

Lexical Ties in Applied Linguistics Research Articles among Iranian and Non-Iranian Authors: A Corpus-based Study

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ABSTRACT

One of the difficult parts of utilizing a foreign language is creating a united text which contains various kinds of lexical ties. This problem even becomes critical when creating the language in a written form. The current study tried to compare the frequency of the utilization of lexical ties in applied linguistics research articles written by Iranian and Non-Iranian authors. To fulfill, two sets of corpora (Iranian and Non-Iranian) were selected each containing 30 articles. In this study, the utilization of two types of lexical ties, i.e. reiteration and collocation were investigated in the abstracts, introduction and discussion and conclusion of Iranian and Non-Iranian applied linguistics research articles. Having collected the data from the two mentioned corpora, the researchers estimated the frequency of lexical ties. Then, Linear Regression was run to compare the utilization of lexical ties in the two sets of corpora. The findings revealed that there was not a statistically significant difference in the utilization of lexical ties in abstracts, introduction and discussion and conclusion sections of applied linguistics research articles. The results of this study have several implications for language teachers and EFL students.

Keywords: Lexical ties, Reiteration, Collocation, Iranian applied linguistics research articles, Non-Iranian applied linguistics research articles.

INTRODUCTION

Familiarizing learners with the act of writing is one of the most challenging aspects of literacy education. As a matter of fact, writing is a laborious activity because learners need to disclose their mental meanings and ideas into language. A related definition has been suggested by Schunk (2004) in which writing was described as translating ideas into linguistic symbols in print. It is supposed that while learners are entangled in the writing process, they need to have access to their fundamental knowledge (Rostami & Gholami, 2016). The knowledge that learners employ during writing is of four kinds, i.e. topical, audiences, genres, and language (Byrnes, 1996 cited in Schunk, 2004). Writer's perception of all these knowledge kinds is necessary since a lack of perception may make the task of writing even more frustrating and complicated. In other words, writers become confused when they need to link these fundamental pieces of knowledge and change them into linguistic symbols.

Irvin (2010) recognizes some misconceptions that writers may face while producing written texts. The first misconception is that writers may wrongly wait for a completely ordered and step-by step framework of writing. In contrast Irvin (2010) supposes a recursive and non-linear format of writing process. The second problem is that most writers attempt to write while they have everything in their mind. Irvin (2010) abandons this characteristic of writers and believes that writing should be started even with shortages in generating a complete text. The third misconception belongs to writers' idea that they should write nicely based on very early drafts. The next is that writers are mostly disappointed when they are faced with their restricted capacity for writing. Another major misconception which was proposed by Irvin (2010) is that of writers' misbelief about the fact that good grammar is good writing.

Accordingly, the task of writing is not an easy process; rather writers need to concentrate entirely to the task of writing in order to produce valuable texts. There are a number of key

factors in writing which can enhance writers' ability to manage their writing. Attending to main constituents of written texts is essential in every writing genre. According to Raimes (1983), content, organization, originality, style, fluency, accuracy and using proper rhetorical forms of discourse are some of the basic factors of writing which need particular attention.

All writing follows specific conventions. Cookbooks, letters, novels, lists, and dictionaries all depend on a specific kind of language and presentation to be comprehensible and easy to use (Graham, 2004). It is a significant issue and it has been of focus cause those who are learning a second language require being able to write in specific ways. Apparently, there are various purposes for writing and it is the feature which highlights the specificity of the writing method. In other words, Reppen (1995) proposed that learners require being able to write in various ways for various purposes. Academic writing is one of the writing ways.

As proposed by Hyland (2008), one type of knowledge required for writing named genre, represents how writers generally apply language in order to reply to recurring situations. One such situation is considered with generating texts for academic purposes. Generally, ESL academic writing courses follows one of the following orientations relying on which factor of composing is taken as the basis for organizing the course of instruction (Shih, 1986). The orientations are rhetorical patterns (form), function, process, or content. Whatever the orientation is, writers require having an intuitive and comprehensive perception of the steps required for writing articles as academic texts. Socolofsky (2004) condenses a well-accepted format for writing articles, notably engineering and science articles. The format contains eight distinct sections.

Abstract: The abstract is a single paragraph that precedes the article and summarizes the content.

Introduction: as stated by Socolofsky (2004), introduction includes at least three paragraphs, the first of which includes broad and detailed information about the problem that the paper refers. The next two paragraphs are involved with literature review and outline of the paper.

Methods: method is the third part in academic articles which describes all the techniques utilized to obtain the results.

Results: Socolofsky (2004) states that the results of the article should display the raw data or the results after applying the techniques outlined in the methods part.

Discussion: The discussion part is involved with explaining the results in order to reach its main conclusions.

Summary and conclusions: As the name imply, this part condenses and concludes what has by then been studied. This parts acts in the same way as abstract except for the fact that summary and conclusions involve more particular and detailed information.

Acknowledgement: The acknowledgment represents the sources of funding that contributed to the article.

References: It is stated that all reference works cited in the article must be present in a list of references that pursue the formatting requirements of the journal in which the article is to be published (Socolofsky, 2004).

Discourse which has attracted the researchers' attention in the domain of communication dates back to the 1960s when researchers were seek to extract new discipline from linguistics, semiotics, psychology, anthropology and sociology. As maintained by Johnstone (2008), the study of discourse is called discourse analysis and is involved with the study of the relationship between language and the context in which it is applied. Moreover, according to McCarthy (1991) those who are involved in the analysis of discourse study language in use. By language in use, McCarthy (1991) alludes to written texts of all types and spoken data from conversation to highly institutionalized forms of talk. A discourse does not include words which are positioned together randomly and haphazardly. The meaning of discourse is not conveyed by such randomness. Alternatively, writers require a number of linguistic markers to generate relationships among the words and sentences within the texts. According to Halliday and Hasan (1985) such semantic relations reveal the texture of the text and supply the situation for generating a coherent text.

A significant contribution to coherence made from cohesion which alludes to a set of linguistic resources that every language has as part of the textual meta-function to link one part of the text to another (Zoghi & Rashidi, 2013). Moreover, Halliday and Hasan (1985) state that

the term cohesive ties imply a relation. In other words, there is no tie without two members and the members cannot appear in a tie unless there is a relation between them. Additionally, Nunan (1993) regards cohesive ties as text-forming devices which enable the writer or speaker to generate relationships across sentence or utterance boundaries, and which assist to tie the sentences in a text together. As well, Seddigh, Shokrpour, and Kafipour (2010) describe cohesion as a term which alludes to the way we relate or tie together bits of our discourse.

According to Halliday and Hasan (1976) there are five categories of cohesive ties. Five categories include reference, substitution, ellipsis, conjunction and lexical cohesion. It needs to be pointed out that Halliday and Hasan's (1976) categorization of cohesive ties which is an umbrella term for lexical ties has been collapsed and later on in 1985 they introduced repetition, synonym, antonym, hyponymy and meronymy as the factors of lexical ties. This was not an end in the study and categorization of lexical ties since Halliday (1985, cited in Martin 1992) considered repetition and collocation as distinct categories, and grouped together synonymy, antonym, meronymy and hyponymy under a general heading of synonymy. In current study, the researchers considered lexical ties under two general headings: reiteration and collocation. Reiteration includes repetition, synonym, superordinate, and general word. The second type of lexical tie is the collocation and is defined by Richards and Schmidt (1992) as the way in which words are utilized together regularly. Lexical ties are essential factors for any discourse and they are means in order to produce coherent texts.

A number of studies have been carried out concentrating on the concept of coherence and applying cohesive ties since Halliday and Hasan's (1976) introduction of Systemic Functional Linguistics (Mojica, 2006; & Petchprasert, 2013). Hinkel (2001) surveyed matters of cohesion in L2 academic texts. In her study, Hinkel carried out a comparative analysis of frequency of explicit cohesive devices employed in academic texts of English, Japanese, Korean, Indonesian, and Arabic students. Expressly, she concentrated on frequency of applying explicit cohesion devices, such as phrase-level coordinators, sentence transitions, logical semantic conjunctions, demonstrative pronouns, and enumerative and

resultative nouns in academic texts of native speakers and nonnative speakers. These quantitative results pointed out that even Advanced ESL non-native student rely on a limited repertoire of features in constructing unified text. The study demonstrated that speakers of Japanese, Korean, Indonesian, and Arabic employ sentence transitions and demonstrative pronouns at considerably higher frequency while compared with native speakers of English. In fact, in L2 texts, Non-native speakers attempt to construct a unified idea flow within the restrictions of a limited syntactic and lexical range of accessible linguistic means. Furthermore, this study manifests the frequent use of coordinating conjunctions by Indonesian and Arabic speakers (Hinkel, 2001).

Mojica (2006) Used Halliday and Hasan's (1976) theory on repetition as a sub-type of reiteration in generating lexical cohesive ties, and Liu's (2000, cited in Mojica, 2006) categorization of this type of cohesion, namely: repetition, synonyms, antonyms, superordinate/hyponyms, related words, and text-structuring words to study the most preferred kinds of lexical cohesion utilized by ESL learners. She assembled the sample from learners' academic papers. Results displayed that repetition was the most frequently utilized type of lexical cohesion by the students. They also frequently employed words like situational synonyms, situational antonyms, lexical items with superordinate/hyponym relationship, and text-structuring words.

Petchprasert (2013) contrasted the applying cohesive markers utilized in Thai and English written texts of graduate students who were speakers of Thai. In addition, he explained applying cohesive markers found in L1 and L2 essays with direct writing and translation. The quantitative analysis of the cohesive markers displayed that in the English direct writing essays, writers considerably used more personal reference and demonstratives compared to those in translation.

Various studies have also been carried out in an Iranian EFL context (Rostami-Abousaedi, 2010; & Seddig et al, 2010). Rostami-Abousaedi (2010) analyzed the applying cohesive ties in the writing samples of 40 Iranian undergraduates of English. In this study, the researcher recognized that participants frequently used references in their writings. Although, his finding revealed that referential

ties were not efficient in giving coherence to the text. Additionally, his analysis displayed that substitution and ellipsis were the least frequently utilized cohesive ties. Moreover, Seddig et al (2010) tested lexical cohesion in English and Persian abstracts. In their study, they compared and contrasted lexical cohesion in one hundred English and Persian abstracts of Iranian medical students' theses to investigate the textualization in the two languages. According to results the two groups of abstracts were not considerably different. In addition, the results demonstrated that there was a great tendency in using repetition in both languages. Although, concerning texts' density, the analysis denotes that Persian abstracts are denser compared to their corresponding English ones.

Applied linguistics research articles produced by the experts in the field are the result of some attempts on the part of researchers to express their new findings. Academic research writers require being active and wise to employ unifying features to generate grammatical and lexical cohesion in their texts. One of the essential factors in producing applied linguistics research articles is applying lexical ties which have the capability of connecting the parts of a text semantically. This research is of importance to the domain of written skill because it focuses on unifying factors that exist in every coherent text. The concept of cohesive ties and respectively lexical ties is not a new term in the field of linguistics. The concept and its use by second language learners have been of foci to many researchers and have been studied in recent years (Halliday & Hasan, 1976; & Halliday & Hasan, 1985). However, written tasks of English academic writing by native versus non-native authors need to be studied in more detail. The reason lies on the fact that writers with various nationalities might prefer discrete number of lexical ties while writing articles. For this aim, the following research question and hypothesis was posed:

Research Questions

RQ. Does the use of lexical ties vary in applied linguistics research articles written by Iranian versus Non-Iranian authors?

METHOD

Scholars all around the world generally write with a goal to advise their audience regarding an explicit truth or give additional data around an issue. For this situation, they put an attempt to

keep themselves far from misrepresenting the truth. The writers need not to misshape their group of audience's understandings by giving clutter articulations; rather, they have to remember that the audience must be looked with a content which has just been sorted out by the writer. One such organizing factor which offers solidarity to the content is lexical ties.

The Corpus of the Study

The Corpus

The corpus comprised of 60 applied linguistics research articles written by Iranian (N=30) and Non-Iranian (N=30) researchers. The selected research articles were drawn and downloaded from the International journals of applied linguistics indexed in Scopus Database published between 2017-2019. To make the corpus data comparable, all of the chosen articles were matched in length. AntConc and Word List Expert software were utilized for calculating the frequency of lexical ties. These softwares are the advanced letter and word frequency counters. Table 3.1 presents information about the corpora size and sampling.

Table1. Description of Two Corpora

Corpus	Number of articles	Number of words
Non-Iranian authors	30	146880
Iranian authors	30	119940

This study can be classified as a quantitative and a qualitative research in which the researchers applied numbers to evaluate the number of lexical ties in the two corpuses and qualitatively compare applying lexical ties in native and non-native applied linguistics research articles. The published academic articles of most authors, either native or non-native demonstrate a consistency in following particular orders. In reality, most published articles attach to a definite format and pursue the steps and sessions required by the editors of the journals. In this study, the researchers selected for particular parts of the chosen applied linguistics research articles to survey applying lexical ties by the authors. Therefore, to carry out procedure of data collection, the researchers concentrate on those articles which had abstract, introduction, discussion and conclusion.

Abstract: The abstracts of Iranian English articles consisted of approximately 5550 words. A main feature of the abstracts in this group was

their classification into four discrete parts. In reality, those who wanted to submit an article to International journals of applied linguistics were required to separate their abstract into four discrete parts: backgrounds, methods, results and conclusion. Additionally, the abstracts of non-Iranian English applied linguistic articles consisted of about 5798 words.

Introduction: Specifying the introduction part of the 30 articles was also of great significance to the researchers because the corpus of study required the analysis of lexical ties in introduction part of native and non-native applied linguistics research articles. The introduction parts of the articles of the current corpus consisted of a total of 73740 words. That is, the introductions of Iranian corpora consisted of 36109 words and the introductions of non-Iranian applied linguistic corpora consisted of approximately 37631 words.

Discussion and Conclusion: In this study, the researchers considered discussion and conclusion parts as a single part and analyzed them together. Approximately 29940 words constructed the discussion and conclusion parts of Iranian articles. On the contrary, non-Iranian applied linguistics research articles included about 33270 words.

Data Collection Procedure

Two corpora were utilized in this study. One corpus was made up of 30 published applied linguistics research articles written by Non-Iranian authors and the other was a 30 corpus of applied linguistics research articles written by Iranian authors. Non-Iranian applied linguistics articles corpus published between the years 2017 to 2019. They were mainly downloaded from journals like Applied Linguistics (Oxford Academic - Oxford Journals), International Journal of Applied Linguistics (Wiley Online Library), Research in Applied Linguistics. It consists of 146880 words. Iranian applied linguistics research articles corpus published between the years 2017 to 2019. They were mainly from journals like Journal of Research in Applied Linguistics (RALs), published by Shahid Chamran University of Ahvaz (Iran), and Language Teaching Research (SAGE publication). This corpus has 119940 words. A significant point regarding the selected journal is that its official impact factor is more than 2 based on the latest Journal Citation Report from Thomson Reuters.

Data Analysis

The researchers started this study by attending to two key features. The first feature was that half of the articles must be written by native English speakers and the other half must be authored by non-native English speakers. The second main feature was that the opted applied linguistics research articles should have been consisted of three main parts, i.e. abstract, introduction, discussion and conclusion. For this aim 30 Iranian and 30 non-Iranian applied linguistics research articles have been opted that consisted of nearly of 119940 and 146880 words, respectively.

The next step following determining the journals and articles was to evaluate the frequency of occurrence of the lexical ties in the applied linguistics research articles written by Iranian and non-Iranian English authors. The researchers applied the common lexical ties categorization of Firth (1957 & 1968 cited in Martin, 1992), Halliday and Hasan (1976), Halliday (1985, cited in Martin 1992), and Martin (1992) as a criterion for identifying the lexical ties. After determining the distribution of the lexical ties in three parts of the two corpora, the data was compared in the two groups of corpora. It is significant to note that the researchers applied Linear Regression to compare the mean of applying lexical ties in the two sets of corpora. Using Linear Regression, the author compared applying lexical ties in three parts of the articles in the two groups. Moreover, the researchers took advantage of this statistical test to evaluate the degree of importance between the two groups in terms of three parts of the articles.

RESULTS

The main challenge of this part was determining applying lexical ties in applied linguistics research articles written by Iranian and non-Iranian English writers. Apparently, the researchers attempted to evaluate the frequency of various categories of lexical ties manually. In this study, the researchers analyzed applying reiteration and collocation as two general kinds of lexical ties in Iranian and non-Iranian applied linguistics research articles.

Reiteration in Iranian and Non-Iranian Articles

As mentioned before, reiteration can be categorized as repetition, synonym, super ordinate and general word. Table 2 illustrates

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the frequency of the utilization of reiteration in three different sections of the applied linguistics

research articles written by Iranian and non-Iranian English authors.

Table2. Frequency of different reiterations in Iranian and non-Iranian applied linguistics research articles

No	Reiterations as lexical ties	Non-Iranian Articles						Iranian Articles					
		Abstract		Introduction		Discussion and Conclusion		Abstract		Introduction		Discussion and Conclusion	
		F	F per 1,000 words	F	F per 1,000 words	F	F per 1,000 words	F	F per 1,000 words	F	F per 1,000 words	F	F per 1,000 words
1	Repetition	54	9.3	103	2.7	306	9.1	36	6.4	88	2.4	226	7.5
2	Synonym	19	3.2	114	3.02	119	3.5	11	1.9	93	2.5	86	2.8
3	Super ordinate	27	4.6	43	1.1	97	2.9	17	3.06	23	0.6	53	1.7
4	General word	9	1.5	21	.5	81	2.4	8	1.4	36	0.9	67	2.2
	Total reiterations	109	18.7	281	7.4	603	18.1	72	12.9	240	6.6	432	14.4
	Total word	5798		37631		33270		5550		36109		29940	

As the table 2 shows, in both Iranian and Non-Iranian articles, the most frequent reiteration in Abstract, Introduction, and Discussion and Conclusion are repetition, synonym, and repetition, respectively.

Collocation in Iranian and Non-Iranian Articles

The second type of lexical ties was Collocation which was considered in this study. The researchers analyzed collocation in both Iranian and Non-Iranian applied linguistics research articles. Table 3 illustrates the utilization of collocations in both Iranian and Non-Iranian applied linguistics research articles' abstracts, introductions, discussions and conclusions

Table3. Frequency of collocations in Iranian and non-Iranian applied linguistics research article

No	Reiterations as lexical ties	Non-Iranian Articles						Iranian Articles					
		Abstract		Introduction		Discussion and Conclusion		Abstract		Introduction		Discussion and Conclusion	
		F	F per 1,000 words	F	F per 1,000 words	F	F per 1,000 words	F	F per 1,000 words	F	F per 1,000 words	F	F per 1,000 words
1	Collocations	39	6.7	209	5.5	239	7.1	23	4.1	169	4.6	231	7.7
	Total word	5798		37631		33270		5550		36109		29940	

Non-Iranian Articles

Linear Regression was utilized to check the findings table 3 indicates that in Non-Iranian articles, the abstract, introduction, and discussion and conclusion parts include 6.7, 5.5 and 7.1 collocations per 1000 words, respectively. Moreover, in Iranian articles, the three mentioned parts (i.e., abstract, introduction, and discussion and conclusion)

contain 4.1, 4.6 and 7.7 collocations per 1000 words, respectively

Comparing Lexical ties in Iranian and the existence of a significant difference between Iranian and non-Iranian articles' abstract, introduction, discussion and conclusion with regard to the utilization of lexical ties. The outcomes of the test are shown in the following tables.

Table4. Relationship between Iranian/non-Iranian applied linguistics research articles and the use of lexical ties in abstracts

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	36.500	18.205		2.005	.092
	nationality	-9.250	11.514	-.312	-.803	.452

As it is demonstrated in Table 4, the p value for the current study is .452>.005. It shows that authors' nationality (Iranian vs. Non-Iranian) has

no significant relationship with the utilization of two types of lexical ties in abstracts of applied linguistics research articles.

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Table5. Relationship between Iranian/non-Iranian applied linguistics research articles and the use of lexical ties in introduction

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	80.500	45.581		1.766	.128
	nationality	-10.250	28.828	-.144	-.356	.734

Regarding the introduction part, as presented in table 5, the results indicate that the relationship is not significant ($p = .734 > .05$).

Table6. Relationship between Iranian/non-Iranian applied linguistics research articles and the use of lexical ties in discussion and conclusion

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	193.500	104.062		1.859	.112
	nationality	-42.750	65.815	-.256	-.650	.540

Finally, a Linear Regression was run to check the relationship between nationality of authors (Iranian/non-Iranian) and their utilization of lexical ties in discussion and conclusion parts of applied linguistics research articles. As the table 6 shows, $p = .540 > .05$. Indeed, the outcomes of this table indicates that the difference between Iranian and non-Iranian applied linguistics research articles is not significant and the two

sets of corpora are not statistically different in the utilization of lexical ties.

Regarding the use of collocation in the two sets of corpora, a Linear Regression was run. Based on the results presented in table 7, the difference between Iranian and non-Iranian applied linguistics research articles is not significant ($p = .503 > .05$).

Table7.

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	89.267	94.475		.945	.398
	parts	17.829	24.259	.345	.735	.503

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The major aim of the current study was based on applied linguistics research articles written by the experts in the field to represent their new findings. The researchers believe that academic contexts require the writers to attend to linguistic as well as meaning features in the writing texts. The cause is to make such texts more comprehensible and interpretable to the intended audience. One such feature is applying lexical ties to express meaning to the readers coherently. The aim of the current study was to compare applying lexical ties in applied linguistics research articles written by native English authors and non-native English authors (Iranian authors).

For this aim the researchers questioned and compared applying lexical ties in native and non-native applied linguistics research articles. Based on the research question, the researchers analyzed three parts (abstract, introduction, and discussion and conclusion) of the two corpora. As the matter of fact, the main features to be analyzed as lexical ties were reiterations and collocations.

In the case of abstracts, the researcher reported that the two corpora were related regarding to the use of lexical ties. The results were admitted when a Linear Regression has been carried out and has been reported importance of 0.452. As this value displays, the two groups of writers face no varieties in applying lexical ties in abstract of applied linguistics research articles.

In addition, the researchers analyzed the frequency of applying lexical ties in the introduction of applied linguistics research articles. Likewise, the two groups of writers shared commonalities in applying lexical ties in this part. In another words, analysis of Linear Regression represented that there was no considerable variety in applying lexical ties in the English texts produced by Iranian and non-Iranian ($p = .734 > .05$).

The equal conclusions have been reported for discussion and conclusion parts. Owing to the fact that the Linear Regression conclusions demonstrated an importance of .540, the researchers supposed that the frequency of applying lexical ties in both groups of corpora were alike and there was no considerable variety

in applying lexical ties in discussion and conclusion.

This study includes pedagogical implications both for teachers and university students. It is the availability of such implications which motivated the progress of this paper. However, the differences were not considerable, the mean score of lexical ties were lower in non-native group while compared with native English speakers' articles. This point highlights the need for non-native English users to attend to such cohesive markers as lexical ties to express their meanings in a unified and coherent manner. This also requires language teachers' attention to the instruction of lexical ties as significant features of producing coherent texts.

This study is not general enough to answer all questions related applying lexical ties in all kinds of academic articles. Further research is required focusing on discrete kinds of academic articles and applying lexical ties.

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Citation: Mehrdad Sepehri, Mehrnoosh Hajjilili, Samira Akbari, "Lexical Ties in Applied Linguistics Research Articles among Iranian and Non-Iranian Authors: A Comparative Corpus-based Study", *Annals of Language and Literature*, 3(2), 2019, pp. 67-74.

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