

# ACADEMIC PAPERS IN ENGLISH AND THE DISTRIBUTION OF SENTENCE ADVERBIALS BY NATIVE VS. NON-NATIVE WRITERS

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**ABSTRACT:** The use of sentence adverbials, i.e., syntactically and/or prosodically detached conjunctive and disjunctive adverbials, is one of the most powerful tools for achieving cohesion in academic texts. Although the genre of academic papers reveals a tendency to some degree of formal uniformity within individual disciplines as the discourses are becoming increasingly international, there persist significant differences in frequency as well as distribution of lexical and grammatical devices between native and non-native users of English. The paper examines preferences of these two groups in the use of sentence adverbials in academic papers dealing with humanities. The research draws on several corpora of expert and novice native and non-native academic texts. Among the findings of the analysis are observable tendencies to overusing or underusing certain adverbials and their distributional patterns displayed by individual groups of authors.

**KEYWORDS:** academic papers; native academic writers; novice academic writers; sentence adverbials; sequential adverbials

## 1. INTRODUCTION

English for Academic Purposes (EAP) is a variety of English used in the fields of science and education, and belongs thus to occupational varieties of language. As Schmied (2011, 2) points out, EAP overlaps to varying degrees with concepts such as EIL (English as an International Language), ELF (English as a Lingua Franca), ESP (English for Specific Purposes), etc., and its educational aspects are discussed within the traditional concepts ELT, TESOL and TEFL. EAP is marked lexically, grammatically and structurally, and the combination of its typical features is, generally speaking, known as the formal style (however, by far not all applications of the formal style are in the domain of science, but also in the areas of administration, media and journalism, law, business, etc.).

The structure of texts within English for Academic Purposes is directly dictated by considerations of their purpose – they must be clear, with logical arrangement of ideas, surveyable, predictable, cohesive and coherent for their intended readership. The structure of academic texts thus employs devices that help to achieve these goals. Logically, such devices operate at different levels of language and their functions sometimes overlap, but it would contradict the general principle of language economy if the role of a linguistic phenomenon were not well-defined and identifiable or if it were often performed by several devices at the same time. Therefore, it can be reasonably assumed that the structure of a text and the roles its parts play (since this is an essential

quality of an academic text) are signalled by some explicit markers. Alternatively, this may also be signalled implicitly by some conventional arrangement of arguments and text parts, but it seems that some explicit structural markers or signals are standardly utilized. This paper will look into the functions and distribution of explicit markers of text structure, namely the so-called sentence adverbials (cf. Huddleston and Pullum 2002).

## 2. SEQUENCE MARKERS AND CONNECTIVES IN EAP

Sentence linkers in general are one of the tools for achieving cohesion in formal texts. They help recipients to reach the obvious goal, namely “to recognize a text as ‘academic’, one important aspect . . . [of which is] the use of clear and fairly predictable structure” (Hamp-Lyons and Heasley 2006, 30).

The linking and text-organizing devices are particularly useful in the spoken mode where they function as scaffolding. In the written mode there is more time for preparation and production of the text and linkers and text-organizers are often replaced by other lexical and grammatical cohesive devices (cf. Halliday and Hasan 1976). This paper examines several corpora of academic texts to see how frequently and in what patterns adverbial linkers are distributed and what relative importance for text organization they have for native and non-native writers.

The author’s previous research in this area was described in the paper “Sentence Linkers in Essays and Papers by Native and Non-native Writers” (Vogel 2008). Its focus was the use of adverbial linking devices functioning at the suprasentential level. The adverbials were studied in a corpus consisting of twenty essays in the field of teaching methodology written by advanced non-native writers and five papers by native writers from the same field. The aim of the analysis was to examine the distribution of linking devices (particularly sequential adverbials) within paragraphs and the whole text, their variety and native vs. non-native differences. The findings of the research are that non-native writers (NNW) placed sequential adverbials in 30% of paragraphs immediately following the introductory one (paragraph  $i+1$ ), in 30% of paragraphs  $i+2$ , and in 45% of final paragraphs. On the contrary, native writers (NW) used no sequential adverbials in their papers, and these texts generally revealed a poor range of linkers.

The following premises and hypotheses about the typical behaviour of native vs. non-native writers in EAP were derived from earlier research (Vogel 2008) and tested in the more broadly conceived present research:

1. Non-native and native writers use tools of grammatical cohesion differently, which is evident from the distribution of sentence adverbials.
2. Non-native writers tend to overuse sequential adverbials, whereas native writers tend to avoid them, probably as a too explicit marker.
3. Also, non-native writers tend to use conjunctive and disjunctive adverbials (due to their explicitness) more often and in a wider range than native writers. (A logical question arises in the context of language training: Is it the result of being taught academic writing?)

4. Conversely, native writers employ a wider scale of style and particularly content disjuncts (as defined in Greenbaum and Quirk 1990, 182–84) than non-native writers.
5. It also prompts the question whether the differences between native and non-native styles of EAP, here manifested through the distinctive distributional patterns of sentence adverbials, have any qualitative impact on the texts, their stylistic acceptability, clarity of message, pragmatic effect, etc.

### 3. METHODOLOGY OF RESEARCH

The current research has used a similar methodology to that applied in 2008, namely:

1. Identification of sentence adverbials or linkers at the intersentential level but also interclausal level if they are syntactically detached.
2. Classification by function, focus on conjunctive (particularly listing, summative, resultive and contrastive) and disjunctive adverbials (adhering to the classification by Greenbaum and Quirk 1990, 181-187). These two syntactico-semantic types of adverbials are assumed to be the most efficient markers (among adverbials) of logical and sequential arrangement of ideas and corresponding parts of text.
3. Tagging sentence adverbials by:
  - their type (grammatico-semantic);
  - their position within a sentence and paragraph (initial, medial, final) and in the whole text (referring to the serial number of a paragraph);
  - their sequence (which is relevant for sequential adverbials);
  - the authorship (used by native vs. non-native writers, novice / inexperienced vs. expert writers – this is a new variable to be analysed).

What is not monitored are differences between various disciplines, between non-native writers by their different mother tongues, frequency of sentence adverbials (i.e., number of occurrences per total wordcount), ratio of sentence adverbials to other connectives, namely conjunctions, etc. All of these criteria would be important descriptors as well, but the previously listed criteria have taken precedence.

As the texts in individual corpora are of varying lengths, only the initial (Pi) and the following five and the final (Pf) and the preceding five paragraphs were scrutinized. It is likely that the introductory and final paragraphs in various papers perform similar functional roles in relation to the whole (and are obviously found in all of them), whereas the varying number of paragraphs between them, in the bodies of papers, do not display such clearly definable organising, presentational, hypothesising, argumentative, concluding, etc., functions relevant to the structure of the whole papers. In other words, the current paper attempts to look into occurrences of sentence adverbials in comparable functional settings, as these are supposed to correspond to specific text stages.

The corpus of EAP texts written by native users has the following composition:

- Corpus 1 (C1): five papers (conference proceedings, field: teaching methodology)

- Corpus 2 (C2): five papers (collective volume – anthology of “selected readings,” field: linguistics – syntax)

The corpus of EAP texts written by non-native users consists of the following subcorpora:

- Corpus 3 (C3): ten essays (written by Czech master’s programme students of English, field: teaching methodology)
- Corpus 4a (C4a): five papers (by Czech and German authors, published in a journal, field: linguistics)
- Corpus 4b (C4b): five papers (by Czech and Slovak authors, published in conference proceedings, fields: linguistics, methodology of language teaching).

#### 4. CLASSIFICATIONS OF ADVERBIALS

Adverbials, which are followed in this research as the principal explicit linking devices, can be classified according to several criteria:

1. grammatical functions – adjuncts, subjuncts, conjuncts, disjuncts (Greenbaum 1969, Greenbaum and Quirk 1990)  
Here, the prosodically and syntactically detached adverbials include:
  - conjuncts – listing (enumerative and additive), appositive, summative, contrastive (concessive, antithetic) (cf. Hůlková 2005), resultive, conclusive, transitional;
  - disjuncts – style, content (certainty-related and evaluation-related)
2. orientation within a sentence – “VP-oriented and clause-oriented AdvP adjuncts” (Huddleston and Pullum 2002)
  - clause oriented adjuncts (this category corresponds to the adverbials this research focuses on) – domain, modality, evaluation, speech act-related, connective
3. semantic roles, formal realisation, position (initial – I, medial – M, end / final – E).

The sequential adverbials, classed by their semantico-grammatical role as conjuncts, can be divided by their function into (Greenbaum and Quirk 1990, 185):

- listing
  - enumerative (*to start with, firstly, secondly, next, then, finally, . . .*)
  - additive (*moreover, furthermore, in addition, above all, similarly, also, . . .*)
- summative (*therefore, all in all, to sum up, in sum, . . .*)

#### 5. DISTRIBUTION OF SENTENCE ADVERBIALS IN PAPERS WRITTEN BY ENGLISH NATIVE WRITERS

##### 5.1 EXAMPLES OF DISTRIBUTION (NATIVE WRITERS)

The following two examples (Table 1) illustrate the distribution of sentence adverbials as they are used by native writers. They manifest the heterogeneous nature of the

selected adverbials in the two sample papers (although some favourite adverbials, such as *thus* and *however*, are shared), but also their relatively frequent occurrence and typically initial position in sentences. The notes on the position within a sentence and a paragraph are included for greater plasticity, but the position has not been analysed as a relevant variable in this research.

TABLE 1: DISTRIBUTION OF SENTENCE ADVERBIALS IN ACADEMIC PAPERS PRODUCED BY NATIVE ENGLISH WRITERS – EXAMPLES (2 PAPERS)

Paragraph	CORPUS 1, PAPER P3 (G. KITZMILLER) Source type: conference proceedings Field: teaching methodology		CORPUS 2, PAPER P6 (W. S. ALLEN) Source type: anthology Field: linguistics	
	Sentence adverbials	Position within a sentence / paragraph	Sentence adverbials	Position within a sentence / paragraph
Pi	0	-	0	-
Pi+1	Indeed	SI / PI	for example	SM / PM
	However	SI / PM	Thus	SI / PM
	In addition	SI / PM	thus	SM / PF
Pi+2	However	SI / PF	on the other hand	SM / PM
			But	SI / PM
			Thus	SI / PF
Pi+3	0	-	Thus	SI / PF
Pi+4	0	-	for instance	SM / PM
Pi+5	Thus	SI / PM	for example	SI / PM
			however	SM / PF
Pf-5	0	-	Thus	SI / PF
			But	SI / PM
Pf-4	Thus	SI / PM	but	SM / PM
	Thus	SI / PF		
Pf-3	Thus	SI / PF	And	SI / PM
			Thus	SI / PM
Pf-2	0	-	Thus	SI / PI
			therefore	SM / PF
Pf-1	Generally	SI / PM	however	SM / PF
Pf	However	SI / PM	0	-

Notes: Pi = initial paragraph; Pi+1 = paragraph after the initial paragraph (i.e. 2nd paragraph), Pi+2 = second paragraph after the initial paragraph (i.e. 3rd paragraph), etc.

Pf = final paragraph; Pf-1 = the paragraph before the final paragraph, Pf-2 = second paragraph before the final paragraph; etc.

SI = sentence-initial, SM = sentence-medial, SF = sentence-final position

PI = paragraph-initial, PM = paragraph-medial, PF = paragraph-final position

## 5.2 FINDINGS OF THE ANALYSIS – ADVERBIALS USED BY NATIVE WRITERS OF EAP TEXTS

The analysis carried out on texts included in the two corpora C1 and C2 reveals some properties describing the distribution of sentence adverbials in EAP texts produced by native users of English (the results are presented in Table 3). It has been established that 52% of the paragraphs in papers in C1 (proceedings) and 60% in C2 (anthology) contain sentence adverbials. As far as the proportion of sequential (enumerative, additive and summative) to other adverbials (contrastive, resultive, adverbial disjuncts, etc.) is concerned, the lowest share of sequential adverbials in all sentence adverbials has been identified in corpus C1 (5%), compared with 17% in C2 (sequential adverbials in this analysis also include summatives in other than final paragraphs, used sequentially and contributing thus to explicit signalling of the micro-structure of a given paragraph, not only as markers of the macro-structure of the whole paper).

In terms of distributional patterns of sentence adverbials within individual papers, 20% of initial paragraphs include sentence adverbials in C1 (i.e., occurring in a single paper only), but 60% in C2; the figures are just reversed for final paragraphs: 60% of them include sentence adverbials in C1 and 20% in C2.

Most frequent sentence adverbials are *however* (37% of all sentence adverbials in C1, 9% in C2), *but* used in the sentence-initial (SI) position (17% in C2, 8% in C1), *thus* (17% in C2, 8% in C1). Sequential adverbials are not numerous, except for *therefore* (3% in C2); however, it is used in the resultive rather than in the potentially summative function here. The analysed texts were not particularly rich in adverbial disjuncts, which is in fact contrary to hypothesis No 4, but one exceptional article in C1 partly compensates for the deficit as it contains the disjuncts *interestingly*, *specifically*, *additionally* (though the last adverb was not used as a disjunct here).

## 6. DISTRIBUTION OF SENTENCE ADVERBIALS IN ACADEMIC PAPERS WRITTEN BY NON-NATIVE WRITERS

### 6.1 EXAMPLES OF DISTRIBUTION (NON-NATIVE WRITERS)

Table 2 provides three examples illustrating the distribution of sentence adverbials in academic texts written by non-native authors. Similarly to Table 1, the usually initial or medial position in sentences is marked, but this variable along with the position in a paragraph have not been analysed.

### 6.2 FINDINGS – PREFERENCES OF NON-NATIVE WRITERS OF EAP TEXTS

Analogously to the two corpora consisting of texts by native writers (C1 and C2), the distribution of sentence adverbials within texts and paragraphs was examined in the NNW corpora (C3, C4a and C4b). The findings (for a comparison of the following findings from all corpora, see Table 3) are that 81% of the paragraphs in non-native corpus C3 (essays), 50% in C4a and 43% in C4b (papers) contain sentence adverbials. The very high figure in Czech students' essays indicates an overuse of this device in the

TABLE 2: DISTRIBUTION OF SENTENCE ADVERBIALS IN ACADEMIC PAPERS PRODUCED BY NON-NATIVE (INEXPERIENCED CZECH; EXPERT CZECH, SLOVAK AND GERMAN) WRITERS – EXAMPLES (3 PAPERS/ESSAYS)

	Corpus 3, essay E6 (K. Roszak) Type: seminar essay Field: ELT methodology		Corpus 4a, paper P11 (Ch. Haase) Type: journal Field: linguistics		Corpus 4b, paper P18 (V. Ježdíková) Type: proceedings Field: linguistics / ELT methodology	
Paragraph	Sentence adverbials	Position within a sentence / paragraph	Sentence adverbials	Position within a sentence / paragraph	Sentence adverbials	Position within a sentence / paragraph
Pi	To start with	SI / PM	however	SM / PM	0	-
			However	SI / PM		
			In fact	SI / PF		
Pi+1	Moreover	SI / PM	0	-	0	-
	For example	SI / PM				
Pi+2	Secondly	SI / PI	As a consequence	SI / PM 0	-	
	therefore	SM / PM	thus	SM / PF		
Pi+3	in other words	SM / PM	0	-	0	-
Pi+4	N/A	N/A	0	-	0	-
Pi+5	N/A	N/A	0	-	0	-
Pe-5	N/A	N/A	0	-	In contrast	SI / PF
					hence	SM / PF
Pe-4	N/A	N/A	0	-	0	-
Pe-3	N/A	N/A	0	-	0	-
Pe-2	0	-	Interestingly	SI / PM	However	SI / PF
			Overall	SI / PM		
Pe-1	so	SM / PM	0	-	0	0
Pe	Finally	SI / PI	Thus	SI / PI	Contrary	SI / PM
	Overall	SI / PF			Analogically	SI / PM
					However	SI / PF

Notes: Pi = initial paragraph; Pi+1 = paragraph after the initial paragraph (i.e. 2nd paragraph), Pi+2 = second paragraph after the initial paragraph (i.e. 3rd paragraph), etc.

Pf = final paragraph; Pf-1= the paragraph before the final paragraph, Pf-2 = second paragraph before the final paragraph; etc.

SI = sentence-initial, SM = sentence-medial, SF = sentence-final position

PI = paragraph-initial, PM- paragraph-medial, PF = paragraph-final position

academic writing of inexperienced NNWs, contrasted by lower than native occurrence in texts written by expert non-native authors.

Sequential (enumerative, additive and summative) adverbials account for 49% in corpus C3, whereas in C4a (papers in a journal) their share is 12% and in C4b

(proceedings) they make up 25% (including summatives in other than final paragraphs). The distinctive occurrence of sequential adverbials in the novice NNW corpus can be illustrated by example E6 from C3 quoted in Table 2; nevertheless, the selected essay is not the one with the highest occurrence of sequential adverbials in the given corpus. As corpus C3 is composed of texts produced by novice non-native writers, whereas corpora C4a+b were written by expert academic writers, these findings again seem to reveal a strong tendency to overuse sequential adverbials by less experienced writers (probably because they prefer marking the structure of their texts in a more explicit way, creating a sort of outline or scaffolding mentioned previously; because they have been taught about the usefulness of explicit discourse markers and readily implement this knowledge, etc.). On the other hand, a very low occurrence of sequential adverbials in non-native expert writing (even lower in comparison with texts written by native writers, viz. C4a vs. C2) may be interpreted as an intentional avoidance of this device as too explicit and formulaic, and their elimination or replacement by more implicit and diverse markers may be seen as a proof of the writers' expertise in EAP.

70% of initial paragraphs include sentence adverbials in C3, and still others are usually shifted further, to paragraphs Pi+1 or Pi+2 (especially sequential adverbials), so their final occurrence is considerably higher. Also, in corpus C3 as many as 70% of the final paragraphs contain a sentence adverbial (60% of these are sequential adverbials), compared with usually lower figures for both variables in corpora C4a and C4b.

The most frequent sentence adverbials in the non-native corpora are *however* (12% in C3, 16% in C4a and 18% in C4b) and *thus* (25% in C4a, 18% in C4b, but only 2% in the essay-based corpus C3). The most frequent sequential adverbial is *firstly/first of all* (7% in C3), followed by *further(more)* (4% in C3, 11% in C4b), *moreover* (4% in C4a) and *finally* and *to sum up* (3% each in C3) (see Table 3). Also, *therefore* is quite often represented in C3 (7%), but its sequential role, being a summative adverbial (as mentioned in Greenbaum and Quirk 1990, 185) is dubious.

## 7. CONCLUSIONS

The analysis of the academic texts in all four corpora has confirmed the previously-mentioned three (out of four) hypotheses derived from my previous research (2008) (the size of two NW corpora does not adequately prove hypothesis No. 4).

As far as sentence adverbials are concerned, their surprisingly high occurrence (except for non-native "novice" texts) has been identified in native writers' texts, namely in papers in an anthology (C2). Papers in the anthology of texts by expert native authors and essays written by non-native novice authors, teacher trainees, reveal a markedly higher occurrence of sentence adverbials, both calculated per paragraph (always exceeding one) and in terms of their equal distribution throughout the texts (i.e., in the majority of paragraphs). This might be interpreted as a result of a more essayistic and didactic approach employed in these two text types.

The research has also revealed a clear tendency to overuse sequential adverbials in "novice" non-native writers' texts (totalling a half out of all sentence adverbials), as



TABLE 3: SUMMARY - DISTRIBUTION OF SENTENCE ADVERBIALS IN ACADEMIC PAPERS PRODUCED BY NATIVE VS. NON-NATIVE WRITERS

	Sentence adverbials per paragraph (average)	Paragraphs with sentence adverbial(s)	Sentence adverbial(s) in the initial paragraph	Sentence adverbial(s) in the final paragraph	Share of sequential adverbials	Most frequent adverbials (in % of the total sentence adverbials in the corpus)
PAPERS BY NATIVE WRITERS						
Corpus 1 (proc.)	0.63	52%	20%	60%	5%	however (37%), thus, but, for example (8% each), consequently, as a result (5% each)
Corpus 2 (anthology)	1.1	60%	60%	20%	17%	but (SI) (17%), thus (17%), however (9%), for example (8%)
PAPERS BY NON-NATIVE WRITERS						
Corpus 3 (essays)	1.3	81%	70%	70%	49%	however (12%), therefore (7%), firstly / first of all (7%), further(more) (4%), to sum up, finally (3% each)
Corpus 4a (journal)	0.85	50%	40%	80%	12%	thus (25%), however (16%), therefore, moreover, as a result, as a consequence / consequently (4% each)
Corpus 4b (proc.)	0.73	43%	60%	40%	25%	however (18%), thus (18%), furthermore (11%)

well as an almost complete avoidance or low occurrence of sequential adverbials in texts by expert native writers (C1 – proceedings) and experienced non-native writers (C2 – journal). Sequential adverbials explicitly marking the location within the whole text (particularly adverbials referring to the initial and final position of respective paragraphs) are used very rarely in texts by expert writers (see the corpora C1 and C2 in Table 3). Specifically, none sequential adverbials were found in the initial paragraphs in the text-organizing function (one paper in corpus C2 included *first* and *second* for listing of arguments within a sentence, though) and just one exception (*finally* in the corpus C2 again) in the final paragraphs.

Papers written by non-native experts resemble those written by expert native users of English, particularly in the lower use of sentence adverbials (when compared with

non-native novice writers' texts) and avoidance of sequential adverbials, preferring other cohesive devices instead.

Obviously the presented findings (and especially the percentages of calculated occurrences) cannot be interpreted as an ultimate picture describing the use of sentence adverbials in English academic texts. The lists of sentence adverbials, their frequencies and mutual ratios within and between individual corpora are likely to change with every addition of new materials into the corpora. The results would certainly differ with inclusion of texts from other scientific disciplines or by expanding the corpora to other academic genres. Nevertheless, it seems that the established results illustrate quite aptly the main tendencies in the application of sentence adverbials in academic papers and essays in the humanities generally, or in linguistics and language teaching methodology specifically. As the differences revealed between native and non-native writers and between novice and expert writers are quite significant and can be logically explained, it may be reasonably assumed that they have more general validity and that they apply even beyond the limits of the disciplines in question.

A global question suggested in this paper remains to be answered: How important is the difference between the usage of otherwise appropriate linguistic devices preferred by English native vs. non-native writers in a discourse situation where English is no longer the domain of its native speakers? It seems that in the present-day world where English is used as the lingua franca in so many different areas (including academic discourse) there is a tendency to create discipline-specific vocabularies and even distributional patterns of lexical and grammatical devices. For this reason, deviations from the native norm, as long as they are within a norm of grammatical and lexical correctness (or appropriacy), are fully acceptable. The newly emerging regular usages thus contribute to forming a style of a fully functional non-native EAP.

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