

A Syntactic Analysis of Constituent Structure in Sentences Written by EFL Students

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This research aims to determine which student uses the most dominant conjunction, what students use the most difficult conjunction and why they have difficulty using correlative and coordinating conjunctions in their sentences. The population of this research was the 4th-semester students of the English education study program at Tadulako University. The sample was selected using a simple random sampling technique, and there were 151 4th-semester students. The researcher used a quantitative description. The data of this research used a test and questionnaire. The results of the data analysis show that (1) the most dominant conjunction used by the students was coordinating conjunction, especially conjunction "and" (2) the most difficult conjunction utilized by the students was correlative conjunction, namely conjunction "both...and", the frequency of conjunction "both...and", (3) there are two factors influencing the students in using coordinating and correlative conjunctions which are internal factor and external factor. The internal factors are: the students rarely improve their knowledge about conjunctions; The students are not interested in the material about conjunctions; The students do not understand the function of conjunctions; The students do not understand about lexical categories. The external factors are: There is no motivation from lecturers or teachers for students to learn the conjunctions; The lecturers or the teachers do not explain clearly the material of conjunctions.

Keywords: *conjunctions; constituent; syntax*

INTRODUCTION

Writing is one skill that people must master. By writing, people can express and deliver their opinions, feelings, and ideas in words. In writing, rules must be addressed. According to Alipanahi et al. (2014), writing is very important; one of the essential fields of writing is the field of workers, especially business professionals. Writing becomes a difficult skill to master because writing requires the writers to master some aspects, such as punctuation, capitalization, grammar, spelling, and others. Based on research by Riyadi, Sari, and Setiawan (2017), peer-direct feedback

is one method that can be used to overcome writing problems. According to Burhanuddin (2020), grammar is the most important aspect when making a sentence.

Moreover, Debata (2013) also states that with grammar, students can improve their knowledge about writing and help students correct their mistakes in writing. We must know elements when we want to make a sentence, such as words, morphemes, phrases, clauses, and sentences. Through constituent tests, we can identify the class of the words in the sentence.

A combination of words in a sentence that has a relationship with each other is called a constituent or phrase. According to Allen (1972), the constituent is a set of words in a sentence that has to focus on their relation to each other. We need constituent tests to see the relationship between words and identify sentence structure. Thus, it is easier for us to construct a word into a sentence. Ibad, Jamiludin, and Bochari (2014) explain that constituent tests can help students make a sentence or build a sentence form without changing the meaning. With constituent structure, we can determine which word can be combined with other words. We can use many constituent tests to identify the constituent structure, including the coordination test. Coordination is coordinating two elements into one with the same syntactic form. The elements can include words, morphemes, phrases, clauses, and sentences. When we combine words, we need a connector. Lubis (2018) states that conjunction is one part of speech in spoken and written language. According to Herring (2016), a conjunction is a connector used to express the same ideas in a sentence. With conjunction, we can write a complete sentence. We have to write two things separately. However, with the help of conjunctions, we can write two things without having to write them separately. For example:

- (1) Ben likes cats.
- (2) Jim likes cats.
- (3) Jim and Ben like cats.

The conjunction can be used to unite sentences (1) and sentence (2) into a single one. Sentence (3) shows that two sentences from sentences (1) and (2) are combined into one by using the connector “and”. Thus, the coordinating conjunctions are connectors that coordinate the elements such as *and*, *or*, *but*, and there are also correlative conjunctions such as *either...or*, *both...and*, *not only...but also* and *neither...nor*.

After identifying the students’ understanding of using conjunctions, the researcher found that there are some of the students were not able to use the coordinating and correlative conjunctions; they combined two elements that do not parallel or do not have the same syntactic form. The use of the incorrect connectors in the sentences usually causes according to Kusumawardhani (2017), the incoherence of the sentences

To connect elements such as phrase with phrase, clause with clause, and sentence with sentence, usually the students have difficulty using conjunctions to connect the elements. There are some factors influencing the students' ability to use the conjunctions. As explained by Ma'shum (2021), two factors influence the students' use of conjunctions. First, the students use incorrect formulas or rules when using conjunctions. Second, the students still have lack of vocabulary. As a result, they are confused about which conjunctions should be used in their sentences. Panggabean (2016) says that there are four factors influencing the students in using conjunctions which are: the students do not understand the material about conjunctions, the students rarely do exercises about conjunctions, the students rarely use conjunctions, and the lecturers do not explain the material about conjunction clearly to the students. According to Lengkoan and Rombepajung (2022) one of problems teachers have in teaching is when circumstances require learning to be done online, that situation makes learning ineffective. In addition, Budiarto (2017) states there are four factors influencing the students in using conjunctions, which are: first, the students' mother tongue affects the use of their conjunctions; second, the students are afraid to use unfamiliar conjunctions; third, the students are confused to use the conjunctions because there are too many conjunctions; the last, the students do not have motivation to learn.

Therefore, this research aims of determining the use of conjunctions in students' writing because it is essential to combine two elements that have the same category in a sentence. The researcher is interested in discussing this topic to see what the most dominant conjunction is, what students use the most challenging conjunction, and also to see why the students are difficult to use the coordinating and correlative conjunctions.

There are several studies that are almost similar to this study they are the first study was conducted by Adiguna (2014), entitled *The Constituent Structure Bearing Trivalent Verbs Concerning to Novel "Special Delivery" by Danielle Steel*. The data of this study is taken from novel *special delivery*. The result of this study shows that the constituents usually follow trivalent verbs such as NP, PP, AP, Adv. P, and Adv. L. The findings of this study show that the theory of syntax is successful in analyzing the internal structure of sentences and phrases using tree diagrams.

The second study by Hidayah (2015), entitled *Analysis of the syntactic structure of Coordination in Emma by Jane Austen* The type of research used in this study is descriptive qualitative. The researcher collected the data by using the documentation method. The steps to

analyse the data are reading, collecting, and numbering the data. The result of this study shows that: 1) there are three constituent elements, which are words, phrases, and clauses. 2) the higher frequent category coordinated is independent clauses which have percentages of 23,33% (14 data). 3) there are two functions of the syntactic structure of coordination in sentence: as predicate and as complement (subjective and objective complement) and there are two functions in phrase: as head and as modifier.

The last study by Winarta, Marantika, and Gunawan (2022), entitled syntactic coordination of compound sentences found in the novel “Hobbit” by J.J.R Tolkien. This study aimed at analysing the types of coordination in compound sentences found in the novel entitled Habbit. This study used a descriptive qualitative method. The result of this study is two types of coordination in compound sentences found in the novel entitled “Habbit”.

The similarity between those three studies and this study is that researchers focus on analysing constituents, but there are some differences. The first is the research design. Those three studies used descriptive qualitative research,¹ while this study used descriptive quantitative. The second is the scope of the research. The scope of the first study is about types of trivalent verbs in English sentences, the second study is about types of constituents and the highest frequency of categories being combined, and the third study focused on types of coordination in compound sentences, while this study focused on constituent using coordination test which is covering the coordinating conjunctions (and, but, *and* or) and correlative conjunctions (both...and, neither...nor, either...or, and not only...but also). The next is the object of the research. The object of those three studies is a novel, while this study used the students’ writing. The last is the instrument. The instruments of the research used by the three studies were document while this study used tests and questionnaires. As a result, this study has some novelty compared to the other three studies mentioned above which focus to what the most dominant and difficult conjunction use by the students, and also focus to find out why the students are difficult to use the coordinating and correlative conjunctions.

MATERIALS AND METHOD

This research used descriptive quantitative because it depends on the quantitative descriptive data by using statistical analysis. Kothari (2007:30) states, “Quantitative research is based on the measurement of quantity or amount. It applies to phenomena that can be expressed in terms of quantity”. Moreover, this research focuses to the conjunction that the students use in their sentences because conjunction is one of the problem faced by the students in writing. The

subject of this research was the 4th semester students of English education study program consisting of 151 students from six parallel classes.

There are many ways to determine the sample; including the Slovin formula. Nalendra, Rosalinah, Priadi, Subroto, Rahayuningsih, Lestari, Kusamandari, Yuliasari, Astuti, Latumahina, Purnomo, and Zede (2021) explain that the Slovin formula is typically used in large-scale population research. Therefore, the researcher used the Slovin formula to determine the sample. As a result, the researcher used the Slovin formula:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + Ne^2}$$

Where:

n: the total of sample

N: the total of population

e: margin error

$$n = \frac{243}{1 + 195 \times 0,005^2}$$

$$n = \frac{243}{1,6075}$$

n = 151,66 because the data will lead the researcher to scientific findings. There are some steps to analyze the data.

1. Analyzing the Test

First, the researcher read the students' answers. Second, the researcher selected the correct answer to separate the valid and invalid data. Third, researcher listed the conjunctions used by the students in their sentences. Fourth, the researcher gave a number to each conjunction to make it easier for the researcher answer research questions number one and two. In the last step, the researcher determined the most dominant conjunction and the most challenging conjunction used by the students in their sentences by using the excel program.

2. Analyzing the Questionnaire

In the first step, the researcher used the SPSS program to test the validity and reliability of the questionnaire. In the second step, the researcher gave a number to each option from the valid questionnaire that the students filled in. In the last step, the researcher calculated the frequency of each item in the questionnaire variable using an excel program.

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

Result

The findings of the data are based on the result of data analysis. The data analysis consists of two parts, which are from the test and questionnaire.

The Analysis of the Data Collected from the Test

In order to find out the most dominant and the most demanding conjunction used by the students, the researcher takes the data from the test.

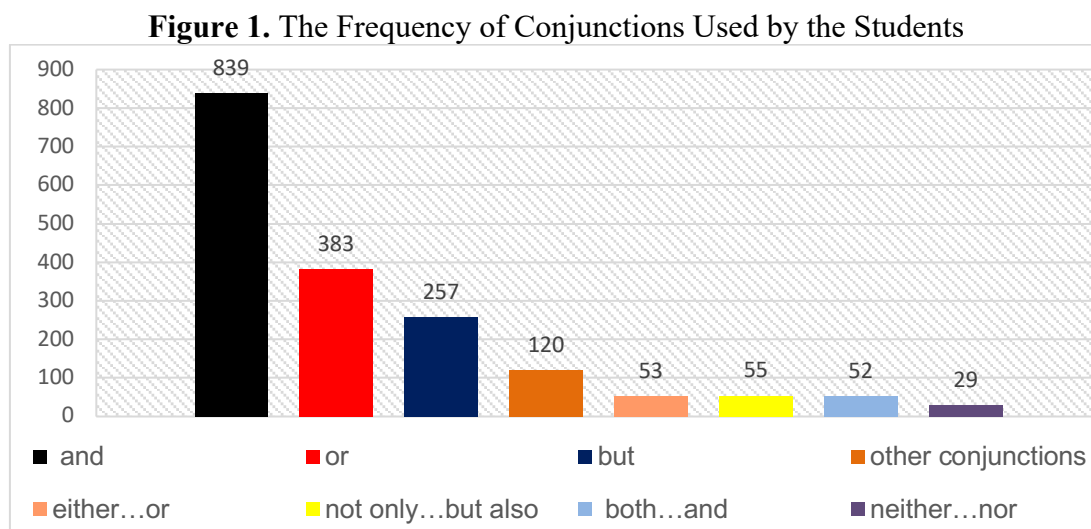


Figure 1 provides specific information about the frequency of the conjunctions used by the students in their sentences. The bars in the chart above are sorted from the most frequently used conjunctions to the least used conjunctions. The highest bar is the conjunction most used by the students, while the lowest bar is the conjunction least used. It can be seen that there are 839 conjunction and used, 383 conjunctions or, 257 conjunctions but, 119 other conjunctions, 55 conjunctions not only...but also, 53 conjunctions either...or, 52 conjunctions both...and, and 29 conjunctions neither...nor. As a result, the researcher can conclude that the most conjunction used by the students is coordinating conjunctions which is conjunction and with a total of 839 conjunctions used.

Figure 2. The Most Difficult Conjunctions Used by the Students

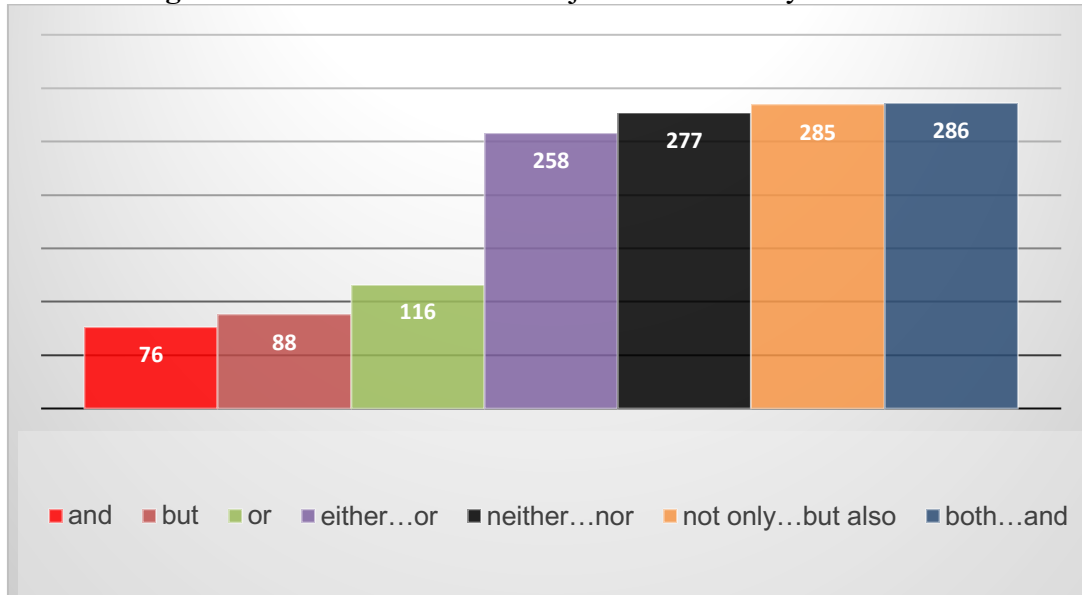


Figure 2 concerns the most challenging conjunction for the students to use in their sentences. The highest bar is the most complicated conjunction, while the lowest bar is the easiest conjunction the students use in their sentences. As we can see, the highest bar is conjunction both...and which only has one difference with conjunction not only...but also. We can also see the lowest bar is conjunction and. Since the conjunction both...and is correlative conjunction and conjunction and is coordinating conjunction, the researcher can conclude that the most confusing conjunction used by the students in their sentences is correlative conjunction which is conjunction both...and with a total of 286. Moreover, since the conjunction is coordinating conjunction, therefore the easiest conjunction for students to use in their sentences is coordinating conjunction, which is a conjunction with a total frequency of 76.

The Analysis of the Data Collected from the Questionnaire

The questionnaire is used to answer the research question which is asking about the reason why the students have difficulty using conjunctions. Therefore, the researcher provides a chart and table about the variables that become the factors influencing the students in using conjunctions below:

Table 1. The Frequency of Students' Answers Based on the Variables

No	Variable	SA	A	D	SD
1	The students do not understand the material about conjunctions	46% (140)	52% (156)	2% (6)	0% (0)
2	The students rarely improve their knowledge about conjunctions.	5% (8)	35% (52)	56% (85)	4% (6)
3	The students are not interested in the material about conjunctions.	24% (72)	48% (144)	26% (78)	2% (8)
4	The students do not understand the function of conjunctions.	22% (99)	67% (302)	10% (45)	1% (7)
5	The students do not understand about class categories of words.	23% (71)	67% (201)	8% (25)	2% (5)
6	The students are afraid to use the unfamiliar conjunctions	18% (81)	69% (315)	12% (53)	1% (4)
7	There is no motivation from lecturers or teachers for students to learn the conjunctions.	46% (280)	49% (297)	4% (25)	0% (2)
8	The lecturers or the teachers do not explain clearly about material of conjunctions	42% (189)	47% (216)	9% (40)	2% (8)

Table 1 illustrates the variables that influence the students in using conjunctions. There are eight variables. The first variable. The students that need help understanding the material about conjunctions. There are two statements in variable one that have passed the validation process. Two statements are positive statements. After identifying the students' answers, the researcher found that almost all of the students have a good understanding of the material conjunctions; as we can see in Table 1, there are only 2% of students do not know the material about conjunctions. It means variable one is not proven to be a factor that influences students' understanding of using conjunctions.

Variable two indicates that students rarely improve their knowledge about conjunctions. There is only one statement valid in variable two, whether students prefer to learn autodidactically or directly explained by the lecturers. This variable has proven to influence have an influence on students in using conjunctions marked by the dominant answer of students, namely not agreeing with autodidactic learning. They prefer to be explained by lecturers; thus, they rarely improve their knowledge.

The third variable is about students needing to be more interested. Two indicators are becoming of the reasons why the students are not interested in learning conjunctions. The first is the number of students in the class is too many and the second is the facilities in the class need to

be improved. This variable is proven to be a factor influencing the students in using conjunctions marked by the answers given by the students who predominantly agree.

Another factor influences the students in using conjunctions is variable four, which is about the students need help understanding the function of conjunctions. Three indicators are supporting this variable. The researcher provides negative statements related to knowledge about the function of conjunctions. Most of the students chose the option to agree even though the statements given were wrong statement. It means their understanding of the function of conjunctions still needs to be improved.

Variable five, which is students do not understand lexical categories, is also becoming the factor influencing the students in using conjunctions. Researcher need to correct the statement regarding the lexical category to the respondents. Most of the respondents agree. This proves that they do not understand the lexical category because almost the respondents answer agree in incorrect statement.

The next variable is variable six which is about the students difficult in using unfamiliar conjunctions. This variable has three statements regarding the unfamiliar conjunctions. Three statements are positive statement. After identifying the students' answers, the researcher found almost all of the students have good understanding about the unfamiliar conjunctions, as we can see in table 1, there are only 14% students afraid in using unfamiliar conjunctions. It means variable six is not proven to be a factor that influences students' understanding in using conjunctions.

The following variable is variable seven which is regarding to no motivation from educators to the students. There are four indicators functioning as statements of motivation that students need from the educators. First, the students prefer that the teachers come on time. Second, the students primarily like it if the teachers provide feedback. Third, the students also demand that the teachers to remember the students' names. Fourth, students want the teachers to provide ice-breaking. From these four statements, almost no students chose to disagree and almost all of the students chose to agree, which means the educators need motivate the students.

The last variable influencing students in using conjunctions is variable eight, which is about the lecturers do not explain the material of conjunctions. Three items support this variable. First, lecturers must review the material at the beginning of the class. Second, lecturers must explain the material directly and its application. Third, the lecturers must explain the material without using full English. Most of the students chose to agree and only a few students chose to disagree.

As a result, from eight variables, the researcher notices only six variables influence the students in using conjunctions. They are: variable 2. The students rarely improve their knowledge about conjunctions, variable 3. The students are not interest in the material about conjunctions, variable 4. The students do not understand the function of conjunctions, variable 5. The students do not understand about lexical categories, variable 7. There is no motivation from lecturers or teachers for students to learn the conjunctions, and variable 8. The lecturers or the teachers do not explain clearly about material of conjunctions.

Discussion

The objective of this research is to find out what the most dominant conjunction is, what the most difficult conjunction is, and why the students find it difficult to use conjunctions in their sentences. Therefore, the researcher presents a discussion of data analysis findings. The researcher only focused on how often the conjunction was used without paying attention to the grammar. In conclusion, the researcher found that the most dominant conjunction utilized by the students in their sentences is coordinating conjunction which is a conjunction and. This finding is also supported by the theory of Quirk et al. (1985). Moreover, this finding was also obtained by researchers Sianturi, Santiya, Panjaitan, and Rambe (2021), Purba, Safnil, and Pulungan (2017). In contrast from Savitri, Setiyono, and Widodo (2021), found the most conjunction used by the students is correlative conjunction, which is conjunction “both...and.”

Furthermore, the researcher also found that students’ most difficult conjunctions in their sentences are correlative conjunctions which are conjunctions of “both...and.” The researcher determined the answer of research question number two by calculating the frequency of the incorrect answers utilized by the students. In contrast to the research conducted by Syafitri, Arasuli, and Sembiring (2017), they found that the difficult conjunction used by the students is coordinating conjunctions. The other research by Savitri et al. (2021) also found conjunction “both...and.” is the easiest conjunction in correlative conjunctions. It means this research has the novelty from the other research.

Moreover, the researcher found six factors influencing the students in using conjunctions, which are; 1. The students rarely improve their knowledge about conjunctions; 2. The students are not interested in the material about conjunctions; 3. The students do not understand the function of conjunctions; 4. The students do not understand about lexical categories; 5. There is no motivation from lecturers or teachers for students to learn the conjunctions; and 6. The lecturers or the teachers do not explain clearly the material of conjunctions. Six factors above can be categorized as two factors which are internal and external factor. This finding is also supported by four other researchers, they are Ma’shum (2021), Nurbaidah (2019), Budiarmo (2017) and

Panggabean (2016). They found the factors influencing students' understanding in using conjunction caused by internal and external factors.

CONCLUSION

After conducting the research and doing the data analysis, the researcher concludes that the most dominant conjunction used by the students is coordinating conjunction, which is conjunction and. The frequency of conjunction "and" used by the students is 839. The students also find it difficult to use conjunctions in their sentences because of two factors; internal and external factors. moreover, this research also shows the most difficult conjunction the students use is correlative conjunctions which is conjunction "both...and." Some factors cause it.

In this research, the researcher limits the scope to only focusing on coordinating conjunction (and, or, but) and correlative conjunction (both...and, either...or, neither...nor, not only...but also). After analyzing the students' answers, the researcher concludes that they still do not understand the use of conjunction, it is proven that many of the students use other conjunctions out of the scope such as subordinating conjunctions.

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