



MJAL 8:1 WINTER 2016

ISSN 0974-8741

English and Persian Apposition Markers in Written Discourse: A Case of Iranian EFL learners by 1. Samaneh Chamanaraeian & 2. Mahmood Hashemian

**English and Persian Apposition Markers in Written Discourse:
A Case of Iranian EFL learners**

Samaneh Chamanaraeian

M.A. Student in Islamic Azad University (Isfahan Branch)

samanechaman@yahoo.com

and

(corresponding author): Dr. Mahmood Hashemian

TEFL20@hotmail.com



MJAL 8:1 WINTER 2016

ISSN 0974-8741

English and Persian Apposition Markers in Written Discourse: A Case of Iranian EFL learners by 1. Samaneh Chamanaraeian & 2. Mahmood Hashemian

Abstract

Despite the abundance of research on what apposition markers are and what they do, much fewer studies have concentrated on investigating apposition markers in nonnative speaker discourse. Although apposition is very important in creating textual cohesion and reader-friendly prose and reducing pragmatic ambiguity, it has received little attention by scholars. As such, this 2-part study examined the form of apposition markers. The first part of the study aimed at cross-linguistic comparison of apposition markers in a corpus of 40 Persian and English electrical engineering articles. Results showed significant differences between the two languages in this regard. Results provide evidence that English scientific prose elaborates more frequently than Persian. These findings conform the relative redundancy of Persian science texts and relative indirectness and implicitness of English ones. The second part of the study, which aimed at investigating the effect of Iranian EFL students' level of proficiency on the use of English apposition markers, analyzed 40 expository paragraphs written by 20 M.A. students majoring in TEFL and 20 B.A. students of English translation at Islamic Azad University, (Isfahan Branch). Chi-square analyses revealed no significant differences between the 2 groups in the frequency of apposition markers ($p \leq 0.05$), and both groups used apposition markers appropriately. Results hold several implications for EFL students, teachers, materials developers, researchers, and translators.

Keywords: Apposition Markers, Appropriateness, Writing, Textual Cohesion



MJAL 8:1 WINTER 2016

ISSN 0974-8741

English and Persian Apposition Markers in Written Discourse: A Case of Iranian EFL learners by 1. Samaneh Chamanaraeian & 2. Mahmood Hashemian

1. Introduction

It is for many years that apposition markers have attracted a lot of attention. Whereas there is disagreement in regard to such fundamental issues as the classification, structure, and meaning of apposition markers, it is widely agreed that such expressions reinforce the relationship between the speaker's or the writer's ideas, make the relationship between preceding and following propositions clear, do metalingual work, create discourse coherence, and are oriented to the reader's or the hearer's needs.

As Brinton (1996) notes, pragmatic markers have little or no propositional meaning; in other words, they are not strictly obligatory for full understanding of an utterance and do not affect the truth conditions of it.

Whereas several researchers have studied apposition markers from the descriptive and contrastive perspective, still research needs to address these devices in relation to L2 writing proficiency. This study aimed at examining the functions, frequency of use, and structure of apposition markers in English and Persian texts in order to explore the possible differences in their frequency between Persian and English. It also investigated whether Persian EFL learners resort to their previous linguistic knowledge of Persian apposition markers when writing in English.

In order to investigate apposition markers in Persian and English research articles as well as in Iranian student's compositions, the following questions were posed:

1. Is there any difference between written English and Persian regarding the frequency of apposition markers?
2. Is the frequency of apposition markers affected by the level of proficiency?
3. Is there any relationship between the level of proficiency and the appropriate use of apposition markers?



MJAL 8:1 WINTER 2016

ISSN 0974-8741

English and Persian Apposition Markers in Written Discourse: A Case of Iranian EFL learners by 1. Samaneh Chamanaraeian & 2. Mahmood Hashemian

Following the aim of study, the following null hypotheses were posed:

- H₀₁: There is not a significant difference between written English and Persian regarding the frequency of apposition markers.
- H₀₂: The level of proficiency is not a determining factor in the frequency of using apposition markers.
- H₀₃: The level of proficiency is not a determining factor in appropriate use of apposition markers.

2. Review of Literature

Gomez Penas (1994) carried out a descriptive analysis of apposition based on a literary corpus from a syntactic, semantic and pragmatic point of view. They analyzed the characteristics which differentiate apposition from other relations within the linguistic system, and observed that it is a type of relation which is mainly found among juxtaposed noun phrases. These noun phrases have the same function within the clause in which they are inserted. It is mainly used to characterize, name and identify characters and everything the author considers necessary. In this way, the author transmits information which helps him not only to give detailed yet concise descriptions, but also, in some cases, to help the reader to follow the story.

Martinez (1994) in his paper on loose apposition in journalistic style applied the notion of apposition to the genre of news magazines. He found that the construction known as loose or non-restrictive apposition is primarily a nominal construction functioning as Subject, direct object or prepositional complement. Also, that the apposition markers are mainly bound by commas and juxtaposed. Contrary to Meyer's findings his data showed that neither the function of prepositional complement nor that of direct object promotes location of apposition at the end of a clause and apposition can also occur between different categories, in unjuxtaposed position. According to his findings, the use of appositions has certain features which seem to be genre-specific. Thus, due to the pragmatics of journalistic written discourse, the classes of apposition most frequently used are those related to the identity and characterization of individuals. The use



MJAL 8:1 WINTER 2016

ISSN 0974-8741

English and Persian Apposition Markers in Written Discourse: A Case of Iranian EFL learners by 1. Samaneh Chamanaraeian & 2. Mahmood Hashemian

of these types is goal-oriented since the journalist tries to attract a wide range of readers, and in order to reach this goal it is necessary to supply additional information for audiences of a low amount of shared knowledge.

Hasan Shaban Ali (2012) made a contrastive study on English and Arabic apposition and concluded that there are four types of appositions in Arabic: correspondent, inclusion, dissimilation, and some of-whole. It is not required that there is a pronoun that refers to the word that we use the apposition for, a verb may be a substitutive to a whole sentence, It is a type of relation which is mainly found among juxtaposed noun phrases, noun phrases have the same function within the clause in which they are inserted, apposition is like predication in their meaning and also in some of their syntactic properties though they have no verb.

4. Methodology

Participants

Twenty B.A. students of English language translation in their last term of study and 20 M.A. students majoring in TEFL from Islamic Azad University, (Isfahan Branch) were selected. The participants were selected by using nonrandom purposive sampling method. The B.A. students had passed three writing courses, and the M.A. students were in their first year of study and were studying a course in advanced writing.

Materials

To gather the data, this study made use of two corpora and 40 expository paragraphs. The contrastive analysis of apposition markers undertaken in this study was carried out on an English and Persian corpus of 40 research papers in electrical engineering (i.e., 20 in English and 20 in Persian). The total number of words in the Persian corpus was 51,324, whereas it was 129,541 in the English corpus. The Persian papers were randomly selected from the papers presented at conferences on electrical engineering. The English papers were randomly selected from the papers published in *IEEE*, *ScienceDirect*, and so on.



MJAL 8:1 WINTER 2016

ISSN 0974-8741

English and Persian Apposition Markers in Written Discourse: A Case of Iranian EFL learners by 1. Samaneh Chamanaraeian & 2. Mahmood Hashemian

Procedure

For conducting the contrastive study on the form and use of apposition markers in the form of Persian and English written discourse, 40 research papers (20 papers for each language) in electrical engineering were used. Next, all the form instances of apposition markers used in the English and Persian research papers were identified. After marking all the form tokens, their frequency, percentage, and density were calculated. Then, a cross-linguistic comparison was made.

To conduct the second part of the study, 20 M.A. students majoring in TEFL and 20 B.A. students studying English language translation at Islamic Azad University, (Isfahan Branch) were asked to write an expository paragraph. Without any instruction, they were given two topics to choose from. The participants were asked to use, at least, 450 words, be as precise as possible, and clarify their thoughts so that the reader could get what they meant. Then, the form of apposition markers used in the paragraphs written by each group were identified, and the Chi-square test was done. Next, the form of apposition markers was analyzed, and the two groups were compared with regard to form and use of apposition markers to find the possible relation between the level of language proficiency and appropriate use of apposition markers.

Once the data were collected, the corpus was analyzed in order to identify all kinds of apposition markers, including *that is (i.e.), that is to say, in other words, it means, I mean, for example (e.g.), for instance, such as, specially, or, including, like, relative pronouns + be.*

Then, the percentage and density of the form of apposition markers utilized in the English and Persian texts were calculated in order to compare the results cross-linguistically. The density of the apposition markers were determined by dividing the total number of the apposition markers in each group by the total number of words in that group. This step was followed by counting the frequency of each apposition marker and putting the forms in order of frequency (i.e., from the highest to the lowest).



4. Data Analysis

Result of Analyzing Persian and English Research Papers:

As mentioned earlier, the total number of words in the English corpus was 129,541, whereas, this figure in the Persian corpus was 51,324. Because the difference in the number of words would make the cross-linguistic comparison impossible, the percentage and density of apposition markers utilized in the English and Persian texts were computed. This procedure made comparison between text groups possible. Table 1 and Figure 1 show the percentage and density of apposition markers found in the selected corpus:

Table 1. *Density and Percentage of Apposition Markers Used in the Texts*

Language	Total N of words	Total N of Apposition Markers	Density	%
English	129541	59	0.000455	0.0455%
Persian	51324	19	0.000370	0.0370%

As shown in Table 1, English tended to use more apposition markers than Persian in the science texts. As the corresponding percentages show, the English writers reformulated and elaborated more than the Persian ones. Figure 1 represents these findings:

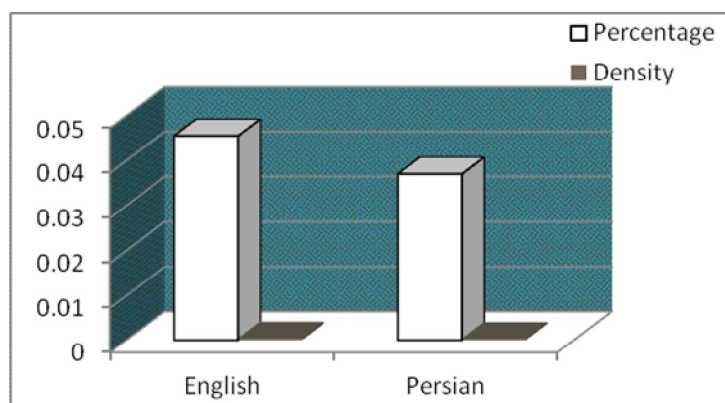


Figure 1. Density and Percentage of Apposition Markers Used in the Texts



MJAL 8:1 WINTER 2016

ISSN 0974-8741

English and Persian Apposition Markers in Written Discourse: A Case of Iranian EFL learners by 1. Samaneh Chamanaraeian & 2. Mahmood Hashemian

Table 2 provides the form, frequency, and parentage of the apposition markers found in the selected corpus. As indicated in Table 2, the English texts included nine forms, whereas the Persian writers used five forms of apposition markers; therefore, English showed a greater variety of apposition markers than Persian. Regarding frequency, English used more apposition markers than Persian. The most frequent apposition markers in English texts were *such as* (28.81%) and in the Persian texts were *ya'ni* (36.84%). On the other hand, the least frequent apposition markers in English were *especially* and *like* (3.38% each), whereas, in Persian, were *bename* and *masalan* (10.52% each):

Table 2. *Form and Frequency of English and Persian Apposition Markers*

English Markers	Frequency	%	Persian Markers	Frequency	%
<i>such as</i>	17	28.81%	<i>ya'ni</i>	7	36.84%
<i>that is (i.e.)</i>	14	23.72%	<i>be ebaarate digar</i>	5	26.31%
<i>or</i>	8	13.55%	<i>be ebaarati</i>		
<i>in other words</i>	5	8.47%	<i>ya</i>	3	15.78%
<i>namely</i>	4	6.77%	<i>bename</i>	2	10.52%
<i>for example</i>	4	6.77%	<i>masalan</i>	2	10.52%
<i>including</i>	3	5.08%	<i>baraye mesal</i>		
<i>like</i>	2	3.38%	TOTAL	19	
<i>Specially</i>	2	3.38%			
TOTAL	59				

Results of Analyzing Paragraphs Written by the Participants:

The frequency of use of different apposition markers by the two proficiency groups of the study (i.e., the B.A. and M.A. students) are shown in Table 3:



MJAL 8:1 WINTER 2016

ISSN 0974-8741

English and Persian Apposition Markers in Written Discourse: A Case of Iranian EFL learners by 1. Samaneh Chamanaraeian & 2. Mahmood Hashemian

Table 3: *Frequency of Use of Apposition Markers by the B.A. and M.A. Participants*

		Apposition Markers												
		<i>that is</i>	<i>in other Words</i>	<i>it means</i>	<i>I mean</i>	<i>for example</i>	<i>for instance</i>	<i>such as</i>	<i>or</i>	<i>including</i>	<i>like</i>	<i>relative Pro. + be</i>	<i>specifically</i>	Tota l
Proficiency Level	B.A.	1	1	2	2	2	1	2	5	0	1	1	0	18
	M.A.	6	1	5	2	7	3	4	25	1	2	16	4	76
Total		7	2	7	4	9	4	6	30	1	3	17	4	94

Whether the difference between the frequencies of apposition markers in the two proficiency groups was statistically significant or not had to be determined by the results of a Chi-square test (see Table 4.):

Table 4.: *Chi-Square Results for Comparing Apposition*

Markers for the B.A. and M.A. Participants

	Value	<i>df</i>	<i>Sig.</i> (2-tailed)
Pearson Chi-Square	8.746	11	.645
Likelihood Ratio	9.249	11	.599
Linear-by-Linear Association	3.024 94	1	.082
<i>N</i> of Valid Cases			



MJAL 8:1 WINTER 2016

ISSN 0974-8741

English and Persian Apposition Markers in Written Discourse: A Case of Iranian EFL learners by 1. Samaneh Chamanaraeian & 2. Mahmood Hashemian

The p value under the *Sig.* (2-tailed) column in front of Pearson Chi-square is greater than the specified level of significance (i.e., $.64 > .05$), indicating that the difference between the frequencies of the apposition markers for the B.A. and M.A. participants was not statistically significant. The conclusion is, thus, that the participants' level of proficiency did not cause differential uses of apposition markers in their L2 productions.

Level of Proficiency and Appropriate Use of Apposition Markers:

The last question addressed by the study was whether there was a significant difference in the appropriate use of apposition markers across the groups with different levels of proficiency. The results showed that both the M.A. and B.A. students used apposition markers appropriately. The difference between these two groups was related to the frequency of the apposition markers used.

5. Conclusion

As we said before, the followings were the research questions of this study:

- Is there any difference between written English and Persian regarding the frequency of apposition markers?
- Is the frequency of apposition markers affected by the level of proficiency?
- Is there any relationship between the level of proficiency and the appropriate use of apposition markers?

Based on the findings of the study, regarding frequency, English used more apposition markers than Persian. The most frequent apposition markers in the English texts were *such as* (28.81%), and the most frequent ones in the Persian texts were *ya'ni* (36.84%).

As for Question #1, English writers tended to use more apposition markers than the Persian ones in the science texts. In other words, the results of this analysis conform the tendency of English writers to elaborate their ideas more often than Persian scholars. So, the gathered data reject the null hypothesis of no difference; as a result, the following directional hypothesis comes into view:



MJAL 8:1 WINTER 2016

ISSN 0974-8741

English and Persian Apposition Markers in Written Discourse: A Case of Iranian EFL learners by 1. Samaneh Chamanaraeian & 2. Mahmood Hashemian

- H₁: There is a significant difference between written English and Persian regarding the frequency of apposition markers.

Regarding question # 2 and the null hypotheses 2, findings of the study showed that the difference between the frequencies of the apposition markers for the B.A. and M.A. participants was not statistically significant. That is, the participants' level of proficiency did not cause differential uses of apposition markers in their L2 productions. So, the gathered data did not reject the null hypothesis of no effect.

As to question # 3 and the third null hypothesis, the results showed that both the M.A. and B.A. students used apposition markers appropriately. As a result, the level of proficiency was not a determining factor in the appropriate use of apposition markers and the null hypothesis was not rejected.

The implications of these findings provide insights into and suggestions for how one can best help students improve their EFL writing abilities to catch their readers' attention. Persian research papers hold several pedagogical implications for both EFL teachers and students. First, EFL teachers should become familiar with the forms and usage of Persian and English apposition markers.

6. References

- Brinton, L. J. (1996). Pragmatic markers in English: Grammaticalization and discourse functions (Vol. 19). Walter de Gruyter
- Martínez, E. R. (1994). Loose apposition in journalistic style. *Bells: Barcelona English language and literature studies*, 6, 113-130.
- Meyer, Ch. F. (1992). *Apposition in contemporary English*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Penas, M. D. G. (1994). Apposition in English: A linguistic study based on a literary corpus. *Revista Alicantina de Estudios Ingleses*, (7), 83-96.
- Shaban Ali, H. (2012). *English and Arabic apposition: A contrastive study*. Iraq: Babel Retrieved June 11, 2014, from the World Wide Web www.iasj.net/iasj?func=fulltext&aId=75211