Exploring Non-Topical Linguistic Materials in Narrative Essays: The Case of Ilocano and Ifugao Writers

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Abstract: Much have been written on exploring and investigating coherent markers of writers coming from different cultures; however, no study has attempted to look into the use of non-topical linguistic materials among students belonging to a different subculture of one particular culture. Anchored on Kachru's (1999) Contrastive Rhetoric Hypothesis, this paper investigates the use of linguistic materials in the narrative essays of Ilocano writers and Ifugao student writers, two subcultures in Region 2. Results revealed that across the five categories, the Ifugao students had the greater propensity to use non-topical linguistic materials than the Ilocano students, except for illocution markers. As regards discourse connectives, the most common devices employed are the elaborative discourse markers, "and" and "but". The higher occurrence of modality markers among the narrative essays written by the Ifugaos may also signify tentativeness in expressing their views. Also, the Ilocano students are more reserved in expressing their emotions compared to the Ifugao students as reflected in the minimal use of attitude markers. Moreover, it was found that the least-favored linguistic devices are metalinguistic markers and illocution markers. This poses a significant pedagogical implication on the instruction of non-topical linguistic materials as aid in the production of cohesive and coherent essays. It is suggested that a larger corpus be included in the analytical realm and an examination of non-topical linguistic materials in other genres of writing be conducted.

Keywords: Non-Topical Linguistic Material, Ilocano, Ifugao

1.0 Introduction

Writing, like the other macro-linguistic skills, need to be given attention because writing is not an easy task to accomplish. To be able to produce a comprehensible essay or writing output, one has to go through the process of brainstorming, writing the first draft, subjecting the draft to peer or teacher review, and incorporating whatever feedback is given. In the academic world, writing happens to be a much-needed and highly valued skill. Writing, an ally of communication, is an extension of one's speech. A student's written output is reflective of his/her level of education, intelligence and cultural orientations. According to Kaplan (1988), "The logic expressed through the organization of a written text is culture-specific; that is, it posits that speakers of two different languages will organize the same reality in different ways (p. 18)."

Moreover, he presented the manner of paragraph development through graphics which are reflective of the rhetorical patterns based on the writing conventions of varied cultures (Kaplan, 1966, cited in Qi, 2007). The whole process of writing involves the interplay of several skills; as Almaden (2006) puts it, writing involves a host of advanced kills that include critical thinking, logical development, and coherence of ideas.

There have been numerous attempts to define coherence. In the 19th century, writing was predominantly focused on sentence connections and paragraph structure. In 1890, Bain (cited in Shen, 2010) defined coherence in terms of sentence connections that lead to structured and independent paragraphs, which are eventually linked together into a larger composition by cohesive and transitional devices. However, some succeeding scholars have contested this view which treats coherence not in in terms of discourse unity but through sentence-level connectedness and paragraph unity.

Due to the preponderance of discourse studies in the 1960s, there was a shift to the emphasis of coherence to more comprehensive principles of discourse from the sentence and its constituents. Labov (1970, cited in Cheung & Lee, 2018), for example, posits that the basic problem of discourse analysis is to illustrate that one utterance succeeds another in a rationale manner, whereby constructing a coherent discourse.

According to Ding and Wu (1998, cited in Fengiie, Xiuying, & Chuanze, 2014) coherence pertains to clear and reasonable connection between parts of a sentence and where all the parts are connected in smooth and logical order. Salient to the accurate expression of ideas is the arrangement of sentence parts as the conceptual meaning of English sentences mainly depends on word order. Moreover, the authors posit that a coherent sentence is easy to understand and does not contain any ambiguity with its conformity to grammar rules and usage. However, incoherent sentences would often misguide readers and present rather ambiguous meanings which can be interpreted in different ways. Lee (2002) defines coherence as "the relationships that link the ideas in a text to create meaning for the readers" (p. 135).

Taking a more encompassing paradigm on coherence, Crossley, Kyle and McNamara (2016) puts into account the role of the reader and the understanding that he/she derives from the text. A coherent text matches the expectations of the reader. This implies that coherence also belongs to the reader and not only to the text and that their interaction is what makes a text coherent. For interaction to happen meaningfully, the text has to be globally coherent or to be able to achieve unity at the discourse level (Cheung & Lee, 2018). As Phelps (1985, cited in Cheung & Lee, 2018) puts it, "The phenomenon of coherence is the experience of meaningfulness correlated with successful integration during reading, which the reader projects back into the text as a quality of wholeness in its meanings" (p. 21). Moreover, text coherence is dependent on several factors such as explicit and implicit cohesion clues. Nonlinguistic factors such as background knowledge and reading skill also come into play. If there exists a consistency between the interpretation of a discourse and the mentally stored knowledge of the reader, a discourse is, then, coherent (Brown and Yule, 1983, cited in Wang & Guo, 2014).

Crucial to this inquiry is the distinction between cohesion and coherence. According to Crossley, Kyle and McNamara (2016), "Coherence is the quality of the reader's mental representation, whereby, comprehension is the observed outcome of that representation. In contrast, cohesion generally refers to the presence or absence of explicit cues in the text that allow the reader to make connections between the ideas in the text" (p. 1228). These explicit cues inform the reader that across consecutive sentences, there lies same or similar ideas communicated to the reader. Moreover, textual relatedness is closely associated with cohesion. Scholars such as Halliday and Hasan (1978) and Tanskanen (2006, cited in Navratilova & Povolna, 2012) conjecture that cohesion is a textual property signaled by overtly connect clauses and/or clause complexes in a text. In addition, relations between ideas and the nature of those relations are provided to the reader through the use of explicit cues such as *because, therefore*, and *consequently*. Though not a sufficient condition for a coherent text, cohesive ties contribute to how a writer expresses continuity of one part of the discourse to the next.

In a review of literature, Lee (2002) identified salient features of a coherent text, which according to him, warrant a pedagogical focus in ESL writing classes. First, a coherent text has a macrostructure that provides a pattern characteristic and appropriate to its communicative purpose (Hoey 1983; Martin and Rothery 1986, cited in Lee, 2002). The macrostructure, an outline of major categories and purposes of a text, aids writers and readers in understanding how the relationship of sentences in a text contribute to a well-written text. What determines the macrostructure for writers is the communicative purpose of a text. Nishi (2004) further asserts that coherent writing encompass clear statement of what the purpose of the writing is, what type of task is to be provided, and who will be the audience of the writing. Another key to the concept of coherence is how an information structure assists the reader in understanding how a topic of a text advances (Danes 1974; Firbas 1986, cited in Lee, 2002). This highlights the significance of providing a summary. Also, this text feature emphasizes that coherent text adhere to the principle of giving old information prior a new information. The third feature gives prominence to the connectivity of the underlying content evidenced by relations between propositions (Kintsch and van Dijk 1978; van Dijk 1980, cited in Lee, 2002). This means that skilled writers justify a proposition or exemplify it with elaboration. Moreover, Halliday and Hasan (1976) characterizes coherent writing as one that exhibits connectivity of the surface text evidenced by the employment of cohesive devices. These include content lexical ties such as repetition, synonymy/antonymy, and superordinates/hyponymy (Liu & Qi, 2000). Pronoun references and conjunctions are also cohesive devices that establish relationship between various sentences or between parts of a sentence.

In the context of L2 writing pedagogy, Halliday and Hasan's (1976) theory of cohesion has led to significant developments in English-language teaching (ELT). For example, their concept of a cohesive tie established the usefulness of measuring a writer's linguistic competence by identifying and coding the presence of discourse markers systematically and quantifiably. In simplified terms, linguistic competence here refers to a writer's familiarity with grammar rules at a sentence level, syntax, semantics, and lexicon; this type of competence falls within the larger theory communicative competence posited by Hymes (1974). According to Halliday and Hasan, "the concept of a tie makes it possible to analyze a text in terms of its cohesive properties, and give a systematic account of its patterns of texture" (p. 4). Following Halliday and Hasan's publication, interest in how cohesion markers contribute to the flow of discourse increased. Teachers and writing instructors assess their (L2) students' knowledge of

textual strategies by examining cohesive devices such as lexical and grammatical structures that "enable readers or listeners to make the relevant connections between what was said, is being said, and will be said" (Castro, 2004, p. 215). According to Cox, Shanahan, and Sulzby (1990, as cited in Palmer, 1999), "cohesion is important both to the reader in constructing the meaning from a text and to the writer in creating a text that can be easily comprehended" (p. 49). Nunan (1993) also forwards the significance of cohesive devices in academic writing. He opines that text unity can be grounded on the use of cohesive devices to connect ideas from one sentence to the other or from one paragraph to the other. Among others, cohesive devices which are typically used are references, substitutions and ellipsis, conjunctions and lexical cohesion.

The phenomenon of cohesion and coherence in L2 English writing has been the focus of attention for several researchers in different nations. Lee (2003) examined two main areas in discourse development, namely superstructure and cohesion, among Chinese and Nordic students. The results indicate that though their languages are distinctly different, a consistent superstructure pattern was found in English texts written by Chinese and Nordic students. Moreover, the results indicate that Chinese L1 does play a significant role in superstructure of ESL writing. As regards cohesion, there seems no consistent evidence that L1 is a strong predictor in the density of connectors of Chinese ESL and Nordic EFL writing. On the contrary, the researcher found a remarkable difference in connector density between Chinese L1 and their ESL writing. Chinese L1 writing displays a significantly less density of connectors than their ESL writing, whereby, Chinese ESL texts do not pattern the same way as L1.

In 2010, Sanczyk investigated the use of cohesive devices in the argumentative essays of Polish undergraduates, using both quantitative and qualitative analysis. The results indicate that the most frequent tie used was lexical cohesion, followed by reference and conjunction ties. Moreover, it was revealed that Polish students had some difficulties in employing cohesive ties appropriately or effectively.

In addition to the literatures on the use of cohesive devices among ESL students, Leo (2012) examined how Chinese-background students in Canada use lexical and referential discourse markers on a standardized essay exam. To ascertain how factors such as first language (L1) and length of residence (LOR) in Canada influence a student's

ability to produce cohesive and coherent writing, discourse analysis of 90 first-year students' expository writing samples was conducted The study uses both quantitative and qualitative methods to explore how Canadian-born Chinese (CBC) students use the two types of cohesive devices. Results indicate that synonymy and content words distinguish the writings of the CBC students from those of their later-arriving peers. Furthermore, qualitative analysis of one CBC essay suggests the need for a more flexible and contextualized approach to evaluating writing among long term students in a foreign country. This allows researchers to acknowledge fully the productive lexical and discoursal strengths of these students.

Rahman (2013), using Halliday and Hasan's (1976) framework of cohesion, looked into college-level Arabic L1 users' command of cohesive devices by exploring the extent to which Omani student-teachers of English and native English speakers differ in their use of cohesive devices in descriptive English writing. In terms of frequency, variety, and control, the results of the study indicated that there was a notable difference between the natives' and the students' use of cohesive devices. While L1 English users' writing displayed a balance between the use and frequency of various types of cohesive devices, the students overused certain types (repetition and reference) while neglecting to use the others, thereby often, rendering their written texts non-cohesive.

In the same vein, Suwandi (2016) looked into the coherence of abstracts of final project reports of Indonesian undergraduate students. The study aims to reveal the micro-level coherence, or how each sentence is connected to the other to make logical relations. Also, the researcher wanted to discover the students' ability to achieve macro-level coherence, where the right use of cohesive devices like conjunction, reference, substitution or ellipsis so as to make the whole text coherent is evident. The result shows that though some cohesive devices like reference, conjunctions, ellipsis were used to link one sentence to the other, the abstracts analyzed have not satisfactorily achieved coherence.

In an earlier study, Alarcon and Morales (2011), quantitatively and qualitatively examined the cohesive devices used by Filipino undergraduate students in their argumentative essay. Halliday and Hasan (1976) concept of grammatical cohesion was used as framework for the analysis of the essays. Based on the quantitative analysis, it was found that reference and

conjunctions were the most common type of cohesive devices employed by the student respondents, while substitution was the least used type of cohesive device. Based on the qualitative analysis, the data revealed that adversative conjunctions and concessive devices assisted the students in the argumentation process. The researchers eschew that qualitative analysis supports the concept of form and function. In the students' argumentative essays, certain forms were chosen over the others for a specific purpose that supports the overall objective of an argumentative text.

Also in 2011, Tarrayo analyzed the relationship between language and culture based on the metatext categories utilized by writers in three speech communities: Philippines, Iran, and Taiwan. He found that Philippine English research articles (RAs) had higher relative frequency of preview and review categories than in Taiwanese English RAs and Iranian English RAs. As regards use of connectors, all three groups' RAs were built on the additive cohesive relation. Further, the three Englishes employed both simple connectors and complex connectors. The most common type of simple connectors evident in the data are, *such as and, but, though*, and *yet* and their complex alternatives, such as *furthermore, on the other hand, in a similar vein, and in a similar sense*. This suggests a preference for a more elaborate and a change-oriented rhetorical pattern. Another definitive feature of the Philippine RAs is the dominance of action markers. Therefore, this indicates that compared with the Taiwanese English and Iranian English, Philippine English has the tendency to be more writer-responsible.

These foregoing literature and studies evince that much have been written on exploring and investigating coherent markers of writers coming from different cultures; however, no study has attempted to look into the use of non-topical linguistic materials among students belonging to a different subculture of one particular culture. Lautamatti (1987) stipulated types of non-topical linguistic materials like discourse connectives, illocution markers, modality markers, attitude markers, and metalinguistic markers. These linguistic materials serve the internal organization of discourse and help the readers relate the content matter to a larger framework of knowledge. This paper hopes to address this gap by investigating on the use of linguistic materials in the narrative essays of Ilocano writers and Ifugao student writers, two subcultures in Region 2. The study is guided by the idea that students, in their attempt to make their work coherent, employ varied linguistic materials that may include discourse connectives, illocutionary markers, and attitude markers. But the question remains, does subculture affect the students' use of discourse connectives and other linguistic markers?

1.1 Theoretical Framework

This paper is heavily anchored on Contrastive Rhetoric Hypothesis (CRH) which according to Kachru (1999), has inspired a great deal of research in writing across cultures. As mentioned, the major theoretical claim of CRH is that different speech communities have different ways of organizing ideas in writing. More specifically, non-native speakers of English employ rhetorical progressions that are incongruent with the expectations of the Anglo-American reader (Kaplan, 1972, as cited by Kachru 1999). This just means that the cultural practices and beliefs of a particular group of people may, in a great deal, affect the kind of writing strategies and patterns of organizations that they employ.

Numerous researchers have investigated L1-L2 relationship in writing, including the possibility of L1 transfer or interference, by comparing L1 English Essays and ESL essays written by groups of students with different L1 backgrounds. And taking heavily from CRH, these studies, as reported in the article of Kubota (1998), generally concluded that ESL students write according to the styles preferred in their own cultures. This may have prompted other research studies to concentrate heavily on emphasizing cultural differences in rhetorical patterns among various languages.

This is the line of argument this paper wants to draw; however, it examines essays of students in the Philippines belonging to two different ethnic groups in Region 2. It must be argued that each ethnic group comprises a different speech community. As Gumperz (2009) puts it, any human aggregate characterized by regular and frequent interaction by means of a shared body of verbal signs is a speech community. He further contends that most groups of any permanence, be they small bands bounded by face-to-face contact, modern nations divisible into smaller sub-regions, or even occupational associations or neighborhood gangs, may be treated as speech communities, provided they show linguistic peculiarities that warrant study. This paper dwells on the writing output of students who come from two speech communities: the Ilocano group and the Ifugao group. Drawing heavily on the belief that, although belonging in just the culture of the Filipinos, they have certain traditions and practices that may have

formed their way of thinking or their thought patterns which may readily be translated to the kind of writing they produce specifically how they connect and link ideas in an essay.

Analysis is anchored on the student-writers' employment of non-topical linguistic materials namely; discourse connectives, illocution markers, modality markers, attitude markers, and metalinguistic markers. Discourse connectives belong to a class of lexical expressions drawn primarily from the syntactic classes of conjunctions, adverbs and prepositional phrases. They signal a relationship between the interpretation of a segment they introduce and a prior segment. Discourse markers include but are not limited to the words *so, and, but, furthermore*, and *after all* (Fraser, 1999). Furthermore, this study adheres to Hyland's (2005, cited in Vasquez & Giner, 2008) framework on modality markers, which contribute to the expression of writer's stance in academic writing. Specifically, this study will make a special reference to the employment of hedges. These include lexical entries such as *may, perhaps, seem,* and phrasal hedges such *"I believe…", "as I see it…"* and *"I think…"* Another non-topical linguistic material that the researchers seek to examine is the use of attitude markers. These expressions, used in both sentence and discourse levels, represent an addresser's stance in certain situations. Examples of these include emotionally charged intensifiers such as *unexpectedly, surprisingly*, *happily*, and the like (Salager-Meyer, 1994).

1.2 Research Questions

Armed with the prevailing belief in Contrastive Rhetoric Hypothesis, this paper aims to answer the following questions:

1. How do the Ilocano and Ifugao writers differ in their use of the following non-topical linguistic materials?
   a. discourse connectives
   b. illocution markers
   c. modality markers
   d. attitude markers
   e. metalinguistic markers
2. What cultural underpinnings are reflected in the narrative essays of the two groups of writers?

2.0 Methodology

The study employed a qualitative design in describing the non-topical linguistic materials employed by writers belonging to different subcultures, specifically, the Ilocanos and the Ifugaos. By non-topical linguistic materials, we

refer to types of linguistic materials which form an essential part of the organization of any informative discourse.

2.1 Data Source

Data for this paper were 30 narrative essays written by second-year College students enrolled in Bachelor of Science in Engineering and Bachelor of Science in Accountancy of St. Mary's University of Bayombong, Nueva Vizcaya. The narrative essay was specifically chosen in order for the researchers to see the writers' use of non-topical linguistic materials as they link and connect strands of ideas together.

2.2. Methods and Procedures

In order to answer the questions set forth in this paper, the researchers asked for permission from the Head of the Languages Department, Dean of the School of Engineering and Architecture, and Dean of School of Accountancy and Business of Mary's University for the conduct of the study. Subsequently, since the researchers are on full study leave, and hence have no access to student's writing outputs, permission was sought from the subject teacher who are handling the students. Likewise, permission was also obtained from the students whose outputs are the main subject for analysis in this paper.

The researchers requested the subject teacher to let her students write on the topic: "*What has been the most challenging event stage /event in your life? How were you able to survive the challenge?*" All the students in the class are Filipino students belonging to various ethnic groups; some are Ilocanos; others are Gaddang speakers and some are from Ifugao-speaking community. In the chosen locale, the two most dominant ethnic groups are Ilocanos and the Ifugaos. All the students in the class were asked to write on the above topic in 400 to 600 words using the narrative essay and was requested to indicate their ethnicity below their name. However, since this paper only explored the non-topical linguistic materials of the Ilocano and the Ifugao speakers, then the outputs of other students were not made part of the analysis. The 30 essays did not undergo editing, either from peer or from the teacher, as we endeavor to reflect the original, uninfluenced thinking of the student writers.

2.3 Data Analytic Procedures

The narrative essays were subjected to analysis by looking at the frequency of the use of certain non-topical linguistic materials. The main clauses and dependent clauses in the paragraphs were

numbered, and from there, the researchers shall identify the non-topical linguistic materials in the essays since the analysis will revolve on which group of writers use more discourse materials in their writing. Finally, the analysis also included how their manner of writing in terms of using discourse materials is reflective of whatever cultural beliefs and traditions are unique to each subculture.

The purpose of this study is to describe and compare the frequency and use of non-topical linguistic materials by Ilocano and Ifugao students enrolled in a private university in Cagayan Valley, Northern Luzon, Philippines. Also, it aims to look into possible implications on how cultural orientations inherent in each identified subgroup may pose an impact on the use of non-topical linguistic materials and the students' writing in general. In order to meet the above-mentioned objectives of this study, each identified area of inquiry is dealt with one by one.

3. 0 Results and Discussion

Table 1. Frequency of use of non-topical linguistic materials by Ilocano and Ifugao Students

Non-Topical Linguistic Materials	Frequency	
	Ilocano	Ifugao
Discourse Connectives	46	67
Attitude Markers	12	21
Modality Markers	8	32
Illocution Markers	3	2
Metalinguistic Markers	1	8
Total Non-topical linguistic materials	69	130

Based on Table 1, some observations can be highlighted. The most common non-topical linguistic material employed by both subgroups is discourse connectives. Among the Ilocano student writers, the second most typical linguistic material employed is attitude markers, followed by modality markers. Illocution and metalinguistic markers are rarely used. As regards Ifugao students, they have a greater propensity to use modality markers over attitude markers. Moreover, Ifugao students also tend to incorporate metalinguistic markers in their essay but, similar with the Ilocanos, rarely use illocution markers. In general, the Ifugao students had the greater inclination to use the varied non-topical linguistic materials than the Ilocano students. Though this warrants further investigation, attributions may be based on the exposure of the Ifugao students to the use of these linguistic materials in their previous writing classes, thus, reflective of their written outputs in their language classes. However, this does not necessarily translate to the incapacity of the Ilocano students in employing non-topical linguistic components. This observation is based on the appropriateness of the non-topical linguistic materials employed in the essays. Within the academic context where both groups belong, English is one of the primary modes of instruction, thus, the students can navigate their way through these linguistic components. Though they have their own vernacular languages, English as a second language, among these learners, has been nativized, indigenized, and institutionalized (Hernandez & Genuino, 2017).

3.1. The Use of Discourse Connectives

In light of the present study, discourse connectives signal a relationship between the interpretation of a segment they introduce and a prior segment. They belong to a class of lexical expressions drawn primarily from the syntactic classes of conjunctions, adverbs and prepositional phrases. The discourse markers include but are not limited to the words *so, and, but, furthermore*, and *after all* (Fraser, 1999). The two subgroups were remarkably homogenous in terms of the use of discourse markers as the data reveal that this kind of non-topical linguistic material had the highest occurrence in the essays. The following excerpts illustrate the use of discourse markers among the Ilocanos tasked to write an essay in English:

Excerpt 1:

*It wasn't easy at first, **but** we came to have fun and be grateful for everything.*

Excerpt 2:

*There are still times that you want to go back, to go home because you'll really miss it, **but** I am saying to myself that it is just a small sacrifice, it is also for me and for them.*

Excerpt 3:

*Little by little, I am earning back my self-worth as an individual. **However**, several factors are always there to hinder your success and begin to tear down the little percentage of self- worth that I'm earning from time to time.*

Excerpt 4:

*I have recognized the importance of time management by which I should schedule each agenda that I must act upon. **Moreover**, patience is the most needed virtue that I must apply in order to be more organized.*

The following illustrates the use of discourse connectives among the Ifugao students:

Excerpt 1:

*My mother may have died **but** she will always be in my heart.*

Excerpt 2:

*Ups and downs are inevitable- everyone needs to undergo several changes **and** walk through a road full of obstacles.*

Excerpt 3:

*I still cherish the happy and sweet memories that we made. **In addition,** there is a quote that is quite famous when moving on after a heart break, "Let bygones, be bygones".*

Excerpt 4:

*I was able to survive by trusting myself and choose to enroll the course I want **in spite of** the difficult circumstances.*

As regards type of discourse connectives evident in the data, the connectives "but" and "and" had the highest occurrence, where 46 and 45 tokens were recorded, respectively. "But" is a contrastive discourse marker "and" is an elaborative discourse. On one hand, contrastive discourse markers signal that the explicit interpretation of a previous idea contrasts with an interpretation of the succeeding idea. On the other hand, elaborative Ddiscourse markers signal a quasi-parallel relationship between two points so that the second idea constitutes an elaboration of the first (Fraser, 2004, cited in Dalili & Dastjerdi, 2013). The following extracts exhibit the use of these discourse connectors among the Ilocano and Ifugao students (excerpts 1 and 2 are written by Ilocanos, excerpts 3 and 4 are written by Ifugaos):

Excerpt 1:

*I remember my grandfather telling me how each of us must live with a full measure of loneliness that is inescapable, **and** we must not destroy ourselves with our passion to escape this aloneness.*

Excerpt 2:

*Like me, I want to be a Civil Engineer someday, **but** in order to attain that, I need to work hard, study hard and also focus.*

Excerpt 3:

*For me, this things are but just life's way for us to cope with things **and** to survive the challenges of this ever-changing world.*

Excerpt 4:

*There is a need to adjust not just because of the professors **but** also because I was used to the spoon-feeding kind of teaching when I was in junior high school*

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The result suggests that both subgroups prefer elaborate and change-oriented discourse style. This affirms the study of Tarrayo in 2011 which reveals that among the research articles produced by Filipinos, the most common type of simple connectors are "but", "and", "such", "yet" and "though". The findings also coincide with that of Alarcon and Morales (2011). It can be construed, therefore, that the use of simple connectors such as "but" and "and" is a common feature of English written materials produced by Filipinos who belong to a single speech community. This observation further attests the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis which posits that different languages reflect differences in the habitual patterns of thought of their speakers (Kaplan, 1988).

3.2. Modality Markers

Modality markers contribute to the expression of writer's stance in writing. Specifically, this part of the analysis made reference to the employment of hedges which include lexical entries such as "may", "perhaps", "seem", and phrasal hedges such "I believe…", "as I see it…" and "I think…", among others. The presence of modality markers in written discourses may imply how a writer controls the whole discursive event and how he/she transacts meaning with the recipients of the written work. The data indicate that among the student writers, the Ifugao tend to use more modality markers than the Ilocanos. Hence, it can be said that the Ifugao writers are more tentative and careful in expressing their views than the Ilocanos. This category makes use of a combination of tentative verbs and modals together with self-mention or use of the pronominal "I". Notice the use of modality markers among the Ifugaos:

Excerpt 1:

*There are times I cry so hard but I will continue fighting because **I believe** that true warriors never lose hope and faith.*

Excerpt 2:

***It may seem** that we are in control of our thoughts and behavior but problems and even the society keeps on pressuring us.*

Excerpt 3:

***I think** that unless we let go or remove the chains that binds us, we can never really move on.*

However, though generally appearing to be direct and straightforward, some Ilocano students also employed modality markers in their narrative essay:

Excerpt 1:

*Of all my problems in life, **I think** confronting an standing up for myself or just letting my father know what I think or feel is wrong is the hardest thing for me to do.*

Excerpt 2:

*It just takes me lots of courage to open up something with him, **I guess that** I'm also daunted with the fact that I'm the eldest among his children.*

Excerpt 3:

***I believe** should defy the gravity of dark memories that chained me for a very long time.*

It has also been observed that a cultural trait among the Ifugao students is their being timid in a classroom dominated by Ilocanos. The researchers speculate that this may be due to the notion of traditional culture being inferior (Anderson, 1991). In the study's locale, the Ilocanos are considered as a major ethnolinguistic group while the Ifugaos belong to the cultural minority. This stance may be a subliminal reflection of their writing, thus, the use of modality markers to express politeness. Regarded as a form of euphemism typically appearing in the form of adjectives, adverbs, clauses and tag questions, modality markers as linguistic units are often used to lessen the impact of an utterance due to the limitations on the interaction between the speaker and addressee (Ariel, 2008).

3.3 Attitude Markers

Basing on the content of the narrative essays, the researchers conjecture that most of the written outputs are impassioned and are highly emotional which may be attributed to the question prompt, "*What has been the most challenging event stage /event in your life? How were you able to survive the challenge?*" Most of the topics dealt with academic difficulties, problems on romantic relationships, identity crisis, and family problems. Hence, another non-topical linguistic material that the researchers sought to examine is the use of attitude markers. These expressions, used in both sentence and discourse levels, represent an addresser's stance in certain situations. Examples of these include emotionally charged intensifiers such as "unexpectedly", "surprisingly", and "happily", and phrasal constructions such as "I feel that", and

"I'm saddened about", among others. (Salager-Meyer, 1994). It was found that this is the second most-favored non-topical linguistic material among the Ifugaos and the third most-favored among the Ilocanos. Generally, there was a greater number of attitude markers in the essays written by the Ifugaos, where 21 tokens were noted among the Ifugaos and 12 tokens among the Ilocano students. It can be assumed that Ifugaos have a greater propensity to intensify the emotional content of their arguments through the employment of attitude markers. As Blagojević (2009) puts it, "Attitude markers express writers" affective values – their attitudes towards the propositional content rather than to the commitment to the truth or objective value. The following excerpts exemplify such:

Excerpt 1:

*They just go with the flow or just follow the crowd. **Sadly**, it's something which has not been taught to many of them; to follow their heart.*

Excerpt 2:

***It was really hard for me** to accept this change because I use to have so many friends, but in just one year, I almost have none.*

Excerpt 3:

*Every day I experience hectic time schedule, endless assignments, short breaks and impossible tasks. **Unfortunately**, I got a failing grade which completely made me lose my self-esteem.*

The employment of emotionally-charged markers allows the readers to commit to a particular interaction with the written text but still considers that the members of the audience still have rights and ideas of their own, which may change in the course of interaction. Emotionally-charged markers serve as a signal of the subjectivity of the term, stating that it is only an opinion, rather than absolute truth (Namrasev, in Makejeva 2017). Among the essays produced by the Ilocanos, the following exemplify the use of attitude markers.

Excerpt 1:

*They brought me into a dungeon of shame barred with insecurities. **I felt** that no one dared to look at me.*

Excerpt 2:

***Luckily**, I didn't got crazy knowing that it is just a thin silver lining that separates sanity from insanity. **More luckily**, I didn't got to give an end to my own life although I wish that someone will do it.*

Excerpt 3:

***Surely**, it will take up lots of courage and determination to do so.*

In this paper, it was previously discussed that attitude markers emphasize subjectivity of a position by allowing an argument to be presented as an opinion rather than a fact and therefore opens that argument to negotiation, acceptance or negation from the hearer or reader. In writing personal narrative essays, writers are free to communicate their personal stance or opinion regarding an issue. This feature of a narrative essay sets it apart from other genres such definition and expository essays. However, the results of this study negate the preconceived notion of the researchers that emotionally-charged markers is a dominant linguistic feature of the essays produced by both ethnic groups. It is interesting to note that the Ifugao students seem to be more expressive of their emotions as reflected by their greater propensity to use attitude markers. According to Kaplan (1972, cited by Kachru 1999) cultural practices and beliefs of a particular group of people may, in a great deal, affect the kind of writing strategies and patterns of organizations that they employ.

3. 4. Metalinguistic Markers

As regards use of metalinguistic markers, both subgroups do not typically use this non-topical linguistic material. These markers assist in drawing the readers to the act of discoursing, alerting them to various degrees of certainty, and guiding their reading (Crismore and Farnsworth 1990, cited in Rahman, 2004). In this study, the researchers particularly examined phrasal constructions such as, "what I can say, ", "I assert", "I suggest" and similar metalinguistic devices that clearly negotiates the rhetorical intention of the student writers. However, the data indicate that this is one of the least-favored linguistic material among the Ilocano and Ifugao students. Only one occurrence was recorded among the former and eight among the latter. The following extract is observed to contain a metalinguistic marker:

Extract 1:

***What I can say now is that**, we shouldn't lose something very important, self-confident.*

Here are some extracts from the narrative essays of the Ifugao students:

Extract 1:

I can say that it is hard to laugh and take it as a joke but I compliment myself for surviving bullying.

Extract 2:

I agree with the statement that without problems life is boring.

Extract 3:

I can explain how I survived or got over my heart ache with the help of this quote from Steve Maraboli, "The truth is, unless you let go, unless you forgive yourself, unless you forgive the situation, unless you realize the situation is over, you cannot move forward.

The disparity on the use of metalinguistic markers may be attributed to the Ifugao students' explicit conveyance of a message so that the reader may interpret it in accordance with writer's intended meaning. The minimal use of this non-topical linguistic material among the English essays produced by the Ilocano students may be an indication that this category is used very little or not at all in the mother tongue. Same results were yielded in the study of Rahman (2004) where several categories of meta-text and metalinguistic markers have no specific counterpart when translated to a foreign language. It thus seems that the use of such devices is determined by the linguistic traditions of a culture.

3. 5. Illocution Markers

The last type of non-topical linguistic material under investigation is illocution markers. According to Williams (1985, cited in Rahman, 2004), illocution markers indicate the relationship between ideas. These are textual meta-discourse devices that make explicit what speech act is being performed at certain points in texts (for example, one instance, such as). Moreover, Peters (1986) posits that these markers provide cohesion from one statement to the next or marks out the structural component of the text. As revealed by the data, this type of linguistic device had the lowest occurrence among the essays produced by both Ilocano and Ifugao groups. Only three tokens were noted among the Ilocanos and two among the Ifugaos.

Here are the extracts from the narrative essays of the Ilocanos:

Extract 1:

Being a college student is hard. You have to face strict teachers, hardships in subjects, and face problems in financial; example,

tuition fees, face problems in bullying, worrying about your grades in major subjects, and especially worries about graduating.

Extract 2:

One instance is that asking him if I could transfer to another boarding house so I could also be with my best friend. I was really hesitant in doing so.

Extract 3:

If I ever did go whenever I want and whatever time I desire, it would lead to the end of me. For example, I might encounter an accident and I would be gravely injured.

The following exemplifies the use of illocution markers among the Ifugao students:

Extract 1:

These days we often see a lot of couples in love and most of them have undergone some hardships or problems such as experiencing a feeling of an unrequited love for someone and something.

Extract 2:

I am very unstable in many ways such as in making decisions where I still need the help of my family.

The minimal use of this category seems to indicate that students from both groups are not inclined to using illocution markers as alternative elaborative discourse devices. It should be noted that, as has been discussed earlier, "and" and "but" are the most common discourse connectives found in the narrative essays. Again, this may be attributed to lack or absence of this category in the mother tongue, or the absence of a specific counterpart in the target language which is English.

However, this claim warrants further investigation since, as revealed in the study of Lee (2003), there seems to be no consistent evidence that L1 is a strong predictor in the density of cohesive devices of Chinese ESL and Nordic EFL writing. Taking a look at the similarity of results, it can be said that the Ilocano and Ifugao students have gained an almost similar level of knowledge on the use of illocution markers. Hence, this finding poses a pedagogical implication as regards the instruction on the use of illocution markers in producing cohesive and coherent essays.

4. 0 Conclusion

Anchored on salient theoretical perspectives, this study focused on the employment of non-topical linguistic materials among students

belonging to two speech communities in Cagayan Valley, Philippines. The non-topical linguistic materials are discourse connectives, modality markers, attitude markers, illocution markers and metalinguistic markers. It was found that across the five categories, the Ifugao students had the greater propensity to use non-topical linguistic materials than the Ilocano students, except for illocution markers.

As regards discourse connectives, the most common devices employed are the elaborative discourse markers, "and" and "but". The higher occurrence of modality markers among the narrative essays written by the Ifugaos may also signify tentativeness in expressing their views. Also, the Ilocano students are more reserved in expressing their emotions compared to the Ifugao students as reflected in the minimal use of attitude markers. Moreover, it was found that the least-favored linguistic devices are metalinguistic markers and illocution markers. This poses a

significant pedagogical implication on the instruction of non-topical linguistic materials as aid in the production of cohesive and coherent essays.

In the students' narrative essays, certain forms were chosen over the others for a specific purpose that supports the overall objective of a narrative text. Furthermore, students should be taught the functions most relevant to their needs since certain language forms perform certain communicative functions and that functions are the means for achieving the ends of writing. (Hyland, 2003). It is suggested that a larger corpus be included in the analytical realm and an examination of non-topical linguistic materials in other genres of writing be conducted. Finally, this paper is a confirmation that cultural orientations affect people's way of thinking and that their thought patterns readily translate to the kind of writing they produce, specifically, how they connect and link ideas in an essay.

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