

An Analysis of the Use of Conjunctions as Cohesive Devices in Essays in Academic English Classes

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Abstract

In this study, the researcher investigated the use of grammatical cohesive devices (conjunctions) in learners' written productions, focusing on Saudi undergraduate students who were studying academic English as a foreign language (EFL). The aim of the study was to examine the use and frequency of four types of conjunctions-additive, adversative, causal, and temporal-in learners' essays.

The researcher employed a mixed-methods (quantitative and qualitative) approach to collect data from learners' essays. Textual analysis was the qualitative method employed to identify and count the four types of conjunctions and to determine whether the learners used any cohesive devices incorrectly. This was followed by quantitative data analysis to calculate the students' mean scores and consider significant differences. The data were analysed using Halliday and Hasan's (1976) cohesion framework. Forty female Saudi students participated in the study by writing and submitting essays following explicit instruction on conjunctions.

The findings revealed that Saudi EFL learners used different types of conjunctions correctly in their essays, such as 'and' as additive conjunction; 'but' as adversative conjunction; 'because' as causal conjunction; and finally, 'first', as temporal conjunction. The findings also showed that additive conjunctions were the most frequently used in learners' essays.

Keywords: cohesive devices, cohesion, conjunctions, EFL students, essay writing.

Introduction

For people in many nations, English is the first language for communication, and in others, it is the second language. Consequently, English is the world's dominant *lingua franca*. English is used extensively in Saudi Arabia, meaning that Saudi English as a foreign language (EFL) students need strong spoken and written skills as prerequisites for becoming proficient in the English language. These skills are important productive skills and vital for any discourse that contains meaningful verbal and nonverbal components. Hyland (2004) claimed that mastering writing skills is essential for EFL learners, and skills that support proficiency in writing are essential for success in academic life (Javadi-Safa, 2018). Thus, Saudi undergraduate students need to master writing skills to produce coherent and consistent pieces of writing.

However, Saudi EFL learners face challenges in writing English essays. They are assessed on their ability to write essays in different genres and are expected to consider such elements as cause and effect, comparison, etc. However, according to Izumi (2011), writing a coherent text is not something that second language learners do naturally, because each language has different approaches to cohesiveness. Kashiha (2022) claimed that EFL learners need explicit instruction on the meanings and uses of cohesive devices to apply them successfully and produce cohesive written work.

In this study, the researcher analysed the cohesive devices (conjunctions) Saudi EFL learners used in their essays and evaluated how explicit instruction assisted learners to use conjunctions correctly. The findings of this research contribute to

the field of academic writing by examining the teaching of cohesive devices to EFL learners and its influence on learners' written productions.

Significance of the Study

In written discourse, cohesive devices play an important role in organising learners' utterances. The correct use of cohesive devices influences the overall coherence of learner's essays, allowing readers to follow their writing easily and smoothly.

Most extant studies in writing skills have focused on analysing the use of cohesive devices and associated errors in essays. After reviewing previous studies, the researcher aspired to fill gaps in the research by explicitly teaching cohesive devices to help students connect their sentences and produce cohesive essays.

Research Objectives and Questions

The aim of this study was to analyse the use of target conjunctions following explicit instruction, based on Halliday and Hasan's (1976) work, and based on previous research regarding the use of cohesive devices in the Saudi EFL context, to examine learners' use of four types of conjunctions—additive, adversative, causal, and temporal—in their essays following explicit instruction on the target conjunctions. The researcher also aimed to examine the frequency of using the target conjunctions and their roles in the discourse; for example, additive conjunctions to combine sentences and compare different things, adversative conjunctions to contrast ideas, causal conjunctions to introduce the reasons for something, and temporal conjunctions to introduce a series of events. The

ultimate aim was to determine the importance of explicit instruction in improving the use of such cohesive devices and its effect on the quality and coherence of learners' essays.

For this study, the researcher adopted textual analysis to analyse Saudi EFL learners' written texts and determine how the learners' used specific conjunctions in their writing. Moreover, Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS[®]) software was utilised to find and compare the students' mean scores and answer the following research questions (RQs):

RQ1: What types of conjunctions are most and least frequently used by Saudi EFL students in their essays following explicit instruction?

RQ2: To what extent Saudi EFL learners used different types of conjunctions correctly?

Literature Review

Cohesion plays a crucial role in producing a good piece of writing. It is an important element in essays, as it helps writers to convey their meanings. Furthermore, cohesive devices play an essential role in helping writers produce coherent and consistent writing. Cohesion is basically 'semantic – it refers to relations of meaning that exist within the text and that define it as a text' (Halliday & Hasan, 1976, p. 4). Cohesion facilitates how written discourse connects through using cohesive ties. (Halliday & Hasan, 1976). Halliday (2000) and Halliday and Hasan (1976) identified two elements of text as key characteristics of good writing: cohesion and coherence. According to Halliday and Hasan (1976) and Halliday (2000), coherence and cohesion are essential textual elements of good writing, and text has a texture that makes it

coherent in relation to context. Text was described by Halliday and Hasan (1976, p. 1) as ‘any passage, spoken or written, of whatever length, that does form a unified whole’. They also stated that a text has ‘linguistic features present in that passage which can be identified as contributing to its total unity and giving it texture’ (Halliday & Hasan, 1976, p. 2). According to Halliday and Hasan (1976) cohesion is classified into two types: grammatical cohesion and lexical cohesion. They identified four categories of grammatical cohesive devices that signal texts coherence — references, ellipses, substitutions, and conjunctions—that relate to the syntactic system (Halliday & Hasan, 1976). In short, grammatical cohesive devices help text hang together cohesively, which means they contribute to what Halliday and Hasan termed a text’s unity of texture. Hence, the focus of this study was on different types of conjunctions as cohesive devices that enhance grammatical cohesion.

Conjunctions as Cohesive Devices

Conjunctions are words or linking signals between phrases and sentences, they convey the ‘semantic relations’ between sentences (Halliday & Hasan, 1976). Halliday and Hasan (1976) distinguished four types of conjunctions: additive, such as ‘and’; causal, such as ‘so’; temporal, such as ‘next’; and adversative, such as ‘whereas’.

Additive conjunctions combine sentences that share the same ideas. There are two types of additive conjunctions: first, to combine two sentences (e.g. ‘and’, ‘or’, and ‘in addition’), and second, to compare two ideas or things (e.g. ‘both’ and

‘neither/nor’). Adversative conjunctions are used to connect two contrasting ideas or results (e.g. ‘but’ and ‘whereas’); causal conjunctions introduce reasons, results, and purposes (e.g. ‘because’, ‘so’, and ‘the reason for’); and temporal conjunctions introduce a series of events/ideas (e.g. ‘first’, ‘next’, ‘then’, and ‘finally’).

Research on Cohesive Devices in Writing Skills

Researchers studying second language acquisition in various EFL contexts have examined the cohesive devices necessary to enhance cohesion and create a coherent text. Furthermore, several researchers have investigated the relationship between the quality of writing and cohesion. For example, Crossley and McNamara (2010), Guiju (2005), and Janjua (2012) found that using cohesive devices positively influenced text quality. Hananta and Sukyadi (2015) claimed that ‘research on cohesion is an important point in literacy studies, more specifically in writing’ (p. 38). Thus, using grammatical cohesive devices plays an essential role in ensuring writing quality, texture, and unity. Therefore, if Saudi EFL learners want to be good writers and deliver good essays, they need to consider the essential elements of cohesion.

Numerous efforts have been made in the field of academic writing to demonstrate the importance of cohesiveness in writing and its relationship to language competence (Bhatia, 2014; Hyland, 2004; Lazar & Ellis, 2011; Swales & Feak, 2004). Research on cohesion in writing skills has indicated the importance of cohesion for learners’ achievement and competence in producing written texts. A reason for this, according to Chandrasoma (2010), is that EFL learners have inadequate writing skills; hence, explicit

teaching is crucial. Rahman and Alhaisoni (2013) argued that ‘explicit classroom teaching should be provided to improve the knowledge of four basic skills, i.e. reading, writing, listening, and speaking’ (p. 117). Ellis (2012) explained explicit instruction as an attempt to give learners descriptions of target forms. Furthermore, Richards and Schmidt (2010) agreed with Ellis (2012), claiming that the goal of explicit instruction is to provide students with specific information. Explicit learning is when ‘the learner is aware of what has been learned’ (Richards & Schmidt, 2002). Thus, explicit instruction in the use of conjunctions is fundamental because it improves learners’ writing skills and the production and quality of their written texts. Many EFL researchers such as Almutairi (2017), Kashiha (2022), and Othman (2019) have suggested that teaching cohesive devices is crucial and has a great impact on improving learners’ essays.

Several studies have investigated cohesive devices in different EFL and English as a second language (ESL) context. A recent study on the use of cohesive devices in essay writing was carried out by Kashiha (2022), who investigated the use of different cohesive devices in learners’ essays and stressed the problems learners may face when writing essays. The findings revealed that students overused cohesive devices or used them incorrectly, and that the most frequently used cohesive devices were conjunctions. Kashiha (2022) suggested that explicit instruction is required to enable learners to produce coherent essays.

Al Shamalat and Ghani (2020) explored the use of conjunctions on the quality of argumentative texts by Jordanian

EFL learners. They found that students used conjunctions in their essays. Moreover, they concluded that there is a substantial correlation between the quality of essays and the use of conjunctions.

Ong (2011) examined texts produced by Chinese EFL learners and investigated the use of cohesive devices based on the detection of errors. The author found a high percentage of errors, indicating that Chinese EFL students had difficulty using different cohesive devices, and recommended that EFL teachers must increase learners' awareness of the importance of cohesive devices and their correct use in essays.

Alarcon and Morales (2011) conducted research to analyse the use of cohesive devices by EFL students in their argumentative essays. They concluded that reference cohesive devices were most frequently used in learners' argumentative essays, followed by conjunctions. Their study also showed that participants used adversative conjunctions more than other types, and they expected these results because of the nature of the essays (argumentative). They asserted that teachers must emphasise the relationship between form and function when teaching writing.

Hananta and Sukyadi (2015) also analysed the use of different cohesive devices in argumentative essays. They concluded that the most frequently used types of conjunctions were additive, temporal, causal, and adversative, and they noted that using cohesive devices enhanced writing quality.

Mohammed (2015) explored how Nigerian ESL learners used conjunctions in written texts and found that ESL learners have not mastered how to connect texts via conjunctions, and he

emphasised the importance of teaching conjunctions to students to acquire the needed level of proficiency.

Research on Cohesive Devices in Writing Skills in a Saudi EFL Context

Regarding the Saudi EFL context, several studies have been performed to test the influence of cohesive devices on learners' written productions. Almutairi (2017), for example, analysed students' essays in public schools, and the results revealed that the students overused and misused certain cohesive devices, which influenced their writing quality. The author recommended that instructors should raise students' awareness of cohesive devices and how to incorporate them in their writing.

Alshalan (2019) conducted a study on the use of cohesive ties by Saudi female students and found that lexical cohesion (repetition) was the most frequently used type of cohesive devices in learners' written texts. The author recommended that teachers in Saudi EFL context should provide learners with relevant tools to improve their writing skills and help them connect their ideas effectively.

Othman (2019) investigated the types of grammatical cohesive device errors produced by EFL learners majoring in the English language in a Saudi University. The study identified three types of cohesive device errors regarding references, substitutions, and conjunctions. Othman (2019) asserted that cohesive devices need to be taught explicitly.

Alyousef (2021) conducted a study on using cohesive devices in written texts by Saudi undergraduate learners. The findings showed that various multimodal high-cohesion texts were

required to help students successfully expand underlying conceptual and logical meaning-making relations.

Alqasham et al. (2021) also investigated the usage of cohesive devices in Saudi EFL students' argumentative essays. The results showed that learners needed regular writing practice to strengthen their writing and enable them to produce good essays.

Qadeer and Chow (2022) investigated the use of cohesive devices by Saudi undergraduate students and discovered that they were unable to apply grammatical devices properly. The authors proposed a writing skill module and explicit teaching techniques to improve students' writing.

Methodology

Participants and Sampling

Forty Saudi female undergraduate students participated in this study by submitting one essay each. All the students were studying English for academic purposes as a core module in a Saudi Arabian University and were taught by the researcher. Hence, they were assigned to the intermediate (B1) level according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. The students received explicit instruction on conjunctions based on their course textbook (*Cambridge Unlock Textbook 3, second edition*; Cambridge University, 2019). Furthermore, as part of their assessments, they were required to submit 250–300-word essays for each unit throughout the semester. The researcher aimed to analyse students' essays regarding the

use of conjunctions and the impact of their use on the cohesion and quality of the students' writing. In addition, for each unit, students were given explicit instruction on how to write essays, the structure of an essay (with examples), and the relevant grammar and vocabulary to use in their essays.

Data Collection and Analysis

The researcher adopted a mixed-methods approach and used students' essays as the main data for determining how frequently they employed conjunctions to fulfil the purpose of the text. Dörnyei (2007) defined mixed methods as the use of quantitative and qualitative methods. He also stated that 'over the past 15 years, mixed-methods research has been increasingly seen as a third approach in research methodology' (p. 42). Therefore, the researcher employed manual textual analysis (a qualitative method) to identify and count additive, adversative, causal, and temporal conjunctions participants used in their essays. The researcher then applied SPSS[®] (a quantitative method) to analyse what Dörnyei (2007, p. 24) called 'numerical data' and discover the frequencies with which different types of conjunctions were used and whether there were any statistical differences in the uses of the four types of conjunctions.

Table 1
Target Conjunctions (adopted from *Unlock Textbook 3, second edition*; Cambridge University, 2019)

Types of conjunctions	Conjunctions	
Additive conjunctions	To combine sentences	'and', 'or', 'furthermore', 'in addition'
	To compare two different things	'also', 'both', 'neither/nor'
Adversative conjunctions	To contrast ideas	'but', 'whereas', 'however'
Causal conjunctions	To introduce results/reasons	because, so, The reason
Temporal conjunctions	To introduce a sequence of events/ideas	'first', 'second', 'then', 'next', 'finally'

The researcher adopted the target conjunctions from Halliday and Hasan (1976) based on the *Cambridge Unlock Textbook 3, second edition*; Cambridge University, 2019. (See Table 1). The conjunctions were analysed quantitatively and qualitatively based on Halliday and Hasan's use of cohesive devices and their associated cohesion model. The target conjunctions were used for different purposes: additive (to combine sentences or to compare between two things), adversative (to contrast two different ideas), causal (to introduce reasons and results), and temporal (to introduce a set of ideas/events).

Data Analysis Procedures

The research process followed three main stages to answer the RQs and achieve the main objectives of the study. First, the researcher explicitly provided instruction on conjunctions throughout the semester. Second, following each unit, students were asked to write 250–300-word essays that included an introductory paragraph, a main body of text (with appropriate paragraphs), and a conclusion. Third, the researcher thoroughly analysed the resulting 40 essays using textual analysis to examine the use of conjunctions.

In addition, the researcher counted the total number of conjunctions in the students' essays according to type: additive, adversative, causal, and temporal. Finally, the SPSS[®] programme was applied to determine the frequencies of use of the conjunctions, the students' mean scores (numerical data), and whether there were any statistical differences between the uses of the four types of conjunctions. Table 2 shows the number of additive, adversative, causal, and temporal conjunctions used by learners in their essays.

Results (Textual Analysis)

The researcher used textual analysis to identify the different types of conjunctions used by the participants. The key reason for conducting the textual analysis was to determine the type of conjunctions and the total number of conjunctions used in participants' essays. Table 2 shows the total number of conjunctions used in the essays (based on textual analysis).

Table 2
Total Numbers of Additive, Adversative, Causal, and Temporal Conjunctions Used in the Essays

Type of conjunctions	Conjunctions		Number of conjunctions used in the essays (40 essays)	Total number of conjunctions
Additive conjunctions	To combine sentences	And	246	315
		Or	19	
		Furthermore	1	
		In addition	3	
	To compare two different things	Also	27	
		Both	16	
Neither/nor		3		
Adversative conjunctions	To contrast ideas	But	8	26
		Whereas	11	
		However,	7	
Causal conjunctions	To introduce results/reasons	Because	12	23
		So	5	
		The reason for	6	
Temporal conjunctions	To introduce a sequence of events/ideas	First	9	18
		Second	5	
		Then	2	
		Next	2	
		Finally	0	

Table 2 indicates the number of each type of conjunction and the total number for the type. The total usages were 315 additive conjunctions, 26 adversative conjunctions, 23 causal conjunctions, and 18 temporal conjunctions.

Additive Conjunctions

The most common conjunctions in the essays were additive conjunctions used to either combine sentences or compare two different things. First, regarding conjunctions to combine sentences, the most frequently used additive conjunctions were ‘and’, ‘or’, ‘in addition’, and ‘furthermore’ with 246 uses, 19 uses, 3 uses, and 1 use, respectively. Second, to compare two different things, the most frequently used conjunctions for comparing sentences were ‘also’, ‘both’, and ‘neither/nor’, with 27 uses, 16 uses, and 3 uses, respectively.

Adversative Conjunctions

Regarding the adversative conjunctions, the focus was on three conjunctions to contrast ideas: ‘but’, ‘whereas’, and ‘however’. The adversative ‘whereas’ was used more than ‘but’ and ‘however’, with 11 uses, 8 uses, and 7 uses, respectively.

Causal Conjunctions

Causal conjunctions were also used to introduce results and reasons. The most frequently used causal conjunctions were ‘because’ (12 uses), ‘the reason for’ (6 uses), and ‘so’ (5 uses).

Temporal Conjunctions

Temporal conjunctions were used to introduce sequences of events and ideas. The students used the conjunction ‘first’ nine

times, 'second' five times, but 'then' and 'next' only two times each. Learners did not use 'finally'.

Results (SPSS® Analysis)

The researcher employed SPSS® software to perform a one-sample t-test and compare the participants' mean scores. The one-sample t-test was used to determine the frequency of use of the conjunctions in learners' essays according to the mean scores. The mean, as Dörnyei (2007) explained, is 'the average of the scores' (p. 214). In addition, a one-sample t-test was appropriate for determining whether the means of the total scores differed across the four types of conjunctions (additive, adversative, causal, and temporal). The results for the use of different types of conjunctions analysed using a one-sample t-test are shown in the following tables.

Additive Conjunctions

Table 3
Total Mean Scores for Additive Conjunctions (Combining Two Sentences) (N = number of essays)

One-Sample T-Test Statistics				
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
And	40	8.20	9.859	1.800
Or	40	0.63	2.414	0.441
Furthermore	40	0.03	0.183	0.033
In addition	40	0.10	0.305	0.056
Total	40	8.97	11.125	2.031

Table 4
Total Mean Scores for Additive Conjunctions (Comparing Two Different Things) (N = number of essays)

One-Sample T-Test Statistics				
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Also	40	0.90	2.784	0.508
Both	40	0.53	2.097	0.383
Neither/nor	40	0.10	0.305	0.056
Total	40	1.53	4.995	0.912

Tables 3 and 4 show the participants' mean scores for the use of additive conjunctions (to combine sentences and compare two things). The mean score for additive conjunctions to combine sentences was 8.97, the mean score for additive conjunctions to compare two things was 1.53, and the total mean score for using all additive conjunctions was 10.50. Thus, there was a significant difference in the mean score for these two types of additive conjunctions.

Adversative Conjunctions

Table 5
Total Mean Scores for Adversative Conjunctions (N = number of essays)

One-Sample T-Test Statistics				
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
But	40	0.27	0.450	0.082
Whereas	40	0.37	0.490	0.089
However	40	0.23	0.430	0.079
Total	40	0.87	1.279	0.234

Table 5 shows the mean scores for the participants' use of adversative conjunctions. The mean score for using 'but' was 0.27, the mean score for using 'whereas' was 0.37, and the mean score for using 'however' was 0.23. The total mean score for using all adversative conjunctions was 0.87. Thus, there were no statistically significant differences between the uses of different devices to contrast ideas.

Causal Conjunctions

Table 6

Total Mean Scores for Causal Conjunctions (N = number of essays)

One-Sample T-Test Statistics				
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Because	40	0.40	0.498	0.091
So	40	0.17	0.379	0.069
The reason for	40	0.20	0.407	0.074
Total	40	0.77	1.135	0.207

Table 6 shows the mean scores for the participants' use of causal conjunctions. The mean score for using 'because' was 0.40, the mean score for using 'so' was 0.17, and the mean score for using 'the reason for' was 0.22. The total mean score for using all causal conjunctions was 0.77. Consequently, there were statistically significant differences between the uses of different devices to introduce reasons: 'because' was used more often than 'so' and 'the reason for'.

Temporal Conjunctions

Table 7

Total Mean Scores for Temporal Conjunctions (N = number of essays)

One-Sample T-Test Statistics				
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
First	40	0.30	0.466	0.085
Second	40	0.17	0.379	0.069
Next	40	0.07	0.254	0.046
Then	40	0.07	0.254	0.046
Finally,	40	0.00	0.000 ^a	0.000
Total	40	0.60	1.13259	0.20678

Table 7 shows the mean scores for the participants' use of temporal conjunctions. The mean score for using 'first' was 0.30, the mean score for using 'second' was 0.17, the mean score for using 'next' and 'then' was 0.07, and the mean score for using 'finally' was 0.00. The total mean score for using all causal conjunctions was 0.60. Hence, there were statistically significant differences between the uses of different devices to introduce a set of events/ideas, 'First' and 'second' were the most frequently used conjunctions.

Table 8

Total Mean Scores for Additive, Adversative, Causal, and Temporal Conjunctions (N = number of essays)

One-Sample T-Test Statistics				
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Additive	40	10.50	14.607	2.667
Adversative	40	0.87	1.279	0.234
Causal	40	0.77	1.135	0.207
Temporal	40	0.60	1.133	0.207
Total	40	12.73	17.755	3.242

Table 8 shows the differences in the mean total scores for using all types of conjunctions. The mean score for additive conjunctions was 10.50, for adversative conjunctions it was 0.87, for causal conjunctions it was 0.77, and finally, for temporal conjunctions it was 0.60. The total mean score for participants' use of all types of conjunctions was therefore 12.73. Thus, there were statistically significant differences in the mean scores for using additive conjunctions compared to other types. In addition, there were no statistically significant differences in the mean scores for using adversative (0.87), causal (0.77), and temporal conjunctions (0.60). Thus, it can be concluded that the highest frequency of use was for additive conjunctions.

Discussion

As mentioned previously, the researcher aspired to answer two RQs. The first RQ was answered by applying SPSS[®] software to the quantitative data to determine the most and least frequent types of conjunctions used by Saudi EFL learners in their essays following explicit instruction. Conjunctions were notable in the students' essays. Moreover, the analysis of their essays showed that the Saudi EFL students used a range of different types of conjunctions (additive, adversative, causal, and temporal) and used them differently. Additive conjunctions were the most frequently used type of conjunction, as the participants used them far more frequently than the other types of conjunctions.

However, the participants used fewer adversative, causal, and temporal conjunctions. They also tended to overuse the conjunction 'and' to combine sentences, with an overall use of 246

times. This study aligns with the studies of Almutariti (2017) and Kashiha (2022) regarding the overuse of cohesive devices.

Furthermore, in many of the essays, students repeated the conjunction 'and', which greatly affected the quality of their written texts. Hence, participants need to be made aware that they can improve the quality of their writing by avoiding repetition and using a range of other types of conjunctions or synonyms such as 'in addition', 'furthermore', or 'etc.' rather than depending solely on the conjunction 'and'. Kashiha (2022) explained that students use repetitions due to 'a lack of vocabulary knowledge' (p. 16). Along with providing explicit instruction, instructors should raise learners' awareness of the purpose of using conjunctions, which is to improve the cohesiveness of a text. Such raising of learners' awareness has been supported by many researchers, including Almutairi (2017), Kashiha (2022), and Ong (2011). In addition, instructors should highlight several conjunctions to help students avoid repetition and to improve the unity of their productions. Overall, if Saudi EFL learners want to be good essay writers, it is critical for them to consider the essential elements of cohesion.

The researcher used textual analysis to answer the second RQ and to determine to what extent Saudi EFL learners used different types of conjunctions correctly in written productions. Some learners used more additive conjunctions than other types of conjunctions. Although the findings of this study align with Almutairi (2017) and Kashiha (2022) regarding the overuse of specific cohesive devices, the participants used cohesive devices appropriately; for instance, they used adversative conjunctions such as 'but', 'whereas', and 'however' to effectively contrast two ideas. Thus, explicit instruction appeared to have a positive effect on learners' correct use of these devices, since learners were aware

of how to use them and for what purpose. Several researchers, such as Almutairi (2017), Kashiha (2022), and Othman (2019), Qadeer and Chow (2022) highlighted the significance of teaching cohesive devices explicitly ‘to ensure unity in the text and sustain the proper flow of ideas’ (Kashiha, 2022, p. 18).

No examples of conjunction misuse were identified during the textual analysis. This can be explained by the fact that participants were given explicit instruction on using different conjunctions and their purposes in sentences. For instance, additive conjunctions can be used to add additional information or to compare things, adversative conjunctions can be used to contrast two things/ideas, causal conjunctions can be used to introduce reasons/results, and temporal conjunctions can be used to introduce a series of events/ideas. Moreover, textual analysis assisted the researcher in evaluating the final essays, and despite the overuse of the conjunction ‘and’ by some students, learners used a wide range of conjunctions that helped the text hang together and students to achieve Halliday and Hasan’s (1976) ‘text unity’. In addition, learners delivered organised essays by following the recommended essay structure of an introductory paragraph, a main body of text (with paragraphs), and a conclusion. Overall, the essays demonstrated evidence of cohesion and paragraph unity, but the students needed to use a wider range of conjunctions to avoid repetition.

Conclusion

The findings of this study indicate that additive conjunctions are the cohesive devices that Saudi EFL learners use most frequently, followed by adversative, causal, and temporal conjunctions, in that order. Furthermore, based on the SPSS®

results, there was a statistically significant difference in the use of additive conjunctions compared to the other types of conjunctions. However, there were no significant differences between the uses of adversative, causal, and temporal conjunctions in the participants' written productions.

The textual analysis demonstrated that students used conjunctions for different purposes correctly; for example, they used additive conjunctions, such as 'and' and 'in addition', to combine two sentences, and 'both' and 'also' to compare two different things. They also used adversative conjunctions, such as 'but', to contrast ideas; causal conjunctions, such as 'because', to introduce reasons; and temporal conjunctions, such as 'first' and 'second', to introduce a series of events.

Overall, explicit instruction on the target conjunctions assisted participants in using them correctly for different purposes. Additionally, explicit instruction influenced the students' learning and their use of all types of conjunctions, enabling them to produce coherent essays.

However, the study had some limitations. First, the data were collected from female students only because the researcher taught only females; a further, large-scale study could include both males and females to compare results and draw strong, valid conclusions. Second, participants provided only one essay each; had they provided one essay prior to instruction and another following instruction (i.e. using a pretest/posttest approach), the researcher could have evaluated and compared the uses of various cohesive devices before and after instruction. Third, learners could be taught specific types of cohesive devices according to the type of essays they are writing, such as argumentative essays and cause-and-effect essays, to allow the appropriate use of certain cohesive

devices to be measured. In addition, learners' essays could be evaluated based on the use of specific cohesive devices for different genres or types of writing, which would help in understanding why some cohesive devices are used more than others.

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Appendix

(Sample essays written by Saudi EFL learners)

Essay 1

Humans activities have been the main reason of climate change primary due to burning fossil fuels like oil and gas uses in fuel, heating, lighting, transport or manufacturing. Or because of deforestation by removing trees to use it as a fuel for construction as a pasture for animals or fields for planting foods, however the deforestation is a important factor for erosion and emissions as well. Emissions are caused by deforestation from farms, pastures, and many other reasons. Excessive energy consumption and the industrialization is also harmful to the environment as it's helpful.

I would talk about the effects of humans activity that harm the environment , firstly Burning fossil fuels creating a lot of greenhouse gases emissions that raising temperatures also it rising the amount of carbon gas, water and air pollution, and increased nitrogen oxide production the most significant greenhouse gas and contributor to global warming this will greatly affect the planet ,floods and long droughts from heat waves will destroy human lives and animals or plants as well and it's causes a decrease in the water level and rain, also including the melting of polar ice so many polar animals will be endangered.

secondly the deforestation is extremely hurtful for the environment and it's mean to cutting down the trees to makes a new areas to build big houses and entertainment places ,as a result animals that live in top of the trees will not find a place to live and It's also bad for human too that the trees emit oxygen that helps clean the air, also lands are going to expanding, reducing lands for growing food so many people will face the threat of not having enough water to drink or even to farm.

Thirdly the industrialization is as bad as it's good for both of human and animals habitat, if we don't care and don't control our use of industry it will definitely harm the environment causing industrial pollution.

Essay 2

Do you know what physical education is? Do you think it is good for university students? Physical education is a class that students must attend in school. It is taken during general education. These classes often include popular games such as football, basketball and cricket. Opinions differ about the universities' need for physical classes, and we will discuss them today?

Physical and sports education is important in human life, whether young or old, and its importance is no less important than behavioral and moral education, because it has many benefits in life, the most prominent of which is improving the academic level of students, as sports help reduce the level of stress that university students are exposed to and Physical education and exercise help to empty the energies of young people in a targeted manner, and prevent them from any improper ways to empty their energies. It also contributes greatly to the development of people's self-confidence, and increases their self-esteem, and thus they will be able to achieve and maintain the previous benefits, because it will be a continuous motivation for them to exercise regularly.

Even though there are many benefits, there are some disadvantages, like the risk of injury. Another disadvantage is that classes can take up precious time in a student's schedule that could be used for studying.

In my view, physical classes for university students is a waste of time and effort because university students have a lot of assignments and tests and do not want the increase in university hours. Also, they are adults and know how to divide their time between work and sports, but this does not mean merging them together.