

Conjunction in Expository Essay Writing by Jordanian Undergraduate Students Studying English as a Foreign Language (EFL)

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Abstract

Academic writing is used a lot in the academic field and general writing as a distinct genre discourse in the linguistic and socio-cultural fields. Good writers generally use well-formed sentences; they often establish connections between sentences. Writing an essay is still a critical problem for most EFL undergraduate students since they are still not able to establish connections between sentences. The purpose of this study is to investigate the usage of conjunctions as cohesive devices in expository essays produced by EFL fourth-year undergraduate students majoring in the English language at the Department of English language and literature, Hashemite University in Jordan. A corpus of 30 expository essays were collected by using a simple purposive sampling technique to answer the questions of the study based on the theory of cohesion analysis by refining the grammatical cohesive related aspect based on Halliday and Hasan's (1976) taxonomy of conjunction. The results show that additive conjunction covers the largest proportion of (57.70%) followed by causal conjunction (6.44%), adversative conjunction (3.64%), and temporal conjunction (3.64%). On the other hand, the analysis reveals that students use additive conjunction (17.93%), causal conjunction (5.32%), adversative conjunction (3.36%), and temporal conjunction (1.96%) inappropriately. This study contributes to the written discourse and pedagogy within the field of teaching English for academic writing. The study recommends that grammatical cohesive devices and their function should be explained to the students through explicit teaching, not as separated grammatical items but as discourse semantic resources of text creation.

1. Introduction

English language is one of the most dominant languages in the world. It is not only famous for its numerous usages in academics but also in other fields. It is broadly used in many areas, including politics, science, arts, tourism, and the economy. Thus, people should learn the English language to understand what is happening in the world (Zawahreh,

Suleiman, et al. Trimbur, Cope, and Kalantzis). In general, English language has four competencies, namely: reading, listening, writing and speaking. Learners should have the abilities of the mentioned skills above to master English effectively (Brown et al.). Writing plays an important part in academic achievement as a productive skill to increase their language abilities and thoughts. Thus, it is one

of the most complicated abilities needed to build human literacy that most students and teachers can grasp (Trimbur, Cope, and Kalantzis). However, writing is the most difficult language skill for non-native speakers since the writing process involves, a critical, rational, and systematic process of thinking, which makes it difficult for a writer to decide what he wants to write (Yang and Sun). In addition, composition skills are needed to modify data or the language itself in academic writing (Grabe and Kaplan). At this stage, writing is a learning to process that helps students to manage their vocabulary and to create well-organized ideas in a written form. Not only does the capacity of academic writing to form grammatical sentences, but students also need the capacity to build coherent text using conjunctions. Connection ties are considered the most important cohesive device since they bind sentences and paragraphs in different units and enable the reader to get the message clearly. Thus, conjunctive elements are the most common types of cohesion in grammar and composition. Such ties describe the coherent association between clauses or parts of the text to demonstrate a significant relationship between them. These conjunctions help students to write their essays by helping signals between different phrases as well as connecting concepts in separate paragraphs. Thus, it is vital for students to employ the conjunction according to their aim since it is important in linking and creating significant ideas (Ghasemi).

2. Literature Review

Many ESL / EFL studies have conducted on the use of cohesive devices, as they are closely associated with writing the essay. (Connor) compares cohesive devices in the writing essays of Japanese and Spanish ESL learners with the writing of English native speakers. His results have shown that learners from ESL seem to have cohesion knowledge but lack different lexical skills compared to native speakers. In this area, ESL learners seem lacking as their essays show less linguistic variety or more conceptual redundancy, while native speakers had a better range of vocabulary. Connor concludes with the implementation of cohesion in ESL written by learners; as English language skills develop; students will improve slowly to a degree of cohesion of the native speakers. Likewise, (Alarcon, Katrina, Morales, et

al.) undertake a study to investigate the cohesive devices employed in the written text by undergraduate students. The results of the study reveal that the students lack using conjunction cohesive devices.

(Barry et al.) examines English writing samples from Saudi undergraduate students who attended pre-academic studies at Michigan's Oakland University. The study investigates several categories, like conjunctions, conventions of English expression, and word order. The findings of the study reveal that participants are excessively used conjunctions, especially "and" similarly, (Satria, Handayani, et al.) examine the use of grammatical cohesive devices by the students of Putera Batam University. The results show that students have problems with the over exploitation of the conjunction devices, especially in the use of "and" and "because". (Hamed) examines conjunctions in argumentative essays written by English as a Foreign Language fourth-year undergraduate Libyan students majoring in English at Omar Al-Mukhtar University in Libya. The results indicated that the Libyan EFL students have difficulties using conjunctions especially, the use of alternative conjunctions followed by additives and casualty, which were most challenging for them. (Othman) examines the types, frequencies, and causes of grammatical cohesive devices errors in the written paragraphs which were committed by the Saudi English major students (male) who are majoring in the English language at the Department of Language and Translation at the University of Tabuk in Saudi Arabia. His findings revealed that the most common mistakes occurred in conjunction with the percentage of (52%), reference (37%), and substitution (11%). The results demonstrated that Saudi students committed such mistakes due to the lack of grammar, the influence of mother-tongue interference, a lack of language skills, and a lack of vocabulary.

3. Theoretical Framework of the Study

In the light of (Halliday, Hasan, et al.) taxonomy of conjunctions, the current study analyzed the different types of conjunctions found in students' written texts. State that cohesive components are not cohesive in themselves; they are not primary tools for entering the preceding or the following text, but indirectly, by their specific meanings, "they express certain meanings which presuppose the presence of

other components in the discourse” (p.226). In using conjunction as a cohesive device, not much attention is given to semantic relations which are carried out throughout language grammar, but on one particular item of them, namely, their related function which occurs in succession linguistic elements. He examined the conjunctions under four main sub types; Additive conjunction which provides extra detail that helps to highlight the discourse topic such as furthermore, besides, for instance, similarly, thus, in other words, likewise, again, also, moreover, what is more, and in addition. Adversative conjunction shows a relation by showing the opposite of what is predicted. Adverse relations are marked with such as: yet, though, but, however, despite, in fact, at the same time, on the other hand, nevertheless, instead, at least, in any case, rather. Casual conjunction shows reason and consequences and it establishes a link between sentences. Casual conjunction is expressed word such as, then, for, because, as a result, to this end, in that case, otherwise and so. Finally, temporal conjunction is connected between two successive sentences in a sequence of time. Temporal conjunctions such as: then, after that, meanwhile, finally, at last, soon, next, at this moment, in conclusion, from now on, etc. The rationale for using the conjunctions taxonomy of it as the framework for this study was that they offered the most thorough exposition in English of cohesive relationships and elaborate codes for analysis of ties.

4. Research Method

This study deploys quantitative methods. This method is appropriate for this study because they use frequency counts of conjunctions used by the EFL students and quantified data. The analytical approach is also used to examine specific explanations of the difficulties that are highlighted. It is also fundamental to trace the impact of Halliday analytical method of conjunction cohesion.

5. Data Collection Procedure

The study’s participants were chosen to use a purposive sample approach. All of the students were Jordanian EFL students majoring in English language and literature at The Hashemite University of Jordan’s Department of English language and literature. Thirty students’ essays written in the real-time examination were collected from the students’ writing assignments, which required them to create a

well-organized piece of writing regarding, “. Many people say that Facebook and other social networking websites can replace real face-to-face communication.” The given topic was determined in the real-time examination during the first semester of 2020-2021. However, the assignment was administered by an EFL instructor.

6. Research Question

The present study investigated the use by EFL Jordanian undergraduate students of conjunctions in expository texts. It tries to answer the following question:

- What types of conjunctions are employed appropriately or inappropriately by Jordanian EFL students at Hashemite University, Jordan, in their academic writing English language?

7. Findings and Discussion

The conjunction analysis is done manually by noting every conjunction connecting sentences. Then, all types of conjunctions were coded as in the following additive conjunction (C1), adversative conjunction (C2), causal conjunction (C3) and temporal conjunction (C4). Next step, all conjunctions are divided into two categories: appropriate (A) and inappropriate (IA) conjunction use. Each sort of conjunction is characterized separately based on its semantic function. Finally, the top conjunction in each conjunction type that was most commonly utilized by participants in terms of their proportion of inappropriateness was rated.

7.1. Findings

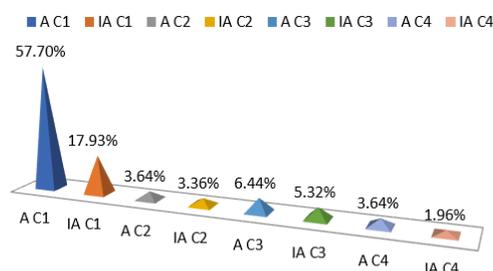


FIGURE 1. The Overall Percentage of Conjunction Use in Participants’ Written Texts

In terms of appropriate (A) conjunctions, the most occurring type is additive conjunction covering the largest proportion of (57.70%) of the total use of

grammatical cohesion devices. Then, it is followed by causal conjunction which covers (6.44%). Adversative conjunction covers (3.64%). The last conjunction found is temporal conjunction, which occupies the same adversative portion (3.64%). As shown in Figure 1, the highest frequency of inappropriate (A) use of conjunctions committed by the learners was in the use of additives (17.93 %), followed by causals (5.32 %), adversatives (3.36 %), and temporal (1.96%).

7.1.1. Additive Conjunction

As shown in chart 2, the appropriate use of additive conjunctions in the students' writings was (206), whereas the incorrect usage was (64). However, it indicates that the additive conjunctions and overall had the highest frequency of inappropriate use (58).

7.1.2. Adversative Connection

The primary function of adversative conjunctions is to express the opposing expectation Halliday. Thus, the adversative relation may be acquired by opposing expectations resulting from previously discussed. However, as shown by the data in Table 2, the highest frequency of inappropriate use of adversative conjunctions was the word but (7).

7.1.3. Causal Conjunction

The table shows the inappropriate use of causal conjunction because was found in the highest frequency of errors (14).

7.1.4. Temporal Connection

Temporal conjunctions are commonly used to connect two sentences or phrases. Their external linkages characterize time since content might be temporal sequences: one follows the other. By then, temporal cohesiveness is expressed in its most basic form, according to Halliday and Hasan (1976, p. 261). When occurrences in texts are time-related, temporal linkages exist. Table 5 indicates that the use of temporal conjunctions was not an issue for the participants. However, the conjunctions but was found (2) times inappropriate in the students written texts.

8. Discussion

The analysis concentrates on the incorrect use of separate conjunctions in participants' written assignments, as incorrect use of conjunctions causes

problems with reading. The discussion is organized around subcategories of semantic functions represented by conjunctions. As a result, the top conjunction from each type was chosen and examined in terms of its linguistic features. The use of additives (and) is first discussed, followed by the use of adversatives (but), causals (because) and the use of temporal conjunction (until).

1. There are many reasons for English learning and English is not close to Arabic structures.

2. In the elementary study, students can read sentences, but they can use the four skills to study.

3. We spend the past four years taking a lot of subjects as drama, grammar, writing, poetry and listening skills because they help my ability and skills.

4. Practice English on the internet and Facebook until they give you new information and skills that need to study.

In example 1, the conjunction and does not add any information to the previously mentioned, rather than the second sentence introducing an opposite relation. So that the conjunction and should be changed into adversative conjunction to establish cohesion with the previous sentence. In example (2), the student employed the conjunction incorrectly by utilizing it without an adversative connection. As can be observed, the but word does not contradict the previously described discourse unit. Instead, it gives more information about the previous mentioned, so there is no adversative relation established between the units of discourse connected by but. Thus, the word but should be substituted for the additive conjunction and create text unity. In (3), The participants' incorrect usage of the word because due to the semantic function, in which the sentence introduced by because does not add to the causal relation with the sentence before because. Instead, it appears to support what has been previously mentioned. As a result, the conjunction between these sentences should be removed in order to unify the content. The conjunction until in (4) fails to establish a cohesive relationship of the consequence of time between the discourse units it links. It can be seen that the sentence introduced by until is a result of what has been formerly mentioned. Therefore, it may be much better to use the word because of its use with cause-and-effect sentences.

According to the findings, additive conjunction

TABLE 1. The appropriate and inappropriate use of additive conjunctions

Conjunctions	Appropriate	Inappropriate
	N	N
And	184	58
Or	16	1
In addition to	3	1
Furthermore	0	1
Moreover	0	1
For example	1	0
Also	2	2
Total	206	64

TABLE 2. The appropriate and inappropriate use of adversative conjunctions

Conjunctions	A	IA
	But	11
However	0	4
Despite	1	0
On the other hand	0	1
In fact	1	0
Total	12	12

TABLE 3. The appropriate and inappropriate use of causal conjunctions

Conjunctions	A	IA
	Because	16
So	4	4
Thus	1	1
Therefore	1	0
In these cases	1	0
Total	23	19

TABLE 4. The appropriate and inappropriate use of temporal conjunctions

Conjunctions	A	IA
	Until	3
Finally	2	2
First	2	0
Second	2	0
In the end	2	1
Total	23	19

accounts for the highest percentage of (67%) followed by causal conjunction (28%), adversative conjunction (3%), and temporal conjunction (3%). Thus, comparing the acceptable and incorrect usage of conjunction connections demonstrates that students have difficulty employing these devices in their writing, implying that conjunctions were significant challenges for the students. This finding is supported by (Nilopa et al.) study, which

found that conjunction devices were the most inappropriately used (50 percent of the other types of cohesive devices) in students' writing but contradicts (Nirwanto) who found that conjunction was the most frequently used 229 appropriately from overall conjunction 247 in academic writing. However, the students overused the additive conjunction, which caused difficulty in their writing. The term and was misused (58) times. According to (Mohamed-

Sayidina), the additive is the most commonly occurring conjunctive in the Arabic language. Thus, it appears that the student's lack of understanding of how to use additive connections correctly.

9. Conclusion

The findings revealed that additive conjunctions were dominantly used, among other types of conjunctions because conjunctions forms are usually used as subject, modifier, or object as part of the sentences. On other the hand, the use of the conjunction was the most commonly used after references of grammatical cohesion. The conjunctive, additive, adversative, causal, and temporal subcategories have been used to decrease order. The word and was found the highest frequency among additive conjunctions. The adversative conjunction but was dominantly used. The word because was used mostly to demonstrate causality and result. While in showing sequence, first, second, finally, and until were the most frequently used temporal conjunction. Based on the results seen above, it is apparent that the students have been used reference and conjunction high-frequency comparison to the other two types. Based on the present study's findings, it recommends that learning and teaching of different types of cohesive devices should be teaching separately from the writing process as well as focus on the functions of each type. It also recommends that instructors provide their learners with a lot of drills to enable them to use these devices effectively in their writing.

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