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The Use of Adverbial Connectors in Academic Writings of Native and Non-native Speakers[1]

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Abstract

It is a well-known fact that among the most problematic issues in academic writing for EFL learners, there lies the use of adverbial connectors, which present complexity in different levels of meaning. In fact, the probable conflicting situations in the use of adverbial connectors both in native and non-native students' academic productions has been investigated widely all over the world so far. With this purpose in mind, investigating adverbials in learner English through native and non-native corpora, the present study aimed to compare the most distinguishing adverbial usages as well as the overuse and underuse patterns in native and non-native corpora. The two academic written corpora employed for this purpose which included "British Academic Written English" (BAWE) and "Karadeniz Technical University Corpus of Academic Learner English" (KTUCALE), which were designed according to strict design criteria. In the analysis of the corpus data, Sketch Engine online interface was used, and the obtained findings were presented in numerical order in the form of tables, figures and graphics. Initial findings indicated strong overuse and underuse patterns in the use of adverbials between the two corpora. There were various but limited number of adverbials employed in non-native corpus data. Findings also indicated that native corpora significantly differed from the non-native corpus in the use of certain adverbials.

Keywords

Adverbial connectors, academic writing, EFL learners, native speakers, corpus, BAWE, KTUCALE.

Full-Text

Introduction

Coherence and clarity are the most important elements for a well-written essay. It is possible to mark the connections between two clauses by using adverbial connectors. These also ensure better understanding in written a text. Hartnett (1986) states that the more connectives are used wisely and properly the more they are such a good helper in a text, but if not, they may cause confusion. Connectors also have a positive effect on the clarity and comprehensibility of discourse (Tapper, 2005, p.80). Biber et al（1999) observe that the primary function of adverbial connectors is to state the speaker/writer's perception of the relationship between two units of discourse and to help to create textual cohesion (cited in Yaochen, 2006, p.32). However, several studies

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show that the use of connectors is a problematic issue for language learners, in particular, foreign language learners. According to Altenberg & Tapper (1998), one reason for this is that connectors are not always needed and that they have to be used with discrimination. Their main function is to facilitate the interpretation of underlying relations in discourse. On the other hand, underuse and misuse of connectors are likely to reduce the comprehensibility of the text. A second problem for learners is that the use of connectors is effective for the discourse of language users. For example, the connectors used in conversation differ a great deal from those used in expository prose (Altenberg 1984, 1986). This means that learning to use connectors appropriately is closely linked with learning to produce different types of discourse. In other words, connector usage is dependent on the development of the learner's communicative competence and how language is taught (cited in Altenberg & Tapper, 1998, p.80). Some studies (e.g., Altenberg & Tapper, 1998; Crewe, 1990; Dubin & Olsbtain, 1980; Tanko, 2004) have reported that it is a universal problematic issue that learner's underuse, overuse, and misuse connectors in EFL and ESL writings. Besides, Granger and Tyson (1996) reported that not only non-native speakers but also native speakers underuse the connectors, and it may not be caused by LA influence (cited in Lee, p.284).

A number of studies on which non-native learners' use of connectors in academic texts written in the English language have been investigated as incoherence issue. For example, Mauranen (1993) studied the use of connectors in Finnish writers' texts, Wikbork and Björk (1989) focused on the use of connectors in Swedish university learners' texts, Altenberg and Tapper (1998) compared Swedish learners' L1 and English texts and contrasted Swedish learners' English texts with those written by French learners. Each of these studies reveals various types of shortcomings in the use of adverbial connectors in EFL writers' texts (cited in Tanko, 157-158). In addition, Granger & Tyson (1996) found clear evidence of overuse and underuse of individual connectives in their study of adverbial connectives in student essays from the French ICLE sub-corpus. They also found evidence of semantic, stylistic and syntactic misuse of connectives (cited in Lee, 2004, p.284). Another example belongs to Wikborg & Björk (1989) who established that in Swedish students' expository essays in both Swedish and English. In that study, it was found that the essays written in English were not significantly poorer than those written in Swedish. Wikborg & Björk's results also indicated that Swedish students are inexperienced in producing expository writing in Swedish.

Among English teachers and lecturers, there is common belief towards the existence of adverbial misuses in writings of EFL (English as Foreign Language) and ESL (English as Second Language) learners. Furthermore, while the use of adverbial connectors has great significance in academic writings, it is also a problematic issue for EFL and ESL learners all around the world as well. A number of studies have already been investigated on this topic, and too many opinions have been asserted. Tanko (2004, p.159) refers to difficulties of using adverbials in his study and designates these difficulties as discourse-organising function, grammatical, semantic and morphological attributes and linguistic factors. Considering the issue from grammatical function, the position of adverbials in a sentence is a tricky situation for students. On the other hand, Altenberg and Tapper (1998, p.80) argue that one of the reasons for this problematic issue is that connectors are not always needed, and their main function is to provide the interpretation of relations in discourse. Another reason is the usage of adverbials in different discourse and context. Consequently, all these reasons may lead to overuse, underuse and misuse of adverbial connectors in academic writings of EFL learners.

In this study, it is concerned with the use of adverbial connectors by native speakers of English and Turkish EFL learners. Concordantly, this study aims to include previous findings of the use of adverbial connectors, to find out the use of adverbial connectors in Turkish EFL learners' academic writings and to make a comparison between the learners and native speakers, and to create awareness about using adverbial connector and its significance in academic writings. The study reveals the frequency of occurrence of adverbials in the students' academic writings and their comparison of quantity with natives. Also, the list of most used adverbials by the learners vs. natives are presented to make a comparison between two corpora. For this reason, this study will mainly contain quantitative data.

Research Questions

1. Do EFL Turkish learners use adverbial connectors to the same extent as native speakers?
2. What are the most used adverbial connectors in learner corpus, KTUCALE and reference corpus BAWE?
3. What types of adverbial connectors are there in KTUCALE?
4. Do Turkish EFL learners use the adverb types in the same rate with the natives?

Review

Adverbial connectors are key concepts in a text to signal logical and semantic relations. When appropriately used, they help the reader to make the text meaningful. The correct use of adverbial connectors is the important structure that helps in better understanding of the text in terms of both semantic relations and coherence and clarity. Cook (1989) states his thoughts regarding this issue that "language learners need to know both how and when to use adverbial connectors. Their presence or absence in discourse often contributes to the style, and some conjunctions can sound very pompous when used inappropriately," (cited in Tanko, 2004, 159). It can be inferred from this statement how the adverbial connectors play a significant role in EFL or ESL learning.

Another subject about adverbial connectors is the position of them. In English, many connectors can have a changeable position in clauses and sentences. Even though the clause-initial position is the norm for most connectors, some connectors are common in medial position (e.g. however) or final position (e.g. anyway) (Quirk et al.1985, cited in Heino, 2010, p.16). Moreover, they can be used to connect two clauses, two sentences, two paragraphs or parts of a paragraph, or they can be used as components of a clause. Where to use is a highly important issue as to use.

Corpus linguistics is the computer-based study of language which enables researchers to extract data from large amount of texts to analyse the use of language and study on applied linguistics, discourse, translation and so forth. Sinclair (1996) associates corpus to representativeness as the collection of pieces of language which are selected and ordered with a strict design criterion to use as a sample of the language. Corpus is simply "a collection of spoken and written texts". Corpus linguistics is a method of carrying out linguistic analyses. Silva and Leki (2004) define corpus linguistics as a linguistic methodology that is founded on the use of electronic collections of naturally occurring text. However, corpus linguistics uses substantial quantities of naturally occurring data to reveal the occurrences/frequencies of individual lexical phrases and the multiple patterns of lexical and grammatical associations (cited in Lee, 2004, p.285). Such kinds of basic corpus analysis techniques themselves serve both qualitative and quantitative insights in terms of linguistics analysis.

Recently, corpus studies have not only been used in linguistic research but also the teaching and learning of languages. Applications based on corpus investigation are found in several different areas such as lexicography, translation, stylistics, grammar, gender studies, forensic linguistics, computational linguistics in language learning and teaching (Tognini-Bonelli, 2001). Contrastive analysis (CA) is the systematic comparison of two or more languages, to describe their similarities and differences. Contrastive Analysis has often been done for practical/pedagogical purposes. The aim has been to provide better descriptions and better teaching materials for language learners. The importance of CA extends beyond individual languages. When we compare across a number of languages, we can also see more clearly what is characteristic of languages more generally (Johansson, 2008, p.9).

Method

In this study, the model of Quirk et al (1985) and Martin (1992) that are categorized according to semantic relations was used. As seen in Table 1, adverbial connectors are mainly classified into six categories according to their semantic relations: Additive, Clarifying, Contrastive, Resultive, Transitional and Corroborative.

Table 1. Semantic types of adverbial connectors

Semantic types of adverbial connectors	**Example**
Additive	In addition, furthermore, moreover, likewise, similarly, finally, secondly…
Clarifying	For example, for instance, generally, particularly, specifically, in other words…
Contrastive	However, alternatively, nevertheless, though, oppositely, instead, rather…
Resultive	Consequence, as a result, therefore, in that case, so, after all…
Transitional	By the way, anyway, well, now, okay…
Corroborative	In fact, actually, as a matter of fact, indeed…

As the data of the study, a native (BAWE; British Academic Written English) and a non-native (KTUCALE; Karadeniz Technical University Corpus of Academic Learner English) corpora were used and compared by Sketch Engine (*https://www.sketchengine.eu/*) online corpus interface. In this study, the top twelve adverbial connectors are investigated. The list of these adverbial connectors is given in the data analysis part of the study with their comparison.

Table 2. Profiles of corpora used in the study

	KTUCALE (2012-2014)	**BAWE**
Words	337,009	514,982
L1	Turkish	English
Genre	Academic	Academic

The reference corpus was taken from the British Academic Written English (BAWE) database. This native speaker corpus consists of Academic essays written by English students and contains 514,982 words. The learner corpus comes from Karadeniz Technical University Corpus of Academic Learner English 2012-2014 (KTUCALE 2012-2014). KTUCALE 2012-2014 sub-corpus contains academic essays written by Turkish EFL students and contains 337,009 words.

For the significance and effect size calculations, Log-Likelihood (LL) scores were used. The calculations were made via online Log-Likelihood interface (*http://ucrel.lancs.ac.uk/llwizard.html*) of Lancaster University, UK.

Findings and Discussion

The use of adverbial connectors in Turkish EFL students' writings and native speakers' writings were analysed by using the corpora BAWE and KTUCALE. These corpora include a remarkable amount of parts of speech. The analysis aims to compare the use of adverbial connectors used by Turkish EFL learners and native speakers to find out if there are any differences and/or similarities. According to the LL calculations, if the score is over (+/-) 3.84, the target word is considered as overused or underuse as well as probably misused.

Table 3. Top 20 Adverbial Connectors used in BAWE and KTUCALE

BAWE (top 20)	BAWE Raw fq.	BAWE Norm. fq.	KTUCALE (top 20)	KTUCALE Raw fq.	KTUCALE Norm. fq.
Also	1,275	2,47	Also	943	2,79
However	972	1,88	So	587	1,74
So	777	1,50	However	300	0,89
Therefore	714	1,38	Therefore	256	0,75
For example	460	0,89	Then	210	0,62
Then	398	0,77	Thus	151	0,44
Thus	299	0,58	Firstly	113	0,33
Especially	141	0,27	Generally	110	0,32
Particularly	137	0,26	Especially	106	0,31
Furthermore	132	0,25	Clearly	97	0,28
Actually	105	0,20	Finally	66	0,19
Mainly	96	0,18	Furthermore	57	0,16
Finally	87	0,16	Actually	51	0,15
Similarly	85	0,16	Secondly	48	0,14
Previously	84	0,16	Additionally	45	0,13
Usually	82	0,15	Lastly	27	0,8
Firstly	75	0,14	Consequently	25	0,7
Moreover	68	0,13	Similarly	23	0,6
Relatively	57	0,11	Thirdly	22	0,6
Consequently	52	0,10	Meanwhile	17	0,5

The top twenty adverbial connectors used in BAWE and KTUCALE are listed in Table 3. The table shows that Turkish EFL learners and native speakers have used nearly the same adverbial connectors with different rank order and frequency. Thirteen of the adverbs (*also, however, so, therefore, then, thus, especially, furthermore, actually, finally, similarly, firstly* and *consequently*) are used commonly among the most frequently used twenty adverbs in both corpora. The raw and normalized frequencies and the Log-Likelihood scores of these common adverbs were calculated and compared to find out their similarities and differences within scientific statistics in Table 4 below.

Table 4. The most frequent common adverbs in BAWE and KTUCALE, and their LL scores

Common Adverbs in Top 20	BAWE Raw fq.	BAWE Norm. fq.	KTUCALE Raw fq.	KTUCALE Norm. fq.	LL Scores
Also	1,275	2,47	943	2,79	**+8.07**
However	972	1,88	300	0,89	**-145.52**
So	777	1,50	587	1,74	**+6.84**
Therefore	714	1,38	256	0,75	**-74.18**
Then	398	0,77	210	0,62	**-6.51**
Thus	299	0,58	151	0,44	**-6.92**
Especially	141	0,27	106	0,31	+1.16

Furthermore	132	0,25	57	0,16	**-7.23**
Actually	105	0,20	51	0,15	-3.15
Finally	87	0,16	66	0,19	**+9.96**
Similarly	85	0,16	23	0,6	**-16.39**
Firstly	75	0,14	113	0,33	**+32.23**
Consequently	52	0,10	25	0,7	-1.66

According to Table 4, *especially*, *actually* and *consequently* are the adverbs which are used in nearly similar rates by Turkish EFL learners and native speakers of English. On the one hand, *also*, *so*, *finally* and *firstly* are the adverbs which are overused by the learners comparing to the natives. On the other hand, *however*, *therefore*, *then*, *thus*, *furthermore* and *similarly* are the adverbs which are underused by the learners.

In accordance with the maximum critical value of the Log-Likelihood and effect size calculator (99.99th percentile; 0.01% level; $p < 0.0001$; critical value = 15.13), *however* (-145.52), *therefore* (-74.18), *similarly* (-16.39) and *firstly* (+32.23) are the most striking underused and overused adverbs by the learners. In this regard, the underuse of *however*, *therefore* and *similarly* may be caused by using low and simple level alternative words such as *but*, *because* and *and*. Furthermore, the overuse of *firstly* might be caused by the essay writing habits of the learners as their writings' introduction paragraphs may start with this adverb.

Table 5. The Distribution of the most frequent Semantic Types of Adverbial Connectors

Adverbial Connectors	**BAWE**	**Adverbial Connectors**	**KTUCALE**
Resultive (so, therefore …)	1842	Additive (also, additionally...)	1068
Additive (also, furthermore …)	1560	Resultive (so, therefore, …)	1019
Contrastive (however, but …)	1029	Listing (firstly, secondly …)	486
Clarifying (for example …)	820	Contrastive (however, but …)	300
Listing (then, finally …)	644	Clarifying (especially…)	216
Corroborative (actually)	*201*	Transitional (meanwhile, clearly)	114
		Corroborative (actually)	51

When comparing semantic types of adverbial connectors used in both corpora, it is observed crosswise position in the first two categories. The first category consists of Additive adverbial connectors in KTUCALE while these are the second category in BAWE. Similarly, the first category is Resultive semantic type in BAWE, while it is the second category in KTUCALE. Other categories of semantic types of adverbial connectors such as contrastive, clarifying, listing, and corroborative are the same in both corpora with different rank order. Only the corroborative type has the same rank order in both corpora. In addition, Turkish learners have used a new semantic type; transitional (*meanwhile* …). In the comparison of semantic types in native and non-native corpora, it seems there are not striking differences.

Table 6. The Semantic Relationships marked in the BAWE and KTUCALE

BAWE	**Norm. freq.**	**KTUCALE**	**Norm. freq.**
Resultive	3,56	Additive	3,68
Additive	3,01	Resultive	3,63
Contrastive	1,99	Listing	2,68
Clarifying	1,57	Contrastive	0,89

Listing	1,23	Transitional	0,78
Corroborative	0,38	Clarifying	0,63
		Corroborative	0,15

Table 6 shows the semantic relationships marked in the BAWE and KTUCALE. The data are calculated by using normalized values as of Table 3. When two corpora are compared in Table 6, small differences are found in the usage ranks of adverbials' semantic types. There is a high number of additive (also, furthermore, additionally, similarly) adverbial connectors in Turkish EFL learners' writings. However, the order of the most top and the least frequent adverbial types are more or less similar, there are some differences between the types that are listing and clarifying. While listing adverbials' usage rate is in top three in non-native corpus, it is one of the last frequent type in the native corpus. Furthermore, clarifying adverbial type shows an underusage in non-native corpus comparing to the native one. Finally, transitional adverbials are also respectively used in the academic writings of non-native learners while its usage is hardly found in the native corpus.

Table 7. The Span of Relationships marked by Adverbial Connectors in KTUCALE

Connection type	**Adverbial Connectors**
Components of a clause	Also, Generally, Especially, Clearly, Actually
Two clauses	So, then, Finally, Secondly
Two sentences	However, Therefore, Thus, Firstly, Furthermore, Lastly, Consequently, Similarly, Thirdly, Meanwhile, Additionally

The adverbial connectors used by Turkish EFL learners can be divided into seven categories as in Table 6. Some example sentences from each category are given below.

Additive adverbial connectors are used as components of a clause (*also*), and connectors of two sentences (*furthermore*, *similarly*, *additionally*).

For example;

*There was **also** the suggestion that these strategies are not the preserve of highly capable individuals but could be learned by others who had not discovered them on their own.*

*This research relieved the dark days of women and the effect of religion in this period. **Additionally**, works and thoughts of Jane Austen and George Elliot are the proof of my research about status of women and female writers in Victorian era.*

Resultive adverbial connectors (*therefore*, *thus* and *consequently*) are used as connectors of two sentences. *So* is used as connector of two clauses.

For example;

*As it can be seen clearly in Persuasion, Austen shows how protagonist, Anne Elliot, discusses about women rights, because, according to the novel, Anne Elliot always defends women rights. **Thus**, Jane Austen shows her real thoughts about women with Persuasion.*

*It depends on mother tongue as Pennington mentioned " Stress shift affected by mother tongue" (Pennington 1996:173). Turkish is a soft stressed language, **so** it needs to be careful. In Turkish, whatever the word is the stress is always at the first syllable.*

Listing adverbial connectors are generally used to connect two clauses (*then*, *finally* and *secondly*) and two sentences (*firstly*, *lastly* and *thirdly*).

For example;

*This means that observation will reveal only those strategies whose application is visible, such as note-taking, asking questions, etc. If a researcher wants to explore such strategies, **then** observation is a suitable method (Cohen & Scott, 1998) whose main advantage is a high degree of objectivity.*

*We can easily realize that the effect of culture on language. The relationship between language and culture is dynamic. **Firstly**, language is an important part of culture. It is the primary vehicle by which a culture transmits its beliefs, values and norms.*

Contrastive adverbial connector (*however*) are used to connect two sentences, while Transitional (*meanwhile* and *clearly*) ones are used as both components of a clause and connector of two sentences.

For example;

*For instance, BA students who study the first level of their English trainings can translate any basic sentence to English, the lingua franca. **However**, they have difficulty translating a sentence, which has cultural terms.*

*Moreover, male pupils want help from the pupils who are the same genders, but it is observed that male students are more effective and social about the different genders. **Meanwhile**, it is clear that the researchers generally separate classroom interaction as three main subjects; lecturers to lecturers, pupils to pupils, pupils to lecturers.*

*There must also be a logical order among the questions. For the purpose of developing questionnaires which are valid, the information must be **clearly** defined previously, and must be specified as much as possible.*

Transitional adverbial connectors are used for moving one sentence to another by generally focusing on timing between sentences.

For example;

*Achilles' first work is fighting with Hector and he kills him. **Meanwhile**, gods and goddesses join to battle.*

Clarifying (*generally* and *especially*) and Corroborative (*actually*) connectors are used as components of a clause.

For example;

*Research studies focusing on listening in language instruction has increased dramatically since 1990s. Listening comprehension is now **generally** recognized as a significant characteristic of language learning but "much work remains to be done in both theory and practice" (Morley, 2001, p.69).*

*The partnership may be difficult for language learners, but this is the best and useful way for me. Does strategy use **actually** aid language learning or do you need to be a good learner to use some of the strategies? Researchers lists strategies and other essential features for good language learners.*

Conclusion

The use of adverbial connectors has a considerably important role for coherence and clarity in academic writings of EFL learners, ESL learners, and even for native speakers of English. For instance, adverbial conjunction used in an essay, article or any other writings makes the semantics and structures of the text much easier for the reader and provides a semantic and holistic transition in writings. Also, the use of adverbial

connectors has a great contribution to learners while writing a well-organized essay. On the other hand, for validity and reliability, language learners should know and use adverbial connectors properly.

The use of adverbial connectors is one of the most important issues in corpus linguistics. Adverbial connectors provide fluency and meaning unity in a text. Therefore, the present study aimed to find out the most used adverbial connectors by Turkish EFL learners and native speakers. Besides, it also aimed to see if these adverbial connectors are overused or underused by Turkish EFL learners. The online text analysis programme *Sketch Engine* was used to analyse data taken from BAWE (British Academic Written English) and KTUCALE (Karadeniz Technical University Corpus of Academic Learner English). The results show that Turkish EFL learners used nearly the same adverbial connectors, but they used these connectors either overused or underused. The overuse and underuse may be considered as a problem which is caused by the lack of language input (listening and reading) with awareness. Surely, the learners know the meaning and the use of those words, however, they are not aware of their stylistics and discourse functions, especially in academic level. Also, semantic categories of adverbial connectors are compared in this study, and there are not observed any striking results. In addition, positions of connectors used by Turkish EFL learners are presented, and some of examples are given in this study. For further studies, the reasons why Turkish EFL learners overused or underused such adverbial connectors can be research subject. The number of the limited top twenty adverbial connectors can be increased for further studies.

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