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THE ROLE OF CONJUNCTION IN THE COHESION OF ABSTRACTS WRITTEN IN ENGLISH AND SERBIAN

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Abstract: Cohesive devices are used to form ties between adjacent parts of the text. Owing to the short form of abstracts, particular parts of their structure can be highlighted using conjuncts as cohesive elements. Therefore, the purpose of this article is to study what kind of conjuncts are used by authors from different disciplines, aiming to determine the most common forms and functions as well as their place in the rhetorical macrostructure of the abstract. The corpus consists of 100 abstracts published in journals, namely 25 social science and 25 mechanical engineering abstracts in English and Serbian. Overall, the English authors guide their readers more often through the text by using conjuncts in comparison with their colleagues writing in Serbian. Additive conjuncts prevail in both parts of the English corpus, signifying a range of specific meanings. Whereas adversatives in the social science abstracts in English mainly serve to identify a research niche, in the engineering abstracts these forms are present in methodology, the same as temporal conjuncts. Considering the structural realization of causatives, English examples include mostly single-word adverbials, while almost all of these forms in Serbian are prepositional phrases with referential elements pointing backwards to the previous text. These results are relevant given the fact English is the medium of international and regional academic publications. This is why cultural and discipline specific aspects of writing should be taken into account and integrated into teaching and learning at universities.

Keywords: *cohesion; conjunction; academic writing; rhetorical macrostructure; abstract.*

1. Introduction

There are many aspects of text and communication in general that impact comprehension. At a lexico-grammatical level, various cohesive structures connect sentences into meaningful units so they can comprise a text. In addition, semantic relationships between elements of the text and contextual factors, such as shared knowledge, contribute to coherence and lead to successful communication, even when there are not any explicit cohesive elements.

Cohesive devices specifically form ties between adjacent parts of written text. The most common classification, as proposed by Halliday and Hasan (1976), includes grammatical and lexical cohesion, the first group comprising four sets of cohesive devices, namely reference, substitution, ellipsis, and conjunction. The concept of “conjunction” is referred to in a number of ways, such as linking

adverbials (Conrad, 1999), discourse connectives (Klimova and Hubackova, 2014), semantic conjuncts (Quirk et al., 1985), textual adjuncts (Eggin, 2004), or discourse markers (Fraser, 1999; Schiffrin, 2001; Downing and Locke, 2006), to list some of the terms. Halliday and Hasan (1976) list them under conjunctive cohesive devices, so this general term will be used throughout this article.

In comparison to three other groups of cohesive devices, conjunction is used to define logical relationships between two sentences, e.g., causal relationship. However, conjuncts are optional elements within the sentence structure, as the relationship between sections of text can be meaningful without using them. This makes conjuncts overt signals of relationships between the stretches of text, though not necessary ones. These devices function as logical connectors and can be realized structurally in a number of ways. More precisely, Halliday and Hasan (1976) divide them into three groups: adverbs of different complexity (e.g., *so*, *then*, *accordingly*, *therefore*, *furthermore*), prepositional phrases (e.g., *on the contrary*, *as a result*, *in addition*), and prepositional expressions with *that* or other referential element which is not mandatory (e.g., *as a result (of that)*, *instead (of this)*). Besides being expressed as complex phrases, finite and non-finite clauses can be used as conjuncts, e.g., *that is to say*, *to conclude*, etc.

Referring to the whole sentence, conjunctives normally take the initial position, which is deemed unmarked (Conrad, 1999). Also, they can be found medially and in a final position, though less commonly. By creating ties in the text, conjunctives link sentences by means of addition, contrast, causal, and temporal relations, which is a classification suggested by Halliday and Hasan (1976).

Regardless of the prevailing type of cohesive ties, either lexical or grammatical, cohesion and coherence of written texts are reflected in the balance between various lexical and semantic resources. Taking into account academic writing, whether a research article (RA) will be accepted in a journal or not sometimes solely depends on the abstract itself. Therefore, rejection can be a signal that there are some problems with the abstract but also the whole RA (Swales and Feak, 2010). However, it is often the case that due to the solid structure and coherence of an abstract, RAs reach the next level of review, especially those written for conference purposes. Huckin (2001) gives four functions of an abstract: it is a “mini” text that provides the subject, method, and purpose of research; it enables easier reading and helps potential readers to decide whether to read the whole article or not; it points to different parts of the article, and enables editors to prepare index at the end of a volume. In addition, Swales and Feak (2010) add the fifth function; namely, the abstract enables reviewers to have a better picture about the article they are about to review.

Owing to the short form of abstracts, particular parts of their structure can be highlighted using conjuncts as cohesive elements. Whether they simply bind sections or enable transition, these elements can be used to draw readers’ attention to some parts of the abstract, thus the whole research article as well. Therefore, the purpose of this article is to study what kind of conjuncts are used by authors from different disciplines and to what extent. In particular, it aims to determine the most common forms and functions as well as their place in the rhetorical

macrostructure of the abstract, comprising the following moves: Introduction (I), Purpose (P), Methodology (M), Results (R), and Discussion (D) (Swales and Feak, 2009). With these aims in mind, a corpus was created containing the same number of abstracts in English and Serbian in order to compare the use of conjuncts by the social and engineering science authors. As these two scientific fields deal with the subject matter in different ways, it is assumed that the presentation of research will reflect the specifics of each field.

2. Methodology

The corpus consists of 100 RA abstracts published in journals, namely 25 social science (SS) and 25 mechanical engineering (ME) abstracts in English and Serbian. The English ones were published from 2007 to 2014 and taken from the online electronic databases of the following journals: *Proceedings of the Institution of Mechanical Engineers, Part C: Journal of Mechanical Engineering Science (JMES)* by Sage Publications and *Contemporary Social Science: Journal of the Academy of Social Science (CSS)*, published by Taylor and Francis Group. The SS abstracts in Serbian were published in *Zbornik Matice srpske za društvene nauke (ZMSDN)* from 2007-2013 and copied from the online database of the Serbian citation index. Primarily owing to the fact that mechanical engineering abstracts in Serbian are relatively shorter, they were taken from several journals, that is, their online databases: 10 from *Integritet i vek konstrukcija (IVK)* published by the Society for Structural Integrity and Life and the Institute for Testing of Materials, 7 from *IMK 14 – Istraživanje i razvoj (IMK)* by the “14. Oktobar” IMK Institute and 4 from two journals, namely *Tehnika (T)* published by the Association of Engineers and Technicians of Serbia and *Facta Universitatis, Series: Mechanical Engineering (FA)* taken from the Serbian citation index. These abstracts were published from 2010 to 2014. In addition, majority of engineering journals in Serbian are already being published in English, this being another reason why abstracts have been taken from a few journals. As many of these journals still contain abstracts written in Serbian, they were included in the analysis.

3. Results and Discussion

Comparing the total number of conjunctives in the abstracts written in English and Serbian, two completely different disciplines in the English, on the one hand, and the Serbian corpus, on the other, have almost the same number of these devices. However, close examination can provide more details about their use.

Table 1. *Conjunctives in the English abstracts*

	Conjunctives				Total
	Additive	Adversative	Causative	Temporal	
Social science	13 (34.21%)	11 (28.94%)	4 (10.52%)	10 (26.31%)	38 (18 abstracts)
Mechan. engineer.	14 (37.83%)	7 (18.91%)	7 (18.91%)	9 (24.32%)	37 (16 abstracts)

Table 2. *Conjunctives in the Serbian abstracts*

	Conjunctives				Total
	Additive	Adversative	Causative	Temporal	
Social science	8 (36.36%)	5 (22.72%)	5 (22.72%)	4 (18.18%)	22 (13 abstracts)
Mechan. engineer	6 (25%)	5 (20.83%)	6 (25%)	7 (29.16%)	24 (11 abstracts)

As can be seen in Tables 1. and 2., more frequent use of conjunctives (in more than half of the abstracts) by the English authors is a signal that they provide more guidance to their readers through the text by using these devices in comparison with their Serbian colleagues. Hence, it can be said that conjunctives are one of the forms that contribute to the interactive character of abstracts (Duszak, 1997), making them more accessible to readers. This is in line with norms and tradition of Anglo-American texts which are believed to be more reader-friendly and dialogic, unlike more monologic writing traditions of Slavic languages (Čmejrková and Daneš, 1997). Authors provide clear guidance and signals, establishing, inter alia, logical relations between sentences with the use of these cohesive structures.

Tables 1. and 2 show that additives prevail in both parts of the English corpus, most of these being used in the ME abstracts. Studying sentence connectors in the abstracts in English and French, Van Bonn and Swales (2007) associate additives with the listing of facts and information, which corresponds to their findings for the French abstracts. Besides adding information, additives have more specific functions, such as that they signal emphasis, apposition, rephrasing, or clarifying. For example, they allow the authors of the English abstracts to present their contribution in a more detailed and emphatic way. This is illustrated in (1) with four additives:

- (1) (4) ***In addition***, the entropy generation of each component [...] is considered. (5) ***In particular***, parametric studies [...] are investigated. (8) ***For example***, compared to an engine [...], an engine [...] is shown to have [...]. (9) ***Additionally***, this engine results in [...]. (JMES 18)
 (4) ***Pored toga***, razmatra se stvaranje entropije svake komponente [...].
 (5) ***Naročito*** se ispituju parametarske analize [...]. (8) ***Na primjer***, u poređenju sa motorom [...], pokazalo se da motor [...] ima [...]. (9) ***Nadalje***, ovaj motor za rezultat ima [...]. (JMES 18)¹

After mentioning the subject of the article, the author further underlines the aims of the article (Purpose), as well as its results at the end (Results). Apart from semantically similar *in addition* and *additionally* in (1), the emphatic form

¹ The examples have been translated by the author of this article. Also, besides numbering the examples, the sentences in the abstracts are marked with numbers in italics.

in particular and the prepositional phrase *for example* are used to provide an example for generally presented results of the research in the previous sentence. These forms serve to reinforce the claims made by specifying them in more detail. Taking into account a higher number of forms and their specific functions in a single abstract, the use of additives helps to bring research details closer to their readers. As regards the rhetorical structure, most additive conjuncts in ME in English are found in Discussion (five) and Results (four), whereas the SS abstracts have most forms in the Purpose section (four).

The same as French authors, the authors of SS abstracts in Serbian are more inclined to list facts about a certain subject, without explaining why they have actually decided to deal with it. They present a narrative or a summary of the main arguments presented in their RA, unlike the experimental ones that follow a well-known rhetorical macrostructure, as presented above. This can be the reason why additives are the most numerous conjunctives, although they are present in six abstracts only. Unlike their ME colleagues writing in English, the Serbian authors use half of them in the Purpose section of the abstract. In the following example the last sentence of the abstract refers to what has been done in the research, i.e., the subject of research is presented:

- (2) (9) *Takođe, na jednom primeru pokazan je rezultat primene razvijenog postupka, ali i rezultat primene jednog statički određenog postupka, kako bi se moglo izvršiti njihovo poređenje.* (IMK 14)
(9) *Also, an example illustrates the result of the application of the developed procedure, as well as the result obtained by a statically determined procedure, so as to enable their comparison.* (IMK 14)

Although the form *also* mostly appears in the ME abstracts, there is more variation in the SS abstracts, with such forms as *more specifically* or *furthermore*, as well as complex prepositional forms combined with noun phrases, e.g., *in addition to academic writing*. Diverse forms enable authors to emphasize particular parts of their abstract and draw readers' attention to their argumentation. In contrast, additives used in the Serbian abstracts contribute to the listing of facts or adding of information, without exemplifying or emphasizing any particular parts. The prevailing form is *takođe*, while other additives take a rather simple form, e.g., *isto tako*, *nadalje*, *inače*. Considering the position of additive conjuncts, they are mainly used initially. Almost all examples of medial position include simple forms *also*, that is, *takođe*.

Besides adding information about the subject of research, authors generally express a particular viewpoint, i.e., they take a stance. It is very common that the author's stance is presented as the main claim of the abstract and RA, either contrasting earlier claims or filling the gaps of previous research. In order to achieve that, adversative conjuncts allow authors to shift emphasis to their claims and position their research. Van Bonn and Swales (2007) have found more adversatives in the English corpus (nearly 50%) than in the French (only 16%). Nevertheless, the results presented here do not show such a significant difference.

It is interesting to note that the SS abstracts in English, in comparison with three other groups, contain most adversatives (in 10 abstracts). More specifically, a number of SS authors opt for these conjunctives when they want to position their own research within their field. This is shown in (3) which presents a gap that needs to be bridged due to a lack of understanding where the adversative *yet* serves to underline the contrast between this lack and the importance of the author's research:

- (3) (2) *Yet we do not understand fully whether cultural expressions at the heart of the conflict are transformed [...]. (3) I explore this question by investigating [...]. (CSS 9)*
(2) *Ipak mi u potpunosti ne razumijemo da li se transformišu kulturni modeli koji su u središtu konflikta [...]. (3) Istražujem ovo pitanje ispitujući [...]. (CSS 9)*

This is in accordance with the argumentative nature of social science research (Bondi 2014), unlike the experimental approach that characterizes engineering investigations. As a part of Introduction, the previous example is among seven adversatives used in this rhetorical move in seven SS abstracts in English, in which authors normally establish the grounds for their research.

On the other hand, owing to the experimental nature of engineering research, when the ME authors from *JMES* use adversatives in Introduction, these forms mainly serve to point to a specific method or technology as more suitable than others, therefore being chosen in the given RA.

- (4) (2) *However, at privateer level, many of the advanced manufacturing technologies [...] are beyond reach [...]. (3) One technology that has the potential [...]. (JMES 3)*
(2) *Međutim, na privatnom nivou mnoge napredne proizvodne tehnologije [...] su izvan dohvata [...]. (3) Jedna tehnologija koja ima potencijal [...]. (JMES 3)*

The adversative in (4) provides contrast needed to position a new approach, in this case a specific technology. The same as in the English abstracts, most adversatives (three out of five) in the Serbian ME corpus appear in Introduction, where they are used to point to shortcomings that need to be studied.

The same number of adversative conjuncts (five) have been found in the SS abstracts in Serbian, half the number of those found in the English abstracts. As the *ZMSDN* abstracts contain mostly additives, their authors do not aim to position their research or arguments in relation to other studies. A rare example of such an approach has been used in the following pair of sentences, one comprising Introduction, and the other containing an adversative within Purpose:

- (5) (1) *Prema opšteprihvaćenom stanovištu, prva regionalna država bila je Italija (od 1948), a druga Španija (od 1978). (2) Ovim člankom*

se, međutim, dokazuje da je prva evropska regionalna država bila jugoslovenska Kraljevina (1921–1939). (ZMSDN 4)

(1) According to the generally accepted viewpoint, Italy was the first regional state (since 1948) and Spain was the second (since 1978). (2) This article, however, proves that the Kingdom of Yugoslavia was the first European regional state (1921–1939). (ZMSDN 4)

Considering the structural realization, the English SS authors use an array of contrastive forms (*on the other hand, on the contrary, yet*), unlike the engineering ones where *however* and *despite* with a noun phrase prevail, three examples of each. Such diversity of forms makes argumentation more successful and the abstract more appealing to readers. A higher degree of similarity has been found between the ME abstracts in the two languages since the Serbian authors repeatedly use the form *međutim*, as well as combinations with *suprotno* and *uprkos*. Also, adversatives mainly take the initial position, although the examples given here include some of those used medially. Salera (in Swales and Feak 2001) associates the initial position with content that is unexpected, whereas the medial does not have to be necessarily such. In contrast with this finding, the previous and other examples in this research do not confirm this, although the number of examples is rather small to actually point to such distinction.

As the third group, causative conjuncts, expresses causal and consequential relations, they can be used in various rhetorical moves. Tables 1. and 2. show quite similar numbers and distribution across the abstracts. Generally, they appear initially, but two instances of *therefore* in *JMES* have been used in the medial position:

- (6) (11) *The two techniques could therefore be combined in a design tool [...] (JMES 25)*
(11) *Dvije tehnike se stoga mogu kombinovati u alatu za konstruisanje [...] (JMES 25)*

Besides *therefore*, causatives in English often comprise combinations with *result* (mainly pointing to the research results) or *consequence*, e.g., *as a result, consequently, as a consequence*. Based on their meaning, they can have a major role in determining moves within the abstract macrostructure. On the other hand, the abstracts in Serbian contain combinations with *zbog*, e.g., *zbog toga*. Namely, ten out of eleven examples in the Serbian abstracts include complex prepositional conjuncts with demonstratives, e.g., *s tim u vezi* or *zbog* combined with a noun phrase, as shown in (7).

- (7) (12) *Zbog toga je monitoring ovog dela populacije veoma važan. (ZMSDN 17)*
(12) *Because of that, monitoring of this part of population is very important. (ZMSDN 17)*

Using those forms, the authors establish both explicit logical as well as referential relationships with the previous text, binding all abstract segments firmly. In a similar way, causatives can serve as a link between rhetorical moves as they provide logical causal bonds between parts of the abstract. They do so by linking the stages of the research, as in the following example from *JMES*:

- (8) (5) **Hence** the authors undertook a small-scale study to understand the issues [...]. (6) **To that end** the authors built a bespoke measuring device [...]. (JMES 6)
(5) **Stoga** su autori sproveli istraživanje manjeg obima kako bi razumjeli ove probleme [...]. (6) **U tu svrhu** su autori napravili mjerni uređaj po mjeri [...]. (JMES 6)

After providing the introduction and general framework for their research, the authors in (8) present the purpose (*hence*) and procedures undertaken (*to that end*), where conjuncts serve to connect the latter sentence with the former, each referring to different rhetorical moves.

Even though they can directly point to the discussion or results sections, the previous examples illustrate the use of causatives in various moves across all abstracts, including methodology in the engineering ones. As regards their structural realization, the Serbian authors mostly opt for prepositional forms that include a referential element, very often a demonstrative, as shown in (7). They do so more often than their colleagues writing in English, who choose adverbial forms such as *hence*, *consequently*, and *therefore* in a number of examples.

The distribution of the temporal conjuncts in the English abstracts is quite similar, as they are used in a number of different moves (all except Results). In particular, there is even more similarity between engineering abstracts, considering Methodology as an important section and a key move comprising several different stages, which very often implies a number of sentences as well, as shown in (9):

- (9) (7) **Zatim** se pristupilo analizi uzroka havarije. (8) **Prvo** je ispitan hemijski sastav osnovnog materijala [...]. (IVK 9)
• (7) **Then** the causes of damage were analyzed. (8) **First** the chemical composition of the base material was tested [...]. (IVK 9)

These conjuncts enable authors to present and order the stages of their research as a series of steps (five out of seven causatives are used in Methodology in the Serbian engineering abstracts). This kind of meaning can be discerned as internal, when they have a textual role, unlike the external which refers to the sequence of events under study, i.e., not directly linked to the internal organization of the text. Such two examples with external meaning appear in the SS abstracts in Serbian, besides the other two in which temporal conjuncts are used to present and organize text.

- (10) (3) *Istovremeno, iseljavanje pripadnika drugih nacionalnosti, koji su emigrirali uglavnom prema matičnim državama iz političkih i ekonomskih razloga, takođe je uticalo na etničku sliku Srbije.* (ZMSDN 9)
- (3) *Simultaneously, the emigration of the members of other ethnicities, who emigrated to their home countries for political and economic reasons, also had effect on the ethnic representation of Serbia.* (ZMSDN 9)

A small number of these conjuncts with the textual role shows that the SS Serbian authors provide a narrative organization of their abstracts, where the logical connection between segments is based on the ordering of sentences. Nevertheless, these conjuncts in the English abstracts can also be explicit metadiscourse structures that unambiguously refer to particular elements in the rhetorical structure, e.g., *in conclusion* used within Discussion. As optional elements in the sentence structure, temporal conjuncts are explicit signals of the sequencing of ideas or different stages of research presented in the article. Having been used in a relatively small number of abstracts, their presence in the corpus is not significant though (most are used in the SS abstracts in English, 10 temporal conjuncts in nine abstracts). Taking into account their structure, the temporal conjuncts in the corpus are mostly adverbials, meaning the authors rather use single-word forms, in contrast with the causative conjuncts. Finally, just like other conjuncts, the temporal forms mostly take the initial position, with only a small number of those found medially.

4. Conclusions

The results of this research show that the authors of the abstracts written in English use more conjuncts in a higher number of abstracts to connect their sentences. Thus, they achieve easier transition between the main parts of the article, namely the moves within the rhetorical structure, which are reflected in the abstract itself. This is in line with other studies, whether about the academic discourse in general (Čmejková and Daneš, 1997) or some of its specific aspects, such as positioning authors' research in the introduction section (Van Bonn and Swales, 2007).

Although additives prevail in general, they take on a number of different functions and forms in the English abstracts, including complex adverbial and prepositional forms. The examples in English cover a range of specific meanings as well, e.g., they provide emphasis and introduce examples, further allowing the author(s) to elaborate on the subject. This should help readers to follow their ideas and claims more easily. In order to contrast earlier claims, other research, or simply fill a gap, the English SS authors use adversatives to shift focus to their own research. In contrast with this, the Serbian authors use additives to list information, without any additional meaning attached to them. As abstracts reflect the RA macrostructure, adversatives prevail in the introduction section, in which authors commonly set the stage for their research. However, the SS authors

writing in English again use a number of diverse forms, while the ME authors opt for rather simple conjunctives, i.e., *however* or *međutim*.

Causative conjuncts are used to a lesser extent, thus logical relationships of this kind are more reliant on the lexical cohesion. When authors use these conjuncts, they signal various rhetorical moves, beyond their overt meaning in English, such as that signified in the phrases with nouns such as *result* and *consequence*. Considering the structural realization, English examples include mostly single-word adverbials, whereas almost all causatives in Serbian are prepositional phrases with referential elements, which point backwards to previous text. The same as causatives, the temporal conjuncts are not used significantly, most being found in the English SS abstracts. Depending on their lexical content, just like other conjunctives, temporal conjuncts can clearly signal rhetorical moves. Taking into account their structure, they are mostly adverbials, meaning the authors rather use single-word forms.

Considering the corpus as a whole, the SS abstracts in Serbian differ from the rest because they are structured as narratives, while the rest of the corpus follows a well-established rhetorical organization with clearly marked moves. Following such organization, conjuncts in the Serbian engineering abstracts are distributed across similar moves as those found in the English part of the corpus, especially engineering. This can be associated with the fact that technical disciplines are more internationally oriented, due to shared subjects of research, and more increasingly published in English, unlike social sciences which often remain in the realm of local or national themes.

This small-scale study has attempted to point to some features, both similarities and differences, relating to conjunctives commonly used in abstracts. Overall, a more interactive rhetorical macrostructure present in the English abstracts can be due to sociological and cultural factors, e.g., a greater number of readers and a wider discourse community available to English authors. This means cultural and discipline specific aspects of writing should be taken into account when teaching English for academic purposes as specific writing practices characterize particular languages and disciplines. Having in mind the global nature of today's academic community, the results presented here can be helpful guidelines for Serbian authors when they need to write in English and become members of a wider global community.

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