
Misuse of English conjunction related to incoherent writing, according to the literature, comes from learners' first language interference, improper mechanical exercises, and misleading lists of connectors in textbooks demonstrated as if mutually interchangeable without contextual constraints.

Form-focused instruction with explicit semantic, stylistic and syntactic properties can help learning of connectors. Additionally, *computer* learner corpus analysis which identifies systematic interlanguage patterns in Chinese learner data offers pedagogical insights for the current study.

Four Web-based online conjunction units based on principles from related literature and learner corpus analyses were designed for 19 EFL college students to use for a month with sentence-beyond contexts concerning stylistic properties and overuse situations.

- The function of conjunctions is to express the logic flow, namely the additive, adversative, causal, and temporal relations between and within sentences.
- Conjunctive devices ought to be taught to non-English writers in order to achieve effective written communication.

**Purpose of the study:** In English as Second /Foreign Language (ESL/EFL) Writing, one of the main problems of creating coherent texts comes from learners’ inadequate ability to employ cohesive devices for sentence cohesion, including reference, substitution, ellipsis, conjunction and lexical ties. Particularly, the use of conjunctions and adverbial connectors was found to be the major sources of error in writing.

The present study focuses on the effects of instruction in connector usage in EFL setting via the help of online corpus tools. The research questions are:

1) Do EFL college students gain the knowledge and acquire the ability to use conjunctive devices correctly in a controlled context through the online materials? Do learners retain them after three weeks?

2) Do learners’ conjunction errors reduce in an essay writing context, and does their overall writing quality improve after the use of the online materials?

3) What are the learners’ attitudes toward the design and the effectiveness of the online materials on their conjunction learning and English writing?

**Background:**

Literature concerning the inappropriate use of cohesive devices in non-English learners’ writing:

1. **Speech-like style:** Chao (2004) examined EFL Taiwanese students’ compositions and found that learners’ developed a speech-like style for formal writing, especially seen in data from the lower levels of the language proficiency.
2. **Overuse/underuse** of the connectors: Lorenz (1998) found the substantial overuse of *so* and *because* in the learner corpora. On the contrary, with regard to formal connectives, such as *therefore* and *thus*, are underused among learners compared with native corpora.

3. **Misuse** of connectors:
   - John’s (1984) found out that adversative conjunctions appeared to be problematic for Chinese ESL writers. For example, ‘on the other hand’ is frequently used by Hong Kong students to perform additive function without any implied contrast.
   - In Field’s (1994) study, the results showed their use of the causal marker *therefore* sometimes leads to illogical texts because it does not introduce a result or a consequence as it should.

**Principles for English conjunction teaching:**

- Lin (2002) claimed that the run-on sentences generated by Chinese EFL writers were attributed to the discrepancy of syntactic structures between English and Chinese.
- The results of Lee’s (2002) study showed that explicit form-focused instruction promises to arouse learners’ awareness of coherence-creating devices, because it enabled learners to recognize the features in the input and made them a part of their acquired knowledge.
- Granger and Tyson (1996) proclaimed that authentic illustrative sentences play an essential role in helping learners figure out the logical relationships that the conjunctive devices signal.
- Basturkmen (2002) suggested that gap-filling, sentence combining and reorganizing are the useful exercise types for non-English writers.
- Kolln (1999) revealed that the design of composition textbooks has lagged behind the research whose findings have demonstrated the significance of teaching cohesion and coherence.
- Many scholars recommend the format of Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) is a good way to facilitate the learning of conjunction, because -data-driven methods with the enhancement of technology can provide learners with numerous authentic examples via consulting corpora online.
- Web-based concordancers may supplement the limited content of traditional workbooks.
- Compared with the feedback provided by traditional workbooks or teachers, computer feedback is much face-saving and learner-controlled.

**Methodology:**

**Participants**
19 students enrolled in a freshman English writing class, a required course, in a public university.

**Data collection**
This was a case study. The gap-filling tests on connectors were conducted before and after the project (pretest, post test, and the delayed posttest. In addition, an essay writing task was used, and then followed by an evaluation questionnaire on students' perception.

**Procedure**
- In the first week of the semester, students were given 15-item background questionnaire, the pretest, and the in-class writing task.
• During the following four weeks, students did online practice on each of four online connectors units for 20 min in class and finished the rest after class. The connectors to be taught were selected according to their frequency in the British National Corpus (BNC).
• In the sixth week, learners took the posttest, worked on another essay and filled out a 19-item evaluation questionnaire.
• Three weeks later, learners took the delayed posttest.

Results:
The scores of the posttest were found significantly higher than the pretest. Results indicated that students generally held a positive attitude toward the online units and demonstrated statistically significant improvements in the use of connectors in both the test and free production contexts. The results also showed that there was no significant difference between posttest and delayed posttest; this could suggest that the online materials may have raised the participants’ awareness and the effect was retained.

Discussion:
Students’ questionnaires indicated their positive attitudes toward the online conjunction instruction. Still, the program can be bettered through concretizing the meaning explanation and increasing the variety of exercise types and overall design. Through the examination of this case study, the researchers argued that pedagogically sound instructional design for online conjunction materials could actually help college EFL learners write more accurately and coherently.

Limitation:
Several limitations should be improved, including the absence of a control group and the small size of the sample. Future project should include a control group as well as a larger population so as to increase the validity and generalizability of the results.

Usefulness of this study:
I think this study is very useful. Diez et al.’s (2000) study found there was no obvious improvement between students’ use of cohesive devices before and after the course. Diez argued that such transfer may not be automatic and suggested production exercises are needed. This study proved that the contextualized production-based exercises could actually enhance students’ ability to use conjunction more properly.
The project introduced in this research uses various corpora—including a Chinese-English corpus, Sinorama, and various natural language processing (NLP) tools to construct advanced English learning tasks for intermediate learners in Taiwan such as college freshman students or those with a similar English proficiency level. It is thus named, Corpora And NLP for Digital Learning of English (CANDLE). It is unique because it adopts a unique approach in Taiwan and internationally by using the Sinorama bilingual corpus and building on learners' first language background knowledge to empower learners with culture-based materials. Both first language and its culture provide a scaffold for learners to use
while learning the new language. Its major features include e-practice that adapts to learners' levels, automatically assessing/monitoring learner's progress, and profiling of learners' preferences.