

Analysis of the Errors Made in the Use of Coordinative Conjunctions in Written English of Senior Secondary 1 Students in Makurdi Local Government Area of Benue State

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Abstract

The study analysed errors in the use of coordinative conjunctions in the written English of Senior Secondary One (SS1) students in Makurdi Local Government Area of Benue State, Nigeria, with specific focus on the influence of academic discipline and gender. The ex-post-facto research design was adopted for the study. A sample of 100 students, consisting of 50 males and 50 females, was selected using the multi-stage sampling procedure. The instrument used was Test of Use of Coordinative Conjunctions in English ($r=0.81$). Data collected were analysed using descriptive statistics of frequency counts, percentages, mean, and standard deviation to answer the research questions, while inferential statistics using t-test was employed to test the hypotheses. Error percentages were categorised as low (0–39%), moderate (40–49%), and high (50% and above). The findings revealed that academic discipline had a significant positive influence on students' use of coordinators, with Arts students recording a higher cluster mean score (30.41%) than Science students (19.81%). The results also showed that gender significantly influenced students' use of coordinators, as female students achieved a higher cluster mean score (27.60) than their male counterparts (21.88). Based on these findings, it was concluded that students' competence in the use of coordinative conjunctions is significantly influenced by both academic discipline and gender, with Arts students and female students demonstrating superior performance. It was, therefore, recommended that English language teachers adopt discipline-sensitive and gender-responsive instructional strategies to improve students' mastery of coordinative conjunctions, particularly among science and male students.

Keywords: Coordinative conjunctions, Academic discipline, Gender, Written English, Error analysis.

Introduction

English is globally recognised as a major language of education, governance, science, technology, and international communication. Across multilingual societies, English functions not only as a medium of instruction but also as a gatekeeper for academic and professional advancement. According to Crystal (2019), English has attained the status of a global lingua franca, shaping access to knowledge and participation in global discourse. In second-language contexts, particularly in post-colonial societies, proficiency in English significantly determines learners' academic success and communicative competence. Scholars such as Graddol (2018) observe that inadequate mastery of English grammar often results in poor academic performance across school subjects, since most instructional content and assessments are delivered in English.

Within the Nigerian context, English occupies a unique sociolinguistic position.

There is no gainsaying the fact that English functions almost like an indigenous language in Nigeria due to its pervasive use across ethnic, cultural, and institutional domains. As a colonial legacy, English provides Nigerians with a shared linguistic platform for expressing ideas, identity, and culture. It remains the language of governance, commerce, science, technology, politics, and formal education. The adoption of English as the medium of instruction in Nigerian Schools dates back to 1882, and since then, virtually all curricular and co-curricular school activities have been conducted in English. Consequently, poor proficiency in English is often associated with overall academic underachievement, as students are unable to effectively access instructional content, participate in classroom interaction, or perform well in examinations.

Following the National Policy on Education (1977, revised 2023), English Language was designated a core subject in the Nigerian educational system. A credit pass in English Language is mandatory for admission into higher institutions, underscoring its centrality in academic progression. However, learning English extends beyond rote memorisation of vocabulary or sentence patterns. Learners are expected to demonstrate the ability to reason, organise ideas, and express meaning coherently in written and spoken forms. Unfortunately, many Nigerian learners continue to perform below expectations in English, particularly in writing, which requires a high level of grammatical accuracy and cohesion.

Grammar remains a fundamental component of effective writing, as it governs sentence structure, meaning, and logical connection of ideas. One critical grammatical feature that enhances coherence in writing is the use of coordinative conjunctions, also known as coordinators. The term “conjunction” originates from the Latin words *con* (together) and *jungere* (to join). According to Ahmad (2016), conjunctions are words used to link words, phrases, and clauses, thereby ensuring cohesion in discourse. Coordinators specifically function to join clauses or sentence elements of equal grammatical status. Wren and Martin (2000) and Geoffrey (2016) explain that coordinators such as *and*, *but*, *or*, *nor*, *for*, *yet*, and *so* are essential in forming compound sentences and expressing logical relationships like addition, contrast, choice, and result.

Coordinators are categorised into central coordinators, semi-coordinators, quasi-coordinators, and correlative coordinators. Central coordinators link similar grammatical units, while semi-coordinators often express negation. Quasi-coordinators connect elements of varying grammatical forms, and correlative coordinators operate in pairs to show balanced relationships within sentences. Effective use of these coordinators enables learners to construct coherent and meaningful written texts. However, studies have consistently shown that

Nigerian secondary school students experience considerable difficulty in using coordinators accurately in writing. Studies have linked students' grammatical difficulties, including errors in the use of coordinators, to factors such as mother tongue interference, instructional methods, and limited exposure to standard English usage. According to Usman (2014), mother tongue interference significantly affects learners' acquisition of English grammatical structures. Ibibi (2014) observes that tense misuse constitutes a major challenge in students' written English, while Da'u (2015) identifies persistent errors in the use of the present perfect tense. Concord errors and misuse of grammatical morphemes have also been reported by Isiaku and Naziri (2015), Agbo and Ifeanyichukwu (2018), and Adejare (2019), all of which indirectly affect students' ability to deploy coordinators appropriately within sentence structures.

Nguyen (2021) carried out research on "Coordinating Conjunction Errors in Written English of First Year Students Majoring in English at a University in Dong Nai Province". This study focused on the analysis of errors in the use of English Coordinating Conjunctions in written English of first year students studying in English with an aim to recommend some strategies for better teaching of English coordinating conjunctions in particular and writing in general. The researcher used percentage and frequency counts to answer the research questions and the result showed that the most frequently used coordinator was 'And' and the highest incidence of errors happened in the use of 'And'.

Academic discipline has also been identified as a variable influencing students' use of grammatical structures, including coordinators, in written English. According to Jian and Guiying (2022), students in Arts-related disciplines often demonstrate higher levels of language enjoyment and competence compared to their counterparts in science-oriented disciplines. This disparity is attributed to greater exposure to language-based tasks, reading, and writing activities among Arts students.

Similarly, Ugwuanyi (2013) notes that students' academic orientation shapes their familiarity with complex sentence constructions, thereby influencing their effective use of coordinators in writing.

Gender has equally been examined as a factor in students' performance in English grammar. According to Yoko (2002), social and cultural expectations often influence learners' attitudes toward language learning, with female students frequently demonstrating more positive dispositions toward language-related tasks. Jian and Guiying (2022) further observe that female students tend to score higher in foreign language enjoyment, which positively correlates with improved grammatical performance. These findings suggest that gender-related differences may influence how students use coordinators in written English, although such differences are context-dependent and require further empirical verification.

Aisyah, Annisa, Pepi and Ruminda (2024) conducted research titled, "Do Female Students Learn Language Better than Male Students?" Three objectives were raised by the researchers. Qualitative descriptive research method was used. The population of the study was seventeen teachers of English in Cirebon and Bandung which was also used as the sample size of the study, using saturated sampling technique. Data were analyzed using percentage analysis to find out the category of learners that do better in language learning and the result showed among others that female students do better in language learning than their male counterparts, due to many factors peculiar to the female gender.

Jian and Guiying (2022) conducted a research titled, Predictive Effect of Gender and Academic Discipline on foreign Language Enjoyment FLE of Chinese High School. Data were collected using questionnaires. To survey the prognostic effects of gender and academic discipline, independent sample t-tests were conducted on the total score of global FLE scale and each of its three sub- scales. The result indicated that female students scored much higher than their male counterparts. Secondly,

students of Arts scored significantly higher than Natural Science students. The present study checked the influence of gender and academic discipline in the students' use of *coordinative Conjunctions*, in Makurdi Local Government of Benue State, Nigeria.

Despite extensive research on grammatical errors and general writing difficulties among Nigerian students, studies focusing specifically on the use of coordinative conjunctions at the Senior Secondary School level remain limited, particularly within Makurdi Local Government Area of Benue State. A.I. Atanda's survey across Nigeria's six geopolitical zones revealed that the North-Central zone recorded the poorest performance in English Language, with an average credit pass rate of 6.90%. Offorma and Anizoba (2010) corroborate this trend, highlighting persistent underachievement in English among secondary school students in the region. Ngadda and Nwoke (2014) as well as Odeleye and Adetuyi (2018) further affirm that learners of English as a second language experience significant challenges in using connectives, including coordinators, effectively.

Given the importance of coordinators in constructing meaningful compound and complex sentences, poor mastery of these grammatical elements can severely hinder effective communication in writing. Classroom observations and interactions with students reveal that many learners struggle to link ideas logically during continuous writing tasks. Since coordinators are essential for clarity and coherence, inadequate knowledge of their use undermines students' overall writing proficiency. It is against this backdrop that the present study undertook an error analysis of the use of coordinative conjunctions in the written English of Senior Secondary One students in Makurdi Local Government Area of Benue State, with particular attention to the influence of gender and academic discipline.

Error Analysis, as a theoretical framework propounded by Corder in the 1960s, provides a useful lens for examining learners' grammatical deviations. According to Corder,

errors are not merely indicators of failure but valuable evidence of the learning process. As cited in Unubi (2016), Error Analysis focuses on identifying, classifying, and explaining learners' errors with the aim of providing effective corrective measures. In this study, Error Analysis was employed to systematically examine errors related to coordinative conjunctions in students' written English, thereby contributing to a deeper understanding of learners' grammatical challenges and informing improved instructional strategies.

Objectives of the Study

The main aim of the study is to analyze the errors made in the use of coordinative conjunctions in written English of Senior Secondary 1 students in Makurdi Local Government Area of Benue state. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. Find out the influence of academic discipline on the use of coordinators in the written English of Senior Secondary 1 Students in Makurdi Local Government of Benue state.
2. Find out the influence of gender on the use of coordinators in the written English of Senior Secondary 1 Students in Makurdi Local Government of Benue State.

Research Questions

The following research questions were raised and answered by the study:

1. What is the influence of academic discipline on the students' use of coordinators in the written English of Senior Secondary 1 Students in Makurdi Local Government of Benue State?
2. What is the influence of gender on the students' use of coordinators in written English of SS1 students in Makurdi Local Government of Benue State?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance:

1. There is no significant difference between the mean achievement scores of art and science students in the use of coordinators in written English of Senior secondary 1 Students in Makurdi Local Government Area of Benue state.
2. There is no significant difference between the mean achievement scores of male and female students in the use of coordinators in written English of Senior secondary 1 Students in Makurdi Local Government Area of Benue state.

Methodology

The study utilized of the ex-post-facto research design. The design is suitable for this study because the students' knowledge of coordinators (independent variables) already exists and cannot be manipulated by the researcher but the errors they commit (dependent variables) can be analyzed. The population for the study was of 1,991 SS1 students from twenty-one secondary schools in Makurdi Local Government Area of Benue State. The sample for this study consisted of 100 SS1 students (50 boys and 50 girls). Multi-stage sampling technique was used to select the respondents. First, cluster sampling was used to divide the population into five distinct clusters representing different areas. After the schools were selected, purposive sampling was used to choose two specific SS1 classes in one of the selected schools: one for science students and one for Art students while simple random sampling was used to select intact class since the Art class had two streams (A&B).

The instrument is named *Test of Use of Coordinative Conjunctions in English (TUCCE)*. There were 100 items in all. Each question carries one mark. The test was divided into four parts namely; Section 1, Section 11, Section 111 and Section iv. Section 1 covers seven (7) subjective questions and seven (7) sentence construction using Central and Semi-coordinators. Section 11 contains 43 subjective questions and 23 sentence constructions using Correlative coordinators and Quasi-coordinators. Section 111 covers the use of the

coordinator *and* in its various contexts. The various contexts of use were provided in brackets to guide the students in identifying which context is applied in each of the seven (7) sentences. Section iv had 13 sentences covering the use of semi-coordinators and correlative coordinators. The students were requested to read each sentence to identify the functions of those conjunctions written in italics (correlatives & semi coordinators). There were 100 items in all, each question carries one mark so the total score was 100. A content validity of the instrument (TUCCE) was ascertained by three experts, one in English department and two in Test, Measurement and Evaluation, all from Joseph Sarwuan Tarkaa University, Makurdi. This was to ensure that the items were in line with the topic, clear and unambiguous, and truly addressed issues raised in the study.

The validated copy of the test items was administered on 30 respondents which comprises of 15 Arts Students and 15 Science students: In one of the classes, 8 were male while 7 were female while the other class comprises of 5 males and 10 females senior secondary 1 Students from Government Secondary School, Lafia, in Nasarawa state. These students are not part of the population for the study but have similar characteristics to that of the population under study. The score obtained from the trial testing was subjected to reliability test using Kuder Richardson formula 20 which is suitable for test items with right and wrong responses. A

reliability coefficient of 0.81 was obtained indicating that the instrument was quite reliable. This study used the descriptive statistics of frequency counts, Simple percentages, mean and standard deviation to answer the research questions. The frequency count of wrong responses of the entire subjects per item was determined and applied to calculate the percentage of the students' errors or achievement per test item. Error percentage from 0-39 was regarded as low error, 40-49 was regarded as moderate error while 50 and above was regarded as high error. Inferential statistics, precisely t-test was used to test the hypotheses to ascertain if there is any significant difference between the achievement scores of art and science students and that of male and female students in the use of coordinative conjunctions. The decision rule for rejecting or otherwise of hypotheses was based on the p-value and alpha value. A hypothesis of no significant difference was not rejected for any cluster of test items whose p-value is equal to or greater than the alpha value of 0.05 ($p \geq 0.05$) while it was rejected for any cluster of test item whose p-value is less than alpha value of 0.05 ($p \leq 0.05$).

Results

Research Question 1

What is the influence of academic discipline on students' use of coordinators in written English of senior secondary 1 student in Makurdi local government area of Benue state?

Table 1: Mean Achievement Score of Students on the Influence of Academic Discipline on the use of Coordinators in Written English of Senior Secondary 1 students in Makurdi local Government Area, Benue State (N=100: 50 Arts and 50 Science).

S/N	Coordinators	Mean Score of Art Students	Mean Score of Science Students	Mean Difference	Remarks
1	Central Coordinators	38.83	20.84	17.99	Positive Influence
2	Semi-Coordinators	41.80	26.70	15.10	Positive Influence
3	Quasi-Coordinators	22.00	15.80	6.20	Positive Influence
4	Correlative Coordinators	19.00	15.90	3.10	Positive Influence
	Cluster Mean Achievement Score	30.41	19.81	10.60	Positive Influence

N= number of testees

Data in Table 1 shows the influence of academic discipline on students' use of coordinators in written English of Senior Secondary 1 Students in Makurdi Local Government Area of Benue State. The cluster mean score for arts students was 30.41 while their science counterparts had a cluster mean score of

19.81 with a mean difference of 10.60 which is positive.

Research Question 2

What is the influence of gender on students' use of coordinators in written English of senior secondary 1 student in Makurdi local government area of Benue state?

Table 2: Mean Achievement Score of Students on the Influence of Gender on the use of Coordinators in Written English of Senior Secondary 1 Students in Makurdi local Government Area, Benue State (N=100: 50 Females and 50 Males).

S/N	Coordinators	Mean Score of Female Students	Mean Score of Male Students	Mean Difference	Remarks
1	Central Coordinators	32.67	27.00	5.67	Positive Influence
2	Semi-Coordinators	39.25	29.25	10.00	Positive Influence
3	Quasi-Coordinators	21.50	16.30	5.20	Positive Influence
4	Correlative Coordinators	17.00	15.00	2.00	Positive Influence
	Cluster Mean Achievement Score	27.60	21.88	5.72	Positive Influence

N= number of testees

Data in Table 2 shows the influence of gender on students' use of coordinators in written English of Senior Secondary Students in Makurdi Local Government Area of Benue State. The cluster mean score for arts students was 27.60 while their science counterparts had a cluster mean score of 21.88 with a mean difference of 5.72 which is positive.

Hypotheses 1: There is no significant difference between the mean achievement scores of art and science students in the use of coordinators in written English of Senior secondary 1 Students in Makurdi Local Government Area of Benue state.

To test the above hypothesis, the mean achievement scores of art and science students were analyzed using t-test statistical tool and presented in Table 7.

Table 3: t-test Analysis of Mean Achievement Scores of Arts and Science Students on the Use of Coordinators in Written English in Senior Secondary Schools in Makurdi local Government Area, Benue State.

Status	N	Mean	Std.	Std. Error Mean	Df	Sig.	Alpha Value	Remark
Art Students	50	30.41	1.35	0.01916	98	0.00	0.05	S, R
Science Students	50	19.81	0.76	0.01069				

N= Number of respondents, Std. = Standard deviation, df = degree of freedom, Sig. = P-value; P < 0.05, S = significant, R = rejected.

Table 3 shows a p-value of 0.00 which is less than the alpha value of 0.05 at 98 degrees of freedom. This indicates that the test is statistically significant implying that there is significant difference between the mean achievement scores of art and science students in the use of coordinators as the mean score of the arts students was significantly higher than their science counterparts. Therefore, the hypothesis which states that there is no significant difference between the achievement scores of art and science students in the use of coordinators

was rejected.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference between the mean achievement scores of male and female students in the use of coordinators in written English of Senior secondary 1 Students in Makurdi local government area of Benue state.

To test the above hypothesis, the mean achievement scores of male and female students were analyzed using t-test statistical tool and presented in Table 8.

Table 4: t-test Analysis of Mean Achievement Scores of Male and Female Students on the Use of Coordinators in Written English of Senior Secondary 1 Students in Makurdi local Government Area, Benue State.

Status	N	Mean	Std.	Std. Error Mean	Df	Sig.	Alpha Value	Remark
Male Students	43	21.880	2.03	0.02871	98	0.00	0.05	S, R
Female Students	57	27.600	1.03	0.01456				

N= Number of respondents, Std. = Standard deviation, df. = degree of freedom, Sig. = P-value; P < 0.05, S = significant, R = rejected.

Table 4 shows a p-value of 0.00 which is less than the alpha value of 0.05 at 98 degrees of freedom. This indicates that the test is statistically significant implying that there is significant difference between the mean achievement scores of male and female students in the use of coordinators as the mean achievement score of the female students was significantly higher than their male counterparts. Therefore, the hypotheses which states that there is no significant difference between the achievement scores of male and female students in the use of coordinators was rejected.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study also showed that academic discipline exerts significant positive influence on students' use of coordinators. From table 5, it was reported that the cluster mean score for arts students was 30.41% while their science counterparts had a

cluster mean score of 19.81% with a mean difference of 10.60% which is positive. This means that Arts students performed better or higher than their science counterpart, indicating that academic discipline of Arts students exerts positive influence on their use of coordinators. This finding is in line with Wepler (2013) who found that brevity and precision are crucial in sciences, in trying to be concise and brief, the students leave out important features and elements, as a result of which meaning is marred in most of their grammatical constructions. This result also validates the claim that students of humanities and social sciences scored significantly higher in overall foreign language enjoyment than students of Natural Science, Jiang and Guiying (2022). This result however, refutes Abdul-Kareem (2014) who found that students of literary arts face greater difficulties in writing than science students.

The findings further revealed that gender has significant positive influence on the

students' use of coordinators. The cluster mean score for female students was 27.60 while their male counterparts had a cluster mean score of 21.88 with a mean difference of 5.72 which is positive. This establishes the fact that female students performed better than male students in their use of coordinators, indicating that gender exerts positive influence on the female students in their use of coordinators. This finding supports Addisu (2020), Pepi and Ruminda (2024) and Yoko (2020) who found that female students score higher in foreign language examinations than their male counterparts. This, according to Yoko might be triggered by social reasons such as the status or title of English as feminized academics and professional choices as well as women's marginalized status in Japanese mainstream society, among other factors.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, it was concluded that students' use of coordinators is significantly influenced by academic discipline and gender, with Arts students and female students demonstrating higher competence than their Science and male counterparts. The results indicate that students in language-oriented disciplines benefit from greater exposure to extended writing and grammatical practice, while female students show stronger performance in coordinator usage, possibly due to higher linguistic sensitivity and engagement with language learning tasks.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made:

1. English language teachers should adopt discipline-sensitive instructional strategies by providing additional language support and targeted writing practice for science students, integrating explicit teaching of coordinators into science-related writing tasks to help bridge the observed performance gap between Arts and

Science students.

2. Teachers and curriculum planners should implement gender-responsive teaching approaches that actively engage male students in language learning through collaborative writing activities, interactive grammar exercises, and motivational strategies, while also sustaining practices that enhance female students' strengths, in order to promote balanced competence in the use of coordinators across genders.

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