

# **1st TRI-ELE International Conference on English Language Education**

**20-21 June 2014**

**Bangkok, Thailand**

**John Blake**

## **Contrastive discourse markers in scientific research abstracts**

Publishing articles in English enables non-native English speaking researchers to reach a global audience. These researchers need not only to conduct their research, but also need to master the discourse features of their particular discipline. Discourse markers showing contrast are often used in abstracts to introduce the novelty or significance of the research method, result or product. This foregrounding of the importance against the backdrop of the established body of knowledge enables researchers to claim new ground. Contrast or concession may be shown by different types of discourse markers, such as adverbs (e.g. *however*), conjunctions (e.g. *but*) and prepositions (e.g. *despite*). A search of the literature failed to reveal any published research on contrastive discourse markers in scientific papers although numerous papers compare learner and native-speaker corpora. In this paper, Sketch Engine and AntConc were used to compare and contrast the usage of contrast markers in a corpus of 500 scientific research abstracts with the British Academic Written English corpus. The 500 corpus was created by selecting the first 100 abstracts published in 5 different highly-ranked journals in the field of information science in 2012. Preliminary results show significant differences in the normalised frequencies of occurrence. For example, in the 500 corpus, there is a heavy reliance on the use of *however* in the initial position and little use of *despite*. Scientists can harness this knowledge to conform better to the generic expectations by selecting and using the discourse markers that are frequently used in their domain.