

A Study of Writing Conjunctions Usage Employed by English Majors

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ABSTRACT

Writing is a very important skill in English learning and teaching. By taking Tongren University as an example, the purposes of this study were to investigate the types of conjunctions and word usage used by English majors in writing; to explore the common conjunction mistakes in writing by English majors; and to analyze reasons that lead English majors to make these mistakes. A total of 100 English majors, of Grade 2021, participated in this study, including 32 students in Class 1, 35 students in Class 2 and 33 students in Class 3. The corpus of this study consisted of 100 essays from English writing test for English majors of Grade 2021, which was required to be completed within 120 minutes. In addition, the test was an argumentative essay on the topic of *Views on Human Flash Search*, and the average length of the essay was at least 300 words. Then data were collected through text analysis, questionnaires and semi-structured interviews based on the combination of qualitative approach and quantitative approach. The results showed that the frequency of use of *additional* types is the highest, followed by the use of *listing* and *time*. The frequency of use of the remaining seven categories of conjunctions is less than nine percent. They are *contrast*, *result*, *cause*, *transition*, *condition*, *summary*, *example*; learners are not proficient in the mastery of conjunctions in English writing, which may lead to the misuse, under-use and overuse of conjunctions; the reasons of leading learners to make these mistakes were listed as follows: *learning attitude*, *teaching method* and *influence of mother tongue of writing*. This study has provided some pedagogical implications for teachers in writing teaching, which can guide learners to use writing conjunctions properly and effectively.

KEYWORDS

Conjunctions; English major; English writing

1 Introduction

1.1 The Background of the Study

Writing, as one of the five basic language skills, is quite important in English teaching and learning (Wang, 2021). In higher education institutions worldwide, English is the primary language of instruction and research. Students are required to write essays, dissertations, and other forms of academic writing in English to demonstrate their understanding of the subject matter and contribute to the field of knowledge (Guo, 2021). Additionally, English writing skills are highly valued by learners, as they indicate a candidate's ability to think critically, analyze information, and communicate effectively (Li, 2022).

At the same time, the use of conjunctions has also attracted increasing attention, and many scholars have conducted research on students' writing ability and found that the use of English

writing conjunctions plays a key role in improving writing level (Li, 2023). Then a growing number of studies have shown that the use of appropriate conjunctions can significantly improve the coherence and logic of a paper (Tian, 2023).

1.2 The Purpose of the Study

English Writing is quite vital for college students because it can not only demonstrate their language competency, but also it accounts for quite a large proportion in college English examination. Therefore, much attention was devoted to English writing teaching and learning. However, most students' English writing performance is unsatisfactory and their English writing level is poor, which is due to their lack of understanding and application of English writing conjunctions (Xie, 2023).

With this in mind, by taking Tongren University as an example, the purposes of this study were 1) to investigate the types of conjunctions and word usage used by English majors in writing; 2) to explore the common conjunction mistakes in writing by English majors; and 3) to analyze reasons that lead English majors to make these mistakes.

1.3 The Significance of the Study

In recent years, many scholars at home and abroad have studied the relationship between writing conjunctions and English learning. For this study, firstly, it can enrich the research content and perspective of the use of English conjunctions devices at the university stage to a certain extent, and has certain reference value for researchers who want to study the theory of English conjunctions devices for English majors and English writing teaching in the future.

Secondly, this study hopes to arouse the attention of teachers and students to the conjunctions in English writing and improve learners' awareness of the use of conjunctions in English writing, so that they can pay more attention to and use English conjunctions correctly in the future. Thirdly, the current research results can help both students and teachers better understand the overall situation of English writing conjunctions and the reasons that affect their own writing.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Definition of Conjunctions

As a cohesive device, the concept of conjunctions was initially introduced in Halliday and Hassan's seminal work, *Cohesion in English*. Halliday and Hassan classified discourse cohesion into five categories: *reference*, *ellipsis*, *substitution*, *conjunction* and *lexical cohesion*. Fundamentally, a conjunction serves as a linguistic unit that joins word, phrase, or clause. Syntactically, conjunctions are functional words that cannot stand alone and are integral parts of a sentence, such as *and*, *but*, and *so*.

The understanding and definition of conjunctions vary among linguists. For instance, Hornby (1997) posited that conjunctions were words that facilitate the combination of words, phrases, and sentences. Nesfield (1912), on the other hand, maintains that the primary function of conjunction is to establish connections. Similarly, Ganshina and Vasilevskaya (1954) argued that conjunctions, devoid of inherent meaning, were solely employed to associate words, words, phrases, sentences, or clauses. Drawing from these linguistic perspectives, we can infer that conjunctions primarily function to link words, phrases, sentences and paragraphs. They cannot exist independently within a sentence and serve as a bridge, fostering relationships within and across sentence structures.

2.2 Functions of Conjunctions

Some scholars study the function of conjunctions to link up text coherence. For example, Brown and Yule (1983) illuminated the importance of conjunctions in creating cohesive relationships. Zamel (1983) points out that conjunctions make for stronger logic between sentences and paragraphs. Leech and Svartvik (1985) claimed that conjunctions can effectively link up the part before and the part after the content, thus helping readers and listeners to understand the meaning of the text.

The proper use of conjunction is of great benefit to our composition, which making the composition complete in structure, coherent in meaning and cohesive in form. Chen and Wu (2006) believes that conjunctions play a cohesive and coherent role between sentences, paragraphs and the whole text. All of them serve the purpose of linking the previous content to the subsequent section. To sum up, the functions of conjunctions are mainly reflected in deepening the understanding of discourse semantics and strengthening the cohesion and coherence of discourse context.

2.3 Classification of Conjunctions

The categorization of conjunctions varies among different scholars. But no unified classification has been reached at present. Thus, this research mainly introduces several mainstream classifications as follows. First of all, according to Halliday and Hassan's classification in 1976, conjunctions can be broadly categorized into four distinct groups, as presented in Table 1:

Table 1 Halliday and Hassan's Classification of Conjunctions

Types	Conjunctions
Additional	and, in addition, what's more, besides, in other words, on the one hand... on the other hand ...,for example, by the way, etc.
Contrast	but, however, despite, though , on the contrary , in fact, actually, as a matter of fact, in spite of, anyhow, etc.
Causal	because, so, for, since, hence, therefore, as a result, thus
Time	firstly, to begin with, at first , at last, finally, in the end, in the first place, then, next, after that, before, when, to sum up, in short, etc.

Subsequently, Quirk et al. (1985) further categorized conjunctions into seven distinct groups. Their classification extends beyond the explicitly listed conjunctions to encompass all adverbs, prevalent prepositions, and noun phrases. These categories are enumerated as follows (see in Table 2): *listing*, *summative*, *appositive*, *resultive*, *inferential*, *contrastive*, and *transitional*.

Table 2 Quirk's Classification of Conjunctions

Types	Conjunctions
Listing	first, second, third, firstly, secondly, thirdly, moreover, to begin with, etc.
Summative	thus, in short, to sum up, in conclusion, etc.
Appositive	namely, in other words, for example, such as, that is to say, etc.
Resultive	hence, therefore, in consequence, etc.
Inferential	in that case, or, otherwise, else, etc.
Contrastive	in contrast, on the contrary, instead, etc.
Transitional	at the same time, by the way, meanwhile, etc.

Many domestic researchers have their own opinions on the classification of conjunctions (e.g. Liu, 2000; Cai, 2001). Particularly, Dai (2000) listed more than 20 types of conjunctions. Zhao classifies conjunctions words into 15 categories(see in Table 3) based on the studies of Chen(1998) , Liu (2000) and Cai(2001).

Table 3 Zhao's Classification of Conjunctions

Types	Conjunctions
Contrast	equally, similarly, likewise, in the same way, in the same manner, the same...as, equally important
Results	Thus, so, hence, consequently, therefore, accordingly, for this that reason, as a consequence, in consequence, it follows that, as a result, under the circumstances
Example	for example, for instance, as a case in point, in the case of, as an illustration, such as, like, that is say
Space	above, across, beyond, in front of, next to, opposite, under below, nearby, close to
Listing	first(ly), second(ly), for one thing, for another, in the first place, first of all, in the second place, to begin with, to start with, for a start, next, to top it (all), to cap it(all)
Emphasize	chiefly, especially, indeed, in fact, certainly, particularly , to be sure, actually, above all, most important, worse, as a matter of fact, no doubt
Concession	although, though, admittedly, it is true but, in spite of, even though
time	earlier, previously, formerly, before, after, until, later , afterwards, meanwhile, at the same time, simultaneously, on another occasion, occasionally, at this that moment, after a while, all that time
Replace	alternatively, or rather, or at least, better still, in other words
Condition	or else, otherwise, in that case, if not
Causal	because, since, owing to, due to, as a result of, on account of
Additional	also, in addition, further (more), besides, moreover, what is more, not only... but also...
Transitional	now, incidently, by the way, as for, to change the subject, with reference to with respect to, with regard to
Adversative	but, on the contrary, still, yet, nevertheless, however, instead, anyhow, unlike, whereas, conversely, rather than, by comparison, by contrast, in contrast, on the other hand
Summative	(all) in all, in conclusion, in sum (many), in short, in brief, to put it briefly, in a / one word, to conclude, to sum up, to summarize, on the whole, briefly, finally lastly, in any event, as I was saying, to get back to the point

As can be seen from the above, different scholars have classified conjunctions in English writing from different aspects and each of them was widely used in previous studies. Due to the limited writing samples and text length of this study, this study analyzed the Hanlliday and Hassan, Quirk and Zhao's classification of conjunctions.

2.4 Previous Studies on Conjunctions in Writing at Abroad

Extensive research has been conducted internationally on the employment of English conjunctions. This study presented some researchers' studies as follows. For example, Karadeniz's (2017) research on college students' utilization of conjunction in English compositions stands out. Specifically, Karadeniz devolved into the correlation between the frequency of conjunction use and the quality of students' writing. The researcher found that students had trouble using conjunctions to make essays flow more smoothly. In addition, students' writing ability is closely related to their ability to use conjunction words such as ellipsis, substitution and examples.

Kim (2017) investigated the use of English conjunctions by Korean students in argumentative writing. Kim's research focuses on the frequency and types of conjunctions in the text, showing that the quality of a student's essay is strongly related to the student's ability level, the frequency of use of conjunctions, and the topic of the essay. Furthermore, a prevalent trend among students emerges in their conjunction usage, specially the over reliance on a particular type of conjunctions.

Kurniati (2019) studied the use of conjunctions in English writing by students. Kurniati collected 82 abstracts from students at an Indonesian university and analyzed the use of conjunctions in the abstracts. In addition, 41 literature and 41 linguistic papers written by students of this school were also collected for analysis. The results revealed that many of the conjunctions used by students in the abstract are similar, and only a few are different.

Ahmad, Mahmood and Siddique (2019) selected 50 abstracts from famous journals in Pakistan to study how writers use conjunctions to make the articles more smooth. The results of the study found that replacing conjunctions in a text is often used to increase the smoothness and logic of the text. Learners do not use some conjunctions words such as substitution, ellipsis, conversion frequently, and often make mistakes, leading to poor quality of the article.

In the study of Gunas, Beda and Jem (2020), 390 English compositions of sophomore students were collected as research samples. Halliday and Hasan' s (1976) were used to analyze the use of substitution, omission conjunctions and vocabulary in 390 research samples, displaying that students had difficulty in acquiring fluency in the whole text when writing.

Alaro (2020) investigated the use of conjunctions in essay writing among 30 students in the Voleta area. It was found that students often use alternative conjunctions to increase the coherence of the essay, but they have some confusion about how to choose the appropriate conjunctions in the writing process.

Ahmad (2020) conducted a study on the argumentative essays of Malaysian students and found that when writing, students tend to use more supplementary and sequential conjunction words, instead of other conjunction words, especially complex conjunctions. Ahmad (2020) believes that if students can add conjunctions in the English writing process, it will help readers better understand the content and viewpoints of the article to some extent.

2.5 Previous Studies on Conjunctions in Writing at Home

The research on English writing cohesion has also made some achievements in our country. We reviewed some researchers' studies as follows.

For example, Yang (2019) conducted a comparative analysis of discourse cohesion in English compositions written by high school students. The conclusion is that students can get a good writing strategy from reading and continuing to write this type of question. That is, starting from the overall situation, paying attention to the integrity of the writing, paying attention to the coherence of the article, learning to use conjunctions, and making the sentences more fluent.

Pang, Song, and Zhuang (2020) studied the number and errors of discourse conjunctions devices used in 45 essays written by sophomore English majors in an English writing contest. According to the frequency of the use, they are *conjunctions*, *reference*, *omission* and *substitution*. It is pointed out that the errors in the use of conjunctions devices are mainly influenced by students' English level, Chinese thinking mode and lack of knowledge of discourse conjunction theory. In this regard, they put forward writing strategies based on discourse analysis theory: 1) transforming thinking patterns in English and Chinese; 2) Learning discourse theory; 3) Read widely; 4) Writing practice; 5) Focus on composition revision to help students overcome text errors and truly improve their English writing level.

Wang and Xu (2021) conducted a systematic study on discourse connectivity. It has been suggested that discourse conjunction is one of the important methods of discourse analysis, which is of great guiding significance for composition writing, second language acquisition, second language teaching and literary criticism.

Li and Li (2022) pointed out that the low usage rate of conjunction words are common problems for students in composition writing, resulting in insufficient and loose conjunctions between levels

of the article. The sentence coherence is poor, the connected components before and after the parallel conjunctions are not equal, and there is a lack of related words.

2.6 Summary

To sum up, although the above previous studies are different in research fields, research subjects and research methods, most of them are based on Halliday and Hasan's theories. They adopt questionnaires, writing tests and other instruments to carry out empirical research, to examine the use of English writing conjunctions in writing. However, as far as we know, most of previous studies focused on middle and high school students, as well as non-English majors, especially native speakers. Therefore, by taking Tongren University as an example, the purposes of this study were 1) to investigate the types of conjunctions and word usage used by English majors in writing; 2) to explore the common conjunction mistakes in writing by English majors; and 3) to analyze reasons that lead English majors to make these mistakes.

3 Research Methodology

3.1 Research Questions

This study aimed to investigate conjunction usage in English writing by English majors at Tongren University with an attempt to answer the following questions:

- (1) In the writing of English majors at Tongren University, what is the current situation of their conjunction usage in terms of type selection and word choice?
- (2) In the writing of English majors at Tongren University, what are the common conjunction errors that English majors make?
- (3) What are the reasons that lead to these errors?

3.2 Qualitative Approach

3.2.1 The Construction of the Corpus

The procedure to construct the corpus was illustrated as follows. First of all, this writing test was the final English writing exam for English majors of Grade 2021. And the test was completed within 120 minutes. Also, "Views on Human Flesh Search" was the topic of this article, which was an argumentative essay. At the same time, the average length of the article should be at least 300 words, achieving the purpose of writing test and conforming to the English proficiency level of students. Secondly, to ensure the accuracy of the text, the exam was formal and the students are more serious and active in preparing for the exam. Finally, this study followed the different conjunctions in the composition (e. g. *supplement* and *transition*) to analyze students' use of conjunctions devices in writing. Finally, 100 essays were collected for the purpose of constructing the corpus.

3.2.2 The Framework of Conjunctions

The framework of conjunctions can help researchers to understand the use of conjunctions in students' writing. As a key element to construct the logical framework of text, conjunctions have been widely concerned by scholars. In order to ensure the clarity of logical relations, this study combined the Halliday and Hassan, Quirk and Zhao's classification of conjunctions to analysis and discussion (see in Table 4). And the reasons for selecting the above scholars in this study as follows:

First, the explicit use of logical conjunctions in a text helped to enhance the logic and coherence of the text, enabling the reader to follow the author's ideas more smoothly. For example the conjunctions of *addition*, *example*, *cause*, *result*, *transition*, *time*, *summary*, etc. They help the reader to understand the structure and logical relationships of the text more clearly.

Second, in the case of *time* conjunction, this conjunction was crucial for building a clear timeline. They not only help the reader to understand the sequence of events, but also enhance the narrative of the text.

Thirdly, *contrast* conjunction can then be used to represent the contrast relationship between different points of view, information, or situations in text. The framework of this study was designed to better understand the author's point of view and intention and enhance the persuasive and attractive text.

Finally, *listing* conjunction was used to list multiple items or information points in a text, helping to organize the information and improve the readability of the text. They help the reader quickly identify key information points in the text.

Table 4 The Framework of this Study

Types	Conjunctions
Additional	and, both... and..., besides, in addition; what's more; not only... but also... neither ... nor ..., either ... or ..., also ...
Contrast	but, yet, however, although, though, while, despite, on the contrary, on the other hand...
Causal	because, since, thanks to, due to, for, now that...
Listing	first, second, third, to begin with, in the end, at last, finally, next, last but not least...
Example	for example, such as...
Results	so, so that, hence, therefore, thus...
Conditional	if, unless, only if, as long as, on condition that..
Time	when, now, nowadays, then, next...
Transitional	by the way, in my opinion, as far as I'm concerned, as far as I know...
Summative	all in all, in one word, to sum up, in short...

3.2.3 Reliability Assurance for Identification of this Study

And in this study, we took a number of measures to ensure the reliability of this study to support our conclusions and findings. First, a experienced teacher and a MA candidate were invited assure the reliability of conjunctions identification. Secondly, in the data collection phase, we strictly followed the prescribed data collection procedures to ensure the accuracy and consistency of the data. Then we discussed and evaluated potential biases and limitations in the research identification process through literature review. These discussions not only help us to identify and correct potential problems, but also help readers to more fully understand our research methods and results.

3.3 Quantitative Approach

3.3.1 Research Subjects

A total of 100 English majors of Grade 2021 from Tongren University, participated in this study, including 32 students in Class 1, 35 students in Class 2 and 33 students in Class 3. They were selected for the following reasons: Firstly, their English proficiency level enable them to write an English essay with a given topic. Secondly, compared with non-English majors, English majors had a greater frequency of choosing conjunction, thus leading to a richer and diverse text. Moreover, the test text was argumentative, which has certain difficulty and requirements, making the corpus more

complete and feasible.

3.3.2 Instruments

3.3.2.1 Questionnaire

The questionnaire of this study was based on the studies of Xia (2021) and Jiang (2020). The reasons for adapting it was as follows: 1) The purpose of the study was the similar; 2) the questionnaire has reliability and validity, clear description and solid theoretical foundation.

The questionnaire was used to investigate the reasons for the problems in the use of conjunctions in English writing.

The questionnaire contained 20 questions, which being divided into four dimensions as follows. The first dimension was items 1-3, investigating college students' attitude towards English writing; The second dimension was items 4-11, examining college students' understanding of discourse conjunctions devices and their application in English writing. The third dimension was items 12-15, investigating the situation of teachers' teaching conjunctions means. The fourth dimension was items 16-20, exploring college students' English writing habits and ways of investigation to find the reasons why they using the wrong conjunctions. This questionnaire used a five-level Likert scale, which was designed on a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). (At the end of the questionnaire, see in Table 5).

Table 5 Four Dimension

Dimension	Cronbach's Alpha	Number
Students' attitude towards English writing	0.804 (1-3)	3
Students' understanding and its application of conjunctions	0.936 (4-11)	8
Teaching methods for conjunctions in class	0.871 (12-15)	4
Students' English writing habits	0.882 (16-20)	5
In total	0.971	20

Cronbach's Alpha was used to analyze the reliability of questionnaires, as shown in Table 6.

Table 6 Reliability Analysis of Questionnaires

Dimension	Cronbach's Alpha	Number
Students' attitude towards English writing	0.804	3
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Teaching methods for conjunctions in class	0.871	4
Students' English writing habits	0.882	5
In total	0.971	20

As can be seen from Table 6, Cronbach's Alpha of each variable, the values was 0.971, greater than 0.7. It can be seen that the internal consistency of the measurement index of the research variables is high, which indicating that each variable within the questionnaire has high confidence and the reliability is good (Xia, 2021; Jiang, 2020).

KMO and Bartlett spheroid test tables were used to test the questionnaire data sample to see whether the data sample was suitable for factor analysis. SPASS was used for analysis, and the test results were as follows(see in Table 7):

As can be seen from Table 7, KMO value was 0.974 greater than 0.7, and Bartlett sphere test statistic value was 0.000 less than 0.001, which indicated that this data sample is suitable for factor analysis.

Table 7 Validity analysis of questionnaires

KMO and Bartlett's test		
	Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin	0.974
	Approximate chi square	1 868.552
Bartlett	df	190
	sig.	0

3.3.2.2 Interview

In order to further explain the reasons for students' errors in the use of cohesive devices in writing. Besides, the interviews outline was divided into the 4 dimensions in accordance with the dimension of questionnaire. Then, this study mainly focused on the following questions:

(1) *Students' attitude towards English writing*: Do you feel that you are translating sentences in English writing, translating the main points of writing requirements one by one?

(2) *Students' understanding of discourse conjunctions and its application in English writing*: How do you think you can make your English writing logical and coherent?

(3) *Teachers' teaching of English conjunctions in class*: Do teachers systematically teach conjunctions methods in English writing classes?

(4) *Students' English writing habits and ways*: What are the main reasons for your poor grasp of writing conjunctions?

3.3.3 Data Collection and Data Analysis

The questionnaire was issued on April 4, 2024 and withdrawn on April 9, 2024. Students were required to fill in the questionnaire conscientiously and truthfully for the purpose of ensure the authenticity of the questionnaire. A total of 100 questionnaires were sent out and valid questionnaires were recovered, which accounted for 100% of the total. Next, interviews semi-structured interviews was continued from April 10 to 15, 2024. And 10 students were randomly selected from the students who participated in the questionnaire survey, each of them were interviewed for 30 minutes. Finally, descriptive statistical analysis and content analysis were adopted to explore the factors that led to students' wrong use of conjunctions.

4 Results and Discussion

4.1 The Overall Situation of Conjunction Usage in English Writing

The first research question aimed to examine the current situation of the conjunction usage in the writing of English majors, regarding the type selection and word choice. (see in table 8). The usage of the ten types of conjunctions is shown in table 8. The table shows the uneven use of the various types of conjunctions. The frequency of use of *addition* types was 49%, followed by the frequency of conjunctions for *listing* and *time* categories, which were both 9%, meanwhile the frequency of the remaining seven categories of conjunctions was less than 9%, including the conjunctions of *contrast*, *results*, *causal*, *transitional*, *conditional*, *summative*, *example*. The results seemed to suggest that students habitually use supplementary conjunctions in writing, but seldom use the conjunctions in relation to *example* and *summary*. According to research of Wu (2022), their study has also shown that it may be affected by the transfer of mother tongue. Chinese generally pays attention to the meaning of an article and can express the meaning of an article without the need for conjunctions, while English pays attention to the expression of formal structure and is more inclined to use conjunctions as a means to connect sentences.

Table 8 Specific Situation of Various Conjunctions

Types	Number	Proportion/%
Additional	1 126	49
Listing	211	9
Time	205	9
Contrast	156	7
Results	150	7
Causal	123	5
Transitional	106	5
Conditional	94	4
Summative	59	3
Example	57	2
In total	2 287	100

4.1.1 The Usage of the Most Frequently Used Conjunction Type

The most frequently used conjunction type was listed in Table 9. It can be seen that 92% of English majors use the conjunction *and* in their writing. However, other conjunctions account for 2% ~ 3%, for example, *in addition*, *not only... but also...* and *what's more...*. In particular, the conjunctions, *both... and...* and *besides*, are used only three times. The findings revealed a serious imbalance in the use of conjunctions.

In English writing, students only use transitional words. Although the number of immediate use of conjunctions is large, the quality of their writing is not high. The results are similar to those of Zhao and Gong's (2024) study. Perhaps, this was due to the long-term influence of Chinese thinking. In Chinese writing, punctuation marks are usually used to separate articles and more attention is paid to the meaning and meaning of articles. Therefore, a large number of conjunctions words *and* are used to connect all sentences in English writing.

Table 9 The Use of Additional Conjunctions

Types	Number	Proportion/%
and	996	92
what's more	27	3
in addition	26	2
not only... but also...	25	2
both... and...	3	0
besides	3	0
In total	1 080	100

4.1.2 The Usage of the Least Frequently Used Conjunction Type

The least frequently used conjunctions are examples and summaries, as shown in Table 10. There are many conjunctions for examples, but students are more likely to use the conjunctions *for example*, *such as* used only 19 times in the composition.

Similarly, in the part that represents summary, students use the *to sum up* more often, which shows that students lack understanding and mastery of these two types of conjunctions in English writing. The reason for this may be that students tend to use the most familiar conjunctions, so as to avoid using unfamiliar or inaccurate conjunctions.

Through research, researchers also found that learners tend to use the vocabulary they have mastered more habitually, and rarely use unfamiliar words (Zhang, Ding & Tao, 2024). At the same time, due to learners' poor grasp of conjunctions, it shows that English learners will lack diversity in the use of conjunctions (see in Table 10).

Table 10 Examples and Summaries of the Use of Conjunction Words

Types	Number	Proportion/%
for example	35	33
to sum up	33	31
such as...	19	18
all in all	15	14
in one word	4	4
in short...	1	1
In total	107	100

4.2 Error Types in the Use of Conjunction

It can be seen from Table 11 that students are not proficient enough in the grasp of conjunctions in English writing, which can lead to frequent misuse, underuse and overuse. For the misuse of conjunctions, students reported 67 occurrences in the writing process, accounting for 38% of the total. For underuse of conjunctions, students reported 66 occurrences, accounting for 37% of the total. For overuse of conjunctions words, students appeared 43 times, accounting for 25% of the total. Examples of typical error types are as follows:

Table 11 The Conjunction Errors in Aspect of Error Types

Error Type	Number	Proportion/%
Misuse	67	38
Underuse	66	37
Overuse	43	25
Total	175	100

4.2.1 Misuse of Conjunction

In English expression, the conjunction *not only... but also...* The two components of the conjunctions are juxtaposed and cannot be separated. In both examples 1 and 2, the sentence is missing the first half of the conjunction. In Example 3, the first half of the conjunction *not only...* It is followed by a verb, but the second part of the sentence *...but also...* It's followed by a noun.

Example 1

Human flesh search has advantages, but also the advantages.

Example 2

Has aroused more and more attention, but also caused a lot of controversy.

Example 3

When the search object's personal privacy, is published without reserve, it will not only face the criticism of the internet users, but also the real life personal attacks and injuries.

4.2.2 Under-use of Conjunction

When learner write English composition, for the conjunctions between sentences and sentences or paragraphs, there will be no or very few conjunctions. For example, as in example 4 and 5, run-on sentences are common. As a result, the sentence is not smooth, the focus is not prominent, and the logic is not clear.

Example 4

Finally, in the face of controversial events on the Internet, without thinking and dialectical before, do not spread easily, there are unknowns behind some of the controversial events, it' possible that we can cause deep harm to others by retweeting it unintentionally, and the spread of false information may also violate the law, then regret is too late.

Example 5

Therefore, when we carry out online activities, we should pay attention to the protection to the protection of their personal information, do not expose personal identity information, school, unit and address on the internet, so as to avoid being used by illegal personal.

4.2.3 Overuse of Conjunction

The overuse of the conjunction *and* in articles is quite serious. Learners use a lot of *and* between sentences and paragraphs. *therefore*, *because* and *because of* also appear in students' articles. As a result, the whole article seems to have a lot of conjunctions, but in fact, the logic and hierarchy of the article are greatly affected.

Example 6

We often see a star on the mobile phone being exploded by the internet and some people will search all his things by human flesh and then exploded the internet that everyone criticize the star and finally the star will become depressed.

Example 7

Therefore, people search is often related to personal privacy and can easily involve legal and ethical issues. Therefore, we should not easily publish others privacy on the internet.

Example 8

First from the point of view of the harm of internet exposure, when a person is exposed to because of being small thing for the victim psychological harm is very great, because on the internet, they help a small thing to enlarge.

4.3 The Reasons for the Errors of the Conjunction Usage

Questionnaire was used to investigate the reasons for the problems in the use of conjunctions in English writing. The questionnaire contained 20 questions, which being divided into four dimensions as follows (see in Table 12).

Table 12 The Results for the Dimension of the Conjunction Usage

Dimension	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD
Students' English writing habits and ways	100	1	5	3.992 0	0.892 0
Students' attitude towards English writing	100	1	5	3.940 0	0.908 6
Students' understanding and its application of conjunctions	100	1	5	3.903 7	0.840 5
Teachers' teaching of conjunctions methods in class	100	1	5	3.717 5	0.950 2
Over dimension	100	5	5	3.888 3	0.897 8

4.3.1 Students' Attitude Towards English Writing

Firstly, it can be seen that the dimension of the students' attitudes towards English writing: According to the statistical results of the questionnaire survey with questions 1-3, the students strongly agree or agree English writing is very important accounting for 83% (Mean=3.9, SD=0.798). About 85% of the students strongly agree or agree English writing is very helpful to improve their English ability (Mean=4.14, SD=1.045), and 70% of the students strongly agree or agree that "I like English writing very much" (Mean=3.78, SD=0.883). This shows that most English majors hold a positive attitude towards English writing and believe that English writing can effectively improve their English ability. (see in Table 13).

At the same time the 10 students interviewed said that English writing is very important and plays a role in improving their own ability. However, they have only a moderate interest in English writing. As English writing for daily practice is generally unable to get timely correction and opinions, one third of the students said that they would take the initiative to practice English writing. Most of the students will practice English writing in the early stage of CET-4 and CET-6 and the final exam. I practice English writing by keeping an English diary.

Table 13 The Results of Descriptive Analysis on Students' Attitude Towards English Writing

Students' attitude towards English writing	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD	Frequency/%				
						1	2	3	4	5
S2	100	1	5	4.14	1.045	5.0	4.0	6.0	42.0	43.0
S1	100	1	5	3.90	0.798	2.0	5.0	10.0	67.0	16.0
S3	100	1	5	3.78	0.883	2.0	6.0	22.0	52.0	18.0

4.3.2 Students' Understanding and its Application of Conjunctions

Second, in terms of the students' understanding of discourse conjunctions and its application in English writing. According to the statistical results of the questionnaire survey with questions 4-11, the students agree or strongly agree that they have understood the conjunctions method of English writing accounting for 81% (Mean=3.84, SD=0.849). In addition, about 84% of the students agree or strongly agree that in the process of writing, almost no English conjunctions or no English conjunctions have little impact on the final score of English composition (Mean=3.89, SD=0.777). Of course, about 83% of students agree or strongly agree that conjunctions are words used to connect words, phrases, sentences, and paragraphs. (Mean=3.91, SD=0.842). As can be seen from the above data, some students do pay much attention to the use of indirect means in English writing, which to some extent affects students' English proficiency and is the key to writing good English compositions. At the same time, students agree or strongly agree that they use phrases such as "what's more, in addition, hence..." when writing accounting for 83% (Mean=3.94, SD=0.874). And more than half of the students know about the conjunctions that indicate transition, condition, transition, and parallel transition (Mean=3.87, SD=0.849). Besides, about 85% of students agree or strong agree that they know that "and" is a conjunction for juxtaposition, "but" for transition, "because" for cause, "so" for effect, and "first", "second", and "third" for enumeration (Mean=3.94, SD=0.839). When writing in English, about 86% of students agree or strong agree that they use different conjunctions to mean the same thing (Mean=3.91, SD=0.830), and the students agree or strong agree that they consider the order of content in a sentence and the smoothness of each sentence before and after accounting for 81% (Mean=3.93, SD=0.891). The above data shows that more than half of the students will use conjunctions to connect the content between sentences in English writing, and they also know many different kinds of conjunctions. In general, many students have more types of conjunctions, this is also the basis of good English writing. However, it is relatively lacking in practical application. Some of them say that they pay little attention to the coherence and fluency between sentences when writing English compositions. And students need to pay more attention to this aspect when writing (see in Table14).

And for the 10 students have learned about the conjunctions in English writing, such as common cause and effect, transition, etc. A few students do not systematically pay attention to the types of conjunctions and do not have a systematic understanding of English conjunctions, but they say that they use commonly used conjunctions more frequently. For example, *firstly, secondly, thirdly...* At the same time, they said that using English conjunctions words can make their articles seem more smooth, hierarchical and logical, which can improve their English level to a certain extent.

4.3.3 Teaching Methods for Conjunctions in Class

Third, it can seen the teachers' teaching of conjunctions means in the classroom. According to the survey data of questions 12-15, about 81% of the students agree or strongly agree that in writing teaching, teachers would emphasize the importance of conjunctions in English writing and require the use of conjunctions in writing (Mean=3.97, SD=0.915). And about 81% of students agree

Table 14 Results of Descriptive Analysis on Students' Understanding and its Application of Conjunctions

Students' understanding and its application of conjunctions	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD	Frequency/%				
						1	2	3	4	5
S7	100	1	5	3.94	0.874	2.0	7.0	8.0	61.0	22.0
S9	100	1	5	3.94	0.839	2.0	7.0	6.0	68.0	17.0
S11	100	1	5	3.93	0.891	2.0	7.0	10.0	58.0	23.0
S6	100	1	5	3.91	0.842	3.0	4.0	10.0	65.0	18.0
S10	100	1	5	3.91	0.830	2.0	7.0	5.0	67.0	19.0
S5	100	1	5	3.89	0.777	2.0	5.0	9.0	70.0	14.0
S8	100	1	5	3.87	0.849	1.0	8.0	13.0	59.0	19.0
S4	100	1	5	3.84	0.849	2.0	8.0	9.0	66.0	15.0

or strongly agree that teachers explicitly instruct students on how to use conjunctions in writing instruction (Mean=3.96, SD=0.974). The students agree or strongly agree that the teacher guided the students to find the conjunctions between sentences or explained the types of discourse conjunctions accounting for 76% (Mean=3.76, SD=0.854). Half of the students agree or strongly agree that for the same kind of conjunctions words, the teacher would introduce multiple expressions, especially different expressions (Mean=4.18, SD=1.058). The above data show that although teachers will explain the types and different types of conjunctions in English writing in class, on the whole, teachers lack the depth of vocabulary conjunctions and rarely teach the rules of English sentence formation, indicating that teachers need to have a more systematic understanding of cohesion theory (see in Table 15).

And among the 10 students, two-thirds of the students said that the teacher had clearly explained the teaching situation of conjunctions in class, especially the teacher would introduce different conjunctions when explaining different types of article structure, so as to improve the students' composition level. However, one third of the students said that the teacher did not talk about the proportion of English conjunctions in the classroom, and only taught some of the conjunctions ways, and the students were not very impressed by English conjunctions. In addition, due to the large class size, most students do not receive clear guidance from teachers in writing.

Table 15 Results of Descriptive Analysis on Teachers' Teaching of conjunctions Methods in Class

Teachers' teaching of conjunctions methods in class	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD	Frequency/%				
						1	2	3	4	5
S15	100	1	5	4.18	1.058	4.0	2.0	18.0	24.0	52.0
S12	100	1	5	3.97	0.915	2.0	7.0	10.0	54.0	27.0
S13	100	1	5	3.96	0.974	4.0	5.0	10.0	53.0	28.0
S14	100	1	5	3.76	0.854	3.0	6.0	15.0	64.0	12.0

4.3.4 Students' English Writing Habits

Finally, for the students' habits and ways of English writing. According to the results of the questionnaire survey of 16-20 questions, the students agree or strongly agree that English writing is to translate sentences, and translating the main points of writing one by one can complete a good composition accounting for 87% (Mean=4.00, SD=0.888). About 71% of students agree or strongly agree that the use of words and grammar is more important than logic and fluency in English writing (Mean=3.78, SD=0.836). About 85% of students agree or strongly agree that they would

consider which conjunctions word is more suitable when they encounter a conjunctive word with similar meaning in English writing (Mean=3.96, SD=0.764). In addition, About 79% of students agree or strongly agree that they consciously use conjunctions in the writing process in order to make the writing more smooth (Mean=4.23, SD=1.090). Students agree or strongly agree that they would pay attention to the simplicity and effectiveness of sentences in English writing accounting for 87% (Mean=3.99, SD=0.882). As can be seen from the above data, although many students pay attention to the importance of conjunctions in English writing, most of them will use conjunctions reasonably in English writing to highlight the theme and make the articles more coherent. However, students lack the habit and convenience of English writing conjunctions, which needs to be further improved.

At the same time, for the 10 students interviewed, most of them said that in order to make their compositions more logical and smooth, they often use English conjunctions in the writing process. They said that when there are many similar conjunctions, in order to make their compositions more smooth, they will choose the most appropriate conjunctions to connect sentences according to different semantics, such as looking up dictionaries, reading books and other ways to choose the conjunctions. However, some students said that in order to avoid using the wrong conjunctions words, they often use the same or the most common conjunctions words to connect the sentences. The students said that the main reasons for their poor grasp of English writing links are as follows :1) students are lack of practice, knowledge accumulation, and systematic learning of conjunctions; 2) Due to the influence of their native language, they tend to use Chinese thinking in English writing and lack English learning thinking; 3) learners should pay more attention to the vocabulary and grammar of the article, thus ignoring the importance of English conjunctions (see in Table 16).

Table 16 Results of Descriptive Analysis on Students' English Writing Habits and Ways

Students' English writing habits and ways	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD	Frequency/%				
						1	2	3	4	5
S19	100	1	5	4.23	1.090	5.0	2.0	14.0	23.0	56.0
S16	100	1	5	4.00	0.888	2.0	8.0	3.0	62.0	25.0
S20	100	1	5	3.99	0.882	4.0	3.0	6.0	64.0	23.0
S18	100	2	5	3.96	0.764	0	8.0	7.0	66.0	19.0
S17	100	1	5	3.78	0.836	1.0	7.0	21.0	55.0	16.0

5 Conclusion

5.1 The Major Findings

This study investigated the overall situation of the conjunction usage in the writing of English majors, it was found that students habitually use supplementary conjunctions in writing, but seldom use the conjunctions in relation to example and summary. That is due to the fact that they maybe affected by the transfer of mother tongue; students' mistakes in using conjunctions are mainly reflected in the types of misuse, underuse and overuse because of their poor grasp of the conjunctions.

5.2 Limitation of the Study

In the process of data collection and analysis, this study is carried out as expected, but there are still some limitations, mainly reflected in the following aspects: Firstly, the sample size of this study is limited. Due to limited time and conditions in the questionnaire survey and interview, the sample size was relatively small because only English majors in Grade 2021 had taken academic English

writing course. As for the selection of essay samples, this study only collected 100 essays from sophomore English majors, which could not represent the writing situation of all English majors or all English learners. Therefore, the universality of the results of this survey needs to be further verified. In future studies, the research samples can be appropriately increased to make the research results more convincing. In addition, textual data statistics are not accurate enough. In this study, the text data of the overall situation analysis of English writing conjunctions, such as the number of use of listing, reasons, examples conjunctions, which were found and marked by manual methods.

5.3 Implication of the Study

The application of conjunctions theory in college English writing can improve students' use of conjunctions devices in writing. It can also effectively improve students' English writing level. Therefore, it is of practical value to use the English writing conjunctions method to teach, and the author has gained a lot of enlightenment in this process.

First, it provides new ideas for the process of teaching implementation in the future. According to the research findings, the application of linking methods in English writing teaching can promote the improvement of students' English writing level. In the future teaching, teachers can further understand the actual situation of students' use of English conjunctions, and proceed from the actual situation to teach. When conditions permit, appropriate to increase the relevant courses of study. Second, it provides a systematic collation of conjunctions-related knowledge for English learners. In this study, the author analyzes the different types of English conjunctions and their different functions, which can help students memorize related conjunctions and accumulate knowledge. Thirdly, in the actual training of text writing, the writing task selected by the author has a great degree of creativity. The writing test in this study does not require students to write according to the given topic, but gives relevant topics and the topics are close to students' real life, which is different from traditional writing tests.

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