

## **Native and Non-Native Perceptions on a Non-Native Oral Discourse in an Academic Setting**

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### **Abstract**

This qualitative study investigates discourse-level patterns typically employed by a Turkish lecturer based on the syntactic patterns found in the collected data. More specifically, the study aims to reveal how different native and non-native speakers of English perceive discourse patterns used by a non-native lecturer teaching in English. The data gathered from a Turkish lecturer teaching finance, and the interviews both with the lecturer and the students. The lecturer and the students were videotaped and the data was evaluated by content analysis. The results revealed a difference between the way non-native and native speakers evaluate an oral discourse of a non-native lecturer teaching in English. Native speakers of English found the oral performance moderately comprehensible, while non-native speakers found it relatively comprehensible.

**Keywords:** *Discourse-level patterns; syntactic patterns; native and non-native speakers.*

### **Introduction**

As the medium of international communication, English has become an international language since the beginning of twentieth century. Today, as a result of globalization, large numbers of non-native speakers use English for their international contacts. As the focus of the present study, international educational contexts require using English as an essential medium of communication between people from different countries. It is obvious that every culture has its own rules for structural organization of texts and this variety directly affects the way language is used, perceived, and evaluated by other speakers. On the other hand there is small but growing body of research on non-native discourse. This study will contribute to the understanding of the nature of interaction in an academic setting between non-native speakers. The study is also important in that it provides evidence for discussions on a non-native discourse from the perspective of both native and non-native speakers of English.

### **Literature Review**

There has been little research that has investigated the discourse structures used in spoken discourse by second or foreign language speakers of English (Fung and Carter; 2007). The English language

exchanged between two non-native speakers may function well in terms of comprehensibility. However, this is not the case in the communication between a native and a non-native speaker. Although a non-native speaker is capable of creating grammatical written or oral sentences, they lack appropriateness in discourse. There are some studies that focused on the issue. One is Jung's (2006) research that analyzed the role of discourse markers in L2 listening comprehension qualitatively. Jung (2006) found that the L2 listeners misinterpreted the text when discourse markers were missing and their presence could facilitate comprehension by the help of the guidance provided by discourse markers. Another study by Tyler (1994) that investigated similar aspects of oral discourse indicates that in communication, both speakers and listeners share the expectation that listeners are aided in their interpretation of messages by speakers' use of contextualization markers. Contextualization markers are meta-linguistic devices that serve as directional guides to signal how listeners should interpret the incoming information. Listeners in a communicative context depend on contextualization markers provided by speakers to establish a coherent, meaningful interpretation of the message. That is, within a given context, listeners expect a variety of contextualization markers which explicitly signal prominence and logical relations among ideas to help them interpret the upcoming information. When these expectations of listeners are violated, they find the message incoherent and difficult to follow (Gumperz, 1982; Rounds, 1987; Schiffrin, 1987; Tyler, 1992, 1994; Williams, 1992; Tyler et al., 1988; Jung, 2006). In another study by Moreno (2001), it was found that Spanish students of English hardly used discourse markers such as; *you know, I mean, right, okay, really*, which are, in contrast, naturally and fluently employed by native speakers of English. This unintentional omission of discourse markers adversely affected interactive functions essential for the speaker-hearer relationship. Such missing features in L2 oral discourse could result in misunderstanding and misinterpretation and reduce the level of comprehensibility of the text. Tyler (1992) also highlighted the role of information structuring devices in the quality of discourse and its comprehensibility by discussing these information structuring devices, which include lexical discourse markers, patterns of repetition, prosody, anaphora (patterns of ellipsis and pronominalization, demonstrative pronouns), syntactic incorporation (hypotactic constructions), and simple clauses (paratactic constructions). According to Tyler, these devices provide native listeners with a set of cues which facilitates their construction of a coherent interpretation of the discourse. Therefore, it seems that a non-native speaker should pay more attention to the use of these devices to enhance the comprehensibility of the oral discourse. The current study attempts to examine the major discourse characteristics of a professor delivering academic courses and document how the language he uses is evaluated by a group of native and non-native teachers of English.

### **Aim of the study**

This study investigated discourse-level patterns typically employed by a Turkish lecturer based on the syntactic patterns found in the collected data. More specifically, the study aims to find out non-native discourse patterns and how these patterns affect native English listeners' understandings of the discourse based on the critical evaluation of native and non-native teachers.

### **Research Question:**

The study focuses on the following research question:

- How do native and non-native speakers of English evaluate a non-native oral discourse?

## Methodology

### Participants

#### *The Lecturer*

The non-native (Turkish) lecturer is proficient speaker of English who stayed in the UK for two years, and currently teaches finance to Erasmus Students from various European countries. He holds a PhD on business administration since 1999 and has given Corporate Finance and Behavioral Finance lessons at both masters and PhD levels in various European countries. Currently, he is working at a state university as an associate professor.

#### *The students*

The students were Erasmus Exchange students from Lithuania. In order to study abroad, Erasmus program requires the participants to achieve a certain level of communicative competence which is necessary both for their survival and academic needs. The students are selected according to the results of a proficiency test, which includes grammar, reading, writing, and listening and speaking. Additionally, the students reported their proficiency levels as upper-intermediate.

#### *Native and Non-native participants*

The participants were both native and non-native speakers of English from various countries. Participant profiles are presented in Table 1.

*Table 1. Demographic information of the participants*

		Native	Non-native	
Number of participants		21	19	
Gender	Male	12	6	
	Female	9	13	
Country	UK	13	TR	16
	US	4	PO	1
	AU	3	GR	1
	IR	1	PA	1
Age range		23-58	23-46	
Jobs	University Lecturer	10	University Lecturer	13
	Research Assistant	3	Research Assistant	3
	English Teacher	8	English Teacher 3	
Education	BA	10	BA	8
	MA	6	MA	2
	PhD	5	PhD	9

## **Procedures**

### ***Target structures***

To answer the research question, the following information structuring devices were investigated in the data analysis of both native and non-native discourses. These are lexical performance, syntactic structure, discourse structures, and discourse organization. These evaluative criteria are not predetermined set of constructs. Rather, they emerged from the data. The authors carried out content analysis of the data and identified that the above mentioned four categories were commonly elaborated on by the participants. The elicited data on how both speaker groups evaluate the non-native oral discourse highlight the discursual aspects that were considered in the evaluation process.

### **Data collection**

This study is a qualitative discourse analysis of the planned spoken discourse of a Turkish lecturer teaching in English. The study uses data from four different sources: (a) the text of the discourse in question, (b) interview with the lecturer, (c) interview with the students, (d) interpretations of the discourse by native and non-native speakers of English.

#### ***The text of the discourse:***

The text of the discourse came from a lecture on finance. After the transcription of the video of a 10-minute lecture, the text was re-recorded as an oral extract by a native speaker of English in order to eliminate the untypical pronunciation employed by the non-native lecturer. This procedure was carried out to help the participants to focus on the discourse structure of the text rather than the fluency or other characteristics of the speaker. This procedure can be justified by the segmental and supra segmental constraints inherent in non-native lecturers' pronunciation that could reduce the actual quality of the content of the non-native discourse. Therefore, a native reading of the text could make the evaluators focus on the discursual characteristics of the product.

#### ***Interview with the lecturer***

As a non-native speaker of English, the lecturer's opinions about his own teaching would be helpful in getting more information about his personal histories, perspectives, teaching experience and overall opinion about teaching in English. Since in-depth interviews are optimal for collecting data about the case, the lecturer was asked some questions such as how often he lectured in English, the difficulties he faced while teaching in English, and the profile of his foreign students (see Appendix A).

#### ***Interview with the students***

In order to find out students' opinions about the language used by the lecturer, an interview was carried out. The interview questions included some demographic information about the participants. Also, they were asked to answer some questions about their perceptions of the lecturer such as how long they had been taking the course and what they thought about the language used by the lecturer.

**Opinions of native and non-native speakers**

The Present study is a case study that focuses on the discourse structures used by a non-native speaker of English. The oral extract was e-mailed to native and non-native speakers of English and they were asked to write their opinions about the lecture. The responses of native and non-native speakers were qualitatively analyzed by content analysis method. The procedures followed for the data analysis are presented in the data evaluation section in detail.

**Data Analysis**

The written comments on the recorded material were collected from both native and non-native speakers of English either through internet or on paper. During the analysis, the following steps were taken. First, the data obtained in this way were then individually read, coded, and categorized by the two researchers of the study. Then, the separately evaluated data were merged. The codes and categories specified by the researchers were compared. The comparison results revealed 90% similarity between the two raters. As a result of the inter-rater analysis, five categories were found from among the codes, including *lexical performance*, *syntactic structures*, *discourse structures*, *discourse organization* and *overall quality of the lecture*. Next, two types of findings were created based on the comments of native and non-native speakers, which in turn allowed an interpretation of the differences between the two with regards to how they perceive an academic non-native text. Additionally, the categories were evaluated in terms of positive and negative aspects of the comments with sub-categories for each. Table 2 shows sub-categories for each main category drawn from the data. Finally, assertions were drawn considering each category for the comments of the native and non-native speakers.

Table 2. Classification of sub-categories for each main category

Main Category		Sub-categories				
1	lexical performance	use of vocabulary	idiomatic use	colloquialism	collocation	
2	syntactic structure	word order	transfer	tenses	the use definite article "the"	
3	discourse structures	overall comments on cohesion	repetition as a cohesive device	reference	use of conjunctions	
4	discourse organization	overall quality of discourse organization	introduction	main ideas	lack of supporting ideas	topic change
5	overall quality	difficult to understand	boring to follow			

**Findings**

This section presents the analysis of the data that revealed five categories, namely *lexical performance*, *syntactic structure*, *discourse structures*, *discourse organization* and *overall quality*. The

assertions for each category are grouped in terms of the participants' being native or non-native speaker of English. These assertions are also analyzed both in positive and negative aspects of the comments being made with regard to the lecture.

### **Lexical Performance**

This category comprises the participants' comments on the use of vocabulary, idiomatic uses, colloquialism and collocations.

**Assertion 1A:** Native speaker participants commented on typicality of the vocabulary employed in the data negatively.

#### ***a. Use of vocabulary***

The native speakers ( $f=15$ , 71 %) criticized the way the non-native speaker used vocabulary items in terms of their level, formality and context features. They found it incompatible with the typical word choice in this academic context but compatible with the usual technical terms. The comments of the native participants support this as in the following quotations.

*"When the teacher tried to elaborate further into the lesson, she used the wrong descriptive vocabulary, which was too basic" [T]*

*"She could have emphasized things in a slightly different way, but perhaps lacked the vocabulary to do so" [C]*

*"The lecturer's assured use of technical term suggests quite fluent English". [C]*

The majority of the native participants expressed negative opinions about the vocabulary use; however, the adequate use of technical terms was reported to be one of the strengths of vocabulary use in general ( $f=9$ , 42 %).

#### ***b. Idiomatic use***

The native speakers ( $f=10$ , % 47) also criticized the inappropriate use of idiomatic expressions for being syntactically incorrect. The following quotation expresses this incompetence.

*"Her syntax and idioms are non-native (she makes errors) such as 'what kinds of investments a company can do' and 'the risks, also going up, was going high', 'stock exchanges don't sleep for us' " [DAM]*

#### ***c. Colloquialism***

Colloquialism is related to the use of phrases in informal speech and this feature is interpreted differently by two native speakers. This is shown in the following examples.

*"The lecturer's use of familiar phrases "you know", "etc" suggests quite fluent English". [C]*

*The lecturer uses some unsuitable colloquialisms, e.g. "you know" [G]*

*"too many etc.. etc.. which do not sound typical English" [H]*

*"uses 'etc' in a lecture a lot, this not a good talk" [RO]*

*"Inappropriate insertion of 'you know' where it often does not make sense, .." [DA]*

*"the original speaker was apparently fond of 'you know' " [A]*

*"there are too many 'you know' and 'errr' to make this an academic lecture "*

The native participants focused on the frequent and wrong use of colloquialisms, which is also not surprising. Such competence requires experience in the target culture and the society.

#### **d. Use of collocations**

The native participants did not mention in their comments the inappropriately used collocations. However, one of the non-native speakers highlighted this problem.

**Assertion 1B:** Non-native speaker participants commented on the use of vocabulary differently with no reference to some culture specific word types

#### **a. Use of vocabulary**

The non-native speakers criticized the use of vocabulary in general and appreciated it for the right use of the terminological terms.

*"The topic presented in the text was intelligible in its general terms; but the details embedded in the subtopics were not clear, partly because the text lacked the vocabulary and expressions to denote the distinctions between these subtopics" [F]*

*"The intelligibility of words poses some problems..." [CA]*

Besides negative opinions, one participant reported the use of academic words as one of the strength of the lecture.

*"The speaker uses the adequate vocabulary (financial terms-ESP) for the purposes of the lecture" [M]*

In general, most of the participants' ( $f=15$ , % 78) opinions on the use of lexical items were negative focusing on incorrect use of words. It is important to note that native speakers made an in-depth analysis of the lexical performance, while non-native speakers made limited comments to evaluate the lexical features of the lecture.

#### **b. Idiomatic use and Colloquialism**

Non-native participants did not comment on errors in idiomatic use and colloquialism unlike the native participants.

#### **d. Collocation**

The only criticism came from one non-native participant providing an example of verb noun collocations as follows:

*"There are some collocations that are untypical in English such as 'make coordination' "*  
[R]

The reason for this is that non-native speakers may also have difficulty in mastering the use of the typical and acceptable combination of words that go together.

It is clear that there is a difference between the native and the non-native speakers' focus when they evaluate an oral discourse. The former focuses on the vocabulary related to the cultural and social factors. On the other hand, the latter lacks the ability to consider such factors. This is one of the major problems of the non-native speakers both at production and comprehension level. There are many reasons for the relative lack of comments on collocations, idiomatic expressions and colloquialism by non-native. Although the ability to play with language is universal and the tendency to play with idioms is a normal feature of everyday language use, whether written or spoken (Carter, 1999), the idiomatic expressions are actually hard for the non-native speakers to use in the right context, as they require the knowledge of the cultural and social backgrounds using another language. This can also be justified by Tannen (1989), for example, who suggests that the flexible nature of 'fixed expressions' is one of the many paradoxes one encounters when dealing with idiomatic language, and while such paradoxes are the stuff of which creativity in the use of idioms is made, for the non-native speaker they may constitute an obstacle to acquisition of that feature of the language. Therefore, a better competence for creating idiomatic expressions is needed to be able to use the target language in the typical way, which is also mentioned by Prodromou (2003) who argues that the need for greater idiomatic competence is precisely what linguists propose for the non-native speaker. However, Fernandes et al. (2009) highlights the critical role of collocational errors in communication which could sound strange but still understandable and support the idea that offering the learner prefabricated lexical items for specific functions could seem a bit excessive.

#### **Syntactic Structures**

This category focused on three basic types of grammatical errors such as word order, transfer, definiteness, and tense use.

**Assertion 2A:** Native speaker participants commented negatively on the syntactic structures used by the lecturer

##### **a. Word order**

The followings are the comments of the participants on word order used by the lecturer.

*"There are some errors in word order. 'this time happened the second world war.' "* [D]

*"Placement of the verb in the sentence is sometimes of off. "this time happened the second world war" and "last week we learnt what is the finance" "* [DA]

*"The speaker has problems with word order eg. 'this time happened the...' and 'what should do the financial ministers'" [AN]*

Word order is an important element in the formation of sentences and text, as it provides the sequence required by English, which is a language in which meanings are understood by how words are arranged. Turkish, a language in which there is a flexible word order, may cause the non-native speakers to use words in wrong orders, leading to expressing meanings incorrectly. To justify this is not in the scope of this study for further discussion of transfer issues could be found in the Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis (Gas and Selinker, 1983; McLaughlin, 1984).

### ***b. Transfer***

Transfer is another characteristic of the L2 use as first language, and is one of the sources on which a non-native speaker bases the target utterances. Therefore, it may be quite natural that a non-native speaker is influenced by the rules of their first language syntax. The following utterances of the native speakers focus on this fact.

*"It appeared that many of the structures used were directly transposed from his native language" [C]*

*"However, understanding the structure is hindered somewhat by some possible mistranslations: 'reliabilities- does this mean securities; corporation is pronounced as 'cooperation', so it was only on the second use of this that I understood what the lecturer was referring to' " [W]*

All the native participants criticized the lecture for including errors in word order. These errors are especially concentrated in the way subordinate clauses are arranged. In addition, the participants drew the attention to the transfer effect found in the structures used. The participants also did not make any positive comments on the syntactic structures. It is commonly known that EFL learners often have problems in organizing their sentences as a coherent unified whole in another language. According to Shen Ying (1998), this might be due to the fact that each language has its own system of conveying meaning through oral discourse. So it is clear that while language learners try to transfer their L1 system into the L2 system, they have problems in terms of their discourse structures.

### ***c. Tenses***

The use of tenses is also problematic, as indicated by some of the native participants, especially due to the subject-verb disagreement and use of incorrect passive structures and perfect tense use.

*"There are some grammatical errors especially in tenses" [M]*

*"One of the grammatical errors in the lecture is the use of correct tenses" [D]*

*"Some inappropriate tense use is confusing eg. 'What is the goals...'" [ANN]*

These errors in the use of right tenses may reduce the comprehensibility of the oral discourse, as they create misunderstandings.

#### **d. The use definite article "the"**

Almost all the native participants drew attention to the use of definite articles, which, they indicated, hinders the comprehensibility of the messages in the lecture. The following criticisms demonstrate the inaccuracy of the definite articles.

*"Misuses of 'the' errors are common throughout the lecture" [C]*

*"'the' is frequently not used, such as in because especially in 1990s, the risks.... This would normally in the 1990s" [DA]*

*"the is also frequently used where it shouldn't be such as last week we learnt what is the finance and 'the companies focused on the both sides of the balance sheet' " [DA]*

*"There are many instances of omission of articles or failure to omit...a very difficult area for many speakers of English as a second language" [ANN]*

**Assertion 2B:** Non-native speaker participants made negative comments on the syntactic structures used by the lecturer

#### **a. Word order**

Word order errors identified by the native speakers are hardly mentioned in the comments made by the non-native speakers. The only comment is as follows:

*"The lecturer makes sporadic errors of syntax in the form of word order" [O]*

#### **b. Transfer**

Unlike the native speaker participants mentioning the transfer effect in the choice of sentence structure, the non-native speakers made no reference to such errors.

#### **c. Tenses**

The non-native participants also underlined the errors regarding the use of English verb tenses ( $f=8$ , % 42).

*"Especially tense errors carry the potential of leading to misunderstanding and the lady commits many of these. In other words, the lady has problems making accurate use of the medium of instruction which might result in unwanted outcomes on behalf of all parties involved" [B]*

*"Time references were often confusing as the verb tense were used wrongly, especially perfect tense were not used correctly" [F]*

#### **d. The use of the definite article "the"**

It is interesting that, although there are a number of errors in the use of definite article "the" as highlighted by the native participants, no such comments were made by non-native participants. The use of articles is also difficult and complex for the non-native speakers as they require word

knowledge, syntactic knowledge and pragmatic and cultural knowledge of the target language. The combination of this diverse knowledge is hard to achieve. Dikilitaş and Altay (2011) found in their study with participants from three different proficiency levels that foreign language learners have difficulty in using the correct definite article even in the ultimate attainment, which proves the complex nature of this grammar domain. In another study that investigated errors in English article usage by non-native speakers, Chodorow and Leacock (2006) discussed the system of English articles as one of the most difficult challenges faced by non-native speakers of English. Therefore, it is not surprising that non-native speakers pay little attention to the use of definite article "the" while listening to oral discourse.

In sum, the comments of the non-native speakers on syntactic structure are all only with reference to the errors in the word order and tense use, which is different from those of native participants. This category concerning the structural quality of the lecture yielded no positive comments by both types of the participants. The types of the errors also turned out to be concentrated in the use of definite article "the". The native and non-native speakers commented on the syntactic features of the oral discourse from varying perspectives, which require different target language knowledge. The errors in the discourse are perceived by both speakers in different ways due to the proficiency differences of native and non-native speakers.

### **Discourse Structure**

**Assertion 3A:** Native speakers of English emphasized the cohesiveness of the sentences used in the lecture in a negative way, but there are also some positive comments about the cohesive structure

Cohesion is based on the conjunction and the lexical repetitions as well as references. The data demonstrated the uses of conjunctions and repetitions in terms of how cohesive the language structures are in the lecture. The comments are both positive and negative in terms of their content. These comments could be grouped under four types as follows:

#### ***a. Overall comments on cohesion***

The overall evaluation of the lecture in terms of cohesion includes both positive and negative comments. Some ( $f=8$ , % 38) draw attention to the general lack of cohesion, while some viewed it as a positive aspect ( $f=6$ , % 28).

*"Her speaking is understandable and reasonably attractive but I didn't get an overall cohesion of a particular train of thought" [L]*

*"Cohesion was not smooth" H*

*"There is no cohesion throughout the lecture" [P]*

Positive comments were also indicated by some native speakers as follows:

*"There is obviously a clear structure to the lecture which comes through" [W]*

*"The lecture is completely intelligible, cohesive and fluent" [DA]*

There is a difference even among the native speakers in the evaluation of the cohesive devices. This could be due to the personal differences of these speakers such as their knowledge of the context and the perception of text unity.

### ***b. Use of conjunctions***

Another device creating cohesion between sentences is the use of explicit conjunctions. This type of cohesive device was found to be weak in general ( $f=18$ , % 85). This weakness could be a negative factor to the comprehensibility of the lecture.

*"There is lack of connectors between topics/statements; therefore it is difficult to follow logical argument" [M]*

*"Following the thread of the lecture was difficult because the speaker used too many linking words when none were necessary" [C]*

*"Connectors were rather poor" [G]*

*"There was hardly a transition and it becomes confusing for the listener" [D]*

*"The connectors used to combine the ideas seem weak" [B]*

*"transition signals could be used to indicate that a number of key points are going to be recovered to highlight the main point and to move smoothly from one point to the next – rather than saying 'another one' each time" [D]*

The native speakers found the oral discourse quite disconnected at sentence level, as there is no clear transition from one sentence to another, which makes it difficult to follow the information provided by the non-native speaker.

### ***c. Repetition as a cohesive device***

Repetition of the lexical items is also an effective way of creating cohesion in an oral presentation. Again, the native participants found that the lecturer failed to appropriately use this device, as is repeatedly indicated by native participants.

*"it seemed that there was some repetition, which could be Okay, but it would be more beneficial if it were in the form of rephrasing rather than word for word repetition" [R]*

*"The lecturer keeps repeating the same points in the same words" [J]*

*"The lecturer also repeated information, which instead of emphasizing it, made it more difficult to follow" [C]*

*"Many sentences had repetitions of words" [ALT]*

*"... sometimes repetition was used instead of explanations" [D]*

Repetition used by the non-native speaker may be overused due to the lack of discourse knowledge and syntactic ability to employ the grammatical elements to provide consistency among the ideas.

#### **d. Reference**

Reference is another subcategory that contributes to the cohesiveness of a text. This is also criticized by native participants as a weak feature of the lecture, stressing that the pronouns are underused.

*"Organization is poor and the lecturer goes back and forth in time" [BR]*

*"It is not clear what some words and phrases refer to eg. 'Another one' " [MA]*

*"There is little use of pronouns as referents and dependent conjunctions eg 'that' are absent" [AN]*

Non-native speakers may have difficulty in creating cohesion among the sentences to convey the meaning throughout the text. This failure can be due to many linguistic factors such as inability to employ the syntactic and discoursal knowledge.

**Assertion 3B:** The followings are the comments of non-native participants on the cohesive elements. They fall into two types: positive and negative

#### **a. Overall comments on cohesion**

The lecturer's creation of cohesion between the ideas using grammatical elements is also found to be both successful and unsuccessful by the non-native participants. These comments failed to share a common idea of cohesion. The negative and positive comments are as follows:

*"...but the real problem lies in the cohesion. The speaker does not seem to have a cohesive approaches she moves back and forth at least two times which is logically against the way things should be" [MU]*

*"there is a lack logical flow in the lecture" [R]*

There are also positive comments on the cohesion of the lecture made by non-native participants which indicate that the lecturer managed to create an overall cohesion within the text.

*"the cohesive items are good enough to connect the ideas and pieces of information together" [Y]*

*"the piece is cohesive in my opinion" [E]*

*"one of the strength of the lecture is that it is cohesive and coherent" [SD]*

Non-native speakers perceived the oral discourse both positively and negatively, which shows that cohesion is also a category of grammatical device that can be complex to employ for the non-native speakers.

The L2 speakers failed to convey intended logical relations among ideas. Instead, they relied exclusively on one or two types of contextualization markers to indicate a wide range of logical relationships among ideas. The L2 speakers also failed to overtly signal foreground and background

information and produced unfocused, undifferentiated discourse, with a cumulative effect that may account for much of the incomprehensibility of their academic monologues (Jung, 2006).

### ***b. Use of conjunctions***

The use of conjunctions is another factor in creating cohesion between the sentences. There are actually not many comments on this type of cohesive device made by non-native participants. One comment was made, which is as follows:

*"she uses some cues such as also, in that case, I mean, such connectors provide a basis for clear understanding of discourse context as they have to create some inks between the ideas" [S]*

The inability of the non-native speakers to comment on the use of conjunctions is common among these speakers because there are many kinds of conjunctions that can have different meanings in different languages.

### ***c. Repetition as a cohesive device***

The non-native participants made a negative evaluation of repetitions as part of cohesion. They found the repetitions quite unnecessary as is indicated in the following statements.

*"Finance, finance, finance"., "etc, etc, etc",,.., "use of too much repetition" make the listener lose concentration. It is difficult to focus on the subject matter" [I]*

*"there are repetitions e.g, 'of course' is repeated for three times " [C]*

*" the lecturer repeats some words, paraphrase some sentences sometimes, maybe due to serving learners' understanding" [N]*

Repetition is another cohesive device that contributes to the text construction if used properly. However, overuse of this device may influence the quality of the discourse, signaling lack of proficiency to better express ideas.

### ***d. Reference***

Reference as part of cohesion-creating grammatical unit is criticized only by one of the non-native participants as being employed inappropriately. The participant claims that such use of referential elements are not typical in the use of English language.

*"the speaker does not seem to have a cohesive approach as she moves back and forth at least two time which is logically against the way things should be" [MU]*

## **Discourse Organization**

This category comprises the comments of the participant concerning overall quality of discourse organization, introduction, main ideas, lack of supporting ideas, and topic change of the text.

**Assertion 4A:** Native speaker participants commented on the organization of the discourse more in a negative way than in a positive way

The comments on this category fell into 5 sub categories such as overall organization, problems in introduction, lack of supporting ideas, and topic change. On the other hand, there are also positive comments on the organizations

#### **a. Overall quality of discourse organization**

The discourse organization requires discourse knowledge to create an overall coherent text. However, the lexical and grammatical elements may be hard and complex to control while speaking. The comments indicate an inability to achieve this.

*"As a student I would lost in the lecture, because there is a lack of organization and structure" [MAR]*

*"The talk is poorly structured and disjointed; one thing does not lead clearly onto another." [R]*

*"It was clear that the information was there, it was just obscured" [C]*

*"Overall the presentation seems difficult to understand because topics are not developed and linked as a native speaker would normally do" [ANN]*

*"There is an English guideline for speakers that they need to say things three times for them to be heard. I don't think this speaker is aware of this difference between the spoken and written genres" [AN]*

There are also positive comments on overall discourse organization, which is as follows:

*"The lecture seemed well organized " [A]*

*" The lecture is generally quite comprehensible" [Ei]*

It seems that there are more negative comments than positive ones made by native speakers on the overall quality of the discourse organization ( $f=16$ , % 76). This may indicate the low level of comprehensibility although they sometimes focused on some strengths of the text.

#### **b. Introduction**

The way a text is commenced determines its end and how the text will be developed and narrated. Therefore, it requires good command of the whole text and a good plan throughout the speech. There are negative criticisms about it as follows:

*"Not very clear and too sudden introduction with the topic. I am not sure what she is talking about. I would prefer a smoother introduction to the topic " [H]*

*"weak intro" [B]*

*"the speaker gives a reasonably good and long introduction before telling us the points she will talk about in the lecture" [L]*

Some native speakers found the introduction quite weak and unnatural, as they indicated in the comments. The reason for this could be psychologically explained. Such speakers, when they use a language other than their own, may be stressed or excited and hesitate to talk. They have to both plan what to say in the topic they are discussing and produce sentences that have to follow one another to form their ideas. These all happen suddenly and especially in the beginning. Therefore, the comments turned out to be negative and incomprehensible.

### **c. Main ideas**

Main ideas were focused on by only two participants, one positive and one negative. The difference in the understanding of the main points may depend on different factors.

*"the entire section that I reviewed appeared to be one long sentence, giving no clear emphasis to new or important points" [SU]*

### **Positive**

*"The major points were well emphasized and were communicated well" [G]*

Main ideas are the basic element of any text and they have to be explicitly expressed by discourse organizers. There are different ways of ordering these ideas, such as chronological order, topical order, process order, and cause-effect. These different strategies require different grammatical words.

### **d. Lack of supporting ideas**

In the same way, supporting ideas are important parts of the text development as they make it easier for the reader to understand the topic and to be persuaded to think in the same way as the writer does. There are also different ways of presenting supporting ideas, such as using examples, statistics, and references.

*"there is lack of supporting knowledge and information in the lecture" [M]*

*"repeating the same message more than once rather than expanding on the point, explaining why it important, or explaining what it actually means" [SU]*

It seems that supporting ideas are not well developed as understood from the comments, which reduced the comprehensibility of the oral discourse.

### **e. Topic change**

The topic of the oral discourse under investigation was finance, more specifically; it focused on the historical development of finance in the words. Therefore, main ideas were arranged in topical order, which means that there were many topic changes while presenting the different periods.

*"For me the topics jump around too much and too many points are covered. For example, I got interested when she started to talk about globalization but that interest soon changed when the topics seemed to ship to something else entirely" [L]*

*"Jumping around too many ideas and points leading to sudden changes" [M]*

*"It is not obvious what the lecture is actually about and it jumps about from topic to topic even within one topic. The points being made are a not at all clear" [P]*

It seems that this was a failure according to the native speakers. The transition from one idea to another was grammatically problematic as the topic was changed without a good presentation of the previous one.

**Assertion 4B:** Non-native speaker participants commented on the organization of the discourse in a positive way

#### ***a. Overall quality of discourse organization***

The non-native participants did not make negative comments on the general organization of the discourse. Rather, they indicated positive comments on overall quality which are as follows:

*"The presentation's flow was good" [F]*

#### ***b. Introduction***

One non-native participant's comments on the introduction of the oral discourse were positive.

*"the lecturer revised the previous week's topic first and then moved on to the new one (or rather continued the previous week's topic)" [EC]*

The positive comment, which is unlike those of the native speakers', may arise from the fact that the non-native speaker evaluated it not for its grammatical correctness, but for its effectiveness in communicating the message. The means used to achieve this ability was not paid any attention by the non-native participants.

#### ***c. Main ideas***

Non-native participants evaluated the main ideas in the text differently. Two made positive comments, while another two made negative comments. This is again due to the individual differences such as the knowledge of the topic, concentration, interest, willingness to help and some other factors.

*"The important points were not emphasized enough" [SE]*

*"Limited 'signpost' language makes the presentation hard to follow. The speaker uses 'Another one' and 'also' repeatedly. Native speakers would be inclined to help their audience by using 'firstly', 'secondly', and 'and finally'. It is also unclear when the existing signposts refer to major or minor points since the development of points is either missing or unclear" [E]*

Positive

*"One of the strength of the lecture is speaker's using and combining sentences first, second, etc for focusing on the hierarchy of events" [N]*

*"the use of signposting devices was good,, eg. This week we will continue..., the first one is, and the other one, the last one etc." [EC]*

It seems that non-native participants found the main ideas reasonably understandable. This could be due to their tendency to evaluate the text based on message given, not on the grammatical means by which the message is given.

#### ***d. Supporting ideas***

One of the non-native participants made a negative comment on the fact that there are few supporting ideas to consolidate the main ideas.

*"There were not many examples for key concepts and arguments." [Se]*

This comment was the only one, which could also show that non-native participants had difficulty in understanding the flow of information in detail.

#### ***e. Topic change***

The non-native speakers did not mention the sudden topic changes in the lecture, in contrast to the great emphasis put by the native speakers.

Generally, the discourse organization was evaluated positively by the non-native speakers. However, it is completely different from the way native speakers organize discourses. There may be two reasons for this. The distinctly different comments of the discourse organization might arise from the weakness of the non-native speakers in this competence. It seems that they lack the ability to see the text as a whole and follow the grammatical elements that form the text while listening. Therefore, they could not also evaluate the oral text from this perspective. Another view could be that they do not see this as an important component of an oral discourse, which is also due to the limited knowledge of text.

### **Overall Quality**

This category deals in the comments made on the overall quality of the recorded material as a course in the classroom. The comments in this category are those that do not involve lexical, syntactic or discourse aspects, but rather the general perception of how comprehensible the course was. There are both positive and negative comments on the overall quality by native and non-native speakers.

**Assertion 5A:** Native speaker participants commented on the overall quality both negatively and positively

#### **a. Difficult to understand**

*"However, above the sentence level, the lecture is very difficult to follow indeed". [P]*

*"The lecturer also repeated information, which instead of emphasizing it, made it more difficult to follow". [C]*

*"No real problems with intelligibility in terms of language, but the content was difficult to follow at times". [D]*

*"Generally, I found this hard to follow for a couple of reasons: cohesion and speed of speech". [DA]*

*"I found this extract of a lecture difficult to understand obviously read and delivered in a colorless and drab manner". [AL]*

#### **b. boring to follow**

*"don't like this lecture. Later the lecture was clearer but I generally fell asleep. [H]*

*"The lecturer failed to grab the attention of the listener and proceeded to give us a series of seemingly unimportant pieces of information. It was weak in almost every way." [B]*

*"I found this extract of a lecture tedious" [AL]*

#### Positive

*"I think it's quite comprehensible" [P]*

*"It was generally OK to understand and some parts were quite easy to understand" [G]*

Almost all the opinions of the native participants were negative. This indicates an important characteristic of the text. It was found difficult to understand and boring to follow, which can give us a clue as to how much it has been comprehended by native participants.

**Assertion 5B:** Non-native speaker participants commented on the overall quality both negatively and positively

#### **a. Difficult to understand**

*"It is difficult to focus on the subject matter. The subject is already boring and the lecturer is not really helping much. It is not totally incomprehensible; however, one has to try really hard to understand" [I]*

*"The lecture was not engaging enough" [SE]*

#### Positive

*"The lecture is quite comprehensible though there are some minor mistakes" [GÜ]*

*"In my opinion the lecture is understandable" [E]*

*"As far as it is concerned the intelligibility, it is simple and clear enough to be understood by an audience" [M]*

*".. it is a well-prepared lecture. The design is good" [C]*

*"it is quite understandable and actually not challenging for the learners" [N]*

*"It was not difficult for me to understand the text in general when I listened to it" [Y]*

*"The intelligibility of words poses some problems but the overall scenario is good" [MU]*

*"the audio is quite comprehensible and the lecturer is fluent" [S]*

It seems that unlike the native participants, the non-native ones found the text easy to understand and they did not mention any boredom while listening to the text. This could arise from the fact that the oral text was constructed by another non-native speaker. The way this speaker used the language may have a lot in common with the non-native participants. This could be one of the reasons why they did not find it hard to follow.

### **Discussion**

This study was carried out with the data obtained from two different populations with participants who have diverse linguistic background and diverse cultural understanding. The participants commented on an oral discourse of a non-native speaker teaching in English at tertiary level. First of all, it is noticeable that the participants made comments on different characteristics of the text. They did not focus on the same variables that were prescribed by the authors.

To answer the research question, the following conclusions could be discussed. First, based on the native non-native dichotomy, we can conclude that the native participants were both interested in the message given in the text and the grammatical means by which this message is packaged. On the other hand, the non-native speakers were mostly interested in the fact that the message was given, not the grammatical means by which it was expressed. This general inference reveals the basic difference in the way both types of speakers comprehend a text. The comments of native participants were concentrated on grammatical details like the use of "the", "tense", "word order" and "transfer", while those of the non-native ones lacked the comments on transfer and definite article. This difference indicates that they were interested in the way the message is given by linguistic means.

Another conclusion related to the research question was that the participants had different comments on the way the vocabulary is used. While the native speakers commented on the idiomatic expressions, colloquialisms and collocations, there were no comments on these issues in those of the non-native one. This indicates that the meaning conveyed by words is important and that the words themselves mean more to the native participants than to the non-native participants. The negative evaluation of the vocabulary choice by the native participants was due to their fully developed understanding of the how words should be combined to mean exactly what the speaker wants to say. This crucial aspect went unnoticed by the non-native speakers as a result of their low level of word knowledge and meaning. Two non-native speakers may share common codes in the construction of meaning, as well as in the understanding of meaning, without paying attention to the mistakes in the words compatibility in the text, which could be easily understood by the native speakers. It seems that non-native discourse patterns affect the native and non-native speakers differently. Some of the patterns are not paid any attention by the non-native speakers, while they are focused on by the native speakers.

To conclude, we should state that both speaker groups have different ways of understanding the comprehensibility of the text. The native participants evaluated it in terms of whether they have difficulty and whether they enjoyed listening to such a discourse. However, the non-native participants, though they mentioned the little difficulty they had, did not mention any boredom, unlike the native participants. This could be due to the egocentric feeling of the non-native speakers who

reported that they understood it with ease and therefore found it comprehensible, while the native speakers found it relatively incomprehensible.

### **Limitations and Suggestions**

This study has a number of limitations. First, as a qualitative study, this study investigated the discourse structure of a specific lecturer teaching in English. Research on other lecturers from different educational settings could provide additional data for the study. Second, the data obtained from the lecturer comprises a ten minutes extract only. More data obtained at different times during the semester could provide additional findings for the study.

### **Implications for further studies**

Future studies on non-native discourse analysis should focus on longitudinal studies, which means, a lecturer from an academic setting can be observed for longer periods and more data should be obtained at different times during one semester. As a result, the findings could reflect more reliable findings about the context.

It is also clear that teachers should understand these characteristics of oral discourse and draw the attention of their students to the significant role of these constraints that could negatively influence the discourses they build in communication particularly in academic settings. There are various linguistic factors that contribute to the creation of adequate oral discourses, for which teachers need to raise awareness and integrate their courses especially developing productive language skills.

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## **Appendix A**

### **Lecture Transcriptions**

#### ***Transcription of an extract from the 1st lecture***

"Hello again. You know last week we learnt what is the finance. We gave some words about the finance. That is banks, exchanges, money, companies, etc. Why a company needs money? Because a companies should make... What kind of investments a companies can do? That is the currency asset So the another subject was short history of managerial finance, you know errrrr which begins 1930s what happened in 1930s, you know a great depression has happened at that time. During that time the companies the managers focused on the reliability and accuracy of the prices and the second one which is 1940s and 50s. This time happened the second world war because of old factors farm fabrics and other buildings destroyed."

#### ***Transcription of the 2nd lecture***

"Ok. Let's continue. We can also divide the stock exchanges as a world, of exchanges national regional or local market, primary and secondary market, and if you have a look at the Picture as you see, a picture from New York of Exchange. And primary markets are the markets in which corporation raise new capital. If a capital... err. if a corporation goes to stock Exchange to issue new shares, it means primary market. After the issuing share, errr, the investors are going to start to buy Exchange, it means secondary market. The Secondary markets are the markets in which existing already outstanding securities are traded among investors. Financial institutions in Turkey. If we have a look you can say this the commercial banks, benching funds, mutual funds like instrument companies, which are very new in turkey, err, and stock exchange, common stock exchange, and futures markets which is futures market, and if we have a look at stock exchanges..."

Ok. Hello again. Hmm. Let me remind you market functional environment, marketing and institutional and we talked about the critical asset market, stoke market and future's market and money market and sometimes we divide the market into world, national, regional and global market ect. ect. And also we divided the market, primary and secondary market. And I gave you the example of different assets market, one of them what kind of goods can be sold in that market. Computers, autos cell phones, notebooks whatever you imagine. So we can sell and buy in the asset market and another one is the stock market, futures market and money market so these are not a typical market. It is also stock market mean you can pay for a good or shared bono and you can get your Money... you can get the good or asset. But futures market will pay for a contract and you have to wait for let's say three months, one months, for a duration. After that duration you can get your money or you can get your good or etc. Money markets are different from eerr markets are different from capital market and the main subject , the main difference between Money markets and the capital markets is duration actually. In short term i mean below the one year term Money market, we call it Money market so banking sector and if the market duration is longer than one year, so which means capital market. Err. Actually there is no between the two of them and sometimes the financial instrument."