



Linking Adverbials in Argumentative Essays of Advanced EFL Learners: A Corpus-assisted Analysis

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ABSTRACT

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The present study aims to investigate how L2 writers of different Asian backgrounds (China and Korea) with advanced English proficiency employ linking adverbials in their academic English essays in comparison to native writers. By controlling extraneous variables such as writing conditions and essay type, this study constructed a corpus of the data extracted from the International Corpus Network of Asian Learners of English (ICNALE) and 96 extra assignments from Chinese undergraduates. It analyzed the production tendencies in four types of categories of linking adverbials in the writing of different L1 groups, whether there are idiosyncratic or overlapping phenomena, and the potential rationales under the English education contexts of China and Korea. The findings revealed the common pattern of overuse of overall linking adverbials and functional categories by both groups, as well as the high dependence on specific cohesion markers that have not been emphasized previously, which indicates the non-naive writers tend to disregard issues of informality, functional degree of linking adverbials or intimacy between the sentences, and to favor sentence-initial positioning. It emphasizes the lack of faculty personnel resources and high-standard recruitment system for more qualified teachers in China, and necessary remedies for instructional methodologies for both China and Korea. This study also argues that one reason for the higher usage is the influence of negative washback of English language examinations in China and Korea and a set of model texts from reference books were examined. Pedagogical points of the results were subsequently provided.

KEYWORDS

linking adverbials, argumentative writing, corpus analysis, L1 differences, English education contexts, education policy

1. Introduction

Discourse cohesion is typically dubbed an essential subject for discussion in quality argumentative writings. Cohesion is a property of texts which occurs when the linguistic elements are tied together to exhibit a semantic relation between one element and another, and the meaningful interpretation of a text depends on one item interlocked with another rather than random collections (Halliday and Hasan 1976). According to Halliday and Hasan (1976), it can be fulfilled via a series of devices classified as forms of grammatical cohesion or forms of lexical cohesion. Grammatical cohesion is realized by reference, ellipsis, substitution, and conjunction. Lexical cohesion involves the relationships in meaning between lexical items in a text, and the main measures of lexical cohesion are repetition, synonymy, antonymy, hyponymy, meronymy and collocation. In the four classes of grammatical cohesion, conjunctions, including an adverb, prepositional phrase or linking adverbial, are cohesive elements to express a semantic relation by its particular meanings.

Linking adverbials represent an aspect of discourse cohesion with which EFL learners often struggle since they require to identify the areas of potential ambiguity where they should be employed appropriately to demonstrate the discourse relations. Research on argumentative writings targeting English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners exhibits controversial results in terms of the degree of their function matching the writings text quality. Although there was a relatively smaller number of research on European EFL learners, such as French (Granger and Tyson 1996), Swedish (Altenberg and Tapper 1998), Spanish (Carrió-Pastor 2013), all of them indicated that non-native writers had a propensity of having different usage distributions from native writers. The use of connectors in argumentative essays by advanced L1 French learners was studied by Granger and Tyson (1996) through an analysis of two subcorpora of the International Corpus of Learner English (ICLE), with the assumption that an overall pattern of overuse would be found in the non-native writings. However, the study demonstrated that learners overused connectors which corroborate the argument, give examples and add points to the argument, and that learners tended to underuse the contrastive connectors and causal connectors which develop the argument. By comparing advanced students' essays extracted from the Swedish ICLE sub-corpus with British students' essays, Altenberg and Tapper (1998) discovered that Swedish students preferred to utilize a larger range of adverbial connectors but showed less frequencies of underuse in their essay writings. They also suggested that the learners' first language may not contribute much to the usage of adverbial connectors and that students should be exposed to a wider range of registers. Carrió-Pastor (2006) revealed that the higher variation in the usage pattern of linking adverbials was partially because of the larger corpus and the governmental policies which emphasized the English learning under the Spanish education context. With data gathered from 40 scientific papers of the engineering field by Spanish writers and native writers, Carrió-Pastor (2013: 200) demonstrated that native texts are "writer-oriented with the authors guiding readers", and non-native speakers' underuse could be a reflection that they might not "consider it important to guide readers using internal connections within the discourse".

In terms of the previous studies on Asian learners' usage of linking adverbials, L1 Chinese learners have heretofore been commonly targeted as a group of EFL learners. Chen (2006) compared the use of conjunctive adverbial in a corpus of 23 final papers written by Taiwanese EFL students with collections of published academic articles in English. The result identified the frequent misuse of *besides*, as well as *what's more*, as the typical features of non-native writers. The use of *besides* was examined again in Yeung (2009) by comparison of the experts' usage pattern with that of the Hong Kong learners. While the expert corpora of formal writings demonstrated no use of *besides*, Hong Kong learners' writings displayed frequent occurrences.

Comparison of frequency was also carried on by Lei (2012) between the academic dissertations of PhD EFL students in mainland China and 120 published journal articles. He also obtained a result that the frequent misuse of *besides* and *what's more* featured the group of Chinese EFL writers. This was once again confirmed by Leedham and Cai (2013). Based on the data taken from the British Academic Written English (BAWE) corpus with a small addition of extra assignments by Chinese undergraduates who study in the UK, the results showed that the key difference was the Chinese students' higher use of particular linking adverbials (e.g., *besides*, *on the other hand*).

Research carried on with Korean EFL learners has been likewise called for an increase in examining how L1 Korean writers make use of linking adverbials to construct their L2 writings.

Having compiled the conjunctive adverbials in the essays by Korean first-year and second-year college students for a long period, Lee (2004) finally compared them with native speakers' 150 different academic writings extracted from Brown corpus. It revealed that Korean college students used twice as many adverbial connectors as native speakers but are confined to a smaller set of types such as *however*, *so*, and *also*. Yoon (2006) examined the frequency and positions of connectors in the essays by Korean EFL learners with published academic writings from the Grate Britain sub-corpus of International Corpus of English (ICE-GB). The generally favored initial position indicated that the connectors were used as "convenient text organizers rather than developing their ideas internally in a coherent way" (Yoon 2006: 175). Louvain Corpus of Native English Essays (LOCNESS) was also favored and used as a reference group in comparison with the essay writings produced by the first-year university students in Ha (2016). The result displayed that the different distribution of semantic categories between two groups was especially noticeable in the sequential and additive categories.

Research which examined the published articles or degree dissertations has also been popular in Korea academia. Eun (2016) compared partial types of conjunctive adverbials ("resultive" and "concessive") between L1 Korean writers and native English writers with 10 English abstracts of doctoral dissertations in sociology field. Results exhibited that *therefore* was preferred the most in resultative category by Korean writers, which was also always located at the initial position of the sentence. In the case of concessive adverbials, Korean EFL learners did not have as various usage pattern as native speakers, and *however* was the most favored.

Different subcategories of linking devices tend to be selected as the subject by other research based on the argumentative essays by Korean college students, such as contrastive conjunctions (e.g., Park 2013a) and conjunctive adjuncts (e.g., Yoon and Yoo 2011). Park (2013a) investigated L1 Korean college EFL students' use of contrastive conjunctions in the argumentative essays and obtained the results that *but* and *however* were two most frequently occurring forms in sentence-initial position in non-native groups, *yet* hardly used, *in contrast*, *on the contrary*, and *on the other hand* frequently misused. Different from many previous studies, Yoon and Yoo (2011) examined grammatical errors of conjunctive adjuncts that occurred in Korean college freshman students' essays. The errors found could be subsumed into frequent use of sentence-initial coordinators, more occurrences of coordinators in sentence fragments than run-on sentences, and unnecessary use or omission of punctuation marks.

One point that is worth necessitating further scrutinization, according to Appel and Szeib (2018), is the lack of comparability in terms of the writing materials between the experiment group and the control group. For example, Milton and Tsang (1993) extracted the data from a wide array of English academic writings in the Brown and LOB subcorpora of ICLE in comparison, whereas it also suggested that the marked differences in the overuse of connectors in students' writings were likely due to the factors such as genre since these corpora were both compiled by general English. Additionally, many previous studies about linking adverbials in EFL learners' MA graduation dissertations (Chen 2006) and doctoral dissertations (Eun 2016, Lei 2012) represented to be not accurately comparable corpora since many factors such as the length of writing materials, writing complexity,

composition time, and experimental conditions, were not entirely guaranteed and possibly resulted in extraneous production during the comparison process. The analogous problem was also found in the analysis of argumentative writings by college students, such as Ha (2016) which collected 105 Korean students' essays from in-class writings and compared them to 175 native essays from LOCNESS. Another factor which some previous studies failed to adhere to is the topic of writing materials. In Yoon (2006), 39 English essays were composed by Korean students based on a variety of solemn topics (e.g., death penalty, abortion, and making English an official language), which were rather different in comparison to the published academic writings by native writers with topics of humanities, social sciences, natural sciences, and technology.

It also needs to be ameliorated from the standing point of experiment subjects in terms of the numbers of participants, participants' background information and their L2 proficiency. For example, a total of 23 final papers contributed by 10 MA TESOL students in Chen (2006), 20 doctoral dissertations in Lei (2012), and 10 English abstracts of doctoral dissertations in Eun (2016) possibly could not arrive to the criteria to demonstrate the reliability of findings. Due to the corpora of small sample sizes, the findings might be not veracious enough to represent the production propensity of the larger EFL learner groups. Likewise, factors such as language proficiency were not well under control primarily in some studies (e.g., Altenberg and Tapper 1998) since the target language proficiency and the writing conditions differ widely in ICLE. Most studies on Chinese and Korean writers (e.g., Ha 2016, Lee 2004, Yeung 2009) did not also strictly control or distinguish participants' English proficiency level and background information in the native/non-native contrast, and therefore it would become more opaque to confirm the factors that contributed to the production tendency. Appel and Szeib (2018) pointed out the significance to make a distinction between L1-idiosyncratic and common features of EFL academic writing for better understanding how the issues vary under native language backgrounds. They compared the distribution of linking adverbials in the argumentative essays by Arabic, Chinese, and French college students. However, they did not control over the target language ability of the participants, and indeed, a more strictly controlled and closely comparable corpora can be realized if the participants have more common background information, such as the EFL students from China and Korea.

Choi and Lee (2008) conducted a survey to gather information on English language education in 16 Asian countries and revealed that China and Korea have the most correspondences in terms of English education context, such as the starting grade of learning English. Accordingly, whether there are idiosyncratic phenomena or overlapping factors, or how to employ better instructional methodologies also have pedagogical implicature that EFL teachers in China and Korea should deliberate on. In addition, according to EF English Proficiency Index (2021), it provides a fact that compared to European countries such as Netherlands which shows very high proficiency level (663 scores), almost all of Asian countries generally have lower English proficiency level (e.g., South Korea 529, China 513, Japan 468, Indonesia 466, Thailand 419). Thus, if linking adverbials investigated in this study are improperly used even in students with high English proficiency level, this will then represent an indispensable aspect that contributes to the universal weaker performance of Asian EFL/ESL learners. Given the restrictions of previous studies on linking adverbials in L2 English academic writing, as well as the significance to investigate the usage pattern by Chinese and Korean EFL learners, this study addresses the following research questions:

1. What are the features of linking adverbials used by non-native advanced EFL learners in terms of frequency and taxonomy?
2. How does the distribution pattern of linking adverbials idiosyncratic or common between Chinese and Korean EFL learners?

3. What are the possible rationales that account for the production tendencies by Chinese and Korean EFL learners?

2. Method

2.1 Corpora

By controlling extraneous variables such as writing conditions and essay type, this study predominantly adopted a between-group design with the data extracted from the International Corpus Network of Asian Learners of English (ICNALE) (Ishikawa 2011) and 96 extra assignments from Chinese undergraduates to balance the total number of essays amidst the three groups. In the interest of making the corpus data as homogeneous as possible, ICNALE strictly controls the conditions for its spoken and written texts. In the section of argumentative writings, responses of students were restricted to two composition questions/topics: (1) whether it is important for college learners to have a part-time job and (2) whether smoking should be completely banned at all restaurants in the country. The additionally collected data in the present study were composed by Chinese college students studying in China under the similar process of data collection and examination to that of ICNALE. A total of 48 Chinese college students of non-English major were involved in the experiment which was conducted online due to the COVID-19 Pandemic. Based on their scores of College English Test - Band 6 (CET-6), as well as on the standard L2 vocabulary size test (VST) assessed before the experiment, the participants were accordingly classified into B2+ (vantage or higher) band based on the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR): A2 (waystage), B1_1 (lower), B1_2 (upper), and B2+ (vantage or higher). Then they were divided into four groups, and groups were gathered in order online to complete the composition task on a weekly basis. At the beginning of the experiment, the basic attributes, motivation in L2 learning, and L2 learning experiences were investigated via Excel questionnaire sheet (cf. Ishikawa 2013). They then were given the same instructions (also cf. Ishikawa 2013) and directed to write two essays of 200 to 300 words according to the topics within 40~80 minutes using MS Word software. In order to set language proficiency as a controlled variable in both Chinese and Korean learners as mentioned previously, the writing essays by Korean EFL learners who had achieved advanced B2+ English level were selected.

2.2 Data Analysis Procedure

A number of terms have been used to refer to linking devices in previous research (e.g., logical connectors, connective adjuncts, connective adverbs). However, Liu (2008) claims that, as it relates to lexical items functioning purely as semantic markers of discourse cohesion, the term linking adverbials refer to the cohesive devices that provide cohesion by illustrating a semantic relationship at or above the sentence level, separated from other devices with intrinsic syntactic features (e.g., subordinators and coordinators). Thus, the current study followed Liu (2008) to cover a range of single and multiword linking adverbials and mainly investigated the cohesive devices that “provide only semantic connections” (Liu 2008: 492). The list of linking adverbials by Liu (2008) was compiled in reference to Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman (1999) and Quirk et al. (1985) with slight modification to realize clearer and more comprehensive demonstration. The taxonomy includes: (1) Additive: emphatic, appositional/reformulation, similarity comparative (e.g., *furthermore*, *besides*) (2) Adversative: proper adversative/concessive, contrastive, correction, dismissal (e.g., *however*, *nevertheless*) (3) Causal: general causal,

conditional causal (e.g., *therefore*, *thus*) (4) Sequential: enumerative/listing, simultaneous, summative, transitional to another topic, etc. (e.g., *firstly*, *then*). Both sets of data from non-native writers and native writers were extracted from unmerged packages of ICNALE Written Essays 2.3, and each linking adverbial item was queried by Antconc 3.5.8 (Anthony 2019) and WordSmith Tools (Scott 2012). They were further confirmed via a careful manual reading of all essays also with the help of another Korean assistant researcher. The issues that arose during the extraction process between us were addressed by four sessions of discussion within a month, and our interrater agreement was greater than 90% in every discussion. Since the writers were also found to make frequent use of other linking adverbials that serve the functional role in sentences, they were adopted into different categories in this study, including causal *in this way* and sequential *at last*.

As for statistical analysis, although it is practicable to calculate the ratio by using either the word-based or the sentence-based approaches as mentioned in the previous studies, the sentence-based method has a drawback per se as it “puts a particular spin on the results” (Chen 2006: 123), if there is a significant difference between the average sentence length of the groups. In this study, due to the fact that the general sentence length of Korean and Chinese students is investigated to be shorter than the native writers as in Table 1, there also exist the texts with more sentences but an appropriate number of linking adverbials compared with the native writers’ texts of similar total characters. If those texts are calculated with a sentence-based method, the erroneous underuse of linking adverbials which is seemingly accurate will lead to a fallacious result of this study. Thus, since the average passage characters in the three corpora range around 224 words, the present research adopted a word-based approach to analyze the usage of linking adverbials. The raw frequency (RF) of linking adverbials was converted to the adjusted frequency per 1,000,000 words (FPMW). The frequencies of linking adverbials in the corpora were also calculated by chi-square test carried out in the Chi-square and Log-likelihood Calculator, a free online statistical tool developed by Liang (nd), to estimate the significant differences in terms of the overall frequencies of four taxonomies, as well as the individual statistical items. Table 1 exhibits the overall feature of the three groups, L1 English writer (L1E), Chinese writer of L2 English (CL2E), and Korean writer of L2 English (KL2E).

Table 1. Fundamental Statistics of the Three Corpora

Corpus	L1E	CL2E	KL2E
number of texts	200	124	152
mean words	223	212	236
word tokens	44,747	26,375	35,888
number of sentences	1,808	1,645	2,288
number of essays	200	124	152
mean sentence length	24.75	15.78	15.68
lexical density	48.82%	51.02%	52.26%

3. Results and Analysis

3.1 General Production, Frequency, and Distribution

Table 2 summarizes the overall frequency and percentages of linking adverbials used by the native writers and non-native EFL learners. A total number of 362, 368 and 709 linking adverbials are classified into four different main categories respectively with the chi-square test result that demonstrate the significant differences between the corpora (L1E vs. CL2E and L1E vs. KL2E) under each category.

Table 2. Overall Frequency of Linking Adverbials

Corpus	Additive	Adversative	Causal	Sequential	Total
L1E	105 (29.01%)	88 (24.31%)	61 (16.85%)	108 (29.83%)	362 (100%)
CL2E	129***(+) (35.05%)	82***(+) (22.28%)	55*(+) (14.95%)	102***(+) (27.72%)	368***(+) (100%)
KL2E	175***(+) (24.68%)	102**(+) (25.67%)	75*(+) (19.75%)	212***(+) (29.90%)	709***(+) (100%)

Note. *** “statistically significant ($p < .001$)”, ** “($p < .01$)”, * “($p < .05$)”; (+) “overuse”, (-) “underuse” (frequency per 1,000,000 words)

From Table 2, it indicates that the native writers use the similar proportions of adversative linking adverbials (29.01%) to that of the sequential ones (29.83%). Chinese EFL learners make more frequent use of the additive category than the sequential one, while Korean EFL learners show most usage percentage in the sequential category, which accounts for 29.90%, higher than the additive group.

The most infrequently used semantic category in both groups of Chinese and Korean students is the causal linking adverbials occurring as slight overuse. It shows that broadly speaking, both Chinese and Korean learners tend to overuse linking adverbials in comparison to native speakers. Although four categories all demonstrate significant overuse of linking adverbials, the most difference between native and Chinese writers can be found in additive ones ($\chi^2 = 31.99$, $p < .001$) followed by sequential linking items ($\chi^2 = 11.42$, $p < .001$), and that between native and Korean writers lies in sequential ($\chi^2 = 60.62$, $p < .001$) and additive ($\chi^2 = 36.10$, $p < .001$) categories. This result is not consistent with the previous findings obtained such as Lei (2012) that sequential linking adverbials are most infrequently used by Chinese writers and Ha (2016) that the additive category is particularly noticeable in the Korean students’ overuse. It also reveals that the tendency of overusing linking adverbials by advanced Korean EFL learners is higher than Chinese EFL learners.

After the investigation of overall frequency and percentages of the linking adverbials used by native writers and non-native writers in each category, the top 10 most frequently occurring linking adverbials in each corpus were extracted, with common and different usage patterns demonstrated in the argumentative writings of the three corpora.

Table 3. Top 10 Most Frequently Used Linking Adverbials

L1E		CL2E		KL2E	
LA	FREQ	LA	FREQ	LA	FREQ
also	1006(12.50%)	first(ly)	1934(13.90%)	however	2703(13.68%)
however	916(11.39%)	however	1479(10.63%)	second(ly)	1728(8.74%)
therefore	648(8.06%)	so	1251(8.99%)	but	1477(7.48%)
finally	514(6.39%)	second(ly)	986(7.08%)	therefore	1449(7.33%)
for example	469(5.83%)	what’s more	645(4.63%)	so	1393(7.05%)
but	402(5.00%)	first of all	645(4.63%)	first(ly)	1365(6.91%)
so	358(4.44%)	besides	607(4.36%)	for example	1226(6.21%)
furthermore	223(2.78%)	that is	531(3.81%)	also	920(4.65%)
in conclusion	201(2.50%)	last but not least	531(3.81%)	first of all	752(3.81%)
in addition (to)	179(2.22%)	of course	455(3.27%)	in addition (to)	669(3.39%)
total	4916(61.11%)	total	9064(65.11%)	total	13682(69.25%)

As shown in Table 3, despite the fact that the top ten most often occurring linking adverbials demonstrate a lot of overlap between native and non-native groups, the percentages of linking adverbials used in each corpus represented by these items varies considerably. It also exhibits that the top 10 linking adverbials used by the Korean students with advanced English level account for the highest percentages among the three corpora and are almost 2.8 times larger than that of the FPMW found in native writers' group. If we scrutinize the individual proportion distributions, the most favored linking item by Chinese learners is sequential *first(ly)* and by Korean learners is adversative *however*. This may be affected by L1 transfer and other factors under the education contexts which will be discussed in detail in Section 4. *However* is also preferred by native speakers but not as much as *also*, which is not used frequently by both Chinese and Korean students.

3.2 Representative Usage Pattern of Linking Adverbials

With the chi-square test to investigate the specific production tendencies related to Chinese or Korean group, representative individual examples of inappropriate usage (overuse, underuse and misuse) were extracted and listed with the detailed FPMW distribution in Table 4 as below. It suggests that Chinese learners generally have a tendency of overusing and underusing individual linking adverbials in comparison to native speakers, and the overuse of linking devices in Korean students' argumentative writings is a prevalent production pattern.

Table 4. Representative Usage Pattern of Linking Adverbials across Corpora

LA	Categories	L1E	CL2E	KL2E
also	additive	1006	531*(-)	920
besides	additive	45	607***(+)	139
furthermore	additive	223	38**(-)	111
moreover	additive	0	152*(+)	418***(+)
of course	additive	0	455***(+)	474***(+)
what's more	additive	67	645***(+)	0
for example	additive	469	455	1226***(+)
that is	additive	67	531***(+)	139
however	adversative	916	1479*(+)	2703***(+)
but	adversative	402	152	1477***(+)
on the other hand	adversative	341	156	139
so	causative	358	1251***(+)	1393***(+)
therefore	causative	648	379	1449***(+)
in this way	causative	45	76	28
as a result	causative	380	227	279
because	causative	22	76	84
thus	sequential	67	417***(+)	279*(+)
first/firstly	sequential	380	1934***(+)	1365***(+)
first of all	sequential	67	645***(+)	752***(+)
second/secondly	sequential	291	986***(+)	1728***(+)
third/thirdly	sequential	112	455***(+)	418*(+)
next	sequential	447	0***(-)	84***(-)
last but not least	sequential	0	531***(+)	0
at the same time	sequential	0	417***(+)	28

3.2.1 Idiosyncratic Distribution in CL2E's Group

The linking adverbials *besides*, *what's more*, and *last but not least* with usually negative value committed to “informality” were found to be overly used and misused in Chinese learners' group, which confirms the findings of Leedham and Cai (2013). *What's more* is described as uncommon in an academic context (Lee and Chen 2009). *Last but not least* is a 4-gram adverbial “used to indicate a concluding point in an argument” (Leedham and Cai 2013: 379), and it is unusual in native writers' argumentative writing (Paquot 2010).

- (1) **What's more**, students can get greater social skills than those who never experience social life. (c61-1)
- (2) **Last but not least**, people do not need to prohibit the smoking in all of the restaurants because they can build some special smoking rooms. (c82-2)
- (3) People who smoke **besides** will bring troubles to other clients when they are having meals in the same restaurant. (c94-2)
- (4) **In this way**, people will try their best to realize the dream, make the most of their lives and have positive attitude towards everything. (c27-1)
- (5) All in all, smoking should be prohibited entirely in all restaurants across the country. **Only in this way** can people in the community live a healthy and harmonious life. (c55-2)

Besides is reported to be frequently used in colloquial English speech in preference to formal writing (e.g., Carter and McCarthy 2006, Chen 2006), which is too heavily depended on by Chinese writers. In contrast, it is somewhat surprising to recognize that the additive linking adverbial *also* is underused by Chinese students with high English proficiency level. All three items as in Example (1)~(3) are frequently used in a sentence-initial position, while there is one case in which *besides* was inappropriately placed after the subject with a relative clause. As Lee and Chen (2009) puts, *besides* is usually made use of to demonstrate that the ensuing point is a subsidiary detail instead of a major addition to an argument, and thus Example (3) is also not well structured. Another misused occurrence in Example (4), *in this way*, is likewise marked in the academic writing of this study. This linking device may function to introduce a result in general, but it does not appear with any cases in native writers' corpus. Instead, it is overused by Chinese students with the inversion as in (5) to add emphasis to the effect of banning smoking.

- (6) **At last**, they will have to an aim to fight for and realize the value of life. They can develop some other talents in other areas. (c11-1)
- (7) **Finally**, students to engage in part time work in college are finding ways to expand their horizons and expand their experience in college. (n05-1)

The CL2E writers' use of *at last* found as in Example (6), which has been never studied in the previous studies, is a common phenomenon under the English Language Teaching (ELT) of China which should not be underestimated. As for the selection of sequential linking adverbial, we can see from Table 3 that *finally* is most preferred by native writers, as illustrated in Example (7). *Finally* and *lastly* can be used without relying on whether a long time delay needs to be implied when the last claim is posted, but the felicitous use of *at last* is under this constraint. *At last* suggests that the event in question has been desired for a long time which mainly appears in the narratives, while it was misused as a major addition to an argument of the advantages to do a part-time job.

- (8) You can find a part-time job such as working in a restaurant or a shop first. They will give you some official training, **that is**, you will be more experienced by doing the part-time job. (c13-1)
- (9) In conclusion, I strongly agree with the idea, **that is**, smoking should be banned at the restaurants. (c104-2)

Similarly, the additive adverbial *that is* or *that is to say* was reported in Lei (2012) to be overused by the Chinese student writers but not emphasized with scrutinization. *That is* or *that is to say* functions “to explain a previous stated term/idea by restating it with simpler or more detailed words or renaming it but not necessarily more concise” (Yin 2014: 100). It is used to add more clarifying information for the previous sentence which may have a misleading meaning. However, “they will give you some official training” in Example (8) does not have a parallel but a progressive relation with the following “you will be more experienced”. One similar problem between Example (8) and (9) is the punctuation error of comma that appears before the linking adverbial, which could have been replaced by a semicolon (or a period).

3.2.2 Idiosyncratic Distribution in KL2E’s Group

According to Biber et al. (1999), the cohesive devices *therefore* and *however* are the most common single linking adverbials in academic prose. Although there appears to be less consensus in the Chinese students’ writing of this study, *therefore* and *however* were confirmed as the overused and misused linking adverbials in Korean learner group, as illustrated in (9) and (10).

- (10) I felt I was smoking as the smell was very severe. **Therefore**, I just finished my dinner as soon as possible even though the meal was with my friend who I had not seen for a long time. (k143-2)
- (11) Although a part time job give some money, studying hard has much more advantages. **Therefore** I disagree that a part time job is important for college students. (n56-1)

The occurrence of *therefore* is used to introduce an outcome in logic (Yin 2014: 92); that is to say, it introduces logical consequences that are inevitable. However, Example (10) simply demonstrates a result without suggesting anything concerning its inevitability - “smelling the smoke” does not definitely connote a logical consequence of “finishing the dinner as soon as possible”. Instead, *as a result* could have been used since it is especially common in process descriptions of narratives. Example (11) extracted from native writers’ data would be appropriate since the clause after *therefore* is an idea which is a logical consequence rather than the real-world events.

- (12) Doing part time job is essential for the students especially college students. **But** it costs a lot to go to the university. Most college students lack both time and money in Korea. (k10-1)
- (13) College students who get a allowance lavish their money on everything since they don’t make money. **But**, college students who have a part time job know the value of money and use money frugally. (k24-1)
- (14) The experience students can get by part time job is not important as students can go through this experience when they get a real job after graduation; **however**, the experience regarding meaningful activities never will not be back once this period is over. (k67-1)

The linking adverbial *but* functions to make the readers to recognize a semantic contrast between the two statements (Rieber 1997). Most occurrences of *but* have appeared to conform to this semantic feature, but this study identified some exceptions, as in Example (12). The argument before *but* is to posit the importance of doing a part time job, but the argument after it says going to the university is costly, which should have been constructed with a causal device instead of the contrastive one. Example (13) is noticeable with a wrongly signed comma following *but*. As Yoon and Yoo (2011) point out, this may be due to the fact that the students do not understand the grammatical differences between *but* and *however*. In other words, it may be a punctuation error of analogy by which the writers may have deduced that a comma that appears after *however* is likewise necessary after *but*.

According to Wallwork (2013: 109), “*however* can be used to add an additional observation or piece of information” and “*nevertheless* makes a stronger back-reference to what was said earlier, rather than focusing on giving new information”. We can see *nevertheless*, although only occurring at the beginning of the sentence, is more formal and emphatic than *however*. Thus, the arguments in Example (14) should have been linked with a contrastive *nevertheless* since the writers highlighted the period for accumulating the experience of doing a part time job. The examples also emphasize the significance of recognizing different contrastive degrees between the linking adverbials rather than simple synonymous substitution.

3.2.3 Universal Usage Tendencies

The usage of *moreover* mainly occurs in arguments where several premises are applied to revolve around a center conclusion (Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman 1999), whereas the Korean learners in Ha’s (2016) experiment “often used it to reformulate or add a point, rather than to add a final powerful claim to convince the reader of a particular issue” (Ha 2016: 1097). This phenomenon was also found in cases of Chinese learners even with high proficiency level as in Example (15). *Moreover* in Example (16) inappropriately takes the following argument as an exemplification instead of introducing an equal or greater value of another claim.

- (15) In my opinion, smoking in the restaurant is a harmful behavior not only to the smokers themselves but also to others who are also present. **Moreover**, smoking can cause trouble to others because of the polluted air. (c91-2)
- (16) ... The most serious problem is that smoking causes a lot of unhealthiness even to those who do not smoke at all. **Moreover**, since children do not have strong immune system, this harmfulness would be more problematic to them. (k89-2)

The widely dispersed linking adverbial *on the other hand* was detected in the Chinese corpus which confirms the results of Leedham and Cai (2013), as well as in the Korean group. Examples include:

- (17) Carrying out part time job, you stand on yourself own legs and be formed sense of economy, be aware of value of money. **On the other hand**, because you who do excessively many jobs might pay no attention to study, learning time relatively is decreased. (k13-1)
- (18) Above all, I think people should not smoke at the table in the restaurant. **On the other hand**, they have to think about other people because they are in public place. (c110-2)

On the other hand usually presents a tradeoff, namely a second consideration that needs to balance the first.

Korean students sometimes appear to use it to “compare or contrast two clearly oppositional items, ideas, or scenarios, or to present advantages versus disadvantages of an entity or issue in question” (Yoon 2019, p. 285), as in Example (17) that points out the disadvantages of doing excessive part-time jobs. However, the linking device employed by Chinese students is to add another idea or explanation to provide more suggestions for the smokers in Example (18). Although Leedham and Cai (2013: 379) illustrated that “*on the other hand* may be frequently used as it is regarded as equivalent to a Mandarin expression literally meaning *one question, two sides* ([yi ge wen ti de liang ge fang mian]; cf. two sides of the same coin)”, it can be probably attributed to the negative L1 transfer of Mandarin *lingwai* “in addition”.

- (19) ... If we participate more in the part-time job, we will learn new skills from it and have more experience of working. Third, **of course**, we will be given the chance to earn some money and meet new friends. (c53-1)
- (20) Some people can argue that right of smokers should be protected. However, rights of other people are also important. **Of course**, for the smokers, facilities such as smoking room are needed. (k80-2)

Another occurrence of frequently misused linking adverbial in both corpora is *of course*, which was employed in the third claim in Example (19) and in the suggestions to balance the smokers and nonsmokers’ contradiction in Example (20). This is probably because the writers did not intend to confuse the readers as though the statements were some new shocking interesting facts that need other justifications. The argument or suggestion, however, is not a take-for-granted fact and still needs to be fully justified.

The combination of redundant successive linking adverbials is likewise a common phenomenon detected in the two non-native groups which supports the findings of previous studies (e.g., Lei 2012, Ro and Na 2012), as illustrated in the following examples.

- (21) **Likewise**, some of them feel relaxed when they smoke. **So** we don’t have any right for them not to smoke. **So** it should be legal to smoke anywhere. (k133-2)
- (22) **Moreover**, we know some smokers are even addicted to smoking. **So** they always cannot resist taking cigarettes with them. **And** they smoke whenever they want in the restaurant. **But** it sometimes does affect the non-smokers’ mood and appetite. **In this way**, there should be some other places for smokers to smoke. (c43-2)

This can be accounted as the surface logicity as suggested by Chen (2006), but it may also be due to the fact that the writers mainly focused on the semantic logic but neglected the different intimacy between sentences. Some linking adverbials are not necessary for the sentences with strong intimacy. The second sentence in Example (21) is a fact to introduce the inappropriateness to control others’ behavior which has more intimate sequential relation to the following clause; that is to say, the parallel usage of the successive *so* weakened the difference of intimacy between the sentences, a point that the students may have ignored. As for the Chinese students, in Example (22), five linking adverbials were used in the paragraph of five sentences. If we scrutinize the linking relations between them, it is evident to find that *so* could have been omitted since the independent clause following it appears to be a result that can be semantically affiliated to the previous sentence without any emphasis. Similarly, *and*-clause could have been transformed into a dependent clause and conflated into the previous one.

In comparison with the native writers, one of the dominant findings that non-native students overuse

sequential linking adverbials such as *first(ly)*, *second(ly)*, and *third(ly)*. The examples below are indicative of native students' attempt to ensure the linking devices to tie the arguments in a subtle but not deliberate way.

- (23) I agree with this statement for various reasons. **The first reason** is because studying costs a lot of money and ... Doing a part time job also shows our parents that we are mature and responsible. **Also**, when we enter college, we are no longer children and so we should take it upon ourselves ... I believe that when we reach college age ... **Finally**, doing a part time job helps us realize what job we might want to do when we graduate. Those experiences could also show us ... (n23-1)
- (24) ... I think college student should have a part time job so that **they can learn to be real adults and stop depending on their parents so much**. I have been working part time... did a part time job and do something for themselves for once. **Next**, a part time job is a great way to get used to working in the real world. Some college students just have work study jobs, ... (n92-1)
- (25) **Above all**, they can make some money to support their life ... **Furthermore**, part-time jobs can give them experience which is necessary in the job hunting ... **Besides**, they can meet more people and expand the social network. For example, ... **Finally**, they can learn what the market needs at present. Through part time job, they can run a business by themselves... (c41-1)
- (26) **First**, students earn money by having part time jobs. Some students receive money from their parents per month ... **Second**, students have social experience by having part time jobs. Before entering university, ... **Lastly**, students have achievement by having part time jobs. For example, ... For these reasons, it is important for students to have part time jobs. (k27-1)

Another common writings phenomenon that can be easily detected, as in Example (25), is that Chinese students show a disposition that almost every major claim appears with a linking adverbial positioned at the beginning of the sentence, although the arrangement of linking adverbials is occasionally not as inflexible as the template *first(ly)*, *second(ly)*, *last(ly)/finally*. However, the group of native writers, as mentioned previously, shows more examples like Example (23) and Example (24) in which linking adverbials are occasionally used for the major claims in a more natural and flexible way without any fixed template. This can be also confirmed when compared with the Korean students' essays as in Example (26), which indicates that there is no rigid arrangement or fixed order of the sequential linking adverbials in the use pattern by native writers, but a more random combination or a more subtle organization. It is a common phenomenon in both China and Korea where the teaching materials and the EFL teachers always provide the EFL learners with lists of linking adverbials or some inflexible templates without explanation with authentic examples. Thus, non-native students may have taken it for granted that the linking adverbials could be substituted by the synonymous counterparts and the template is a popular tool for organizing the argumentative writing.

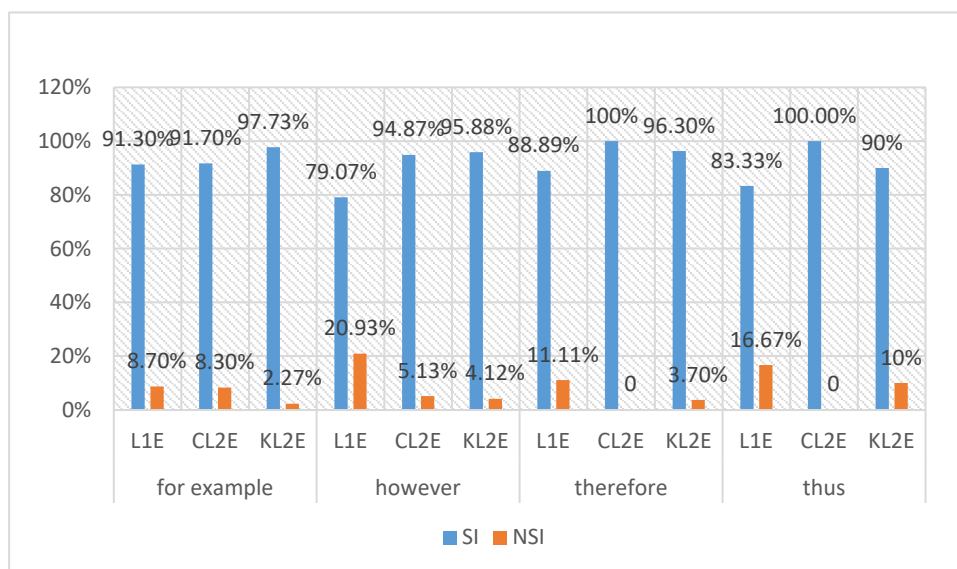


Figure 1. Sentence Position of Four Representative Linking Adverbials

Previous studies have identified overall percentages of use of linking adverbials in three sentence positions (initial, medial, final), and the initial position is the most common for linking devices within different academic register. Thus, initial position could be deemed as the unmarked position for linking adverbials (Biber et al. 1999). This research employs four frequently occurring linking adverbials, *for example*, *however*, *therefore* (Park 2013b) in addition to *thus*, so as to determine the non-native writers’ preference for sentence-initial (SI) or non-sentence-initial (NSI) positions in more detail as in Figure 1. We can see non-native writers used the 4 typical linking adverbials in the sentence-initial position all above 90%. The tendency result of how Korean students of advanced English level use *for example*, *however*, *therefore* is consistent with Park (2013b), and Chinese students most overuse *therefore* and *thus* in the sentence-initial position. This may be due to EFL learners’ L1 transfer since the corresponding items in Chinese and Korean mainly occur at the beginning of sentences, and their rare exposure to the diverse usage of linking adverbials in multiple sentential positions.

4. Discussion

4.1 Potential Rationales for the Production Tendencies of CL2E’s Group

The results of the present study exhibit that the usage pattern of different categories is distributed differently (the sequential items are mostly used) from the previous studies (e.g., Lei 2012) possibly because of the control of experiment conditions. As Yoon (2019) mentioned, another factor that might have contributed to the high frequency of *on the other hand* is the short sentence length. This is also compatible to the overuse of all linking adverbials in both Chinese and Korean groups in this study.

The linking adverbial *however* was the only example of overuse that was identified in the L1 Chinese corpus in Appel and Szeib (2018), but it was not detected to be overwhelmingly used in the present research. Other individual devices of the usually negative value attached to informality, such as *what’s more*, *besides*, mentioned in Leedham and Cai (2013) were further confirmed as shown in the result of overuse. The overuse or underuse of

the linking adverbials such as *moreover*, *furthermore*, etc., may be due to the Chinese equivalent *lingwai*, with a tendency of the lack of mapping of one-to-many translation from Chinese to English. Although the linking adverbial *last but not least* was investigated in Leedham and Cai (2013) as a special linking device that only occurs in Chinese students' corpus, others such as *only in this way ... can we ...* and *at last*, together with the misuse of punctuation, are rarely involved in the previous research. The inappropriate usage pattern of linking adverbials mentioned above can be further explained under the ELT context of China.

According to Gil (2016), as announced by recent official directives, English continues to be viewed as a necessary component of China's reform and opening up. Eclecticism, instead of a single approach, typifies English language teaching in China with a wide range of methods (Yao 1993). Although Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) has been emphasized and discussed in the academics of China, other teaching methodologies and strategies, such as task-based language teaching (TBLT), have also grown in popularity, in which language learning and teaching are accomplished via a series of pedagogic tasks (Brown 2007b, Nunan 1999).

As for the perspective of resources and qualified teachers, despite of the high requirements on learning English, the lack of qualified teachers has been a continually tricky issue since "many talented students seek employment in areas more lucrative than teaching" (Gil 2016: 77). This leads to the recruitment of unqualified teachers, some of which teaching College English even simply have an undergraduate degree in English language and literature and have never received any authorized training (Zhu 2003). Indeed, even though the teachers are experienced professionals, many of them have restricted English proficiency, threatening the smooth acquisition of English language for Chinese EFL learners. This primarily influential factor can be also viewed as a major impediment to the appropriate usage of linking adverbials by the learners of advanced English level in China. Although linking adverbials seemingly appear to be a diminutive section in English education, the significance behind it represents the semantic logicity at or above sentence level, which gives a trial to EFL teachers not only in respect of simple comprehension of individual linking adverbials, but the comprehensive understanding of the underlying logicity behind the local context. Since Chinese learners with high English proficiency could have more motivations to perform well than learners of medium or low English levels, higher command of English language and teaching skills are required to EFL teachers to promptly and accurately help students realize their deficiency.

Despite the the innovations of curriculum and teaching methodologies, the characteristics of the IR lesson and the classroom practices appear to be consistently traditional with a teaching sequence called the Five Steps (Zheng and Adamson 2003): revision, presentation, controlled practice, production and consolidation. The overuse and underuse of certain linking adverbials detected in this study can be attributed to what extent of the details of instruction are on the distinctive linking adverbials that the teachers impart. They may take it for granted that linking adverbials function as a minuscule part in English writing education and disregard its significance to the cohesion and coherence of discourse.

In China, EFL teachers tend to distribute a long list of linking adverbials at most with illustration of the functions (e.g., contrastive, additive, etc.). No extra examples or notes are demonstrated under each items as to the usage or formality, neglecting to draw the learners' attention to the different functions when they are positioned in the context. This may have led the writers to use the linking adverbials in a constantly repetitive way, or use the ones that never occur in native writings. Apart from the pure listing of linking adverbials, some individual problems also need to require specific analysis. The lack of proper and prompt instruction on positive transfer may lead to the overuse of certain linking adverbials and the blind transitions from Chinese to English, such as the translation of *on the other hand*. Moreover, the successive usage of linking adverbials and misuse of

comma can be respectively accounted for by the lack of instruction on the different intimacy between the sentences as well as the negligence of grammatical knowledge (e.g., punctuation errors). Similarly, although there was only one case of misuse in terms of the position of *besides*, the misused syntactic position of some other individual linking adverbials is another significant point that requires our attention since there are seldom reminding from EFL teachers given to the learners in terms of the usage of linking adverbials in diverse sentence positions, such as *thus* and *therefore*.

The overwhelming usage of writing templates is a continuously existing problem that results from the negative washback of English language examinations in China. Students who intend to go to university after senior secondary school must take the National College Entrance Examination (NCEE), which contains the part of Matriculation English Test. In addition, college students of English majors must pass the Test for English Majors 8 (TEM-8) and those of non-English majors must pass the College English Test 4 (CET-4) in order to receive the degrees and help secure employment in jobs requiring English. Students can also take the College English Test 6 (CET-6) to strengthen their prospects of landing a well-paid job in a bigger Chinese corporation, joint venture, foreign-owned enterprise, or government department, and some colleges demand this test for admission to a master's degree program (Feng 2009, Yao 1993). Thus, it is apparent that these examinations primarily contribute to the formation of English writing by Chinese college students. The corresponding reference books and model texts serve as writing guidance and facilitate students' learning of linking adverbials, which are also integrated into teaching materials in the classroom teaching. The inappropriate guidance of template, overwhelming emphasis on some individual linking adverbials such as *only in this way*, *besides*, etc., as well as rarely different sentence positions in the materials may again explicate the unbalanced distribution by Chinese writers.

4.2 Potential Rationales for the Production Tendencies of KL2E's Group

As shown in the results of Section 3, L1 Korean EFL writers mostly overuse sequential linking adverbials followed by additive category, which supports the findings of the students with high English proficiency from Park (2013b) who categorized the learners into NNS-LP (Low Proficiency), NNS-IP (Intermediate Proficiency), and NNS-HP (High Proficiency). The difference is that adversative linking adverbials are more overwhelmingly overused than causal devices. Most studies about the usage of linking adverbials by Korean learners identified *however* is highly frequent in their academic English writing (e.g., Yoon 2006, Suh and Choe 2015, Eun 2016). Since it is a frequently occurring linking adverbial in Korean such as *keureona*, *keureociman*, *keureonde*, *haciman* (Lee 2013), equating Korean into English could possibly have contributed to the overuse of adversative linking adverbials in the KL2E's corpus.

Since Korean learners with high proficiency level may have more motivations to perform well in English as Chinese learners, other factors under the education context need to be addressed more. One distinctive characteristic of South Korea's English education policies is the numerous innovations. As demonstrated in English education policies from the phrase of sixth National Educational Curriculum (NEC), fluency became more important than accuracy, comprehension became more critical than production, and textbooks embraced a functional syllabus rather than a grammatical syllabus. It was also at this period that the South Korean government began looking for native English instructors from other countries by launching the "English program in Korea" (EPIK). In the seventh NEC until present, a grammatical-functional syllabus was developed in textbooks, recognizing the grammatical knowledge's recently recovered position in language acquisition.

As Chung and Choi (2016: 285) put it, "the teacher education and recruitment system are features that have

consistently been reinforced by South Korea's English education policy". Effective teaching education and stringent teacher recruitment process are frequently mentioned as a potential contributing to South Korea's worldwide educational competitiveness, as measured by PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment). As a result, South Korea benefits from the resources and qualified teachers in contrast with China in terms of the preparatory phrase, which may contribute to the overall English level higher than most Asian countries. However, the students' expectation in the secondary school to focus on the Korean Scholastic Ability Test (KSAT) or the English language examinations required in the period of university sometimes compel EFL teachers to teach in a conventional manner. English instruction in schools concentrates on the receptive skills of listening and reading, as well as grammatical knowledge, rather than the productive abilities of speaking and writing. It means ELT related policies took principles of ELT pedagogy such as CLT and TBLT and presented them as the effective methods to ELT without actually assessing their suitability with the context, which can be considered as linguistic imperialism in South Korea (Chung and Choi 2016). If we focus on the aspect of the education of linking adverbials, the common intersection of China and South Korea still lies in the teaching methodologies and practice materials.

The phenomenon of distribution of a list of linking adverbials can be likewise found in English education of Korea. According to Ha (2016: 1099), "many EFL teachers often provide their students with a semantically sorted long list of linking adverbials without detailed information on their individual usage". Students' lack of the necessary grammatical knowledge of linking adverbials to use them correctly in academic writing leads to the punctuation errors. In contrast with Chinese students who use the devices in the inappropriate registers, Korean students tend to neglect the gradable degree of the contrastive function and sequential function of certain individual linking adverbials, such as *however* and *therefore*. This eventually leads them to misusing the linking adverbials interchangeably. The shortage of teaching on the intimacy between the sentences and the excessive emphasis on the writing template could also provide explanations for the successive use and monotonous use of linking adverbials in KL2E's group.

Analogous to the statements in Leedham and Cai (2013), it is usually the reading comprehension practices in the reference books and model texts that provides the Korean learners with chances to recognize the semantic knowledge of linking adverbials (Yoon and Yoon, 2011). For example, the reference books for TOEIC tests which is one of the essential requirements for securing and maintaining jobs for Korean college students can negatively affect their learning and performance of the composition of academic writing. TOEIC tests consist of the Listening and Reading (TOEIC LR) and Speaking and Writing (TOEIC SW). A small comparison was implemented between the reference books from two different publishing houses with examples shown in the following Table 5. The former has a total number of 6 practice tests, while there are totally 10 practice tests in the latter case. It is apparent that the former has a unbalanced distribution of linking adverbials with *however* and *in addition* overwhelmingly more than other items in frequency. The distribution appears more balanced in the latter but *however* is likewise the most frequently occurring linking adverbial. Therefore, it implies that a good selection of reference books can be also considered as a factor that contributes to the acquisition and usage of linking adverbials.

Table 5. Linking Adverbials in Reference Books

Reference book for TOEIC tests	Total tests	Linking adverbials	Types
<i>Mock Tests for High Score 950 (Season 2)</i> , 2019, Gilbut Press	6	after all, at last, for instance, in addition (17), then (3), accordingly, likewise, additionally, however (18), instead (3), similarly (4), otherwise, regardless, finally (3), again, in the meantime (2), on the other hand (2), first, therefore (2), typically, nevertheless, as a result (2), in fact, as a matter of fact, for instance	25
<i>Practice Tests for TOEIC 2 (1000 Reading)</i> , 2019, YBM press	10	similarly, therefore, however (14), accordingly, meanwhile, in the mean time (2), also, for instance (3), in other words, in that case (2), in addition (5), after all (2), therefore (3), again, consequently, moreover, in fact (3), in summary, on the other hand, as a matter of fact, additionally (4), finally, on the contrary, as a result (2), on the other hand, furthermore, nonetheless, likewise, in a word, first of all, but (2), and (2), plus (2)	33

Note. The number in the bracket denotes frequency which is more than 1.

5. Conclusion

The present study has investigated how L2 writers of Asian backgrounds (China and Korea) of advanced English level and native writers employ linking adverbials in their academic English essays by a more strictly controlled and closely comparable corpora. It provides insights into whether there are idiosyncratic phenomena or overlapping factors under the education contexts and how to employ the better instructional methodologies that EFL teachers in China and Korea should deliberate on. The findings reveal the significant different usage distribution of linking adverbials to denote cohesiveness in the L2 English argumentative essays by college writers from China and Korea. The pattern of overuse of overall linking adverbials and functional categories by both groups, as well as the high dependence on specific cohesion markers emphasize some necessary remedies for English education policies and instructional methodologies.

As mentioned above, one characteristic of South Korea's English education policies is frequent and numerous innovations, which can be referred to and further altered to be compatible to the English education system of China. In China, the shortage of recruiting or cultivating more qualified EFL teachers, as well as high-quality teacher training, are major issues. Two major features that may be critical to the success of policy implementation are the personnel resources, and the recruitment and training of EFL teachers. The former is particularly acute in impoverished or rural regions. One point that China may make reference to Korea is the two schemes operated by Korean government, English Programme in Korea (EPIK) for graduates and TaLK for undergraduates, of which the latter is particularly concerned with assigning instructors to schools in rural areas. The latter problem to be solved is more significant since "such perceived shortfalls in their proficiencies need to be taken seriously because they could influence various aspects of their English teaching, including the teachers' confidence, pedagogical skills, the content of their teaching, student motivation, and ultimately, students' success in acquiring English" (Butler 2004: 268). A possible solution would be to raise the restrictions on the English proficiency level of candidates. For example, the conditions for recruitment of EFL teachers of secondary school in China partly include the academic certificate and TEM 4 or TEM8 certificate. However, even TEM8 can be obtained only if the individual test takers score 60 or above (the level of performance is reported including *excellent* "score 80 or above", *good* "score between 70 and 79" and *pass* "score between 60 and 69"). Thus, higher restrictions should be implemented on the scores or performance, such as *excellent* "score 80 or above" rather than simply on the acquisition of certificates.

In case of both Korea and China, the common concern appears to be the need for enhanced teaching methods and materials. Especially for teachers, as change agents, they should exercise their own agency based on their local skill and knowledge to resist any imperialism of education policy (Chung and Choi 2016). Both Chinese and Korean writers of L2 English may require further guidance to help them become more conscious of their heavy reliance on some linking devices. They may learn from specialized teaching on how to utilize a larger variety of linking adverbials to highlight alternate cohesive relationships. It may be also beneficial that teachers use other linking strategies to help students recognize the intimacy between the sentences, and become aware of the implied cohesion. For example, in addition to the practices of “filling the blank with linking adverbials”, more alternative practices can be integrated into the instruction process, such as “choosing the redundant ones in the passage”. As for the usage of reference books, EFL teachers should recommend a list of optimal selections to students through a process of strict investigation and repeated siftings.

Yasuda (2011) insisted that the development of learners’ writing proficiency should include their genre awareness. This is also applicable to Chinese learners of advanced English level in the present study. As Appel and Szeib (2018) suggested, Data Driven Learning, such as the Michigan Corpus of Upper Level Student Papers (MICUSP), may assist non-native authors in reducing their reliance on the linking adverbial and realizing the difference between the native and non-native writers. They also suggested teachers should “assign specific linking adverbials that often appear with high frequency in student writing as search terms for out of class analysis and ask students to submit brief reports on their findings” (Appel and Szeib 2018: 124). This method can be used to help improve the writers’ management of excessive usage caused by L1 transfer or misperception, and enhance non-native writers’ recognition of more formal usage of linking adverbials in terms of genre and register. Another direct and practicable way is that teachers need to raise the learners’ awareness to the sentence length in their compositions. This may efficiently help to dispel a frequent misconception concerning the overuse of linking adverbials since they are automatically forced by the sentence length and limited total characters, and subsequently have no choice but to decrease the number of linking adverbials.

Finally, a shift from teacher-centered approaches to learner-centered approaches could be also utilized. Due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, online courses and tools are examples of learning settings that provide learners with relevant, communicative environments and varied learning possibilities. Because of the collaborative and constructive character of online activities, these communicative contexts can help students acquire semantic and grammatical knowledge, such as weekly online discussion and learning activities in the Google Classroom platform. Well-designed online platforms may assist students in improving their language skills, promoting independence in learning, and inspiring involvement in learning (Manurung et al. 2020). For example, the practices of choosing the redundant linking adverbials in the passage can be uploaded to the Google Classroom main platform and then everyone online engages in a constructive debate about them. As they continuously share the expertise, recognize the overused linking adverbials in each essay, and analyse the possible improvements, students could gradually realize how the unnecessary linking adverbials backfire when there are already evident relations between arguments.

Several limitations need to be pointed out for future research. First, although the data collected from ICNALE are controlled in an optimal way, it should be noted the demographic characteristics of data from native writers are composed of the subjects from USA (57% in Written Essays Module), UK (14%), Australia (8.5%), Canada (6.5%), and others (6.5%), future research then should continue to strive for constructing more closely comparable corpora and making proper contrasts to provide definite conclusions. Second, while further relation between the reference books and the use of linking adverbials was detected in terms of *however*, future research should investigate the influence in a large quantity to verify their relation to other unbalanced usage patterns and

broader functional categories. To realize this goal, it may be possible to distribute questionnaires that can be used to identify the specific reference books that students have used for English language examinations. Also, more perspectives to textbooks or other teaching materials can be further considered in the future research in terms of their unique characteristics and influence on problems such as formality and genre. Finally, interviews can be also implemented with EFL instructors and EFL students to help collect their attitudes towards or views on the impacts of English education policy on English acquisition and the usage of linking adverbials.

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Examples in: English

Applicable Languages: English

Applicable Level: Tertiary