

ON SOME VARIATION IN THE USE OF DISCOURSE MARKERS BY CZECH AND GERMAN STUDENTS OF ENGLISH

Renata Povolná

Abstract

Since recent studies on academic English have shown considerable cross-cultural variation in texts written by non-native speakers (Clyne 1987, Ventola & Mauranen 1991, Čmejrková & Daneš 1997, Duszak 1997, Chamonikolasová 2005, Stašková 2005, Mur-Dueñas 2008, Wagner 2011, Dontcheva-Navratilova 2012, Povolná 2012), the paper investigates a corpus of diploma theses written by Czech and German students of English with the aim of finding out how novice non-native writers from different discourse communities (Swales 2004) use causal and contrastive discourse markers (DMs) associated with hypotactic and paratactic relations in order to build coherence relations (Taboada 2006) in academic texts. In addition, the author attempts to find out whether there is any variation in the preferences of novice writers depending on the different fields of study, i.e. diploma theses written in the areas of linguistics and methodology, and whether the use of selected DMs by Czech and German students differs from the writing habits of native speakers of English.

Key words

written academic discourse, diploma theses, discourse markers, causal and contrastive relations, hypotactic and paratactic relations

1 Introduction

Semantic relations that may hold between adjacent or more distant segments of discourse tend to be expressed explicitly by some markers above all in written academic discourse where the expression of the author's argumentation becomes of crucial importance. Since causal and contrastive relations rank among the most complex of all semantic relations that may hold within the text (Kortmann 1991), the paper investigates ways in which students of English from two different discourse communities, i.e. different cultural backgrounds (Czech Republic and Germany), use discourse markers (DMs) to express these most complex relations when building coherence relations, i.e. "relations that hold together different parts of the discourse" (Taboada 2006: 567) in order to enable the reader(s) to perceive the text as being coherent. "The process of creating coherent texts involves an indication of relationships between the things one is 'on about'" (Halliday & Hasan 1989: 94), since an appropriate application of guiding signals indicating relationships between segments of discourse by