

“Moreover, but on the other hand...”: Challenges of Transitions

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Task 1: Textual differences between High Intermediate/Advanced NNS and NS

In your experience, what are some of the main differences between NS and NNS texts at high intermediate/advanced levels?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Task 2: Examples of Transitions in Four Categories

Transition Type	Examples
Additive	
Adversative	
Temporal	
Causative	

Task 3: Addressing NNS Difficulties with Transitions in Academic Writing

Read the text assigned to your group, then discuss within your group how you might help developing writers improve their understanding of transition usage.

List some of the key suggestions:

Example Text A: Overuse of Transition Expressions

Writing an essay can be challenging. **However**, there are techniques that can make the process a little easier. **For example**, taking plenty of notes on the subject can help the writer generate ideas.

Therefore, note-taking is an important "pre-writing" strategy. **In addition**, some people "free-write," writing quickly for ten or twenty minutes to see what ideas arise. **However**, taking notes and free-writing are only the beginning. Ideas must **eventually** be organized in a logical way. **Consequently**, an outline can help the writer make sense of the rough material generated through the note-taking and free-writing process. **Therefore**, writing an outline is another important step in the writing process.

However, some writers are able to conceptualize a sense of logical order for their ideas without actually writing an outline. **Nevertheless**, these writers seem to have some kind of outline in their minds. **In addition**, an outline should help the writer formulate a thesis for the essay. **Consequently**, an outline can help give focus to the essay.

Source: <http://www2.ivcc.edu/rambo/english1001/transitions.htm>

Example Text B: Non-Standard Use of Transition Expressions

Example 1:

In addition, I believe that MacDonald et al. (2001) suggestion was indispensable when they highlight the factors that formulate theoretical more efficient studies. In his article, Borg (2003) stated that teachers' experiences shape their cognition **while** novice teachers have some weakness.

Example 2:

Although Ellis explained the strengths and weaknesses of each approach in great detail, few studies have been undertaken to examine these statements' reliability. **Furthermore**, more research is needed.

Example 3:

Recent studies on teacher education have been focusing on the legitimacy of practitioner knowledge, the nature of what constitutes professional development and broadening the definition of language and second language acquisition (Johnson, 2009). **On the other hand**, Ellis (2009) proposes three different approaches to SLA and teacher education.

Example 4:

However, I would like to argue that many learners are just not proficient at the present stage. There is no reason to deny that they will become active contributors eventually. **Therefore**, he cannot make the assumption that the Chinese learners have few opportunities to use English outside the classroom neither.

Adapted from the texts of high-intermediate/low advanced level writers

Example Text C: Inappropriate Register of Transition Expressions

This is **because** that NNS can not restrict their interaction only with NNS in reality, and they can not avoid having interaction with native speakers. **So**, native speakers will have an indirect influence on ELF through NS-NNS interactions.

Secondly, I quite agree with the second issue Maley raises in his article that it is not practical for teachers to teach so called ‘core’ features in ELF which impede non-native speakers’ comprehension in conversation, **because** sometimes contexts can override the ‘core’ features in communication. **Like** Cook (2011) points out that “if there is a communication problem, the participants solve it between themselves with nobody explicitly discussing language or acting as the controlling experts” (p.151). Cook further argues in the same line with Maley that the interactions happen between interlocutors outside the classroom are quite different from what has been designed to teach in the classroom, partly **because** the speakers “learning on the wing”.

Adapted from the text of a high-intermediate/low advanced level writer

Example Text D: Insufficient Breadth of (Conventionalised) Transition Expression Use

This article raises several arguments. Two of these arguments attracted my attention. **First**, the author mentioned that there is one assumption that the majority interactions happened between non-native speakers (NNS) **and** non-native speakers. This assumption is the premise of ELF is an emergent **or** emerging set of linguistic features. The quote of Seidlhofer (2006) **also** supports this premise, which is “most ELF interactions take place among ‘non-native’ speakers of English”. **But** the author thought this assumption was actually not tenable. As the author mentioned, **although** the number of NNS-NNS exchanges is high, a large number of NNS-NS exchanges still take place in the whole world. **And** the number of interactions between Outer Circle nativised users **and** Inner Circle NSs is not low either. **Since** so many interactions among different kind of English users, the assumption that the majority of interactions worldwide now are between NNS-NNSs looks like underestimate the significance of other types of interaction.

Second, the proponents of ELF’s strong version emphasized that ELF is an emerging **or** emergent new variety. **But** they overlooked one fact, which is that the base of a new variety is a speech community. As the author mentioned before in this article, it is complex to identify the differences between English learners, consumers, **and** real users. **Since** the majority of English users is not stable, it is more difficult for researchers to identify whether ELF has a speech community **or** not, which means that ELF cannot token as an emerging **or** emergent new variety. The author provided several research to support his point of view on these two arguments. Based on my opinion, these evidence is convincing enough.

Adapted from the text of a high-intermediate/low advanced level writer

Selected References

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Suggested Classroom Activities

Supporting Developing Writers (1)

- Ask students to take note of ONE transition used in a reading and report to class on the context in which it occurred and how it was used (with attention to form AND meaning)
- Compile the different transitions in a place visible to all
- Organize them into categories (ADD, ADV, TEM, CAU)
- Draw attention to and discuss differences

Supporting Developing Writers (2)

- Analyse readings relevant to developing writers (NOT textbooks)
- Start at paragraph level
- Explore type(s), number, location of transitions
 - Draw attention to other cohesive devices used in paragraph
- Discuss selections; potential options
- Use LGSWE (or database such as COCA) to identify widely used transitions

Supporting Developing Writers (3)

- Model analysis of transitions in a short paragraph on an OHT or handout
- Invite students to name (near) synonyms of one or two transitions
- List them, then ask students to collect examples of their 'synonyms' from their readings
- Discuss subtle differences in meaning
- Provide students with frequency numbers (e.g., COCA, Lextutor)

Supporting Developing Writers (4)

- Select and scan a relevant paragraph (not for NNS!)
- Remove transitions and resulting spaces
- Ask students to determine where transitions would seem appropriate
- Discuss different options and implications for meaning
- Initially: give students a list of transitions that were removed