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**ERROR ANALYSIS OF 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 was 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 of this study confirm earlier studies showing English learners as a foreign language are having difficulty in using conjunctions in their writing. 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.

Keywords:

Cohesion, Conjunction, Expository Essay, Importance of Writing, Difficulties of Writing, Error Analysis

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 economy. Thus, people should learn the English language to understand what is happening in the world (Barber, 1999; Zawahreh, 2012). 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, 2000). 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 (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000). (Ting, 2003; Ong, 2011) report that writing is the most difficult language skill for non-native speakers since the writing process involves, critical, rational, and systematic process of thinking, which makes it difficult for a writer to decide what he wants to write. In addition, Grabe and Kaplan (1998) point out that composition skills are needed to modify data or the language itself in academic writing. At this stage, writing is a learning 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. Heino (2010) considers connection ties are 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. They 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, 2013).

Literature Review

Many ESL / EFL studies have conducted on the uses of cohesive devices, as they are closely associated with writing the essay. Connor (1984) 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 and Morales (2011) 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. Campus (2017) explores how Nigerian ESL learners achieve cohesion in their written texts and how coherence is related to cohesion in their written texts. The results indicate that conjunctions and lexical reiteration are the most serious difficulties Nigerian learners face compared with native English student Leuven.

Barry (2014) 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 excessive use conjunctions, especially "and". Similarly, Satria and Handayani (2018) examine the use of grammatical cohesive devices by the students of Putera Batam University. The results show that students have problems with the overexploitation of the conjunction devices, especially in the use of "and" and "because". Hamed (2014) 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 adversative conjunctions followed by additives and casualty, which were most challenging for them. Othman (2019) 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. Othman's 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.

The Importance of Writing

Writing is essential since it is widely utilized in academic and working environments. If EFL learners cannot interact successfully with professors, employers, classmates, or anybody else, they cannot express themselves in writing. Many business communications are done in written form. Proposals, memoranda, reports, applications are part of a university EFL student or successful graduates' everyday lives. Walsh (2010) reported that "At its best, writing has helped to transform the world. Revolutions have been started by it. Oppression has been toppled by it. Moreover, it has enlightened the human condition" (The National Commission on Writing [NCW], 2003, p.10).

Difficulties of Writing

EFL students may be well aware of a particular subject or field but have problems integrating their skills into the writing process (Kellogg, 2008; Hyland, 2013). The most common writing problems among higher education EFL students include a deficient or missing evaluation of theoretical assumptions, weak argumentation, lack of argument support, unorganized idea presentation, lack of elaboration and integration, and lack of critical review (McMillan & Raines, 2011; Cavdar& Doe, 2012). A significant challenge for EFL learners is developing writing skills needed to critique and process retrieved information (Cavdar& Doe, 2012). Santangelo et al. (2007) believe that the problem for converting knowledge into critical writing arises from the inclination of EFL learners to focus on content generation and neglect of assessment and critical evaluation. Many EFL writers continue to emphasize the "form and the mechanics, rather than the substance or process" of writing (Santangelo et al., 2007, p.2). Critical thinking and research problems mainly affect EFL learners' capacity to create intelligent essays that stimulate thought (Campbell et al., 1998). Thus, essays are commonly employed as techniques for evaluating the study of EFL students. Writing issues are therefore often recognized and rectified with the comments of teachers. However, many EFL students fail to integrate instructors' feedback to enhance the results of subsequent paper (Cavdar& Doe,

2012). Consequently, sustained writing difficulties may be due in part to a lack of integration of a pedagogical process into curricula to support EFL learners' critical writing skills development (McMillan & Raines, 2011).

Error Analysis

Error analysis was established by Stephen Pit Corder and colleagues in the 1960s. It consists of a set of procedures for identifying, describing and explaining EFL learners' errors. According to Corder (1981), EFL learners' errors are considered in three ways. First, they provide information about the language an EFL learner uses. Second, they give information on how a language is learned. Finally, they provide information to EFL learners since errors can be regarded as a device used by EFL learners to learn. Error analysis has some pedagogical benefits because it gives useful input for designing and carrying out the teaching and learning process. Error analysis constitutes a link between language learning and teaching which can be exploited in initial as well as remedial teaching. Error analysis can become a useful tool to improve language teaching and, consequently, facilitates EFL learners' learning. Erdogan (2005), for example, states that error analysis would help teachers to find out the sources of errors and try to find a solution for them. Moreover, the definition of error analysis is given by Brown (as cited in Ridha, 2012) as 'the process to observe, analyze, and classify the deviations of the rules of the second languages and then to reveal the systems operated by EFL learners.

Theoretical Framework of the Study

Halliday and Hasan (1976) report that the concept of cohesion is a semantic relation connected between one element in a text and other parts that are located in the same text. Therefore, the relations of any sentence depend on the surrounding elements. In other words, cohesion refers to the range of possible links with what has been done before. Since this connection is accomplished through relations in meaning. Halliday (1994) introduces the main idea of the cohesion concept by saying that we need to develop ties between sentences and clauses to construct discourse. The length of a sentence is determined by the number of grammar items. These grammatical elements or the number of sentences in a paragraph or the whole of the text are merely characteristic features of discourse structures, but they do not determine whether a text is coherent or not. What helps to understand unity in writing discourse is the analysis of semantic tools applied for connecting sentences to see how the various parts of the text are connected. Discourse structure is, as the name implies, a type of structure; the term is used to refer to the structure of some postulated unit higher than the sentence, for example, the paragraph, or some larger entity such as episode or topic unit (Halliday & Hasan, 1976, p. 10). Therefore, structures that define the relations between the parts can be seen in the sentences. Concerning cohesion, what can be found in written discourses through sentences is not structures, but connections that have specific characteristics to be understood by a reader that determine the relations between the parties.

In the light of Halliday and Hasan's (1976) taxonomy of conjunctions, the current study analyzed the different types of conjunctions found in students' written texts. Halliday and Hasan (1976) 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. Halliday and Hasan (1976) examined the conjunctions under four main subtypes; 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 Halliday and Hasan (1976) 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.

Research Method

This study deploys qualitative method. This method is appropriate for this study to analyze the function use of conjunctions. 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 and Hasan's (1976) analytical method of conjunction cohesion.

Participants

The study's participants were chosen using 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. They were all enrolled in a course called "Essay Writing Course," thus there were a total of thirty-four fourth-year students in this study.

Data Collection Procedure

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, "Reckless and bad driving has become a dangerous social behavior made by many careless drivers which can cause a lot of accidents on the road." 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.

Research Objective

To identify types of conjunctions, cause more difficulties than others to EFL Jordanian undergraduate learners in expository writing.

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:

1. To what extent do some conjunctions cause more difficulties than others to EFL Jordanian undergraduate learners in expository writing?

Results and Discussion

The conjunctions used in expository essays were obtained from cohesive devices in written essays to analyze the problematic conjunctions produced by participants at the Department of English language & literature at the Hashemite University, Jordan.

Types of Conjunctions

Inappropriate Use of Additive Conjunction

The function of additive conjunction *and* is to add one thing to another or put one thing next to another without a connection specification. Yet, the two sentences are certainly part of a paragraph. However, it was clearly found that the use of the additive conjunction *and* was a problematic area for the participants since it was revealed that the majority of the use of the word *and* was inappropriately employed. The following examples show the inappropriate use of such conjunction.

1. Some reckless drivers fearlessly break the law through excessive speed, they think it is entertainment! *and* this is very bad, traffic accidents become more and more prevalent little by little due to the lack of awareness and the non-imposition of harsh penalties on the reckless!

In (1) the student was not used word correctly and does not introduce any extra information to the preceding sentence. Thus, the sentence *this is very bad* gives a construct information to the previous mentioned rather than being merely parallel to what preceded. So that, the inappropriate use conjunction *and* should be changed into the adversative conjunction *but* to establish a cohesive tie between the two sentences.

Moreover, additive conjunctions such as *furthermore*, was used inappropriately in the students' texts. As seen in the following examples:

2. The reckless behavior of many drivers in the roads have many causes, one of the main sources of such negative reckless act is the lack of awareness on the significance of such behavior and how it could lead to many dangerous impacts on both the driver and the passengers, *furthermore* the driver should be aware of the impact of his irresponsible actions.

In (2), the conjunction, *furthermore*, is used to show the complex additive relation between the two discourse units. However, the student struggles to use it in the right place since the sentence introduced by *furthermore* adds nothing to the previous sentence. Rather, it adds a consequence of what was mentioned before. Thus, the use of '*furthermore*,' does not appropriate in the sentence "the driver should be aware of the impact of his irresponsible actions" since it is a consequence of what was earlier written. Therefore, the conjunction of the cause-and-effect terms might be much better to use the general emphatic clausal conjunction '*consequently*' to establish a cohesive tie between the boundaries of the discourse units.

Inappropriate Use of Adversative Conjunction

However, the ability of the use the simple form adversative relations *but* and however remain a challenge for the students in their written texts as in the following examples:

1. Leadership deaths are among the highest death rates in the world, *but* it is one of the main causes of death.

2. In the recent period, there is an increase in the number of deaths due to traffic accidents. *However*, adolescents who are less than 20 years old should be educated and adequately trained to drive a car.

In (1), the student was not able to use the adversative relation *but* appropriately to bind the boundaries of the two sentences. It can be noticed that the sentence followed by *but* does not act in contradiction to the previous sentence rather it gives new information about the *Leadership*. Thus, the word *but* does not establish a cohesive tie between the units of the sentences. So, it should be replaced by the simple additive relation such as '*also*' or '*and*'. The conjunction *however* in (2), does not produce a cohesive relation between the discourse units that it combines. It can be seen that the sentence introduced by *however* is not related to a contradiction of what was previously mentioned. The presence of *however* confuses reader (s) since it expects that the sentence following the word *however* would be resulted in or purposive of what has been mentioned before. Thus, the conjunction should be replaced by clausal relation such as *thus* or *therefore* in order to make the text unified.

Inappropriate Use of Causal Conjunction

The causal conjunctions '*because*', and '*so*' in the following examples are used to show the result, reason or purpose since they tie the two clauses together by showing their causal relation. These two clauses are cohesively linked by the clausal conjunction *because* or *so* as forms of cohesive elements. Thus, the conjunctive marker is also acceptable as it semantically adapts to the surroundings and supports the writer's claim. Here are the examples:

1. A major cause of death like this must be taken into consideration and seriously reduced *because* we care about the lives of those we love before our lives and we want them to remain safe.
2. There can be much longer last effects though, especially in the more serious crashes *So* what are people to do in these circumstances.

In (1), the casual conjunction *because* does not establish the relationship between cause and effect related to the preceding sentence. Instead, it seems to be adversative relation to what has already been mentioned previously. Thus, the use of adversative relation *however* becomes more acceptable to establish a cohesive tie with the preceding sentence. In (2), the student failed to use conjunction *so* to build a cohesive tie of a causal relationship between the sentences since the sentence follows the conjunction *so* does not introduce specific result or a situation of what has been presented earlier. Thus, the presence of *so* confuses readers since its interpretation depends on the reader's perception. The connection between sentences can be seen as a purpose, but a conditional relation, *in that case*, can be also used instead of *so*. In (3), the word *so* is misleading since it does not indicate the causal relation between parts of the sentence. The proposed meaning is apparently as the following: *Finally, drive calmly and wisely for another person's life does not end with a moment of indiscretion*. Thus, the word *so* should be omitted from the sentence to remove the ambiguity.

Inappropriate Use of Temporal Conjunction

The study found some students in their written text used temporal conjunction inappropriately as in the following examples:

1. *At the end*, I can only say that I have offered my opinion and I Pfkurti in this topic for Ali I have been able to write it and express it and *finally* I am but human (Retrieved from essay, S12, 0017).
2. Everyone knows the importance of seat belts, which makes wearing them one of the most important - and obvious - good driving habits, But *until* there is a laxity in wearing the seat belt. (Retrieved from essay, S5, 006).

In (1), *at the end* is categorized as the temporal conjunction since it is paralleled by the sequence of sentences themselves. However, it can be seen that the student does not use the appropriate conjunction that must be changed into *in the end* instead of *at the end*. Also, the use of the word *finally*, should be removed from the sentence to create a cohesive tie. In (2), there is an error use of two conjunctions *But* and *until* together, these conjunctions are not related to the same category. The word *but* is constructive conjunction, while the word *until* is used to show a sequential relationship between the two discourse units. Thus, the word *until* should be removed from the sentence because there is no temporal relation with the previously mentioned.

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. Thus, it seems that the students' lack of knowledge about using additive relations to create ties can be related to the lack of diversity conjunctions.

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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