

EFL LEARNERS' TENDENCY IN USING CONJUNCTIONS IN WRITINGS: EVIDENCE FROM ENGLISH DIPLOMA-III STUDENTS

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Abstract

The conjunction is known as one of the most challenging topics to acquire by EFL learners. Its close correlation with the ability of writing makes this topic imperative to master by English learners. The study intends to identify (1) the types of conjunction used by EFL learners in writing English texts, and (2) the combinations formed by using conjunction in writing English texts. Data was collected from the background part of final project reports of English Diploma-III students of Politeknik Negeri Bandung, Indonesia. It resulted in 213 uses of conjunctions to be further analyzed. This study employed the qualitative descriptive method to identify the type of conjunction used and the model of combinations formed. The results show that EFL learners have been able to use coordinate conjunction, subordinate conjunction, and correlative conjunction in writing English texts. The most conjunction used is the coordinate conjunction. Also, they have been able to form combinations of word-word, word-phrase, phrase-phrase, and clause-clause by using conjunctions in their English writings. These results may bring both theoretical and practical implications. First, theoretically, the findings can enrich the knowledge of English Grammar and Writing in general. Second, practically, the results may be beneficial for curriculum designers and lecturers as one of the evaluation resources to arrange more suitable materials for EFL learners, especially at the level of Diploma-III.

Keywords: Conjunction; Final Project; Background; EFL Learners

INTRODUCTION

English has been long regarded as an essential tool for working internationally (Kirkpatrick, 2007); it connects people all over the world by default. Therefore, any level of education put the English subject in their school curriculums. Among those basic English skills to master, the biggest challenges for EFL learners lay in English grammar and writing. They are considered the most difficult subjects to learn. Djurayeva et. al. (2020) stated that grammar is notoriously difficult to comprehend for both native and second-language speakers. In a similar tone, Negari (2011) affirmed that in the academic setting, writing in a second language or foreign language appears to be the most challenging language ability for language learners to acquire in academic contexts. These two skills are also correlated since the production of good writing is a result of, one of which, the good application of grammar knowledge. The knowledge of conjunction is one of the grammar aspects to comprehend in order to build satisfactory writing. A conjunction is a word that connects units of words, phrases, and clauses to form sentences in a text. It is defined as certain words that combine syntactical units; between words, phrases, and clauses (Maulina, 2018). A conjunction is used to make the information within a sentence coherent and logical so that the idea conveyed can be easily understood. It functions to connect the elements of thinking (Situmorang, 2018) so readers are notified that a new idea is coming. However, mastering conjunction seems to be a difficult task for EFL learners. They might understand the functions of each conjunction, but still, they are not able to apply it in their writing. A number

of previous literature have been carried out regarding this matter. Geraldine (2018), for instance, discovered three reasons behind the errors made by high school students in using conjunction in their recount texts: incomplete application of rules, ignorance of rules restrictions, and over-generalization. Similarly, Budiarjo (2019) found that temporal conjunction and additive conjunction are the common errors made by second-high school graders in producing procedural text since the students do not fully comprehend the subject. Further, Amayreh and Abdullah (2021) confirmed that English learners are having difficulty using conjunction in their writing. They suggested English teachers and educators integrate grammatical items as discourse semantic resources for text creation. Numerous previous studies have been conducted regarding the use of conjunction at any level of education, for example, Maulina (2018) carried out research on the use of conjunction by Elementary School students in composing literary texts. Deviyana (2017) and Ningrum (2019) observed the ability of Junior High School students in applying conjunctions in writing compound sentences and recount texts. Such studies were also done at the level of Senior High Schools (Geraldine, 2018; Budiarjo, 2019; Setiawan, 2019; and Silalahi et.al., 2022). Finally, studies on the ability of undergraduate students in applying conjunction in their writing were conducted by Al Shamalat and An (2020), Erlina (2021), and Amayreh and Abdullah (2021). However, to the best of the authors' knowledge, specific research that observes the ability of vocational higher education students in using conjunction in their writings is still scarce to find. Vocational higher education aims to prepare students to enter the workforce and produces graduates who are ready to join the world of work (Samani, 2018). Thus, the subjects and materials at this level of education must be able to equip learners to achieve such goals. Last-year students in the Diploma-III English Department of Politeknik Negeri Bandung, Indonesia, have been equipped with the subject of Grammar and Writing for almost five semesters. Their ability to produce good academic writing and apply correct conjunctions can be seen in their final project reports that they produce as a requirement to finish their study. It is interesting to observe how these Diploma-III students use conjunctions in writing their final project reports. Among all parts, the background section is chosen as the object of analysis. It is because the background is where the authors mostly put their own original ideas and thoughts.

Driven by the research gaps, this study aims to observe the tendency of EFL learners in using conjunction in their writing. More specifically, it intends to identify (1) the types of conjunction used by English Diploma-III students in writing the background part of their final project reports, and (2) the combinations formed by using conjunction in the background part of final project reports. This study is expected to contribute to two areas. First, theoretically, the findings can enrich the knowledge of English Grammar and Writing in general. Second, practically, the results may be beneficial for curriculum designers and lecturers as one of the evaluation resources to prepare more suitable materials for EFL learners, especially at the level of Diploma-III.

The discussion regarding conjunction has been started since 1983. A conjunction is a word that connects units of words, phrases, and clauses to form sentences in a text. It is defined as certain words that combine syntactical units; between words, phrases, and clauses (Maulina, 2018). It joins things—words to words, phrases to phrases, or clauses to clauses—and they signal logical relationships among them (Solorzano, 2015).

According to Quirk and Greenbaum (1973), and has been quoted and adapted by plentiful researchers, conjunctions can be divided into three big types: coordinate conjunction, subordinate conjunction, and correlative conjunction.

- 1) A coordinate conjunction is a word that joins two elements of equal grammatical rank and syntactic importance. They can join two verbs, two nouns, two adjectives, two phrases, or two independent clauses. The seven coordinating conjunctions are *for*, *and*, *nor*, *but*, *or*,

yet, and so; each of them brings its own meaning. Below are presented some examples of the use of coordinate conjunction.

- a. *The white kitten was cute, but I chose the tabby instead.*
- b. *I don't like running or swimming.*
- c. *She usually studies in the library or at a café.*
- d. *I am a vegetarian so I don't eat any meat.*

2) A subordinating conjunction is a word or phrase that links a dependent clause to an independent clause. This word or phrase indicates that a clause has an informative value to add to the sentence's main idea, signaling a cause-and-effect relationship or a shift in time and place between the two clauses. The examples of subordinate conjunction are *because, unless, after, before, although*, and others. Here are several examples of the use of subordinate conjunction.

- a. *You need to hurry before you lose time.*
- b. *I don't want to go to the movies because I hate the smell of popcorn.*
- c. *Although there have been some articles promoting Palembang, they do not give enough information and explanation on the value of the place.*

3) Last, correlative conjunction, like the other two types of conjunction, also functions to connect words and phrases within a sentence. The correlative conjunctions always come in pairs, for example, *both...and, neither...nor, either...or, not only...but also*. The examples are presented as follows:

- a. *The results may be beneficial both theoretically and practically.*
- b. *You can either come with me or walk home.*

As stated by Solorzano (2015) and Traffis (2020), a conjunction functions to join things—words to words, phrases to phrases, or clauses to clauses—and they signal logical relationships among them.

- 1) A word is a single unit of language that brings a single meaning that can be in spoken or written form. The classification of words is called part of speech, some of which are nouns (e.g.: *lion, meat, cage*); verbs (e.g.: *capture, captivate*); adjectives, (e.g.: *old, wild*); and adverbs (e.g.: *quickly, slowly*).
- 2) A phrase is a combination of words that form together as a single grammatical unit. The phrase consists of one or more related words without the subject and verb. Thus, it cannot stand alone like a sentence since it cannot provide a complete meaning, for example, *an old fat woman, full of tea, on the carpet*.
- 3) A clause is a group of words that have a subject and verb to express the meaning. It can stand alone (the independent clause) or sticks to other clauses (the dependent clause). The use of certain conjunctions in a sentence can identify the type of the clause, and at the same time, identify the type of the sentence. The use of coordinate conjunction to connect two independent clauses will create a compound sentence while subordinate conjunction connects one independent and one dependent clause which will make a complex sentence.

METHOD

This study employed the qualitative descriptive method to identify the type of conjunction used and the model of combinations formed. The data was obtained using the random sampling

method from 10 background parts of 2021 Diploma-III graduates of Polban English Department. In the initial process, the documents were read, and the conjunctions were identified. The sentences that contained conjunction were manually recorded in Microsoft Excel form. This process resulted in 213 uses of conjunction to be further analyzed. Next, the types of conjunction were identified and the models of the combination were classified based on the theory of Quirk and Greenbaum (1973). In the end, a simple calculation was carried out to discover the tendency of these ELF learners in using conjunction in their writing.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

The samples of data are those sentences containing conjunctions. Employing the theory of Quirk and Greenbaum (1973), the types of conjunction were identified. According to this theory, conjunctions can be classified into three categories: (1) coordinate conjunction, (2) subordinate conjunction, and (3) correlative conjunction. Table 1 presents the results of the classification.

Table 1. Types of Conjunctions Used in the EFL Learners' Writings

Background	Coordinate Conjunction	Subordinate Conjunction	Correlative Conjunction
Background 1	31	2	3
Background 2	13	5	1
Background 3	7	1	0
Background 4	13	6	1
Background 5	22	7	0
Background 6	14	3	4
Background 7	24	13	1
Background 8	13	1	0
Background 9	7	1	1
Background 10	14	4	1
Total	158	43	12
Total conjunctions	213		

Table 1 indicates that the EFL learners, in this case, the Diploma-III English Department students, have been able to use the three types of conjunction in composing the background part of their final project reports. The most conjunction applied is the coordinate conjunction with 158 uses, followed by the subordinate conjunction with 43 uses, and lastly the correlative conjunction with 12 uses.

The second step is to identify the models of the combination formed by the use of conjunctions in EFL learners' writing. The models were divided into four groups: (1) word-word, (2) word-phrase, (3) phrase-phrase, and (4) clause-clause. The results of the classification are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Models of Combinations Formed by the Use of Conjunctions

Background	W-W	W-P	P-P	C-C
Background 1	4	17	12	3
Background 2	1	4	8	6
Background 3	2	1	2	3

Background 4	1	4	5	10
Background 5	1	1	12	15
Background 6	4	5	7	5
Background 7	3	5	8	22
Background 8	3	4	5	2
Background 9	4	0	3	2
Background 10	1	1	9	8
Total	24	42	71	76
Total conjunctions			213	

Note:

W-W = Word-Word

W-P = Word-Phrase

P-P = Phrase-Phrase

C-C = Clause-Clause

Table 2 indicates that the EFL learners, in this case, the Diploma-III English Department students, have been able to form all models of combinations by using conjunction in the background part of their final project reports. The most combination formed is the clause-clause combination with 76 cases, followed by the phrase-phrase combination with 71 uses. Meanwhile, the least combination produced is the word-word combination with only 24 uses.

Discussion

This study intends to identify (1) the types of conjunction used by EFL learners in writing English texts, and (2) the combinations formed by using conjunction in writing English texts. The sample of the research is the Diploma-III English Department students of Politeknik Negeri Bandung. Data was taken from the background part of their final project reports. The findings show that the Diploma-III English Department students have been able to use all types of conjunction in their writing. They are also able to apply those conjunctions to form the combinations of word-word, word-phrase, phrase-phrase, and clause-clause. A more detailed explanation will be presented in the following paragraphs.

1) Types of Conjunction Used by EFL Learners in Writing English Texts

First, the findings show that coordinate conjunction is the most common type of conjunction used by the Diploma-III English Department students in composing the background part of their final project reports. It covers 158 cases of the data. It implies that the Diploma-III English Department students tend to use conjunctions that join two elements of equal grammatical rank and syntactic importance. The coordinate conjunctions are used to form all models of combination: word-word, word-phrase, phrase-phrase, and clause-clause. In the case of clause-clause combination, the coordinate conjunctions function to build a compound sentence by combining two independent clauses together. In addition, it was discovered that the most used coordinate conjunction is *and* with 119 cases. The conjunction *and* is used to connect two elements of a sentence; one of which functions to provide additional information to the other one. Examples of the use of coordinate conjunctions in students' writing are given as follows:

- a. *It is approximated that more than 70% of a person's conversations in speaking, hearing, reading, or writing are composed of different forms of fixed expressions.*
- b. *It will encourage them to try and visit other places such as Palembang.*

- c. *Many ways can be conducted to improve the ELF learners' competence in using collocations such as reading English texts, reading books about collocations, and listening to how native speakers use collocations.*
- d. *A lot of students feel hard to learn mathematics, and they do not enjoy doing it because for them it is too difficult.*
- e. *The work programs are related to research and technology, education, sociopreneurship, and the environment.*

Second, the findings show that subordinate conjunction is the second most common type of conjunction used by the Diploma-III English Department students in composing the background part of their final project reports. It covers 43 cases of the data. Not like the coordinate conjunction, subordinate conjunction can only be used to connect two clauses: the independent and the dependent one. The combination of these two clauses will create a complex sentence. The examples are given as follows:

- a. *Although the information about this department can be seen on a website and leaflets, these two media are deficient because they do not offer detailed information such as students' activities, tuition fees, campus life, and enrollment procedures.*
- b. *The aspect of story and narrative in a video game can make the game itself, even if it is lacking in gameplay or technical quality.*
- c. *However, a printed prospectus is still needed because it can be kept at hand whenever it is needed, and it is easier to read and store away.*
- d. *Reading is an effective way for improving reading comprehension skills as it can expand the knowledge of vocabulary, and different sentence structures.*

Third, the findings show that correlative conjunction is the least used type of conjunction used by the Diploma-III English Department students in composing the background part of their final project reports. Among 213 data, it covers only 12 cases. The correlative conjunctions always come in pairs, for example, *both...and*, *neither...nor*, *either...or*, *not only...but also*. The examples are presented as follows:

- a. *The storyline of a video game is the aspect that both people and game developers in this day and age still often overlook.*
- b. *By focusing on the story and narrative aspects, they can still create games that are enjoyable and marketable, benefiting both the developers and the video game industry as a whole.*
- c. *This place is not only a woven handicraft producer, but it also serves as one of the educational tourist destinations.*

2) Models of Combinations Formed by the Use of Conjunctions

First, the findings show that clause-clause combination is the most frequent model formed by the Diploma-III English Department students in composing the background part of their final project reports. It covers 76 cases of the data. The findings imply that the Diploma-III English Department students have been able to compose their sentences by applying a high order of thinking. The use of conjunctions to connect clauses will determine the types of sentences. Coordinate conjunctions are used to create compound sentences while subordinate conjunctions are applied to create complex sentences. Referring to the previous explanation, coordinate conjunction is the most used one; meaning that the background part of students' final project reports is mostly composed of compound sentences. The examples are given as follows:

- a. *The Indonesian video game industry reached 1,13 million USD in 2018, but local games were only occupying just 0.2 percent of it.*
- b. *The collocated words arise spontaneously when the main words appear, yet they are unforeseeable for language learners.*
- c. *If we inquire a native speaker about the reason for using certain collocations, he will not be able to give us an explanation other than “I just do” or “It sounds right”.*
- d. *IQR Foundation, one of the Non-Governmental Organizations in Indonesia, has a good image in the public since it has given a lot of contributions to the Indonesian people and foreigners through its programs.*

Second, the findings show that phrase-phrase combination is the second most frequent model formed by the Diploma-III English Department students in composing the background part of their final project reports. It covers 71 cases of the data. The examples are presented below.

- a. *The Making of a Business Biography Book of APIQ which is written in English is based on the interview of APIQ’s owner, the employees, and the customers.*
- b. *Furthermore, as the daughter of the owner and an English student, the writer could start to develop this business overseas.*
- c. *Reviews could lead the customer’s mind and increase the reliability of a company.*
- d. *It says it is originally in Bali but not in Indonesia.*

Third, the findings show that word-word combination is the least frequent model formed by the Diploma-III English Department students in composing the background part of their final project reports. It only covers 24 cases of the data. Instead of word-word, the students tend to combine word-phrase. Below are examples of word-word combinations (1, 2) followed by word-phrase combinations (3,4).

- a. *The present project aims to promote this village locally and globally.*
- b. *The stories on Wattpad are available in various genres such as romance, sci-fi, fantasy, mystery, and others.*
- c. *In conclusion, this present final project is about producing English and Indonesian prospectuses for the Civil Engineering Department of Politeknik Negeri Bandung.*
- d. *All business actors involved in Desa Wisata Kampung Kreatif Sukaruas should improve their potential and innovation.*

CONCLUSION

This study aims to identify (1) the types of conjunction used by EFL learners in writing English texts, and (2) the combinations formed by using conjunction in writing English texts. The results of the study conclude that the EFL learners have been able to apply the three types of conjunction in their writing, but the tendency of using lays in the coordinate conjunction since it is the most type used. Moreover, the learners have been able to produce the combinations of word-word, word-phrase, phrase-phrase, and clause-clause by using conjunctions in their writing. The results show that clause-clause combinations tend to be produced more. It implies that the learners have already possessed enough comprehension of English grammar, especially in the aspect of conjunction. They have been able to connect complicated information in the form of clauses. This study may bring two implications. First, theoretically, the findings can enrich the knowledge of English Grammar and Writing in general. Second, practically, the results may be beneficial for curriculum designers and lecturers as one of the evaluation resources to arrange more suitable materials for EFL learners, especially at the level of Diploma-III. Despite those useful contributions, however, this study still bears some limitations. First, the data was limited to the writings produced by Diploma-III English

Department students of Politeknik Negeri Bandung only. Further researchers may observe other Diploma-III students and compare the results to get a more comprehensive understanding. Second, the study only focused on the models of combinations formed by the use of conjunctions. Next studies may examine other aspects, such as the tendency of the use of conjunctions to form certain types of sentences in various kinds of texts.

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