



คำที่ใช้แสดงความเหมือนและความต่างในข่าวธุรกิจ

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Lexical Expressions of Compare and Contrast in English Business News Articles

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บทคัดย่อ

งานวิจัยนี้ศึกษาการใช้คำแสดงความเหมือนและความต่างในข่าวธุรกิจ งานวิจัยที่เกี่ยวข้องกับการศึกษาการใช้คำแสดงความเหมือนและความต่างในงานวิจัยก่อนหน้านี้ให้ความสำคัญกับงานเขียนของนักเรียนที่เรียนภาษาอังกฤษเป็นภาษาต่างประเทศ เช่น นักศึกษาญี่ปุ่น นักศึกษาอินโดนีเซีย และนักศึกษาไทย และตัวบทความวิจัยภาษาศาสตร์ประยุกต์ อย่างไรก็ตาม งานวิจัยครั้งนี้เลือกตัวบทที่แตกต่างออกไป คือ ข่าวธุรกิจ ชุดข้อมูลเก็บรวบรวมมาจากคอลัมส์ธุรกิจในหนังสือพิมพ์รายวัน *The New York Times* ซึ่งเป็นหนังสือพิมพ์อเมริกันที่มีผู้อ่านมากที่สุด ชุดข้อมูลหนังสือพิมพ์ข่าวธุรกิจได้เก็บรวบรวมระหว่างวันที่ 1 มกราคม 2566 ถึงวันที่ 28 กุมภาพันธ์ 2566 คำ จำนวนทั้งสิ้นประมาณ 120,000 คำ ประกอบด้วย 280 ตัวอย่าง การใช้คำแสดงความเหมือนและความต่างในข่าวธุรกิจ การวิเคราะห์การใช้คำแสดงความเหมือนและความต่างดำเนินการตามแบบของ Swan (2016) เพื่อให้การวิเคราะห์ข้อมูลดำเนินการไปอย่างถูกต้องและเหมาะสม นักภาษาศาสตร์ผู้ใช้ภาษาอังกฤษเป็นภาษาแม่ จำนวน 3 ท่าน มาดำเนินการตรวจสอบการวิเคราะห์ความเที่ยงระหว่างผู้ประเมิน และความเที่ยงตรงของเนื้อหา ผลการศึกษาแสดงให้เห็นว่า การใช้คำแสดงความเหมือนและความต่างในข่าวธุรกิจถูกใช้เป็นจำนวนร้อยละ 59.29 และ 40.71 ตามลำดับ ปรากฏการณ์นี้สามารถอธิบายได้โดยความไม่เป็นทางการ (*principle of informality*) การแสดงความคิดเห็นเชิงขัดแย้ง (*subjectivity*) และการให้ข้อมูลโดยใช้คำตรงกันข้าม (*antonym*) นักวิจัยหวังเป็นอย่างยิ่งว่าผลการศึกษานี้จะเป็นประโยชน์ต่อผู้เรียนภาษาอังกฤษเป็นภาษาต่างประเทศในเชิงการใช้คำแสดงความเหมือนและความต่างเพื่อการเขียนเชิงธุรกิจได้อย่างถูกต้องและเหมาะสม

คำสำคัญ: คำแสดงความเหมือน คำแสดงความต่าง บทความข่าวธุรกิจ

Abstract

This study aimed to investigate the use of lexical expressions of compare and contrast in business news articles. Related previous studies concerned with this type of study observed the use of lexical expressions of compare and

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contrast in the writing of EFL learners (i.e., Japanese students, Indonesian students and Thai students) and the materials of applied linguistics research articles. However, this study aims to contribute to the field by using the materials of business news articles to investigate the use of lexical expressions of compare and contrast in English. The source of data was gathered from the business section in *The New York Times*, which is the national American newspaper that gains the highest circulation. The dataset of this daily business news articles was collected between January 1, 2023 and February 28, 2023. A total of approximately 120,000 words contains 280 tokens with lexical expressions of compare and contrast. In regard to the data analysis, the framework of lexical expressions of compare and contrast in this study follows Swan (2016). After the process of data analysis, three linguists whose mother tongue is English were instructed to validate the data analysis via inter-rater reliability to ensure their validity and reliability. The results show that the percentages of lexical expressions of compare and contrast in business news articles are 59.29 percent and 40.71 percent, respectively. This phenomenon is explained by principle of informality, principle of subjectivity and opposite information via antonyms. It is expected that the results in this study will be beneficial to learners of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in terms of applying the preference styles of lexical expressions of compare and contrast in business writing correctly and appropriately.

Keywords: lexical expressions of compare, lexical expressions of contrast, business news articles

Introduction

Today, we are living in the globalization era where having the ability to communicate in English is significant in order to gain various benefits. For example, when a person acquires the notion of the English language, they can become an international student across territories. Moreover, having the notion of the English language allows a person to apply for a job in an international organization and as a result, gain higher salary. Accordingly, having the notion of the English language is considered as a route to success.

In English, there are four skills for English language learners to study. They are grouped into receptive and productive skills. The receptive skills include listening and reading. On the other hand, the productive skills include speaking and writing. To compare these skills, most learners of the English language confess that the skill of writing is the most difficult skill to master (Santangelo, 2014). Not only does the skill of writing in English require the writers to have a variety of syntactic structures, such as *adverbial clauses* vs *reduced adverbial clauses*, but also having the notions of lexical semantics, such as *synonyms* and *antonyms*, is considered crucial (Hinkel, 2012). This *linguistic competence* allows English language learners to have the ability to produce language proficiently.

The skills of writing in English can be improved by several ways. Some universities teach writing skills to their students based upon their levels of proficiency. Others, especially in the Department of the English Language, teach the writing skills to their study by a genre-based approach, such as descriptive writing, narrative writing and process writing. One of the beneficial, but challenging genres, is the genre of

compare and contrast (Toba, Noor & Sanu, 2019). Not only does the genre of compare and contrast has its own organization (i.e., block organization and point-by-point) to know, but also there are certain lexical items to be used in this type of writing (Oshima & Hogue, 2006). It is useful for English language learners to know the genre of compare and contrast in order to apply it for writing academic papers, independent studies, theses and dissertations. However, the genre has its own academic norm of practice, especially the use of lexical expressions of compare and contrast. Some examples of lexical expressions of compare include *the same as*, *as well as*, *similar to* and *likewise*. On the other hand, some exemplifications of lexical expressions of contrast are *however*, *in contrast* and *conversely*. Basically, these lexical expressions seem to be similar in terms of their semantic denotations, as in (1).

Lexical Expressions of Compare

(1)

(a) Mary enjoys studying Mathematics. **Likewise**, Peter also like math.

(b) Mary enjoys studying Mathematics **the same as** Peter.

Lexical Expressions of Contrast

(2)

(a) Mary enjoys studying Mathematics. **However**, Peter likes studying English.

(b) Mary enjoys studying Mathematics, **while** Peter likes studying English.

Examples (1) and (2) show the differences of lexical expressions between compare and contrast. Even though the semantic denotations between the two sentences in (1) and the two sentences in (2) are the same, the choices of lexical expressions between the two are different. Despite being synonymous expressions, this could create a controversial issue as to when one variant of lexical expression is preferred to be used over the other.

It is believed that different *text varieties*, interchangeably known as *genres*, have their own preference of lexical expressions of compare and contrast. Most related previous studies examined the lexical expressions of compare and contrast in written papers of learners of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) (Soleimani & Najafgholian, 2014; Toba, Noor & Sanu, 2019). This current study seeks differences by employing news articles in order to examine the use of lexical expressions of compare and contrast in English.

Based upon previous studies, numerous EFL learners show many errors on the use of compare and contrast lexical items (Almusharraf & Alotaibi, 2023). This reflects that they do not understand the way to write this genre effectively. While previous studies (i.e., Hamed, 2014; Toba, Noor & Sanu, 2019) examined EFL's writing of compare and contrast in English, they tend to study the learners' production of errors rather than accuracy in usage. This study fills that gap by adding more accurate examples that are written in actual authentic texts to be guideline for English language learners when they write an essay in the genre of compare and contrast. In addition, Seo and Kim (2020) investigated learners' writing compare and contrast by using short fiction between *Araby* and *Donbackkot*. The results shows that learners could connect the ideas in the two novels effectively, but the teachers found the errors of language use, which is the major problem of writing This current



study is different from previous studies as it is a genre-based approach, focusing on compare and contrast lexical items and the preferences of these lexical items used in business writing.

According to Mittal (2014), there are numerous advantages of using news articles in English language learning. The first reason is that English language learners can improve their vocabulary where authentic language is used. Secondly, it offers students a variety of information for their conversation in everyday life. Having read English news articles, English language learners can gain the ability to apply form and use at the same time. Moreover, different authors in newspapers seems to present their own subjectivity or personal comment when they write their column. Reading business newspapers from authentic texts allow the learners or the readers to upgrade their critical thinking person.

With regard to the significance of this study, not only do the learners could learn lexical items of compare and contrast in prescriptive grammar book (Swan, 2016), providing actual examples of lexical item of compare and contrast from authentic texts from newspapers, which are sources of everyday reading would be useful for English language learners. This information leads one to the following objective of the study and research question. It seems that students could learn principles and practicality at the same time.

Objective of the Study

To examine the preferences of lexical expressions of compare and contrast in business news articles

Research Question

What are the preferences of lexical expressions of compare and contrast in business news articles?

Literature Review

This section provides the background information concerning lexical expressions of compare and contrast in English. The framework of lexical expressions in the current study is based upon Swan (2016). Related previous studies concerning the use of lexical expressions of compare and contrast in different text varieties will be given. The selection of business news articles will be explained.

Genre

The term *genre* was originally used by Halliday and Hasan (1989). The term refers to different categories of text that the researcher uses to analyze certain patterns, such as linguistic features, formats, and structures. Normally, it is believed that different genres contain different styles and language use. For example, the genre of business correspondence, or writing letters in English require the writer to be direct to the point. The first sentence must clearly inform what the reader needs to do after reading the letter. Therefore, having the notion of genre could lead the writers to reach accomplishment in their work.

Synonym and Antonym

Synonym or synonymous expressions refers to any word or phrase that its meaning is nearly the same or close in meaning. In other words, words or phrases have similar meaning (Gelbukh & Kolesnikova, 2012). For example, the word *increase* to mean go up is synonymous with the words *rise*, *augment* and *multiply*. In addition, the lexical expression *whereas* is synonymous with the lexical expression *while*.

Antonym or antonymous expressions is any word or phrase that its meaning is opposite to the given meaning. In other words, words or phrases have different meaning (Gelbukh & Kolesnikova, 2012) such as *increase* vs. *decrease*.

In English, the lexical semantics of synonyms and antonyms are well applicable in writing since having this knowledge helps the writers avoid repeating the same word again and again, especially in an adjacent area. Using the same word repetitively is not a common practice in English writing. This present study examines synonyms or synonymous expressions of lexical items of compare and contrast.

Lexical Expressions of Compare

Lexical expressions of compare are words or phrases which link two or more similar ideas or information together (Swan, 2016). They connect two or three entities within the same sentence or different sentences together (Swan, 2016). Some examples are given as in (3).

(3)

(a) I like yellow watermelon **the same as** John.

(b) I like yellow watermelon and John likes it, **too**.

Examples (3a) and (3b) present that both *John* and *I* love eating yellow watermelon, which expresses the same idea. In (3a), the use of lexical expression *the same as* links the proper noun *John* and the subject *I* together. In (3b), the use of the lexical expression *too* suggests that both *John* and *I* like yellow watermelon. More lexical expressions of compare are exemplified into *be similar to*, *both ... and ...*, *like*, *similarly*, *likewise*, *as well as* and *resemble*.

Lexical Expressions of Contrast

Aside from lexical expressions of compare, *lexical expressions of contrast* are words or phrases that link two or more contradictory ideas or entities together (Swan, 2016). The words or phrases guide the readers that the idea as linguistically expressed in the following, is in contrast to the previous idea (Swan, 2016). Some examples are illustrated as in (4).

(4)

(a) James dislikes eating vegetables, **but** he likes eating fruit.

(b) Helen enjoys living in rural areas, **whereas** Mary prefers to live to urban areas.

Examples (4a) and (4b) present opposite ideas between the two clauses where they are linked by different lexical expressions of contrast, such as *but* and *whereas*. Swan (2016) also provides more



examples of lexical expression of contrast, such as *yet*, *still*, *however*, *nevertheless*, *on the other hand*, *while*, *although*, *even though*, *despite* and *in spite of*. These words sound synonymous, referring to the words that have close meaning as reproduced in (5).

(5)

- (a) James dislikes eating vegetables, **but** he likes eating fruit.
- (b) James dislikes eating vegetables, **while** he likes eating fruit.
- (c) James dislikes eating vegetables, **whereas** he likes eating fruit.
- (d) James dislikes eating vegetables, **even though** he likes eating fruit.
- (e) James dislikes eating vegetables. **On the other hand**, he likes eating fruit.

The bold as exemplified in (5) shows various synonyms of lexical expressions of contrast. Nevertheless, it seems possible to say that they have similar semantic denotations. Although they can be synonymous, each word or phrase has its own structural preferences. Example (5e) includes two simple sentences, which is linked by the expression *on the other hand* to show two contradictory ideas. Example (5a) is a compound sentence linking with the coordinator *but*. Differently, examples (5b)-(5d) are complex sentences. It is interesting to study when one lexical expression of contrast is preferred to be used over the other.

Subjectivity

The principle of subjectivity refers to the speakers or the writers' expressions of comments or opinions in concern with certain data or information (Dirven & Radden, 2007).

(6)

- (a) I think, this house is **nicer** than the condominium we are now resigning.
- (b) In fact, staying in urban areas is **more** convenient than rural areas.

Examples (6a) and (6b) present speakers' comments toward a certain object or entity. Example (6a) presents the speaker's comment or opinion comparing the size of the house and the size of the family, whereas example (6b) presents the speaker's comment or opinion between urban areas and rural areas.

Related Previous Studies on Lexical Expressions of Compare and Contrast

One interesting study was conducted by Toda, Noor and Sanu (2019). They studied Indonesian EFL students' writing with the genre of compare and contrast essays. They applied a mixed method to investigate 52 EFL students via their different aspects of writing compare and contrast essays. The results of the study showed that most students had difficulty using vocabulary in writing compare and contrast essays at 86.55 percent. The other problems that Indonesian EFL learners had difficulty with in writing compare and contrast essays was organization at 79.40 percent and contents at 75.70 percent. With this research information, it can be seen that lexical items that are necessary to be used in writing compare and contrast is their biggest problem. The quotation below came from Toda, Noor and Sanu's (2019) interview.

I have limited vocabulary, so it is hard for me to translate and develop my ideas in writing especially comparison and contrast essay, where it needs many vocabulary to show similarities and dissimilarities.

(Toba, Noor & Sanu, 2019, p. 67)

In addition to Indonesian EFL students, a similar problem in word choice to be used in compare and contrast essays was found in Thai EFL learners (Watcharapunyawong & Usaha, 2013).

Another study was conducted by Narita, Satao and Sugiura (2004) who investigated the preferences of lexical items of contrast among EFL learners. With the same semantic denotation, it was found that Japanese EFL learners prefer to use the lexical expression of contrast, *however*. However, Chinese EFL learners prefer the lexical item *yet*. This research paper is interesting in that EFL learners in each nation have their own preference of lexical items of compare and contrast.

Furthermore, Hamed (2014) examined the use of lexical expressions of compare and contrast as written by undergraduate Libyan students in Libya. The researcher judged whether their participants could use the lexical items of compare and contrast appropriately or not. From Hamed's (2014) study results, 76 percent of the participants could not use lexical items of contrast correctly. For example, the appropriate use and inappropriate use of the lexical expression *on the other hand* is calculated at 12.5 percent and 87.5 percent respectively as in (7).

(7)

Some parents think that slapping children on their hands is a good method of discipline because children benefit by avoiding bad behavior. **On the other hand*, other parents think slapping children on their hands can damage child development and affect their personality [...]

(Hamed, 2014, p. 115)

Example (7) reveals the inappropriate use of the lexical expression of contrast, *on the other hand*, between the previous discourse and the following sentence.

To fill the gap of the study, this current study selected a different genre, which is business news articles, to study lexical expressions of compare and contrast.

Business News Articles

Text varieties refers to different genres of materials, such as novels, academic prose and magazines. The text variety in this study is news, focusing on business news articles. Right now, people are living in the globalization era where business transactions are all around us. The word *business* here includes commerce (i.e., products and services), digital marketing, finance and stock market. One of the advantages of reading business news articles is that it helps them to be up-to-date in the world of business. For example, one of the popular hobbies in the present time is that people trade digital currency, which is another way that people could earn income for their living. So, they need to read information in order to compare and contrast different digital currencies so that they can make an informed decision as to which one would help them earn more profit.



Since we are living in the world where business is everywhere, many universities in Thailand and other countries offer a major called *Business English*. Even though this is not a new major, we have limited research articles or academic documents concerning business English for this group of students to read as empirical evidence (Wongkittiporn, 2022). In fact, the majors of English and business English are not exactly the same as business English has its own preference of grammar and vocabulary for students to study (Wongkittiporn, 2022).

Unlike other sections of news articles (i.e., sports news articles, entertainment news articles), business news articles are not the section that everyone can read and understand. They are full of their own terms, terminology and jargon.

Methodology

This section provides information in regard to sources of data, data collection, data extraction, data analysis and data validation.

Sources of Data

In order to investigate the use of lexical expressions of compare and contrast, the present study selected the material of American business news articles from *The New York Times* due to the criteria of circulation. It was reported with the highest circulation as ranked at number 1 among other USA newspapers (<https://muckrack.com/rankings/top-50-us-newspapers>). The circulation of *The New York Times* as updated on 2023 is 569,379,567. In other words, *The New York Times* is popular among readers in the United States of America.

The second criterion is that the newspapers selected to be studied must be a broadsheet, referring to a national newspaper. *The New York Times* is one of the national newspapers of the United States of America. The advantage of using written news is that each section of news articles contains numerous articles which are written by different journalists. So the source of data is not specific to one particular style of the writer like a novel. Therefore, the sources of data in this study were considered as having higher *external validity*, referring to the ability to reflect the results of the study to societies.

Data Collection

As the source of data in this study is *The New York Times*, the date of business news articles in *The New York Times* were gathered between January, 1 2023 and February 28, 2023. From the total number of 120,000 words, there are 280 tokens, referring to sentences that are made up of lexical items of compare and lexical items of contrast. The business section in this study includes technology, economics, media and money. This data collection is considered enough in this study because the analysis reached data saturation or patterns became repeated.

Regarding the method of the study, this study applied *purposive sampling method* in order to gather information. This method allows the researcher to gather both descriptive statistical data (i.e.,

frequency and percentage) and qualitative data to support the data analysis. There are several advantages of this sampling method. One of them is that it allows the researcher to gather certain materials in order to seek patterns of linguistic features that he/she wants to study. It helps the researcher to save time and money as it is not necessary to gather a huge amount of information. The results gained are valid and reliable as they can be supported by empirical evidence such as exemplifications.

Data Extraction

Once the materials of *The New York Times* were gathered, the tokens containing lexical items of compare and lexical items of contrast were manually extracted for the analysis of inductive approach. as exemplified in (8).

(8)

The Fed finds itself in a difficult spot. It has declared that it intends to bring inflation down to its longtime 2 percent target, **but** prices keep rising much faster than that.

(*The New Yorks Times*)

The data extraction as in example (8) contains the lexical expression *but*, which suggests contrasting information between the previous discourse and the following discourse. As exemplified in (8), it is counted as one token.

Data Analysis

The framework of data analysis in the present study follows Swan (2016) who provided the lexical items of compare and contrast. The key words that are used to extract compare and contrast sentences are given as follows:

Table 1 Lexical Expressions of Compare

<i>And</i>	<i>Comparatively</i>	<i>Likewise</i>
<i>Be similar to</i>	<i>Equally</i>	<i>Similarly</i>
<i>Be compared with</i>	<i>In the same way</i>	<i>The same as</i>
<i>Both ... and ...</i>	<i>Like</i>	<i>Resemble</i>

Table 2 Lexical Expressions of Contrast

<i>But</i>	<i>On the contrary</i>	<i>Unlike</i>
<i>Even though</i>	<i>On the other hand</i>	<i>whereas</i>
<i>However</i>	<i>Otherwise</i>	<i>While/ whilst</i>
<i>In contrast</i>	<i>though</i>	<i>Yet</i>



Once found, the lexical items of compare and contrast as presented in Table 1 and Table 2, were extracted to be studied as follows:

Table 3 Data Analysis

(9)

Classifications	Examples
Sentences with Lexical Items of Compare	(a) Of the 81 missiles Russia fired overnight and through the morning, Ukraine said 47 hit their targets, a <i>higher</i> ratio <i>than</i> usual. (<i>The New York Times</i>)
Sentences with Lexical Items of Contrast	(b) The Fed finds itself in a difficult spot. It has declared that it intends to bring inflation down to its longtime 2 percent target, <i>but</i> prices keep rising much faster than that. (<i>The New York Times</i>)

Examples (9a) and (9b) represent sentences with lexical items of compare and contrast. The key word of the lexical expression of comparison is detected as *a higher [...] than*. On the other hand, the key work of the lexical expression of contrast is detected as *but*.

The Results of the Study

The results of lexical items of compare and contrast in business news articles show specific use and they are limited to a few certain preferences of lexical expressions of compare and contrast. To summarize the results in this study, the lexical expressions of contrast occur more frequently than lexical expression of compare. It is unique for lexical items of compare and contrast in business English newspapers to be shorter words, such as *but* and comparative items such as *shorter than* and *faster than*. This could be because the space limitation as provided in written texts of newspapers.

Quantitative Data

This section presents the quantitative data of lexical expressions of compare and contrast. A total number of approximately 120,000 words contains 280 words. The frequencies and percentages of lexical expressions of compare and contrast are given in Table 4.

Table 4 Frequencies and Percentage of Lexical Items of Compare and Contrast

Classifications	Frequencies (Tokens)	Percentages (%)
Lexical expressions of compare	114	40.71
Lexical expressions of contrast	166	59.29
Total	280	100

Table 4 reveals the different frequencies and percentages of lexical expressions of compare and contrast. The percentage of lexical expressions of contrast occur higher at 59.29 percent. On the other hand, the lexical expressions of compare appear at 40.71 percent. This leads one to the discussion in the following part. With these percentages, the major findings in this study show that business writing usually contrast different information from different sources for the readers to judge information themselves. For examples, the authors contracts marketing strategies between two different companies or inflation rates in different years.

Qualitative Data

Apart from the quantitative data, the qualitative data via exemplifications are given in this section to support frequencies and percentages in the above section.

(11)

Lexical Items of Compare

(a) Fortescue, he said, will mix hydrogen with carbon dioxide so it is *similar* enough in consistency to liquefied natural gas that it can be transported in the same tankers.

(The New York Times)

(b) Now U.S. airlines are pressing the White House and Congress to address the problem by subjecting foreign carriers from nations not barred from Russian airspace to *the same* restrictions applied to the U.S. airline, effectively requiring them to fly *the same* routes as their American competitors.

(The New York Times)

(12)

Lexical Items of Contrast

(a) The Fed finds itself in a difficult spot. It has declared that it intends to bring inflation down to its longtime 2 percent target, *but* prices keep rising much faster than that.

(The New York Times)

(b) The company assumed its talks would be resolved soon after it submitted a 90-page proposal to the administration in August, *but* its efforts have been stymied by several revelations around how ByteDance and TikTok have mishandled U.S. user data.

(The New York Times)

Examples (11a) and (11b) show the use of lexical expressions of compare such as *similar* and *the same*. Examples (12a) and (12b) show the use of the lexical expression *but* to indicate the contrast of information between the two clauses. To support this with numerical data, the use of *the same* and *but* in business news article is frequently used at 54 and 80 tokens or they can be calculated into approximately 48 percent and 48.19 percent, respectively.



Discussion

In terms of the lexical expressions of contrast, the word *but* was the most frequent use in the dataset of business news articles. There are several unique ways how the lexical expressions *but* is used as discussed in the following session.

Lexical Expressions of Compare

Comparative features as in *more* and *-er* were found to be common features to be used in business news articles as in (13.)

(13)

(a) Foreign air carriers benefit from **shorter** flight times, **lower** cost and less fuel consumption.

(*The New York Times*)

(b) Unable to fly through Russian airspace because of the war in Ukraine, U.S. airlines are stepping up a lobbying campaign on Capitol Hill and at the White House to address what they say is a growing problem: they are losing business to foreign competitors who can take passengers between the United States and Asia **faster and more cheaply**.

(*The New York Times*)

(c) In a battery of tests, the company found that GPT-4 scored **better than** previous versions on its ability to produce truthful content and decline “requests for disallowed content.”

(*The New York Times*)

In (13a) and (13c), the writers tried to make a comparison between longer, more costly flights of U.S. airlines and shorter, faster and cheaper flights which benefit their foreign competitors.

Based upon the discussion of lexical expressions of compare and contrast, the distinctive characteristic of lexical expressions of compare and contrast in business news articles is a short and simple word, such as *but*. The comparative linguistic features, such as *more* and *-er* are also frequently found to be used in this text variety. The usage of lexical expressions of compare and contrast in the current study is in concordance with the style of business writing which requires the writer to make the writing short and concise (Martin, 2010). For example, the writer says *lower cost rather than more economical*. Not only do the writers need to be direct or to the point, but they also need to use as simple words as possible (Martin, 2010).

Lexical Expressions of Contrast

Subjectivity

Subjectivity refers to speakers’ or writers’ comments or opinions. Although it is not common practice to use of the lexical expression *but* at the beginning of the sentence (Swan, 2016), this study found that the use of the lexical item *but* at the beginning of the sentence is a distinctive characteristic of writing business news articles to prepare the readers for contradictory comments as exemplified in (14).

(14)

(a) It was a **painful but necessary** tactic – “like being robbed,” Priscilla said later of watching strangers enter the home.

(*The New York Times*)

(b) **But** since many gun parts and ammunition **are not considered critical** to making a gun operational, licensed retailers can lawfully ship them to a private residence.

(*The New York Times*)

(c) **But** what transpires in the next few months **will still be critical** for consumers and investors, and **may** even determine the outcome of the next presidential election.

(*The New York Times*)

(d) Transportation department officials declined to comment. **But** national security officials are **mindful** of the potential diplomatic consequences of steps aimed at a longtime ally like India, or of adding further tension to the already strained relationship with China.

(*The New York Times*)

(e) “They were able to adjust to a lot of their problems after sanctions were implemented through dollarization,” according to Mark A. Wells, a U.S. deputy assistant secretary of state, “and so it starts to look over time that they are able to reach a status that basically helps **the elites** there, **but the poor** are still very, very poor.”

(*The New York Times*)

Example (14a) is viewed as an ordinary or common pattern to contrast ideas or comments. However, through example (14b) to (14d), the unique characteristic of the lexical expression of *but* was found. Not only does the use of the lexical expression *but* in the beginning of the sentence present opposite ideas, but also it is used to place emphasis on certain ideas or information that the speakers or the writers want to make comments on, such as the information of guns and ammunition in (14b) and the information of *transpires in the next few months* as in (14c). In addition, the use of the lexical expression *but* in (14c) suggests that the information given in the previous discourse might not be correct. So the speakers try to express different comments or opinions. Again, in (14d), the use of the lexical expression *but* at the beginning of the sentence is to provide the writer’s own comments. Example (14e) contrasts between the poor and the elites. In addition, the use of the lexical expression of contrast *but* at the beginning of the sentence is interpreted as an informal style of writing (Hylang & Jiang, 2017). For example, *but, I disagreed with your opinion*. This statement is used to show personal subjectivity.

Opposite Ideas

Another way to use the lexical expression of contrast is that the writer provides opposite ideas. Opposite ideas could be given via antonym or different facts, such as (15).



(15)

(a) The Fed finds itself in a difficult spot. It has declared that it intends to bring inflation **down** to its longtime 2 percent target, **but** prices keep **rising** much faster than that.

(The New York Times)

(b) The company assumed its talks would be resolved soon after it submitted a 90-page proposal to the administration in August, **but** its efforts have been stymied by several revelations around how ByteDance and TikTok have mishandled U.S. user data.

(The New York Times)

(c) **But** he said that “**we have legitimate national security concerns here**, and outside of all that, we continue to support bipartisan legislation that’s designed to address those security concerns posed by certain foreign-owned consumer apps.”

(Maheshwari & McCabe, 2023, p. 6)

In (15a), the lexical expression of contrast *but* shows the opposite information between *inflation down* in the previous clause and *prices keep rising* in the following information. Likewise, in (15b), the lexical expression of contrast *but* is used to show the opposite information between *the company assumed its talks would be resolved* in the first clause and *its efforts have been stymied* in the following clause. In (15c), the lexical expression *but* is used to prepare the listeners or the readers for unpleasant or negative information.

Opposite Entities

Business new articles use the lexical expression *but* to compare/contrast two opposite entities.

(16) Even though both companies are hugely profitable; Australia’s government has made hundreds of millions of dollars available to them through subsidies and *land allocations* over the past two years, mostly in Western Australia, which is six times the size of California **but** has only two million people.

(Bearak, 2023, p. 7)

Example (16) makes a contrast between the huge size of Western Australia and the small number of people.

Variations and Styles of Business Writing

The results in this current study show the certain variations and styles of business writing. The variation of business writing in this study could be reflected through limited variants of lexical items of compare and contrast. Longer and fancy connectors, such as *nevertheless*, *on the other hand*, and *in spite of*, and *notwithstanding* were not found in business newspapers. This could be explained by the

limitation of space in writing where the author has only one limited column to summarize when happen in the text. Although these lexical items are regarded as formal, business readers are likely to read to catch the main idea rather than the appreciation of language use.

Comparisons of the Results of this Study with Previous Studies

This study goes along the same line with Toba, Noor and Sanu (2019) to answer why EFL IEFL students are faced with difficulties in using compare and contrast lexical items in compare and contrast essays. The evidence shows that 86.55 percent of EFL learners had difficulties using vocabulary in writing compare and contrast essays. This is because different genres seem to have its own preferences of lexical items of compare and contrast. For example, business English writing allow the use of contrastive lexical item but at the beginning of the sentence to present own subjectivity. On this other hand, applying this use in general writing in English classroom can be marked ungrammaticality as prescriptive grammar do not allow this grammatical style in its writing.

Implications

As mentioned earlier, the results of this study could be applicable to English language learners in the field of English for Specific Purposes, especially in Business English. The learners could apply the technique of using compare and contrast lexical items in their writing effective and efficiently. Especially in the present day, many universities in Thailand try to run business English courses; however, the research papers in this field are rarely found. This paper could be a guideline for this group of learners to develop their business writing skills.

Conclusion

The current study investigates the use of lexical expressions of compare and contrast in order to answer the following research question.

What are the lexical expressions of compare and contrast in business news articles?

From a total number of approximately 120,000 words, the use of lexical expressions of contrast in business news articles occur higher at 59.29 percent followed by the use of lexical expressions of compare at 40.71 percent. The most frequent use of lexical expressions of compare and contrast in business news articles are *but* and *the same*. With these examples, the characteristics of lexical items of compare and contrast in business news articles could be simple, short and concise. The frequent use of the lexical expression *but* at the beginning of the sentence shows the characteristic of informality. Although other text varieties, such as applied linguistics research articles are likely to show the more formal layer of using lexical expressions of compare and contrast, such as *even though*, *on the other hand* and *similarly*, these were not found in business news articles in this study. However, the results of this current study can only explain the characteristics of lexical expressions of compare and contrast in business news articles. The limitation of this study is that generalizing the results of this study to other genres of writing such as academic prose might not be acceptable. Future research in this field



should add more data. For future researcher papers, it is recommended that examining other texts, such as novels in English and scientific texts to study the lexical expressions of compare and contrast may provide different results to contribute something new to the field.

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