

## Improving the Use of Linking Words in Tertiary Level Essays

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**Abstract:** Use of linking words (LWs) in student writing in English has been in the centre of research interest in several countries recently. However, it has mainly dealt with the error analysis of the use of LWs. This study attempts to focus more on analysing tertiary level student performance before and after doing several specially designed practice tasks that are related to both language and business contexts that are employed by the study programme. The goal of the research was to determine whether students have improved their skills to use LWs in academic essays after additional training. The research was a case study. In order to attain the research goal, first, a pre-test was given to 29 first-year undergraduate students in Latvia and the errors regarding the use of LWs were analysed. Then, practice tasks were designed to address the problem areas. At the end, it was analysed what improvement in students' use of LWs can be observed in the examination essay. The results of the pre-test indicated that the main errors are the semantic and register appropriateness of the selected LWs. After additional training, the students applied more LWs and demonstrated a wider variety of their choice in the written essay. There was only one error regarding inappropriate semantic use of the selected LW, and the number of register errors had also reduced, which allows the authors to conclude that the designed practice tasks have attained their objectives. The results are significant as an attempt to address the described problem but should be tested on a larger size of a research sample.

**Keywords:** tertiary level, academic essays, linking words, errors, practice tasks, university education.

### Introduction

Latest research papers have been devoted to different aspects of the use of linking words in student writing. According to J.M. Swales and C.B. Feak, 'linking words and phrases can help a writer maintain flow and establish relationships between ideas' (Swales, Feak, 1994, 22). They distinguish subordinators, sentence connectors and phrase linkers (ibid.) D. Biber, S. Conrad and G. Leech (2002), in their turn, distinguish *linking adverbials* (LAs) to refer to the same sentence connectors, such as *therefore* and *in contrast*. As seen from the previous studies, there could be different terms used for linkers in a text; thus, in the present paper linking words (LWs) will be used to refer to both inter-sentential and inter-paragraph linking words and phrases. LWs will also refer to such text linkers, which are not used in D. Biber, S. Conrad and G. Leech's classification (Biber, Conrad, Leech, 2002), for example *indeed*, *in fact*, *actually*, *as a result*, *nonetheless*.

There are several studies on the use of LAs in student writing at different stages of tertiary level. L. Lei's (Lei, 2012) research revealed that even applied linguistics doctoral students' writing concerning the use of LAs differs from professional writers, as they either over- or underuse linkers, for example adversative adverbials were underused because of the difficulty Chinese students faced in their selection. Another finding showed that novice writers used a rather 'limited set of linking adverbials'. Lei also noticed that doctoral students faced problems with register in selecting LAs for their writing (e.g. *because*, *actually*). L. Lei suggested analysing 'the overused, misused and underused adverbials' (Lei, 2012, 274). Moreover, L. Lei considered that it is important to work on a 'precise definition of overuse, misuse and underuse from both quantitative and qualitative perspectives' (ibid.).

Another study, performed by M. Leedham and G. Cai, demonstrated that Chinese students utilised a limited number of linking words and selected also informal ones in their academic essays when studying in the UK (Leedham, Cai, 2013, 386). The researchers considered that students had learnt them at secondary level and 'continue using them in their longer undergraduate assignments'. They also assumed that students would 'notice ... most common' LAs when reading different texts in three years of their studies and, thus, broaden their 'range of adverbials'. The feedback which they received on their writing was mentioned as another reason for improving the use of LAs (ibid.).

When analysing the use of sentence connectors in native English speakers' (NESs') and non-native English speakers' (NNESSs') or Spanish writers of English research papers M.L. Carrio-Pastor noticed that 'NNESS used fewer listing, inferential and contrastive connectors than NES. In the categories of

summative, appositional, resultative and transitional connectors, the overall results were quite similar in both corpora (Carrio-Pastor, 2013, 195).

Prior research also demonstrates that the use of linkers, especially LAs, in undergraduate writing, such as paragraphs and academic essays, is topical, as it causes problems to students; for example, G. Anderson has found that first-year non-native speakers 'may have limited experience and familiarity with the genre'. He considers that it is important to 'provide effective instruction that will guide these students' (Anderson, 2014, 1). The linguist emphasizes that there is a relatively insufficient number of studies on the use of LAs in tertiary level writing. Although he did not do 'a thorough qualitative assessment of appropriate or inappropriate linking adverbials' (Anderson, 2014, 9), he suggested providing 'a more comprehensive list of linking adverbials, such as D. Liu's (2008) list of 110 linking adverbials' (Anderson, 2014, 10) instead of just 24. He also suggested that it is important to pre-teach 'the nuanced differences of similar LAs, such as *however* and *yet*' as well as analyse the whole text and the pedagogical goal of the process as well as the product' in order to 'assess over- and underuse' of linkers (Anderson, 2014, 9).

Z. Vincela's register-based study on non-native students' writing (essays, letters, messages) demonstrated that the use of LAs depended on the communicative purpose of the text. She observed overuse of 'a limited range of linking adverbials' and concluded that students in Latvia need to be involved in concordance-based learning. The linguist emphasized that research on students' writing of 'different registers' should be continued, especially on the over- and underuse of LAs as well as their location in a text (Vincela, 2013, 222).

Another, more recent, study was performed by M. Larsen-Walker (2017) on data-driven learning (DDL) on the use of LAs in persuasive essays, written by advanced undergraduates of an EAP course at a university in the USA. She found only 'a slight difference' between the results of the control and the treatment group, which contrasted another prior study carried out by J.R. Garner (2013). Both the studies mentioned had a rather small sample size (N=24 and N=27 in J.R. Garner's case); thus, their findings may only be treated cautiously. However, they provided several useful suggestions for further research. J.R. Garner (2013), in contrast to M. Larsen-Walker, had analysed both semantic and register appropriateness of LAs. Finally, M. Larsen-Walker (2017) recommended that DDL is important when dealing with essay writing, but it is more important to base learning on 'lexico-grammatical patterns' and 'multi-word LAs' rather than 'single words' (Larsen-Walker, 2017, 36).

All the above discussed studies demonstrate the topicality of the selected research theme. As the previous research papers have dealt mainly with the error analysis of text linkers in student writing, the aim of the present study is to focus on analysing the student performance in writing and on testing the selected task types in order to improve the students' academic writing skills in linguistic and business context as required by the study programme. Within the framework of this paper, only the use of inter-paragraph and inter-sentential LWs, not the clause linkers, will be analysed.

## Methodology

The present research deals with a corpus of 56 academic essays written in English by first-year tertiary level full-time students majoring in languages and business in Latvia. All students have studied academic writing at secondary level, so it is assumed that they possess general knowledge about typical linking words and their use in essays when they start taking a university course in academic writing.

The research goal was to determine whether students have improved their skills to use LWs in academic essays after additional training. The research questions were the following.

1. What linking words do students use and how frequently and appropriately do they use them before they have studied writing academic essays?
2. What improvement in students' use of LWs can be observed in the examination essay?

In order to reach the goal and answer the questions, the following research objectives were set.

1. to find out the type and the frequency of LWs that students use and what errors students commit when using LWs in academic essays on business topics;
2. to design practice tasks to help students improve their knowledge and skills on the use of LWs;
3. to test whether students' skills to use LWs appropriately have improved.

The research was a case study where both quantitative and qualitative research approaches were applied. In order to attain the research goal, the students were given a pre-test before the actual teaching of essay writing started. The pre-test contained 4 topics students could choose from (Appendix 1). All 4 topics were selected: 20 students chose the first topic, 5 students wrote about the second topic, 2 students wrote about the third topic and also 2 about the fourth topic. Although the formulation of the topics suggests that various essay types and organization patterns can be selected to write about each, the chosen type and pattern were not considered for this research as the research interest was an appropriate use of LWs irrespective of the selected essay type and organization pattern. The students did the pre-test electronically in the so-called *e-university platform*. The students were to write the essay in 60 minutes because that is also a standard time allocated for the examination essay to be written.

The students' errors in the pre-test regarding the use of LWs were grouped based on D. Biber, S. Conrad and G. Leech's classification of LAs (Appendix 2) and their frequency was calculated (Biber, Conrad, Leech, 2002). The objective was to find out the most frequent errors in order to obtain information what additional knowledge and skills about LWs require special attention.

There seems to be little research available on what types of tasks would be appropriate for teaching LWs while the need for designing practice tasks to address the determined problems in the use of LWs is admitted. For example, Z. Yin (2017) compared how LWs are presented and taught in 5 textbooks published by quality publishers (selected from a pool of 50 textbooks) and concluded that none of them dealt with teaching in what register the LWs are used or how frequently the respective LWs are used, that textbooks did not cover the use of LWs as discovered by a number of corpus based research on the use of LWs. He suggested using online corpora for designing tasks on teaching LWs, but he did not study how it could be applied. L. Kamelifar's study on whether teaching LWs improves the Iranian students' overall writing performance provided statistical evidence for the impact of teaching and using authentic materials. She used explanations and illustrations from authentic materials to teach LWs (Kamelifar, 2017).

Therefore, due to the little research on what types of tasks would be best for teaching register and semantic appropriateness of LWs, which appeared to be the main problem areas demonstrated by the pre-test, it was assumed that the task types frequently appearing in published textbooks will be used. The students were offered to do a multiple-choice task, and two gap filling tasks – in one the LWs were provided as a list, in the other students had to decide themselves which LW would be appropriate for the context (Appendix 3). All three tasks were designed, based on authentic texts and only the gap filling task where the LWs were provided consisted of groups of 2-3 contextually linked sentences while the other two tasks contained larger adapted extracts, consisting of several paragraphs, so that the students had an opportunity to apply their knowledge on the use of LWs and see how the particular LW suits the context semantically and register-wise.

The tasks were published in the e-university platform, and students had an opportunity to practice them in class as well as do them independently at the time best suited to them because the answer keys were provided. The students could redo the tasks for an unlimited number of times, but everyone was asked to do each task at least once. 4 students had done the tasks twice and two had made three attempts. The need to make the tasks available electronically also determined the choice of their types.

At the end of the course, all the students had to write an examination essay. The students were provided 2 variants and in each there was a choice among 4 topics, an approach similar to the one in the pre-test. The use of LWs in the examination essay was compared with the results of the pre-test, and conclusions regarding the potential improvement of students' skills to use LWs appropriately were made. The examination essay was written by 27 students. The difference in the number of sample size between the pre-test and the examination essay lies in the fact that three students had decided to drop out of the programme and did not take the examination. One student who took the examination did not write the pre-test and do the practice tasks because she was learning by distance not face-to-face and the pre-test and the practice tasks were announced as compulsory assignments. Due to the small size of the research sample statistical analysis methods were not applied for the analysis of the data as the reliability of the calculations cannot be substantiated.

The results of both the pre-test and the examination essay will be discussed in the following section of the paper. All the examples provided illustrate the original writing of the students, that is, the grammatical and spelling errors are not corrected.

## Results and Discussion

### *Results and discussion of the pre-test essay*

In total, the students had used 111 LWs in the pre-test essays. There were 3 essays where no LWs were used. One of those essays contained a number of essay organization and unity and coherence errors, in the other two, various other discourse markers were used instead of LWs. There were 3 essays where only 1 LW was found and 1 essay where the only inter-sentential and inter-paragraph LW found was the coordinating conjunction *and*, which is a register error in an academic essay. According to D. Biber, S. Conrad and G. Leech's classification (Biber, Conrad, Leech, 2002), most of the found LWs belong to enumeration (15), summation (14), contrast (14) and addition (13) LWs. The students had used the following LWs of enumeration: *firstly, secondly, thirdly, lastly, first of all, finally, then*; of summation: *to sum everything up, to sum it all up, to sum up, all in all, to summarize, overall, in conclusion*; of contrast: *however, on the other hand*; of addition: *moreover, furthermore, also*. The students had also employed the LWs of apposition (*for instance, for example*) 7 times and of result/inference (*thus, therefore, consequently*) 6 times. Both the LA of concession *besides* and the LW of transition *meanwhile* appeared once.

The most frequently used inter-sentential LW was *however*, which appeared 9 times, 5 of which were in comparison and contrast essays. The LW denotes contrast, but its use in other types of essays cannot be considered an error because the context allowed using it as, for example in the sentence:

*Of course, person should have an outstanding knowledge in order to build an inspiring career like this. However, there are many cooks in the world, but not all of them are famous to the extent as Jamie Oliver is.*

In one case *however* was used as an inter-paragraph LW together with the LW *in conclusion* to introduce the concluding paragraph, which is an error:

*However, in conclusion I may say that nowadays everything has changed, and there are female engineers as well as male make-up artists and hair stylists.*

Students had also used such linking phrases as *in my opinion, to my mind*, and adverbs *in fact, actually, unsurprisingly, of course, mostly, honestly, coincidentally, perhaps*. The above-mentioned results indicate that students use a variety of LWs, but the range is somewhat limited even if compared with D. Biber, S. Conrad and G. Leech's list (Biber, Conrad, Leech, 2002). To indicate contrast, the coordinating conjunction *but* was used 4 times to introduce a sentence (in 3 essays). The coordinating conjunction *and* appeared 9 times (in 4 essays). The use of both conjunctions to introduce a sentence demonstrates that students do not recognize them as inter-sentential LWs used in the informal register. Also, the use of: *to sum everything up, to sum it all up, to sum up* to introduce the concluding paragraph is the same type of error. For example:

- (1) *Some men may also say that women are not smart enough in the field of mechanics, so they could never trust them with their vehicles. That happens because of the stereotypes they have about how women only care about their appearance. But is it really that way?*
- (2) *The most typical professions for men are different automotive repairers, men who work in constructions and engineers. Their jobs mostly need their strength and power, because it is a physical work. And these kinds of works are better paid than women's.*
- (3) *To sum up, typical male jobs (firefighter) in Latvia are those where risk taking is a part of a daily routine, while female jobs (secretary) are characterized by the sense of security and stability.*

In two cases students had unnecessarily used two LWs of the same group:

- (1) *People are inclined to name only physical characteristics for example: men tend to have shorter hair-styles, facial hair, shorter nails, loose fitting clothing as well as their voice. Whereas women on the other hand tend to have longer hair, no facial hair, longer nails, and are used to wearing tight fitted clothing.*
- (2) *Although it might sound quite odd that cook is business leader, nevertheless I am ready to make a statement that he is one of the most excellent business leaders and entrepreneurs.*

The two examples indicate that students mix together LWs introducing a clause and LWs introducing a sentence that have the same semantic function. The provided examples also illustrate that students commit punctuation errors, that is, they lack knowledge and/or skills to use commas and semicolons as required by the respective LWs. To summarize, the pre-test indicated that students demonstrated two problem areas in the use of LWs: (1) selection of an LW that did not belong to a formal register and (2)

selection of a semantically inappropriate LW, which were also the two areas analysed in Larsen-Walker's (2017) study. To address the observed problems, it was decided that additional practice tasks (described in the methodology section of this paper) will be designed for training the students' skill to recognize and choose an LW appropriate semantically and for the register.

The pre-test essays also demonstrated punctuation errors linked with the use of LWs, but as it was not a research interest in this particular study, no practice tasks were designed especially for improving students' punctuation skills. However, knowing appropriate punctuation was a hint included in the tasks.

### **Results and discussion of the examination essay**

The results of the examination essay show that the total number of LWs the students use has increased, although there were 2 essays less submitted than in the pre-test ( $N_{LW_e}=138$  in the examination essay as opposed to  $N_{LW_p}=111$  in the pre-test). There was only one essay where no LWs were used and one essay where the LW was used only to introduce the concluding paragraph. The essay with no LWs cannot be classified as one that would demonstrate an underuse of LWs because the student had applied many other discourse markers to make the text coherent. The other essay could be considered an example of the underuse of LWs as the paragraphs were not well linked together, although some other discourse markers were applied. As the analysis of other discourse markers is not the focus of the present study, they will not be dealt with in more detail.

The examination essays also presented that the variety of LWs the students used has also increased (Table 1). The explanation could be that during the course the students have learnt and practised more LWs that were not part of the students' active vocabulary previously, for example such as *hence*, *nevertheless*.

Table 1

**LWs used in the essays**  
(based on (Biber, Conrad, Leech, 2002) classification of Las)

Type of LWs	LWs used in the pre-test essay	LWs used in the examination essay
Enumeration	first of all, firstly, secondly, thirdly, finally, lastly, then	first of all, first, firstly, secondly, second, thirdly, third, finally, lastly, next, last but not least
Addition	moreover, furthermore, also	moreover, furthermore, in addition, additionally, as well as, what is more
Summation	to sum (everything/it all) up, to summarize, overall, in conclusion, all in all	to sum up, to summarize, summarizing, in summary, overall, in conclusion, to conclude, all in all
Apposition	for instance, for example	for instance, for example
Result/ inference	thus, therefore, consequently	thus, therefore, consequently, hence
Contrast	however, on the other hand	however, on the one hand ... on the other hand
Concession	besides	besides, though, nevertheless, nonetheless
Transition	meanwhile	meanwhile

However, it has to be noted that an error still occurred in the use of *thus*. A student had used it to introduce the concluding paragraph, but the context required summation there. No other errors regarding the semantic use of LWs were observed in the examination essay. Figure 1 illustrates the comparison of the number of each inter-paragraph LWs used in the pre-test essay and the examination essay. In total, the students used inter-paragraph LWs 56 times in the examination essay while it was only 39 times in the pre-test essay. The results reveal that the students have used more LWs to link the paragraphs, especially regarding the LWs to introduce the concluding paragraph and LWs whose function is to signal that some information is added. This might be an indication to the fact that the students have learned more LWs and have the skills to use them now. They have also learned that LWs can and have to be used, along with other discourse markers, to make the text coherent.

Although several researchers have expressed concern that students over- and underuse LWs (Lei, 2012; Vincela, 2013; Anderson, 2014), no overuse was observed in the examination essays.

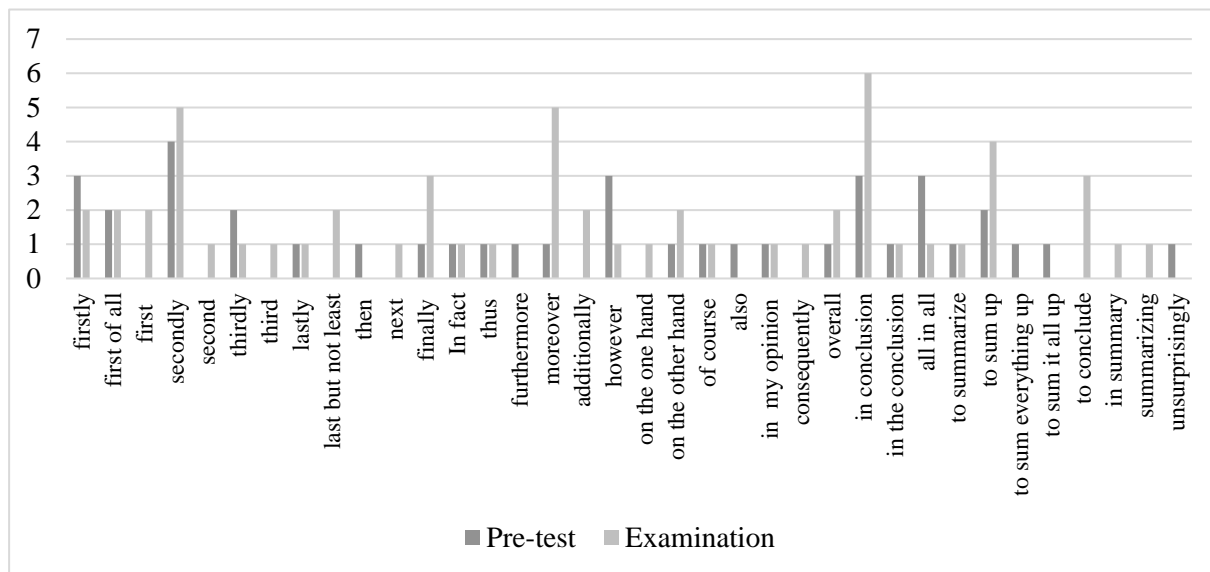


Figure 1. The number of inter-paragraph LWs used in the pre-test and the examination essays.

In the examination essay the students used 37 various inter-sentential LWs as opposed to 29 in the pre-test. Figure 2 exemplifies the frequency of only those LWs that appeared at least 4 times in one of the essays – pre-test or examination. *However*, is the most frequently used LW as it appeared 17 times in the examination essay. It appeared only in the comparison and contrast essay, which indicates to the students’ skill to use it semantically appropriately.

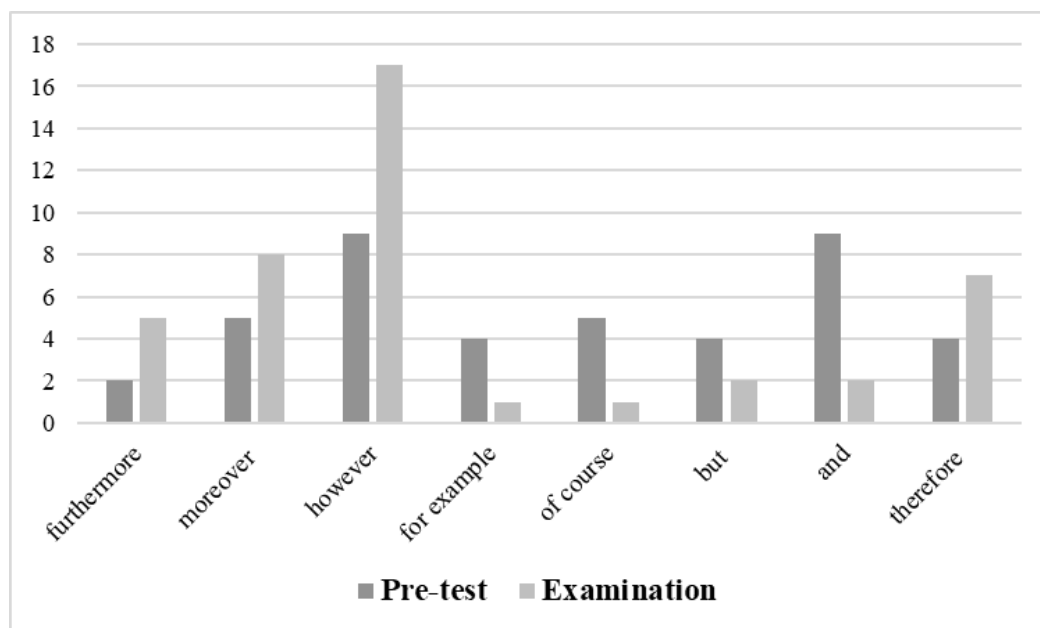


Figure 2. Frequency of inter-sentential LWs used in the pre-test and the examination essays.

Regarding the register errors, Figure 2 reveals that the students’ skills have improved. In two cases students still use both the coordinating conjunction *but* and the coordinating conjunction *and* to start a sentence in the examination essay. In fact, both cases of *but* appeared in the essay of a student who was acquiring the course material by distance and had not taken the pre-test. Both errors in the use of *and* also appear in the essay of one student who demonstrated the same error in the pre-test essay and who had not taken the additionally designed practice tasks. Not doing the practice tasks, of course, might not be the only reason why both students commit the register error, but it is one of the potential reasons. Another reason might be that changing habits or re-teaching the skills a student has developed is even more difficult than teaching something new. It is also observed in Figure 1 that *to sum up* is used in 4 cases to introduce the concluding

paragraph. One of the cases is observed in the essay of the student who acquired the course by distance. An objective reason for the error in other essays is difficult to be stated.

Although it was not the main objective of the practice tasks to train the students in using appropriate punctuation together with the selected LW, the knowledge of how LWs are punctuated could be employed as hints in the practice tasks to decide which LW is the most appropriate one. Only 1 error of inappropriate punctuation with the selected LW was observed in the examination essay. In the pre-test there were 8 errors of this type. As the difference is large, it can be assumed that the practice tasks have also helped to improve the students' punctuation skills. At least, none of the students who had not properly punctuated LWs in the pre-test had committed the same errors in the examination essay. When writing both the pre-test and the examination essay the students were allowed to use any sources available to them. The lack of punctuation errors might also be attested to the fact that the students had become aware of their errors and could edit themselves or ask an editor's web resource to help them.

### Conclusions

The study revealed that the designed practice tasks helped the students to improve their writing performance regarding the use of LWs because the number of LWs used in the examination essay and their variety increased. The number of errors in selecting LWs that are appropriate semantically and for the academic register also reduced after additional training. Because the tasks were designed based on authentic materials and dealt with business context it can be assumed that it helped to improve the students' skills to use semantically and register appropriate LWs in an academic essay on a business topic. It can also be concluded that the selected task types (multiple choice and gap filling tasks) facilitated the positive students' performance. It is justified by the fact that the student whose essay contained most register errors in the use of LWs was the one who had studied the course by distance, that is, depended on her own management of learning, and who had not done the practice tasks. Another justification is that only one error regarding inappropriate semantic use of the selected LW was observed. Thus, it can be concluded that the present study attained the research goal. The present study is significant as it addresses an issue that is very little researched. However, the research should be replicated on a larger sample in order to validate the research results and generalize the findings.

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**APPENDIX 1****Pre-test**

Write an essay on one of the themes below. The volume of the essay is 300-350 words.

1. Describe typical male jobs and female jobs in Latvia.
2. Describe a business leader in Latvia/abroad that you respect and his/her leadership style. Why is this person effective as a business leader?
3. Evaluate which economy sector in Latvia seems most attractive for development.
4. Compare two business organizations (of your choice).

**APPENDIX 2****Typical linking adverbials (based on D. Biber, S. Conrad and G. Leech, 2002, 389-391)**

<b>Semantic categories</b>	<b>Use</b>	<b>Linking adverbials</b>
enumeration and addition	(a) 'to enumerate (list) pieces of information' (389)  (b) 'to signal the addition of items to a list' (389)	(a) first(ly), second(ly), thirdly, finally, lastly, in the first/second place, first of all, for one thing ... for another, to begin with, next  (b) in addition, similarly, also, by the same token, further, furthermore, likewise, moreover
summation	to indicate 'that a unit of discourse concludes or sums up points made in the preceding discourse' (389)	in sum, to conclude, all in all, in conclusion, overall, to summarise.
apposition	'to show that the following piece of text is equivalent to, or included in, the point made in the preceding discourse' (390)	in other words, for example, for instance, e.g., which is to say, that is to say, that is, i.e., namely, viz., specifically
result/ inference	to show 'that the second unit of discourse states the results or consequence of the preceding discourse' (390)	consequently, thus, hence, therefore
contrast/ concession	(a) 'to mark some kind of contrast or conflict between information in different discourse units' (391)  (b) to signal 'that the subsequent discourse expresses something contrary to the expectations raised by the preceding clause' (391)	(a) in contrast, alternatively, on the other hand, conversely, instead, on the contrary, at any rate, by comparison, however  (b) though, anyway, anyhow, besides, nevertheless, still, in any case, at any rate, in spite of that, after all, yet
transition	to show 'the insertion of an item that does not follow directly from the previous discourse' (391)	by the way, incidentally, by the by, meanwhile, now

## APPENDIX 3

## Examples of the designed practice tasks

**Task I. Fill in the gaps with an appropriate linking adverbial from the ones provided below. Some of them should be used several times.**

consequently, for instance, likewise, therefore, furthermore, indeed, similarly, however, for example, moreover, in general, in addition, eventually, meanwhile

1. Few companies offer something so popular that their name becomes a verb. \_\_\_\_\_, that is one of the many achievements of Uber, a company founded in 2009 which is now the world's most valuable startup, worth around \$70 billion.

2. Uber's app can summon a car in moments in more than 425 cities around the world, to the fury of taxi drivers everywhere. \_\_\_\_\_ its ambitions, and the expectations underpinning its valuation, extend much further: using self-driving vehicles, it wants to make ride-hailing so cheap and convenient that people forgo car ownership altogether.

3. In the longer term autonomous vehicles will drive the reinvention of transport. \_\_\_\_\_, the first ones have already hit the road.

..... (the original task continues)

Sentences 1-4 are taken from 'The world's most valuable startup is leading the race to transform the future of transport', *The Economist* print edition, 3 September 2016

**Task II. Choose an appropriate linking word from the given options.**

Chinese tourists are an increasingly common sight in America's cities, from New York to Honolulu. About 2m Chinese visit the country each year \_\_\_\_\_ (1. and/but/in fact,) that figure is expected to rise to over 3m by the end of the decade. \_\_\_\_\_ (2. However, /But/Moreover,) it is not just Chinese tourists \_\_\_\_\_ (3. which/that/who) have been enjoying American hospitality; it's Chinese investors, too.

This week HNA Group, a Chinese firm \_\_\_\_\_ (4. what/who/that) began life as an aviation company, announced that it is to buy a 25% stake in Hilton Worldwide Holdings. It will be the largest shareholder in the hotelier \_\_\_\_\_ (5. which/that/who/whose) brands also include Embassy Suites, Hampton Inn and Conrad.

..... (the original task continues)

Adapted from 'Chinese firms are investing heavily in American hotels', published on [www.economist.com](http://www.economist.com) on 28<sup>th</sup> October 2016, written by A.W., WASHINGTON, DC

**Task III. Use an appropriate link word in the provided gaps. The link words will not be provided. Think of ones that suit the context.**

In 1959, Italian novelist Italo Calvino received a grant to spend six months in the US. \_\_\_\_\_ (1.) he arrived in New York City, he discovered a disturbing trend.

'The trend of espresso-places has been thriving for a few years in New York and is expanding to the rest of the country,' he wrote in his journal. "Sure, I'm happy when I can drink a coffee Italian-style, \_\_\_\_\_ (2.) I struggle to explain to Americans the feeling of uneasiness \_\_\_\_\_ (3.) this kind of places provoke in me."

More than 50 years later, Italians are still deeply protective of their country's reputation as the coffee capital of the world. Italians despise American-style coffee, \_\_\_\_\_ (4.) they regard as a sort of dull black broth. At the same time, they scoff at Americans' attempts to replicate espresso, \_\_\_\_\_ (5.) invariably ends up being too short, too strong, or too slow.

..... (the original task continues)

Adapted from 'The curious story of how transatlantic exchange shaped Italy's illustrious coffee culture', written by Cosimo Bizzarri, 29 May 2017.