

Use of ‘But’ for Semantic and Pragmatic Contrast by Turkish EFL Students

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Received 02 October 2019

Accepted 07 December 2019

Abstract

The connective ‘but’ mainly represents two different contrastive relations (Lakoff, 1971; Van Dijk, 1979; Blakemore, 1989). One of them is semantic, which shows semantic opposition and where no expectation is denied. The other is pragmatic, which shows a denial of expectation. This study aimed to investigate the use of ‘but’ by Turkish EFL students in their L2 writings in terms of the relations it indicated. The participants of the study were the first-year students in the Department of English Language and Literature in Hatay Mustafa Kemal University in Turkey. Students’ argumentative essays written in the Research and Study Techniques course were used for the study. Each instance of ‘but’ was coded based on the relation it indicated, and then those relations were separated into categories depending on their meaning in the context. The findings showed that the number of pragmatic uses was higher than semantic uses in the students’ L2 writings and that the pragmatic uses could be categorized as violated expectation, correction, evidence, and emphasizing condition. The study revealed that L1 transfer, frequency in the L2 input, context, position of the connective ‘but’ in the sentence, and the type of the essay were related to the use of semantic or pragmatic contrast. The study also revealed that the unmarked function of ‘but’ could be violated expectations.

Keywords: *Semantic Relation, Pragmatic Relation, ‘But’, EFL*

Introduction

The major aim of language learning is to achieve the ability to use the target language appropriately and correctly for effective communication. This ability to use language effectively for the transmission, interpretation, and comprehension of written or oral messages is called communicative competence. The term communicative competence was first used by Hymes (1972). According to Hymes (1972), communicative competence does

not only mean having grammatical competence, but it also means having the ability to use the language appropriately in a social context. According to Canale and Swain (1980), communicative competence has four components. These are grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, strategic competence, and discourse competence. Grammatical competence refers to the knowledge of the rules of morphology, phonology, semantics, lexis, and syntax. Sociolinguistic competence refers to the socio-cultural rules of language and the appropriate use of language. Strategic competence refers to the ability to use verbal or non-verbal communication strategies when there is a communication breakdown. Discourse competence refers to two abilities as interactional competence and textual competence. The former means the ability to communicate effectively in conversations, whereas the latter means the ability to create coherent written texts.

Coherence occurs when utterances in a text are presented in a logical order, and the logical relations in the text are clear. This way, meaningful mental representations occur in the readers' minds, and the readers organize discourse relations and understand the text even if they do not have any prior knowledge about what is mentioned in the text. According to Sanders, Spooren, and Nordman (1992), the term 'coherence relation' is an aspect of the meaning of at least two discourse segments that cannot be interpreted through the meaning of the isolated segments. The use of connectives plays an important role in indicating the coherence relations between or among the discourse segments. In other words, using connectives appropriately and correctly in written language is an important component of textual competence. The reason is that readers may not have any background knowledge about the subject written, or they may fail to activate their schemata even if they have some background knowledge about the subject. According to Virtanen (2004), using connectives appropriately and correctly is important because they indicate the kinds of thought processes in the text, and they allow the reader to construe the logico-semantic relations between the units in the text. Similarly, Zamel (1983) states that connectives are very important in writing because they signal the relationship between ideas and affect the meaning that the writer is trying to convey.

The process of determining the coherence of discourse is called 'coherence establishment' (Kehler, 2002). The need to establish coherence is crucial to discourse understanding. Readers or hearers try to recover the coherence structure of utterances from computing discourse meaning just as they try to recover the syntactic structure of a string of words to compute sentence meaning. The establishment of coherence allows readers or listeners to communicate and understand more meaning than the meaning of each sentence. Kehler (2004) states that discourses are not arbitrary collections of utterances, and a felicitous discourse must be coherent. According to Fahnestock (1983), coherence relations are classified as continuative and discontinuative relations. The continuative-discontinuative distinction refers to positive/negative propositions and the expectations they generate in the readers' minds during text processing. Adversative relations are discontinuative, whereas Additive, Causal, and Temporal Relations are continuative.

According to Kehler, Contrast relation can be expressed in two ways. One of them is that the relations expressed by the utterances are contrasted. In those cases, ‘but’ is used to indicate the contrastive relations.

Gephardt supported Gore, but Armey opposed him (Kehler, 2002, p.16).

The other is the relation where a set of parallel entities is contrasted, as in the example below.

Gephardt supported Gore, but Armey supported Bush (Kehler, 2002, p.16).

Another relation where ‘but’ is used is the Violated Expectation relation, which is accepted as one of the Cause-Effect relations, according to Kehler’s (2002) categorization. The order of the Violated Expectation relation is shown below, where the propositions P and Q identified from the first sentence (S_1) and the second sentence (S_2), respectively (Kehler, 2002).

Infer P from the assertion of S_1 and Q from the assertion of S_2 , where normally $P \rightarrow \neg Q$. The formula for Violated Expectation Relation, according to Kehler, is $P \rightarrow \neg Q$.

*George wanted to satisfy the right-wing of his party, **but** he refused to introduce an initiative to allow government funding for faith-based charitable organizations.* (Kehler, 2004, p.247)

George is a politician, but he’s honest (Kehler, 2002, p.21).

The conjunction ‘but’ will generally signal a Contrast relation when it can be paraphrased with ‘but in contrast’, whereas it signals a Violated Expectation relation when it can be paraphrased with ‘but surprisingly’ or ‘but counter to expectation’ (Kehler, 2002, pp.32-33).

According to Halliday and Hasan (1976) ‘but’ is one of the adversative connectives, which indicates concession; the other connectives are ‘however’, ‘yet’, and ‘although’. In addition to this sense, ‘but’ has a different sense, which is called contrastive. In this latter sense, the meaning is not ‘despite’ but it means ‘as against’, ‘to be set against’, ‘as against that’ as well as on the other hand.

Source of Coherence and ‘But’

Different researchers use different terms for Source of Coherence. The main idea behind this distinction depends if the propositions represent real events or they represent the speaker’s or writer’s personal interpretation which stems from the writer’s or speaker’s schematic knowledge. Hoek, Evers-Vermeul and Sanders (2019) make objective-subjective distinction. They state that when their locutionary meaning relates two segments, a discourse relation is an objective. In other words, the relation is observable in the real world. Subjective relations involve the speakers’ reasoning and they are related because of the illocutionary meaning of the segments. (Hoek et al., 2019). Sweetser (1990) makes a distinction among content relations, epistemic relations, and speech act relations. Content relations represent real events, whereas epistemic and speech act relations involve the writer or speaker interpretation and hence they are subjective. Similarly, Halliday and Hasan (1976) made external/internal relations distinction. The former indicates relations inherent in the states, which are based on facts and hence represent semantic relation. The latter indicates relations inherent in the communication process, which have text organizational nature and hence represents pragmatic relations. According to Sanders et al. (1992), if segments are related at the level of propositional content, a relation has a semantic

source of coherence. If they are related at the level of illocutionary meaning, the source of coherence is pragmatic. Van Dijk (1979) states that pragmatic connectives refer to relations between speech acts while semantic connectives indicate relations between denoted facts.

‘But’ is one of the connectives which is used to indicate both types of semantic and pragmatic contrastive relations mentioned above. The connective ‘but’ mainly represents two different contrastive relations (Lakoff, 1971; Blakemore, 1989; Van Dijk, 1979). In other words, ‘But’ represents two different contrastive knowledge. One of them is semantic and the other is pragmatic. In semantic contrast, there is a contrast between two lexical items (Lakoff, 1971). In other words, there are contrastive elements which are indicated by the connective ‘but’ as in the examples below:

John is tall but Bill is short. (semantic)

‘But’ indicates simple opposition between elements of a text. In this example, the adjectives tall and short are opposites.

John is rich but Bill is poor (Lakoff, 1971, p.134).

Similar to the previous example, the adjectives rich and poor are opposites. In the example below, on the other hand, the sentence includes pragmatic contrast.

John is rich but dumb (Lakoff, 1971, p.133).

In this sentence, the expectation which stems from the schematic knowledge plays an important role in the interpretation of the sentence. The sentence below is another example that shows pragmatic contrast.

Mary is poor but happy (pragmatic) (Lakoff, 1971).

In the sentence above, there is no lexical contrast between the words ‘poor’ and ‘happy’. Therefore, there is no semantic contrast in the sentence above. On the other hand, there is a contrast between expectations and reality because normally, poor people are not expected to be happy (Lakoff, 1971). Therefore, there is a pragmatic contrast in the sentence. In other words, there is a pragmatic contrast between the expectations of the speaker/hearer and the actual situation.

According to Renkema (2009), “the characteristic of the concession relation is that there is an implied meaning that is denied or blocked in the other segment. One could also say that the expected effect or result does not happen or that the expected consequence does not hold. Mostly, a concessive can be seen as a violated expectation” (p.78).

An explicit marker of denial of expectation is the connective ‘yet’, one of whose functions is to show an element of surprise or contrary to what is expected.

John is small, but he plays basketball (Spooren, 1989, p.51).

According to Spooren (1989), this sentence can be paraphrased as follows:

It is plausible that John does not play basketball, and in reality he does play basketball. (Spooren, 1989, p.52)

When the propositions are reversed in denial of expectation relation, the interpretation may be different in as in the examples from Spooren (1989, p.53).

The storm blew over the tennis-court, but (yet) the referee decided to let the match go on.

The referee decided to let the match go on, but(yet) the storm blew over the tennis court.

In the first sentence, the denied expectation is ‘if a storm blows, then the match will be cancelled’ while in the second one the denied expectation is ‘if a match goes on, then the weather is good.’ According to Rudolph (1996), this supports the fact that the second proposition conveys the most important information which is the rejection of an expectation derived from the first proposition.

While determining whether the relation is semantic or pragmatic, just focusing on the semantic opposition or antonyms in the discourse may be misleading. Semantic or pragmatic categories may even overlap. For instance, suppose that we mention two siblings Mary and Jane and make the following statement.

Mary is fat but Jane is thin.

There is semantic contrast in this sentence because of the antonyms ‘fat’ and ‘thin’. We can paraphrase the sentence using ‘while’ or ‘whereas’ to indicate the contrast.

While Mary is fat, Jane is thin or Mary is fat whereas Jane is thin.

However, if we know that Mary and Jane are siblings and from our schematic knowledge if we presuppose that they should be alike, our expectation is denied, in this case, we can consider the relation as Violated Expectation, which is a pragmatic relation.

Another relation indicated by ‘but’ in the literature is ‘Corrective’ or ‘Correction’ relation. According to Halliday and Hasan (1976), a correction relation is in the sense of ‘not but’. They state that the general meaning is still contrary to expectation, but the special sense is ‘as against what has just been said.’ They state that typical expressions used to indicate this relation are ‘instead’, ‘instead of that’, ‘rather’, ‘on the contrary’, ‘at least’ and ‘I mean’.

Similarly, according to Rudolph(1996), another function of the connective ‘but’ is correction and its formula can be considered as ‘not X but Y’. Taking those views into consideration, it can be concluded that if we can use one of the corrective connectives suggested by Halliday and Hasan(1976) instead of ‘but’, we may think that ‘but’ has a corrective function the sentence. Some examples for the correction relation are as follows:

This paper wasn't written by John, but by Peter.

Not John but Peter went to Munich (Asbach-Schnitker, 1978 as cited in Rudolph, 1996).

Considering all these views, the connective ‘but’ has different functions. Therefore, just looking at the semantic opposition of the words is not enough to determine whether the relation is semantic or pragmatic. Using the schematic knowledge and reading the discourse as a whole is necessary to determine the type of the contrastive relation.

The claims and examples above are related to the use of ‘but’ and those relations by native speakers. There is a need to investigate how non-native speakers or learners of English use the connective ‘but’ in their L2 to indicate different types of relations.

The Literature Review

There are various studies on connectives which were carried out with EFL learners and which revealed important findings regarding the use of ‘but’. Some studies carried out with learners of

English with different L1s (Shi, 1993; Carlsen, 2010; Alarcon & Morales, 2011; Prommas & Sinwongsuwat, 2011; Dumlao & Wilang, 2019) showed that 'but' is one of the most frequently used connectives. Shi's (1993) study which investigated the writing quality of the argumentative essays showed that low-rated essays contained more connectives than high-rated essays and that nearly 37% of the conjunctions in the low-rated essays were 'but' and 'because' were found to be the most frequent conjunctions following 'and'. Carlsen (2010) conducted a corpus-based study of the use of discourse connectives in written texts of learners of Norwegian as a second language. The study revealed that 'but' was among the most frequently used connectives by all Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) levels of proficiency. Alarcon and Morales (2011) found that 'but' was the most frequently used connective in the argumentative essays of EFL undergraduate learners. Prommas and Sinwongsuwat (2011) investigated the connectives in argumentative compositions used by Thai undergraduate students and English native speakers. The study revealed that both groups of students shared similar characteristics and 'but' was one of the frequently used connectives. Dumlao and Wilang (2019) investigated the connectives employed by students whose L1 is English and L2 English users enrolled in BA English program in the Philippines. Twenty-four academic essays were used for the analysis. One of the major findings of the study is that 'but' is the most frequently used contrastive connective both by the L1 and L2 speakers of English. Other studies focused both on the function and the position of 'but' in the sentence (Leung, 2005) or on only contrastive connectives (Pavičić Takač, Kružić, & Vakanjac Ivezić, 2020). Leung's (2005) study revealed that 'but' was used by Chinese (Hong Kong) and American university students for the functions such as contrast, adding (including but also), changing the subject, introducing a reply which indicates surprise, disbelief, refusal, or protest. The study showed that the most favorable usage of 'but' was showing a contrast (84%) both for American and Chinese students. Another finding of the study is that non-sentence-initial position was generally used by the students (80%). Sentences with 'but' in the sentence-initial position were mostly preceded by a long sentence of the related subject matter. Pavičić Takač, Kružić, and Vakanjac Ivezić (2020) analyzed a corpus which consisted of English and German subcorpora, which included 40 texts written by non-native users of English or German at B2 proficiency level. The researchers analyzed the argumentative essays written by the students and found out the connectives indicating contrast. Among the connectives indicating contrast in the English subgroup, the frequency of 'but' is the highest (7.04 per 1.000). Merilaine's (2015) study showed that Estonian EFL learners tended to overuse 'but'. In contrast, native speakers of English used various adversative connectives simultaneously.

Some studies which were carried out in the Turkish EFL context (Altunay, 2009; Karahan, 2015; Aysu, 2017) revealed that 'but' is one of the most frequently used connectives. Altunay's (2009) study, which was carried out with first-year Turkish ELT department students, showed that 'but' was among the most frequently used top ten connectives used by the participants. The study revealed that the most frequently used connective for adversative relations was 'but'. One of the striking findings of the study is that participants of the study used the concession function

of ‘but’ more frequently than its contrastive function. Karahans’(2015) study, which was the partial replication of Altunay’s (2009) study, supported Altunay’s (2009) findings in that ‘but’ was one of the most frequent connectives in the ELT department students’ essays. Aysu (2017) investigated the connectives used by 104 elementary-level Turkish prep-class students. The results showed that elementary-level students used 180 connectives and ‘but’ occurred 51 times and it was the most secondly used connective after ‘and’. The findings of those studies support the findings of the previous studies which were carried out with students with different L1s (Shi, 1993; Carlsen, 2010; Alarcon and Morales, 2011; Prommas and Sinwongsuwat, 2011). All the studies mentioned above revealed important findings and allow us to make generalizations on the use of ‘but’. However, aspects other than frequency and sentence position regarding the use of ‘but’ should be focused on with Turkish EFL learners. Nine of the studies mentioned above investigated the coherence relations for which ‘but’ was used by Turkish EFL students. The current study was carried out to fill this gap in the literature.

Methods

Aim of the study

Although there are studies that focused on the use of ‘but’ in the literature, there is not any study that investigated the use of ‘but’ by Turkish EFL learners in terms of semantic and pragmatic contrastive relations it indicates. Therefore, the study aims to investigate the use of ‘but’ by Turkish EFL learners to indicate semantic and pragmatic contrast in their L2 writing. This is important to see whether their use of the connective ‘but’ is similar to the native speaker norms and to see if their acquisition of the connective ‘but’ is complete.

Research questions are:

1. Do Turkish EFL students prefer using the semantic or pragmatic function of ‘but’?
2. What are the functional categories of ‘but’ found in the participants’ written discourse?

Participants

The participants of the study are the first-year students in the Department of English Language and Literature at Hatay Mustafa Kemal University in Turkey. In the mentioned department, the students take Writing Skills I and Writing Skills II courses both in the fall semester and spring semester, respectively. In writing courses, they learn about different types of paragraph writing and essay writing, such as compare-contrast, cause-effect, and argumentative writing. In those courses, students receive instruction about the connectives that can be particularly used in each paragraph or essay type. In the second semester, they receive Research and Study Techniques course in addition to the writing course. In this course, students learn how to do academic research on a topic and how to write an academic research paper in the argumentation format. 78 students were enrolled in this course. However, the essay of one international student was excluded from the study to ensure homogeneity to prevent a different L1 influence. The remaining 77 students whose L1 was Turkish are the participants of the current study.

Data Collection

The data was collected in one of the Research and Study Techniques class in the 2018-2019 academic year. The argumentative essays written by the students were used to collect data. In argumentative writing, writers try to convince the reader that their point of view or belief is right. While doing this, the writers also present contrastive ideas and concessions and refute the counter-arguments by using adversative connectives. Therefore, the argumentative essay type was considered as an appropriate essay type for the current study. The essays were checked using a plagiarism program. Direct quotations were excluded in the analysis because they may not reflect the participants' production.

Data Analysis

The essays were read more than once and instances of 'but' were found in the essays. Each instance of 'but' was coded based on the relation it indicated and then those relations were separated into categories depending on their meaning in the context. Finally, the number and percentages of the connective 'but' for each relation and functional category were calculated.

Findings

The findings of the current study are presented below.

Research Question1. Do Turkish EFL students prefer using the semantic or pragmatic function of 'but'?

The essays consisted of 29,320 words. One hundred sixteen instances of 'but' were found in the data. The results showed that pragmatic uses were higher than semantic uses. Among 116 instances, 94 uses were pragmatic and 22 uses were semantic. In other words, 81% of the total uses were pragmatic while 19% of the uses were semantic.

Example sentences from the students' essays are presented below without making any changes or corrections on the students' productions.

My friend became a teacher but I had never seen her in the class.

In this sentence, 'but' indicates pragmatic relation because normally the writer expected to see her friend in the class because she was a teacher, but it did not happen. The writer's expectation has been denied or violated. Therefore, there is pragmatic contrast in the sentence.

It is surprising that some smokers do not have a lot of money, but they still pay for smoking instead of paying for their other important needs.

Normally, smokers who do not have a lot of money are not expected to pay for smoking, instead, they are expected to pay for their basic needs. The actual situation is the opposite of this expectation. In other words, the expectation has been violated, so 'but' indicates pragmatic relation in the sentence above.

All of them are small things for young people but they are very important problems for old people.

The sentence above includes lexical contrast between two lexical items, ‘young’ and ‘old’. It mentions the contrast between young and old people. Therefore, the sentence includes semantic contrast.

While the child is in high school, a later start time may help some students succeed because they would feel more rested. In the short-run, this would be beneficial to teens, but in the long-run, this would create bad habits.

The sentence above includes lexical contrast between two lexical items, ‘short-run’ and ‘long-run’ and the possible results of a late start time for the short-run and long-run is compared. Therefore, the sentence includes semantic contrast.

Research Question 2. What are the categories found for each function in the participants’ written discourse?

The study revealed that the semantic relations were only used for contrast and pragmatic uses might indicate other relations in addition to denial of expectation, which will be called as violated expectation in the rest of the article. The results showed that pragmatic uses could be categorized as violated expectation, correction, evidence, and emphasizing condition.

Violated Expectation:

In my opinion, technology is necessary to improve life conditions, but it has bad effects more than benefits.

In this sentence, since technology is necessary to improve life conditions, one may expect that its effects are more than bad effects. However, the writer mentions the opposite and the reader expectation is violated.

Correction

As a result of this study it is clear that the discriminatory attitude is not an innate reflex but a learned one.

As stated by Halliday and Hasan(1976) and Rudolph (1976), the relation is in the sense of ‘not but’ or ‘not X but Y’. The writer states that that the discriminatory attitude is not an innate reflex, instead it is something learned. In this sentence, if we remove ‘but’ and use ‘instead’ or ‘rather’, the meaning will not change.

Evidence

In present time people have a lot of things to have fun or get information but when it is thought the earliest sample of humankind, the opportunities to have fun was very limited.

In the sentence above, the writer is trying to convince the reader that in the past the early humans did not have opportunities to have fun. The writer uses the connective ‘but’ with ‘when’ and tries to persuade the reader that today’s circumstances and the circumstances in many years ago are not the same.

Emphasizing Condition

Smokers think that they do not quit smoking, but if they be determined, they can quit.

In this sentence, the meaning is that if smokers are determined they can quit smoking. The condition for quitting smoking is to be determined. The two propositions are connected with the connective ‘but’ together with ‘if.’

We can summarize the main findings of the study in the table below:

Table1.

Use of ‘But’ for Semantic and Pragmatic Contrast

Functions of ‘But’	N	%(rounded)
<i>Semantic Contrast</i>	22	19
<i>Pragmatic Contrast</i>	94	81
<i>Violated Expectation</i>	86	91
<i>Correction</i>	4	4
<i>Evidence</i>	2	2
<i>Emphasizing Condition</i>	2	2

Discussion

The findings of the study reveal that the participants use the pragmatic function of ‘but’ more than its semantic function and the findings support Altunay’s (2009) findings in this respect. The finding that the participants use the pragmatic function more than the semantic function indicates that EFL learners mostly indicate text-external or subjective relations. One of the reasons may be that they encounter the pragmatic function of ‘but’ more than its semantic function in the L2 input. Another reason may be that in their L1, participants use ‘ama’ and ‘fakat’, which are the Turkish equivalents of ‘but’ to indicate pragmatic relations rather than semantic relations and they transfer this L1 habit to their L2 writing. Another possible reason is that the context which requires the use of pragmatic relations is more frequent than the use of semantic relations.

Turkish discourse markers ‘ama’ and ‘fakat’ contributes to various coherence relations when used in sentence-initial, sentence-middle and sentence-final positions, and both ‘ama’ and ‘fakat’ contribute to more relations when they are used in sentence middle position then sentence-initial and sentence-final positions (Kuru-Gönen, 2007). This means that there is a relationship between sentence positioning and the function of the connective. When the data of the current study was analyzed, the study shows that only 15 instances of ‘but’ were used sentence- initially. Fourteen of those sentence-initial uses were for pragmatic contrast. The rest 101 were used in the sentence-middle position. This finding is in line with Leung’s (2005) finding in that non-sentence-initial position was generally used by the students. To make a comparison of the findings of the current study and the use of the native speakers, the use of ‘but’ in BNC (British National Corpus) was investigated through KWIC (Key Word In Context). It was founded that 21% of all instances are used sentence-initially in written texts. This means both in BNC data and the data of the current study shows that sentence-initial use of ‘but’ is not very common.

Further research is needed to see whether the native speakers and non-native speakers prefer certain positions to indicate certain functions.

The most probable reason of using ‘but’ for pragmatic contrast is the type of essays analysed in the current study. Among the whole pragmatic uses, the frequent use of the violated expectation relation is the main reason of the frequent use of ‘but’ for pragmatic contrast. In an argumentative essay, students write about the opposing ideas about an issue, and using evidence they try to convince the reader that their argument is the right one. For an effective argument, students need to use connectives to indicate concession or refutation. This means that they need to show that their argument is just the opposite of what is expected from the reader’s part. They also need to show that the opposing argument is valid, but their own argument is stronger than the opposing argument. This requires the use of violated expectation relation. To show violated expectation relation, students need to use connectives such as ‘but’, ‘however’, and ‘yet’.

Similar to the use of violated expectation relation, students used ‘but’ together with ‘when’ to provide evidence. This finding also stems from the nature of the argumentation. Students need to provide evidence to support their argument and they achieve this by using ‘but when’. As for corrective connectives, ‘instead’ and ‘rather than’ were searched in the essays, but the study revealed that the students did not use those connectives. They preferred using ‘but’ for correction.

As stated before, use of ‘but’ for emphasizing condition was found in the students’ essay. This finding is similar to Üstünoğlu’s (2006) finding for Turkish. In the current study, the participants used ‘but’ together with the conditional ‘if’ as in the example below:

Smokers think that they do not quit smoking, but if they be determined, they can quit.

In such sentences, the realization of one of the propositions which is connected by ‘but’ may depend on the realization of the other proposition (Üstünoğlu, 2006). For example, ‘Gelirim, ama sinemaya gideriz- I’ll come, but we’ll go to the cinema’ is interpreted as ‘I will not come if we will not go to the cinema.’) The findings of the current study partially support Üstünoğlu’s (2006) study where the functions of ‘ama’ (‘but’) were investigated. Considering both studies, it is concluded that both ‘ama’ and ‘but’ are used for evidence, violated expectation, emphasizing condition, and correction by native speakers of Turkish and Turkish EFL students. This shows that Turkish EFL students transfer some of their L1 characteristics to their L2.

The study revealed that for contrastive relations, students preferred using ‘but’ to other contrastive connectives such as ‘whereas’ and ‘while’. To confirm this, the number of instances of ‘whereas’ and ‘while’ were counted in the students’ essays. 2 instances of ‘whereas’ and 7 instances of ‘while’ were found to indicate semantic contrast as in the examples below.

Faith is important for religion while doubt is important for philosophy.

While the evil represents an ugly idea, the goodness represents the beautiful ideas.

As stated before, the participants preferred ‘but’ to indicate semantic contrast. For example, in the example below if ‘while’ or ‘whereas’ is used instead of ‘but’, the meaning does not change. However, the students preferred using ‘but’ instead of other contrastive connectives ‘whereas’ or ‘while’.

In the short-run, this would be beneficial to teens, but(whereas/while) in the long-run, this would create bad habits.

To investigate the frequency effect, the frequencies of the contrastive and concessive connectives were investigated in the BNC. The frequencies of ‘while’ and ‘whereas’ are 54067 and 6114, respectively, including the temporal function of ‘while’. Even if the frequency of ‘while’ includes both the contrastive and temporal functions in the BNC data, in any case it is much lower than the frequency of the connective ‘but’. When the frequencies of the concessive connectives which show violated expectation relation in the BNC, the numbers for ‘but’, ‘however’, ‘yet’ and ‘nevertheless’ are 440934, 59003, 33500, 6985 respectively. To see whether the participants preferred ‘but’ to other connectives for violated expectation, the instances of ‘but’, ‘however’, ‘yet’ and ‘nevertheless’ those connectives in the participants’ essays were found. The numbers are 86, 38, 5 and 3 for ‘but’, ‘however’, ‘yet’ and ‘nevertheless’ respectively. The sequence of those connectives from the most frequently used to least frequently used is the same for both native speakers and the participants of the current study. We may conclude that the participants prefer ‘but’ for violated expectation relation because ‘but’ is more frequently used than other concessive connectives also in the native speaker data.

The findings of the study can be interpreted from the perspective of linguistics. Kellerman (1979,1983) invoked the concept of markedness and stated that more marked structures are those that are perceived to be more irregular, infrequent, and semantically opaque. Marked or unmarked structures are also distinguished on the basis of their degree of complexity. Unmarked forms are thought to be less complex than marked.

At this point, the following questions should be answered: which function is mostly used by the participants and which function is the core or unmarked function of ‘but’? The findings of the study show that the participants used the pragmatic functions of ‘but’ more than its semantic function. Among the pragmatic functions, the violated expectation is the most frequently used one. So, does it mean the unmarked or core function of ‘but’ is violated expectation, which is a pragmatic function? One may think that contrast, which is the semantic meaning of ‘but’, is the unmarked meaning of ‘but’. The reason is that violated expectation, which is one of the pragmatic uses of ‘but’, is more complex than contrast. Hall (2004) states if one wants to reduce one to the other, it is more reasonable to say contrast is the basic meaning and the other interpretations derived pragmatically (Hall, 2004).

Kies asserts that concessive meaning belongs only in the domain of the adverbial ‘but’ and there is a shift towards using ‘but’ as an adverbial. Kies argues that semantically the coordinator ‘but’ strongly implies contrast or negation while the hallmark of the adverbial ‘but’ is its implied concession. According to Kies(1993), the possibility of paraphrasing of ‘but’ by concessive adverbials like ‘however’ and ‘all the same’ or by concessive conjuncts like ‘yet’, ‘though’, and ‘although’ supports the view that the hallmark of the adverbial ‘but’ is its implied concession. Considering Kies’(1993) statement and the findings of the current study, it can be concluded that the participants of the current study also conform to such tendency. The participants use the pragmatic function of ‘but’ more than its semantic function. This means that the unmarked

meaning of ‘but’ is pragmatic and among the pragmatic relations the violated expectation relation is dominant. If we accept the pragmatic function of ‘but’ as its unmarked function as revealed by the current study, we can conclude that the participants of the current use the violated expectation function as the unmarked function and more frequently than the other functions, which means that their use conforms to native speaker norms.

Conclusion and Implications

The study reveals that the participants use ‘but’ to indicate pragmatic relations more than to indicate semantic relations. The violated Expectation category is the most frequently used category among the pragmatic relations. It can be concluded that the unmarked or core function of ‘but’ is the violated expectation function, which indicates pragmatic relation. This means that EFL learners use ‘but’ mostly to indicate text-external or subjective relations. In other words, readers need to have the same schematic knowledge as the EFL writers to interpret the contrastive relations in the students’ essays. However, this may not always be the case. Therefore, students should be taught that they should not assume that they and the readers have the same information in their mind. They should be taught to provide every information in their essays so that the readers can interpret correctly what the students mean. Although the study shows that both the participants and native speakers prefer ‘but’ to other connectives for semantic or pragmatic relations, students should also have an awareness of the other connectives which have similar meaning and they should be encouraged to use them in their productions. In addition, students should be exposed to different genres since the types and frequencies of the connectives to indicate a particular relation may be different for different genres. They should receive instruction on sentence-positioning of the connectives mentioned in the study. They can be given substitution exercises and paraphrasing activities using ‘but’ and other connectives having similar meanings. They can be given translation exercises to check their understanding. They should be instructed on the use of ‘but’ and other contrastive connectives in written and oral language. It can also be concluded that the participants transfer some L1 characteristics to L2 regarding the use of ‘but’. Zeyrek(2014) compared the two words (‘ama’ and ‘fakat’) which are used as the equivalents of ‘but’ in Turkish. She states that ‘ama’ signals concession and pragmatic relations more readily than ‘fakat’ does. The study revealed that ‘ama’ is preferred in fiction whereas ‘fakat’ is used in more formal genres such as research papers. In future research, it could be interesting to give Turkish EFL students some texts which include ‘but’ and ask them to translate the texts into Turkish. They could also be given texts which include the connectives ‘ama’ and ‘fakat’ and be asked to translate them into Turkish to see which connectives they prefer to use in translations to indicate semantic or pragmatic contrast.

The findings are based on the written data which has been collected only from the first-year students in the English Language department at a public university in Turkey. This can be considered as a limitation of the study. Data from students from different universities can be collected to make better generalizations. Another limitation of the current study is that the data

was based on written language and argumentative essays. Comparative studies could be carried out with L1 learners and L2 learners regarding the use of ‘but’ both for written discourse and oral discourse. If significant differences are found between the L1 users’ and L2 users’ productions, instructions should be designed accordingly so that L2 learners can get closer or conform to the native speaker norms. Some functions of ‘but’ which do not exist in written language may exist in oral language, for example, using ‘but’ for a topic shift in a conversation or as a speech act. The findings of this study represent findings in argumentation. Similar studies could be carried out using different essay types and the results could be compared. New studies could also investigate whether L2 learners use ‘but’ for the same or different functions in L2 written and oral discourse and whether those uses change depending on the proficiency level.

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