

Lexical Expressions of Compare and Contrast in Applied Linguistics Research Articles

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Abstract

This study examines lexical expressions of compare and contrast used in applied linguistics research articles. The previous study in the field randomly selected English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners to investigate their problems of using lexical expressions of compare and contrast in their writing. The results revealed that approximately 80 percent of the learners did not have sufficient knowledge to write compare and contrast paragraphs and essays accurately. This study filled the gap by examining lexical expressions of compare and contrast in English applied linguistics articles. Due to the reliability, Swan's (2016) principles were employed to select approximately 120,000 words comprising 41 samples of lexical expressions of compare and contrast. The samples were gathered from the Journal of English for Specific Purposes and Journal of English for Academic Purposes because of their high quality and their indexation in the SCOPUS database.

The results showed that 90.24 percent of the lexical expression was the lexical expression of contrast which was used to express the contrastive messages. The words such as even if, however, and although were used in high frequency. This is to indicate the gaps in the previous research studies. It is expected that the results of this study will be useful for EFL learners in terms of applying the lexical expression of compare and contrast in writing more effectively.

Keywords: Lexical Expressions of Compare, Lexical Expressions of Contrast, Applied Linguistics Articles

คำที่ใช้แสดงความเหมือนและความแตกต่างในบทความวิจัย ภาษาศาสตร์ประยุกต์

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บทคัดย่อ

งานวิจัยนี้มุ่งศึกษาคำที่ใช้แสดงความเหมือนและความแตกต่างในบทความวิจัยภาษาศาสตร์ประยุกต์ ในขณะที่การศึกษาเกี่ยวกับภาษาอังกฤษเป็นภาษาต่างประเทศเพื่อศึกษาปัญหาเกี่ยวกับการเขียนเชิงเปรียบเทียบความเหมือนและความต่าง นักศึกษาผู้เรียนภาษาอังกฤษเป็นภาษาต่างประเทศร้อยละ 80 มีความรู้ไม่เพียงพอในการใช้คำศัพท์เพื่อเขียนเชิงเปรียบเทียบความเหมือนและความต่าง งานวิจัยครั้งนี้จึงเลือกศึกษาคำที่ใช้แสดงความเหมือนและความแตกต่างในบทความภาษาศาสตร์ประยุกต์ ชุดข้อมูลจำนวนประมาณ 120,000 คำ เก็บรวบรวมจากบทความวิจัยภาษาศาสตร์ประยุกต์ที่อยู่ในฐานข้อมูล Scopus นั่นคือ Journal of English for Academic Purposes และ Journal of English for Specific Purposes ชุดข้อมูลนี้ประกอบด้วย 41 ตัวอย่าง คำที่ใช้แสดงความเหมือนและความแตกต่างยึดตามแบบของ Swan เพื่อให้การวิเคราะห์ข้อมูลเป็นไปอย่างถูกต้องและแม่นยำ

ผลการศึกษาแสดงให้เห็นว่าร้อยละ 90.24 เป็นคำที่ถูกใช้ในการแสดงความแตกต่าง ซึ่งมีการใช้แบบเฉพาะเจาะจงซึ่งคำแสดงความขัดแย้ง เช่น Even If, However และ Although จะปรากฏในความถี่ที่สูงและใช้เพื่อแบ่งบอกถึงช่องทางในงานวิจัยก่อนหน้านี้ ผู้วิจัยหวังเป็นอย่างยิ่งว่างานวิจัยครั้งนี้จะเป็นประโยชน์ต่อผู้เรียนภาษาอังกฤษเป็นภาษาต่างประเทศในการใช้คำเพื่อการเขียนเปรียบเทียบความเหมือนและความต่างได้อย่างมีประสิทธิภาพ

คำสำคัญ: คำที่ใช้แสดงความเหมือน, คำที่ใช้แสดงความแตกต่าง, บทความภาษาศาสตร์ประยุกต์

Background of Study

Since studying English is presently necessary for everyone, English language learners need to know various genres of writing, such as descriptive writing and narrative writing. However, the genre of compare and contrast is considered useful for English language learners to know how to use certain lexical expressions.

(1)

- (a) The left hemisphere functions for logical thinking, reading, and arithmetical number, *whereas* the right hemisphere functions with creativity.
- (b) The left hemisphere functions for logical thinking, reading and arithmetical numbers, *while* the right hemisphere functions with creativity.

As in (1), the lexical expressions, such as *whereas* and *while* are semantically identical. So, the problem is that EFL and ESL learners seem to use them interchangeably. However, it is interesting to know when and why one variant is actually used over the other.

To help English language learners learn the genres of compare and contrast, they are advised to learn from authentic texts (Ciornei, &Dina, 2015, pp. 274-279). Therefore, this study tended to look through English applied linguistics journals under the SCOPUS Q1 database with the expectation that studying the way how to write compare and contrast in applied linguistics journals would be useful for EFL learners.

Objective of the Study

To examine the lexical expressions of compare and contrast used in applied linguistics articles

Literature Review

Previous studies focused on the problem of writing English in the genre of compare and contrast. One of the distinctive research papers was studied by Sadehgj, Biniaz, &Soleimani (2016). The result of the study showed that the mean score of comparison increased from 5.11 on the pre-test to 8.44 on the post-test. Similarly, the mean score of contrast increased from 5.55 to 8.88 on the post-test

Another distinctive study was conducted by Toba, Noor, &Sanu (2019) who studied Indonesian EFL students' writing with the genre of compare and contrast via mixed methods quantitatively and qualitatively. Toba, Noor, &Sanu (2019) noted that Indonesian major problems in writing compare and contrast paragraphs were vocabulary and grammar at 86.55 and 74.40 percent, respectively.

Similar to the study of Toba, Noor, &Sanu (2019), Hammann, &Steves (2003) applied instructional approaches to master students' writing of compare and contrast essays. The participants in this study were 63 ESL students. The task designed to make an experiment in this study was both a pre-test and a post-test. With the post-test, they were asked to write a compare and contrast composition. The experiment group was taught several skills, such as structure skills and combined skills before they were asked to perform their post-test. The post-test showed that English language learners' scores increased significantly after they were taught these two skills. The results also showed that the students perceived the grammatical structure, or the arrangement of words in the genre of compare and contrast were necessary.

Methodology

Sources of Data: Applied Linguistic Articles

The data were gathered from the *Journal of English for Specific Purposes* and the *Journal of English for Academic Purposes*. The articles selected for this study were guaranteed that they passed the process of double-blind review for their reliability. To ensure practicality and avoid bias that may occur, various topics relating to the study of applied linguistics, such as grammar and vocabulary, were selected to study.

Table 1 Journal of English for Specific Purposes

Authors and Years	Topics
Adel (2023)	Adopting a 'move' rather than a 'marker' approach to metadiscourse: A taxonomy for spoken student presentations
Drayton, &Coxhead (2023)	The development, evaluation, and application of an aviation radiotelephony specialized technical vocabulary list
Jurkovič (2022)	Authentic routine ship-shore communication in the Northern Adriatic Sea area – A corpus analysis of discourse features
Liardet, &McGrath (2023)	Grammatical metaphor across disciplines: Variation, frequency, and dispersion.
Parkinson, Watterson &Whitter (2022)	Constructing arguments in engineering student case Studies
Sawaki (2023)	High use of direct questions and a relative absence of promotional intention in Japanese peer-reviewed research article introductions compared to their English counterparts

Table 2 Journal of English for Academic Purposes

Authors & Years	Topics
Asadnia, &Atai (2022)	Examining the effectiveness of an online EAP course in developing researchers' virtual conference presentation skills
Bastola, &Ho (2022)	'Don't become so much high sounding': Power dynamics in master's thesis viva
Chien, &Li (2022)	Problems of writing the doctoral dissertation discussion section: Advisors' and their doctoral students' perspectives from natural and applied sciences and social sciences
Hyland, &Jieng (2022)	Metadiscourse choices in EAP: An intra-journal study of JEAP
Rajendram, &Shi (2022).	Supporting international graduate students' academic language and literacies development through online and hybrid communities of practice
Aksit, &Aksit (2022)	Establishing an institutional EAP teacher development scheme based on BALEAP's competency framework: A critical review of the competencies

Data Collection

The total number of 120,000 words included 60,000 words from each journal. The number of samples in this study was 41 tokens, referring to sentences.
(2)

In the examined corpus, a relevant part of the message is repeated by the sender 36 times but 'I say again' is only used once by the shore services in (SS): "I say again, contact the pilot." ***On the other hand, [CONTRAST]*** if both 'I say again' and 'repeat' are considered as valid prowords to indicate the repetition of one's transmission, then it can be claimed that both communication agents always clearly indicate repetition, as in (SS): "I repeat my message. On arrival, please drop anchor on anchorage area Alpha one."

(Jurkovič, 2022, p.56).

Based on the sentence above that contains the lexical item of compare and contrast, it was collected at the same time as the previous and next sentences. The context of adjacent sentences helps support the analysis in this study. (Radford, 2009).

Data Analysis

Articles from the Journal of Applied Linguistics were taken to extract the structures of compare and contrast based on Swan's (2016) principles. In Swan's (2016) grammar references, there were suggestions on how to use the structures of comparison and contrast.

Table 3 Lexical Items for Contrast (Swan, 2016, p.346)

<i>Although</i>	<i>In contrast</i>	<i>Otherwise</i>
<i>But</i>	<i>Inspire of</i>	<i>Still</i>
<i>Conversely</i>	<i>Nevertheless</i>	<i>Though</i>
<i>Despite of</i>	<i>Nonetheless</i>	<i>Unlike</i>
<i>Even though</i>	<i>Notwithstanding</i>	<i>Whereas</i>
<i>Even if</i>	<i>On the contrary</i>	<i>While or Whilst</i>
<i>However,</i>	<i>On the other hand</i>	<i>Yet</i>

Table 3 illustrates contrast keywords that were used to detect the structures of contrast in British and American sports news articles.

Apart from the study of lexical items that were used for the structure of contrast in British and American sports news articles, the lexical items in the structure of comparison were also examined in this study, as shown in Table 3.

Table 4 Lexical Items for Compare (Swan, 2016, p.347)

<i>Also</i>	<i>In concordance with</i>	<i>Similarly</i>
<i>At the same time</i>	<i>In the same way</i>	<i>Similar to</i>
<i>Compared to</i>	<i>Like</i>	<i>The same as</i>
<i>Comply with</i>	<i>Likewise</i>	<i>Too</i>
<i>In comparison with/to</i>	<i>Resemble</i>	

Table 4 illustrates keywords of comparison which were used to detect the structure of comparison in British and American sports news articles.

The Results and Discussion

As the number of 120,000 words for each dataset, there were a total of 41 tokens of lexical expression of compare and contrast in the Journal of English Applied Linguistics, as presented in Table 5.

Table 5 Lexical Expressions for Compare and Contrast in Applied Linguistics Articles

Categories	Frequency	Percentage
Compare	4	9.76
Contrast	37	90.24
Total	41	100

Table 5 shows the results of lexical expressions between compare and contrast in the Journals of English Applied Linguistics. The results show that the lexical items for contrast appear with a higher frequency by 90.24 percent. On the other hand, the percentage of similarities appears by 9.76 percent. The frequency and percentage of lexical expressions of contrast were given in Table 6.

Table 6 Frequency and Percentage of Lexical Expressions of Contrast

Lexical Items of Contrast	Frequency	Percentage (%)
<i>however</i>	14	37.83
<i>although</i>	5	13.51
<i>despite</i>	4	10.81
<i>in contrast</i>	4	10.81
<i>on the other hand</i>	4	10.81
<i>even if</i>	2	5.41
<i>whereas</i>	2	5.41
<i>but</i>	1	2.7
<i>be contrasted to</i>	1	2.7
Total	37	100

In Table 6, the lexical item of contrast that is commonly used in applied linguistic articles is the word *however*, which is at 60.33 percent and 16.66 percent, respectively. The higher frequency of the use of the word is due to its multi-functions, as discussed subsequently. On the other hand, the frequency and percentage of lexical expressions of comparison were different as shown in Table 7.

Table 7 Frequency and Percentage of Lexical Expressions of Compare

Lexical Expressions of Compare	Frequency	Percentage
<i>be similar to</i>	6	54.54
<i>compared to</i>	2	18.18
<i>be similar that</i>	1	9.09
<i>the same as</i>	1	9.09
<i>like</i>	1	9.09
Total	11	100

Table 7 shows the lexical expressions of similarities used in the applied linguistic text. The most commonly found lexical expression of similarities is the expression *be similar to*, which is used at 54.54 percent in the text.

The use of lexical expressions of contrast in the applied linguistic article was based on various purposes. As mentioned by Swan (2016) and Kirkpatrick & Klein (2009), one of the functions of contrast lexical expression is used for making an argument to counteract previous ideas, as in (3).

(3)

(a) *Even if* there is agreement that metadiscourse may vary in size and scope, it is clear that, in practice, some studies predominantly work with smaller units than others.

(b) *However*, it also needs to be noted that it is not necessary to define metadiscourse as non-propositional and not all researchers of metadiscourse do so. (Ädel, 2023, p.7)

(Ädel, 2023, p.6)

In (3a), the author tried to make an argument with previous studies. Therefore, the lexical items of contrast can be used to counteract previous proposed ideas. The lexical expression *like even if* and *however* are frequently used for this semantic interpretation. The lexical expression *however* was found to be used more than others. This could be because it can express various semantic denotations, such as the gap of the study and the contradictory results with the previous study.

Another semantic interpretation of lexical expressions of contrast was to make a differentiation between two entities, referring to someone or something.

(4)

(a) *In contrast*, American students tended to write in general-to-specific configurations.

(Sawaki, 2023, p.20)

(b) More frequent moves are described as obligatory, *whereas* less frequent moves are described as optional

(Parkinson, Watterson, &Whitter, 2022, p.15)

To differentiate object A from object B, the lexical expressions of contrast that are popular for this use are *in contrast* and *whereas*.

As indicated by Wee, &Banister (2016), the literature review section requires the writer to provide the gaps of the study. The result outstandingly showed that the lexical expression of contrast *however* was commonly used to suggest the gap of the study as in (5).

(5)

(a) By doing so, presenters communicate scientific knowledge, safeguard mutual interpretations, attract audiences' attention, and strengthen interpersonal relations. *However*, researchers lack adequate language knowledge to deliver effective English presentations.

(Asadnia, &Atai, 2022, p.2)

(b) Genres produced include book chapters, journal articles and conference proceedings; *however*, none of the five informants produced a journal article in Swedish

(Hyland, &Jieng, 2022, p.10)

In (5), the use of *however* both in the beginning and at the middle position indicates what is insufficient in the previous studies.

In terms of similarities, when two entities held something in common, the expression *be similar to* and *be similar in that* were found commonly used.

(6)

(a) Rhetorically, Yeung's introduction is similar to Nathan's obligatory Orientation move; her topical sections *are similar to* Nathan's obligatory Analytical move in that each of her topical sections uses a different topic or perspective as the focus for analysis.

(Parkinson, Watterson, &Whitter, 2022, p.16)

(b) The overall macro-rhetorical structures between the English and the Japanese RAIs *were similar in that* both are characterized by extensive non-epistemically-oriented background/topic generalizations.

(Sawaki, 2023, p.28)

In (6a), the similarities between Yeng's introduction and Nathan's obligatory Orientation are mentioned. In (6b), the similarities between English and Japanese RAIs are addressed.

Conclusion

This current study semantically examined the lexical expression of compare and contrast in the Journal of *English for Specific Purposes* and *Journal of English for Academic Purposes* as indexed in the Q1 SCOPUS.

Although Swan (2016) noted that there are up to 40 lexical items of comparison and contrast in grammar references, it is quite limited when it comes to actual use. It seems that those 40 items of lexical expression of contrast can be used interchangeably, they are used specifically in English applied research articles. When the authors want to make an argument, the lexical items of *even if*, *however*, *although*, and *despite* are practiced. In contrast, when the author would like to differentiate between two or more entities, the lexical items *in contrast* and *whereas* are preferred. The results in this study are limited to only applied linguistics research. Generalizing the result of this study to other types of texts, such as English novels, may not be applicable to the optimal levels. For future study, it is recommended that selected other genres such as business news articles would be contributed something new to the field.

Originality and body of Knowledge

As mentioned earlier, this study will be useful for learners of English as a Foreign Language (EFL). English language learners could employ authentic text as in English newspapers to improve their English ability. While learners' lexical items in the authentic text allow English language learners to learn form, meaning, and use at the same time. Learning to acquire language used in this way can help learners to avoid boredom in English language classrooms.

As mentioned in the literature review by Toba, Noor, & Sanu (2019), students seem to know the form of lexical expression of compare and contrast via grammatical references (Swan, 2016), but they lack of adequate notion regarding the actual use. To reflect this thought, when English language learners were asked whether they know the lexical expression *even if* or not, the answer is yes. However, they cannot

explain that it is used for argument. Therefore, this study allows them to gain insight into the use of this lexical item via empirical evidence.

Suggestion for Future Study

Since this current study contributes to the view of lexical expressions of compare and contrast in applied linguistics research articles, the future study in the field is recommended to use other materials, such as news articles, novels and academic textbooks. Not only do the use of these texts could contribute something new to the field, but the researchers could investigate the similarities and differences of lexical items of compare and contrast between different text varieties and be able to use them effectively and appropriately. Another recommendation is concerned with a number of lexical items as used in this current study. Since the dataset in this study is quite limited, a larger number of dataset or a corpus-based study can gain more insightful information and more examples for learners of English as a Foreign Language to study in the future. The last suggestion is regarded to the varieties of the English language. Investigating the use of lexical items of compare and contrast in different language varieties, such as British English and American English could lead one to the new results to the field.

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