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Grammatical and Semantic Patterns of Communicative Verbs in Saudi and Native English Argumentative Writing

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ABSTRACT

The present study examined the use of communicative verbs (CVs) in argumentative essays composed by Saudi EFL learners together with native English-speaking university students. The study investigated four main questions: (1) What communicative verbs do Saudi EFL learners use in their argumentative essays? (2) To what extent are these verbs covered in the argumentative essays of Saudi EFL learners when compared to those of English native speakers' university students? (3) Do Saudi EFL learners show a tendency to use communicative verb patterns as native speakers do? If so, what are some similarities and differences? (4) Do the semantic frames of these pattern structures primed by native and non-native speakers have common or distinctive features? This study is urgent in light of persistent challenges faced by EFL learners in developing native-like academic discourse when expressing stance and argument structure. The research utilized two corpora which consisted of 491 Saudi argumentative essays totaling 166,000 words and 175 LOCNESS essays with 151,000 words. The communicative verbs were extracted through AntConc before applying Wmatrix for tagging purposes. Pattern Grammar was used to analyze grammatical patterns, while FrameNet was employed for semantic frame classification. The data was validated through manual annotation procedures that achieved 90% inter-rater agreement. The findings showed that Saudi learners preferred to use a small number of CVs (e.g., *argue*, *say*) while demonstrating less grammatical and semantic variety than native speakers. The research provides practical applications to teaching English as a foreign language by showing how specific instruction about grammatical patterns and semantic frames enhances students' academic writing abilities.

Keywords: Argumentative Essays; Communicative Verbs; Corpus-based Study; Grammatical Pattern; Semantic Frames

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1. Introduction

Academic writing skills have emerged as the key focus for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners who study in higher education institutions throughout nations that use English as their university language of instruction. The proficiency in English has become essential for students in Saudi Arabia because it determines their academic achievement and job prospects[1]. Therefore, there is an increased emphasis on developing advanced writing abilities. Writers use communicative verbs (CVs)—such as *say, argue, claim* and *recommend*—to structure arguments and express stances as essential linguistic resources. The verbs function as essential rhetorical tools to indicate agreement while reporting evidence and directing readers to interpret claims[2,3]. The successful completion of academic writing depends heavily on the effective application of communicative verbs which represent one of its essential components. Through writing with verbs like *argue, claim, suggest* and *report* authors can present their arguments and reference sources while also evaluating information and responding to different perspectives[4].

The use of communicative verbs functions as the primary mechanism to establish authorial position and maintain organized argumentation. According to Hyland[2], these verbs both report information while enabling writers to interact with readers and sources in the text. The research by Biber et al.[3] identifies communicative verbs as stance, reporting and evaluation while demonstrating their fundamental importance in academic writing. Many studies indicate that EFL learners face difficulties using these verbs correctly because they rely on a few common words and incorrectly use verb combinations, according to Hinkel[5] and Hyland and Sancho Guinda[6].

In Saudi EFL classrooms, the focus on teaching academic writing tends to emphasize grammatical precision and paper organization but disregards discourse-level features such as stance and evaluative language[7,8]. The lack of discourse-level instruction creates difficulties for students because they remain unaware of how their language choices impact their writing effectiveness through the use of CVs. Research by Alahmed and Jabbar[9] along with other regional studies indicates students tend to repeat the verbs "say" and "argue" in a formulaic way which prevents them from developing advanced persuasive writing skills. The usage of communicative verbs becomes especially restrictive in argumentative essays because writers need to build claims while addressing counterarguments and supporting their positions.

This study expands existing research by analyzing the application of communicative verbs by Saudi university students in comparison to native English-speaking students from the LOCNESS corpus. Previous research based on corpus analysis investigated how English as a Foreign Language writers utilize communicative verbs throughout different educational contexts such as Turkish[10], Iraqi[9], Setswana[11], and Malaysian[12] learners. Research indicates that EFL writers demonstrate restricted verb variety while depending heavily on forceful expressions and avoiding both evaluative and epistemic vocabulary. However, there exists no research that investigates Saudi EFL learners' communicative verb utilization in argumentative writing in general, or through implementing the combined analytical framework of grammatical patterns and semantic frames to gain meaningful insights into how meanings develop.

According to Boas[4] learners need to master grammatical and semantic variability of communicative verbs because these elements connect syntax to lexicon in academic discourse. The theoretical models Pattern Grammar[13] and FrameNet[14] provide researchers with systematic methods to study both structural and semantic aspects of verb use. This research addresses the following four research questions:

1. What do corpus statistics show about the overall use of communicative verbs in Saudi and native English argumentative writing?

2. To what extent are these verbs covered in the argumentative essays of Saudi EFL learners when compared to those of English native speakers' university students?

3. Do Saudi EFL learners show a tendency to use communicative verb patterns as native speakers do? If so, what are some similarities and differences?

4. Do the semantic frames of these pattern structures primed by native and non-native speakers have common or distinctive features?

By addressing these questions, the study aimed to enhance knowledge about EFL learners' discourse participation and develop better educational methods for learner development support. The study also aimed to establish empirical evidence that will guide writing instruction development to

enhance students' abilities with rhetorical flexibility and semantic awareness, as well as grammatical competence in using communicative verbs.

2. Literature Review

Academic writing research has studied communicative verbs in the context of EFL learners[2–4,11]. Communicative verbs act as both information markers and stance markers and interaction and evaluation markers[2,3]. According to Hyland[2], communicative verbs allow writers to establish authority while evaluating information and making contact with readers, which makes them essential for argumentative writing. This perspective supports the metadiscursive understanding of verbs that create rhetorical connections between writers and their knowledge and readers.

In addition, Biber et al.[3] identify communicative verbs through their analysis of academic writing registers which include stance verbs and reporting verbs and discourse organizers. Through their corpus analysis, the authors demonstrated that native speakers employ a wide range of these verbs with different grammatical arrangements to convey complex positions. The linguistic flexibility observed in native English speech and written patterns is frequently absent from EFL student writing especially for those with minimal experience with authentic academic English texts.

EFL learners face specific problems in using CVs through their frequent use of a few basic verbs and their incorrect use of verb complements and restricted rhetorical effectiveness[5,6]. According to Hinkel[5], the academic language production of learners mainly consists of frequent verbs *say* and *tell* while neglecting both correct syntactical arrangement and proper rhetorical application. The study by Alahmed and Jabbar[9] supported previous findings by demonstrating that Iraqi postgraduate students depended mostly on assertive verbs without showing much variation or evaluative complexity.

In Turkey, Bozdağ and Badem[10] investigated how Turkish EFL learners use communicative verbs through a comparison with native speaker performance. The researchers observed that students used fewer communicative verb types while choosing basic grammatical patterns with V + that-clauses. The observations showed restricted syntactic diversity and restricted semantic possibilities of CVs. In

a similar vein, Kanestion et al.[12] revealed that Malaysian university students used a restricted set of verbs in their argumentative writing, while their linguistic expressions showed less complexity than those of native English speakers.

The analysis of semantic framing represents another focus area in research. According to Boas[4], it is essential to examine the connection between syntax and lexicon to study communicative verbs. Boas[4] stated that different verbs create specific semantic frameworks that impact their grammatical usage together with their rhetorical effects. For instance, the combination of "*suggest*," "*recommend*" and "*urge*" typically happens with modal structures or indirect speech because they build advisory communicative frames. Among several semantic framing models, the systematic framework of FrameNet developed by Ruppenhofer et al.[14] enables researchers to study verb relationships while understanding how they operate in different semantic contexts.

Pattern Grammar framework developed by Hunston and Francis[13] enables researchers to link lexical items with their corresponding grammatical patterns. According to Hunston and Francis[13], native English speakers use specific verb patterns to convey meaning distinctions that non-native speakers typically do not master. A number of studies have applied this framework[15] and have indicated that non-native speakers use V + NP + to-infinitive or V + NP + that-clause with embedded stance less frequently because they prefer to use general patterns.

At an expert level, for example, Khamkhien[16] determined that Thai academic research discussions lacked proper evaluative stance development because some Thai academics depended too heavily on assertive or neutral CVs. The research supports the requirement for EFL writing instruction that teaches students to use verbs for expressing different attitudes. The use of argumentative essays requires EFL writers to develop essential skills for establishing positions and supporting them through evidence.

Alahmed and Jabbar[9] investigated CVs used by Iraqi learners and found that they employed the verbs "*argue*" and "*say*" to share their thoughts but failed to use "*suggest*" or "*acknowledge*" or "*emphasize*" which restricted their ability to present stance or critical evaluation. Since the research conducted on CV usage in Saudi Arabia lacks empirical studies, Alahmed and Jabbar's[9] study provides insights that could apply to Saudi EFL students because they share simi-

lar linguistic and educational aspects in Arab EFL education. In this regard, Mahboob and Elyas[17] recommended that Saudi English teaching focus on discourse-level awareness and rhetorical instruction.

Several studies have examined CVs in EFL writing through Pattern Grammar framework and semantic analysis[4,10,18], but few have conducted this analysis within the Saudi context. This dual analysis approach provides a more comprehensive understanding because it shows how the surface grammar of writing connects with deeper semantic factors. The analysis of verb usage for argument construction and writer positioning becomes possible through this method.

The research field lacks sufficient studies that combine Pattern Grammar with FrameNet to analyze how learners use communicative verbs in their writing. The majority of research investigates either syntactic errors[5] or lexical underuse[9] while neglecting the process of meaning construction through both form and function. The existing research on Saudi EFL writing focuses mainly on lexical errors and cohesion problems[8] instead of analyzing how grammatical and semantic choices affect argumentation.

The current literature shows that EFL learners consistently struggle to use communicative verbs effectively in most aspects including frequency usage, lexical choice, grammatical structures and semantic subtleties. The research study addresses a recognized knowledge gap by using Pattern Grammar and FrameNet to analyze how Saudi EFL learners and native English speakers use communicative verbs in their argumentative writing. The research provides new knowledge about the grammatical patterns and semantic frames that define L2 academic discourse. The research results provide valuable information about how Saudi students build arguments and express their stance which helps develop better writing instruction methods for EFL students.

3. Method

3.1. Corpus Collection

The study used two purposefully selected corpora to research the application of communicative verbs in undergraduate argumentative writing. The Saudi corpus included 491 timed argumentative essays written by Saudi EFL students aged 19–22 who studied at a public Saudi university during their first year of an academic writing course. These students had studied English for at least six years in intermediate and secondary schools, with instruction typically focused on grammar, vocabulary, and general reading comprehension. The students' proficiency level was assessed as B1 on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). This level was determined through a standardized institutional placement test administered by the university's English language institute. Also, students who enrolled in the course were considered B1 level. Each participant produced an essay as a final writing exam in a timed setting and was assessed using rubrics also aligned with CEFR standards. The average length consisted of 336 words. Only essays receiving a grade of 17 or higher out of 20 were included to achieve quality and consistency. The Saudi corpus contained a total of 166,047 words. Ethical considerations were observed, and all essays were anonymized prior to analysis.

The second corpus was drawn from the LOCNESS corpus (Louvain Corpus of Native English Essays), specifically the subset of 175 argumentative essays written by American and British university students aged 19–23. The timed essays consisted of an average of 500 words for a total of 151,707 words. Both corpora were equivalent in their genre (argumentative essays), comparable length (average 500 words), and academic level (undergraduate), which allowed for meaningful comparisons.

3.2. Data Classification

The first classification process required AntConc[19] to identify and extract communicative verbs (CVs). The classification started with a reference list of 63 CVs which Biber (2006) had compiled. The CVs were directly taken from[20] which included common stance and reporting verbs in academic writing. The AntCLAWSGUI tool was used to perform part-of-speech tagging on both corpora which enabled precise identification of verbal forms.

Also, the Wmatrix tool[21] helped identify and tag grammatical patterns and semantic categories which were later manually reviewed and validated. The most common and academically relevant verbs from the extracted CVs were selected for further analysis: *argue, say, claim, state, suggest, mention, explain, assert, point out,* and *recommend*. The selected verbs were chosen because of their rhetorical significance in argumentative discourse.

Each occurrence of these verbs was examined in its sentence context. Instances were manually reviewed to confirm genre relevance (i.e., argumentative function) and to exclude non-discursive or narrative uses. The verbs were then categorized according to both their grammatical structure and their semantic function.

The integration of Pattern Grammar and FrameNet was deliberate. The analysis of verb realization through Pattern Grammar becomes necessary for identifying both syntactic preferences and errors in EFL learner language. The conceptual functions of those verbs become accessible through FrameNet analysis which reveals their rhetorical purpose. The combination of these frameworks produced a comprehensive analysis that connected grammatical forms to their semantic meanings and syntactical structures to their functional meaning. The dual analysis approach proves most effective for academic writing research because it evaluates both grammatical precision and rhetorical strategy for achieving success.

3.3. Data Analysis

The analysis involved both quantitative and qualitative procedures. Quantitatively, the frequency of each CV was normalized per 100,000 words, and type-token ratios (TTRs) were calculated to assess lexical diversity. The ratio of CVs to total words and to all lexical verbs was also computed to determine lexical density and prominence.

Qualitatively, the grammatical structures of the top 10 CVs were examined using Pattern Grammar[13], which classifies recurring syntactic patterns of verbs. Pattern Grammar is a corpus-driven model that describes how words occur in specific syntactic structures[13]. The approach differs from traditional prescriptive grammar models because it examines actual language use to identify recurring lexicogrammatical behaviors. The method proves beneficial in EFL contexts since learners use formulaic language and make mistakes when they depart from familiar grammatical structures. Instances were tagged into categories such as V + that-clause (e.g., *argue that*), V + NP + to-infinitive (e.g., *recommend students to*), V + wh-clause, and V + NP. The analysis also documented errors in verb complementation, particularly among Saudi learners.

Simultaneously, semantic frame analysis was conducted using FrameNet[14]. The semantic resource FrameNet[14] classifies words according to the conceptual "frames" they evoke. The theory explains that word comprehension requires an understanding of the entire mental scenario that the word implies. The verb "*claim*" activates the Statement frame which contains roles Speaker and Proposition while "*recommend*" activates the Recommendation frame with Speaker and Action and Addressee. Semantic frames were used to classify each verb into categories including Statement, Evaluation, Recommendation, Acknowledgment, Justification and Explanation based on its functional role in the text. The current study examined both structural usage patterns of verbs and their communicative functions in academic argumentation. These frames were selected through three evaluation criteria:

First, academic argumentative writing includes rhetorical functions that match the selected frames[2,6]. Second, the six frames encompass all semantic behaviors shown by the top 10 CVs in both corpora (e.g., *argue, claim, suggest, recommend, acknowledge*). The selected frames appear frequently in the FrameNet database and previous corpus-based discourse analyses[4,14].

3.4. Data Validation

To ensure the reliability of annotation and classification, the coding process for both syntactic patterns and semantic frames for all occurrences of the top 10 communicative verbs was applied manually. A second trained coder independently reviewed a random 20% sample of the coded data. The agreement rate between the two coders exceeded 90%, indicating high consistency in the study. The coders resolved all disagreements through collaborative discussions to achieve accurate and replicable results for grammatical pattern tagging and semantic frame assignments. The majority of disagreements emerged when verb usage matched multiple possible grammatical or semantic categories including the distinction between *recommend + NP* and *recommend + that-clause* and the classification of *suggest* between Recommendation and Evaluation frames. Both coders used Pattern Grammar[13] and FrameNet[14] definitions to resolve these disagreements through collaborative discussions. The coding decision in ambiguous cases focused on selecting the option that best matched the argumentative discourse context. The coders achieved complete agreement on all annotated examples while documenting ambiguous cases for transparency purposes.

3.5. Reporting of Results

The results were presented in both tabular and narrative formats. The tables presented corpus comparison metrics (e.g., total tokens, CV frequencies, TTRs), top 10 CVs by frequency, grammatical patterns by corpus, and semantic frame distributions. The narrative analysis added interpretive commentary to the tables to explain the contrastive trends between Saudi and native speakers in both grammar and meaning.

4. Results

4.1. Corpus Statistics and Overall Usage

The two corpora showed significant statistical and semantic differences regarding the usage of communicative verbs (CVs). As shown in **Table 1**, the Saudi corpus with 491 argumentative essays contained slightly more words (166,047) than the LOCNESS corpus (151,707) yet the native speaker corpus demonstrated higher lexical diversity and wider functional use of CVs. The quantitative data showed significant variations between the two writer groups regarding their linguistic execution of communicative functions.

The statistics showed that Saudi EFL learners used CVs at a higher rate than native speakers did possibly because they used this strategy to strengthen their argumentation. The high frequency of CVs indicated active argumentative discourse engagement but the limited type/token ratio along with the repetitive use of a small set of verbs indicated underdeveloped lexical variety and rhetorical complexity. The high proportion of CVs to total verbs indicated that writers might substitute these structures for more extensive lexical choices.

Table 1. Corpus Comparison Statistics.

Metric	Saudi Corpus	LOCNESS Corpus
Total words	166,047	151,707
All lexical verb tokens	7,156	9,417
Number of communicative verbs	2,393	827
Unique CV types	15	21
Type/Token Ratio (TTR) of CVs	0.0063	0.0254
Ratio of CVs to total words	1.44%	0.55%
Ratio of CVs to overall verbs	33.44%	8.78%

Token: Every individual word occurrence in a corpus
Type: A unique word form

The LOCNESS writers demonstrated better control of verb deployment throughout their texts despite using fewer CVs. Native speakers' advanced syntactic abilities and pragmatic discourse control enabled them to express stance and argument through multiple structural and functional elements.

The difference between type/token ratios (0.0063 vs. 0.0254) showed that Saudi learners frequently used CVs, yet they failed to utilize most available verbs. The writers' limited exposure to academic texts and their dependence on instructional models that focused on specific verbs might be the cause. The unbalanced distribution of verbs in argumentative writing created negative effects on both clarity and precision and persuasiveness.

The high ratio of communicative verbs in the Saudi corpus (33.44%) likely reflects more than limited lexical diversity. The direct expression of opinions in exam-oriented writing tasks may also contribute to the repeated use of verbs such as *say*, *argue*, and *claim*. Learners may also use CVs to organize and signal arguments when they do not have more advanced cohesive devices. This suggests a strategic overuse of CVs as a compensatory tool rather than a sign of rhetorical maturity.

4.2. Comparison Between Saudi Learners and Native English Speakers

An analysis of the most frequently used communicative verbs demonstrated further differences in preference and variety, as indicated in **Table 2**.

Saudi students showed a strong preference for verbs like *say*, *argue*, and *state*, which were the top three most frequently used communicative verbs in their corpus. The preference for these verbs indicated that students tended to use formulaic or instruction-based patterns in their writing,

sticking to a small set of familiar verbs to build their arguments. The focus on these verbs indicated that students had a restricted understanding of the various rhetorical options that existed for persuasive writing.

Table 2. Top 10 Communicative Verbs and Their Frequencies.

Verb	Saudi Corpus (Freq.)	LOCNESS Corpus (Freq.)
say	472	103
argue	438	92
claim	331	83
state	277	76
suggest	241	91
mention	198	63
explain	151	52
assert	133	41
point out	86	80
recommend	66	86

Native speakers employed more diverse communicative verbs in their written work than the Saudi students did. The native writers showed their mastery of evaluative and dialogic functions in their essays because they used *"recommend"* and *"point out"* and *"acknowledge"* frequently. The writers showed sophisticated comprehension of how verbs operated to create stance and strengthen arguments and connect with readers.

Native writers used *"recommend"* and *"suggest"* verbs in hedged or modal structures to show their mastery of academic tone and reader engagement. The Saudi students used *"argue"* or *"say"* to convey certainty and assertiveness which could damage their rhetorical balance and critical engagement.

However, the verb *recommend* stands as an exception because it occurs with comparable frequency in both corpora. The verb *recommend* appears frequently in EFL writing instruction especially in the conclusions of argumentative essays. The syntactic patterns between Saudi learners and native speakers differ because Saudi learners tend to use non-standard forms such as *recommend someone to* while native speakers use more complex or appropriate patterns such as *recommend that*. The high frequency of this word indicates that students learned it through instruction rather than developing it through syntactic growth.

4.3. Grammatical Pattern Similarities and Differences

As can be seen in **Table 3**, Pattern Grammar analysis[13] showed that the syntactic patterns used with communicative verbs were different. Saudi learners mostly used the V + that-clause pattern, especially with *argue*, *claim*, and *say*. Other complementation patterns, such as to-infinitive or noun phrase complements, were rare and occasionally inaccurate. This pattern preference indicated a tendency towards formulaic usage, which restricted syntactic variation and the ability to express complex rhetorical relations.

Table 3. Grammatical Patterns of Select Communicative Verbs.

Verb	Saudi Corpus Pattern	LOCNESS Corpus Pattern
say	say that + clause	say that + clause
agree	agree with + NP	agree that + clause
recommend	recommend + to-infinitive	recommend that + clause
argue	argue that + clause	argue that + clause
claim	claim that + clause	claim that + clause
suggest	suggest to + verb (non-standard)	suggest that + clause / V-ing
state	rarely used	state that + clause
assert	infrequent	assert that + clause
explain	explain + NP	explain how/why/that + clause
advise	advise + object + to-infinitive	advise that + clause

The fact that Saudi learners used that-clause constructions extensively indicated a structural bias which was probably due to EFL instruction that often focused on simpler syntactic patterns. This dependence may lead to monotonous sentence patterns which decrease the level of stylistic complexity.

Furthermore, instances of non-standard constructions, such as "*suggest someone to go*," showed that learners had difficulties in mastering verb complementation rules. An example from the Saudi corpus "*I suggest for the people who are overweight and wants to lose weight...*". The construction "*suggest for the people*" is non-standard. Native usage typically avoids "suggest + for + NP + to-infinitive". It should be: "*I suggest that people who are overweight...*". Such errors indicated that learners had not fully mastered the grammar and may make their arguments less clear and less coherent.

In addition, while *agree* did not appear among the top 10 most frequent verbs in **Table 2**, it is included here due to its frequent syntactic misuse in the Saudi corpus and its relevance to Pattern Grammar analysis. This inclusion enables a more complete examination of grammatical accuracy and learner challenges, even for verbs of slightly lower frequency.

On the other hand, native speakers were able to use different verb-complement structures correctly. This included noun phrase complements ("*state the position*"), to-infinitive complements ("*advise students to*"), and modal forms. Such diversity enabled more sophisticated and rhetorically effective communication which is necessary for advanced argumentative writing.

4.4. Semantic Frames Across Corpora

As indicated in **Table 4**, the semantic analysis of CVs through FrameNet[14] resulted in the identification of semantic frames including Statement, Evaluation, Recommendation, and Justification. The Statement frame dominated the Saudi students' writing because they used verbs like *say, claim* and *argue* to present facts and opinions. The analysis revealed that students paid less attention to Justification and Explanation frames which play a crucial role in source engagement and critical thinking development.

Table 4. Semantic Frame Distribution of CVs.

Frame	Saudi Corpus (%)	LOCNESS Corpus (%)
Statement	42.3%	35.8%
Evaluation	19.6%	25.7%
Recommendation	21.4%	14.2%
Justification	8.1%	14.6%
Explanation	8.6%	9.7%

The excessive use of the Statement frame in the Saudi corpus indicated that students had a restricted understanding of CVs because they mainly used verbs to state facts instead of evaluating or qualifying them. The result was writing that contained too many declarative statements without sufficient complexity.

Native speakers demonstrated a more balanced distribution of frames in their writing. The Evaluation and Justification frames in their writing showed their ability to handle opposing views and provide evidence and qualifications which were fundamental elements of persuasive academic writing.

The limited use of these frames by Saudi students might result from their limited exposure to texts that demonstrated such usage or from instructional approaches that focused on factual assertion rather than rhetorical interplay. The development of frame diversity awareness will help EFL learners create more critical and dialogically rich and engaged writing.

5. Discussion

This research reveals important distinctions in how Saudi EFL learners and native English university students employ communicative verbs in their writing. These differences showed up as differences in the way these verbs occurred in the text as well as what words were chosen and the grammatical forms used and what messages were carried by the text. The following sections use Pattern Grammar[13], FrameNet[14] and stance-taking in academic writing[2] to

interpret these findings.

5.1. Frequency and Overuse of Communicative Verbs

The Saudi corpus contained a much higher number of communicative verbs (2,393 tokens) than the LOCNESS corpus of native speakers (827 tokens) even though both corpora were nearly of the same size. The knowledge of the CVs' rhetorical function is probably demonstrated by the awareness of these three high-frequency verbs (*say, argue, claim*) but the overuse of these three verbs suggests that the rhetorical range is still narrow. Similar findings have been observed by Alahmed and Jabbar[9] and Bozdağ and Badem[10] among Iraqi and Turkish EFL learners. Hyland[2] shows that CVs function in the reporting of information as well as in the construction of stance and argument, thus, frequent assertive verb use may indicate poor discourse strategy.

The proportion of CVs to total verbs in the Saudi corpus (33.44%) is greater than in the LOCNESS corpus (8.78%) which reinforces the interpretation of overuse. Native speakers seem to use CVs in combination with other rhetorical strategies to produce their writing rather than simply as markers. The use of more diverse and contextually embedded verbs leads to more sophisticated and effective academic prose[2,3].

5.2. Comparison between the Two Corpora

The Saudi corpus showed less lexical variety in CVs since its type/token ratio (TTR = 0.0213) was lower than the US corpus (TTR = 0.0690). Saudi students used a small set of verbs consisting of *argue, say, claim* which accounted for most of their usage. Less common were evaluative verbs such as *acknowledge, recommend*, or *emphasize* which are required for critical engagement.

The limited vocabulary also demonstrates immature lexicogrammatical development, which affects both the ability to express ideas and to use epistemic modulations, as observed by Boas[4]. Hyland and Guinda[6] pointed out that academic writing demands exact verb selection to show stance and to indicate modality and evidentiality. The Saudi corpus contains a limited set of verbs that restrict writers from accomplishing these communicative tasks.

Teachers should provide students with direct exposure to CVs and academic lexical bundles (such as *it is recom-*

mended that, some may argue that) to improve their ability to use language flexibly and appropriately in context. EFL learners need this training because they typically do not encounter a wide range of academic verbs in their general classroom education.

5.3. Grammatical Pattern Usage

In the Saudi learners' writing, the V + that-clause pattern was chosen most frequently. Although this construction follows the rules of grammar, using this construction repetitively (e.g., *students argue that...*) produces repetitive and formulaic writing. Problems arose from time to time due to verb complementation errors (e.g., *suggest someone to, explain him that*) showing that learners were unsure of how to use verb patterns correctly.

Native writers employed different syntactic patterns in their writing, such as V + NP + that-clause, V + to-infinitive, and modal verb constructions. Through flexible grammar, writing became more sophisticated and better able to express nuance. These findings are consistent with Hinkel[5], Kanestion et al.[12], and Khamkhien[16] who note grammatical patterning as one of the common challenges faced by EFL writers.

According to Hunston and Francis[13], knowledge of verb patterns is the basis for achieving fluency in English academic discourse. Learning to transform sentences and perform contrastive analysis of verb patterns, particularly for communicative verbs will help learners increase their syntactic range.

5.4. Semantic Frame Preferences

The findings of semantic frame analysis demonstrated that Saudi learners relied mostly on CVs from the Statement and Assertion frames. The students' writing style based on assertion and personal or general viewpoints fails to generate dialogic responses. Learners restricted their rhetorical possibilities through their infrequent use of Evaluation frame verbs alongside Acknowledgment and Recommendation frame verbs which include *emphasize, highlight, concede*, *admit*, *propose,* and *suggest*.

The native English speakers combined different linguistic frames in their writing by using *recommend, acknowledge* and *advise* to handle various perspectives. The

writing approach enables better reader engagement and reveals higher rhetorical competence according to Hyland[2] and Biber et al.[3].

The instruction of semantic framing in education helps students to recognize the proper verbs that function for specific rhetorical purposes. Educational tasks should include three stages of analyzing CVs from different semantic frames followed by their comparative evaluation and replacement process to help students understand the influence of verbs on text meaning and writer position.

The overreliance on assertive CVs together with insufficient utilization of evaluative or interactive verbs demonstrates a need for educational changes. The teaching approach in Saudi Arabia seems to prioritize both precise language use and standardized format designs while minimizing flexibility in written communication. Students in high power-distance societies tend to develop writing behaviors based on cultural and educational norms that discourage them from expressing evaluation or dissent[17]. The Hofstede[22] classification of Saudi Arabia as a high power-distance society shows different characteristics in educational contexts. The academic environment of Saudi students requires them to show respect toward authority figures including teachers and published scholars and textbooks[17]. The cultural background of students tends to prevent them from using critical evaluation verbs such as *dispute*, *question*, or *critique* because they prefer assertive or affirming verbs including *agree*, *say*, or *believe*.

The results match previous studies that investigated EFL learners in Arab and neighboring regions. Alahmed and Jabbar[9] demonstrated that Iraqi postgraduate students used assertive verbs *say* and *argue* more frequently than evaluative verbs *recommend* and *acknowledge*. Furthermore, Bozdağ and Badem[10] showed that Turkish learners depended mainly on general-purpose CVs because they had limited experience with academic genre conventions. Lastly, Kanestion et al.[12] revealed that Malaysian students demonstrated limited grammatical variety in their CV usage with a strong preference for that-clause constructions. The current study confirms regional patterns by demonstrating that Saudi learners face CV usage challenges as part of a broader EFL learning pattern found in educational contexts with comparable instructional and sociocultural characteristics.

The study demonstrates that academic corpus instruc-

tion should become a standard practice for language learning. Students should complete concordance analysis tasks and perform transformation exercises and rhetorical rephrasing activities to build their grammatical and semantic abilities. According to Römer[15], students require training to learn pattern generalization and manipulation for effective internalization of the material in meaningful contexts.

6. Conclusions

The present study analyzed how Saudi EFL learners use communicative verbs (CVs) in their argumentative essays through a comparison with native English-speaking writers using the LOCNESS corpus. The study combined Pattern Grammar and FrameNet frameworks to study the occurrence frequency and grammatical structure together with semantic frames of the ten most frequently used CVs in both corpora. The analysis revealed major distinctions between the two groups through their lexical diversity patterns and grammatical organization as well as their rhetorical effectiveness.

Native English speakers demonstrated fewer CVs than Saudi EFL students, yet they displayed a wider range of semantic frames with better type-token ratios. The students preferred using the V + that-clause pattern while displaying occasional incorrect uses of suggest and explain. Native speakers showed equal CV use and different grammatical patterns along with expanded semantic reach by using Evaluation and Recommendation and Acknowledgment frames.

The findings demonstrate both positive and negative aspects of academic writing produced by Saudi students. The high occurrence of CVs indicates students understand their purpose in writing, yet their restricted set of verbs and patterns demonstrates the requirement for advanced teaching methods. The observed differences between student and native speaker patterns demonstrate why EFL curricula need to incorporate corpus-based teaching materials and explicit instructions about verb complementation and discourse function.

The study adds a significant contribution to applied linguistics through its method of analyzing learner writing form-function relationships by using a hybrid grammatical-semantic approach. The present study stands as a pioneering work because it merges Pattern Grammar with FrameNet analysis in L2 academic writing which both enhances cor-

pus methodology and theoretical understanding of argumentative discourse language use. To the best of my knowledge, this is one of the first corpus-based studies to systematically apply both models to compare EFL and native speaker writing in the argumentative genre.

In addition, the study supports writing instruction that moves past basic grammar instruction to help students grasp the rhetorical effects of their selected words. Teaching staff should help students develop their communicative verb skills through specific activities that include stance-based writing assignments and peer review tasks and model essay exposure with annotation. The design of writing assignments must include structural elements to help students properly use CVs for argument construction. The analysis of authentic native-speaker writing in LOCNESS through corpus-based activities enables learners to recognize effective verb usage. The implementation of writing portfolios together with peer reviews which examine verb variety and pattern choice, and frame alignment will establish these practices as standard procedures. Writing instruction needs to include metadiscursive reflection as one of its essential elements. Students who ask rhetorical questions about verb functions develop their ability to view grammar as a tool for effective communication instead of focusing on grammatical rules. The implementation of corpora within reflective practices matches the teaching methods of ESP and EAP as described by Flowerdew[23] and Hyland[24].

The findings demonstrated the necessity for specific educational interventions in teaching EFL writing at Saudi institutions via different means. First, the overuse of basic verbs such as *say* and *argue* requires teachers to integrate additional communicative verbs including *recommend* and *acknowledge* through corpus-based educational resources. Educational tools like AntConc enable teachers to produce relevant concordance lines from the target verbs argue, recommend and acknowledge for their students. Second, the study indicated that students struggled with verb complementation because they may lack adequate syntactic control abilities. Teaching staff should teach verb patterns through academic writing examples to students. Third, the low frequency of Evaluation and Acknowledgment frames indicated that students did not actively engage with critical argumentation techniques. Educational institutions must incorporate stance and hedging training into their writing curricula to help students develop nuanced argumentation abilities.

Research can be enhanced by investigating additional genres and by analyzing the long-term evolution of CV use, and by developing interventions that tackle these issues in the classroom. Learner corpora and semantic resources present exciting research and pedagogical potential in EFL settings. Research should explore how direct semantic frames instruction influences learners in both stance-taking and writing quality. The framework has the potential to be used for other registers and genres including research article discussions, introductions, and literature reviews, where CVs hold a significant role. Enhancing Saudi EFL learners' capability to use communicative verbs with accuracy and rhetorical skills will boost their academic achievements and global communication abilities.

The study faces a limitation because the two student corpora may have different educational backgrounds and contextual factors. The study made attempts to match the corpora through argumentative essays as well as undergraduate-level and timed exam essay conditions, but native English-speaking students and Saudi EFL learners may differ in their academic English exposure and writing instruction approaches. The writing instruction Saudi students receive emphasizes grammar rules whereas native English students encounter more critical thinking and rhetorical variation during their writing classes[8,17]. The factors affecting communicative verb usage operate independently from language proficiency which makes it hard to identify L1 versus L2 as the sole cause of differences. Researchers should view the study's results with careful attention since future investigations need to include writing instruction history and disciplinary focus and feedback training as background variables to better understand learner performance[6,25].

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