The Use of Conjunctive Adverbials in the Research Articles of American, Hong Kong/Singaporean, and Korean Scholars*1)

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I. Introduction

Although conjunctive adverbials (CAs) “are not primary devices for reaching out into the preceding (or following) text” (Halliday & Hasan, 1976, p. 226), they are very important tools for presenting clear and logical relationships among ideas expressed in writing. A text without appropriately used CAs would simply be a set of sentences with unclear connections to one another. The appropriate use of CAs appears to be very difficult to master, even for ENL (English as a native language) speakers. Nippold, Schwarz, and Undlin (1992) found that adolescent and young adult ENL speakers struggle to properly use CAs in written discourse. Therefore, if

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these individuals have difficulty using CAs, it makes sense that ESL (English as a second language) and EFL (English as a foreign language) speakers would face even greater challenges in this area. Other research has found that ESL/EFL speakers inappropriately used or inadequately distributed CAs throughout their writing, and their overuse, underuse, and misuse resulted in incoherent texts (e.g., Chen, 2006; Field & Yip, 1992; Lei, 2012; Milton & Tsang, 1993).

There may be several reasons for the difficulties associated with CAs. Because CAs are optional, speakers often do not have enough knowledge of these devices, including when it is appropriate to use them (Conrad, 1999). Also, different types of CAs are used depending upon the type of discourse, which makes it difficult for speakers to distinguish which CA should be used and where (Biber, Johansson, Leech, Conrad, & Finegan, 1999; Conrad, 1999). Finally, the different rhetorical structures found in speakers’ first languages can interfere with a proper understanding of CA use in English (Altenberg & Tapper, 1998).

To better understand the patterns of CA use by ENL, ESL, and EFL speakers, many studies have compared either ENL and ESL or ENL and EFL speakers (e.g., Altenberg & Taper, 1998; Back, 2012; Bolton, Nelson, & Hung, 2002; Chen, 2006; Field & Yip, 1992; Granger & Tyson, 1996; Lee, 2004; Lei, 2012; Milton & Tsang, 1993; Park, 2013; Yoon, 2006). However, this body of research has its limitations. One such limitation is that the studies focus little attention on comparisons that include both ESL and EFL speakers. Also worth noting is that these studies were limited by the size of the relevant corpora. Therefore, the generalizability of their findings should be tested in large-scale corpora to obtain more reliable results. Furthermore, the writing considered by previous studies consists largely of argumentative essays written in classroom settings by college students. Even advanced English students often improperly use CAs (Chen, 2006; Lei, 2012), and so it is important that the samples also include the work of more experienced or even professional writers.

Considering the limitations described above, it is clear that more accurate results