



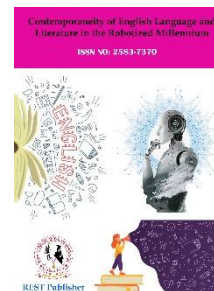
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An Analysis of Conjunctive Cohesive Devices in EFL Students' Academic Writings

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Abstract: *This research focuses on the analysis of conjunctive cohesive devices in EFL students' academic writings. Conjunctive cohesive devices are grammatical tools that connect words, sentences, and ideas, playing a crucial role in creating cohesive discourse. The study aims to examine the awareness and usage of conjunctive cohesive devices among second- and fourth-year students in the English department, and to determine the frequency of their usage in academic writing. The research was conducted at Cihan University, involving twenty-four students from both academic levels. The participants were asked to write an essay titled 'the importance of learning English.' The collected data were analyzed based on the number, variety, and usage of conjunctive cohesive devices. The findings reveal that four types of conjunctions were commonly used by the students, and there were differences in the usage patterns between second- and fourth-year students. While fourth-year students displayed a higher awareness and usage of conjunctions compared to second-year students, there were still instances of misuse and limited variety in both groups. Overall, this study emphasizes the significance of conjunctive cohesive devices in EFL students' academic writing and highlights the need for improved awareness and diversified usage of these devices. The findings contribute to a better understanding of how conjunctive cohesive devices contribute to the coherence and cohesion of written discourse.*

Keywords: *Cohesion, conjunctive cohesive devices, discourse analysis, EFL students' academic writing.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Problem of Study: Effective communication is integral to human society, and the manner in which we convey our thoughts is of utmost importance. Cohesive devices, such as conjunctions, play a vital role in connecting ideas and providing a sense of flow to written text. This flow is particularly crucial in academic writing, where precision and clarity are paramount. Incorrect or inadequate use of these essential words can lead to inconvenience for readers and, in the worst-case scenario, misunderstandings. Therefore, it is imperative for students to understand the significance of cohesive devices, handle them with care, and employ them correctly to ensure the coherence and comprehensibility of their written work. The problem at hand is that students learning English as a foreign language (EFL) often lack the proficiency to effectively use cohesive devices. Consequently, their essays tend to be riddled with redundancies, lack variety, and exhibit inappropriate usage, resulting in disjointed and inconsistent writing when compared to the standards of proper academic writing. Cohesive devices, particularly conjunctions, are indispensable for constructing meaningful connections within a text and thereby creating coherence. However, EFL students frequently encounter difficulties in employing cohesive devices correctly and effectively in their writing endeavors.

Research Questions: RQ1. What is the awareness and usage of conjunctive cohesive devices among second and fourth-year EFL students in the English department at Cihan University-Duhok? RQ2. How do the

frequency and variety of conjunctive cohesive devices differ between second and fourth-year EFL students' academic writing at Cihan University- Duhok?

Aims of the study: In summary, the study aims to analyze the use of conjunctive cohesive devices in the academic writing of EFL students. It seeks to assess their proficiency in using conjunctions effectively and correctly, while also exploring if there is an improvement in their writing ability between the second and fourth years of study.

Hypotheses of the Stud : The study hypothesizes that EFL students use conjunctive cohesive devices in their writing, but with limited variety. Additionally, it is hypothesized that fourth-year students are more familiar with using conjunctions compared to second-year students, owing to greater practice and exposure.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The Concept of Cohesion: Cohesion is the semantic relationship between elements in a text, allowing sentences to form a cohesive and unified whole. It goes beyond mere grammatical units and encompasses the semantic connections between ideas in spoken or written discourse. Cohesion helps convey and connect ideas in a text, making it a meaningful and coherent piece of language. The interpretation of one element in a cohesive text depends on another, as they presuppose and rely on each other. Cohesion involves the connections that readers establish between ideas in a text, whether explicitly signalled or not. It encompasses both grammatical and lexical aspects. Grammatical cohesion, as categorized by Halliday and Hasan (1976), includes reference, substitution, ellipsis, and conjunction. (Vadivel,2021). These cohesive devices serve as signals to guide readers in making connections with previous or forthcoming information. On the other hand, lexical cohesion encompasses reiteration and collocation, focusing on the cohesion achieved through vocabulary choices. Cohesion is not limited to grammar but also encompasses vocabulary. It is crucial for creating ties and connections within a text, aiding readers in understanding and interpreting the relationships between ideas. Cohesive devices act as markers or signals that facilitate the comprehension and construction of meaning in written discourse.

Conjunctive Cohesive Devices: Conjunctions serve as linking devices between sentences or clauses in a text, establishing logical and semantic relationships. Unlike other grammatical devices, conjunctions structure the text in a meaningful order for the reader or listener. They explicitly indicate the type of relationship between sentences or clauses. (Khalil. 2021)Conjunctions can be categorized into four types: additive, adversative, causal, and temporal. Additive conjunctions connect units that share a semantic similarity, such as "and," "likewise," "furthermore," and "in addition." Adversative conjunctions express contrasting results or opinions, and include words like "but," "however," "in contrast," and "whereas." Causal conjunctions introduce results, reasons, or purposes, using words such as "so," "thus," "therefore," and "because." Temporal conjunctions indicate the time order of events, including words like "finally," "then," "soon," and "at the same time." Huy, D. T. (2022) In summary, conjunctions play a vital role in structuring a text and expressing logical and semantic relationships. They can be classified into different categories based on their specific functions and the types of relationships they convey.

Academic Writings: Academic writing is a form of writing predominantly used by graduate students to fulfill specific writing assignments. It is primarily associated with English-medium colleges and universities, where students are required to write essays and other assignments for exams or coursework (Bailey, 2003). Cohesion and coherence are essential elements to consider in academic writing. Halliday and Hassan (1976) highlighted the significance of cohesion and coherence in creating well-structured and comprehensible writing. A strong command of linguistic connections is necessary to achieve cohesive discourse. Writing, particularly in a foreign language, is a skill that demands dedicated effort. University students are tasked with various academic writing projects that require adherence to specific guidelines. Utilizing conjunctive cohesive devices appropriately can enhance students' writing and contribute to the cohesion and comprehensibility of their texts. This research paperfocus on the use of conjunctions, a significant type of grammatical cohesion and one of the most frequently employed by students, in academic writing.

Previous Studies: Researchers have conducted studies on the role of cohesive devices in academic writing, emphasizing their importance in creating well-constructed and understandable compositions, particularly for foreign/second language learners. For example, Abdurahman, Wijaya, and Salam (2013) examined the types of grammatical cohesive devices used in theses and their contribution to cohesive discourse. The majority of devices identified were referential cohesive devices (82.25%) and conjunctive cohesive devices (17.12%). Another study by Janulienė and Dziedravicius (2015) focused on the usage of conjunctive adverbs in academic essays written by law students. The study explored the role of conjunctive adverbs in achieving cohesion, highlighting their significance as cohesive tools. The analysis of 88 essays revealed the widespread use of conjunctive adverbs, particularly in the temporal and additive connector categories. Despite previous research in this area, there is a gap in the analysis of conjunctive cohesive devices specifically in EFL students' academic writing at Cihan University. This paper aims to address this gap by examining the use of conjunctive cohesive devices in EFL students' academic writings.

3. METHODOLOGY

The Research Design: The research design chosen for this study is quantitative. Quantitative research involves collecting numerical data for analysis, such as scores, durations, or ratings. In this study, the aim is to examine the hypothesis that fourth-year students have a higher awareness and proficiency in using conjunctive cohesive devices in academic writing compared to second-year students. Additionally, the study seeks to determine the students' perception of the importance of conjunctive coherence and identify the most frequently used types of conjunctives.

Participants: The study included twenty-four participants from the English department at Cihan University, consisting of an equal number of male and female students from both the second and fourth years. The participants were selected based on the assumption that they possess fundamental writing skills and have previous experience with academic writing assignments. The participants were asked to write an essay on the topic of "the importance of learning English."

Data Collection and Procedure : The data for this study was collected in the form of test papers, specifically the essays written by the participating students. Prior to writing the essays, the students were informed about the study's purpose, and their consent was obtained to ensure the confidentiality of their test papers for academic purposes only. The essays were then analyzed to identify and count the usage of different types of conjunctive cohesive devices. The analysis aimed to determine the students' level of awareness and proficiency in using conjunctive cohesion appropriately, as well as to identify the frequency of usage for each type of conjunctive.

Method of Data Analysis: The written data was corrected and analyzed based on Halliday and Hassan's (1976) framework. To visualize the data, the Microsoft Excel application was utilized. The analysis of the written data involved two steps. Firstly, the total usage of each conjunction type was counted for each academic level. Secondly, a comparison of conjunctive cohesion was made between second and fourth-year students, focusing on the appropriate use of conjunctions in their academic writings. To calculate the percentage of each conjunction, a simple statistical approach was employed. The study's results were then summarized, and the research findings were interpreted using clear and concise charts. These charts were presented in the subsequent chapter to provide a comprehensive understanding of the research outcomes.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this chapter, the analyzed results of the gathered data from our EFL second and fourth-year students are presented. The analysis reveals that both groups demonstrate a certain level of usage of conjunctive cohesive devices. However, there is a noticeable difference in the quantity and types of devices used. The fourth-year students exhibit more frequent and diverse use of such devices, as demonstrated in the tables below.

TABLE I. FREQUENCY DISTRIBUTION OF CONJUNCTIONS USED IN EFL STUDENTS' ACADEMIC WRITINGS

Levels	The number of Students/ essay	Additive	Adversative	Casual	Temporal	Total
Second year Students	12	(79) 63.7%	(3) 2.4%	(29) 23.3%	(13) 10.4%	124
Fourth year Students	12	(108) 63.5%	(7) 4.1%	(41) 24.1%	(14) 8.2%	170

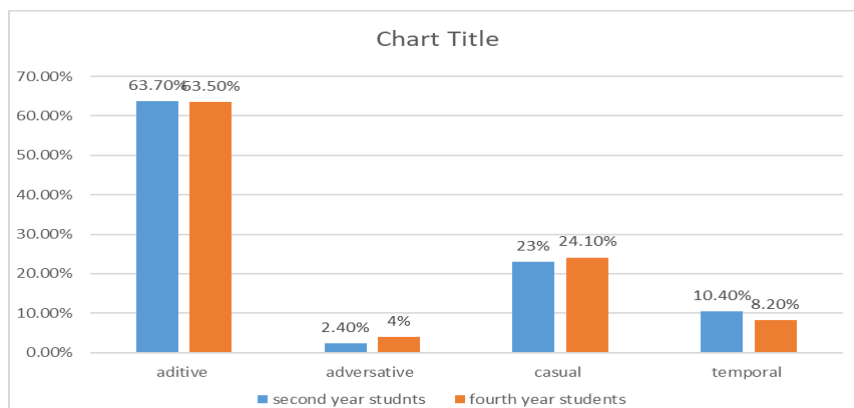


FIGURE 1. Conjunction used in EFL students' academic writings

Students' Use of additive cohesive devices :The following analysis presents the quantity and types of additive devices used in the essays of our second and fourth-year EFL students.

TABLE 2.SECOND-YEAR STUDENTS' USE OF ADDITIVE COHESIVE DEVICES

Total	Additive use	Number of additive use	Percentage
	and	55	69.6%
	also	7	8.8%
	in addition	1	1.2%
	such as	1	1.2%
79	like	4	5%
	for example	2	2.5%
	as well as	1	1.2%
	or	7	8.8%
	I mean	1	1.2%

TABLE 3. FOURTH YEAR STUDENTS' USE OF ADDITIVE COHESIVE DEVICES

Total	Additive use	Number of additive use	Percentage
	and	74	68.5%
	also	12	11.1%
	furthermore	1	0.9%
	moreover	1	0.9%
	as well as	2	1.9%
	such as	4	3.7%
	or instance	1	1.6%
108	for example	4	3.7%
	another	2	1.9%
	or	3	2.8%
	nor	1	0.9%
	I mean	1	0.9%
	that means	2	1.9%

The results reveal a high frequency of using the additive conjunction 'and' in both second-year students' writing (69.6%) and fourth-year students' writing (68.5%). It indicates that students consistently prefer using 'and' to convey addition. However, second-year students also employ other additive devices, such as 'also' and 'or' (8.8%), 'like' (5%), 'for example' (2.5%), and others like 'in addition,' 'as well as,' 'such as,' and 'I mean' (1.2%). In contrast, fourth-year students use 'also' (11.1%), 'such as' and 'for example' (3.7%), 'or' (2.8%), 'as well as' and 'that means' (1.9%), along with other devices like 'furthermore,' 'moreover,' 'for instance,' 'nor,' and 'I mean' (0.9%). This suggests that students may be familiar with and utilize these devices from their earlier writing, while they may have limited knowledge or experience with alternative additive conjunctions like 'likewise,' 'alternatively,' 'similarly,' 'in the same way,' and 'in other words' since they did not use them in their previous writing. Consequently, students demonstrate limited proficiency in using these less frequently employed additive devices[23].

Students' Use of Adversative Cohesive Devices: The tables below present the number of adversative cohesive devices used by second and fourth-year students in their essays.

TABLE 4. SECOND-YEAR STUDENTS' USE OF ADVERSATIVE COHESIVE DEVICES

Total	Adversative use	Number of adversative use	Percentage
3	But	2	66.6%
	however	1	33.3%

Table 5.

Total	Adversative use	Number of adversative use	Percentage
	But	3	42.9%
7	However	2	28.6%
	Yet	1	14.3%
	Despite	1	14.3%

Both tables present the usage of adversative cohesive devices by second and fourth-year students. The findings from both tables indicate that students have limited experience in utilizing adversative cohesive devices. This

deficiency can be particularly significant when writing argumentative essays. Table 4.4 demonstrates that the adversative conjunction 'but' is highly prevalent, with a frequency of 66.5% in second-year essays and 42.9% in fourth-year essays. The second most common cohesive device used by both groups is 'however,' accounting for 33.3% in the second year and 28.6% in the fourth year. Additionally, fourth-year students employed the adversative cohesive devices 'yet' and 'despite' at a rate of 14.3%. Moreover, the results suggest that students may be unfamiliar with other adversative cohesive devices such as 'though,' 'rather,' 'instead,' 'nevertheless,' 'actually,' 'anyway,' 'anyhow,' and 'whichever.' This lack of exposure to such devices further highlights the students' limited experience in using adversative cohesive devices.

Students' Use of Casual Cohesive Devices: The tables below present the number of causal cohesive devices used by second and fourth-year students in their essays.

TABLE 6. SECOND YEAR STUDENTS' USE OF CASUAL COHESIVE DEVICES

Total	Casual use	Number of casual use	Percentage
	Because	13	44.8%
	Since	2	6.9%
29	As	2	6.9%
	So	11	37.9%
	In order	1	3.4%

TABLE 7..FOURTH-YEAR STUDENTS' USE OF CASUAL COHESIVE DEVICES

To tal	Casual use	Number of casual use	Percentage
	Because	13	31.7%
	Because of	2	4.9%
	Since	4	9.8%
	As	7	17.1%
41	So	6	14.6%
	For the purpose	1	2.4%
	This is why	1	2.4%
	Hence	1	2.4%
	Thus	1	2.4%
	Therefore	4	9.8%
	Due to	1	2.4%

The results from Tables 4.6 and 4.7 indicate that the preferred causal cohesive device used by both second and fourth-year students is 'because.' It is used in 44.8% of second-year essays and 31.7% of fourth-year essays. Additionally, it is observed that the total number of causal devices used by fourth-year students is higher compared to second-year students, and fourth-year students also employ a greater variety of causal devices. The second most frequently used causal device for second-year students is 'so,' accounting for 37.9% of its usage. In contrast, fourth-year students demonstrate a more distributed usage of causal devices, including 'because of' (4.9%), 'so' (14.6%), 'as' (17.1%), and 'since' (9.8%). These findings suggest that fourth-year students exhibit greater potential in utilizing causal cohesive devices, likely due to their increased exposure to these devices, allowing them to incorporate them more seamlessly into their writing.

Students' Use of Temporal Cohesive Devices:

The tables below present the number of temporal devices and the total usage of temporal cohesive devices by second and fourth-year students in their essays.

TABLE 7. SECOND YEAR STUDENTS' USE OF TEMPORAL COHESIVE DEVICES

Total	Temporal use	Number of temporal use	Percentage
	First	1	7.7%
13	First of all	10	76.9%
	When	1	7.7
	In the end	1	7.7

TABLE 8. FOURTH YEAR STUDENTS' USE OF TEMPORAL COHESIVE DEVICES

Total	Temporal use	Number of temporal use	Percentage
	In the beginning	1	7.1%
	When	5	35.7%
	Before	1	7.1%
	While	1	7.1%
14	To conclude	1	7.1%
	First	1	7.1%
	Second	1	7.1%
	Third	1	7.1%
	Fourth	1	7.1%
	Finally	1	7.1%

Tables 4.8 and 4.9 show that both second and fourth-year students use temporal cohesive devices in their essays, but with some differences. Second-year students primarily rely on the use of "first of all" (76.9%), while other temporal devices like "first," "when," and "in the end" are used less frequently (7.7%). In contrast, fourth-year students demonstrate more proficiency in using a wider range of temporal cohesive devices. However, it is worth noting that both groups utilize very few cohesive devices for concluding or summarizing their ideas, indicating a potential lack of exposure to such terms or a less emphasis on proper essay conclusions in their writing. Cohesive devices, also known as linking words or connectors, play a crucial role in academic writing by linking ideas and improving coherence. There are four categories of cohesive devices: additive, adversative, causal, and temporal. A study analyzing essays from second and fourth-year students found differences in their usage of these devices. Additive conjunctions were used effectively, while adversative and temporal conjunctions were used sparingly. Both groups struggled with using conjunctions for summarizing or concluding their writings. Lack of familiarity, limited revision, and differences in educational background contributed to these findings. Fourth-year students demonstrated better usage of cohesive devices, indicating their exposure and study of the topic. However, students relied on a limited set of devices, lacking experience with a broader range. Background knowledge played a significant role in their ability to use conjunctions effectively. To improve the use of cohesive devices, students need more focused study and practice. Factors such as educational level, assigned topics, and prior knowledge can influence their proficiency. The findings align with previous studies, emphasizing the importance of conjunctive devices in cohesive writing.

Overall, teaching and emphasizing cohesive devices in academic courses are crucial for EFL students. Teachers should identify and correct students' mistakes in using these devices. Cohesion is a vital aspect of academic writing, tested in exams like IELTS and TOEFL. Hence, cohesive devices should not be overlooked.

V. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study aimed to investigate the use of conjunctions as cohesive devices in academic writing. The findings revealed several important conclusions: Overall, students demonstrated awareness of the four types of conjunctions: additive, adversative, causal, and temporal. However, they tended to rely on a limited set of conjunctions instead of using a variety of connectors. Additionally, there were instances of misuse of conjunctions, indicating a need for further instruction on their proper usage. Fourth-year students exhibited a higher level of proficiency in using conjunctions in their academic writing compared to second-year students. The conjunction 'and' was the most frequently used, while conjunctions such as 'moreover, despite, and hence' were used less frequently. These findings emphasize the importance of expanding students' repertoire of conjunctions and improving their understanding of how to effectively use them in academic writing.

Recommendations and Scope for the further research: Based on the findings of this study, several recommendations can be made: Diversify the Teaching of Conjunctions: It is recommended to introduce and teach students various types of conjunctive cohesive devices beyond the ones they are already familiar with. This will broaden their repertoire and enable them to use a wider range of connectors, enhancing the overall flow and coherence of their writing. Avoid Overusing Specific Conjunctions: Teachers and students should be mindful of overusing certain conjunctions. Encourage students to explore different conjunctions within each

category to maintain variety and prevent repetitive language in their writing. Focus on Effective Application: Emphasize the importance of using conjunctive cohesive devices effectively in writing. Provide guidance and practice exercises to help students understand the appropriate contexts and purposes for using specific conjunctions. Further Research: This study opens up opportunities for further research on other cohesive devices and their impact on students' academic writing. Investigating and analyzing additional types of cohesive devices will contribute to a deeper understanding of how they can be effectively utilized. By implementing these recommendations, both teachers and students can enhance their understanding and usage of cohesive devices, leading to improved writing quality and communication skills.

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