

COMMON ERRORS IN USING CONJUNCTION

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ABSTRAK

Errors in conjunction usage remain a significant challenge for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners, adversely impacting textual cohesion, coherence, and overall writing quality. This study aimed to identify common conjunction-related errors, analyze their underlying causes, and evaluate strategies to address them. The research employed a quasi-experimental design involving 60 EFL learners divided into experimental and control groups. The experimental group received instruction integrating context-based teaching, corpus-based learning, and structured formal writing practice, while the control group followed a traditional grammar-focused approach. Pre-test and post-test assessments evaluated improvements in conjunction usage accuracy, textual cohesion, and error reduction. Findings revealed that conjunction errors frequently disrupted text meaning, diminished academic performance, and created negative impressions of writer proficiency. Contributing factors included mother tongue interference, limited grammatical understanding, insufficient writing practice, and theoretical teaching methods. The integration of innovative instructional strategies significantly improved conjunction usage, as evidenced by increased accuracy and enhanced cohesion and coherence in the experimental group's written texts. This study underscores the importance of adopting context-driven teaching strategies to address conjunction-related errors, with implications for EFL instruction and curriculum design. Further research is recommended to explore these methods across broader learner demographics and linguistic contexts.

Keywords: Conjunction usage; EFL learners; grammatical errors; writing quality; teaching strategies

INTRODUCTION

Errors in the use of conjunctions represent a critical issue in English grammar learning, particularly for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners. Conjunctions not only serve as connectors between clauses but also play a pivotal role in maintaining logical coherence within texts (Najamuddin, 2017). Prior research underscores that students frequently misuse conjunctions such as "and," "but," and "because," resulting in ambiguous meanings in writing (Ma'shum, 2021; Geraldine, 2020). This problem highlights the complexity of mastering grammatical structures essential for effective communication.

A deeper understanding of conjunction-related errors reveals that challenges often arise from insufficient knowledge of coordinative, subordinative, and correlative conjunctions, as discussed by Arabi and Ali (2014). Additionally, the influence of learners' native language exacerbates these difficulties, as noted by Nurbaidah (2019) and Rahman (2017). Moreover, Riadi and Nathania (2023) identify significant struggles

in the use of conjunctions within academic writing, emphasizing the difficulty students face in adapting to formal writing styles.

The widespread misuse of conjunctions among EFL learners adversely impacts the clarity and cohesion of their written communication. This issue is particularly evident in academic contexts, where precision and logical structuring are imperative. Studies, including those by Swan (2016) and Huddleston & Pullum (2002), have extensively documented the role of conjunctions in textual cohesion and their direct influence on the overall quality of writing.

Despite the availability of pedagogical strategies to address grammatical challenges, traditional methods often fail to adequately resolve learners' difficulties with conjunctions. The integration of innovative and technology-driven learning media, such as flashcards, videos, and mobile applications, has emerged as a promising solution to enhance English language instruction (Wani et al., 2023). These tools provide an engaging platform for learners to practice and internalize proper conjunction usage in varied contexts.

The utilization of targeted strategies like Direct Reading and Thinking Activities (DRTA) has demonstrated potential in improving learners' comprehension and application of conjunctions. DRTA effectively engages learners in reflective thinking during reading activities, fostering a deeper understanding of grammatical structures (Lubis, 2018). Similarly, the minimal pairs technique, commonly used for phoneme differentiation, has been adapted to train students in distinguishing conjunction types and their contextual applications (Marpaung et al., 2023).

The use of multimodal learning approaches, combining auditory and visual stimuli, has been particularly effective in addressing grammatical errors. For instance, integrating children's songs and animated videos enhances learners' ability to recognize and use conjunctions appropriately, as these mediums promote interactive and context-based learning (Wani et al., 2023). Moreover, digital platforms designed for grammar practice offer immediate feedback and tailored exercises, which help learners identify and rectify specific errors.

Another innovative approach involves the application of syllable-based phonological analysis to explore how conjunctions function within sentence structures. Hasibuan (2023) highlights the relevance of understanding linguistic units such as syllables in grasping complex grammatical forms, suggesting that such insights can also inform the teaching of conjunction usage.

A comprehensive review of the literature indicates that while existing methods address various aspects of conjunction usage, critical gaps remain. Studies by Azar (2013) and Carter & McCarthy (2006) provide foundational frameworks for teaching grammar but do not sufficiently address the persistent influence of native language interference on learners' mastery of English conjunctions. Furthermore, most studies focus on either spoken or written contexts without fully exploring their interconnectedness.

Moreover, the limited scope of existing research in academic writing contexts, particularly at advanced levels of English learning, underscores the need for further investigation. Riadi and Nathania (2023) point to a lack of tailored strategies for formal writing, leaving learners ill-equipped for the demands of higher education.

Additionally, while technology-based learning media have shown promise, their specific impact on conjunction usage remains underexplored.

This study aims to systematically identify the most frequent errors in conjunction usage among EFL learners and analyze their underlying causes. Building on frameworks proposed by Azar (2013) and Carter & McCarthy (2006), the study employs a mixed-methods approach to explore these issues across both informal and academic writing contexts. By incorporating innovative pedagogical tools and methodologies, the study seeks to contribute novel insights into the integration of multimodal learning strategies for teaching conjunctions.

The research is significant in its potential to bridge gaps between theoretical understanding and practical application. Its findings will inform educators and curriculum designers in developing more effective teaching strategies, ultimately enhancing learners' grammatical competence and written communication skills. The scope includes a detailed analysis of conjunction errors, contextual influences, and the effectiveness of intervention strategies in diverse learning environments.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study utilized a combination of authentic written texts, a linguistic corpus database, and structured formal writing exercises to investigate the effectiveness of different instructional strategies for improving conjunction usage among EFL learners. Authentic texts, drawn from academic journals, news articles, and narrative essays, were selected to provide participants with diverse examples of conjunctions in real-world contexts. The British National Corpus (BNC) was employed as a linguistic resource to analyze patterns of conjunction usage across various genres and registers. In addition, a workbook specifically designed for the study included contextualized grammar tasks and formal writing exercises to ensure consistent practice.

The participants consisted of 60 EFL learners enrolled at a university in Indonesia, selected using purposive sampling to ensure homogeneity in language proficiency. All participants were assessed at the B1 level of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) through a standardized English test. They were divided into two equal groups: an experimental group, which received the intervention strategies, and a control group, which followed a traditional grammar-focused curriculum.

The study employed a quasi-experimental design with pre-test and post-test measures to evaluate the intervention's impact. The pre-test consisted of sentence correction tasks, multiple-choice questions, and a short essay to assess participants' initial proficiency in conjunction usage. Over 12 weeks, both groups attended weekly 90-minute instructional sessions. The experimental group received instruction that integrated context-based teaching, corpus-based learning, and formal writing tasks. This approach emphasized the practical application of conjunctions through real-world examples, linguistic pattern analysis, and iterative writing exercises. Conversely, the control group followed traditional instruction, focusing on rule memorization and isolated practice without contextual reinforcement.

The post-test, identical to the pre-test, measured improvements in conjunction usage accuracy and the quality of written texts. The primary parameters assessed included the accuracy of conjunction usage, textual cohesion and coherence, and the

reduction in errors between the pre- and post-tests. Textual cohesion and coherence were evaluated using rubrics adapted from the CEFR. Error reduction was quantified as the percentage decrease in conjunction-related mistakes.

The data were analyzed using SPSS software. Paired sample t-tests were conducted to compare pre- and post-test results within each group, while independent sample t-tests assessed differences between the experimental and control groups. The magnitude of the intervention's effectiveness was determined through effect size calculations. Additionally, qualitative analysis of the participants' essays provided detailed insights into changes in their ability to construct cohesive and coherent texts. This mixed-methods approach enabled a comprehensive understanding of the instructional strategies' impact on improving conjunction usage.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Analysis of Errors in the Use of Conjunctions in EFL Learners

The analysis revealed four prevalent types of errors in the use of conjunctions among EFL learners: coordinative, subordinative, correlative, and transitional. First, the misuse of coordinative conjunctions was widespread, particularly the conjunction "and." Many students incorrectly applied "and" to connect ideas that were not logically parallel, leading to a lack of alignment in meaning within compound sentences (Geraldine, 2020; Ma'shum, 2021). This resulted in sentences that were syntactically acceptable but semantically unclear.

Second, errors in subordinative conjunctions were evident, especially with "because." Students frequently struggled to use this conjunction to indicate cause-and-effect relationships correctly. This was attributed to a limited understanding of the syntactic and semantic requirements of subordinative constructions (Arabi & Ali, 2014). For example, students often introduced incomplete or disconnected clauses, failing to establish a coherent causal link.

Third, correlative conjunctions, such as "either...or" and "neither...nor," posed significant challenges. Students commonly mismatched or misused these conjunction pairs, resulting in ungrammatical structures (Setyawan, 2013). Such errors hindered the logical balance and symmetry expected in sentences employing correlative conjunctions.

Finally, transitional conjunctions like "however" and "therefore" were misused, particularly in formal writing. These errors were characterized by inappropriate placement or incorrect application, disrupting the logical flow of arguments (Riadi & Nathania, 2023). The frequency of these mistakes highlights the complexity of using transitional conjunctions to maintain coherence in formal contexts.

The findings align with earlier research on the challenges EFL learners face in mastering conjunctions, confirming the observations of Najamuddin (2017) regarding the centrality of conjunctions in creating textual coherence. The misuse of "and" for non-parallel ideas corroborates Geraldine (2020) and Ma'shum (2021), who identified similar issues among EFL learners, linking these errors to inadequate instruction on logical structuring in sentences.

Subordinative conjunction errors echo the conclusions of Arabi and Ali (2014), who emphasized the influence of incomplete comprehension of grammatical rules. However, while their study highlighted native language interference as a primary

cause, this research underscores the need for contextual practice in understanding the semantic nuances of conjunctions.

Regarding correlative conjunctions, the findings support Setyawan's (2013) assertion that learners often struggle with grammatical symmetry in paired constructions. The study extends this by showing that these errors persist across proficiency levels, suggesting the need for explicit teaching strategies.

The issues with transitional conjunctions align with the challenges identified by Riadi and Nathania (2023) in academic writing. Unlike simpler conjunctions, transitional ones demand a sophisticated understanding of discourse coherence. This study further highlights that these errors are not solely linguistic but also cognitive, stemming from difficulties in constructing formal arguments.

These findings have significant implications for both pedagogy and linguistic research. Pedagogically, the results emphasize the need for targeted instruction that differentiates between conjunction types and their functions. For instance, incorporating multimodal learning tools, such as videos and interactive applications, could provide contextual practice to improve understanding, as suggested by Wani et al. (2023). These methods can also address the cognitive demands of mastering transitional conjunctions, enhancing learners' ability to organize formal texts effectively.

Linguistically, the findings contribute to the broader understanding of how conjunctions operate within EFL contexts. By revealing specific patterns of error, this research supports the need for a more nuanced approach to teaching grammar, aligning with the analytical frameworks proposed by Azar (2013) and Carter & McCarthy (2006). Additionally, the study's focus on transitional conjunctions opens avenues for further research on the cognitive aspects of language learning, particularly in formal writing.

The study underscores the importance of an integrated approach to grammar instruction, combining phonological analysis and contextualized learning, as highlighted by Maharani et al. (2023). By aligning sound structures with syntactic functions, educators can provide a holistic framework for learners to internalize conjunction usage more effectively. Moreover, understanding and addressing these errors will ultimately lead to improved written communication skills, aligning with the goal of fostering linguistic competence in global contexts.

Factors Causing Errors in Using Conjunctions

The study identified four primary factors contributing to students' errors in conjunction usage. The most prominent was mother tongue interference, where learners often transferred Indonesian sentence structures into English, leading to incorrect conjunction use (Rahman, 2017). This phenomenon was particularly evident in attempts to replicate Indonesian syntactic patterns, resulting in constructions that did not align with English grammar rules.

The second factor was a limited understanding of grammatical rules, as highlighted by Azar (2013). Students lacked clarity on the functions and types of conjunctions, such as the distinction between coordinative and subordinative forms. This knowledge gap frequently led to repetitive errors, particularly in more complex sentences.

Thirdly, insufficient practice in writing was a significant barrier. The lack of practical exercises focusing on conjunctions hindered students from internalizing proper usage (Greenbaum & Quirk, 1990). This gap in active learning opportunities limited their ability to apply theoretical knowledge effectively in varied contexts.

Lastly, the learning environment played a crucial role. Overly theoretical teaching methods, as noted by Carter & McCarthy (2006), prevented students from engaging with conjunctions in meaningful, real-world scenarios. This approach failed to bridge the gap between theoretical understanding and practical application.

The findings align with Rahman's (2017) observations on the impact of mother tongue interference. However, this study further emphasizes the systemic nature of such interference, linking it to broader cognitive challenges in adapting to English syntax. While Rahman identified the issue, the current research highlights the persistent nature of these errors across proficiency levels.

Similarly, the role of limited grammatical understanding supports Azar's (2013) claim that knowledge of conjunctions is foundational yet underdeveloped in many EFL learners. This study builds on Azar's work by demonstrating how this deficiency compounds errors in academic writing, where precision is crucial.

The results also corroborate Greenbaum and Quirk's (1990) findings on the necessity of writing practice. However, this research extends their argument by linking the lack of practice to modern educational environments where passive learning methods prevail. This deficiency is compounded by an overemphasis on rote memorization, which undermines active skill development.

Lastly, the influence of the learning environment echoes Carter and McCarthy's (2006) critique of theoretical teaching methods. This study provides additional evidence that practical, context-based instruction is essential for mastering conjunction usage. For instance, integrating phonological elements, as discussed by Maharani et al. (2023), could offer innovative pathways to connect theory with practical application, fostering deeper learning.

The implications of these findings underscore the urgent need to address systemic barriers in EFL instruction. First, mitigating mother tongue interference requires targeted strategies that help learners recognize and adjust to the syntactic differences between Indonesian and English. Tools such as minimal pairs, which have proven effective in pronunciation training (Marpaung et al., 2023), could be adapted to teach syntactic nuances in conjunction usage.

Second, the persistent gap in grammatical understanding calls for curriculum reforms that prioritize conceptual clarity. Educators must ensure that students grasp not only the types and functions of conjunctions but also their application in varied contexts. Interactive digital tools and media, as highlighted by Wani et al. (2023), could support this by offering engaging, context-specific exercises.

The lack of practical writing opportunities necessitates an emphasis on active learning. Writing tasks should be incorporated into daily instruction, focusing on diverse sentence structures to reinforce correct conjunction usage. The effectiveness of structured learning strategies like Pre-Reading, During Reading, and Post Reading activities (Tanjung et al., 2022) suggests that similar approaches could be adapted for grammar instruction.

Lastly, addressing the limitations of traditional teaching methods requires a paradigm shift toward experiential learning. Incorporating real-world scenarios and collaborative activities can help students internalize grammatical rules effectively. For instance, phonological insights, as discussed by Hasibuan (2023), could be integrated into teaching materials to enhance learners' understanding of language structures holistically. By addressing these factors comprehensively, educators can bridge the gap between theoretical understanding and practical application, fostering more effective communication skills among EFL learners.

The Impact of Misuse of Conjunctions

The findings underscore that errors in conjunction usage significantly impact the quality of written texts. Cohesion and coherence were the most affected aspects, as conjunction errors disrupted the logical flow of ideas, making texts difficult to comprehend (Najamuddin, 2017). For instance, incorrect use of coordinative conjunctions like "and" often resulted in disjointed or redundant sentences, which hindered readers' ability to follow the intended meaning.

Additionally, misinterpretation of meaning was prevalent, particularly with subordinative conjunctions such as "although." Errors in these structures frequently altered the intended contrast or causality in sentences, leading to ambiguity (Arabi & Ali, 2014). This issue was further compounded in academic texts, where precision is paramount.

Another critical finding was the negative academic consequences of conjunction errors. Students who committed these errors often received lower grades, as their writing was deemed less professional and coherent. This aligns with the observations of Riadi and Nathania (2023), who highlighted the challenges EFL learners face in meeting the high standards of academic writing.

Lastly, such errors created a negative impression on readers, as improper conjunction usage suggested a lack of proficiency in English. Huddleston and Pullum (2002) argue that errors in grammar, particularly conjunctions, can undermine the credibility of the writer and diminish the overall impact of the text.

The findings are consistent with existing literature that emphasizes the centrality of conjunctions in achieving textual cohesion. Najamuddin (2017) identifies cohesion as the backbone of effective writing, and the disruptions caused by conjunction errors in this study reaffirm this principle. By comparing the patterns of errors in student writing, this study further highlights the practical implications of these theoretical insights.

The issue of misinterpreted meaning aligns closely with Arabi and Ali's (2014) observations. While their work focuses on the syntactic misuse of subordinative conjunctions, this study extends their findings by demonstrating how such errors can alter semantic intent in both formal and informal contexts. This underscores the importance of conjunctions in not only structuring sentences but also conveying nuanced relationships between ideas.

Similarly, the correlation between conjunction errors and low academic performance supports the findings of Riadi and Nathania (2023). This study adds depth to their conclusions by analyzing how these errors specifically undermine the professional tone required in academic writing. For example, the improper use of

transitional conjunctions like "however" often resulted in fragmented arguments, reducing the overall clarity and persuasiveness of essays.

Huddleston and Pullum's (2002) assertion that grammatical errors negatively impact readers' perceptions is also supported here. This research provides empirical evidence that conjunction errors can erode a writer's credibility, reinforcing the need for accuracy in grammar as an essential component of effective communication.

The findings have significant implications for both pedagogy and linguistic research. In teaching, the emphasis must shift toward addressing the dual challenges of cohesion and coherence in writing. Teachers can employ innovative strategies, such as integrating phonological analysis into grammar instruction, to help learners internalize the correct usage of conjunctions (Maharani et al., 2023). For instance, linking conjunction usage to sentence rhythm and structure may enhance students' understanding of how these elements contribute to logical flow.

To mitigate the risk of misinterpreted meaning, explicit instruction on subordinative conjunctions should include practical exercises that highlight their semantic roles. These could involve rewriting tasks where students correct faulty conjunctions to achieve clarity, reinforcing their ability to convey precise meanings.

The connection between conjunction errors and low academic performance calls for the incorporation of writing-focused pedagogies, such as the Direct Reading and Thinking Activity (DRTA) method, which has been shown to improve comprehension and writing skills (Tanjung et al., 2022). By applying such approaches, educators can foster a deeper understanding of the functional roles of conjunctions.

Finally, addressing the negative impressions created by conjunction errors is critical for preparing learners to communicate effectively in professional and academic settings. Encouraging the use of digital tools and interactive media, as suggested by Wani et al. (2023), can offer learners engaging platforms to practice and refine their writing skills. Overall, by combining theoretical frameworks with practical teaching strategies, these findings highlight the importance of accurate conjunction usage in enhancing both the quality and perception of EFL learners' written work.

Effective in Overcoming Misuse of Conjunctions

The study identified four effective strategies for addressing errors in conjunction usage among EFL learners. The first strategy is context-based teaching, which involves using authentic examples from real texts to illustrate the practical application of conjunctions. This approach helps students understand how conjunctions function in creating cohesion and coherence within texts (Swan, 2016). By connecting grammatical rules to meaningful contexts, learners can internalize correct usage more effectively.

The second strategy is corpus-based practice, which uses linguistic corpora to expose students to patterns of conjunction usage across diverse contexts. Carter and McCarthy (2006) emphasized the value of corpus-based learning for uncovering authentic language usage, allowing students to see how conjunctions are applied in various communicative settings.

The third strategy is the emphasis on formal writing practice, which involves repetitive exercises in structured writing. Azar (2013) highlights that consistent practice in formal writing can reduce errors by reinforcing the correct application of

conjunctions. This approach is particularly beneficial for preparing students to meet the demands of academic and professional writing.

Lastly, constructive feedback from instructors plays a pivotal role. Greenbaum and Quirk (1990) advocate for specific and targeted feedback to address individual errors in conjunction usage. Such feedback not only corrects mistakes but also builds learners' awareness of grammatical principles and their application in writing.

The findings align with Swan's (2016) argument that context-based teaching bridges the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application. This research extends Swan's conclusions by demonstrating that integrating real-world examples fosters a deeper understanding of conjunctions, enabling learners to apply them effectively in diverse contexts.

The use of corpus-based methods, as recommended by Carter and McCarthy (2006), is validated by this study's findings. Corpus tools provide learners with exposure to authentic language patterns, enhancing their ability to recognize and replicate appropriate conjunction usage. This study further highlights the role of corpora in addressing specific errors, such as those involving transitional conjunctions, by showing authentic examples of their correct application.

Azar's (2013) emphasis on formal writing practice is also supported by the findings. Regular and structured exercises help students internalize grammatical rules, reducing the likelihood of recurring errors. This study adds to Azar's perspective by illustrating how such practice not only enhances grammatical accuracy but also improves the overall quality and professionalism of students' writing.

The importance of constructive feedback, as emphasized by Greenbaum and Quirk (1990), is reaffirmed. This study illustrates that specific feedback targeting conjunction errors enables learners to understand the underlying rules and correct their mistakes. Moreover, the feedback process fosters a collaborative learning environment, encouraging students to actively engage with grammar instruction.

These findings have significant implications for teaching practices and curriculum development. Context-based teaching should be prioritized to make grammar instruction more engaging and relevant. For example, incorporating authentic texts, such as news articles or excerpts from novels, into classroom activities can help students see how conjunctions are used effectively in real communication.

Corpus-based learning should be integrated into EFL instruction to provide students with access to diverse examples of conjunction usage. Digital tools and online corpora, such as the British National Corpus (BNC), can serve as valuable resources for exploring patterns and refining understanding. By using these tools, students can gain insights into the nuances of conjunction application across different genres and registers.

Formal writing exercises should be a central component of the curriculum, with a focus on iterative improvement. Drawing from the Direct Reading and Thinking Activity (DRTA) model discussed by Tanjung et al. (2022), structured writing tasks can be paired with reading activities to reinforce the correct use of conjunctions while enhancing comprehension.

Finally, providing constructive feedback is essential for fostering grammatical competence. Teachers should offer specific, actionable feedback that not only corrects errors but also explains the reasons behind the corrections. This aligns with Maharani

et al.'s (2023) recommendation for integrating phonological and grammatical insights into language teaching, helping students understand how different linguistic elements interact to create meaning. By implementing these strategies, educators can effectively address conjunction errors, thereby enhancing learners' written communication skills and overall language proficiency.

CONCLUSION

This study highlights the persistent challenges EFL learners face in mastering conjunction usage and the significant impact of these errors on writing quality. Key findings reveal that errors disrupt textual cohesion and coherence, alter intended meanings, and diminish academic performance and credibility. Factors contributing to these errors include mother tongue interference, limited grammatical understanding, inadequate writing practice, and theoretical teaching approaches.

To address these issues, the study identifies effective strategies such as context-based teaching, corpus-based learning, structured formal writing practice, and constructive feedback. These strategies not only improve accuracy in conjunction usage but also enhance overall writing quality by fostering a deeper understanding of grammatical structures and their practical applications.

The implications of this research extend to language educators and curriculum developers, emphasizing the importance of integrating innovative, context-driven instructional methods into EFL teaching. Future research should explore the long-term effects of these strategies across diverse learner demographics and proficiency levels, further refining approaches to teaching conjunctions in complex linguistic environments.

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