Korean College EFL Students’ Use of Contrastive Conjunctions in Argumentative Writing*

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This paper examines how Korean college EFL students use contrastive conjunctions in their argumentative writing in comparison with native speaker college students’ use of them. The data consists of a Korean college students’ writing corpus, which was divided into a lower proficiency group and a higher proficiency group, and an American and British university students’ writing corpus. The findings reveal that the first two most frequently occurring forms are *but* and *however* in all four groups, although the usage patterns such as positioning differ between the NS and the NNS groups. The third most frequent form is *on the other hand* in both NNS groups and *yet* in both NS groups, which shows an interesting difference in that the NNS groups hardly use *yet* in their writing. Both NNS groups also show frequent misuses of conjunctive adverbials such as *in contrast*, *on the contrary*, and *on the other hand*. The paper concludes with some pedagogical implications and suggestions.

**Key words:** contrastive conjunctions, College EFL students, argumentative writing, learner corpus, second language writing

1. INTRODUCTION

As Leech and Svartvik (2002) assert, conjunctive markers are “like ‘signposts’ on a journey” (p. 187) by signaling how one idea is connected with another in speech or in writing. They are also a type of cohesive device (Halliday & Hasan 1976) creating textual cohesion as well. Among different types of cohesive devices, conjunctions show a unique characteristic in that “they are not primarily devices for reaching out into the preceding (or following) text, but they express certain meanings which presuppose the presence of other

* This work was supported by the College of Humanities Research Fund (CHRF) of Seoul National University.
components in the discourse (Halliday & Hasan, 1976, p. 226).” As such, conjunctions have been paid much attention to by researchers in areas such as reference grammars (cf., Carter & McCarthy, 2006; Celce-Murcia & Larsen Freeman, 1999; Leech & Svartvik, 2002) and second language writing (cf., Bolton, Nelson, & Hung, 2002; Crewe, 1990; Field & Yip, 1992).

Conjunctions are typically divided into four different types, namely, additive, contrastive, causal, and temporal (Halliday & Hasan 1976). Among these four types, this study, as part of a larger project on conjunctions, focuses on the use of contrastive conjunctions by both native student writers and nonnative student writers in argumentative writing. As Biber, Johansson, Leech, Conrad, and Finegan (1999) asserts about contrastive linking adverbials, contrastive conjunctions play an important role in academic writing in that contrastive conjunction in general highlights “contrasting information, which often leads to main points that academic authors want to make” (p. 881). More specifically, the concept of contrast is very useful in establishing and emphasizing the problematization in argumentative essays or establishing differences between proposed and opposed claims in academic argumentation. Contrastive conjunctions are the ones that are mainly used for this purpose, that is, marking contrast (cf., Barton, 1995).

There is yet another reason why contrastive conjunctions deserve more attention. That is, as it will be shown later in the study, seemingly similar contrastive linking adverbials behave very distinctively from each other in discourse (Williams, 1996). However, in many writing textbooks or reference grammars and/or actual ESL/EFL classrooms, they tend to be presented and introduced as merely equal alternatives (Crewe, 1990).

This study will investigate how these contrastive conjunctions are actually used by both native writers and nonnative writers in argumentative writing in terms of their distribution and some characteristics of their use. It will also present what is problematic and how it can be improved.

2. PREVIOUS STUDIES

2.1. Studies on Contrastive Conjunctions

Contrastive conjunctions consist of a coordinating connector but, contrastive/concessive subordinating connectors such as although, and conjunctive adverbials. In the case of

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1 As for conjunctive adverbials, various terms have been suggested depending on which perspective is adopted. Such terms include adverbial conjunction (Williams, 1996), adverbial connectors (Altenberg & Tapper 1998), conjunctive adjuncts (Halliday & Hasan, 1976), conjunctive adverbials (Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman, 1999), discourse connectors (Cowan, 2008), linking adverbials
contrastive conjunctive adverbials, categorizations by several researchers differ as shown in the following table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Researchers</th>
<th>Subcategories</th>
<th>Conjunctive Adverbials</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Halliday and Hasan</td>
<td>Adversative</td>
<td><strong>yet, though, only, but, however; nevertheless, despite this</strong> in fact, actually, as a matter of fact, but and, however, on the other hand, at the same time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(1976)</td>
<td>Contrast</td>
<td><strong>in any case, in either case, whichever way it is, anyhow, at any rate, however it is</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Correction</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dismissal</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quirk, Greenbaum, Reformulatory</td>
<td>Replacive</td>
<td><strong>better, rather; more accurately, more precisely; alias, alternatively, in other words</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leech, and Svartvik</td>
<td>Antithetic</td>
<td><strong>again, alternatively; rather; better, on the other hand, etc.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(1985)</td>
<td>Concessive</td>
<td><strong>Contrariwise (formal), conversely (formal), instead (blend of antithetic with replacive), oppositely (rare), then, on the contrary, in/by/by way of contrast, in/by/by way of comparison, on the other hand</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biber et al. (1999)</td>
<td>Contrast/concession</td>
<td><strong>On the other hand, in contrast, alternatively, though, anyway, however, yet, conversely, instead, on the contrary, nevertheless, still, in any case, in spite of that, after all, etc.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman</td>
<td>Proper adverative</td>
<td><strong>however, nevertheless, despite this, in contrast</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(1999)</td>
<td>Contrast</td>
<td><strong>in fact, actually, however, on the other hand, etc.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Correction</td>
<td><strong>instead, rather, on the contrary, at least</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dismissal</td>
<td><strong>in any case, anyhow, at any rate</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carter and McCarthy (2006)</td>
<td>Contrast</td>
<td><strong>alternatively, instead, in/by contrast, more accurately/more precisely, on the contrary, then again</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As is shown in Table 1, contrastive conjunctive adverbials are further categorized under terms such as contrast, concession, and dismissal based on the types of contrasts that come before and after the conjunction. Various researchers adopted different ways of subcategorizing contrastive conjunction, and as a result, the scope of the contrastive conjunctive adverbials can differ quite widely. The current study will adopt a modified version of Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman’s list, which is originally adapted from (Biber, et al., 1999), linking words and phrases (Swales & Feak, 2004), and transitions (Fitzpatrick, 2011).
Halliday and Hasan’s (1976).

Next, we will examine previous studies on the semantic and pragmatic use of contrastive conjunctions. First, as for the contrastive coordinator but, Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman (1999) introduce it as having three semantic-pragmatic meanings/functions, that is, denial of expectations, semantic contrast, and marking speaker return. They also note that the conjunction yet shares the meaning of denial of expectations with but. Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman also introduce the use of conjunctive adverbials based on Williams (1996).

Williams provides some insightful propositional frames which illustrate how conjunctive adverbials can be interpreted differently. For example, the frame for by contrast or in contrast is “X (a) in contrast Y (b),” which specifies that two different topics or subjects are different in at least one respect as in Example (1).

(1) London is a truly beautiful city. By contrast, Manchester is dirty and depressing. (ibid., p. 40)

Another conjunctive adverbial, on the other hand, has a different frame like “X (a) on the other hand X (b).” That is, it only requires a single subject or topic, which has two contrasting qualities, as shown in Example (2).

(2) Minnesota is excruciatingly cold much of the year. On the other hand, it is one of the more scenic states. (p. 39)

These frames can be a useful tool to differentiate these conjunctive adverbials, which are often given as convenient alternatives in textbooks or in classrooms.

Next, we will examine Bell (2007), which analyzes sentence-initial and (SIA) and but (SIB) in academic writing. Traditionally, both forms have been proscribed in this genre. Bell, however, shows a frequent use of them in academic journals—especially in humanities journals in the case of SIB—and adds some observations on how they are used. In the case of SIB, it tends to co-occur with a comparative or superlative and preface discourse markers, stance adverbs, interrogatives, and reported speech as well. This co-occurrence pattern seems to be distinguished from however, whose co-occurrences with these markers are very limited. Bell attributes this preference of SIB over however to its reduced phonological prominence and its role as a coordinating conjunction.

Another study by Bell (2010) demonstrates the differences between nevertheless, still and yet. These are categorized as concessive cancellative markers and “share the same core pragmatic instruction of cancellation, that is an aspect of information derivable from P is canceled in Q” (p. 1925). Bell compares them in terms of variability of scope, speaker
perspective, and degree of concession: *yet*, which was shown to occur far more frequently than the other two in both written and spoken genres, has the largest scope and is said to act similarly to *but*. By contrast, *nevertheless* has the most limited scope. In terms of speaker perspective, the position of a speaker who uses *yet* is located in P, while that of a speaker who uses *still* is located in Q. *Nevertheless* seems to be neutral. Finally, in terms of degree of concession, the three conjunctions seems to be on a cline with *nevertheless* showing the strongest degree of concession and *yet* the weakest. Overall, the higher frequency of *yet* seems to have to do with its characteristics of having the largest scope and the weakest degree of concession, very much similar to *but*, which also occurs frequently in both written and spoken genres.

Finally, we will examine how these conjunctions are actually used through some corpus-based studies. Biber, et al. (1999), based on their corpus study, show the use of contrastive/concessive conjunctive adverbials in four different genres. The results show that a simple coordinator *but* is most frequent in conversation and fiction, and least frequent in academic prose. They attribute its low frequency in academic prose partly due to the fact that contrast is more often expressed by more formal forms such as *however, nevertheless, and on the other hand.*

Carter and McCarthy (2006), another large-scale corpus-based study, also report frequent uses of contrastive conjunctive adverbials such as *by/in contrast, nevertheless, on the other hand, conversely, nonetheless,* and *on the contrary* in academic English. They also note differences between *on the contrary, by contrast and on the other hand* in that *on the contrary* rejects a previous statement in favor of an opposite one, while *by contrast* and *on the other hand* “hold two statements up for consideration and comparison/contrast, but do not reject the first one” (p. 291) as shown in Example (3):

(3) Such complex impressions on the part of teachers by no means arise from ignorance or prejudice: *on the contrary,* they are the result of powerful, historically informed, shared perspectives on musical reality. (p. 291)

As shown so far, several studies on contrastive conjunctions have attempted to reveal their semantic/pragmatic meanings and uses (e.g., Bell, 2007, 2010; Williams, 1996) and corpus-based uses in different genres (e.g., Biber, et al, 1999; Carter & McCarthy, 2006). Few studies, however, seem to provide comprehensive studies on contrastive conjunction in various corpus data. Considering its importance in academic prose, more vigorous studies are needed to reveal their actual uses in authentic discourse.
2.2. Studies on Learners' Use of English Conjunctions

Quite a few studies have been conducted on ESL/EFL learners' use of conjunction, mostly on conjunctive adverbials using corpora. Among those studies, we will first examine Hinkel (2002), which is a large scale study on textual characteristics of native writers and nonnative writers from six different L1 groups including Korean, using a corpus of 1,457 argumentative/expository type short essays in response to the same writing prompts. In her study, conjunctions were divided into phrase-level coordinating conjunctions such as and, but, and not only ... but also, and sentence-level coordinating conjunctions, which are equivalents of linking adverbials. The results revealed that the frequency of sentence-level conjunctions in NNS essays of all L1 groups was significantly higher than that in NS essays. In the case of Korean writers, the frequency was about three times (median 1.95) higher than that of NSs’ (median 0.64). The use of phrase-level conjunctions also appeared significantly more in Korean writers’ essays (median 4.20) than in NSs’ essays (median 3.62).

When it comes to studies that focus on conjunctions, numerous studies are available, and we will first examine Bolton, Nelson, and Hung (2002), who compared connector usage in the writing of undergraduates in Hong Kong (ICE-HK) and Britain (ICE-GB) and in the writing of accomplished writers (ICE-GB). The results in their study indicated that both groups of students showed a pattern of overuse, especially in the case of Hong Kong students. The top five overused connectors in each group differ, however, in that the former had the list of so, and, also, thus, and but, while the latter had however, so, therefore, thus, and furthermore on their list. They also reported that both groups of students—NSs and NNSs alike—overuse a wide range of connectors.

Field and Yip (1992) compared the use of cohesive devices between Cantonese learners and native speakers in argumentative writing. The results showed that Cantonese writers used the devices more frequently than NS counterparts. The study also examined the positioning of the devices and the NS group had much higher frequency of the conjunctive use in non-initial positions. Adversative devices, out of additive, adversative, causal, temporal types, are the most frequently used types in the NS group and two groups of NNSs among the three. The three most frequently used adversative devices in the NS group was however, but, and yet, whereas those in NNS groups include however, on the other hand, but, and actually.

Yang and Sun (2012) explored Chinese EFL writers' use of cohesive devices in argumentative writing. As for the use of conjunctions, students in both the intermediate and the advanced groups used conjunctions less frequently than other cohesive devices, and there was no significant difference between the two groups except adversity. In the case of adversity conjunctions, as the writers’ level went up, their argumentation structure became
more sophisticated providing more counterarguments. The major types of conjunction errors included redundant use of conjunctions, unreasonable lack of conjunctions, and misuse of conjunctions. Also, students' essays were replete with monotonous repetitions of conjunctions. Finally, a significant positive correlation was identified between the overall (correct) use of cohesive devices and students' writing quality, regardless of their levels.

Several studies examined more advanced learners' use of conjunctive adverbials—or more accurately, how postgraduate students use conjunctions. Chen (2006) explored the use of conjunctive adverbials (CAs hereafter) in both the learner corpus compiled from MA TESOL students' papers and the control corpus from journal articles in the same field. The results showed that these advanced student writers were found to slightly overuse CAs and misuse some as well. It was additive CAs that occurred most frequently (33.8%) in the learner corpus, while the frequency of adversative CAs was highest (37%) in the reference corpus. It was also reported that the learner corpus showed higher frequencies of CAs in all types except adversative CAs. In other words, the learner group used additive, causal, and temporal CAs more than the professional writers, but in the case of adversative CAs, professional writers used them more. In both groups, the more frequently used CA was however. Chen also pointed out some characteristics of NNS writers' usage of CAs such as the use of besides, which was observed quite frequently in the learner corpus, but not at all observed in the reference corpus. Finally, she also discussed the problem of unnecessarily using a string of connectors.

Lei (2012) compared Chinese doctoral students' use of linking adverbials in academic writing with that of native speakers in published articles. The results showed that the overall frequency was higher in Chinese learners' writing and that a total of 33 linking adverbials were found to be overused by the students, among which besides and actually were misused. Meanwhile, 25 adverbials were identified as underused by students as well, and among them, the adversative adverbials were most problematic, however being the most underused. Lei found this result similar to that in Granger and Tyson (1996) and Altenberg and Tapper (1998), where French and Swedish learners were reported to underuse adversative adverbials.

As shown so far, many studies report ESL/EFL learners' overuse and misuse of conjunctions. Regarding these problems, Crewe (1990) attributes them to textbooks, which in many cases simply provide lists of cohesive devices, present them as equivalent alternatives, and often advise learners to avoid repeating one form and to use different forms among the suggested alternatives, citing Zamel (1983).

While many studies deal with Chinese learners' use of conjunctions (Bolton, et al., 2002; Crewe, 1990; Lei 2012; Yang & Sun, 2012, and so on), several studies are found on Korean learners' use of them. Lee (2004) investigated the use of conjunctive adverbials using a corpus consisting of college students' scholarly writing. Compared with the data
from the Brown corpus, the students' corpus data showed that the frequency of the students' conjunctive adverbials was more than twice that of NSs. However, it was also shown the Korean learners tend to use fewer types of conjunctive adverbials, meaning that they tend to resort to the same type of adverbials. Regarding the types of conjunctive adverbials preferred in each group, both groups tend to use enumeration and addition, contrast and concession, and result and inference types more often, but in the case of native speakers, a more variety of types such as summation and transition are used quite frequently as well. She also noted the Korean learners' use of the adverbials in the sentence-initial position.

Yoon (2006) examined Korean college students' use of connectors—mainly conjunctive adverbials but also including *and* and *but*—with that of Hong Kong students shown in Bolton, et al. (2002). The results confirmed Lee's (2004) study in that most frequently used conjunctive types are enumeration and addition, contrast/concession, and result/inference, and that learners prefer to use the adverbials in the sentence-initial position. The study also mentions a case of the students' misuse of *however*, that is, linking two clauses and making run-on sentences.

So far, studies on ESL/EFL learners' use of conjunctions were reviewed. In most studies, the topics were the use of conjunctive adverbials in general, and the overall patterns of preferred or problematic types were provided. Yet, more detailed patterns of usage for each type of conjunctions have not received enough attention, and therefore, await further research. The current study will try to fill this gap and focus on the college EFL students' use of contrastive conjunctions, which are very useful devices in argumentative writing or academic writing.

3. DATA AND METHODOLOGY

3.1. Data

The data for the study are from two difference sources: a corpus of nonnative speakers' argumentative writing and a corpus of native speakers' argumentative writing. The native speaker corpus is from the LOCNESS, that is, the Louvain Corpus of Native Speaker of English, which is a reference corpus in the ICLE (International Corpus of Learner English) Project (cf., Granger, 1998). The current study used both the argumentative essays written by American university students and British university students for the comparison of the nonnative speakers' argumentative writing. The topics covered vary including opinions about boxing, fox hunting, welfare reforms, and prayer in schools.

The nonnative speakers' corpus is a subset of the SKELC (Seoul National University
Korean English Learner Corpus, a tentative title), which contains university students’ argumentative writing. For this study, the data from Fall, 2009 and Spring and Fall semesters of 2010 were included. The topics also vary here including opinions on current issues such as same-sex marriage and the Cyber Defamation Law. The data were then divided into two groups—the lower proficiency group (NNS-LP) and the higher proficiency group (NNS-HP). The criterion for this division is the students’ TEPS scores: The students whose TEPS scores are under 550² belong to the NNS-LP, while the students whose TEPS scores range from 651 to 800 belong to the NNS-HP.

Table 2 provides the size of the corpora in general and other details about the data.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Data Corpora</th>
<th>NNS-LP</th>
<th>NNS-HP</th>
<th>NS-US</th>
<th>NS-UK</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of Essays</td>
<td>367.00</td>
<td>424.00</td>
<td>176.00</td>
<td>106.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Words</td>
<td>86,746.00</td>
<td>109,023.00</td>
<td>149,574.00</td>
<td>55,615.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Words per Essay</td>
<td>236.40</td>
<td>257.10</td>
<td>849.90</td>
<td>524.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Words per Sentence</td>
<td>12.54</td>
<td>12.77</td>
<td>18.58</td>
<td>19.74</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 shows not only the overall size of the corpus in each group but also the number of words per each essay and the number of words per each sentence in each group. The number of words per each essay shows that nonnative writers’ essays are much shorter than those by native speakers, US writers’ being much longer than British writers’. This seems to affect the organization of the essays and the employment of contrastive conjunctions as well, which will be discussed later. Lastly, the table shows the number of words per sentence for each group. As can be expected, the nonnative speaker groups’ sentences are much shorter than those by native groups, this time British writers’ sentences being longer than those of US writers.

3.2. Procedures

The list of contrastive conjunctions to be examined is as follows, adopted mostly from Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman (1999): actually, but, by contrast, conversely, despite, however, in contrast, in fact, instead, nevertheless, nonetheless, on the contrary, on the

² TEPS refers to the Test of English Proficiency developed by Seoul National University. TEPS 550 equals to TOEIC 695 and TOEFL 79; TEPS 651 equals to TOEIC 810 and TOEFL 93; TEPS 800 equals to TOEIC 920 and TOEFL 107.
other hand, rather, and yet. All of the contrastive conjunctions here except but are linking adverbials. The motivation to include but on this list is that it occurs so frequently in both native and nonnative speakers’ writing that without this, it does not seem to be possible to fully understand the use of contrastive conjunctions in the data.

The 15 tokens of contrastive conjunctions were identified in each set of the corpora, using WordSmith Tools 5.0. In the case of several conjunctions that have multiple-meanings such as but, rather, and yet, each example was examined to judge whether the token used actually represent the contrastive use, and only the ones that belong to the proper usage were included for counting.

4. RESULTS

4.1. Distribution of Contrastive Conjunctions

We will first examine the overall distribution of contrastive conjunctions in each group. Table 3 illustrates the results. Table 3 shows the rank order of the 15 contrastive conjunctions used in each group’s writing. The two most frequently used items in all four groups are but and however. This result is interesting in that but, the connective that is known to be an informal one and, therefore, is usually advised not to be used in formal writing, is most frequently used even in native speakers’ groups. It could be due to the fact that the writers in these groups are also students, not professional writers, and the fact that the writing in the data corpus cannot be the same as very formal academic writing. It needs to be verified using a more professional writers’ data in future studies. Yet, between the two NS groups, the US students use but much more frequently than however, while the UK students use both but and however very frequently. In the case of the two NNS groups, a heavy dependence on but is found between the two forms.

From the third more frequently used ones, each group shows different preferences. First, what holds the third place in both nonnative groups is on the other hand, while the counterpart in both the NS-US and NS-UK groups is yet. Considering that the frequency of yet in the nonnative groups is practically zero (i.e., zero in NNS-LP and one in NNS-HP3), this difference is very notable, which has also been observed in Field and Yip (1992). As Bell (2010) notes, yet has the largest scope and is very similar to but in terms of its semantic features, which could be a possible reason for the NS student writers’ preference. However, for nonnative speakers, perhaps due to its multiple meanings, it does not seem to be a preferred form at all.

3 As for the raw frequency, please refer to Appendix A.
TABLE 3
Rank Order of the Use of Contrastive Conjunctions
(Number of Tokens per 1,000 Words in Parentheses)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>NNS-LP</th>
<th>NNS-HP</th>
<th>NS-US</th>
<th>NS-UK</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>But (4.023)</td>
<td>But (4.072)</td>
<td>But (2.741)</td>
<td>But (3.614)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>However (1.579)</td>
<td>However (1.696)</td>
<td>However (0.862)</td>
<td>However (2.319)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>On the other hand (0.184)</td>
<td>On the other hand (0.174)</td>
<td>Yet (0.307)</td>
<td>Yet (0.395)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Nevertheless (0.092)</td>
<td>In contrast (0.137)</td>
<td>On the other hand (0.147)</td>
<td>Despite (0.305)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Despite (0.069)</td>
<td>Instead (0.091)</td>
<td>Instead (0.073)</td>
<td>Instead (0.053)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Rather (0.034)</td>
<td>Despite (0.082)</td>
<td>Despite (0.040)</td>
<td>On the contrary (0.035)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Actually (0.023)</td>
<td>Nevertheless (0.082)</td>
<td>Rather (0.040)</td>
<td>On the other hand (0.035)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>In contrast (0.023)</td>
<td>In fact (0.045)</td>
<td>In contrast (0.026)</td>
<td>In fact (0.017)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>On the contrary (0.023)</td>
<td>On the contrary (0.045)</td>
<td>Actually (0.020)</td>
<td>Nevertheless (0.017)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>By contrast (0.000)</td>
<td>Rather (0.027)</td>
<td>Nevertheless (0.020)</td>
<td>Actually (0.000)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Conversely (0.000)</td>
<td>Actually (0.009)</td>
<td>On the contrary (0.013)</td>
<td>By contrast (0.000)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>In fact (0.000)</td>
<td>Yet (0.009)</td>
<td>Conversely (0.006)</td>
<td>Conversely (0.000)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Instead (0.000)</td>
<td>By contrast (0.000)</td>
<td>By contrast (0.000)</td>
<td>In contrast (0.000)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Nonetheless (0.000)</td>
<td>Conversely (0.000)</td>
<td>In fact (0.000)</td>
<td>Nonetheless (0.000)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Yet (0.000)</td>
<td>Nonetheless (0.000)</td>
<td>Nonetheless (0.000)</td>
<td>Rather (0.000)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>6.052</td>
<td>6.475</td>
<td>4.298</td>
<td>7.605</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What is also notable in Table 3 is the zero use of several conjunctions. In the case of the NNS-LP and the NS-UK, six conjunctions were not used at all, whereas the NNS-HP and the NS-US groups have three conjunctions that did not occur at all. Among them are by contrast and nonetheless, which are often introduced in reference grammars and ESL writing textbooks as alternative of in contrast and nevertheless, respectively. The use of conversely is very limited as well in that only one occurrence of it is observed. These conjunctions may occur or probably do occur in a larger corpus consisting of various types of writing or written by different writer groups including more professional writers or more aged writers. However, the fact that none of American or British college students use them seems to be notable in that they are introduced frequently in many ESL writing books or reference grammars as available linking adverbials without further differentiation. And yet,

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4 The figures here mark the number of tokens per 1,000 words.
the actual use shows that they are not preferred at all by native speakers, at least by college students.

The bottom of Table 3 shows the total use of contrastive conjunctions in the data. What it shows is striking in that both native speaker groups take up the lowest and the highest frequency—the NS-US group uses the target conjunctions least frequently and the NS-UK group uses them most frequently. What causes this difference is not clear: The conditions under which the data was collected in each group could have been different, and some characteristics of each group's writing such as the average length of each group's essays could possibly be attributed to the difference. As for the difference between the two NNS groups, it is the higher proficiency group that has a higher frequency, which confirms what Yang and Sun (2012) found about Cantonese writers, although the difference here does not seem to be big enough. As for the NNS groups' overall frequency of contrastive conjunctions, it is hard to judge since we have opposite results from the two NS groups. If we compare the NNS groups' results only with that of the NS-US group, it is obviously their overuse of contrastive conjunctions. Considering that previous studies dealing with the issue of overuse are also not quite conclusive (cf., Altenberg & Tapper, 1998; Chen, 2006; Field & Yip, 1992; Granger & Tyson, 1996; Lei, 2012), the result here seems to await a further investigation, ideally using writing corpora collected under similar conditions and with similar essay lengths.

4.2. Characteristics of the Use of Contrastive Conjunctions

In this section, we will examine some cases of nonnative writers' misuse, overuse, or underuse of the contrastive conjunctions in further detail. First, we will look at different positioning of but and however, the two most frequently used conjunctions in all four groups. Table 4 illustrates the results, where each figure given in the table is the number of tokens per 1,000 words.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>But Position</th>
<th>However Position</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sentence Initial</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td>NS-UK</td>
<td>0.395</td>
<td>3.218</td>
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</table>
What is observed in the table above is quite an opposite preference regarding where to position *but* and *however* in writing: Nonnative writers tend to place both of them in the sentence-initial position, which has also been observed in some previous studies (Lee, 2004; Yoon, 2006). In the case of the native writers, they seem to much prefer to place *but* in non-initial positions—in the case of the UK college students, *but* occurs almost ten times more frequently in non-initial positions. In placing *however*, the native speakers prefer the sentence-initial position, but the ratio between the sentence-initial position and non-initial positions is much smaller than that in nonnative writers’ data—both NNS groups place *however* in sentence-initial position more than ten times more frequently.

Second, we will examine some misuse of *however* in the following. What is observed is the use of *however* in non-initial position, creating run-on sentences.

(4) For most, online games are just games, *however*, for some, they can be addictive. (NNS-LP 457)

(5) Perhaps, children did immoral behavior like smoking *however* they were not adults. (NNS-HP 727)

It is interesting that even native writers often make this type of mistakes, although the frequency is not very high:

(6) For example, drugs are a grave matter in their own, *however*, most people do not think in terms of drugs as a possible suicide. (NS-US 662)

(7) There are many valid arguments on either side, *however*, in the end the choice must rest upon the shoulders of the individual. (NNS-UK 329)

It is not clear whether the native speakers’ examples are due to the result of careless or hasty writing or the reflection of inexperienced student writing. To verify this, we will have to make a further investigation of the use of conjunctions by more experienced or professional writers, which is beyond the scope of the current study.

Third, we will examine the positioning of *however* in non-initial positions. As was also observed in Lee (2004) and Yoon (2006), they seem to be placed in very limited positions in the NNS groups.

(8) In the past when there's no smart phone, people usually utilized these services with their computers. Nowadays, *however*, people rarely use these services with their computers. (NNS-LP 572)

(9) It could be controversial to who believe that the public education is most important to the young students. It is, *however*, an opportunity to expert in what they do.
Sentence (8) is one of the very few examples of however used correctly in a non-initial position in the NNS-LP group. Almost invariably, this type of positioning occurs with sentence-initial temporal adverbial phrases such as in these days, nowadays, and until now. In the NNS-HP, more flexible positioning is observed as in (9). Yet, many of them are still limited to the position after some adverbial phrases. In contrast, much more flexible positioning of however in various positions is found in the NS writers’ data as in the following.

(10) It is also however, a problem of which nuclear energy is only a small piece. (NS-US 663)
(11) The question of whether animals should be used for human benefit is not, however, a question which it is the responsibility of scientists to resolve. (NS-UK 270)
(12) Should the attitudes of the people involved in this persevere or get stronger however, then there could be some major problems ahead. (NS-UK 352)

Unlike the NNS examples, where however occurs only in very limited positions, the NS examples above show the positioning of however in variable positions. The flexible positioning of however seems to enable the NS writers to adjust the contrastive force of however more freely in their writing.

Fourth, we will examine some uses of sentence-initial but (SIB) based on Bell (2007). According to him, SIB “facilitates argument development by its canceling or refining the previous argument” (p. 196), frequently co-occurring with a comparative and a superlative and prefacing discourse markers, stance markers, interrogatives, and reported speech. These points were confirmed in the NS examples in the following:

(13) It is fairly easy to establish equity between marketplace jobs with duties and responsibilities that are roughly similar. That is, a teacher of sophomore high school English and a teacher of senior high school English perform comparable tasks and therefore should be equally compensated. But how do we compare raising a family of four children over a period of twenty-five years to the job of an neurosurgeon over the same period of time? (NS-US 64)
(14) As a consequence the number of homeless that are mentally ill are still high today. The homeless were still looked down upon during this time. But, the 1980s showed a little more compassion towards the homeless. (NS-US 98)
(15) Another thing that Nebraska had for its advantage that West Virginia didn’t have was a history for having great football teams. But Florida State and Notre Dame
were the two teams getting all the hype and recognition to be playing for the national championship and that's because they had played one of the greatest games in college football history during the regular season. (NS-US 183)

(16) This is produced as a waste product by yeast, but it eventually kills itself by the product, but yeast has been bread for higher concentrations of alcohol more & more. But the most controversial aspect of genetics, is manipulation of humans. (NS-UK 173)

As shown above, in native speakers’ writing, SIB does occur with a comparative (Example (14)), a superlative (Example (15)), an interrogative (Example (13)), and a stance marker such as the most controversial in Example (16), all of which are basically to develop argument more effectively. By contrast, SIB in NNS writing rarely co-occurs with such features. At best, it is comparatives that co-occur with SIB as shown in Examples (17) and (18), which were very hard to find.

(17) In these examples, the increase of aging of population is very serious problem. Of course not there are only bad sides of aging population. But there is much more bad sides than good sides. (NNS-LP 48)

(18) Women in the past, their goal of life was settle down to a happy life with family. But today's women have more interest in development themselves and achieve their goal in works. (NNS-LP 144)

There was one incidence of SIB with an interrogative, shown here in Example (19). Yet, what the interrogative does seems very different from what is observed in the NS’s example in (20), shown as (13) earlier.

(19) The most critical reason people enjoy online game is just for fun. And many people really love to do something together. Through web connection it is very easy to enjoy something together. But actually why they are become addicted? That’s because online game allows people to achieve something they want, which can’t be realized in reality. (NNS-HP 81)

Here, writing on online game addiction, the writer makes a rather abrupt topic shift after SIB. With the question, the writer introduces another topic—the reason why people get addicted to online games—and develops it further by answering the question. But here simply marks a topic shift along with another marker, actually.

(20) It is fairly easy to establish equity between marketplace jobs with duties and
responsibilities that are roughly similar. That is, a teacher of sophomore high school English and a teacher of senior high school English perform comparable tasks and therefore should be equally compensated. But how do we compare raising a family of four children over a period of twenty-five years to the job of an neurosurgeon over the same period of time? (NS-US 64)

In (20), we have a very different use of a question after SIB. Here, it is a kind of a rhetorical question used to cancel the previous argument to develop and strengthen the writer’s point. The same structure of sentence-initial but followed by a question is found to be used very differently in the NS and the NNS writing.

Next, we will look at the NNS groups’ use of in contrast and on the other hand based on Williams (1996). It is not difficult to locate misuses of them in both NNS groups’ writing.

(21) First, matchmaking is traditional way to meet spouse in Korea. People are familiar with matchmaking and accepted it naturally. In contrast, matchmaking is felt strange and regarded as artificial way for marriage in other countries. But in Korea, people just think that matchmaking become specialized matchmaking business. (NNS-LP 584)

(22) The appearance of the internet offers more opportunity to talk each other and share their thoughts or information more freely than before. Therefore, some people may say that the introduction of the Cyber Defamation Law limits the rights to express their opinion. Speaking ill of someone without foundation by using anonymity, however, is really wrong. In contrast, that kind of behavior takes away the victims’ rights not to hear bad things and be wounded. (NNS-HP 793)

(23) Besides, we often empty out the brain or mind in moving; in contrast, we often think deeply when we move. But after the smart phone get spread, we have lost the thinking or thoughtless time. (NNS-HP 783)

In (21), the writer describes how matchmaking is perceived in Korea and other countries. Here, what is more appropriate would be on the other hand, since it is about one topic of matchmaking being perceived differently in the two places. In the case of Example (22), what follows after in contrast is not oppositional in any sense, and, therefore, a contrastive conjunction is not a proper choice at all. In (23), what is contrasted is what one does while moving or walking, for which in contrast is not appropriate. The following sentence is another problematic one:

(24) I think family members have the right to choose death with dignity for the patient. The price of life support systems is 15 million won per 4 months. And the average
income per month of Korea is about 2 million won. In contrast that price, the price that needed to cure is more expensive. (NNS-HP 781)

In this sentence arguing for a patient's family deciding on death with dignity, the writer misuses in contrast not only semantically but also grammatically as well. It is not appropriate at all for in contrast to be placed in this sentence in that what comes after in contrast is an additional fact to be considered.

As shown so far, most of the NNSs' uses of in contrast seem to have to do with understanding the meaning relations between what comes before and after in contrast, although problems related to form are also observed. The fact that some examples contain propositions that are not even in oppositional relations shows how limited the learners' understanding of this conjunction is. Considering that it is the fourth most preferred form in the NNS-HP group, it is highly problematic and more attention should be paid in class.

We have a similar picture regarding the use of on the other hand, the third most preferred form among the NNS groups.

(25) According to the National Statistical Office, Korea's total birth rate which means the number of babies whom one woman bears during the child-bearing period is about 1.13 in 2006. ... It is the lowest value among OECD nations. Now Korea ranks 26th for population, but its ranking is expected to get lower until 44th in 2050. On the other hand, the average life span is expected to be the best among them. This value of Korea is about 79.1; it is higher than North America (78.5) and Europe (74.6). (NNS-LP 632)

(26) The Korean government has yet established a policy of exemption for supporting high-level player or for high-level scientist. A country is supposed to guarantee equal rights for everyone or we might ask why it exists. With political exemption from military service, they are mostly people with a high level of income that are exempt from military service. This strengthens the bondage of the poor against the rich. One might also wonder why women are not required to do the military service. Men and women are supposed to be equal in Korean society, for example Israel obliges women to serve in the army. On the other hand, South Korea, a country in full economic development needs of these people whether famous or very smart to ensure its economic future. Send these people to the army might lead to a massive emigration of South Korea scientists. (NN-HP 872)

In Example (25), there is a clear contrast between Korea's low birth rate and the high average life span, and here in contrast seems to be a proper choice. Many of the NNS writers' use of on the other hand shows a similar pattern. In the case of Example (26), the
problem seems to be more complicated: In response to the prompt on the military service exemption policy, the writer seems to introduce problematic cases first mentioning rich people and women. Then, s/he brings in the necessary cases such as scientists after on the other hand. If we can reconstruct the macro structure of the writing, the use of on the other hand may be justified, that is, people who should join the army vs. people who need to be exempt from it. Yet, considering the local connection, on the other hand is very abrupt in that it comes right after the proposition that women should join the army like Israeli women.

Next, the NNS writers’ use of on the contrary will be examined through the examples of (27), (28), and (29). It may be recalled here that Carter and McCarthy (2006) suggests that on the contrary rejects a previous statement in favor of an opposite one.

(27) People in general like talking with people who have same ideas. But, on the contrary, when people talk with people who have different ideas, people feel uncomfortable and they think such time is worthless. I don't think so. (NNS-LP 623)

(28) I think because human is born in the world, he or she must be die someday. So, we need to accept death naturally. There is no need to judge too rationally but on the contrary to this, It is not good to emphasize emotion excessively ahead. (NNS-HP 866)

(29) Korea’s birth rate is constantly decreasing now. Because many young people want to avoid difficulties like childcare, cost of the private education, and unemployment which is caused by pregnancy. On the contrary, aging of population is increasing now because of the influence of the aging baby-boom generation. (NNS-HP 868)

None of the use of on the contrary in the examples above fit the description Carter and McCarthy suggested. Perhaps the simple use of but may work in Examples (25) and (26). Nonetheless, the writers additionally employ on the contrary, and in Example (26), an error of adding to after on the contrary is also found. Note also that both examples contain but as well, which may reflect the student writers’ insecurity of using on the contrary only. In the case of Example (29), perhaps in contrast would have been a better choice, which is also observed in other examples in the corpus.

Lastly, I would like to point out what is really problematic regarding the NNS writers’ use of contrastive conjunctions, especially in the case of low level writers. As the following example illustrates, low level writers’ writing is replete with contrastive conjunctions as well as other types of conjunctive adverbials in general (cf., Chen, 2006; Yang & Sun, 2012).
(30) *But* we cannot use computer with rapidity. If we want use computer, we must turn it on, and wait, and login, and wait, and connect internet, and wait. *On the other hand,* Mobile phone has better accessibility, *but* its capacity is limited. (NNS-LP 270)

What the NNS writers seem to hide behind the overuse of these conjunctive adverbials is their lack of logic or organization in their writing. That is, when their organization of ideas is poor, the student writers resort to the device of conjunctions, simply borrowing their role of "signposting."

So far, we have examined some characteristics of the NNS writers' use of contrastive conjunctions such as overuse of *but* and *however* in sentence-initial position and misuses of contrastive conjunctive adverbials including *in contrast* and *on the contrary.* As shown through the examples, the misuse cases seem to involve problems in many aspects: Most of the problems have to do with misunderstanding semantic relations the conjunction leads, but some problems also involve form-related errors as well. It is also often found that the problem lies in the overall organization of ideas where the conjunction is placed.

5. CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

In this study, we have observed patterns of the use of contrastive conjunctions in both NS and NNS student writers' corpora, and some of the findings seem to have implications, which deserve further discussions. First, between the two NNS groups, the higher proficiency group used slightly more conjunctions as was also observed in Yang and Sun (2012), but not that many differences were noted. Both groups revealed similar error patterns as well. It may be attributed to the fact that the participants were mostly inexperienced writers who have hardly had any experiences in writing before. A better comparison could have been made if we had had more advanced learners' writing.

Next, the result that the British student writers used more contrastive conjunctions among the four groups seems to deserve some thoughts and interpretations: First, it seems that it has to do with different rhetorical structures and organization of argumentative writing NS and NNS writers employed. NS writers' writing is much longer than NNS writers', and seems to have different and perhaps more complicated argumentation structures consisting of more counterarguments, which usually contain more contrastive conjunctions (cf., Chen, 2006). Second, it is also possible that both NS and NNS groups are still students, and even NS writers' writing may contain some inexperienced writers' features that can be distinguished from more professional writers' writing or academic journals. Lastly, there can also be a language variety issue, that is, differences between American English and British English. These points are beyond the scope of this study and
await a further investigation.

Perhaps what is more significant is that the types of contrastive conjunctions used frequently by NNS writers and those by NSs differ, and it can be attributed to several factors. Perhaps the most plausible explanation would be the training factor, which has to do with the materials they are exposed to and overteaching of these markers (Milton & Tsang, 1993). That is, composition textbooks typically provide a list of conjunctions (cf., Crewe, 1990) and encourage learners to alternate them. Frequent forms appearing in these books include by contrast, in contrast, on the other hand, and so on, which are indeed what Korean learners seem to prefer here other than but and however. Another point to be noted seems to be that these contrastive linking adverbials are also semantically more distinct than others such as yet and rather, which have multiple meanings and functions. Lastly, a developmental or interlingual factor suggested by Shaw and Liu (1998) also deserves some attention. That is, learners may show the inappropriate “spoken” uses, as shown in the overuse of but through their developmental processes.

As for the pedagogical suggestions, researchers like Crewe (1990) suggest a reductionist model to encourage learners to reduce the number of conjunctions overall. However, the solution does not seem to lie in simply limiting the number of conjunctions. What is more urgent seems to be the need to raise both teachers’ and students’ awareness of the differences among various contrastive conjunctions as was shown in Williams (1996) and other studies reviewed here. In order to do this more effectively, using concordance data as some authentic examples will be very effective.

For future studies, it is suggested to examine a full range of learners’ data including advanced learners, which will provide a full picture of how learners at different levels approach contrastive conjunctions. Also, a larger scale study on how professional writers use conjunctions in comparison with the conjunction use of inexperienced NS writers such as college students and NNS writers to verify some peculiar results shown in the study.

As Yang and Sun (2012) emphasize, “being an indispensable textual property, cohesion, the grammatical and lexical glue of discourse, aids in the formation of textual/discourse competence, the ability to handle language above the sentence or to structure a series of sentences as a meaningful whole, which has been increasingly deemed in the SLA field as one of the most important constituent abilities that contribute to a language learner’s overall proficiency” (p. 33). I hope this study can shed some light on a better understanding of the student writers' use of contrastive conjunctions and help students improve their competence in managing them.
REFERENCES


APPENDIX A

Contrastive Conjunctions: Number of Tokens per 1,000 Words
and Raw Number of Tokens in Parentheses

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<tr>
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<th>NNS-HP</th>
<th>NS-US</th>
<th>NS-UK</th>
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<td>Actually</td>
<td>0.023</td>
<td>0.009</td>
<td>0.020</td>
<td>0(0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>But</td>
<td>4.023</td>
<td>4.072</td>
<td>2.741</td>
<td>3.614</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>By contrast</td>
<td>0(0)</td>
<td>0(0)</td>
<td>0(0)</td>
<td>0(0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conversely</td>
<td>0(0)</td>
<td>0(0)</td>
<td>0.006</td>
<td>0(0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Despite</td>
<td>0.069</td>
<td>0.082</td>
<td>0.040</td>
<td>0.305</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>However</td>
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<td>1.696</td>
<td>0.862</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>In contrast</td>
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<td>0.137</td>
<td>0.026</td>
<td>0(0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In fact</td>
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<td>0.017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instead</td>
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<td>0.091</td>
<td>0.073</td>
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</tr>
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<td>0(0)</td>
<td>0(0)</td>
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<td>6.475</td>
<td>4.298</td>
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Applicable levels: College

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Received in March, 2013
Reviewed in April, 2013
Revised version received in May, 2013
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TOEIC Speaking Level 5 이상 시험 합격자 지정

- Toshiba: TOEIC Speaking Level 5 이상 시험 합격자 지정
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