

Speech-like Pragmatic Markers in Argumentative Essays Written by Iranian EFL Students and Native English Speaking Students

Faezeh Ziyagham, M.A., English Department, Najafabad Branch, Islamic Azad University,
Najafabad, Iran

Shahla Simin*, Assistant Professor, English Department, Najafabad Branch, Islamic Azad
University, Najafabad, Iran
shahlasimin@yahoo.com

Abstract

In this study, the use of speech-like pragmatic markers in Iranian EFL students' academic writing was investigated. Speech-like pragmatic markers, such as *I think, well, I guess, actually, anyway, anyhow*, etc. are linguistic components that are more specific to conversation than writing, and writers may wrongly include them in their academic writing. To examine the students' use of speech-like pragmatic markers when writing an essay, samples of Iranian students' and English native students' argumentative essays were analyzed using Contrastive Interlanguage Analysis (CIA). Moreover, the overuse or underuse of such items was compared between English native students and Iranian EFL students. Native English data were collected from the Louvain Corpus of Native English Essays (LOCNESS) and non-native English data were gathered from Iranian students' essays during an academic semester from Islamic Azad University of Najafabad, Islamic Azad University of Abadan and Shahid Chamran University of Ahvaz in Iran. Iranian participants were 71 EFL upper-intermediate (based on the Oxford Placement Test) graduate students that were selected randomly from male and female students. A frequency analysis of pragmatic markers indicates significant differences between Iranian students' and English native students' use of speech-like pragmatic markers. Quantitative analyses of the non-native corpus data revealed that students apply these spoken components in their argumentative essays, which may adversely affect their text in terms of a correct style and tone. By investigating the results, the language teachers and materials writers are recommended to recognize the features of Iranian English students' interlanguage and to provide them with planned input about appropriate use of pragmatic markers.

Key words: Pragmatic markers, speech-like pragmatic markers, academic writing, argumentative essay

Introduction

Written and spoken English are considered apart from each other. According to Šimčikaitė (2012), "as scholars like Leech and Svartvik (1994), Biber, Johansson, Leech, Conrad, and Finegan (1999), Pridham (2001), Huddleston and Pullum (2002), Carter and McCarthy (2006) indicate that spoken and written English differ in terms of grammar, vocabulary, formality and spontaneity" (p. 27). In terms of second language writing, especially academic writing, it is a problematic issue for language learners to select suitable pragmatic markers (here after: PMs) in parallel with stylistic tone and register. Although PMs have been focused by many researchers, stylistic properties of PMs need for more focus and attention. Pragmatic markers as components of a discourse constitute the discourse type. Hence, informal or speech-like pragmatic markers used in an academic essay can cause to development of the oral tone of the essay. Common PMs in spoken English which are called speech-like pragmatic markers in this study sometimes are found in academic written texts. One area which revealed to be problematic for students from different mother tongue backgrounds is the use of a stylistically appropriate tone. In particular,

many students use markers which are more usual in speech than in writing, and which consequently give the essay an excessively oral tone. Unfamiliarity with typical English spoken features can be the result of this phenomenon.

This study is carried out to clarify the differences in speech-like pragmatic marker usage by comparing the performances of Iranian EFL students' and native English speaking students' in writing argumentative essays. Specific objectives of this research include finding out the frequency of using speech-like pragmatic markers applied in Iranian EFL students' argumentative essays and then comparing the non-native English data with the native English data including the frequency of speech-like pragmatic markers in writing argumentative essays. Another purpose of the research is to determine the overused and underused speech-like pragmatic markers in each certain corpus.

Pragmatic Markers

It is obvious that the conversation is distinguished from writing. It is important that conversation has overall and detailed specifications that make it different from writing and formal speech. Conversation is generally unplanned. It is produced under cognitive and processing constraints which are reflected in filled and unfilled pauses, repetition, incomplete grammatical structures (Aijmer, 2004). Typical items in 'spoken language' are, for instance, *well, you know, sort of, you see*, etc, and have been called 'pragmatic markers' by (Aijmer, 2004). Schiffrin (1987) describes pragmatic markers to be 'discourse markers' suggesting that their use vary based on different discourse planes. According to (Aijmer, 2002), 'discourse markers' are highly context specific and indexed to attitudes, participants, and text. Therefore, they have discourse functions both on the textual and interpersonal level. Carter and McCarthy (2006) defined pragmatic markers as following:

Pragmatic Markers are a class of the clause and which encode speakers' intentions and interpersonal meanings. Pragmatic markers include discourse markers, which indicate the speaker's intentions with regard to organizing, structuring and monitoring the discourse, stance markers, which indicate the speaker's stance in relation to the message, hedges, which enable the speakers to be less assertive in formulating the message, and interjections, items which indicate affective responses and reactions to the discourse (p. 208).

Andersen (2001) considered that "The term ' pragmatic marker' was introduced to describe a class of short, recurrent linguistic items that generally have little lexical import but serve significant pragmatic functions in conversation" (p. 39).

Schiffrin (1987) stated that they play an important role in understanding discourse and information progression (as cited in Yang, 2011). Aijmer and Simon-Vandenberg indicate that a "Pragmatic marker is preferred to discourse markers when the markers have a pragmatic rather than a discourse-marking function" (2006, p. 9). They dissent that the word 'Pragmatic Marker' (here after: PM) is used more to refer to a wide variety of both interpersonal and textual functions. So, they vary in types and functions. These lexical items help to link segments of the text and make it coherent.

Academic writing

Dulger (2007) declares that writing can be dealt with in four levels where handwriting, spelling and punctuation constitute the first level, sentences, grammar, and word choice the second, paragraphs the third, and the overall organization the last. Written style is considered as planned, complex, well-structured and transactional. It has a denser content, richer vocabulary and grammatical structures and uses punctuation to help readers understand the writer's intention.

An extensive definition of academic writing includes any writing assignment given in an academic setting, including essays, research article, conference paper, academic journals and dissertation. The present study investigates the argumentative essays which this type of essays classified in the academic writing. Šimčikaitė's (2012) idea regarding the academic writing is the following:

Writing is one of the most difficult skills to master that has quite complex structures and is more formal and impersonal in style than everyday language. However, it has been noticed that some of the features of spoken English which contribute to the oral tone of a written work tend to appear in learner academic writing (p. 27).

However, discrimination between speech and writing seems ambiguous, especially for English learners due to the factors such as lack of awareness in regard to use appropriate pragmatic markers and also confusion in choosing these lexical items based on discourse planes. Recent written communication arena includes email and text messaging that the users by means of the pragmatic marker usage manifest the interaction, is closer to speech than traditional forms of written communication. This type of speech-like interaction also has been found in English learners' academic essays writing.

This study applies comparative and corpus-based research to survey the use of spoken pragmatic markers including: *you know, I mean, I think* and some others in Iranian EFL students' argumentative essays and native English speaking students' argumentative essays. Employment of corpus data is a useful method of analysis for learners' writing and speech and can provide possibilities of comparisons between native and non-native speakers.

Research Question

Based on what was mentioned above, the following research question was posed:

Q. Is there any significant difference between upper-intermediate Iranian EFL students and native English speaking students in the use of speech-like pragmatic markers in their argumentative essays?

Literature Review

Granger and Tyson (1996), Altenberg and Tapper (1998), Narita and Sugiura (2006) reported overuse of the term *of course* for French, Swedish and Japanese foreign learners' respectively. The outcomes indicate that these items tend to be overused by learners and that the overuse gives learner writing an overtly oral tone.

Also, Granger and Rayson (1998) have demonstrated that French-speaking learners misapply abundant lexical and linguistic features of speech, such as short Germanic adverbs (*very, only, so, also, etc.*) or first and second person pronouns and considerably underuse numerous characteristics of formal writing, such as a high frequency of nouns and prepositions.

Additional researches, focusing on more detailed items, have exposed the same points. For instance, Lorenz (1999) investigated the noticeable overuse of the conjunction *because* and the adverb *so* in German learners' written products; French, Swedish and Spanish learners' dependence on *I think* to manifest their personal opinion is stated by Granger (1998), Aijmer (2002) and Neff et al. (2007) respectively;

Moreover, Crawford (2005) shows that components such as personal pronouns, contractions and the quantifier or the demonstrative pronoun that are significantly more repeated in dialogue than in text writing, tend to be used more by German, Spanish and Bulgarian learners than by native speakers.

The findings of this study confirmed the results reported by, Granger and Rayson (1998), Granger (1998), Altenberg and Tapper (1998), Aijmer (2002, 2004), Müller (2005), Narita and Sugiura (2006), Gilquin and Paquot (2007), and Šimčikaitė (2012). The results of these

researches show pragmatic markers which are used usually in the oral and spoken mode are overused in English learners' essays when compared to the writing of native speakers. Moreover, a number of English native speakers as a result of confusion in the distinction between formal and informal registers have an oral tone in their writing.

All these researches indicate students confused the register even in advanced level of English learners and highlight the oral tone of learner writing more than usual. But, these studies are restricted to a limited collection of learner L1 populations (generally one to three groups, as cited in Crawford, 2005).

Each type of genres has its particular features, and speech cannot be completely defined by the syntax of the written language. Consequently, constructing a text in a particular genre needs what Lorenz (1999, p. 64) names "text-type sensitivity". As emphasized by Lorenz and others, but, non-native writers mostly are in need of such sensitivity and may try to discover a suitable means, that is, a style that is appropriate for a specific text type. Specifically, it has been frequently mentioned that learners regularly do not pay attention to the differences between speech and writing and that the tools they apply "can give confusing signals of register" (Field & Yip, 1992, p. 26).

Methodology

Participants

In this study, the participants were 82 Iranian EFL graduate students that were native speakers of Persian. They were selected randomly from students who were first or second year majoring in Teaching English as Foreign Language, both male and female, and aged between 23 and 30 years. They came from Islamic Azad University of Najafabad, Islamic Azad University of Abadan and Shahid Chamran University of Ahvaz in Iran. The Oxford Placement Test (OPT) was administered to determine their English language proficiency level and to homogenize them. After performing the test, 71 upper-intermediate participants were selected. Because the aim was gathering non-native English data, each of them was asked to write an English argumentative essay.

Instead of the using native English-speaking participants with the aim of collecting their written products, the researchers utilized LOCNESS that is a reference corpus of native English-speaking students. Features of this research corpus are provided in the next part (Instrumentation) in detail.

Instrumentation

With the objective of homogenizing the data, the OPT consists of 60 multiple choice items that was used in this research to determine the Iranian students' proficiency level.

In order to collect native-English sample in the present study, the LOCNESS was utilized as the source corpus. The ICLE corpus and the LOCNESS corpus have been employed to investigate aspects of lexis, discourse and the grammar of learners' English (Granger, 1998). It is a reference corpus of native English and consists of American and British university students' argumentative essays. The ICLE with the LOCNESS is a 300,000-word corpus of essays written by native English students. The data of both corpora are university students' argumentative writing (Granger, 1998, p. 13).

For identifying certain speech-like pragmatic markers within the native and non-native corpora, based on Carter and McCarthy (2006) views, approximately 60 markers including single words and phrasal items were considered. The considered spoken pragmatic markers that were investigated in the two datasets are mentioned below:

Single words and miscellaneous items such as *anyway, yeah, cos, fine, good, great, like, now, okay, right/(all)right, and, well, hey, ah, oh, look, listen, remember, incidentally, meantime, anyhow, only* and phrasal or clausal items such as *you know, you see, I mean, as I say, for a start, mind you, just think, as I was saying, as it were, if you like, in a manner of speaking, in other words, speaking of which, not to say, or rather, so to speak, strictly speaking, that's to say/ that is to say, to put it another way, to put it bluntly/ mildly, by the way, there you go, at the end of the day, talking about, while I think of it, as well, on top of it all, to cap it all, to crown it all, what's more/ what is more, then again, mind you, for a start.*

The corpus analysis software 'AntConc 3.4.4w' (2014) was used to obtain frequencies of speech-like pragmatic markers for each of the native and the non-native English databases. Furthermore, it helped investigate the location of pragmatic markers in the data.

Data Collection Procedure

The present study was corpus-driven comparative linguistic research and involved focusing on comparing the written productions of a group of Iranian students majoring in Teaching English as Foreign Language with the written samples of native English-speaking students.

The following steps were carried out in this research: First, 71 Iranian upper-intermediate EFL students studying in Islamic Azad University of Najafabad, Islamic Azad University of Abadan and Shahid Chamran University of Ahvaz were selected randomly based on their OPT score. Afterwards, they were asked to write an English argumentative essay. Seventy one argumentative essays were obtained. This method of collecting non-native English data was due to the lack of a systematic and accessible Iranian corpus for English learners in the universities of Iran.

In the next step, in order to make comparisons based on CIA approach, native English-speaking students' argumentative essays were gathered from the LOCNESS. The sample contained 22 A-level argumentative essays written by native British students.

Examining the pragmatic markers within the two native and non-native datasets were carried out by AntConc 3.4.4w (2014). The corpus analysis software AntConc 3.4.4w (2014) was used to collect frequencies for each of the speech-like pragmatic markers that were considered according to Carter and McCarthy (2006). The concordance facility of AntConc helped to identify the pragmatic structures within a corpus. Concordance ability was also as a facilitator tool to distinguish words applied as pragmatic markers from those present other grammatical functions.

Some examples are as follows:

Example 1.

Well, actually if it depends on what kind of need... (66_ page 77.txt)

Example 2.

...conditions of... were not as *well* as now... (71_ page 82.txt)

Following this, the frequency calculations of spoken pragmatic markers were gathered from both native and non-native databases and were compared using contrastive interlanguage analysis. In order to test the reliability of these data, including the number of applied spoken PMs and the overall number of words in the essays, inter-rater reliability check was conducted. According to results of reliability that was calculated 0.86; therefore, the reliability of the data is

considered high. The frequency of the markers was compared between the Iranian samples and the LOCNESS corpus; in other words, the comparison includes non-native speakers data in contrast to native speakers data (L2 vs. L1). At last, frequency differences were measured by a log-likelihood statistical measurement Log-likelihood (LL) ratio is an advanced type of statistical measurement that is used specifically in corpora contrasts and computes frequencies according to the word sizes of two corpora in addition to specifying the relevant overuse and underuse in a defined corpus.

Data Analysis

Log-likelihood statistical measurement was utilized in order to contrast the frequent usage of the speech-like pragmatic markers in native English-speaking students' argumentative essays with the frequency of their use in Iranian EFL students' argumentative essays. It also was applied to determine the overuse and underuse of speech-like pragmatic markers in each certain corpus.

Statistical investigations of the frequencies of PMs were conducted to answer the Research Question. The raw frequency of each pragmatic marker was standardized as a frequency per 1000 words. On the other hand, the frequency of each marker was used to calculate the log-likelihood ratio for comparison between the corpora of different sizes. Finally, log-likelihood ratio was measured for contrasting the total usage of pragmatic markers in each native and non-native corpus.

In corpus studies, while chi-square tests have been done to compare word frequencies through corpora, log-likelihood tests are proposed to have higher reliability than other statistical methods when comparing different-sized datasets (Rayson & Garside, 2000). When scholars compare two databases with a particular and different amount of freedom, significance is statistically examined by the log-likelihood ratios. If the log-likelihood ratio is ± 3.84 or more, a significant difference exists between the two datasets at a 5% significance level (Rayson, Berridge, & Francis, 2004).

Results

The overall number of words and the number of essays in non-native and native speaker corpora are provided in table 1.

Table 1. *Non-native Speaker and Native Speaker Corpora*

	Iranian Corpora	LOCNESS
Number of words	11494	11074
Number of essays	71	22

Table 2 shows the frequency of each speech-like pragmatic marker used by Iranian EFL students and native English students in their argumentative essays, as presented below:

Table 2. *Frequencies of Speech-like Pragmatic markers in Iranian and Native English Data*

Pragmatic Markers	Iranian Corpora	LOCNESS
	F	F
I think	33	4
Well	24	1
And (sentence initial)	20	1
We know	16	0

I know	14	0
Actually	12	2
I guess	10	0
In other words	8	0
Though	2	4
I can say	1	0
We can say	1	0
We can't say	2	0
Sort of	8	1
Kind of	5	0
Maybe	5	3
And so on	2	0
Like that	2	0
At the end of the day	1	0
We can talk about	1	0
Don't Know	2	1
Doesn't Know	1	0
Or so	1	3
As well	0	4
Total	171	24

Note. F = frequency.

Generally, the results in Table 2 showed differences of raw frequency both between NNS and NS. Iranian EFL students as non-native speakers seemed to use the higher amount of pragmatic markers (171), whereas British students used about one sixth of this amount (24). As it is presented in Table 2 the highest raw frequencies in the Iranian samples seems to be mostly due to the use of specific pragmatic markers, such as *I think* (33), *well* (24), *And* (sentence initial) (20), and *We know* (16), *I know* (14), *actually* (12), *I guess* (10), *in other words* (8) and sort of (8) respectively. The raw frequency of each certain PM standardized through the frequency of per 1000 words as these results was illustrated in Figure 1.

Remarkably, *I think* was the most frequent speech-like pragmatic marker in Iranian samples. *I think* is recognized as scarce in academic writing (54.38 occurrences per million words) (Gilquin & Paquot, 2007). In the present study, it exposed significant frequency in students' writing (2.87 per 1000 words in Iranian texts while, 0.36 per 1000 words in the native English corpus (LOCNESS)).

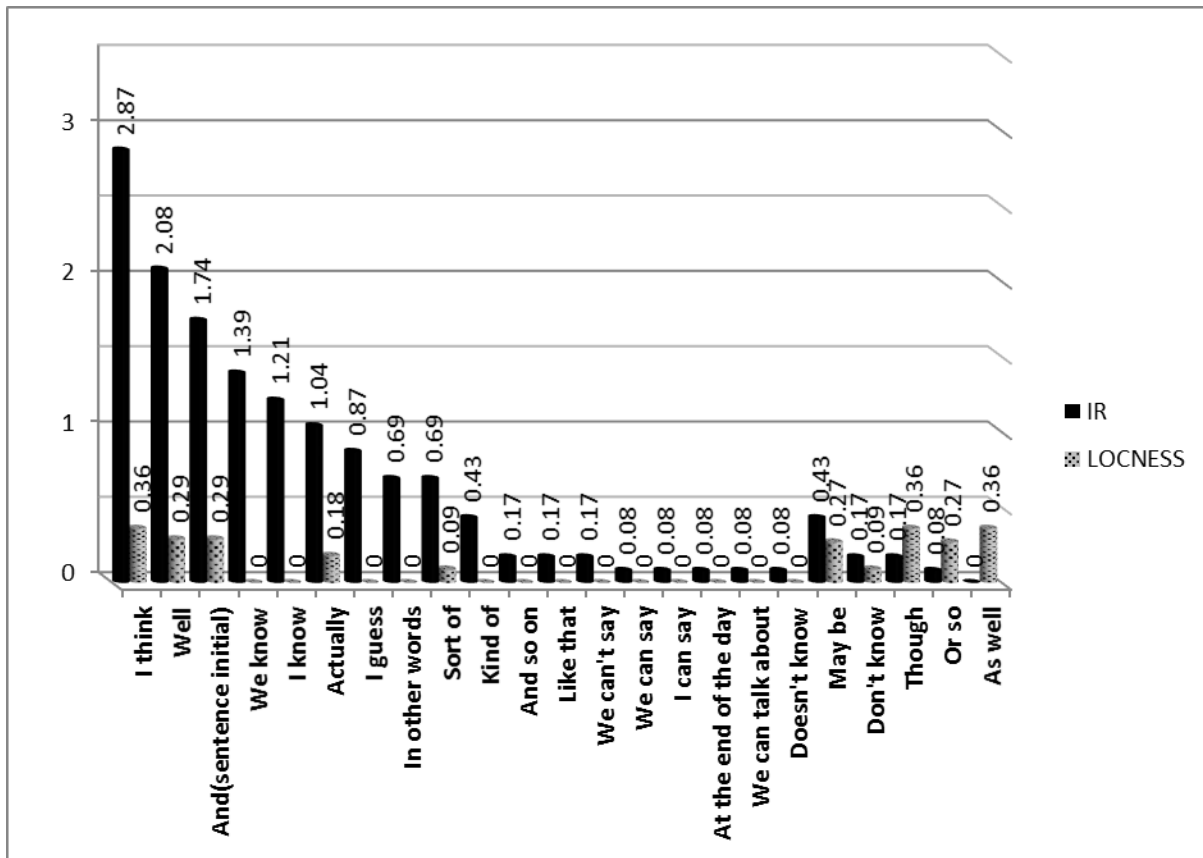


Figure 1. Word frequency per 1000 words of Speech-like pragmatic markers between Iranian and native English corpora. IR = Iranian sample. LOCNESS = the Louvain Corpus of Native English Essays.

The markers such as, *I know*, *Actually* and *I guess* are other frequently used speech-like markers in Iranian students' essays demonstrated in Figure 1. If the occurrence rate of pragmatic markers was 0.01 or below in both datasets, the markers were not included in the analysis so, many pragmatic markers were excluded from the related analysis.

As the results of frequency per 1000 words in Figure 1 shows, *I think*, and *well*, seem to be used by the non-native group more frequently than native English speakers. In particular, *well*, is frequent as an adjective and an adverb in academic writing, but the result of the present study indicates that Iranian students used it 2.08 times per 1000 words as speech-like marker that is typical in speech context. However, British students applied *well* 0.29 per 1000 words. Moreover, sentence-initial *and* is one of the commonly used markers by Iranian learners. As a matter of fact, *and* is frequently applied as a conjunction in academic writing, but is considered to be infrequent in a sentence-initial position in academic writing. The sentence-initial *and* occurred 1.74 times per 1000 words in Iranian students' essays while 0.29 per 1000 words in British students' essays. The samples of usage are shown below from non-native students' essays:

Example 1.

... Men need women and vice versa. *Well*, men have certain characteristics which...
(44_page_53_44)

Example 2.

...It was simpler; *And* people were friendlier, values such as honesty, generosity,...
(50_page_59_50)

Nevertheless, a statistical measurement is needed to demonstrate the significant difference between the groups. Table 3 shows the Log-likelihood ratio (LLR) measurements for the overall frequencies among the two corpora:

Table 3. Log-likelihood ratio (LLR) of Overall Frequency of Pragmatic Markers among Non-native and Native Corpora

	(LLR)
Iranian sample vs. LOCNESS	+ 119.45

Note. (critical value: 3.84); + indicates overuse in the first corpus relative to the second corpus; - indicates underuse in the first corpus relative to the second corpus.

The LLR result confirmed the overuse of speech-like pragmatic markers in Iranian data against native English speakers' data. If the critical value of Log-likelihood ratio is considered as ± 3.84 or more, +119.45 by Iranian data over LOCNESS reveal a significant difference between Iranian and native English speakers in the use of speech-like pragmatic markers.

Figure 2 provides the LLR results for each pragmatic marker between the two non-native and native datasets, as it shows the overuse or underuse of each marker.

If the LL ratio of the certain marker in the two groups is + 3.84 or more, that marker will considered to be overused in Iranian corpora than in LOCNESS. On the other hand, when the ratio is - 3.84 or less, that marker will considered to be underused in the non-native database.

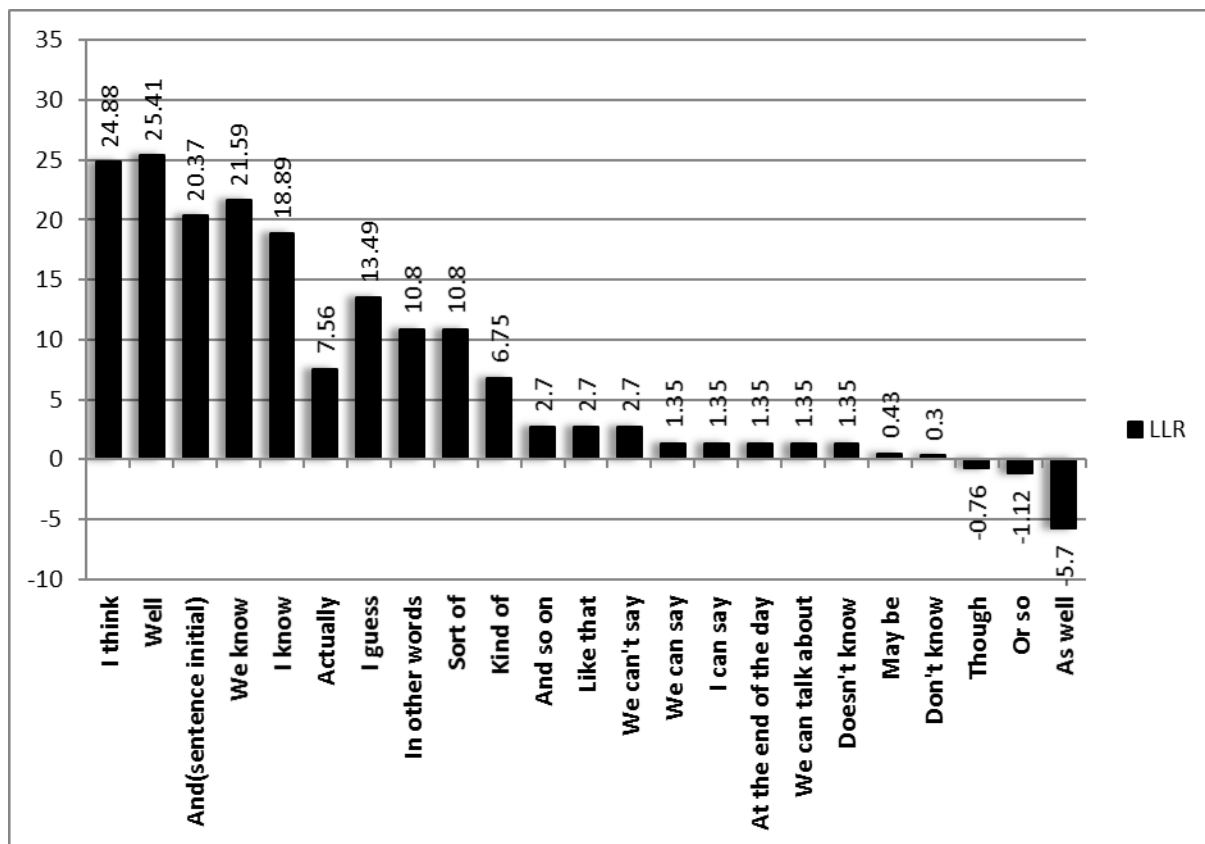


Figure 2. Log likelihood ratio (LLR) of speech-like pragmatic marker usage, Iranian students' use against British students' use.

According to Figure 2, the investigation of LLR revealed that Iranian students overused speech-like pragmatic markers such as *Well* (+25.41), *I think* (+24.88), *We know* (+21.59), *And (sentence initial)* (+20.37), *I know* (+18.89), *I guess* (+13.49), *In other words* (+10.8), *actually* (+7.56), and *kind of* (+6.75) while they underused the speech-like pragmatic markers *As well* (-5.70) in contrast with native speakers of English.

Based on the critical value of LLR (± 3.84 or more), the statistics that are presented in Figure 2, did not show significant differences among other items such as *and so on*, *like that*, *we can't say*, *we can say*, *I can say*, *at the end of the day*, *we can talk about*, *doesn't know*, *maybe*, *don't know* although, they have a positive LL ratio.

As Figure 2 shows the LLR, the speech-like pragmatic markers including *Tough* (-0.76), *Or so* (-1.12) cannot be considered as underused markers because based on critical value of LLR; (± 3.84 or more), their ratio does not show a significant difference. At the end, the LL ratio of the marker *As well* (-5.70) indicating it is underused by Iranian students in comparison with British students.

Overall results indicated Iranian students more frequently used certain speech-like pragmatic marker such as *Well*, *I think*, *We know*, *And (sentence initial)*, *I know*, *I guess*, *In other words*, *Sort of*, *Actually* and *Kind of* respectively in their argumentative essays; however, they less frequently used the speech-like pragmatic marker, *As well* than native English students in comparison with native English students.

Discussion

With regard to the research question, the results showed that there was a significant difference between two groups of upper-intermediate Iranian EFL students and native English speaking students in the use of speech-like pragmatic markers in their argumentative essays. This result is similar to previous studies such as, (Gilquin & Paquot, 2007; Šimčikaitė, 2012). As highlighted by these scholars who found parallel outcomes, the overuse of these markers by writers is due to various reasons, such as register confusion, L1 transfer, L2 instruction, as well as developmental factors (Gilquin & Paquot, 2007).

The LL ratio of the marker *As well* (-5.70) indicating it is underused by Iranian students in comparison with British students in LOCNESS. In other word, British students misapply this speech-like pragmatic marker as well as Šimčikaitė's (2012) comparative analysis showed that similar speech-like pragmatic markers are observed in LOCNESS-US and LOCNESS-BR. Even though speech-like features were found in all the three corpora (Lithuanian corpus, LOCNESS-US and LOCNESS-BR) by this researcher, the study suggests that the native English speakers make a better distinction between the pragmatic markers applied in academic essay writing and conversation. On the other hand, outcomes of Šimčikaitė's research as well as the results of the present comparative study indicate the non-native learners are less familiar with speech-like pragmatic markers. It confirms Granger's (1998, p. 80) study which revealed that learners have problems with recognizing distinction between pragmatic markers used in conversation and academic essay writing.

In terms of Iranian EFL students, it can be said that the overuse of speech-like pragmatic markers in writing is related to the present principles of L2 instruction that are based on a communicative approach. Course textbooks that take a communicative approach as the major theoretical background for grammar instruction may promote confusion between written and spoken registers among learners by focusing on a communication-oriented task. Accordingly, learners may over generalize the communicative facets in their writing by applying lexical items or expressions in inappropriate contexts to overcome the complications of using the target

language. One of the causes might be that the learners' course books and other resources they use, lack of some key information about pragmatic markers. The supplies to make a formal style are designated and among the substances making the style more formal pragmatic markers are provided; nevertheless, patterns are shown with no descriptions on stylistic and statistical settings of pragmatic markers. For instance, "first , firstly (to begin an essay) or then, subsequently (for middle steps) are given without representing that firstly is more formal than first , and then is slightly informal, while subsequently is formal" (Granger , 1998 , as cited in Šimčikait , 2012 , p .29).

Another fact relates to L1 transfer, a phenomenon that is observed in Iranian learners, because markers like *I think* (Fekr mikonam: فکر میکنم), *maybe* (shayad: شاید), *I mean* (manzouram ineh: منظورم اینه), *well* (khob: خوب), *we know* (ma midanim: ما میدانیم), *Actually* (vaghean: واقعا), *I guess* (hads mizanam: حدس میزنم), etc. are very common in Persian spoken language. This can be one of the reasons for Iranian EFL students' overuse of speech-like features in their writing; however, it requires a comprehensive study in order to state an L1 transfer, at least to investigate the use of speech-like pragmatic markers in Persian language in terms of comparison.

Conclusion

This study has brought to light a general tendency among upper-intermediate EFL students of English, with Persian mother tongue background, to use in their written production words and phrases which are more typical of speech than of academic writing. Different possible reasons have been suggested to account for this phenomenon, including lack of awareness of more formal options, L2 instruction, L1 influence, teaching-induced and developmental aspects. Awareness-raising activities have also been offered that should help learners become more aware of register difference and of the significance of adopting a stylistically suitable tone in academic writing.

Based on the outcomes of inferential analysis reported and the discussion conducted in the previous section, a general conclusion can be derived. Considering the differences between two groups of non-native English speaking students and native English speaking students, according to the results of the research, there was a significant difference between two groups of upper-intermediate Iranian EFL students and native English speaking students in the use of speech-like pragmatic markers in their argumentative essays.

The findings of the present study also indicate Iranian EFL students more frequently used certain speech-like pragmatic marker such as: *Well, I think, We know, And (sentence initial), I know, I guess, in other words, sort of, actually and kind of* in their argumentative essays than the native English group, though, Iranian EFL students more infrequently applied the speech-like pragmatic marker, *As well*, than the native English group. This means that native English students overused the pragmatic marker, *As well*; In other words, native English students also misuse some oral features of language and it seems some misunderstanding in the distinction of formal and informal register.

Further research could include adding data from several learner groups from different L1 backgrounds in order to indicate the differences in using pragmatic markers by contrasting the writing production of the different learner population. Moreover, further study would be conducted with considering L1 transfer, gender and different level of Iranian students. To better understand whether or not and how the L1 transfer would affect the Iranian students' use of these certain speech-like pragmatic markers a study of their equivalents by analyzing comparable L1 Iranian written and spoken data will also be needed.

References

- Aijmer, K. (2002). *English discourse particles: Evidence from a corpus*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company.
- Aijmer, K., & Simon-Vandenberg, A. M. (2006). *Pragmatic markers in contrast*. Amsterdam: Elsevier.
- Aijmer, K. (2004). Pragmatic markers in spoken interlanguage. *Nordic Journal of English Studies*, 173-190.
- Altenberg, B., & Tapper, M. (1998). The use of adverbial connectors in advanced Swedish learners' written English. In S. Granger (ed.) *Learner English on Computer*, (pp. 80–93). London and New York: Addison-Wesley Longman.
- Andersen, G. (2001). *Pragmatic markers and sociolinguistic variation: a relevance-theoretic approach to the language of adolescents*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Bennett, G.R. (2010). Using corpora in the language learning classroom: corpus linguistics for teachers. Retrieved from <http://www.press.umich.edu/titleDetailDesc.do?id=371534> . Michigan ELT.
- Biber, D., Johansson, S., Leech, G., Conrad, S., & Finegan, E. (1999). *Longman grammar of spoken and written English*. Harlow and London: Pearson Education Limited.
- Carter, R. M., & McCarthy. (2006). *Cambridge grammar of English*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Crawford, W. (2005). Is L2 writing like native-English conversation? Paper presented at ICAME 26 (*International Computer Archive of Modern and Medieval English*) – AAACL 6 (*American Association of Applied Corpus Linguistics*), University of Michigan, 12–15 May 2005.
- Dulger, O. (2007). Discourse markers in writing. *Selcuk Universitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitusu Dergisi*, 257-270.
- Field, Y., & Yip, L.M.O. (1992). A comparison of internal cohesive conjunction in the English essay writing of Cantonese speakers and native speakers of English . *RELC Journal*, 23(1), 15-28.
- Gilquin, G., & Paquot, M. (2007). Spoken features in learner academic writing: Identification, Explanation and Solution. *Proceedings of the 4th Corpus Linguistics Conference*, University of Birmingham, 27–30 July 2007. Available at http://ucel.lancs.ac.uk/publications/CL2007/paper/204_Paper.pdf
- Granger, S. (1998). Introduction. In Granger, S. (ed.) *Learner English on Computer*. London: Longman.
- Granger, S. (2002). A bird's-eye view of learner corpus research. In Granger, Hung & Petch – Tyson (eds), 3-33.
- Granger, S., & Rayson, P. (1998). Automatic lexical profiling of learner texts. In S. Granger (Ed.), *Learner English on Computer* (p. 119). 26-27 London & New York: Addison Wesley Longman.
- Granger, S., & Petch-Tyson, S. (1996). Connector usage in the English essay writing of native and non-native EFL speakers of English. *World Englishes*, 15, 19–29.
- Huang, L.F. (2011). *Discourse markers in spoken English: A corpus study of native speakers and Chinese non-native speakers*. (Doctoral thesis, University of Birmingham). Retrieved from <http://etheses.bham.ac.uk/2969/9/Huang11PhD.pdf>
- Huddleston, R., & Pullum, G. K. (2002). *The Cambridge Grammar of the English Language*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Leech, G., & Svartvik, J. (1994). *A Communicative Grammar of English*. London: Longman Group Limited.

Lorenz, G. (1999). *Learning to cohere: Causal links in native vs. non-native argumentative writing*, in W. Bublitz, U. Lenk and E. Ventola (eds) *Coherence in Spoken and Written Discourse. How to create it and how to describe it*, pp. 55–75. Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company.

Müller, S. (2005). *Discourse markers in native and non-native English discourse*. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins.

Narita, M., & Sugiura, M. (2006). The use of adverbial connectors in argumentative essays by Japanese EFL college students. *English Corpus Studies* 13, 23-42.

Neff, J., Ballesteros, F., Dafouz, E., Martínez, F., & Rica, J-P. (2007). A contrastive functional analysis of errors in Spanish EFL university writers' argumentative texts: corpus-based study, in E. Fitzpatrick (ed.) *Corpus Linguistics beyond the Word: Corpus Research from Phrase to Discourse*, pp. 203-225. Amsterdam: Rodopi.

Pridham, F., (2001). *The Language of Conversation*. London: Routledge.

Rayson, P., Berridge, D., & Francis, B. (2004). Extending the Cochran rule for the comparison of word frequencies between corpora. In G. Purnelle, C. Fairon, & A. Dister (Eds.), *Le poids des mots: Proceeding of the 7th International Conference on Statistical Analysis of Textual Data* (pp. 926 - 936). Louvain-la-Neuve, Belgium: Presses universitaires de Louvain.

Rayson, P., & Garside, R. (2000). Comparing corpora using frequency profiling. In A. Kilgarriff & T. B. Sardinha (Eds.), *Proceedings of the Workshop on Comparing Corpora: Held in Conjunction with the 38th Annual Meeting of the Association for Computational Linguistics* (pp. 1-6). Hong Kong: Hong Kong University of Science and Technology.

Schiffrin, D. (1987). *Discourse markers*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Simcikaite, A. (2012). Spoken discourse markers in learner academic writing. *Studies about Languages*, 20, 27-34.

Yang, S. (2011). Investigating discourse markers in pedagogical settings: A literature review. *ARECLS*, 8, 95-108.