

# Techniques of Teaching Conjunctions in Secondary Schools

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**Abstract - The aims of this paper are to reveal the role and problems of teaching conjunctions in secondary schools. The main problems that face the students at secondary schools are the using of conjunctions perfectly. The study followed analytical descriptive method depended on a questionnaire that distributed to teachers of secondary schools. The paper came out with the following results: Secondary school students are unable to use English conjunctions properly, secondary school students are unable to identify the different types of conjunctions, teachers do not use the appropriate techniques for teaching English conjunctions, and there is no enough practice for conjunctions in the syllabus. The study recommended that: Secondary school students must be taught English conjunctions in separate paragraphs. Secondary school syllabus designers should pay more attention to conjunctions.**

## I. INTRODUCTION

Conjunctions are crucial devices in the organization and cohesion of a discourse because they do not build complex units but also guide speakers to the interpretation and processing of utterances with respect to one another and to the context. Conjunctions join two clauses within a sentence. Conjunctions are a class of words whose function is to connect words, phrases, or sentences syntactically, while characterizing semantic relations between those elements. With regard to their syntactic function a distinction is drawn between coordinating and subordinating conjunctions: because co-ordinating conjunctions connect elements that are equally ordered with each other, they generally cannot be used sentence-initially.

### Questions and Hypotheses of the Paper

To investigate the difficulties of the study, the researchers raised the following questions:

1. To what extent are secondary school students unable to use English conjunctions correctly?
2. Are secondary school students able to identify the different types of English conjunctions?
3. What are the causes behind these weaknesses?

Based on these questions the three hypotheses are generated. These hypotheses are:

1. Secondary school students are unable to use English conjunctions correctly.
2. Secondary school students are unable to identify the different types of conjunctions.
3. There are some causes behind the students' weakness in using English conjunctions.

### Method of the Study:

To achieve the goals of this study, the researchers use descriptive analytical method to investigate the difficulties encountered secondary school students in using English conjunctions in written performance. The researchers employ a questionnaire as a tool for data collection.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

### The Definition of Conjunctions

According to Martha and Funk (2010:281) "Conjunctions connect words and phrases and clauses within the sentences themselves. Within the sentence the most common connectors are the simple coordinating conjunctions".

Also, conjunctions are words that join two or more words, phrases or clauses. The most common conjunctions include (and or but) conjunctions are often used to join sentences together. The word (but) shows a contrasting idea. These common conjunctions are used in the written text.

Other definition conjunctions are "linguistic elements that link two or more words, phrases, clauses, or sentences within a large unit in such a way that a specific semantic relation is established between them". In the literature, conjunctions are also referred to as "connectives" and "linker". Conjunctions are crucial devices in the organization and cohesion of discourse because they do not build complex units but guide speakers to word interpretation and processing of utterances with respect to one another and with respect to context. Conjunction joins two clauses within a sentence

Clark (1996: 60), Holliday and Hassan (1976: 227) argued that: in describing conjunction as a cohesive device, we are focusing attention not on the semantic relations as such as

realized throughout the grammar of the language, but on one particular aspect of them, namely the function they have of relating to each other linguistic elements that occur in succession but are not related by other structural means".

### Types of Conjunction

There are three type of conjunctions adopted in English language as stated by A.J. Thomson and V. Martinet (1986: 288) as follow:

Coordinating conjunction, subordinating conjunction, correlative conjunction, coordination conjunction and subordination conjunction deal with the relationships between sentences. Coordination places equal importance between sentences while subordination shows that one sentence may be less or more important than another sentence. Both coordination and subordination can be achieved through signal words and phrases, such as subordinating and coordinating conjunction. The following links are intended to help people by giving information on both coordination and subordination.

### Coordinating Conjunctions

A coordinative conjunction joins two sentences together that do not rely on each other for meaning. Thomas and Martinet (1986:326)(And, but both...and, or, .... or, neither...nor, not only.... but also) these join pairs of noun /adjectives/ adverbs/ verbs/ phrases/ clauses:

### Kinds of Coordinating Conjunction

According to Murthy (2007), coordinating conjunctions are divided into three kinds. They are:

1. Cumulative or Copulative Conjunctions
2. Adversative Conjunctions and
3. Disjunctive or Alternative Conjunctions

In addition, they will be considered one after the other:

### Cumulative or Copulative Conjunctions

These are used to join statements, or they add one statement to another. They include *and, so, both ... and, as well as not only ... but also, no less than*, and so on. Sentential examples:

1. He looked *and* smiled at me.
2. He is my father, *so* I respect him.
3. They *both* gave me money *and* stood by me in my trouble.
4. *As well as* writing the letter for me, he posted it.
5. She, *no less than* her friend, tried to cheat me.

### Adversative Conjunctions

According to Halliday and Hassan (1976), the meaning of the adversative relation is "contrary to expectation". The expectation may be derived from the content of what is being said, or from the communication process, in a speaker-hearer situation. They include *but, still, only*, and others. Sentential examples:

1. She is beautiful *but* poor.
2. You are intelligent *still* you must work hard.
3. He is a good servant *only* he has greed for food.

### Disjunctive or Alternative Conjunctions

These are used to express a choice between two alternatives. They include: *or, nor, either...or, neither...nor, else, whether...or, otherwise*, and so on.

Sentential examples:

1. You must tell me the truth, *or* I cannot help you.
2. She is not a teacher *or* a typist.
3. You must *either* return my money *or* sell your house to me.
4. She *neither* loved him *nor* liked to marry him.
5. You must do the work sincerely *else* you will lose the job.

### Subordinating Conjunction

Subordinating conjunctions are words which are used to link subordinate clauses with the main clauses in a complex sentence. Conjunctions are used to join clauses of unequal rank. In other words, they are used to join an independent or main (principal) clause with a dependent (subordinate) one that relies on the main clause for meaning and relevance. This means that main clauses can stand alone and do not depend on subordinate clauses while subordinate clauses cannot stand alone. As Aarts (2001) noted, "another way of putting this is to say that subordination is a type of *hypostasis*, a Greek term that means originally" syntactic underneath arrangement". This means that a subordinating conjunction causes the clause it appears in to become dependent, and that it will only be a sentence fragment unless it is joined to an independent clause. Simply, subordinating conjunctions are called subordinators and the art of using a subordinator to join two clauses together is referred to as *subordination*. According to Quirk and Greenbaum (2004), subordination is a non-symmetrical relation, holding between two clauses in such a way that one is a constituent or part of the other. Also according to Huddleston (1988), subordination in contrast with coordination, involves inequality, that is, a relation between a dependent (the subordinate element) and a head (the superordinate one). A subordinating

conjunction can appear at the beginning or in the middle of a sentence. According to Sahebkeir and Aidinlou (2014: 125), subordinating conjunctions are also known as transitional conjunctions. They include *after, because, if, that, though, although, till, before, unless, as, when, where, while, than, whether, in order that, nevertheless*, etc.

According to Baskervill and Sewell (2015: 3), subordinating conjunctions are divided into eight classes. They include time, cause or reason, purpose, result or consequence, condition, circumstance, concession and comparison, we will consider them one after another:

### **Time**

These are subordinators that express consequence in time or succession in time between clauses.

Examples include *before, after, till, since, when, while*

*Mary had left before my arrival.*

*I began my work after they had gone.*

*I have not seen Mercy since she was married.*

*She will be happy when her mother returns from the market.*

*He was speaking with his friends while I was trying to sleep.*

### **Cause or Reason**

These are subordinators that express causal relations in the simplest form that mean "*as a result of this*" or "*because of this*". Examples include *because, since, as, and for*.

Sentential examples:

*He travelled home because of the death of his mother.*

*Since it is dark, take the torch with you.*

*As she is my sister, I like her.*

### **Result or Consequence**

Result/consequence and cause/reason are closely related but the main subordinator here is *so* and *that*. These have the relation that is expressed to mean "for this reason" which leads to something else.

Sentential examples:

He talked *so* fast that I could not understand him.

I was so tired *that* I could not eat after cooking.

### **Purpose**

Purpose and cause/reason are closely related, and the subordinators involved have the sense of "for this reason" or "for this

Reason "or" for this purpose" They include *that, so that, in order that, lest*, etc. Sentential examples:

We eat *that* we may live.

I will help him now *so that* he can help me tomorrow.

Emeka travelled to Abuja *in order that* he could see his brother.

He walked quietly *lest* he should wake the child.

### **Condition**

According to Quirk and Greenbaum (2004: 323), conditional subordinators state the dependence of one circumstance or set of circumstances on another. The main subordinators in English are *if* and *unless*. The *if*-clause could either be a positive or negative condition while the *unless*-clause is a negative one. For example:

*If* you do the job well, I will pay you.

*If* you do not do the job well, I will not pay you.

### **Circumstance**

Subordinators express a fulfilled condition, or to put differently, a relation between a premise in the subordinate clause and the conclusion drawn from it in the main clause. An example of this is a special circumstantial compound conjunction: *seeing that*. Sentential example:

*Seeing that* the weather has improved, we shall enjoy our game.

### **Concession**

These are subordinators that express the sense of "reluctant yielding". They are usually introduced by *though* and its more formal variant *although, even if* and occasionally *if*. Others include *however, whereas*, and so on. Sentential examples:

No goals were scored, *though* it was an exciting game.

*Although* I enjoyed myself, I was glad to come here

*However* hard he tried, he failed the exam

*Whereas* Sule seems rather stupid, his brother is clever.

*Even if* you dislike music, you would enjoy this concert.

### **Comparison**

These are subordinators that express comparison between dependent and independent clauses. They are introduced by

*"Then, as-as, as"*, and the like.

Sentential examples:

She respected me more *than* I thought.

Uchendu walks *as* beautifully *as* a film star.

*As* sugar attracts ants, John is attracted by Mary.

### Coordinating Complete Sentences

There are three methods of joining independent clauses to produce compound sentences:

1. Using coordinating conjunctions.
2. Using the semicolon, either with or without conjunctive adverbs.
3. For limited situations, using the colon.

The compound sentence with a coordinating conjunction such as *and* shows up at an early stage of the writers' development:

We went to the fair, and we had a good time.

Robby is means, and I don't like him.

Such sentences can, of course, be effective when they are used sparingly, but they will strike the reader as immature when overused. The compound sentence is most effective when the coordinate ideas have relatively equal importance when the two ideas contribute equal weight; I disapprove of her spending money on lottery tickets, and I told her so. The curtain rose to reveal a perfectly bare stage, and a stillness settled over the audience.

Pete filled the bags with hot roasted peanuts and stapled them shut.

Note that the punctuation rule that applies to the compound sentence differs from the rule regarding internal coordinate constructions.

Between the sentences in a compound sentence, the comma is not used with the conjunction; between the parts of a coordinate structure within the sentence we do not. When the clauses of a compound sentence are quite short and closely connected, however, we sometimes omit the comma.

The following sentence, for example, would probably be spoken without the pitch change we associate with commas:

October came and the tourists left. The coordinating *and/or* can link a series of three or more sentences: Pete filled the bags, and I stapled them shut, and Marty packed them in the cartons.

The kids can wait for me at the pool, or they can go over to the shopping center and catch the bus, or they can even walk home. In these two sentences, the first conjunction can be replaced by a comma:

Pete filled the bags, I stapled them shut, and Marty packed them in the cartons. But usually joins only two clauses:

Jill wanted to wait for her, but I refused. But can introduce the final clause when *and* or joins the first two:

Pete filled the bags, and I stapled them, but Marty refused to lift a finger.

The kids can wait for me at the pool, or they can walk to the bus stop, but I really think they ought to walk home.

### Correlative Conjunctions

Correlative conjunctions are sort of like tag-team conjunctions. They come in pairs, and they are used in different places in a sentence. They I include pairs like:

(Both, and, either...or, neither... nor, only, but also)

Connect both complete sentences and elements within the sentence.

Within the sentence either *or* and *neither –nor* are used like:

I will {either, neither} met you in the lobby {or, nor} come to your room.

As connect *or* of sentence, *neither –nor* requires the subject –auxiliary shift; *either-or* does not:

Neither will I meet you in the lobby, nor will I come to your room.

Not only but also can be used both within and between sentences:

Not only the coaches and players but also the fans had high hopes of defeating the crimson Tide.

Both *and* does not connect complete sentences; it connects elements within the sentence only:

Franco is a good sport, both on and off the playing field.

Both Jeanne and Marie worked hard to get their manuscript finished on schedule.

### Conjunctive Adverbs (Adverbial conjunctions)

According to Martha and Funk (2010:282) as their name suggests, the conjunctive adverbs join sentences to form coordinate structures as other conjunctions do, but they do so with an adverbial emphasis. The following list also includes some of the most common simple adverbs and adverbial prepositional phrases that function as sentence connectors:

Result: therefore, consequently, as a result, of course

Concession: nevertheless, yet, at any rate, still, after all, of course

Apposition: for example, for instance, that is, namely, in other words

Addition: moreover, furthermore, also, in addition, likewise, further

Time: meanwhile, in the meantime

Contrast: however, instead, on the contrary, on the other hand, in contrast, rather.

**The Functions of Conjunctions**

Conjunctions serve different purposes within a text as:

**1. Connecting argument**

Conjunctions are used to connect argument and to organize discourse, like “also”, and “further”, show that is more to say to support the argument. On the other hand, the conjunction “thus” tells the reader that what follows is a conclusion. These additive conjunctions link logical steps within the text. They are also used to organize the stages of a text. Martin and Rose (2003)

**2. Comparing Arguments**

Conjunctions are used to exemplify are used to compare general statements with specific instance. This includes conjunctions such as “for example”, “for instance” in order to convince the reader.

**3. Ordered Arguments**

There are also some conjunctions that tell the reader what a new stage is beginning. This plays a significant role in organizing the whole discourse. Conjunctions therefore, are called global discourse markers such as: firstly secondly, thirdly....and finally Elizabeth Whittome (2014, 251). Holliday and Hassan (1976) state that conjunctions play three significant roles in ordering and organizing discourse. These roles are explained as follow:

**1. Elaboration**

It is relationship of restatement by which one sentence represents the previous one. The conjunctions that are used to realize this function are:

In other words, for example, that is to say

**2. Extension**

It is a relationship for either addition or variation. A sentence may add or change the meaning of previously mentioned sentence. This is done using conjunctions like: and, also, moreover, in addition, but, yet, on the contrary (Wikipedia).

**3. Enhancement**

Refers to the way by which one sentence develops on the meaning of another one in terms of dimensions such as: comparison, cause, and effect. Comparative conjunctions include likewise, similarly; causal conjunction include: therefore, because, as a result (Wikipedia).

**Methodology**

The researchers used two types of tools for the data collection process, a questionnaire for teachers was given

to 30 respondents who are representing the teachers’ community in Sudanese Schools. The responses to the questionnaire of the 30 teachers were tabulated and computed. The following is an analytical interpretation and discussion of the findings regarding different points related to the objectives and hypotheses of the study.

Each item in the questionnaire is analyzed statistically and discussed. The following tables will support the discussion.

**Data Analysis and Discussion**

The researcher distributed the questionnaire on determined study sample (30) and constructed the required tables for collected data. This step consists transformation of the qualitative (nominal) variables (agree, neutral, disagree).

**Figure (1) Teachers of English do not use the right teaching technique for introducing conjunctions.**

Valid	Frequency	Percent
Agree	15	75.00%
Neutral	04	20.00%
Disagree	01	05.00%
<b>Total</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

The above figure (1) shows that there are fifteen candidates in the study's sample with percentage (75.00%) are agreed with the notion "Teachers of English do not use the right teaching technique for introducing conjunctions". Which shows that student’s disability of using conjunctions. There are four candidates with percentage (20.00%) were “not sure” those and one candidate with percentage (05.00%) disagreed.

(75.00%) are agreed with "Teachers of English do not use the right teaching technique for introducing conjunctions” thus teachers should provide intensive lessons focusing on English conjunctions for students to tackle their problems.

**Figure (2) Teachers do not adopt new techniques for teaching conjunctions**

Valid	Frequency	Percent
Agree	17	85.00%
Neutral	02	10.00%
Disagree	01	05.00%
<b>Total</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

From the above figure (2) and we can see that there are seventeen candidates in the study's sample with percentage (85.00%) are agreed with the item "Teachers do not adopt new techniques for teaching conjunctions. "There are two

candidates with percentage (10.00%) were "not sure" with that, and one candidate with percentage (05.00%) disagreed. (85.00%) agreed with "Teachers do not adopt new techniques for teaching conjunctions." Thus, teachers should use suitable ways teaching which can help students to know the rules of English conjunctions.

**Figure (3) Teachers do not provide students with interesting text to practice conjunctions**

Valid	Frequency	Percent
Agree	16	80.00%
Neutral	01	05.00%
Disagree	03	15.00%
<b>Total</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

From the above figure (3) shows that; there are sixteen candidates in the study's sample with percentage (80.00%) are agreed with "Teachers do not provide students with interesting text to practice conjunctions." "There is one candidate with percentage (05.00%) were "not sure" with that and three candidates with percentage (15.00%) disagreed. So, teachers should provide the students with interesting text to practice conjunctions.

**Figure (4) Secondary school students are not given more time to practice using conjunctions**

Valid	Frequency	Percent
Agree	14	70.00%
Neutral	03	15.00%
Disagree	03	15.00%
<b>Total</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

From the above figure (4) shows that there are fourteen candidates in the study's sample with percentage (70.00%) are agreed with "Secondary school students are not given more time to practice using conjunctions". There are three candidates with percentage (15.00%) were not sure about that and three candidates with percentage (15.00%) disagreed. Thus, teachers should give students more time to practice their English conjunctions.

**Figure (5) Secondary school students do not familiar with the function of conjunctions**

Valid	Frequency	Percent
Agree	15	75.00%
Neutral	02	10.00%
Disagree	03	15.00%
<b>Total</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

From the figure No (5) shows that there are fifteen candidates in the study's sample with percentage (75.00%)

are agreed with "Secondary school students do not familiar with the function of conjunctions". There are two candidates with percentage (10.00%) were "not sure" with that and three candidates with percentage (15.00%) disagreed. So, teachers should use an easy way to make students feel more familiar with the function of conjunctions. As mentioned above using of interesting texts.

**Figure (6) Syllabus cannot help secondary school students in learning conjunctions**

Valid	Frequency	Percent
Agree	16	80.00%
Neutral	01	5.00%0
Disagree	03	15.00%
<b>Total</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

From the above figure No (6) shows that there are sixteen candidates in the study's sample with percentage (80.00%) are agreed with "Syllabus cannot help secondary school students in learning conjunctions" "There are one candidate with percentage (20.00%) were "not sure" that, and three candidates with percentage (15.00%) disagreed.

**Figure (7) there is no enough practice for English conjunctions in syllabus**

Valid	Frequency	Percent
Agree	18	90.00%
neutral	10	5.00%0
Disagree	10	5.00%0
<b>Total</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

From the above figure No (7) shows that there are eighteen candidates in the study's sample with percentage (90.0%) are agreed with "There is no enough practice for English conjunctions in syllabus". There is one candidate with percentage (5.0%) were "not sure" with that and one candidate with percentage (5.0%) disagreed.

**Figure (8) Secondary school students are unable to use the right conjunctions due to the lack of exercises**

Valid	Frequency	Percent
Agree	18	90.00%
Neutral	01	5.00%0
Disagree	10	05.00%
<b>Total</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

From the above figure No (8) we can see that there are eighteen candidates in the study's sample with percentage (90.00%) are agreed with "There are one candidate with percentage (05.00%) was "not sure" that, and one candidate with percentage (05.00%) disagreed.

The calculated value of chi-square for the significance of the differences for the respondents' answers in the No (1) question was (20) which is greater than the tabulated value

of chi-square at the degree of freedom (4) and the significant value level (5%) which was (8.22). this indicates that, there are statistically significant differences at the level (5%) among the answers of the respondents, which support the respondent who agreed with the statement ***“Teachers of English do not use the right teaching technique for introducing conjunctions***

Figure (9)

Nom.	Statement	Mean	SD	Chi square	p-value
1	Teachers of English do not use the right teaching technique for introducing conjunctions.	3.4	0.7	20	0.000
2	Teachers do not adopt new techniques for teaching conjunctions	3.4	0.5	24.0	0.000
3	Teachers do not provide students with interesting text to practice conjunctions.	3.3	0.8	24	0.000
4	Secondary school students are not given more time to practice using conjunctions	3.9	0.6	24.4	0.000
5	Secondary school students do not familiar with the function of conjunctions.	2.6	0.8	27	0.000
6	Syllabus cannot help secondary school students in learning conjunctions	2.4	0.9	25	0.000
7	There are no enough practice for English conjunctions in syllabus.	2.4	0.5	35	0.000
8	Secondary school students are unable to use the right conjunctions due to the lack of exercises	2.4	0.7	25	0.000

The calculated value of chi-square for the significance of the differences for the respondents' answers in the No (2) question was (24.0) which is greater than the tabulated value of chi-square at the degree of freedom (4) and the significant value level (5%) which was (8.22). this indicates that, there are statistically significant differences at the level (5%) among the answers of the respondents, which support the respondent who agreed with the statement ***“Teachers do not adopt new techniques for teaching conjunctions.***

The calculated value of chi-square for the significance of the differences for the respondents' answers in the No (3) question was (26) which is greater than the tabulated value of chi-square at the degree of freedom (4) and the significant value level (5%) which was (8.22). this indicates that, there are statistically significant differences at the level (5%) among the answers of the respondents, which support the respondent who agreed with the statement ***“Teachers do not provide students with interesting text to practice conjunctions.***

The calculated value of chi-square for the significance of the differences for the respondents' answers in the No (4) question was (24.4) which is greater than the tabulated

value of chi-square at the degree of freedom (4) and the significant value level (5%) which was (8.22). this indicates that, there are statistically significant differences at the level (5%) among the answers of the respondents, which support the respondent who agreed with the statement ***“Secondary school students are not given more time to practice using conjunction***

The calculated value of chi-square for the significance of the differences for the respondents' answers in the No (1) question was (27) which is greater than the tabulated value of chi-square at the degree of freedom (4) and the significant value level (5%) which was (8.22). this indicates that, there are statistically significant differences at the level (5%) among the answers of the respondents, which support the respondent who agreed with the statement ***“Secondary school students do not familiar with the function of conjunctions.***

The calculated value of chi-square for the significance of the differences for the respondents' answers in the No (2) question was (25) which is greater than the tabulated value of chi-square at the degree of freedom (4) and the significant value level (5%) which was (8.22). this indicates that, there are statistically significant differences

at the level (5%) among the answers of the respondents, which support the respondent who agreed with the statement ***“Syllabus cannot help secondary school students in learning conjunctions”***

The calculated value of chi-square for the significance of the differences for the respondents' answers in the No (3) question was (35.0) which is greater than the tabulated value of chi-square at the degree of freedom (4) and the significant value level (5%) which was (8.22). this indicates that, there are statistically significant differences at the level (5%) among the answers of the respondents, which support the respondent who agreed with the statement ***“There are not enough practice for English conjunctions in syllabus.”***

The calculated value of chi-square for the significance of the differences for the respondents' answers in the No (4) question was (25.0) which is greater than the tabulated value of chi-square at the degree of freedom (4) and the significant value level (5%) which was (8.22). this indicates that, there are statistically significant differences at the level (5%) among the answers of the respondents, which support the respondent who agreed with the statement ***“Secondary school students are unable to use the right conjunctions due to the lack of exercises”***

**According to the previous results the hypothesis of this study is accepted**

### Findings

Based on the results on chapter four, the study reveals the following results:

1. Secondary school students are unable to use English conjunctions properly.
2. Secondary school students are unable to identify the different types of conjunctions.
3. The result of the questionnaire shows that, teachers don't use the appropriate techniques for teaching English conjunctions, and there is no enough practice for conjunctions in the syllabus.

### 5.3 Recommendations:

With reference to the findings of the study, the researcher recommends the following:

1. Secondary school students must be taught English conjunctions in separate paragraphs.
2. Secondary school syllabus designers should pay more attention to conjunctions.

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