



Lexico-grammatical Cohesion in English as a Global Lingua Franca: A Corpus-based Systemic Functional Analysis

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ABSTRACT

This corpus-based study is an attempt to illuminate two lexicogrammatical features of ELF represented by the texts in the “about” section of 30 universities around the globe. Drawing on the Kachruvian three-circle model, a corpus was collected from the websites of 20 universities in the inner circle, 20 in the outer circle and 20 in the expanding circle. The corpus was then analysed around the clause for the types of Reference and the types of Conjunction, two of the four main ways of creating cohesion in Halliday’s Systemic Functional Grammar. The frequency count of the seven devices in the system of Reference reveals that all the three circles used the system of Reference in similar ways, although some differences can be identified. The results also showed similarities between the ways the system of conjunction was used. However, the main aim of the study was to describe varieties of English alongside each other rather than find statistically significant differences between them. One major implication of this study is that this line of research has a huge potential for clarifying the linguistic features and explaining English as a global lingua franca as an independent variety.

Keywords: EFL; systemic functional linguistics; corpus; system of reference; cohesion

1. Introduction

English as a global language is now a well-established concept and there is a massive body of research and articles on its inception, development, social status, to name but a few. One of the major areas of concern in the field has been the linguistic features of English as an international English, or English as a global Lingua Franca. Key research into the common features of ELF has been conducted through the analysis of, for example, the ‘lingua franca core’ (Jenkins, 2000), and the VOICE corpus (Vienna-Oxford International Corpus of English). Seidlhofer (2004) argues, however, that it would be premature to launch into a discussion of the teaching of this lingua franca before certain prerequisites have been met. The most important of these are a conceptualization of speakers of lingua franca English as language users in their own right, and the acknowledgment of the legitimacy of, and indeed the need for, a description of salient features of English as a lingua franca (ELF), alongside English as a native language (ENL).

The present study is an attempt to shed light on one of these salient features of ELF, namely, how cohesion is created through

the use of the system of Reference, and the System of Conjunction, by analysing a corpus of written English compiled from the “about” section of sixty university websites. The reason this particular genre was selected to study English as global lingua franca is that a massive amount of communication in the academic world is now taking place in cyberspace. What makes this huge source of linguistic data particularly attractive is that most of the communication takes place for authentic, rather than for instructional purposes. More specifically, it appears that the language in the “about” section of the university websites has a number of features that makes it especially suitable for gaining insight into English a global lingua franca:

1. It has most probably been produced by (a group of) very proficient L2 users.
2. It is intended for a global audience, which means the intended audience probably do not share a common first language or culture.
3. It is used to project a certain identity, and therefore, can be indicative of the cultural context in which the texts unfold, since universities are now a part of almost any community in the world.

However, it appears that not many studies have tapped into this rich source of natural linguistic data, which is what this study aimed to do by compiling and analysing a corpus of the language used in cyberspace.

The analysis has been made within the framework of Halliday’s Systemic Functional Grammar. Following the Kachruvian three-circle model, these universities were selected from the inner-circle, the outer circle and the expanding circle, with twenty universities representing each circle. The universities are shown in Table 1.

1.2. The Purpose of the Study

This study intends to achieve more useful insights by the analysis of cohesive devices used in written texts. An important area of this study is opened up by a focus on two lexico-grammatical devices that contribute to cohesion. Thus, the aim of this work is to figure out to what extent two lexico grammatical resources can contribute to the creation of a text in English as global lingua franca, which provides insights into two significant linguistic features of ELF.

One of the features that distinguish this study from similar works in the field is that it taps into a rich source of linguistic data, i.e. the internet, where English is now a major language used by people and for the people who do not share a common first language for real communication purposes rather than for instruction. It also uses a powerful analytical frame work whose major focus is on text as unit of meaning. More importantly, the study does not strive to show how statistically significant the differences and similarities are between native and non-native varieties, as is the trend in most studies. Rather, the principal aim is to give an account of English as a global lingua franca, as an independent variety, by describing the Englishes used in three social contexts alongside each other.

The next section sets out the details of how the corpus was compiled and analysed in order to the reveal the type of Reference and the type of Conjunction used in this type of text.

1.3. Research Questions

The principal motivation for the study was to gain an understanding of two crucial aspects of grammatical cohesion, namely, the System of Reference and the system of Conjunction in English as a global lingua franca. The study aimed to address three basic questions:

1. What types of Reference are used in these texts?
2. What types of Conjunction are used in these texts?
3. What are the features common among them?
4. What are the different features found in the texts?

2. Literature Review

Although it goes by different names and has various definitions, English as a global lingua franca (ELF) is the used to mean a medium of communication by people who do not speak the same first

Table 1. The university websites in the corpus

Inner-circle universities		Outer-circle universities		Expanding circle universities	
The USA	The UK	India	Malaysia	Iran	Korea
Princeton University	University of Cambridge	Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore	University of Malaya	Tehran University of Medical Sciences	Seoul National University
Harvard University	University of Oxford	Institute of Chemical Technology, Mumbai	University Sains Malaysia	University of Tehran	Korea Advanced Institute of Science & Technology KAIST
Yale University	Imperial College London	Jawaharlal Nehru University New Delhi	Universiti Teknologi Malaysia	Sharif University of Technology Tehran	Yonsei University
Columbia University	University of St Andrews	University of Hyderabad, Hyderabad	Universiti Putra Malaysia	Tarbiat Modares University	Korea University
Stanford University	University of Durham	Tezpur University, Tezpur	Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia	Ferdowsi University of Mashhad	Hanyang University
University of Chicago	University of Warwick	University of Delhi, New Delhi	Universiti Tenaga Nasional	Amirkabir University of Technology	Pohang University of Science & Technology
Massachusetts Institute of Technology	University of Exeter	Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi	Universiti Teknologi MARA	Isfahan University of Technology	Kyungpook (Kyungbook) National University
Duke University	University of Surry	Indian Institute of Space Science And Technology, Thiruvananthapuram	International Islamic University of Malaysia	Iran University of Science & Technology Tehran	Sungkyunkwan University
University of Pennsylvania	London School of Economics	Birla Institute of Technology & Science, Pilani	Universiti Tun Hussein Onn Malaysia	Shahid Beheshti University of Medical Sciences	Kyung Hee University
California Institute of Technology	University College London	Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh	University of Nottingham Malaysia	Shiraz University	Pusan National University (Miryang)

language (Kirkpatrick, 2007), which exists in its own right and which is being described in its own terms rather than by comparison with ENL (Jenkins, 2007).

One of the most common methods employed to study ELF is corpus analysis. In this section, first some of the major ELF corpora are introduced, which will help to see the difference between the corpus used in this study and other corpora in the field. Then, some of the studies that investigate the linguistic features of ELF will be reviewed.

One of the major ELF corpora is VOICE (Vienna-Oxford International Corpus of English), compiled by Barbara Seidlhofer and her team at the University of Vienna (accessible at <https://www.univie.ac.at/voice/>). It is the first large-scale corpus consisting of one million words of naturally occurring ELF interactions. The project aimed at the linguistic description of spoken ELF discourse with 1250 ELF speakers in the corpus from 50 first language backgrounds. The corpus is compiled through various speech events, such as interviews, press conferences, service encounters, seminar discussions, working group discussions, workshop discussions, meetings, panels, question-answer sessions, and conversations. The domain of these speech events are professional, educational and leisure. VOICE has been used as a source of data in several master's and doctoral studies on ELF (Dorn, 2010; Pitzl, 2011; Reiter, 2013).

ELFA (the Corpus of English as a Lingua Franca in Academic Settings) is another ELF corpus compiled on a large scale, consisting of one million words, collected by Anna Mauranen and her

team at the University of Helsinki.(accessible at <http://www.uta.fi/laitokset/kielet/engf/research/elfa/>).It is a corpus of spoken academic ELF collected through lectures, seminars, PhD thesis defences, conference discussions and presentations. The domain of the speech events are social sciences, technology, humanities, natural sciences, medicine, behavioural sciences, economics and administration. The number of ELF speakers in the corpus is 650, with 51 L1s represented. The ELFA project consists of two main parts, the ELFA corpus project and the SELF (Studying in English as a Lingua Franca) project. Detailed descriptions of ELFA corpus has been presented in Mauranen (2003, 2006a, 2007a) and Mauranen and Ranta (2008).

WrELFA (The Corpus of Written English as Lingua Franca in Academic Settings), also compiled by the ELFA team, is another corpus aiming to investigate the academic ELF discourse. This corpus, however, is based on written academic ELF interactions. It consists of 774,000 words, containing over 400 authors, with 37 L1s represented. The data is gathered primarily through two text types: preliminary examiners' statements for PhD theses, and research blogs in which published papers are discussed.

A more recent large-scale ELF corpus, compiled by Andy Kirkpatrick and his team, is ACE (Asian Corpus of English), which constitutes one million words of naturally occurring spoken ELF interactions. The corpus was compiled through interviews, press conferences, service encounters, seminar discussions, working group discussion, workshop discussions, meetings, panels, question-and-answer sessions, and conversations. These speech events contain the domains of education, leisure, professional business.

As was pointed out above, there is a clear need for a description of the salient linguistic features of English as lingua franca. A quick look at the abstracts of the papers presented at the second International conference of English as a global lingua franca will reveal many attempts at such a description. For instance, drawing on a million-word corpus, Mauranen (2008) tries to describe the strategies used in online international university settings that help people to make sense of each other's experience in academic dialogues. Another study that focuses more specifically on linguistic features is that by Baumgarten & House (2008), who investigate the use of discourse markers in English L2 oral interaction in final oral university exams.

Another attempt at describing linguistic features of ELF was made by Breiteneder, Klimpfinger and Pitzl (2008), investigating the innovative use of lexis and vocabulary of ELF in Europe, by looking at the words that could not be found in dictionaries.

In a similar setting, Mortensen (2008) looks at the way L1 Danish learners of English use modal verbs and epistemic and evidential adverbs during group meetings. Like the previous study, this one is also concerned with linguistic features of lingua franca English in oral communication.

In another study that takes a more comprehensive perspective, Mauranen (2010) studies the discourse and lexico-grammatical features of academic ELF, using a database of spoken English to investigate the features of English used in an academic context.

One study that embraces users from different language backgrounds was carried out by Onraet (2011), who looks into the common linguistic and discursive features of English as a lingua franca in the Western Cape and compares them with other second language varieties in South Africa, using the recorded conversations among fourteen female students from various language backgrounds.

Interesting though these studies are, they appear to be lacking in some of the qualities that can present a more detailed picture of the linguistic characteristics of English as a global lingua franca.

First and most, many of them investigate the use of English by learners in one particular area mainly from one common linguist background, which means they do not consider users of English from different first language backgrounds, which is evidently one of the realities of the use of English as a global language. Even the study by Onraet (2011) does not involve learners from different language backgrounds around the globe.

Third, many of them take a rather broad perspective and do not focus on one specific feature.

This study, on the other hand, focuses on one specific linguistic feature used in texts that have been produced by users in various linguistic and cultural backgrounds. In the next section, the definition of the key terminologies, which come from Halliday and Matthiessen (2004), are presented.

2.1 Systemic Functional Grammar: Theoretical Framework

Before concentrating on the key concepts in this study, we are going to have a look at the concept of cohesion in general. A study of the theoretical background to cohesion has revealed that it has been one of the most productive areas in the investigation of texts (Halliday and Hasan 1976, Brown and Yule 1983, Gutwinski 1976, Hoey 1983, 1991, Thompson 2004). It is obvious that the deep insights can prompt further analyses and help researchers gain a better understanding of how various cohesive devices can be employed to fulfil semantic relations of a text.

The exploration of interconnected systems of textual signalling has been of considerable import (Scott and Thompson, 2001, p. 56). A huge number of studies of written texts have tended to focus on the identification of cohesive devices that assist readers with perception of a text. In a more functional tradition, the term cohesion has been defined by Halliday and Hasan (1976). Theoretical sources give no evidence of different sets of terminology. However authors give various interpretations that help clarify how texts work as texts since Cohesion is a complex phenomenon to describe.

Halliday and Hassan (1976p.299) define the general meaning of cohesion as “the continuity that exists between one part of the text and another”. In other words, cohesion is regarded as a semantic concept that “refers to relations of meaning that exist within the text” (Halliday and Hasan 1976, p. 4). In this respect cohesion has an impact on the comprehensibility of a written work. Flowerdew and Mahlberg introduce the notion of the property of connectedness to refer to Cohesion (2009, p.103). Connectedness is the flow of information and is reflected by the choice of vocabulary words or grammatical linking words that contribute to textual relations (Flowerdew & Mahlberg 2009, p.106).

Now we are going to introduce the concepts that form the theoretical foundations of this study. One of the key concepts that SFG is concerned with is Text, which refers to “any instance of language, in any medium, that makes sense to someone who knows the language” (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2003, p.3). A text can be analysed from two different but complementary perspectives: a text can be regarded as an artefact or as a specimen. The former perspective addresses the question of why a text means what it does while the latter is interested in what the text can reveal about the system of the language it is in. This study adopts a “specimen” view of text.

The second underlying assumption in this study is that of language as a ‘System’, or paradigmatic ordering, which constitutes “patterns of what could go instead of what” (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004, p. 22). The view of language as system discusses the choices that lexicogrammar puts at the writer’s disposal and the conditions where those choices are made. For example, in the system of modality, there is a choice between a metaphorical expression of modality as in ‘I don’t think it is right’ and a congruent expression as in ‘it probably isn’t right’ and positive polarity as in ‘it is probably wrong’. Although these clauses all express the speaker’s uncertainty, they are not exactly the same. As Halliday points out, a text is the product of ongoing selection in a large system network.

The third concept, namely, ‘Instantiation’, is what relates system to text. Text is regarded as an instance of language as system. In other words, “the system of language is instantiated in the form of text” (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004, p. 26). The basic question that this relationship can answer is whether a set of texts produced by chemists are just similar texts or whether they represent a subsystem of language.

The study, therefore, considers the texts from the “about” section of university websites as the lexico-grammatical choices made in instances of language. It investigates two lexicogrammatical resources for creating cohesion among clauses and paragraphs i.e. the System of Reference, and the system of Conjunction.

The system of reference, according to Halliday and Matthiessen (2004), refers to resources for marking textual status, by which is meant “values assigned to elements of discourse that guide speakers and listeners in processing these elements” (p. 549). More specifically, the textual status in question is that of identifiability: Does the speaker judge that a given element can be recovered or identified by the listener? If a given element can be identified from the physical environment where the text is unfolding, the Reference is said to be Exophoric; for instance, when you ask someone

at the dinner table “Can you pass the salt, please?”; the salt is can only be identified from the extra linguistic context. On the other hand, if an element can be recovered from the linguistic context, it is said to be Endophoric. Different realisations of Endophoric Reference are exemplified in the table below:

Personals and demonstratives can either refer back to an element, in which case they are said to be Anaphoric, or refer forward to an element within the text (Cataphoric reference). One notable difference between Personals/ Demonstratives and Comparatives is that while the former establish a relation of co-reference, the latter form a relation of contrast, by making reference to either the general features of identity, similarity and difference or specific features of quality and quantity.

The second research question addresses the different Systems of Conjunction employed in our corpus texts. According to Halliday and Matthiessen (2004), “the cohesive system of conjunction has evolved as a complementary resource for creating and interpreting text. It provides the resources for making logico-semantic relationships that obtain between text spans of varying extent” (p.538). However, this question will view the system beyond Clause Complexes; here, we are interested to find out how cohesion is created across clauses and paragraphs, not within clauses complexes, although for Halliday and Matthiessen (2004) this system of Conjunction is also at work within clause complexes. The Logico-semantic relations in the system of Conjunction fall into three types of Expansion. The first relationship is one of Elaboration, which refers to the way the second clause specifies or describes the first one. In other words, the second clause gives more detail about the second one by rephrasing or clarifying it. The second type of relationship is Extension, which refers to how the second clause adds something new to the first clause by introducing an exception or adding another piece of information that serves the same or the opposite purpose in the text. The third type of relationship is one of Enhancement. This is when the second clause qualifies the meaning of the first by reference to time, place, manner, cause or condition. The types of Conjunction and some of their realisations are set out in Table 3.

Table 2. Realisations of endophoric reference

Anaphoric	My relation to Joseph Conrad was unlike any other that I have ever had. I saw him seldom and not over a long period of years
Cataphoric	You’re not going to believe this, but I was Nepal with my daughter
Co-reference: personal	My relation to Joseph Conrad was unlike any other that I have ever had.
Demonstrative	I saw him seldom and not over a long period of years. During the European scramble for Africa, Nigeria fell to the British. It wasn’t one nation at that point
Comparative:	Same, equal, similar, additional, other, different, such, So, likewise, similarly,
General	identically, as, else, differently, otherwise
Specific	More, less, fewer, further, bigger, better

Table 3. Examples of conjunction types

Elaboration	Apposition	In other words, I mean, to put it another way, for instance, for example, thus, to illustrate, etc.
	Clarification	Or rather, at least, by the way, anyway, leaving that aside, as I was saying, to sum up, in fact, actually, to get back to the main point, etc.
Extension	Variation	On the contrary, instead, apart from that, except, alternatively, etc.
	Addition	And, also, moreover, in addition, nor, but, yet, however, on the other hand, etc.
Enhancement	matter	Here, there, in that respect, as to that, in other respects, elsewhere
	manner	Likewise, similarly, in a different way, by such means
	Sapio-temporal	Next, afterwards, soon, until then, at that point, thereupon, straightaway, in the end, all that time, etc.
	Causal-conditional	Then, therefore, consequently, hence, because of that, for, in consequence, as a result, for that reason, for that purpose, in that case, otherwise, though, still, nevertheless, despite this, even though, under the circumstances, etc.

3. Methodology

One of the most common descriptive tools has indeed been corpus linguistics, which has been widely used in applied linguistics. Gries (2008) defines a prototypical corpus as “a machine-readable collection of (spoken or written texts that were produced in a natural communicative setting” (p. 411). He goes on to discuss two main intentions of building a corpus: it is intended to be “representative and balanced with respect to a particular variety or register or genre and to be analysed linguistically” (p. 411). These characteristics of Corpus linguistics make it an ideal analytical tool for descriptive purposes and qualitative linguistics research.

The corpus in this study was compiled in three stages. The first stage involved visiting the websites and the “ABOUT” section of the websites of top ten universities in six countries: the UK and the US (two inner circle countries), India and Malaysia (two outer circle countries) and Iran and South Korea (two expanding circle countries). These universities were the first ten universities on a list of universities on a website (<http://www.webometrics.info>), which gives an updated ranking of universities in each country used by students who are planning to study abroad (according to a quick informal survey of about twenty students). The list of the target universities can be seen in Table 1. Basically, the aim was to build a corpus of written texts produced for real communication purposes on these websites.

In the second stage, the texts were copied into the “word” software documents and arranged paragraph by paragraph in the order they appeared on the original page. In the third stage, these documents, which constitute a corpus of over 100,000 words, were printed out, ready for analysis.

The corpus was then analysed within the framework of Halliday’s systemic-functional grammar in order to discover the similarities and differences between them in terms of the System of Reference, and the system of Conjunction. To answer the research questions, all the texts were analysed around the clause and the corpus underwent an in-depth qualitative analysis, which revealed the lexicogrammatical feature in question, i.e. the types of Reference and the type of Conjunction used in them.

As was pointed out above, a prototypical corpus is expected to be read and analysed by a machine. However, it seems that computers are as yet unable to suit all analytical purposes. In our case, an extensive web search revealed no software that could carry out the analysis. As Al. Hamdany (2017, p. 179) observes: “there is currently a lack of computational SFG (Systemic Functional Grammar) resources. There is no norm or standard format for machine readable annotation, no annotated corpora, and no usable parsers.” Therefore, for lack of a software programme, the analysis had to be done manually, using pen and paper. So to count the frequency of the type of Reference, a table was drawn in which the frequency of each type of Reference was recorded. Here is the table that shows the types of Reference sought in the texts. The texts were read clause by clause and when each type of Reference was spotted one mark was put in the relevant box to keep tally of the feature in question (See Appendix A for sample frequency table for reference type).

To enhance reliability, the instances of Reference were recorded by two raters. In the third stage, the number of lines in each box was counted which represents the frequency of each feature. These frequencies are set out in percentage terms in the table in section four.

Overall, the study enjoys a mixed method design, since the data have undergone both quantitative and qualitative analyses. The quantitative analysis only involved a frequency count of the logogenetic features, which is presented in percentage terms in the next section. The qualitative analysis was based on the principles of grounded theory, which according to Mackey and Gass (2005, p. 179) involves:

developing theory based on, or grounded in data, that have been systematically gathered and analysed. Grounded theory attempts to avoid placing preconceived notions on the data, with researchers preferring to let the data guide the analysis. Using grounded theory, researchers often aim to examine data from multiple vantage points to help them arrive at a more complete picture of the phenomena under investigation.

So, in addition to answering the research questions, which initially motivated the study, an

Table 4. The percentages of each types of reference in each group of texts

Text	Anaphoric	Cataphoric	Personal	Demonstrative	Specific	General	Exophoric
America	55.60	2.91	49.93	86.66	4.66	1.19	16.29
Britain	46.41	0.73	40.55	6.58	0.87	0.43	28.84
India	30.68	1.94	24.85	7.78	0.14	1.79	6.13
Malaysia	50.42	0.33	43.97	6.79	0.50	0.67	2.39
Iran	23.83	0.73	18.6	5.89	0.49	0.49	5.15
Korea	51.38	1.47	43.25	9.61	0	1.66	8.50

Table 5. The percentages of each type of conjunction in each group of texts

University text	Elaboration	Extension	Enhancement
America	1.72	1.98	0.13
Britain	0.87	1.61	0.43
India	0.46	1.79	0.74
Malaysia	2.03	2.20	0.67
Iran	0.98	1.96	0.49
Korea	4.80	1.10	2.21

open mind was kept to see whether any theoretical implications might originate from the data. The results and the possible implications are laid out in the next two sections.

4. Results

As was pointed out previously, the research questions addressed the type of Reference and the type of Conjunction used in the texts. The frequency counts, which are shown as a proportion of the number of pronouns to the total number of clauses in each text in percentage terms, clearly show that Endophoric reference is far more frequent than Exophoric reference in all the texts. However, Exophoric Reference seems to be far more common in British and American texts. Within the Endophoric type Personal co-reference appears to preponderate the second most frequent type, i.e. Demonstrative. In terms of the direction of reference, Anaphoric reference is consistently much more common than Cataphoric reference. General and Specific pronouns are quite infrequent in all the texts except in the American ones.

In summary, a comparison of the percentage of each type of reference in each group of texts clearly shows that the dominant type of Reference is one of Personal Anaphoric. The second most common type of Reference is Demonstrative.

Another type of reference that the texts were analysed for was Exophoric Reference, which was one type of Reference under study, although it cannot be considered a cohesive device. The percentages clearly indicate that the American and British universities make much more frequent use of this type of Reference than the other universities.

The second feature in question was the system of conjunction, which concern the creation of cohesion through four means; to answer the second research question, the texts were analysed for words and phrases that connect clauses. It is must be noted that, unlike Halliday and Matthiessen (2004), who also deal with the type of relationship within clause complexes, this question is only concerned with the type of relationship between independent complex or independent simple clauses as is realised through conjuncts.

As the figures in the table show, this is the area where the most variations were observed. As far as the types of Conjunction are concerned, it can be seen that, American, Malaysian and Korean texts make far more use of Elaboration than the others. As for Extension, it can be argued that all of them use Extension to a similar extent, although Malaysian texts stand slightly further ahead. The same seems to be true for Enhancement, with the exception of Korean texts, which stand far ahead of the others in terms of the percentage of Enhancement type of Conjunction.

To summarise, except for the Korean texts, where Elaboration is far more common, in all the other texts, Extension is more frequent than other types of conjunction. The second most frequent appears to be Elaboration in all the texts except for the Indian texts.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

One significant feature that stands out from the results is that the six sets of texts, which are presumably representative of six different social contexts of English as a global lingua franca, is that all of them have a tendency to use anaphoric personal and Demonstrative References. In more general terms, as far as the use of the lexicogrammatical resource of Reference is concerned, this can be indicative of the fact that the global varieties of English as a global lingua franca utilise the same lexico-grammatical resources to a similar extent. However, the fact that British and American texts, representative of the Western culture, use the Exophoric pronoun of "WE" to refer to the university authorities more than the others may suggest that cross-cultural differences probably play a crucial role in the way lexico-grammatical resources are used.

The same explanation might apply to the system of Conjunction where a great deal more variation could be observed. The fact that two East Asian texts (Malaysia and Korea) use far more Elaborating Conjunctions than the others might be attributed to differences in culture, although more in-depth qualitative cultural research is required to pin this down.

This method of analysis can also feed into ESP (English for Specific Purposes) course design, in terms of the emphasis that should be placed on and the priority that ought to be given to the teaching of the lexicogrammatical resources used in the creation of texts for a global audience in a particular genre. For instance in this case, the results can justify a greater emphasis on the teaching of Personal Anaphoric and Demonstrative pronouns than on the teaching of Comparative Reference to those who aim to learn to introduce universities in the "about" section of their websites. In a similar vein, these results might justify giving priority to teaching of Extension before the other types of Conjunction.

One hypothesis that can be formulated based on these results is that the System of Reference in a text is determined by the social purpose that text is meant to serve. The texts analysed in this study come from the "about" section of the university websites, which is intended to project an identity. As was said in section 2.1 above, the textual status that the system of Reference is concerned with is that of Identifiability, i.e. helping the listener to recover or identify an element at relevant points. Comparative reference carries out the same task through contrasting by referring to similarities and differences (general reference) or to quantities and quantity. Therefore, it can be hypothesised that the choices made in System of Reference are probably determined by the text purpose.

The same hypothesis sounds relevant to the system of Conjunction. The fact that Extension tends to be more consistently common across the texts might reflect a far greater need for adding or making exceptions than rephrasing. Obviously, more research is required to ascertain these hypotheses.

All in all, these differences and similarities could be an indication that there is a slow move, at least at the lexicogrammatical level, towards a true ELF, where differences in the use of lexicogrammatical resources by proficient users will not hinder cross-cultural understanding.

To conclude, the considerable implication of this line of research for the study of English as a global lingua franca is that the language behaviour of both native and non-native users can be compared and contrasted not against each other, but against some concrete objective linguistic criteria, which can be a significant step towards treating ELF as an independent linguistic phenomenon. As Widdowson (2008, p. 1) puts it:

Although the widespread existence of ELF is generally acknowledged, there has been a marked reluctance to accept it as a linguistic phenomenon in its own right or as a legitimate field of inquiry. Those concerned with language pedagogy have had difficulty in seeing ELF as anything other than a failure to conform to norms of prescribed correctness.

This is indeed the potential that Systemic Functional Grammar appears to be able to offer. A text, a unit of meaning and an instantiation of language which unfolds through the lexico-grammatical

choices made in the process, can be analysed and evaluated in its own right.

The main focus of this study was on two lexicogrammatical resources. Halliday's Systemic Functional Grammar looks at the Clause from four perspectives: from below, above, around and beyond the clause. The same corpus, or indeed other corpora, can be used to investigate other lexico grammatical choices made in various text types, genres and social situations.

However, there is one serious limitation that might be overcome is the ability of computers to understand texts. As was pointed out in section three above, although a corpus is meant to be a machine-readable body of language, at the moment, computers cannot go beyond word and co-occurrence identification. This can make the lexicogrammatical analysis of texts rather slow. Hopefully, future technological advances will facilitate the meaning-based analysis of corpora, which can be a significant step forward.

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