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A Comparative Corpus-based Analysis of Boosters in NESs and NNESs' Academic Articles

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
	The purpose of the current study was to examine the frequently used boosters in academic articles written by Native (NESs) and Non-native (NNESs) Speakers of English (Turkish researchers) in the field of English Language Teaching. Investigating whether differences exist in the use of these markers between NESs and NNESs' academic articles was another aim of the study. Within this purpose, data was collected from one hundred academic articles (NESs= 50, NNESs= 50 articles) published between 2016 and 2021 in two different international journals indexed in ERIC by using the keyword 'English Language Teacher Education', and the data were analysed using AntConc concordance tool. Log-likelihood statistics were run to find out whether any significant difference exists between NESs and NNESs' use of boosters in terms of frequency. The analysis revealed that statistically significant underuse of boosters by NESs writers in terms of their use of types of boosters was found.

1. Introduction

In academic writing, producing a cohesive and understandable text using words efficiently is crucial for authors because an academic article reflects the authors' stance i.e., claims or statements on that issue in written discourse. To do this, authors utilise interactional metadiscourse devices in their academic papers. In this sense, Hyland states that "effective academic writing actually depends on interactional elements which supplement propositional information in the text and alert readers to the writer's opinion" (1994, p. 240). In other words, an effective article depends on the author's ability to provide the readers with a tentative data analysis presentation, thus giving the chance for alternative interpretations.

In the field of linguistics, this is referred to as epistemic modality. According to Coates (1987), epistemic modality refers to a speaker or author's confidence or lack of confidence in the way of proposing information. In this regard, Hyland (1994) advocates that an author can express his/her degree of confidence in academic papers by using hedges and boosters (Hyland, 1994). While hedges are a kind of expressions indicating doubt while presenting information by using linguistic devices such as seem, suggest, and indicate. On the contrary, boosters are the author's expressions of certainty by means of using such linguistic items as clearly and obviously (Hyland, 2000).

Based on the literature, as stressed by Abdi, (2011) Hyland's model is the one highly preferred in recent corpus-based metadiscourse studies. Thus, as the model for the present study, Hyland's (2005) metadiscourse markers model was chosen. The categories, functions, and examples about the metadiscourse markers model described by Hyland's (2005) is presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1. A model of metadiscourse in academic texts

Category	Function	Examples
Interactive	**help to guide the reader through the text**	**Resources**
Transitions	express relations between main clauses	In addition; but; thus; and
Frame markers	refer to discourse acts, sequences or stages	finally; to conclude; my purpose is
Endophoric markers	refer to information from other texts	noted above; see figure; in section 2
Evidentials	refer to information from other texts	according to X; Z states
Code glosses	elaborate propositional meaning	namely; e.g.; such as; in other words
Interactional	**Involve the reader in the text**	**Resources**
Hedges	withold commitment and open dialogue	might; perhaps; possible; about
Boosters	emphasize certainty cloze dialogue	in fact; definitely; it is clear that
Attitude markers	express writers' attitude to proposition	unfortunately; I agree; surprisingly
Self-mentions	explicitly reference to author(s)	I; we; my; me; our
Engagement markers	explicitly buid relationship with readers	consider; note; you can see that

As indicated in Table 1, there are two main categories of metadiscourse markers including interactive and interactional, and boosters are under the category of interactional. Broadly speaking, boosters are used to emphasize certainty in writing. To illustrate, *in fact*, *definitely*, *it is clear that* can be given as samples of boosters. As boosters are used by authors to engage with others' socially determined positions (Hyland, 2005) and to mark commitments and beliefs, the use of boosters varies across different cultural and language communities (Connor, 1996; Holmes, 1988). Moreover, Abdi (2011) proposes that academic writers leave their traces in their academic papers which may be linked to their national culture.

Several research have been conducted on hedges and boosters in the related literature (Akbas, 2012, 2014; Can & Yuvayapan, 2018; Chen, 2012; Coates, 1987; Holmes, 1990;

Holtgraves & Lasky, 1999; Kim & Suh, 2014; Shirzadi, Akhgar, Rooholamin, & Shafiee, 2017; Vassileva, 2001; Yağız & Demir, 2015). For instance, Vassileva (2001) conducted a cross-linguistic and comparative study regarding commitment and detachment in English and Bulgarian academic texts. The findings of the study revealed that the number of boosters used in the academic texts of Bulgarian English was over than those of native English. In another study, Akbas (2014) made comparison of Anglophone writers' and Turkish writers' discussion sections of academic texts regarding the interactional discourse markers, and the research findings indicated that a higher mean frequency of boosted sentences were identified in Turkish writers' texts than Anglophone writers. In a similar vein, Shirzadi et al. (2017) examined stance strategies in native and nonnative speakers' English academic writings. The researcher found no statistically significant difference in using stance strategies of native and nonnative writers; however, hedges, attitude markers, and self-mentions were more utilised in native writers' texts than nonnatives, whereas nonnative writers used boosters in their papers more. In the same way, Kim and Suh (2014) investigated native and Korean students' epistemic rhetorical stance in English writing, and when compared to the native counterparts, Korean writers tended to use more boosters indicating a stronger stance of certainty on the claims or statements in their papers. In contrast to the previously mentioned studies, Akbas (2012) reported that Anglophone writers' usage of boosters while writing dissertation abstracts was higher than Turkish writers. Likewise, Yağız and Demir (2015) compared non-native writers and Anglophone writers in terms of authorial commitment, and maintained that boosters were utilised more by Anglophone writers than non-native writers.

Although extensive research has been conducted related to the use of metadiscourse in academic writing, there is still a need to investigate how metadicourse markers as linguistic devices make contribution to authors' stance-taking. (Lafuente-Milan, 2010). In the light of the relevant literature, it is obvious that metadiscourse markers are referred to one of the important linguistic devices in the academic genre. Therefore, mastering of these markers both for NESs and NNESs academic writers is significant to have an important place in the academic world. In this sense, the present study aims to examine the use of boosters as one of the interactional metadiscourse markers in academic papers of NESs and NNESs writers. More specifically, this study focuses on the academic articles in the field of foreign language teacher education by comparing the use of boosters of NESs and NNESs through a corpus-based analysis. Within this concern, the researcher benefited from the relevant literature to decide which metadiscourse markers model to adopt for the aim of the current research study.

The purpose of the study was twofold. First, it was aimed at exploring the frequently used boosters as interactional metadiscourse features by NESs and NNESs in academic articles; and second aim was to examine whether differences exist in the use of these markers between NESs and NNESs' academic articles. Within this purpose, the study specifically aims at addressing the following research questions:

1. What is frequency of use of boosters by NESs and NNESs writers?
2. Is there any significant difference between NESs and NNESs writers in using boosters, in their academic articles?

2. Research Methodology

In this current descriptive-comparative study, two corpora were used for analysis with the purpose of investigating and comparing the use of boosters in academic articles of native and nonnative writers in the field of English Language Teacher Education (ELTE). The reason behind selecting the articles purely written about the issues of ELTE resides in the fact that metadiscourse devices are claimed to show differences across disciplines (Hyland, 2005). Furthermore, the relevant literature is silent about the authors' usage of interactional metadiscourse markers in this field. To figure out and compare the usage of boosters by NESs and NNESs in academic articles of authors from ELTE is assumed to contribute to the literature by shedding light on the authors' way in their academic writing process in addition to presenting the comparison of NESs and NNESs' expressions of their stance in academic papers.

2.1. Corpora of the study

A hundred academic articles (50 for NESs and 50 for NNESs writers) were selected from TESOL journal and Journal of Language and Linguistic Studies (JLLS) as the corpora, respectively for NESs and NNESs writers. To this aim, the keyword 'English Language Teacher Education' was utilised and the relevant academic articles of NESs and NNESs writers published between 2016 and 2021 years were collected as data of the present corpus-based study. Each of the selected articles were examined and separated into two groups as NESs and NNESs. Furthermore, each article was coded in accordance with the writers of them, for instance, NESs 1, NNES 2, and so on. Before uploading the texts on the AntConc software, all texts obtained from the selected articles were cleaned manually by excluding the references, tables, figures, appendix, author information and so on in order to get more reliable data. The corpus used for NESs writers included 287061 words in total while the corpus which was used for NNESs writers included a total number of 313243 words in the current study.

2.2. Data Analysis

Within the concern of the research, data was analysed using AntConc concordance tool and supplemented by manual analysis in accordance with Hyland's taxonomy of metadiscourse, and the following list for boosters was used in the present study in order to detect boosters in two corpora based on Hyland's (Hyland, 2000) and Serholt's (Serholt, 2012) studies. All the forty-three booster items listed in the linguistic model of the current study were used during data analysis. Boosters were grouped into 4 categories namely modal auxiliaries, adjective and adverbs, lexical verbs, and miscellaneous. The first category consists of modal auxiliaries like have to, need to, must, and should. Adjectives and adverbs such as certain/certainly, definite/definitely, obvious/obviously, clear/clearly formed another category. Lexical verbs like show, demonstrate, prove, realize, believe, and find were classified as the third category. Then, multi-word features like it is known that, a/ the fact that were also categorized as boosters in this study. In order to ensure credibility, the data analysis results were shown to another expert from the field. Table 2 shows the boosters specifically used in the study:

Table 2. Table specifying the boosters used in the study.

Interactional Metadiscourse Device	Type	Resources
Boosters	Type 1:Modal Auxiliaries	have to (has to, had to) must need to (-s, -ed) should
	Type 2: Adjective and adverbs	actually (in fact) always certain/certainly clear/clearly definite/definitely obvious/obviously substantially undeniable/undeniably
	Type 3: Lexical verbs	believe (-s, -ed) demonstrate (-s, -ed) find (finds, found) prove (-s, -ed) realize (-s, -ed) show (-s, -ed)
	Type 4: Miscellaneous	a/the fact that It is known that

Based on the linguistic model presented in Table 2, first, the instances of occurrences of each booster were detected searching in the Antconc. Secondly, the frequency of each booster booster was documented. Thirdly, each booster was contextually analyzed by reading the surrounding text. Then, only items qualified as boosters were included in the display of the data. For instance, note the differences in the following sentences:

1. *"It is <u>certain</u> that the efficiency of a teaching programme can be understood when it is applied, in other words, with the knowledge, skills and qualifications that teacher candidates reflect after their graduation."*

    Extracted from NNESs 2

2. *"They also reported having some difficulties in <u>certain</u> aspects of flipped or online instruction such as planning studies, managing time, meeting deadlines, and taking the responsibility of their own learning."*

    Extracted from NNESs 6

While certain in example 1 has the role of a booster, the same word in example 2 functions as an adjective that specifies which aspects were analyzed.

3. *"From the discussions, it became <u>clear</u> that students' lived experiences as immigrant women in a violent, anti--immigrant political and social climate, as well as their family and social histories, played a role in their perceptions of culture."*

    Extracted from NESs 42

4. *"Teachers identified a <u>clear</u> division in their professional roles as an obstacle to collaboration for writing instruction specifically and teaching more generally."*

    Extracted from NESs 50

Whereas clear in example 3 was used as a booster in the proposition of information, the same word in example 4 has as an adjective role that specifies which division were analyzed.

5. *"Future and current teachers <u>need to</u> take into account the political and critical dimensions of language learning and teaching."*

<div align="right">Extracted from NESs 27</div>

6. *"Thus, there is a <u>need</u> to propose a few strategies for TESOL teachers to develop their intercultural identity and intercultural communication competence."*

<div align="right">Extracted from NESs 22</div>

In example 5, need to functions as a modal auxiliary indicating a booster. In contrast, the same word in example 6 functions as a noun.

7. *The teachers ranged in age from 31 to 40 and <u>had</u> 8 to 18 years of teaching experience."*

<div align="right">Extracted from NESs 10</div>

8. *"Compared to their teaching in Turkey, which <u>had to</u> strictly follow a syllabus and had no freedom to decide what to teach, the five Turkish teachers creatively designed teaching topics and implemented communicative language teaching in the U.S.-based classrooms."*

<div align="right">Extracted from NESs 9</div>

In example 8, had to functions as a past form of the modal auxiliary (have to) indicating a booster; however, the same word in example 7 was used as the past form of verb have specifying the possession of 8 to 18 years of teaching experience.

As for data analysis process, raw frequency values of each booster used by NESs and NNESs' writers in their academic articles were calculated. Moreover, the raw frequency values were normalized per 10.000 words to make comparison of each corpus. For calculation of the normalization, the following normalization formula was used similar to Can and Yuvayapan 's (2018) study. To get the normalized frequency value of a booster, raw frequency value was multiplied by 10.000. After that, the result was divided by the corpus size.

3. Findings

3.1. Overview use of Boosters in NESs and NNESs writers' academic articles

The overall distribution of boosters in NESs and NNESs writers' academic articles is presented in Table 2. Based on the frequency of boosters in both corpora, it is obvious that NNESs writers tended more to use boosters to express certainty in their academic articles. A frequency of 1798 in NESs and 2529 in NNESs were found. The normalized frequency levels for NESs and NNESs were found as 62.0 and 80.0 respectively. As seen in Table 3, it is obvious that NESs underuse boosters compared to NNESs.

Table 3. Overall Distribution of boosters in NESs and NNESs writers' academic articles

	NESs	NNESs
Corpus size in words	287061	313243
Number of boosters (n)	1798	2529
n /10.000	62.0	80.0

n: raw frequency of NESs and NNESs writers' booster types
n /10.000: frequency of NESs and NNESs writers' booster types per 10.000 words

In order to examine whether any significantly difference exists between NESs and NNESs' use of boosters in terms of frequency, Log likelihood analysis was done. Based on the findings, an underuse of boosters with -0.37 LL value by NESs was identified, indicating a statistically significance. On the other hand, O1 and O2 show the frequencies of boosters in

NESs and NNESs writers' academic articles respectively, and % 1 refers to relative frequency of boosters in NESs. The results display that 0.63 boosters were employed by NESs per 100 words while 0.81 boosters were used in their academic articles per 100 words by NNESs, as %2 indicates.

Table 4. LL ratio of Boosters in NESs and NNESs writers' academic articles

	1. NESs	4.	7. NNESs	10.	13. LL	16. ELL
	2.	5.	8.	11.	Ratio	17.
	3. (O1)	6. %1	9. (O2)	12. %2	14.	18. (p<
					15.	0.05)
Boosters	1798	0.63	2529	0.81 -	-0.37	0.00001

O1 is observed frequency in Corpus 1
O2 is observed frequency in Corpus 2
%1 and %2 values show relative frequencies in the texts.
+ indicates overuse in O1 relative to O2
- indicates underuse in O1 relative to O2

3.2. Categorical use of Boosters in NESs and NNESs writers' academic articles

In order to examine whether any significantly difference exists between NESs and NNESs' use of booster types, Log likelihood (LL) analysis was run. And the findings were presented in Table 5. It was found that all types of boosters showed difference significantly regarding their frequency in both NESs and NNESs' corpora. The LL value for modal auxiliaries was -0.39, while it was calculated -0.14 for adjective and adverbs. The LL values for Type 3 and Type 4 were -0.31 and -1.38 respectively. The significance values for each type of boosters supported these statistically significant differences between NESs and NNESs writers' academic articles.

Table 5. LL ratio of Booster types in NESs and NNESs writers' academic articles

Booster Types	1. NESs	3. NNESs	5. LL Ratio	8. ELL
	2. n	4. n	6.	9. (p< 0.05)
			7.	
Type 1: Modal Auxiliaries	741	1062	-0.39	0.00001
Type 2: Adjective and adverbs	170	204	-0.14	0.00000
Type 3: Lexical verbs	843	1138	-0.31	0.00001
Type 4: Miscellaneous	44	125	-1.38	0.00001

n: raw frequency of each type of boosters
+ indicates overuse in O1 relative to O2
- indicates underuse in O1 relative to O2

In the lights of the findings presented so far, it is clear that a statistically significant underuse of boosters by NESs writers in terms of the use of types of boosters was found. To get a deeper understanding of the frequency distribution of types of boosters in NESs and NNESs writers' academic articles, the findings are indicated in Table 6.

Table 6. Frequency Distribution of Booster types in NESs and NNESs writers' academic articles

Boosters	NESs			Boosters	NNESs		
	1. n	2. n/10.000	3. %		4. n	5. n/10.000	6. %
Type 1:Modal Auxiliaries	741	25	41	Type 1:Modal Auxiliaries	1062	33	41
Type 2: Adjective and adverbs	170	5	9	Type 2: Adjective and adverbs	204	6	8
Type 3: Lexical verbs	843	29	46	Type 3: Lexical verbs	1138	36	44
Type 4: Miscellaneous	44	1	2	Type 4: Miscellaneous	125	3	4

n: raw frequency of each type of boosters
n /10.000: frequency of each type of boosters per 10.000 words

Lexical verbs as boosters showed the highest frequency level in both corpora consisting of 46 % of NESs and 44 % of NNESs as indicated in Table 6. Although 29 lexical verbs functioning booster per 10.000 words were identified in NESs, they occurred 36 times per 10.000 words in NNESs. As having the second highest frequency we see modal auxiliaries used to express booster by NESs and NNESs writers with similar percentage 41%. Whereas 25 modal auxiliaries functioning booster per 10.000 words were detected in NESs, they occurred 33 times per 10.000 words in NNESs. Then, adjective and adverbs follow with the frequency values of 9% of NESs and 8% of NNESs writers. Adjective and adverbs functioning booster appeared 5 and 6 times per 10.000 words respectively in NESs and NNESs writers' academic papers. As seen in Table 6, it is clear that miscellaneous type had the lowest frequency value in both corpora including 2 % of NESs and 4% of NNESs. Based on the results, it can be clearly claimed that NNESs writers tend to take a stronger stance with their use of boosters in comparison to NESs in their academic papers.

4. Discussion

As mentioned before, the purpose of this study was twofold. One of the aims was to examine the frequencies of the use of boosters in NESs and NNESs writers' academic articles, adopting the metadiscourse markers model of Hyland (2005). The first research question of the present study was: What is the frequency of s use of boosters by NESs and NNESs writers. With regard to the first research question and based on the findings obtained from the descriptive analysis, it could be concluded that NNESs writers' frequencies of boosters were more than NESs writers. The second research question was about investigating whether any significant difference exists between NESs and NNESs writers in using boosters in their academic article. In response to the second research question, the results of the study revealed that there was a statistically significant difference in terms of using boosters between NESs and NNESs writers. That is to say, it was concluded that NESs writers employed booster markers less frequently than NNESs writers.

The results of this study partly support Shirzadi et al. (2017)'s study who conducted a corpus-based contrastive analysis of stance strategies in native and nonnative speakers' English academic writings. That is, the findings of the present research also indicated that nonnative writers made more use of boosters than native writers in their academic papers. Whereas Shirzadi et al. (2017) found no statistically significant difference, in the current study, it was found that a statistically significant difference existed in terms of using boosters between NESs and NNESs writers. On the other hand, the findings of this study revealed that NESs and NNESs writers used of lexical verbs as boosters at the highest frequency levels in their academic articles similar to the results of Farrokhi & Emami' (2008) study. In line with the findings of the current study, Vassileva (2001) also found that the number of boosters used in the academic texts of Bulgarian English was over than those of native English. Similarly, Akbas (2014)'s research results were also in tune with the present study in that a higher mean frequency of boosted sentences were identified in Turkish writers' texts than Anglophone writers. However, there were also some studies in contrast to the results of this study revealing that the use of boosters are higher in the writings of native speakers of English than nonnatives (Akbas, 2012; Can & Yuvayapan, 2018; Yağız & Demir, 2015).

5. Conclusion

The present comparative corpus-based study aimed to examine the frequently used boosters in academic articles written by NESs and NNESs Speakers of English from the field of English language Teaching, published between 2016 and 2021. The selected articles were collected from two different international journals indexed in ERIC. The significance of this research lies in the fact that the focus of this corpus-based study is English Language teacher education. Therefore, the current study contributes to the field of corpus driven analysis regarding foreign language teacher education.

The findings of the current study indicated that NESs writers made less use of boosters in their academic articles, while NNESs writers tended to use boosters more frequently indicating a stronger stance in their academic writing. The overall difference between NESs and NNESs writers regarding the frequency of use of booster showed statistical significance. In the light of these findings, it can be suggested that English teachers could apply different categories of interactional metadiscourse markers in their classes to teach their students how to express their stance in their academic writing. Another implication based on the results of this study can be related to ESP (English for Specific Purposes). As it is well-known, today the language of science is English in all disciplines. Thus, using metadiscourse markers appropriately without overusing or underusing can give chances to both native and nonnative writers of expressing their epistemic modality more vividly and comprehensibly throughout the world.

The current study has some limitations. First, the number of the selected articles is limited to one hundred academic articles. Then, only two international journals indexed in ERIC were searched; however, for future studies, different databases can be applied, and more journals can be reviewed for the selection of the articles written by NESs and NNESs Speakers of English in the field of English language Teaching. In addition, in this study, the articles published between 2016 and 2021 were analysed indicating another limitation of the present study in that the last five years of research articles in the relevant journal.

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