

LINKING ADVERBIALS IN ESTONIAN SCHOOL-LEAVERS' ENGLISH STATE EXAMINATION ESSAYS

Reeli Torn-Leesik, Liina Tammekänd

Abstract. This exploratory study investigates the use of linking adverbials (LAs) in argumentative English essays written by Estonian school-leavers as part of their state examination in English. Using a sub-corpus of 150 essays from the English State Examination Corpus (ESEC) and comparing it to British students' A-level¹ essays from the Louvain Corpus of Native English Essays (LOCNESS), this paper examines the frequency, variety, and semantic categories of LAs employed by Estonian school-leavers. The results indicate that, compared to native speakers, who demonstrate a more balanced and varied use across semantic categories of LAs, Estonian L1 learners markedly overuse enumeration and addition adverbials (e.g., *firstly*, *secondly*, *also*). The study highlights the tendency of Estonian learners to rely on familiar LAs, often resulting in formulaic and overly structured essays. This overuse may be attributed to teaching practices that emphasise explicit marking of cohesion – or to insufficient instruction in the use of other cohesive devices.

Keywords: argumentative essays, cohesion, linking adverbials, Estonian learner English

1. Introduction

School-leavers in Estonia are required to take a state examination in English at the end of their secondary education. The examination includes an argumentative essay to demonstrate their written language skills. An important element of a well-written essay is clear structure, characterised by cohesion and coherence. One way to achieve cohesion is by using linking devices, of which linking adverbials are crucial in conveying semantic connections between different parts of the text. School-leavers often find it difficult to employ these links in their writing in a native-like manner.

¹ A-level refers to General Certificate of Education Advanced Level which is an advanced qualification for ages 16–18 in England, Wales, Northern Ireland, the Channel Islands, and the Isle of Man.

Previous research on learner English writing (Altenberg, Tapper 1998, Appel, Szeib 2018, Leńko-Szymańska 2008, Narita et al. 2004, Ha 2016, Rørvik, Egan 2013, Tankó 2004) has revealed that novice writers often exhibit a lack of register awareness and tend to overuse linking adverbials (LAs) across semantic categories. The difficulty in the use of LAs may be explained by their diverse nature and the specifics of their discourse-organising functions. The problem may also lie in the way they have been presented in learning material as well as in insufficient clarification provided when teaching them (see McCarthy 1991). The authors' personal experience as teacher trainers has shown that language learners are often presented with long lists of LAs, with no thorough explanation of the difference between various forms and uses. Also, textbooks tend to divide LAs into various semantic categories (e.g. time, addition, contrast, etc.) but often fail to accompany these with explanations of differences between category members (see Soars et al. 2015: 100 or Norris, French 2014: 158, 223). Any of the above may lead to incorrect use by students.

To date, there has been no thorough study of the use of LAs by Estonian English learners. While Rummel (2005, 2010) investigated the readability of academic texts, including a discussion on the use of cohesive devices, the only available study addressing linking adverbials is Merilaine's unpublished MA thesis (2015), which focuses on the frequency and lexical variability of such constructions in university entrance examination essays for the English language and literature programme. The aim of the present study is to analyse the use of linking adverbials by Estonian learners of English in their English state examination essays. The study is an exploratory one. Unlike the university entrance examination essays analysed by Merilaine (2015), which are set as a reading-to-write task, the state examination essays are written without – and do not reflect the influence of – a base text. For the present study, a learner corpus comprising 150 essays across three proficiency levels (CEFR A2, B1 and B2²) was analysed.

The paper is structured as follows. Section 2 introduces the notion of cohesion and discusses the use of LAs as a cohesive device. It also provides a brief overview of previous studies on the use of LAs by learners of English with different L1s. Section 3 presents the data, methods and results of the current study. The paper ends with some concluding remarks.

2. Cohesion and linking adverbials

This section looks at LAs as a cohesive device and presents the semantic categories that they fall into. It also gives a brief overview of previous studies on the use of LAs by learners of English with a different L1.

2.1. Linking adverbials as a cohesive device

According to Halliday and Hasan (1976), cohesion is a semantic concept referring to meaningful connections within a text. Cohesion gives texts a sense of unity, distinguishing them from random sequences of sentences. Carter and McCarthy (2006)

² According to the CEFR (Common European Framework of Reference), there are six reference levels of language ability, of which A1 and A2 refer to basic, B1 and B2 to independent and C1 and C2 to proficient users.

argue that this unity is achieved through cohesive links between sentences, where understanding one item depends on another item. Halliday and Hasan, along with Carter and McCarthy, maintain that cohesion between sentences can be achieved by grammatical as well as lexical means. While lexical cohesion is achieved through the choice of words, grammatical cohesion involves reference, substitution and ellipsis. As a cohesive device, conjunction is primarily grammatical, although – by creating cohesion through conjunctive elements which do not link to other parts of the text directly, yet imply their presence by the meanings they convey – it also includes a lexical aspect. Halliday and Hasan point out that when compared to other devices, conjunction is particularly difficult to identify, as conjunctive relations are not dependent on the sequence of items in the text. Thus, if two sentences are connected by a conjunction, they retain their relationship even if the order in which the sentences are presented changes. The role of LA can be fulfilled by conjunctions (e.g., *and*, *but*, *so*, *yet*) and adverbs (e.g., *then*, *next*, *accordingly*, *nevertheless*), as well as by prepositional phrases and expressions (e.g., *on the contrary*, *as a result of that*) that function as adverbials.

Grammarians often use different terminology to refer to LAs, calling them conjunctives and discourse adjuncts (Halliday, Hasan 1976), conjunctive adjuncts (Halliday, Hasan 1976, Huddleston, Pullum 2002), conjuncts (Quirk et al. 1985), or – as used in this article – linking adverbials (Biber et al. 2021).

LAs do not change the basic meaning of the clauses they link and are also distinct from the principal structure of the sentence (Quirk et al. 1985: 631–632, Huddleston, Pullum 2002: 776). Formally, LAs can be realised by different structures: they can take the form of simple adverbs, adverb phrases, prepositional phrases, finite and non-finite clauses (Biber et al. 2021: 876). Semantically, they also exhibit a degree of variety. For instance, Biber et al. (2021) differentiate between six semantic categories of linking adverbials: enumeration and addition, summation, apposition, result and inference, contrast and concession, and transition (see Table 1 for examples).

Table 1. Biber et al's (2021) six general semantic categories of linking adverbials

Category	Examples
Enumeration and addition	enumeration: <i>first, second, lastly, firstly, secondly, thirdly</i> (etc.), <i>in the first/second place, first of all, for one thing, for another (thing), to begin with, next</i>
	addition: <i>in addition, further, similarly, also, by the same token, further(more), likewise, moreover</i>
Summation	<i>in sum, to conclude, all in all, in conclusion, overall, to conclude, to summarise</i>
Apposition	<i>which is to say, in other words, i.e., that is, for example/instance, namely, specifically</i>
Result and inference	result: <i>therefore, consequently, thus, as a result, hence, in consequence, so</i> (in conversation)
	inference: <i>then</i>
Contrast and concession	contrast: <i>conversely, instead, on the contrary, in contrast, by comparison</i>
	concession: <i>anyhow, besides, nevertheless, still, in any case, at any rate, in spite of that, after all</i>
Transition	<i>now and meanwhile, incidentally, by the way</i>

The above-mentioned semantic categories of LA differ in frequency in different registers. For instance, compared to other genres LAs are used more frequently in academic prose, in which presenting and supporting arguments by overtly marking connections between ideas is essential. When discussing the findings from the Longman Spoken and Written English Corpus, Biber et al. (2021: 872–873) point out that, although all semantic categories of LA are used in academic prose, the one that is found most frequently is that of result/inference, used to signal the conclusion the author wants the reader to reach. While appositional LAs are used to restate and clarify claims and present evidence, contrastive/concessive LAs help the author emphasise contrasting information. Enumerative LAs are a means to structure the information, signalling where readers are in the text. Transition LAs, however, are infrequent in academic prose. Biber et al. (2021: 850) also note that similarly to LAs, also some stance adverbials (e.g., *in my opinion*, *in fact*) may have a linking function.

2.2. Previous research on the use of linking adverbials by learners of English

Previous studies of English learner use of LAs (e.g., Appel 2020, Appel, Szeib 2018, Ha 2015, Rørvik, Egan 2013, Leńko-Szymańka 2008, Wei-yu Chen 2006, Tankó 2004, Bolton et al. 2002, Alfenberg, Tapper 1998, Granger, Tyson 1996) focus on patterns of over-, under- and misuse of LAs across a range of L1 backgrounds, including Hungarian, Swedish, French, Japanese, Korean, Chinese and Arabic. The proficiency levels of participants in the studies vary, with some focusing on intermediate and others on advanced learners. Several studies (e.g., Appel, Szeib 2018, Rørvik, Egan 2013, Tankó 2004, Alfenberg, Tapper 1998) analyse argumentative essays that have either been collected from learner corpora, such as the International Corpus of Learner English (ICLE), or written specifically for research purposes.

The studies vary in their research designs and focus. LAs have been extracted either manually (e.g., Appel, Szeib 2018, Wei-yu Chen 2006, Bolton et al. 2002) or automatically (e.g., Leńko-Szymańka 2008, Granger, Tyson 1996) and categorised into different function groups utilising preexisting taxonomies such as those by Quirk et al. (1985) or Biber et al. (1999). For instance, both Appel and Szeib (2018) and Granger and Tyson (1996) rely on the taxonomy by Quirk et al. (1985), with the former manually extracting LAs and the latter using automatic extraction methods. Rørvik and Egan (2013) and Leńko-Szymańka (2008) compare learner writing and professional writing, while Rørvik and Egan (2013) analyse novice and expert writers' use of LAs within the same language group focusing on L1 transfer.

L1 transfer, proficiency, and a lack of awareness of formal language registers have an influence on over- and underuse of LAs in English learner writing. In their study of French learners, Granger and Tyson (1996) observed an overuse of LAs, such as *moreover* and *in fact*, while contrastive adverbials, such as *however*, were underused, which they explain with L1 influence. Narita et al. (2004) found that Japanese learners over-relied on enumerative LAs, such as *for example*, but neglected inferential and contrastive LAs, such as *then*, *yet* and *instead*. Appel and Szeib's (2018) study on Chinese and Arabic learners demonstrated that Chinese

learners overused contrastive adverbials, while Arabic learners favoured additive connectors. Ha's (2015) study on Korean learners indicated that their overuse of the sequential adverbials *firstly* and *secondly* could be linked to lower levels of proficiency. The studies by Alfenberg and Tapper (1998), who observed that Swedish learners underused formal English LAs, and also by Ha (2015), who found that Korean learners overused colloquial LAs such as *so*, suggest a lack of register awareness. These insights into the patterns of LA use across various L1 backgrounds highlight a critical gap in learners' understanding and application of LAs.

This gap is particularly evident in Tankó's 2004 study into LA use in Hungarian university students' argumentative essays. He found that Hungarian university students frequently overuse enumerative, additive, and summative LAs, such as *first*, *also*, and *in conclusion*, leading to overly structured and formulaic essays. In Tankó's opinion, students are aware of the need to use LAs for creating structure and cohesion, but rely on a limited range, preferring familiar LAs over more sophisticated ones. According to Tankó, this suggests a restricted range of expression and possible difficulties with handling complex arguments. He attributes this overuse to teaching practices that emphasise explicit cohesion, indicating a need for more nuanced instruction to help students use connectors more effectively and naturally.

Previous research consistently highlights that learners favour simplistic LAs, resulting in formulaic writing and limited expression. The reliance on a limited range of LAs, as demonstrated by Tankó (2004), indicates a lack of awareness of how to use more sophisticated connectors, suggesting a need for improvement of teaching strategies.

3. The study

3.1. Material and methods

One of the prerequisites for completing one's secondary education in Estonia is passing a foreign language examination (National Curriculum for Upper Secondary Schools 2014). English is the most popular foreign language taken in upper secondary school, and the number of candidates choosing it as one of their school-leaving exams is consistently high. The state examination in English is a bi-level examination at CEFR common reference levels B1 and B2 (Türk, Tender 2013, Alas, Liiv 2014). It is a 100-point examination based on the national curriculum and consists of writing, listening, reading and speaking papers. The use of aids such as dictionaries is not allowed. Candidates whose result is 75 points and higher and those making 50–74 points earn a B2 or B1 certificate respectively. Students who score under 50 points do not receive a B-level certificate (Kriisa n.a). The most difficult part of the examination has been the writing paper, with the average result of about 64% (Kriisa n.a). The paper consists of two tasks: 1) a transactional letter (120 words) and 2) an essay/a report (200 words).

The present study examined Estonian L1 school-leavers' English state examination essays from 2015, 2018, 2019, 2022, and 2023. All the essays were anonymised to protect the identities of the participants. The study was approved by the Research Ethics Committee of the University of Tartu. The corpus (the English

state examination corpus or ESEC) included 150 essays (a total of 35,368 running words). Essays awarded 50 or more points qualified for B1 and B2 CEFR certificates and were grouped into corresponding sub-corpora (B1 and B2). Those marked below 50 points did not receive a certificate but were classified, for the purposes of the present study, as a sub-corpus corresponding to CEFR level A2 (basic user proficiency). Specifically, the A2 sub-corpus contained 4,739, the B1 sub-corpus 11,012 and the B2 sub-corpus 19,617 running words. Including the A2-level essays provided a better understanding of potential usage differences across proficiency levels. For comparison, the study incorporated British students' A-level essays written for the General Certificate of Education Advanced Level Qualifications (GCE A-level) from the Louvain Corpus of Native English Essays³ (LOCNESS). The A-levels sub-corpus consists of 60,209 words of argumentative essays written by students in the final years of secondary education in the UK.

Table 2. The corpora studied

Corpus/Sub-Corpus		Running words
English State Examination Corpus (ESEC)		35,368
CEFR levels	A2	4,739
	B1	11,012
	B2	19,617
GCE A-level essays (LOCNESS)		60,209

Data preparation involved digitising and keyboarding the essays from state examinations in English. LAs were extracted manually from both the ESEC and A-level essays. Identified LAs were then analysed using AntConc's *Word*, *N-gram*, and *Key Word in Context* tools. To account for the difference in corpus size, the frequency of LAs was normalised per 1000 words. The ten most frequent LAs in the ESEC, its three proficiency-level sub-corpora and the A-level sub-corpus of the LOCNESS corpus were compared. The final analysis focused on identifying unique usage tendencies related to proficiency levels and differences between Estonian and British school-leavers.

3.2. Results and discussion

Table 3 presents the ten most frequent LAs in the ESEC and A-level essays from LOCNESS. Analysis shows that the most frequent LA used by Estonian learners of English was *for example/instance*, which was the second most frequent LA in native-speaker essays. The most frequent LA in British students' essays was *however*, which also occurred in the ESEC but came only seventh in the frequency list. *Also* as a LA showed a similar frequency in both corpora – third and fourth respectively in the ESEC and A-level essays. The other two LAs that occurred among the ten most frequent were *firstly* and *therefore*. While *firstly* did not occur among the first three most frequent LAs in either corpus, *therefore* was the third most frequent one in the A-level essays and the eighth in the ESEC.

318 ³ The LOCNESS is made up of British students' A-level essays, as well as British and American university students' essays.

Table 3. The ten most frequent LAs in the ESEC and A-level essays (LOCNESS)

ESEC			A-level essays (LOCNESS)		
LA	Freq. per 1000 words	Semantic category	LA	Freq. per 1000 words	Semantic category
1. <i>for example/instance</i>	20.357	apposition	1. <i>however</i>	24.173	contrast/concession
2. <i>in conclusion</i>	11.926	summation	2. <i>for example/instance</i>	10.178	apposition
3. <i>also</i>	11.592	enumeration/addition	3. <i>therefore</i>	10.1	result/inference
4. <i>(in/on/from) the other hand</i>	11.406	contrast/concession	4. <i>also</i>	6.457	enumeration/addition
5. <i>firstly</i>	11.027	enumeration/addition	5. <i>thus</i>	3.311	result/inference
6. <i>secondly</i>	9.048	enumeration/addition	6. <i>so</i>	2.98	result/inference
7. <i>however</i>	7.917	contrast/concession	7. <i>in my opinion</i>	2.65	stance
8. <i>therefore</i>	6.22	result/inference	8. <i>firstly</i>	2.484	enumeration/addition
9. <i>furthermore</i>	5.372	enumeration/addition	9. <i>in fact</i>	2.318	stance
10. <i>first of all</i>	3.422	enumeration/addition	10. <i>in general</i>	1.822	summation (stance)

When looking at the range of semantic categories of LAs, Estonian school-leavers across all proficiency levels most frequently use LAs of the enumeration and addition category (*also, firstly, secondly, furthermore, first of all*). Such usage demonstrates over-reliance on explicit signalling when structuring their essays. It may be the case that students are taught writing using a template that lists enumeration/addition LAs as a means of linking different parts of the essay although such explicit enumeration is not always relevant. These findings are very similar to Tankó's (2004) results. An extract from an ESEC B2-level essay written on the topic of studying and working abroad in example (1) illustrates the use well. The student represents all their ideas as a list to support their claims.

- (1) It is known that most of the young Estonians leave their native country to study or work abroad. [---]. **In my opinion** this is a big problem for the country and for those who stay behind and do not leave.
- Firstly** I would say that one thing that will motivate them to return would be bigger paychecks in every working place. If people leave to get more money, [---].
- Secondly**, when people leave to get a better education, I think it is [---]. Every country can hire better teachers and [---]. **Therefore** I see, if there could be more good or [---].

Thirdly I think that the prices of [---]. So when people leave because they are not satisfied with their income and earn more money abroad, I think that Estonian real estate [---].

There can be so much more different opinions about this topic. [---]

Other semantic categories among the ten most frequent LAs are apposition, summation, contrast/concession and result/inference. The summative LA *in conclusion*, which is the second most frequent LA in the ESEC and which is illustrated in example (2), fits well into the enumeration/addition model (*first(ly)-second(ly)-in conclusion*) as it sums up the listed items.

(2) In nowadays many young people dream [---].

I do not really following now [---]. But **on the other hand** people, who do sports also became popular and famous.

Firstly, I think why many young people want to become famous – it is money and a big part of attention. But many young people does not want to work. I mean, if you want [---].

Secondly, if you becoming famous, you also will have a many challenges [---].

In conclusion I want to say, that yeah, many young people dream about becoming famous, but some time [---].

The appositional LA *for example/for instance* is the most frequently used one in Estonian school-leavers' English essays. It is used where the author needs to cite evidence to support a claim they are making. The contrast/concession category was represented by *however* and (*in/on/at*) + *the other hand*. Adverbials of this category mark contrast, alternatives and concession. Some are unambiguously representative of one of the three, while others may combine elements of contrast and concession (Biber et al. 2021: 878).

The reference data show that native speakers use a much broader range of LAs and exhibit a more pronounced balance in their use (see Table 3 above). One of the most striking differences between Estonian learners' and native speakers' data is the use of enumerative/addition adverbials. Only two enumerative/addition LAs (*also, firstly*) occurred among the ten most frequent LAs in British students' essays in contrast to five in the ESEC. Estonian school-leavers tend to overuse such LAs, which also coincides with the findings in Tankó (2004) on Hungarian learners of English. The contrast/concessive LA *however* – common in academic and argumentative prose in general (see Biber et al. 2021) – appears frequently in native speakers' essays. Similarly to Estonian students, the appositional LA *for example/for instance* is used quite often in native speakers' argumentative essays, but is in part dictated by the genre. Unlike in ESEC essays, the result/inference LAs *therefore* and *thus* were frequent in native speaker writing to draw conclusions and show logical progression. This coincides with Biber et al's (2021) corpus findings. Analysis of the data showed that English native speakers also use two stance LAs, *in my opinion* and *in fact*, to show the development of ideas through different parts of their text. Biber et al. (2021) note that some linking adverbials blend functions of stance adverbials.

In addition to using LAs, native speakers often used other devices to build cohesion in their essays. The extract in (3) has four instances of LAs (*for example* (twice), *however*, *overall*) while also using nominal reference (*another 'disease'*, *all of these considerations*) and stance expressions (*obviously*) to build cohesion. In contrast, Estonian learners tended to use explicit conjunctive elements in their essays.

- (3) Genetics is one of the fastest growing fields of science [---].
Most people believe that the ability to erase genetic 'flaws' is a good thing, but the key to the problem is knowing when to stop. **I believe** that in some areas there may be a case for genetic manipulation, **for example** the case of Duchenne [---]
Another 'disease' with proven genetic links is Manic Depression. [---] **Obviously** the traits of such people are not wholly genetic, but there must be some genetic influence in the way their minds work.
Any scientist who works in genetics [---]. **However** the scientist is also the first line of defence against the misuse of his discoveries. If a scientist [---].
All of these considerations are continually growing more important as people look to science, almost as a new religion. As people find religion harder to stomach (often due to scientific discoveries - **for example** there is no heaven in the clouds [---]
The Gay Gene Theory was 'proved' over two years ago [---]
Overall, I believe that the 'major burden' of responsibility for scientific discoveries [---]

Table 4 summarises the results for the ten most frequent LAs according to three proficiency levels. As can be seen, B2-level learner essay data are very similar to combined data representing all three proficiency levels (see Table 3) – the most frequent LA is the appositional *for example/for instance* and the most frequent LA function is enumeration/addition.

Table 4. The ten most frequent LAs in Estonian school-leavers' essays according to CEFR levels

Proficiency level	10 most frequent linking adverbials	Norm. freq. per 1000 words	Semantic category
B2	1. <i>for example/instance</i>	19.448	apposition
	2. <i>also</i>	16.312	enumeration/addition
	3. <i>firstly</i>	12.234	enumeration/addition
	4. <i>in conclusion</i>	11.771	summation
	5. <i>secondly</i>	11.725	enumeration/addition
	6. <i>on the other hand</i>	11.350	contrast/concession
	7. <i>however</i>	11.215	contrast/concession
	8. <i>in my opinion</i>	10.277	stance
	9. <i>therefore</i>	9.176	result/inference
	10. <i>furthermore</i>	6.627	enumeration/addition

Proficiency level	10 most frequent linking adverbials	Norm. freq. per 1000 words	Semantic category
B1	1. <i>for example/instance</i>	15.505	apposition
	2. <i>in conclusion</i>	12.769	summation
	3. <i>in my opinion</i>	11.909	stance
	4. <i>on the other hand</i>	9.201	contrast/concession
	5. <i>also</i>	8.173	enumeration/addition
	6. <i>secondly</i>	5.449	enumeration/addition
	7. <i>first of all</i>	4.580	enumeration/addition
	8. <i>furthermore</i>	4.541	enumeration/addition
	9. <i>however</i>	3.632	contrast/concession
	10. <i>therefore</i>	3.632	result/inference
A2	1. <i>also</i>	27.432	enumeration/addition
	2. <i>for example</i>	14.846	apposition
	3. <i>firstly</i>	12.661	enumeration/addition
	4. <i>in my opinion</i>	10.659	stance
	5. <i>in conclusion</i>	10.604	summation
	6. <i>secondly</i>	6.330	enumeration/addition
	7. <i>on the one hand</i>	4.285	contrast/concession
	8. <i>however</i>	4.220	contrast/concession
	9. <i>first of all</i>	2.132	enumeration/addition
	10. <i>in fact</i>	2.132	stance

B1-level learner data do not suggest a major difference in LA use between proficiency levels either. The frequency of LAs is somewhat lower, with *for example/instance*, *in conclusion* and *in my opinion* being the most used. LAs of contrast/concession (*however*) and result/inference (*therefore*) are still present but at lower frequencies compared to B2 learners.

A2-level learner data, however, demonstrate a more limited range of LAs. The most frequent LA is *also*, a basic LA for adding information. It is followed by *for example/for instance*. A2-level learners did not use any result/inference LAs. Instances of *in conclusion* and *however*, representing summation and contrast/concession categories respectively, can be found in the data. The data also show that A2 learners rely heavily on basic enumerative LAs without much variety, as illustrated in (4).

- (4) Nowadays many Estonian people [---].

In my opinion to return to Estonia people just need maybe small motivation because on the others countries they see any good perspectives. People just know about [---].

Firstly, our country need to do a good Universities and Collages and some schools on the Russian languages because many Russian people live from Estonia. [---].

Secondly, a good motivation for our students is schools where we can like and study too. I think it can be change motivation for young people [---].

Finally, for the stop migrate our country need to do somethink because now is hard [---].

Overall, the use of LAs by Estonian learners becomes more varied and sophisticated as they progress from A2 to B2. Although B1 and B2 learners show some use of result- and inference-related LAs, which are common in academic and more formal registers (see Biber et al. 2021), the dominant category still remains that of enumeration/addition. Estonian learners rely heavily on grammatical conjunctions, while native speakers also use lexical elements to create cohesive ties in the text. It may be that conjunctions are easier to teach and to learn than other means of creating cohesion. Native speakers are likely to use more lexical devices for creating cohesion; however, specific comparisons in this respect would require additional research. In terms of LAs, native speakers exhibit a broader and more balanced use of adverbials, employing a greater variety of additive, contrastive, and resultative markers than Estonian learners at all three proficiency levels.

4. Concluding remarks

The aim of this exploratory study was to investigate how Estonian learners of English use LAs in their essays for the state examination in English. The authors analysed a corpus of 150 Estonian learner essays and compared these with British students' A-level essays from LOCNESS, focussing on the frequency and variety of LA use.

The findings of this study align with the results of previous research on the use of LAs by learners of English with different L1. Similarly to the results of Tankó (2004), who identified an overuse of enumerative and additive LAs in Hungarian learners' writing, this study found that Estonian learners of English often rely on such adverbials. The overuse of connectors like *firstly*, *secondly* and *also* may be attributed to teaching practices that focus on explicit, list-like structuring, which often leads to formulaic writing and results in students using a limited range of connectors. The results of the present study also mirror findings by Rørvik and Egan (2013), who noted a more balanced use of LAs by native speakers compared to learners. Native speaker A-level essays in LOCNESS showed greater lexical variety and a more strategic application of LAs, particularly in contrast and resultative functions (e.g., *however*, *therefore*), which reflects a higher level of discourse cohesion.

The study, however, also has some limitations. The analysis is based on a relatively small corpus of 150 essays, which may not fully reflect broader patterns of LA usage among Estonian learners of English. A larger corpus would provide a more reliable understanding of how LAs are employed across different proficiency levels. The analysis is further limited by its focus on argumentative essays (to the exclusion of other types of texts). While the study focuses on LAs, it does not consider other cohesive devices, thus offering a limited view of the cohesive strategies used by Estonian learners in argumentative writing.

Nevertheless, the study has several practical implications for the teaching of English in Estonia. Teachers should move beyond explicit list-based instruction, which tends to result in formulaic writing, and encourage the use of a broader range of semantic categories of LAs. To achieve this, instruction should involve analyses of texts from different genres to demonstrate the impact of register on the use of LAs. Classroom tasks should simulate authentic writing contexts to promote natural use of LAs. Instruction should be tailored to learners' proficiency levels. For instance, A2 learners may benefit from a strong foundation in basic LAs, while B2 learners should focus on developing variety. Incorporating corpus tools, such as AntConc or Sketch Engine, would allow students to explore natural patterns of LA usage in both native and non-native texts. Teachers can design activities using these tools to explore authentic examples of LAs across different contexts. Teacher training programs and educational materials should provide practical guidance on effective methods for teaching LAs, moving beyond rote learning.

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KONNEKTIIVLAIENDID GÜMNAASIUMILÕPETAJATE INGLISE KEELE RIIGIEKSAMI ESSEDES

Reeli Torn-Leesik, Liina Tammekänd

Tartu Ülikool

Artiklis analüüsitakse siduvate üldlaiendite ehk konnektiivlaiendite kasutamist Eesti koolilõpetajate inglise keele riigieksami arutlevates esseedes. Uurimuse käigus võrreldi inglise keele riigieksami korpuse (ESEC) 150 õppijakeelset esseed LOCNESS-i (Louvain Corpus of Native English Essays) Briti keskkooli lõpuesseede alakorpusega. Tulemused näitavad, et Eesti õppijad kasutavad teksti sidustamisel oluliselt rohkem loendamise või täiendamise põhitähendusega konnektiive (nt *firstly, secondly, also*) võrreldes emakeelsete kirjutajatega, kelle siduvate üldlaiendite kasutus on mitmekesisem ja tasakaalustatum. Emakeelsed kirjutajad kasutavad rohkem tulemusele ja järeldusele viitavaid laiendeid (nt *therefore, thus*) ning mitmekesisemaid vastandavaid ja kontekstipõhiseid laiendeid (nt *however, on the other hand*). Lisaks esineb nende tekstides muid sidustamisvahendeid (nt leksikaalne sidusus, seisukohamarkerid).

Õppijate keeletasemete (A2, B1, B2) võrdlemisel selgus, et konnektiivlaiendite kasutus muutub keerukamaks ja mitmekesisemaks keeletaseme tõustes. Siiski on kõigil keeletasemetel domineerivaks semantiliseks kategooriaks loetelule ja täiendamisele viitavad siduvad üldlaiendid.

Üks peamisi põhjusi, miks Eesti õppijad nimetatud laiendeid üle kasutavad, võib olla see, et inglise keele õpikud ja õppemeetodid rõhutavad eksplitsiitset sidusust ega pööra piisavalt tähelepanu ülejäänud sidustamisvahendite kasutamisele. Selle tulemusena võivad esseed muutuda n-ö šabloonseks ja ülestruktureerituks.

Näeme vajadust täiendada õpetamispraktikaid, et julgustada õppijaid kasutama laiemat valikut konnektiivlaiendeid ning neile lisaks teisi sidustamisvahendeid. Abi võib olla ka korpustööriistade kasutamisest inglise keele tundides, tutvustamiseks õppijatele konnektiivlaiendite loomulikke kasutusmustreid koos teiste sidustamisvahenditega.

Võtmesõnad: arutlev essee, kohesioon, konnektiivlaiend, eesti õppijakeel

Reeli Torn-Leesik (University of Tartu), her research interests include morphosyntax (esp. voice constructions), learner language research and first and second language acquisition.
Lossi 3, 51003 Tartu, Estonia
reeli.torn-leesik@ut.ee

Liina Tammekänd (University of Tartu), her research interests include learner language research, second language acquisition and academic writing.
Lossi 3, 51003 Tartu, Estonia
liina.tammekand@ut.ee