Spoken Discourse Markers in Learner Academic Writing

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Abstract. The present article focuses on the use of spoken features in learner academic writing. It aims to analyze the spoken-like nature of learner academic writing through the use of informal or semi-formal discourse markers in their academic essays. Non-experimental methods of data collection were chosen to achieve these objectives (the data was collected from language corpora): quantitative method was used (the frequency counts of discourse markers were indicated); qualitative and contrastive methods were used (the types of discourse markers were discussed and the comparative analysis between the three corpora was made). The results of the present investigation revealed that both the Lithuanian learners and the native learners use stylistically inappropriate (more typical of speech than of academic writing) discourse markers in their academic essays. In contrast to the native learners, the Lithuanian learners tend to use more of spoken discourse markers in their essays. Fifteen functional categories of the spoken discourse markers were distinguished. They helped to disclose which functional types of discourse markers tend to appear more often in the Lithuanian learners’ essays. Other spoken features were briefly observed during the analysis of the discourse markers too. Both spoken discourse markers and other lexical items more typical of speech than of academic writing contribute to the overly oral tone of the learners’ academic essays.

Key words: spoken features, written/spoken English, discourse marker, academic writing, functional categories.