Chinese learners' use of concessive connectors in English argumentative writing
[以中文為母語之英文學習者 在議論文中讓步連接詞語之使用]

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Abstract

A learner corpus, i.e., a principled collection of contextualized texts produced by second language learners, can be of invaluable help in identifying learners' needs. Previous learner corpus research has indicated that an area for improvement in second language writing is learners' use of logical connectors as cohesive devices. While most previous studies have been general surveys that examined a wide range of English connectors, the present one is a more focused investigation, probing into Chinese-speaking learners' use of concessive connectors. The data is taken from a self-constructed corpus of argumentative essays written by Taiwanese freshmen, who were placed into four proficiency levels. Common errors, including orthographical, syntactic, and semantic ones, were identified and categorized. The frequency distribution of the attested concessive connectors reveals Chinese learners' development in their use of individual connectors. Difficulties may be attributed to the linguistic complexity of concessive connectors in English and L1 transfer. Moreover, previously identified lexico-syntactic characteristics in learners' use of English connectors were reconfirmed by our corpus data. More importantly, the pragmatic function of concessive connectors in Chinese learners' argumentative writing is also addressed. The findings have important pedagogical implications. Pragmatics is an area in need of further attention in learner corpus research, and we have gone some way toward enhancing our understanding of that area.

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