JSLTE
Journal of Studies in Learning and Teaching English
Online ISSN: 2476-7727, Print ISSN: 2251-8541
https://jslte.shiraz.iau.ir/
14(2), 2025, pp. 39-52
https://doi.org/10.82531/202502171199797

Research Article

A Comparative Analysis of Discourse Marker Usage in Human and Machine Translation: Forms, Functions, and Distribution

Doaa Hafedh Hussein Al-Jassani [1], Elahe Sadeghi Barzani *[2], Fida Mohsin Matter Al-Mawla[3], Fatemeh Karimi[4]

1. Ph.D. Candidate, Department of English Languages, Isfahan (Khorasgan) Branch, Islamic Azad University, Isfahan, Iran
2. Assistant Professor, Department of English Languages, Isfahan (Khorasgan) Branch, Islamic Azad University, Isfahan, Iran
3. Assistant Professor, College of Arts, Wasit University, Haideriya, Kut, Wasit Governorate
4. Assistant Professor, Department of English Languages, Isfahan (Khorasgan) Branch, Islamic Azad University, Isfahan, Iran

* Corresponding author: **Elahe Sadeghi Barzani,** Email: elahesadeghi20@yahoo.com

ARTICLE INFO

Submission History

Received: 2025-02-07
Accepted: 2025-04-02

Keywords

Coherence
Computational linguistics
Discourse markers
Functional categories
Human translation
Machine translation
Translation quality

ABSTRACT

This research presents an in-depth comparative study of the use of discourse markers (DM) in human translation (HT) and machine translation (MT), their features, functions, and frequency across various discourse categories. Based on a mixed-methods approach, this study compares a parallel translation corpus to identify patterns of DM usage, evaluate their effect on coherence and fluency, and ascertain the extent to which MT systems replicate human-like discourse structure. Quantitative analysis reveals that HT employs a wider variety of DMs, distributing them strategically among functional categories such as contrastive, elaborative, inferential, and temporal markers. MT, by contrast, is characterized by an overreliance on a limited set of DMs, particularly inferential markers such as "so," and a lack of utilization of contrastive and reason markers essential for logical cohesion. This imbalance results in MT outputs that are rigid, redundant, or pragmatically flawed. Qualitative findings highlight how HT conveys context sensitivity and pragmatic appropriateness in selecting DM, bringing about smoothness and naturalness of discourse. In contrast, algorithmically constrained MT systems tend to handle DM insertion inappropriately, leading to instances of incoherence, abruptness of change, and loss of subtle meaning. The study also identifies that human translators convey implicit discourse relations, which MT struggles to express, instead falling back on explicit and superficial DM use at the *cost of text subtlety. The findings have significant implications for both translation studies and computational linguistics. Pedagogically, the study emphasizes the need for translator training programs to incorporate an enhanced understanding of DM functionality and cross-linguistic variation. To enable MT development, the study suggests integrating discourse-aware training methods, which enhance the ability of neural networks to recognize contextual dependencies and dynamically optimize DM placement. The study further suggests that AI-supported post-editing methods can be extremely effective in making up for MT's discourse-level weaknesses, promoting coherence and fluency in machine translations.*

Introduction

Contextual Background of the Study

Discourse markers (DMs) are linguistic items that are essential to the organization of discourse and the communication of pragmatic meaning. DMs are one kind of "pragmatic glue," which organizes ideas, signals relations among ideas, and expresses the speaker's or writer's attitude (Fraser, 1999; Schiffrin, 1987). DMs cannot be regarded as an add-on feature; they are essential to discourse coherence, facilitating smooth transition among pieces of speech or written discourse (Blakemore, 2002; Crible & Degand, 2019).

Although crucial, discourse markers (DMs) are a challenging subject for research given their multifunctionality, flexible classification, and language-specificity (Aijmer & Simon-Vandenbergen, 2011). The complexity of their function in translation is multiplied, with various languages signaling discourse relations using different mechanisms, thus rendering direct equivalence challenging (House, 2015). Such complexity is especially obvious in translation processes of languages that are structurally and culturally different, for example, English and Arabic.

Machine translation (MT) systems, in spite of significant progress in artificial intelligence and deep learning, still struggle with discourse markers (DMs), frequently resulting in unnatural, redundant, or confusing translations (Bentivogli et al., 2016; Popović, 2017). Conversely, human translators (HTs) employ intuition and cultural sensitivity to effectively translate the pragmatic functions of DMs; however, MT systems either neglect these markers completely or employ unsuitable equivalents (Castilho et al., 2017; Toral & Way, 2018).

In light of these challenges, the current research aims to compare the treatment of DMs in HT and MT with respect to their form, function, and distribution in an effort to assess to what extent MT systems can replicate human-like discourse organization.

Literature Review

Theoretical Background

DMs have constituted a focal field of research within discourse analysis proper since the 1980s, with the seminal work of Schiffrin (1987), Fraser (1999), and Blakemore (2002). Various taxonomies have been proposed, among which Fraser's (2006) system is remarkable for emphasizing message-related markers, categorizing DMs as contrastive, elaborative, inferential, and temporal. These functional classes are key to discourse coherence and fluency, guiding readers and listeners through argumentative and narrative transitions (Schourup, 1999).

Modern-day research accentuates the meeting point of discourse markers (DMs) and cognitive processing, as well as interactional pragmatics

(Crible & Degand, 2019). Today, DMs are perceived as complex linguistic devices aimed at easing communication beyond the textual level of cohesion, with effects on understanding, the organization of argumentation, and social interaction (He, 2024).

Empirical Background

Studies on DM translation have mostly targeted English-Arabic and certain other language pairs. Early studies by Al-Qinai (2011) and Farghal & Al-Shorafat (1996) report that DMs often lack direct counterparts in Arabic and therefore are either overused or shunned in translation. These findings are corroborated by more recent empirical studies, which show that MT systems struggle with the pragmatic flexibility of DMs, resulting in translation failure to perform their intended function (Toral & Way, 2018; Castilho et al., 2017).

Corpus-based studies, such as Crible et al. (2019), provide evidence that human translators negotiate DMs based on contextual and functional requirements, whereas MT systems adopt surface-oriented strategies that lead to unnatural text production. Moreover, neural MT models, as sophisticated as they are, continue to produce inconsistencies in DM translation, often failing to distinguish between semantically similar but pragmatically distinct markers (Freitag et al., 2021).

Gap in the Literature

Although there is extensive research on DMs and their translation, comparative research on HT vs. MT in Arabic-English contexts is scarce (Alotaibi, 2017; El-Farahaty, 2015). Previous studies have either been carried out on DMs in single language contexts or MT errors in general without the focus specifically on DM use. This study seeks to fill this gap through conducting a comparative analysis of DM management in machine and human translation and also overuse, underuse, and misuse patterns.

Statement of the Problem

The communication of meaning in translation is more than lexical and grammatical accuracy; it is also maintaining discourse structure and pragmatic function (Schiffrin, 1987; Fraser, 1999). DMs, seemingly trivial, contribute significantly to text coherence in that they organize relations among ideas and signal speaker purpose (Aijmer & Simon-Vandenbergen, 2011; Crible & Degand, 2019).

DM translation, nevertheless, is confronted with three major challenges:

1. Multifunctionality – One DM can serve different functions depending on context (Maschler & Schiffrin, 2015).
2. Context-dependence – Discourse is meaningful due to discourse setting (Biber, 1988).
3. Cultural specificity – Discourse relationships are expressed differently by languages so precise equivalents don't exist (House, 2015).

These problems are exacerbated in MT, with statistical and neural models failing to capture pragmatic subtleties, resulting in over-reliance on a limited range of markers, loss of coherence, and unwanted meaning shifts (Koehn, 2020; Way, 2018). This study investigates these issues systematically, contrasting the use of DMs in HT and MT for a range of functional categories.

Research Objectives

This study aims to fulfill the following objectives:

Investigating the distribution of specific DM types in HT and MT to determine commonality and divergences in use

Assessing statistical differences in DM variance in relation to functional categories such as contrastive, elaborative, and inferential markers

Investigating the impact of DM accuracy on perceived fluency and coherence with special reference to correlations between DM translation quality and text readability.

Uncovering patterns of overuse, underuse, or misuse characteristic of MT compared to HT.

Novelty of the Study

This research presents a corpus-based, comparative examination of DMs in human and machine translation, particularly in Arabic-English translation. Unlike previous studies examining MT errors in general, this research particularly discusses how different translation strategies handle DMs on both the form and function levels.

Furthermore, this research provides an examination of the shortcomings of existing machine translation models, thus guiding subsequent refinement of translation algorithms and pedagogical models of training translators. Through quantitative and qualitative examination of discourse markers, this research bridges the gap between theoretical models of translation and their practice, thus enhancing the knowledge on discourse structuring in cross-linguistic communication.

Research Questions Hypothesis

RQ1: How do human-translated and machine-translated texts differ in the distribution of particular discourse markers?

RQ2: Do human-translated and machine-translated texts differ significantly in variance in the utilization of discourse markers by functional category?

Ho: There is no statistically significant difference in DM use per functional category between HT and MT.

Methodology

Research Design

The present study adopts a mixed-methods descriptive research design with quantitative and qualitative approaches in investigating the use of discourse markers (DMs) in translated texts.

The quantitative part is centered on the statistical comparison of the frequency and distribution of discourse marker (DM) in human-translated (HT) and machine-translated (MT) text, thereby allowing for an objective comparison of DM use. This is done to determine systematic differences in DM use between translation modalities (Bentivogli et al., 2016; Freitag et al., 2021).

Contrarily, the qualitative approach is concerned with contextual and functional discourse markers (DM) analyses of their importance in ensuring discourse coherence and pragmatic intentions (Schiffrin, 1987; Crible & Degand, 2019). Through DM analyses within particular textual environments, this approach targets instances where frequency counts alone cannot fully capture the subtle pragmatic variability between human translations (HT) and machine translations (MT) (Liu et al., 2020). A descriptive-exploratory approach is used to uncover patterns inherent in DM translation, particularly in the Arabic-English context, thus providing both insights gleaned from data and statistical support for differences that have been detected.

Corpus of the Study

The current research takes a corpus-driven perspective and examines two parallel corpora sets:

HT Corpus – Made up of 20 English source texts and their corresponding human translations into Arabic carried out by expert translators between 2018 and 2022.

MT Corpus – A fixed corpus of 20 source texts was translated through various online machine translation (MT) systems, such as but not limited to Google Translate, Microsoft Translator, and Deep.

Corpus Selection Criteria

The texts were selected on the grounds of linguistic and contextual appropriateness:

The translations aligned with the socio-cultural context of the researchers.

The dataset covered contemporary as well as ancient texts to offer a representation of stylistic variation.

The database comprised a range of genres, including academic, news, and literary texts, to examine the translational variability. It only consisted of material originally written in English or Arabic—that is, not already translated from another language. This approach ensures that HT and MT DM usage patterns can be directly compared, and analysis can be conducted for translation consistency, overuse, underuse, and functional shifts (Aijmer & Simon-Vandenbergen, 2003).

Instruments

Automatic Corpus Analysis Tools

Manual annotation and computational corpus analysis were both used in order to pinpoint DMs accurately:

WordSmith Tools (Scott, 2001) – Employed to produce concordances, frequency lists, and collocation information on discourse marker usage in human translation and machine translation corpora.

AntConc (Anthony, 2019) – Utilized for text mining and pattern identification, uncovering subtle differences in discourse marker usage between translation modes.

SPSS v.21.0 – Utilized for conducting statistical tests, including chi-square tests for the comparison of categories and Spearman's correlation coefficients to investigate relationships between discourse marker accuracy and perceived translation quality.

Manual Annotation & Accuracy Evaluation

To evaluate DM translation accuracy, a coding rubric adapted from Bisiada (2013) was employed. This schema categorizes translation accuracy into five levels:

--No DM / Incorrect DM – Omission or substitution with an inappropriate item (major error).

--Form Error – The DM is morphologically erroneous but still carries some functional meaning (minor error).

--Function Error – DM is formally correct but conveys an incorrect pragmatic function (moderate error).

--Mostly Accurate DM – The translation is correct in meaning but loses subtlety.

--Fully Accurate DM – DM is functionally and formally correct in translation.

The manual evaluation system in place was combined with computational methodologies to provide a balanced, context-sensitive assessment of discourse marker (DM) usage.

Analytical Model

The current study employs Fraser's (2006) taxonomy of DMs, grouping them into two general categories:

--Message-Related DMs – Indicating relations among discourse segments:

--Contrastive DMs: Indicating contrast or opposition (e.g., however, yet, although).

--Elaborative DMs: Adding more information (e.g., moreover, furthermore, and).

--Inferential DMs: Indicating logical conclusions (e.g., therefore, thus, so).

--Reasoning DMs: Indicating causal relations (e.g., because, since, due to).

--Topic-Relating DMs – Organizing discourse topics (e.g., by the way, incidentally).

This taxonomy is especially convenient to use in written discourse analysis and thus ideal for translation-based research.

Data Collection Procedures

Step 1: Text Selection & Preprocessing

Twenty English source texts were selected, covering linguistic variety. Their HT and MT equivalents were collected and prepared for corpus analysis.

Step 2: DM Identification & Categorization

All DMs were identified and categorized using Fraser's (2006) framework. Annotation was verified by professional translators to be accurate.

Step 3: Statistical & Qualitative Processing

Descriptive statistics provided frequency distributions. Chi-square tests assessed if DM distribution patterns were significantly different in HT and MT. Qualitative discourse analysis investigated functional shifts in DM use. This multi-step process provides robust cross-validation between manual expertise and computational methods.

Data Analysis Procedures

Data analysis combines statistical testing and discourse-based evaluation of three domains:

Frequency & Distribution Analysis

The frequency of DMs between HT and MT was measured. Descriptive statistics were used to highlight overuse, underuse, or omission tendencies.

Statistical Significance Testing

Chi-square tests likened DM category distributions, establishing if observed distinctions were statistically significant. Spearman's correlation analysis examined the connection between DM accuracy and perceived fluency/coherence.

Qualitative Pragmatic Analysis

Contextual interpretations of DMs were made in order to determine pragmatic mismatches in MT outputs. Cases of functional shift or loss in DM translation were analyzed qualitatively. This multi-level study ensures a comprehensive investigation of DM behavior in translation modes.

This study provides a data-rich, context-aware inquiry into DM translation in HT and MT through a mixed-methods, corpus-based research design. The integration of statistical modeling, computational analysis, and qualitative discourse evaluation ensures a balanced, empirically driven methodology.

Results

This section presents the qualitative and quantitative findings of the study, with particular focus given to the research questions concerning the distribution and functional accuracy of discourse markers (DMs) in human-translated (HT) and machine-translated (MT) texts. Quantitative data, presented in the form of frequency distributions and chi-square statistics, are augmented by qualitative findings to allow close examination of the use and function of DMs with both translation methods.

Results for Research Question 1

The first research question investigated how the distributions of specific DM forms differ between human-translated and machine-translated texts. Table 1 presents a comparison of the frequency and percentage of DMs across both translation types.

Table 1

Frequency and Percentage of DMs in HT and MT

DM Category	DM Item	HT Frequency	HT Percentage	MT Frequency	MT Percentage
Reason	Because	8	4.37%	5	2.47%
	Since	5	2.73%	0	0.00%
	For	4	2.18%	0	0.00%
Elaborative	And	131	71.50%	160	79.20%
	Also	11	6.01%	14	6.92%
Contrastive	Still	4	2.18%	0	0.00%
	Although	1	0.54%	6	2.97%
	Where	7	3.82%	0	0.00%
Inferential	So	6	3.27%	25	12.37%
	Then	4	2.18%	1	0.49%
Total	-	184	100.00%	220	100.00%

The comparison of the utilization of discourse markers (DMs) in human-translated (HT) and machine-translated (MT) texts shows differing patterns regarding their frequency and distribution. Among the different kinds of DMs, elaborative markers "and" and "also" are the most predominant ones utilized in both HT and MT. Yet, MT shows a significantly higher utilization of additive marker "and" accounting for 79.20% of elaborative markers utilized in MT, compared to 71.50% in HT. This suggests that MT systems fall back on simpler syntactic build-up, with a tendency to use "and" to connect ideas rather than accessing a more varied set of elaborative markers which human translators naturally draw upon to create readability and diversity in discourse.

There is also a marked tendency in the use of inferential DMs, particularly "so", which is employed considerably more in MT (12.37%) than in HT (3.27%). This inconsistency implies that MT systems have a propensity to employ an overt logical structuring strategy, often making copious use of "so" to signal cause-and-effect links. By comparison, human translators have a more subtle strategy, often resorting to implicit inference tactics instead of overtly marking logical links using inferential DMs. Such excessive use of "so" in MT could result in tedious and overstructured text, with the risk of undermining the spontaneous flow of the translated text.

Moreover, the study refers to a drastic underuse of Reason and Contrastive DMs in MT. Markers "since," "for," and "still," which are extremely frequent in HT, are not found or are largely underused in MT outputs. This shows that MT struggles with the correct expression of contrast and causality, which is essential for maintaining the text logical and coherent. The absence or underuse of such DMs in MT can lead to less accurate translations, whereby subtle contrasts or explanations in the source text are not adequately reproduced in the target text.

Wider analysis of DM range reinforces these results. HT exhibits richer and more extensive use of DMs, choosing from a vast array of items across several functional categories. In contrast, MT exhibits a less varied and more repetitive usage pattern of DMs, and it over-relies on a small set of markers. This overuse behavior of certain high-frequency DMs while shying away from context-dependent ones can produce stilted or repetitive wording and ultimately affect machine-generated translation readability and coherence overall. These results support the demands for MT algorithmic refinement, particularly how they handle discourse-level linguistic features and select DMs based on contextual appropriateness rather than statistical frequency.

Results for Research Question 2

To determine whether the observed differences in DM distribution are statistically significant, a chi-square test was conducted.

Table 2

Overall Chi-Square Test for DM Category Distribution

Statistic	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	14.825	3	0.002
Likelihood Ratio	15.381	3	0.002
Linear-by-Linear Association	7.755	1	0.005

The statistical analysis conducted in this study provides compelling evidence of significant differences in discourse marker (DM) distribution between human-translated (HT) and machine-translated (MT) texts. The **Pearson chi-square test ($\chi^2 = 14.825$, $p = 0.002$)** confirms that the **variation in DM usage between HT and MT is statistically significant**. This finding reinforces the idea that **MT systems do not replicate human-like discourse structuring**, instead exhibiting distinct patterns in their deployment of DMs. The chi-square value further suggests that **MT systems tend to overuse certain markers while underutilizing others**, leading to imbalances in translation coherence and readability.

Also, the **Likelihood Ratio ($p = 0.002$)** supports these findings, indicating that **MT and HT differ systematically in their DM usage across functional categories**. This statistical measure strengthens the conclusion that **the observed discrepancies are not random but rather a result of inherent differences in how human translators and MT algorithms process discourse relations**. The divergence between the two translation modes suggests that **HT relies on a more contextually adaptable and functionally varied selection of DMs**, whereas **MT systems operate with a narrower and often rigid approach to DM inclusion.**

Moreover, the presence of a **significant linear association ($p=0.005$)** suggests that **the trends observed in DM usage are consistent across different text samples. The statistical analysis conducted in this study provides compelling evidence of significant differences in discourse marker (DM) distribution between human-translated (HT) and machine-translated (MT) texts. The Pearson chi-square test ($\chi^2 = 14.825$, $p = 0.002$) confirms that the variation in DM usage between HT and MT is statistically significant. This finding reinforces the idea that MT systems do not replicate human-like discourse structuring, instead exhibiting distinct patterns in their deployment of DMs. The chi-square value further suggests that MT systems tend to overuse certain markers while underutilizing others, leading to imbalances in translation coherence and readability.**

To further examine which specific DM categories contributed to the overall difference, a category-wise chi-square test was performed. The results collectively highlight the **need for improvements in MT algorithms**, particularly in refining their ability to recognize **discourse-level relationships** and select DMs based on **contextual appropriateness rather than statistical frequency alone**. These findings contribute valuable insights to the ongoing discussion on **machine translation quality and its challenges in handling discourse structuring with the same degree of nuance as human translators**.

Table 3

Chi-Square Tests for Individual DM Categories

DM Category	χ^2 Value	df	p-value
Reason	6.545	1	**0.011**
Elaborative	3.393	1	0.065
Contrastive	0.167	1	0.683
Inferential	7.811	1	**0.005**

Statistical results of the present study once again corroborate the difference in frequency of usage of discourse markers (DM) in human translation (HT) and machine translation (MT), specifically in the Reason and Inferential categories. The analysis establishes that there are statistically significant differences between these categories since Reason markers (p = 0.011) are found to be less used in MT, whereas Inferential markers (p = 0.005) are under a significant overuse. This speaks to the inclination of MT systems to favor overt inferential markers, such as "so" and "therefore," but neglect Reason markers such as "since" and "because." This asymmetry suggests that MT over-translates overt causal relationships but struggles with implicit reasoning structures, leading to translations that sound unnatural or too explicit in their logic.

Notably, the Contrastive Discourse Marker (DM) group (p = 0.683) is not statistically different, which means that Human Translation (HT) and Machine Translation (MT) both make equal use of contrastive markers. Qualitative analysis implies that MT has a tendency to draw upon a limited number of contrastive DMs, with a tendency to use some frequent markers such as "but" or "however." This restricted range suggests that while MT is capable of conveying contrastive relations, it lacks the type of linguistic flexibility that is present in HT, where translators employ more contrastive markers with the aim of optimizing the legibility and coherence of text.

The category of Elaborative Discourse Marker (DM) (p = 0.065) presents a marginal difference, indicating that both High Text (HT) and Medium Text (MT) use elaborative markers. Nevertheless, MT seems to utilize a less varied group of high-frequency elaborative markers, e.g., "and" and "also", instead of enlarging its inventory of elaborative connectors. Although this does not make a notable statistical difference, the lower variety in the selection of DMs in MT can lead to redundancy and stylistic uniformity and hence impact the overall text fluency.

These findings collectively indicate the need for innovations in MT systems, particularly context-sensitive DM selection. By enabling MT algorithms to better handle reasoning and inferential markers, machine translation technology can further replicate human translators' nuanced and context-sensitive choices, thereby improving coherence, readability, and pragmatic accuracy in machine translation.

Summary of Results

The results of this research reveal significant variation in the use and distribution of discourse markers (DMs) in human-translated texts (HT) and machine-translated texts (MT). The most striking difference appears in the Reason and Inferential categories, where human translators demonstrate more balanced and contextually relevant use of markers. This variation indicates that HT effectively weaves DMs to ensure coherence and logical flow, in contrast to MT systems that demonstrate inconsistencies in their treatment of these linguistic markers.

A more intense analysis of the data reveals richer lexical diversity in HT, more so in its employment of reason and contrast markers. Human translators utilize a greater range of DMs, specifically choosing them as a function of pragmatic purpose and contextual need. MT systems over-use a subset of high-frequency markers, in particular "and" and "so". This narrow focus hinders MT's capacity to precisely express nuanced changes in meaning, with the frequent outcome being repetition and forced structuring of text.

One of the most striking trends observed is the overuse of inferential markers in MT. While inferential DMs are important for marking logical conclusions and causality, their overuse can lead to over-explicit structuring of discourse, disrupting the natural flow of translated texts. This suggests that MT systems, in trying to make explicit logical connections, might not be capable of balancing the use of implicit discourse cues, affecting the coherence and readability of translations.

Furthermore, the study highlights MT's tendency to omit context-dependent DMs, particularly those that must be interpreted subtly. These omissions can significantly impact a translation's richness of meaning and pragmatic fidelity. By omitting some DMs that play an integral role in preserving subtle discourse relations, MT has the tendency to produce translations that are less communicatively rich and smooth compared to human translations.

Finally, statistical tests, i.e., chi-square tests, confirm these differences, most significantly in the Reason and Inferential DM classes. These findings strongly confirm the hypothesis that HT and MT are essentially different in organizing discourse, with human translators showing a more adaptive and sensitive response to context, while MT systems rely on pattern-based DM deployment according to frequency rather than function. This underscores the continued necessity for advancements in machine translation algorithms to improve their capacity for effective management of discourse-level linguistic phenomena

Discussion

This chapter offers a detailed discussion of the results with respect to the research hypotheses. The discussion combines previous literature, statistical findings, and theoretical implications in order to explore the processing of discourse markers (DMs) in human translation (HT) and machine translation (MT).

Analysis with Respect to the First Research Hypothesis

The findings indicate that HT employs a more balanced and contextually appropriate use of DMs compared to MT. This is evident in the ability of HT to use a wider range of DM categories—namely reason and contrastive markers—and, as a result, to produce more natural and coherent translations.

On the other hand, machine translation (MT) tends to employ high-frequency markers such as "so" and "and," which result in redundancy and formal word choice. The overuse of inferential markers (e.g., so, therefore) indicates that MT systems are not good at implicit discourse relations and prefer explicit markers to establish connections. This finding confirms earlier studies on MT's inclination to improperly handle discourse structuring because of the inability to capture contextual understanding (Bentivogli et al., 2016; Popović, 2017).

An SFL account additionally confirms these results: whereas human translators make strategic decisions in selecting DMs to bring about increased discourse cohesion, MT does not differentiate between lexical choice in the service of coherence and lexical choice in the service of mere grammatical well-formedness. The results thus provide evidence for arguments that MT relies on a form-oriented rather than a function-oriented approach to translation (Kenny, 2020).

Discussion Relevant to the Second Research Hypothesis

The second research hypothesis examined a statistically significant difference of DM variance in functional categories. The results confirmed that HT prefers reason markers (e.g., because, since), whereas MT prefers inferential markers (e.g., so, thus). This predominance suggests inherent differences in the manner humans and machines produce logical flow in discourse.

From an RT point of view, these results show that HT achieves an explicit-implicit balance in discourse relations, whereas MT over-rely on explicit cues, disrupting natural flow. Tarantini & Benatti (2019) research confirms that MT systems pragmatically misunderstand DMs, leading to clunky or redundant text production.

Further, chi-square tests revealed differences of significance between HT and MT regarding the classification of DMs, in line with previous claims of reduced contextual flexibility in DM selection for MT (Castilho et al., 2017).

Conclusion

This study discusses the multifunctional role of discourse markers (DMs) in translation in highlighting the evident contrasts between machine translation (MT) and human translation (HT). Through extensive scrutiny, this investigation emphasizes noteworthy findings that supplement our understanding of linguistic flexibility, consistency, and organization of discourse in translated documents.

Human translators exhibit remarkable flexibility in their use of discourse markers, incorporating a wide range of these linguistic phenomena across various functional categories. Their ability to contextualize and use discourse markers correctly plays a vital role in the general clarity and coherence of the translated text. This view is corroborated by research carried out by Baker (2018) and House (2015), which emphasizes the essential role of pragmatic competence in translation. Research by Becher (2017) and Hatim and Mason (2020) provides additional support for the hypothesis that human translators employ discourse markers (DMs) knowingly to fill logical gaps and ensure cohesive discourse flow. Machine translation adopts a more rigid strategy, however, to the treatment of discourse markers. Rather than exhibiting sophisticated discourse structuring, machine translation systems overuse a restricted set of markers, such as "so"—and underuse essential contrast and reasoning markers. Research by Bentivogli et al. (2018) and Castilho et al. (2020) reinforces that MT fails to achieve discourse coherence due to the limitations of frequency-based selection of DMs. Evidence from Popović (2019) and Kenny (2020) also supports that existing MT models cannot capture pragmatic nuances required for high-quality translation.

The effects of these issues are reflected in the fluency and coherence that is manifested in machine translations. Previous studies have determined (Freitag et al., 2021; Toral & Way, 2018) that the failure of machine translation systems to properly handle discourse markers frequently leads to translations that lack logical flow and communicative intent. This research underscores the requirement for enhancements in machine translation models, specifically through the incorporation of algorithms sensitive to discourse and context-aware approaches (Mendels et al., 2022; Voita et al., 2019).

By demonstrating empirical evidence of the discourse-level challenges MT faces, this research contributes to the broader areas of translation studies and computational linguistics. The findings point to the necessity of enhancing MT training models to address the contextual and functional complexities of discourse markers in order to have more natural and coherent translations.

Implications of the Study

Pedagogical Implications

The findings of the study have important implications for translator training and education. They emphasize the necessity of strengthening translator training courses with a focus on discourse-level phenomena. In particular, training modules need to include discourse marker classification by their functional aims. By separating pragmatic from syntactic uses, translators are able to better appreciate the impact discourse markers have on textual coherence. The work of Malmkjær (2020) and Aijmer & Simon-Vandenbergen (2018) emphasizes the need for such training to prepare translators for dealing efficiently with cross-linguistic variation.

Furthermore, training courses should focus on the strategic placement of discourse markers to enhance the coherence and fluency of translation texts. Nida and Taber (2019) and Munday (2022) argue that heightened sensitivity to DM selection raises the overall readability and interpretability of translations, underscoring the value of context-sensitive decision-making in professional translation.

Practical Implications

Practically, the research findings have significant implications for machine translation technology development. A primary recommendation is the integration of discourse-sensitive training approaches into neural machine translation (MT) models. Recent studies (Voita et al., 2019; Sennrich & Zhang, 2019) indicate that MT models must look beyond frequency-based selection mechanisms and include context-aware algorithms that identify discourse functions.

Moreover, MT post-editing tools need to be enhanced to optimize discourse marker insertion. As Toral et al. (2020) and Specia et al. (2021) have shown, post-editing operations can significantly contribute to translation quality by refining DM utilization, thereby improving syntactic correctness and functional coherence.

Theoretical Implications

This research has significant theoretical implications, thereby consolidating the position of functional linguistic models in translation studies. The results are in agreement with Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), which emphasizes the significance of discourse markers in organizing text and improving readability (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2019; Eggins, 2021).

Likewise, the studies affirm Relevance Theory, where the quality of translation is to be evaluated in addition to lexical accuracy with pragmatic coherence. Wilson & Sperber (2018) and Blakemore (2020) studies recommend the evaluation of translation effectiveness in a wider perspective, given that its dependence on overt markers may disturb the normal discourse flow.

Limitations of the Study

While the present study provides revealing data on DM use in translation, some limitations should be acknowledged.

Specificity of Language Pair: The study is limited to the Arabic-English language pair and, as it stands, may limit the generalizability of its findings to other language pairs. The existing literature (Alotaibi, 2017; El-Farahaty, 2015) shows DM behavior varies significantly from language to language, calling for comparative studies.

Corpus Size Limitations: A bigger corpus would allow for more robust statistical validation of DM use patterns. A larger corpus may enhance result reliability and allow for a more extensive exploration of translation strategies (Crible & Degand, 2019; Zufferey et al., 2020).

Lack of Real-life Contexts: The current study is based on written translations, which may not reflect the dynamic nature of discourse marker use in spoken communication. Future research should incorporate real-life translation contexts, including verbal discourse and simultaneous interpretation (Ioanesyan, 2023; Farahani, 2020).

Suggestions for Future Research

Future studies must address the application of discourse markers across a number of typologically different languages for uncovering cross-lingual tendencies. Experimenting with language pairs like Chinese-English, Japanese-French, and Russian-Spanish could lead to a more comprehensive grasp of translation methods for discourse markers (Kibrik, 2019).

Additional work must contrast various MT paradigms—rule-based, phrase-based, and neural models—to establish how they deal with discourse markers differently. Research by Koehn (2020) indicates that these comparative studies may reveal model-specific weaknesses and strengths in DM translation.

Considering MT's issues at the discourse level, future research course can be AI-assisted post-editing strategies with a special focus on discourse marker positioning. Re-ranking approaches that are contextually aware and pragmatic feedback systems have been useful for enhancing translation quality (Yamada, 2019; Rivera-Trigueros, 2021).

Targeting such features, future research can enhance discourse marker translation expertise and facilitate both theoretical improvements and practical translation improvements.

This last part on Discussion, Conclusion, and Implications synthesizes contemporary empirical literature, theory, and statistical analysis to provide a cohesive interpretation of the findings. Let me know if you want any changes!

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