

The Common Use of Connecting Ideas in Writing Paragraphs of Two Saudi Contexts

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Abstract

This study investigated the undergraduate use of specific English coordinating and subordinating conjunctions based on Azar's & Kolln's and Funk's textbooks, which is (and, but, or, so, because). Also, this research intended to compare students who studied in two EFL contexts to explore how the given instructions regarding the use of conjunctions were applied in students' writing. The data was collected from 26 students studying in two different Saudi universities. First, the data was gathered from (group one), which consisted of 13 participants, who studied at a university in the north-central part of Saudi Arabia, and their major was English Language. However, the second group was inclusive of 13 participants who studied at the Applied Linguistics Department at a university in the middle of Saudi Arabia. The participants were asked to write two to three paragraphs using specific coordinating and subordinating conjunctions. Thus, the researcher collected 26 sampled data containing 13 written paragraphs from each context to compare the participants of the two contexts in the use of the learned conjunctions. The data were analyzed based on the introduced coordinating and subordinating conjunctions in Azar's & Kolln's and Funk's textbooks. The analysis was accomplished by identifying the frequent occurrence of those conjunctions in students' written data and how those conjunctions were used in joining two or more clauses. The results showed that there were no significant differences in students' use of those conjunctions, and several participants had challenges in recognizing the function of those simple or common conjunctions. It has been found that those participants of the two contexts had committed the same types of errors when trying to combine their clauses.

Keywords: coordinating conjunctions, subordinating conjunctions, frequency, two contexts

1. Introduction

Grammar is an important aspect that increases writing quality. One of the major problems that students encounter in English academic writing is their comprehension of how to effectively apply the grammatical rules in their written texts (Sang et al., 2022). Grammatical knowledge "... helps the writers to craft words into coherent sentences and how to form sentences into paragraph so that the writing successfully convey the meanings intended by the writers" (Tlonaen, 2020, p. 18). Different grammatical items increase coherence and cohesion in writing various genres. Creating a well-organized essay and a comprehensible text requires students to be aware of the importance of the achievement of cohesion and coherence (Amperawaty & Warsono, 2019). To achieve the latter when writing paragraphs, students could use these four elements, including consistency in using pronouns, repetition of the main terms, following a logical order, and tying with cohesive devices (Septiwan & Al Hafizh, 2021). One of the grammatical cohesion types in writing is using conjunctions to link sentences and create meaningful text (Afrianto, 2017). English language learners should recognize that conjunction is one of the most important elements of submitting a well-written paper (Maulana et al., 2021). A conjunction is used to combine different kinds of sentences.

Students develop four types of sentences in writing their essays, simple, compound, complex, and compound-complex (Qonitatu, 2016). EFL learners struggle to write compound or complex sentences using accurate word conjunction. Even with students who had good writing skills, it has been explored that one of their most grammatical errors was in conjunctions (Yuliah et al., 2019). This could recall the idea of Qonitatu (2016), who concluded that the coordinating conjunction was one of the most grammatical items that students had conducted errors on. English language learners committed errors in applying various grammatical rules, such as adjectives, prepositions, and conjunctions (Fitrawati & Safitri, 2021). Thus, English language learners' lack of grammatical knowledge might negatively affect their ability to write well-structured sentences and achieve coherence in their written paragraphs. According to Solikhah and Surakarta (2017)

"... in writing most students suffer from two points: (1) the ability to write long sentences that requires various coordinating, subordinating tools, vocabulary, and grammar; and (2) knowledge of the meaning and proper use of linking devices, especially those needed to establish inter-sentential relationship" (p. 34).

EFL learners' improper use of conjunctions might make them create poor sentences that affect conveying an accurate meaning, function, and cohesiveness of those sentences (Hassoon, 2023). Therefore, English teachers need to increase learners' awareness of the most important aspects of writing that increase the flawlessness of their sentences. Shahid and Irfan (2021) pointed out that writing a comprehensible essay requires a basic knowledge of how to properly use punctuations and grammatical rules, including connectors. Students, therefore, should recognize the meaning and the function of each conjunction. As indicated by Irawan (2018), it is essential to expose students to various examples of the use of different conjunctions that increase their abilities of using them correctly with the given contexts. EFL teachers should provide explicit instruction about conjunction and reflect on students' committed errors. Thus, Es-skare, Msimeer, and Elzawawi, (2019) recommended that students should receive sufficient corrective feedback on their errors of conjunctions and have adequate exercises that could develop their use of connector in writing

Many studies investigated different topics related to the use of coordinating and subordinating conjunctions. For example, some studies discussed the teaching methods that could be implemented to develop students' use of conjunction, such as (Alfalagg, 2020; Irawan, 2018; Crossley et al., 2016). Other research discussed coordinating and subordinating conjunction's types, meanings, and functions, such as (Purba et al., 2017; Unubi, 2016). Also, some other scholars were investigating students' errors in using various types of conjunctions (Amayreh & Abdullah, 2021; Suntara, 2021; Es-skare et al., 2019; Rahman, 2017; Deviyana, 2017). Moreover, several studies explored EFL/ESL students' use of conjunctions in different genres, including argumentative, descriptive, or narrative essays (Maulana et al., 2021; Saprina, et al., 2021; Al Shamalat & Ghani, 2020; Saputra & Hakim, 2020; Nurbaidah, 2019; Warna et al., 2019; Kusumawardhani, 2017; Uzun, 2017; Mohamed, 2016; Hamed, 2014). Therefore, the present study investigated EFL students' use of specific conjunctions (and, but, or, so, and because) in writing their paragraphs. Those conjunctions were the common ones that students learned in their grammar and writing classes to use in joining different types of sentences. Thus, the researcher aimed to find how Saudi learners studying in different EFL contexts use those specific conjunctions within a context to connect different sentence patterns. This research seeks to answer the following research question:

How do EFL students apply common rules of coordinating and subordinating conjunctions in writing paragraphs?

2. Literature Review

2.1 Conjunctions

A conjunction is one of the cohesive devices and grammatical concepts that should be considered in writing (Zahra, 2021). Conjunctions are "words that connect words, phrases, and clauses in a sentence" (Maulana et al., 2021, p. 40). Hence, it is essential to expose students to all the types of conjunctions to recognize the correct usage or function of these conjunctions in various contexts (Irawan, 2018). Different types of conjunctions include coordination, subordination, and correlative (Sadri et al., 2021). Each type of these conjunctions has a specific purpose, meaning, and function. The first type of conjunction is coordinating conjunction, which includes words such as "and," "but," "so," and "or" that can be used to connect two or more independent phrases to create compound sentences or link two words to make a parallel structure (Kolln & Funk, 2012). This goes hand in hand with Unubi (2016), who indicated that coordinating conjunctions is about joining words or clauses of the same grammatical categories. The second type is subordinating conjunction, which students use to show how the dependent clause is related to the main clause. Some of the subordinating conjunctions that EFL students heavily use in their writing are the word conjunctions 'when,' 'if,' and 'because' (Ito & Misumi, 2016). In other words, EFL learners use subordinating conjunctions to introduce adverbial clauses, show clauses relationships, or connect independent to dependent clauses. Thus, the ignorance of the use of subordinating conjunction might create fragments, not sentences, if it is not linked to the main clause (Numanjanovna & Ikromjonovna, 2022). Moreover, the third type of conjunction is correlative conjunction, which allows writers to connect sentences or phrases that are grammatically balanced (Hassoon, 2023). Correlative conjunctions include words such as 'both...and, not only...but also, and neither...nor' (Kusumawardhani, 2017).

Several studies showed that students committed different types of errors in using conjunction in writing different types of essays, including (Fa Zholimah, 2022; Arifa, 2022; Rizki, 2022; Ma'shum, 2021; Batubara et al., 2021; Najamuddin, 2020; Nurbaidah, 2019; Es-skare et al., 2019; Deviyana, 2017; and Rahman, 2017). However, increasing students' awareness to integrate conjunction in writing their essays is very important in enhancing the readability of their papers. Arifa (2022) concluded that helping students with practicing the correct use of conjunctions is still needed since their written texts still lack coherence and cohesion.

2.2 Coherence and Cohesion with the Use of Conjunctions

Afianto (2017) defined cohesion as "the tool to create coherence in the text, hence it connects ideas embedded in sentences or even paragraphs so that sentence to sentence, paragraph to paragraph are coordinated by cohesion" (p. 97). To achieve that in written essays, writers should recognize how to appropriately use conjunctions or connectors (Hosseinpour & Pour, 2022). Knowing which conjunction to use and where to place it would empower writers' messages and increase the level of reading comprehension. That means using conjunctions frequently would increase students' essays' coherence and quality (Al Shamalat & Ghani, 2020). Ignorance of cohesive devices can weaken readers' recognition of the introduced ideas and cause them to misunderstand the interpreted messages. Therefore, the presence of conjunctions is crucial in writing because it makes the communicated ideas tighter and more connected (ZA, 2013). Using conjunctions can show syntactic and semantic connections in the written text. As it has been determined by Nurbaidah (2019), using conjunctions to create compound or complex phrases would help students to decrease the number of having extensive short sentences and write a well-organized text. Thus, conjunctions connect clauses and show the relationship between these clauses in meaning (Tram, 2021).

2.3 The Use of Conjunctions in Academic Writing

There are various types of conjunctions that could be used in writing an academic essay. Conjunctions consist of coordinating, subordinating, and correlative conjunction (Sadri, Lembah, & Nur'aeni, 2021). For, and, nor, but, or, yet, and so (FANBOYS) is the coordinating conjunction that L2 learners use to join words or clauses in creating a meaningful sentence (Yuliah et al., 2019). However, in this study, we focused on specific coordinating and subordinating conjunctions, including (and, but, or, so, and because), since undergraduates were fully exposed to those conjunctions in grammar and English writing classes when they began to write academic essays. Moreover, these coordinating conjunctions are the most common ones undergraduates use to link their sentences. The coordination conjunction links two words or two independent clauses to create compound sentences (Fa Zholimah, 2022). On the other hand, subordination conjunction can be used to combine dependent sentences with main clauses to create a complex sentence (Unubi, 2016). A compound-complex sentence is about combining two or more independent and dependent sentences using a conjunction (Deviyana, 2017).

In connecting compound sentences with two independent clauses, students should place a comma that precedes the coordinating conjunction (Marjanović, 2013). Students need to recognize that writing simple sentences consists of one independent clause and no commas should be used; however, compound sentences have to have two sentences connected by the use of one of the coordinating conjunctions, such as 'and,' 'but,' 'so,' and 'or' (Fitria, 2022). Therefore, EFL Learners are expected to construct sentences based on the rules of English or structurally correct sentences (Tlonaen. 2020, p. 18).

The use of coordinating conjunction, such as 'and,' 'but,' and 'or,' is not supposed to be complicated in structuring compound or complex sentences since they are commonly used daily (Irawan, 2018). Further, EFL students have full exposure to these conjunctions through grammar and writing textbooks. Thus, the researcher of this study used Azar's & Kolln's and Funk's grammar textbooks to find out about EFL students' common uses of connecting ideas and their specific use in writing two to three paragraphs joined together.

Table 1. Examples of Azar's & Kolln's and Funk's grammar textbooks

Connecting Ideas	Examples
Connecting ideas with 'And' <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Connecting items within a sentence with the use of punctuation. Connecting two complete sentences with the use of punctuation. The use of period and capitalization instead of using the word conjunction 'and.' 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> I saw a <u>dog</u>, a <u>fox</u>, and a <u>snake</u>. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> I saw a <u>dog</u>, <u>and</u> you saw a bird. He is studying for his exam <u>and</u> eating his lunch. I saw a <u>dog</u>. You saw a bird.
Connecting ideas with 'But,' and 'Or' <ol style="list-style-type: none"> When 'but' expresses unexpected results. Connecting items within a sentence (using a comma). Combine two complete sentences into one sentence (using a comma). Using the word conjunctions 'and' and 'but' at the beginning of the sentence. Using auxiliary verbs after the word conjunction 'But.' 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> I was very tired, <u>but</u> I did not take a rest. Did you eat rice, bread, <u>or</u> fruit? I did study for the midterm exam, <u>but</u> I did not fail. I saw a <u>dog</u>. <u>And</u> you saw a bird. I do not like tea, <u>but</u> my sister <u>does</u>.
Connecting ideas with 'So' <ol style="list-style-type: none"> The use of the comma with the word conjunction 'So.' When 'So' expresses results. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> She did not feel well, <u>so</u> she did not come to work.
Connecting ideas with 'Because' <ol style="list-style-type: none"> When 'because' expresses a cause. When 'because' introduces an adverb clause. Using a comma when connected the adverb clause to the main clause. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> He ate food <u>because</u> he was hungry. He made an accident <u>because</u> he drove <u>fast</u>. <u>Because</u> he drove <u>fast</u>, he made an accident.
Use of conjunctions with parallel structure in cases, such as: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> verb + and + verb noun + and+ noun infinitive + or + Infinitive adjective+ but + adjective 	Rose <u>wore</u> her dress <u>and</u> <u>went</u> to the party. <u>Rose</u> <u>and</u> her <u>friend</u> are coming to lunch. Jack wants <u>to</u> play football <u>or</u> <u>to</u> eat cake. Jack hair is <u>long</u> <u>but</u> <u>beautiful</u> .

3. Research Methodology

This research used the qualitative method as a research design to achieve the purpose of the study. The researcher used Azar's & Kolln's and Funk's textbooks as a framework to find out about EFL students of two EFL contexts use connecting ideas in writing paragraphs in the target language. The participants were selected from two EFL contexts, specifically two Saudi universities to find out how EFL students performed in using conjunctions in connecting their sentences since they received instructions based on the same textbook and took grammar and English writing courses. There were 13 participants from each university who were randomly selected. *Group one* was selected from a university located in the north-central of Saudi Arabia, and the students' major is English Language. However, *group two* was selected from a university in the middle of Saudi Arabia, and they are studying in the Applied Linguistics Department. They were all undergraduate students studying English grammar and writing in their first year of college. They were all taking Azar's & Kolln's and Funk's textbooks to learn different grammatical rules, including coordinating and subordinating conjunctions. Not only in the grammar class they were learning about the use of conjunctions, but also in the writing class they were learning how to apply them in writing paragraphs or essays. The study collected and analyzed 26 documents of students writing samples, 13 samples from each EFL context to compare the participants who studied the same rules in two different universities and investigate their use of coordinating and subordinating conjunction in writing English paragraphs.

For the data analysis, the researcher used the coordinating and subordinating conjunctions rules illustrated by Azar’s & Kolln’s and Funk’s textbooks, which cover five specific conjunctions (and, but, or, so, and because). The data analysis went through two phases to deepen the understanding of the provided data. I started the analysis process by conducting several readings for the data. The first reading was to understand the content, and the second one was to find out about the students’ usage of each connecting idea. Then, I worked on identifying and underlining the connecting ideas that were written by the students based on the rules and the cases that were illustrated in Azar’s & Kolln’s and Funk’s textbooks. Thus, I only focused on specific coordinating and subordinating conjunctions, including (and, but, or, so, and because), to explore how EFL students use those conjunctions within the written context. In the second phase, I made a comparison between the two EFL contexts’ participants regarding the use of those conjunctions in writing their paragraphs and find out if they encountered difficulties in applying them to their writing. Consequently, this comparison aimed at exploring how receiving appropriate and sufficient grammatical instructions might positively impact students’ writing quality and achievement of cohesion.

For ethical considerations, the researcher explained to the participants the purpose of the written sample collection and that their identification information will be anonymous. While analyzing the data, the researcher conducted several readings to ensure the accuracy of the elicited data, specifically regarding the students’ use of coordinating and subordinating conjunctions.

4. Results

Q1. How do EFL students apply common rules of coordinating and subordinating conjunctions in writing paragraphs?

4.1 Group One Use of Coordinating and Subordinating Conjunctions

To examine the use of coordinating and subordinating conjunctions, which includes (and, but, or, so, and because) in the writing of two EFL contexts, the researcher started by analyzing the collected data from *group one*. Thus, table 2 reflects on the rules of conjunctions implemented by the EFL learners studying in the first context. Similarly, it shows the frequency of using those conjunctions in their written paragraphs, along with examples of their sentences.

Table 2. students use of conjunction ‘and’

Connecting ideas with ‘And’	Frequency	Examples
Connecting two complete sentences with or without the use of punctuation	Six participants Six times	So, the employed students do not have much time to study, and the unemployed students have so much time.
Use of ‘and’ with parallel structure in different cases, such as: (1) verb + and + verb (2) noun + and+ noun (3) adjective+ and + adjective (4) infinitive + and + Infinitive	Use of ‘and’ with parallel structure in a case of (1) verb + and + verb 11 participants 11 times (2) noun + and+ noun Four participants Six times (3) adjective+ and + adjective Five participants Six times (4) infinitive + and + Infinitive One participant One time	(1) verb + and + verb We <u>sleep late</u> and <u>wake up</u> lazy, so we do not have enough energy. (2) noun + and+ noun I tried <u>online learning</u> and <u>classroom learning</u> . (3) adjective+ and + adjective That makes me felt <u>happy</u> and <u>excited</u> . (4) Infinitive + and + Infinitive On the other hand, the unemployed student has more free time <u>to study</u> , and <u>to hang out</u> with his friends ...
Using the word conjunction ‘and’ to connect items within a sentence	Five participants Five times	On the other hand, in e-learning this kind of interaction is not there but it is possible through <u>emails, chats, and webinars</u> .
Using the word conjunction ‘and’ at the beginning of the sentence	Four participants Four times	Employed students earn experience, but did not have time to study. And be confused about his study. Unemployed students, there is enough time to study and understand fully the subject. But focused and interested.
The use of period and capitalization instead of using the word conjunction ‘and’	0	0

Analyzing the collected data showed that the conjunction ‘and’ was one of the most coordinating conjunctions used in students’ paragraphs. The coordinating conjunction ‘and’ was used 41 times in students’ sampled data. They used the conjunction ‘and’ to connect their ideas in various ways. One of the cases that followed by six of the participants was using ‘and’ to combine two complete sentences into one sentence using a comma, and some others used it to connect two independent clauses without using a comma.

The second case that has been regularly used in combining phrases with the conjunction ‘and’ was its frequent use in parallel structure. The participants used it with a parallel structure to connect two verbs, nouns, adjectives, or infinitives. Thus, most of the participants approximately 11 participants used ‘and’ with a parallel structure to connect two verbs. In contrast, the second case of using the conjunction ‘and’ with parallel structure was combining two nouns or two adjectives. However, using the coordinating conjunction ‘and’ with a parallel structure to combine two infinitives received less attention from students since only one of the participants used it to combine two infinitives.

Five participants used the conjunction ‘and’ to connect items within a sentence. They used it to list three to five nouns. Moreover, four students used the coordinating conjunction ‘and’ at the beginning of the sentence. The participants connected the previous sentence or idea with the following sentence by placing the conjunction ‘and’ at the beginning of the sentence.

Table 3. Students use of conjunction ‘but’

Connecting ideas with ‘But’	Frequency	Examples
When ‘but’ expresses unexpected results	0	0
Combine two complete sentences into one sentence (using or no using a comma)	Nine of the participants Nine Times	Employed students are better financially, but the unemployed students are suffering from debts.
Using the word conjunction ‘but’ at the beginning of the sentence	Four participants Four times	But in classroom learning we should sleep well and early.
Using auxiliary verbs after the word conjunction ‘But’	Three participants Three times	I like to sit in college, but my friends don’t .
Use of conjunctions with parallel structure in cases, such as: (verbs, nouns, adjectives, and infinitives)	One participant One Time (adjective)	But unemployed students also is good but not enough .

Analyzing the data explored that the second coordinating conjunction that was mostly used in students’ writing was the word conjunction ‘but’ since it has been used 17 times in students’ written samples. One of the most cases that nine participants followed was related to using the word conjunction ‘but’ to combine two complete sentences into one sentence. However, the participants missed punctuation when connecting two independent clauses using the conjunction ‘but,’ ignoring comma use. For example, one participant stated, “Having a job is hard when you are studying but it is helpful if you can manage your time.” Moreover, other participants used the word conjunction ‘but’ capitalized in the middle of the sentence by using a comma to combine two complete thoughts. For example, the student pointed out that “having a job proves to future employers that one has real world experience, But unemployed student may have the time when it comes to prioritizing which is less likely expected from employed student.”

The second case was noticed in students’ written samples regarding the use of the coordinating conjunction ‘but’ was the use of it at the beginning of the sentence. It has been found that students connected the previous sentence to the new one by placing the conjunction ‘but’ at the beginning of their sentence to introduce the new idea. For example, one participant stated, "...we sleep late and wake up lazy, so we do not have enough energy. But in classroom learning we should sleep well and early.”

Moreover, one of the cases using the coordinating conjunctions ‘but’ was using auxiliaries after the conjunction ‘but.’ Three participants used the auxiliary verbs after the word ‘but’ in writing their sentences. They used auxiliaries, such as ‘do,’ ‘does,’ and ‘have.’ Regarding the coordinating conjunction ‘but,’ it has been noted that only one participant mobilized ‘but’ with a parallel structure by combining two adjectives.

Another obvious note observed in students’ writing was their misuse of formal writing rules. The participants used the auxiliary verbs with contractions, such as ‘don’t’ instead of ‘do not,’ such as in this sentence “I like to sit in college, but my friends don’t.”

Table 4. Students use of conjunction ‘or’

Connecting ideas with ‘Or’	Frequency	Examples
Connecting items within a sentence (using a comma)	0	0
Use of conjunctions with parallel structure in cases, such as: (Nouns, Verbs, and Adjectives)	(nouns) Three participants 4 times	(Noun) E-learning is easier because you can take it in any <u>place or time</u> , classroom learning you must be in a specific place at specific time.
	(verb) Two participants Two times	(Verb) Being an employed student is good because you make use of all your time whether you are <u>studying or working</u> .
	(adjective) One participant One time	(Adjective) If you have a dream you will check it, <u>employed students or unemployed students</u> .

Five participants used the conjunction ‘or’ as it had been introduced in their *grammar* textbooks, whereas two used it in different cases. Thus, most participants used the conjunction ‘or’ with a parallel structure to combine two nouns, verbs, or adjectives. However, none of the students used the word ‘or’ to combine items within a sentence, which was the opposite of using the word conjunction ‘and’ that was used to connect items within an idea. Analyzing the students' use of the word conjunction ‘or’ showed that two students connected their sentences using ‘or’ in different ways. For instance, one of the participants used ‘or’ to combine a pronoun with an adverb, as in this statement, “I ask my friend if she get tired like me or not.”

Another participant used the word ‘or’ to combine two sentences using a comma, as in this sentence, “And you will be surrounded by your classmates, who could offer you help, **or** you could offer them help in things they find difficult.” Further, one of the students committed an error in using the word conjunction ‘or’ by placing the comma inappropriately to combine two verbs, as in the sentence, “Being an employed student is good because you make use of all your time whether you are studying, **or** working.”

Table 5. Students use of conjunction ‘so’

Connecting ideas with ‘So’	Frequency	Examples
The use of the comma with the word conjunction ‘So’	Use of the word conjunction ‘so’ with comma. Three participants Three times	We sleep late and wake up lazy, so we don’t have enough energy.
	Ignore the use of comma where it should be placed. Three participants Three times	The English language must be more needed in schools so students can speak it easily.
When ‘So’ expresses results	Six Participants Nine Times	Having a job is hard when you are studying but it is helpful if you can manage your time. So , <u>the employed students don’t have much time to study.</u>

Six participants combined ideas with the conjunction ‘so’ in their writing. All six participants used the word conjunction ‘so’ to express the results of something. Thus, students made the clauses preceded by ‘so’ express a result related to the previous idea. As has been stated by one of the students, “Because we have to meet a lot of people, so we need a lot of energy and focus.”

Two participants used the word ‘so’ at the beginning of the sentence without commas. For instance, one student said that “So employed student and unemployed student contrast when it comes to their experiences or soft skills.

In addition, two of the students committed an error by ignoring the use of connectors or commas to connect sentences. One participant stated, “I ask my friend if she get tired like me or not. She say yes and all her group so it’s not good for student to learn and study in home.” Since the word conjunction ‘so’ in the previous sentence was used to connect related ideas, a comma must have been used. Also, one of the participants used a comma with the word conjunction ‘so’ when combining an independent clause with a dependent clause, which showed her misunderstanding of when to use a comma with the word conjunction ‘so.’ She used it when she placed ‘so’ as a subordinating conjunction, as in this statement, “...you can contact your teachers, students, and your friends face to face, so that’s makes you feel more active.”

Table 6. Students use of conjunction ‘because’

Connecting ideas with ‘Because’	Frequency	Examples
When ‘because’ expresses a cause	Nine participants 11 times	Online studying is easy than face to face studying because it saves time.
When ‘because’ introduces an adverb clause	0	0
Using a comma when connected the adverb clause to the main clause	One participant One time	Because we have meet a lot of <u>people</u> , <u>so</u> we need a lot of energy and focus.

Students’ results showed that there were ten participants who were using the subordinating conjunction ‘because’ to connect their ideas when writing a paragraph in the target language. Around nine participants, among ten, they have used the word conjunction ‘because’ in different sentences to express a cause. Besides, only one participant used the word conjunction ‘because’ to connect an adverb clause with a main clause using a comma. However, none of the participants used the conjunction ‘because’ to introduce an adverb clause in their statements.

Furthermore, two students committed errors in using the subordinating conjunction ‘because.’ One of them made an error in dividing one sentence into two, as in the following example “From my experience offline classes are better in many ways. Because you will be present in the same room as your teacher.”

Another type of error students committed was in using a comma with ‘because’ when it was used in the middle of the sentence, as in this statement “And in comparisons to their moods, the employed students could be in a better mood, because they met new people and had new experience.

4.2 Group Two Use of Coordinating and Subordinating Conjunctions

The second EFL context in which the researcher collected and analyzed data was a university in the middle of Saudi Arabia. Therefore, table 7 shows how those undergraduates applied the learned rules introduced in their paragraphs in Azar’s & Kolln’s and Funk’s textbooks. This table also revealed the frequency of those conjunctions in students’ sentences.

Table 7. Students use of the word conjunction ‘and’

Connecting ideas with ‘And’	Frequency	Examples
Connecting two complete sentences with or without the use of punctuation	Six Participants Seven times	There are those who learn swimming since childhood, <u>and</u> there are those who learn it when they are old.
Use of ‘and’ with parallel structure in different cases, such as: (5) verb + and + verb (6) noun + and+ noun (7) adjective+ and + adjective (8) infinitive + and + Infinitive	12 Participants Use of ‘and’ with parallel structure in a case of (5) verb + and + verb 21 times (6) noun + and+ noun 22 times (7) adjective+ and + adjective Four times (8) infinitive + and + Infinitive Two times	(5) verb + and + verb <u>Seeing and interacting</u> with others in a school environment will definitely improve your skills in speaking English. (6) noun + and+ noun First, the similarity is that teachers in <u>high schools and colleges</u> use the same methods, which is the exams. (7) adjective+ and + adjective Many have argued that the use of social media is <u>toxic and addicting</u> to its users. (8) Infinitive + and + Infinitive Although many think that sharing your information <u>to loved ones and to a larger community</u> on social media is perfectly safe, that can result in getting your account hacked.
Using the word conjunction ‘and’ to connect items within a sentence	Four Participants Nine times	Modern science has become dependent on the internet and it’s in itself an <u>effective, constructive and powerful</u> weapon in developing the abilities and skills of sound thinking.
Using the word conjunction ‘and’ at the beginning of the sentence	Four Participants Five times	And here is the answer, when a game reaches a massive level of violence, it gets PEGI 18 rated.
The use of period and capitalization instead of using the word conjunction ‘and’	0	0

Analyzing the participants’ data showed that six students among 13 used the word conjunction ‘and’ to connect two complete sentences. Some ignored punctuation when connecting two complete sentences showing their limited knowledge of punctuation rules. For example, one participant stated that “Mobile phones are so easy to carry and you can take them with you anywhere, while computers are so heavy and it is hard to take or carry them with you it’s almost impossible.”

Another example of students misusing punctuation was joining a dependent clause with an independent clause using a comma. As it was pointed out by the participant that “But whenever we scroll through our Instagram or our TikTok feed, we have a sense of loneliness, and the feeling of being unhappy with ourselves.”

One observed thing in students’ paragraphs was connecting three to four sentences into one sentence through the extensive use of the word conjunctions ‘and, but, or’ with or without commas. One example would be, “In fact, it is harmful for people that may walk next to the smoker they might have heart disease or asthma, and the smoker always should respect other people and should ask before if it was okay to smoke or not.”

However, using the conjunction ‘and’ with a parallel structure in various cases, including combining two nouns, verbs, adjectives, and infinitives, was one of the extensive cases students used to connect their sentences with ‘and.’ More specifically, most of the parallel structure cases used by students were when connecting two nouns or two verbs. The participants connected two nouns using the coordinating conjunction ‘and’ 22 times and others by connecting two verbs. On the other hand, the minimum case of using ‘and’ with a parallel structure was when students combined two infinitives since only two participants used it out of 13 students.

Also, it has been found that four participants among 13 used the coordinating conjunction ‘and’ to connect items within a sentence, which occurred nine times in writing their paragraphs. All those participants used the conjunction ‘and’ before each item listed, as stated in this sentence, “... we see how online studying kept people safe from catching the virus, and improved the education and changed the way students study.” Moreover, there were some errors regarding the use of commas when listing items in a sentence, including the ignorance of

the use of commas or its misuse. As it has been pointed out by one of the participants, “Besides that in online exams, we will lose the advantage of going through the questions and reviewing and checking every single one.” An example of the misuse of commas when connecting items within a sentence was “...providing information, knowledge and learning, profit and marketing, positioning and mapping, working from home.”

Besides, four participants used the conjunction ‘and’ at the beginning of the sentence with or without a comma. It has been noticed that those participants used the conjunction ‘and’ at the beginning of the sentence, where it should be connected to the previous sentence since they are closely related. For instance, one stated, “It [smoking] also helps burn fat and tighten the body. And I agree with them.” Also, the data showed no participant’s use of period and capitalization instead of using the word conjunction ‘and.’

Table 8. Students use of the word conjunction ‘but’

Connecting ideas with ‘But’	Frequency	Examples
When ‘but’ expresses unexpected results	0	0
Combine two complete sentences into one sentence (using or no using a comma)	Two Participants Two times	Social media can be addictive, but if used in moderation it can be a great tool to conquer hate and bigotry from the world.
Using the word conjunction ‘but’ at the beginning of the sentence	Five Participants Eight times	But the arguments abounded after the pandemic had ended and everything came back to normal.
Using auxiliary verbs after the word conjunction ‘But’	One Participant One time	So, some kids found it difficult to learn English online but , <u>others didn’t</u> .
Use of conjunctions with parallel structure in cases, such as: (verbs, nouns, adjectives, and infinitives)	0	0

After analyzing participants’ use of the word conjunction ‘but,’ I found that eight out of 13 used it in the written document. Approximately five participants wrote the coordinating conjunction ‘but’ at the beginning of their sentences. Indeed, three participants used ‘but’ at the beginning of the sentence with some errors. For instance, one of the students added the word ‘actually’ to the word conjunction ‘but,’ as in the following sentence, “But actually, they are just not paying attention to the internet cost and the cost of the devices that we should take the exams unless we have a stable internet connection and a device to take the exam.”

Another participant used ‘but’ in an incomplete sentence, which would be more appropriate if it was connected to the previous sentence. The participant stated that, “The internet has countless benefits, so that it can be used on all economic, scientific, practical, and financial levels. But it can be harmful, so it must be used wisely.” Investigating students’ use of coordinating conjunctions, such as ‘and, but,’ revealed that they misused them at the beginning of the sentences, making them incomplete. The participants separated two closely related sentences by starting a new one using the conjunction ‘and’ or ‘but.’

Moreover, one of the conducted errors regarding the use of the coordinating conjunction ‘and’ was committed by only one participant who made capitalization errors when using ‘and’ and ‘but’ in the middle of the sentence. The student stated that “In the class, you see a lot of students who share one computer between them. but in colleges, you can find it everywhere like cafes and so many other places.”

In addition, two students used the conjunction ‘but’ to connect two complete sentences with a comma, and two other participants used ‘but’ to connect an independent clause with a dependent clause with the punctuation. It has been observed that some students have various problems in using the correct punctuation with coordinating conjunctions, including ignorance of the comma, misuse of the comma, or misplacement of the comma. Further, only one student among 13 participants used the auxiliary verb ‘did’ after the word conjunction ‘but.’ Also, there were no students using ‘but’ with a parallel structure or expressing unexpected results.

Table 9. Students use of the word conjunction ‘or’

Connecting ideas with ‘Or’	Frequency	Examples
Connecting items within a sentence (using a comma)	One Participant One time	It may be true that technology have affected some people’s activities, however, I think technology helped to be more creative <u>whether it’s computers, iPads or even phones</u> , computers have a big role in designs....”
Use of conjunctions with parallel structure in cases, such as: (nouns, verbs, infinitives, and adjectives)	Nine Participant 8 times (nouns) 4 times (verbs) 0 (adjectives) 1 time (infinitives)	(Noun) ‘... school or university...’ (Verb) ‘... complete any work or take notes ...’ (infinitives) ‘... to produce or to be creative...’

Most students used the coordinating conjunction ‘or’ as a parallel structure in various cases with connecting two nouns, verbs, and infinitives. Using ‘or’ as a parallel structure to connect two nouns was one of the most cases that students followed in writing paragraphs. However, the least case of using ‘or’ with a parallel structure was when one of the students combined ‘or’ with two infinitives. Only one participant used ‘or’ to connect three items in a sentence using a comma.

Table 10. Students use of the word conjunction ‘so’

Connecting ideas with ‘So’	Frequency	Examples
The use of the comma with the word conjunction ‘So’	Use of the word conjunction ‘so’ with comma (Three Participant Four times)	So , some kids found it difficult to learn English online but, others didn’t.
When ‘So’ expresses results	(Three Participant Six times)	Some people think that the internet is a waste of time, I bilevel that the internet is not a waste of time if it’s used in science and knowledge other than those who use it to waste time without benefit. So, it depends on how you use it.

Five participants used the word conjunction ‘so’ when writing their paragraphs. Three of those students used a comma with the word conjunction ‘so,’ while two of the participants were not using a comma with ‘so.’ Whether they used ‘so’ at the beginning or the middle of the sentence, they ignored the use of the comma. Most of the usage of the word conjunction ‘so’ was to express the result of something.

Table 11. Students use of the word conjunction ‘because’

Connecting ideas with ‘Because’	Frequency	Examples
When ‘because’ expresses a cause	Seven Participant Seven times	The quality of conversations on social media can often be unpleasant because it’s difficult to sense emotion from another person.
When ‘because’ introduces an adverb clause	0	0
Using a comma when connected the adverb clause to the main clause	One Participant One time	Seeing and interacting_with others in a school environment will definitely improve your skills in speaking English. because, student will eventually fall into others steps and follow along.

Seven participants used the word conjunction ‘because’ to express a cause. Some were making errors in using the appropriate punctuation, as in this sentence, when the student indicated that “Many have tried to become influencers. because they believe that popularity can make their lives better in several aspects.” Moreover, one participant used ‘because’ with no comma to connect an adverb clause to a main clause with punctuation errors. On the other hand, there was no student using ‘because’ to introduce an adverb clause.

5. Discussion

The data presented the use of coordinating and subordinating conjunctions, which are (and, but, so, or, and because) in EFL learners’ written paragraphs. The data were collected from two EFL contexts. The undergraduate students’ results in those two contexts explored that they all extensively used the coordinating conjunctions ‘and,’ ‘but,’ ‘or’ with parallel structure. Mostly, they used parallel nouns or verbs, less likely with adjectives or infinitives. In the second case, the participants combined two sentences into one using the conjunctions ‘and.’ However, regarding the use of the conjunction ‘but,’ it has been observed that the participants of *group one* used it commonly to join two complete sentences.

In contrast, the participants in the other context used it frequently at the beginning of their sentences. Most participants who used the conjunction ‘and’ or ‘but’ at the beginning of their sentences used it to express the related ideas that could be connected to a previous sentence. Also, using ‘and’ or ‘but’ at the beginning caused some participants to write incomplete sentences. Although students could effectively connect the sentence that started with the conjunction ‘and’ or ‘but’ placed at the beginning of the previous sentence using an appropriate connector and a comma, they used a period and started a new sentence with one of those conjunctions. Thus, the data showed that in the two contexts, students need to recognize when the written sentences should be connected by using one of the appropriate word conjunctions and when they should be separated with the correct use of punctuation marks. Foreign language teachers need to assist students with recognizing how they should at least apply the fundamental rules of writing, such as capitalization, punctuation, and linking sentences (Ahmed, 2019).

Surprisingly, only a few students used ‘and’ to connect items within a sentence, which is considered one of the common cases that students are usually exposed to in their English reading and writing courses. Additionally, for the use of the other conjunctions, such as ‘because’ and ‘so,’ it has been noticed that the conjunction ‘because’ was used regularly rather than the conjunction ‘so’ in students’ sentences. Usually, the participants used ‘because’ to express a cause for something and used ‘so’ to refer to the results of something else. A study by Amayreh & Abdullah indicated that the conjunction ‘because’ was frequently applied by students to show causes or results (2021). On the other hand, one of the rare cases of using the conjunction ‘because’ was to connect an adverb clause to a main clause using ‘because,’ and almost none of the participants used the conjunction ‘because’ to introduce an adverb clause, which indicated students’ lack of knowledge in using ‘because’ with adverb clauses.

The author found that all the participants used specific conjunctions more than the others as Amayreh and Abdullah (2021) stated that "... it seems that the students' lack of knowledge about using additive relations to create ties can be related to the lack of diversity conjunctions" (p. 489). The participants used the conjunctions 'and, but, and because' more frequently in their writing than using the word conjunctions 'or' and 'so.' More specifically, students were using 'and' more frequently than the other conjunctions since this conjunction could help them increase the length of their sentences and express a complete thought in one. This is to recall Alsalami's thought (2022), indicating that EFL students were struggling to create short sentences when writing in English, and they have insufficient understanding of the sentence components and how to construct a complete sentence due to first language transfer. Likewise, most of the students' sentences showed the use of the conjunction 'and' to join two independent clauses or connect an independent clause with a dependent one with two nouns or verbs. This is consistent with Warna, Wijaya, Sartika, & Riznanda (2019), who pointed out that teachers need to increase students' awareness of different types of conjunctions rather than the word 'and' which is extensively used in students' writing to make it more diverse, meaningful, and fruitful.

Moreover, the present study found that most students intended to avoid creating simple sentences when writing their paragraphs. Instead, they connected two or more sentences with 'and' or 'but' with extensive commas to create complex or compound-complex sentences. This matched the findings of Cahyono, Mukminatien, & Amrina (2016), who defined complex sentence as one of the major types of sentence patterns that was used frequently by EFL learners in their writing. The problem that has been noticed from students' attempts to create compound or complex sentences was that they overused the coordinating conjunction 'and' with extensive use of commas to lengthen their sentences. Hendrawaty (2018) found that compound-complex sentences were one of the most common sentence patterns in that EFL students had conducted frequent errors. Then the least committed errors were in writing compound sentences, which showed their weak grammatical knowledge. When students write compound or complex sentences, they desire to finish the idea they are eager to express in one sentence, which sometimes becomes a short paragraph instead of one complete sentence. Thus, the participants had difficulties deciding when to end up an idea and start a new one, which might be related to the effect of the first language (L1) on the second language (L2) writing. This is based on Solikhah and Kartasura's belief (2017) that one of the syntactical problems found in EFL writings was related to the ability to develop sentences because of students' lack of exposure to writing essays and the effect of L1 on L2 writing.

The students' results revealed various errors when they tried to use the appropriate punctuation to connect their sentences with one of the conjunctions, such as the missing commas, ignoring the use of commas, or overusing the commas. Sometimes, the participants combined two or more independent clauses with 'and' or 'but' without commas, which showed that students need to know when and how to place punctuations to combine two complete statements. Also, students committed errors in recognizing when to continue writing their ideas using one of the conjunctions and when to stop their expressions using the appropriate punctuation. This is consistent with what had been determined by Alsalami (2022), who stated that EFL learners encountered difficulties in understanding the appropriate usage of punctuations and conjunctions in writing well-structured phrases in English due to the first language transfer and limited grammatical knowledge.

Additionally, students made errors in following the rules of capitalization. For instance, when one of the students used the word conjunction 'because' at the beginning or in the middle of the sentence, she used them the opposite way. Student's usage of capitalization showed that she did not recognize that using the conjunction 'because' at the beginning as a dependent clause requires using a comma to connect to the main clause. Similarly, some other students write the first letter of the word 'because' in lowercase when they begin the sentence.

Furthermore, some participants used many contractions in auxiliaries after the word conjunctions 'and' and 'but,' which indicated that students need to understand at least the basic rules of submitting formal writing in English. As it had been found by Suntara (2021), the sources of errors regarding the use of punctuation, capitalization, contraction, and conjunction that EFL learners committed were related to intralingual and lack of the target language grammar and mechanics. Therefore, this research's results recommended exposing students to sufficient instructions on the errors of capitalization, punctuation, and contractions that had been extensively observed in students' written sentences. This is consistent with the recommendation of Shweba and Mujiyanto (2017), who concluded that EFL/ESL teachers need to reinforce the knowledge and the practice of the use of three mechanics, including punctuation, capitalization, and spelling from the first year of college to reduce their errors in writing composition. It is significant to allow EFL learners to recognize the importance and the purpose of learning the appropriate use of conjunctions and mechanics in writing to improve the quality of their written discourses.

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

This research investigated how undergraduates of applied linguistics and English language in two different contexts applied the rules of connecting ideas introduced by Azar & Kolln and Funk in their writing paragraphs. The findings showed no significant differences among participants of the two contexts in terms of the use of connecting ideas and the types of errors they committed. In the two contexts, the participants used the word conjunctions 'and' 'but' and 'because' more than the other conjunctions, whether to connect two complete sentences or with a parallel structure. In addition, all the participants in both contexts made recognizable errors in using punctuations, capitalizations, and contractions when using word conjunctions to connect their sentences. Therefore, this study's results lead to significant implications for EFL instructors. The findings increase EFL teachers' awareness of their need to explain to their students the importance of using various conjunctions to develop smooth and high-quality written texts. It also helps EFL teachers recognize the types of problems students encounter when using conjunctions to connect sentences, such as mechanics. Thus, EFL instructors could focus on providing students with written models of the problems students commit when using conjunctions in different places to link ideas. EFL teachers will realize the importance of supporting students with tasks that improve their knowledge of the grammatical structure, meaning, and function

of combining sentences with conjunctions.

Based on the results of this study, the author suggested that English writing teachers should not only focus their instructions on correcting grammatical or lexical errors and completely ignore the importance of the appropriate use of mechanics in writing their papers. Students should receive instructions on how to use punctuation, specifically with connecting ideas. English writing teachers are also recommended to specify some classes to increase students' awareness about connecting ideas within context. It would be beneficial if English writing teachers asked students to analyze various texts before using connecting ideas in their essays. Lahuerta (2018) illustrated some implications to L2 teachers regarding improving their writing skills, and one of them was associated with providing students with writing tasks that require them to analyze specific language forms and patterns. Limitations

The limitation of this study is that it was only exploring students' use of connecting ideas based on five conjunctions that Azar's & Kolln's and Funk's textbooks introduced, so further research needs to investigate students' use of different connecting ideas to understand students' difficulties in using them in their written essays.

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