

Assessing Sudanese EFL Secondary School Students' Syntactic and Semantic Knowledge in Utilizing English Connective- words

Ammar Musa Ahmed Hassan¹
ammarahmad5500@gmail.com

Abstract

Writing has been one of the most problematic language skill for the most Sudanese EFL Secondary School students; this is may be due to the fact that effective communication, depends to a large extent on the ability to construct a cohesive and coherent text by knowing how to utilize discourse connectives, which are considered one major linguistic devices of clarifying, identifying interrelationships, and encoding cohesive and coherent discourse. The purpose of this study is to investigate how Sudanese EFL Secondary School students use English discourse connectives appropriately for their communicative needs. The data were taken from EFL Sudanese Secondary School students' written discourse at Wad Medani Secondary School for Boys in Greater Wad Medani Locality, Gezira State- Sudan. The aim is to analyze how well EFL Sudanese students at Secondary level produce logical connectors in accordance with their semantic cohesive functions they fulfill, and to sensitize Sudanese EFL students at Secondary level to the different types of English discourse connectives in order to write a well-organized written discourse. In addition, to test how Sudanese EFL Secondary School students understand the functions of the different kinds of connective words, and the meaning relationships signaled by these connective words. The functions of these connectors were classified according to the model of Halliday and Hasan. The model of classification and the quantitative analysis of the study subjects' data were presented together with the results revealed from grading of a taken sample (n=30). The findings revealed that Sudanese EFL Secondary School

students encounter difficulties in the use of a variety of additive, adversative, temporal, and causal connective words; since their frequencies of incorrect responses is (2180 instances, i.e. 56%), which is more than that of correct responses (1706 instances, i.e. 44%). Thus, the findings of this study would be beneficial and advantageous for both language learners and language teachers. The study recommended that in order to comprehend better discourse connectives syntactic and semantic rules, Sudanese EFL Secondary School students may need be exposed to a higher degree of English connectives and assigning the students a lot of reading and writing assignments.

Key words: Connectives; Additive; Adversative; Clausal; Temporal; Sudanese EFL Secondary School Students

¹ Assistant Professor, English Language Department, Faculty of Education-
Hantoub, University of Gezira

Introduction:

Appropriate and correct use of connectives in writing reflects the extent of one's textual competence. As stated by Meyer et al (1980), connectives have an important role in discourse representation. Zamel, (1983), and Virtanen, (2004), also emphasize the importance of connectives in demonstrating the semantic relations between the different units of a particular text in the all forms of continuous communication, in either spoken or written form. In fact, these connectors are valuable tools,

to connect, organize, develop and encode a message by signaling how larger successive linguistic units in a discourse are interrelated. Therefore, it is important for students to comprehend that, connectors errors are not only distort the intended message the students attempt to convey, but also cause the thread of the argument to sway about, and each connector is pointing at a different direction. In the light of this, the researcher hopes that heightened awareness of semantic, syntactic and stylistic properties of connectors will lead Sudanese EFL University students to think more carefully about the ideas these connectives are linking.

Statement of the Problem

One of the most common reasons for coherence break in the text is the underuse or misuse of logical connectors by students at Secondary Schools; despite the fact that the proper use of these connectives is an essential component, not only to create an organized and coherent text, but also to make the content of the text comprehensible to the reader. However, increased mastery of English connective words will enormously help students at Secondary level to express the logical relationships expressed in the surface structure of the text (i.e. Clauses or sentences) more clearly. Thus, the study seeks to investigate, analyze, the problems associated with Sudanese EFL Secondary School Students' usage of English connective words in some randomly selected Secondary School students' written

discourses at Wad Medani Secondary School for Boys, with the attention given to examine the underuse, overuse, and the misuse of English connective words.

Objectives of the Study

Based on the aforementioned information, the followings are the main objectives:

- i- To provide a detailed syntactic analysis of the English connective words utilized by Sudanese EFL Secondary School students in their written discourse.
- ii- To explore why some particular connectors were preferred to others in Secondary School students' written discourse.

Questions of the study:

The following questions will be addressed:

- i- Why do students at Secondary level do not employ the syntactic variations of connectors appropriately in order to achieve cohesion in their written discourse?
- ii- Why do students at Secondary level prefer some particular connective words to others in their writing processes?

Hypotheses of the Study:

The following hypotheses will be tested:

- H₁ EFL Sudanese Secondary School Students are unaware of the different syntactic variation functions of the entire English connective words?
- H₂ EFL Sudanese Secondary School Students tend to underuse English connective words in their written discourses.

Significance of the Study:

The ability to write clearly, correctly, and coherently is the foundation upon which all the rest of the students' academic education is indisputably laid. It is expected to know how Sudanese EFL Secondary School students' acquire English discourse connectives, and the elements that facilitate or impede their learning process. Therefore, the findings of this study would be beneficial and

advantageous for EFL teachers, learners, syllabus designers, and other researchers.

Definition of Connectives

Providing a definition for the term connectives that can be accepted by all grammarians is impossible. In fact, discourse connectives are in various linguistic approaches defined very differently, which is mainly due to the complexities and versatilities of the connective words, and their functions. The complexities, versatilities, and hardly definable boundaries of the discourse connective words are considered a stumbling block to some linguists. For example, Schiffrin (1987), who claims that it is extremely difficult to draw a demarcation line between certain connective words, which are used as adverbs, and sometimes as conjunctions. For instance, he exemplifies the word 'so' which is significantly a frequent used word in English written and spoken discourses, with multiple functions and meanings in both discourses. According to the definition of Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (1997), 'so' is first an adverb which means 'in this/that way', and indicates adverb of manner, the adverbial use of 'so' is similar to that of 'thus' and 'therefore', which are used in more formal context. The second functions of 'so' is as a conjunction word, used to connect two clauses. In this context, the word 'so' means 'therefore' or 'that why', and indicates a logical outcome. The Longman Dictionary also highlights the other different uses of 'so' in spoken and written English. With regards to the complexity of the term connectives, the researcher attempts to give some straight forward definitions for the term and, then, the controversial issues will be discussed later in details. According to the Dictionary of Contemporary English for Advanced Learners (2009), "*connectives are words that join parts of a sentence.*" However, some of the grammarians define connectives in a narrow sense, for example Kleiser (2008), who limits or defines a connective word as "*a joiner word that connects 'conjoins' parts of a sentence.*" In essence, these

two definitions restrict connectives functions to grammatical units below discourse level, just linking one sentence to another. The aforementioned definitions were clashed with a recent trend that considers discourse connectors primarily occur at a textual level. In this regards, some linguistic scholars advocate that logical connectors work at level above the sentence to contribute to the overall textual structure; rather than a grammatical cohesion at a sentence level. Notably, Halliday and Hasan's (1972), and Schiffrin (1987), who investigate cohesion in depth, they advocate that discourse connectives are primarily occur at a supra- syntactic level , functioning to relate prior units of discourse with upcoming discourse; rather than a grammatical cohesion that work at a syntactic level (i.e. sentence level). Schiffrin (1987), adds that "*discourse connectives occur in initial position, may have tonic stress, and show syntactic detachability from their containing clauses*". Halliday and Hasan's (1972), in their studies of cohesion themes, define the term 'discourse connectives' as "*conjunctive elements cohesive not in themselves, but indirectly by virtue of their specific meanings, they are not primarily devices for reaching out into the preceding or following text, but they express certain meanings which presuppose the presence of other components in the discourse.*" In fact, one of the practical definitions for the term 'connectives' is proposed by Lockwood (2002), who points out that, the term 'connectives' is a general term used to refer to a great many different text elements. He explains that a connective is a word that explicitly links one clause to another clause, such as: and, but, if, although etc., or that connects ideas in two adjacent sentences, such as: however, thus, etc. Lockwood claims that, this latter type of connectives could be called 'sentence- linkers.' He provides the following example to expound his claim: "*I went to the park because I wanted to climb the jungle gym. However, the park did not have a jungle gym*". The word 'because' in this excerpt indicates that '*a desire to climb the jungle gym*' is what caused the sentence writer to go to the Park. In this context, the word 'however' which signals the

ideas in the preceded sentence are contrasted, or opposed to what is expressed at the end of the previous sentence (*i.e.*, *wanting to climb on the jungle gym*). Thus, based on the first sentence, the reader would expect 'the Park' to have a jungle gym, but the second parts of the sentence tell the reader that, 'the Park' did not have a jungle gym.

Classification of Connective Words

Generally speaking, there are clear differences in the terminologies assigned in the linguistic literature to refer to the connective words. For instance, John (1975), describes the term 'connectives' as "*an umbrella term for all kinds of linguistic items signaling a linkage of sentences or larger units of discourse.*" In general, there are several of English labels used to refer to the connective words. For instance, while Quirk et al. (1985), refer to connectives as conjuncts, and give a more elaborated classification for the term connectives, which included seven types, namely: Listing, summative, appositive, resultive, inferential, contrastive and transitional connectives, as stated in table (1). Other Linguistic scholars have adopted different labels. For example, Schiffrin (1987), labels connective words as '*discourse markers*', Huddleston (1984), describes connectives as '*connective adverbs*', Biber et al. (1999), as '*logical connectives*', and Olsher (1993), assigns the term "*Idea markers*," to label transition devices. He proceeds to explain that, the "*idea markers*" help the reader to trace the writer's thought in a paragraph. However, Halliday and Hasan (1972), in their detailed studies of cohesion devices, they classify connectives into four categories, namely: additives, adversatives, clausal and temporal, as indicated in table (2). Each category subsumes several items. These four categories reflect four semantics relations between sentences in a text, as follow: Firstly, the additive connectives include the followings: And, furthermore, moreover, in addition to etc., which are used to link clauses, phrases, and words. The additives occur at all levels of text, which repeat and emphasize the key points, or add

relevant new information to the previously mentioned expressions. Secondly, the adversative connectives (e.g., but, yet, nevertheless, however, on the contrary etc.), these connectors introduce information that contrast and opposite in the light of previous information. Thirdly, ‘the clausal’ connectives (e.g., thus, hence, therefore, because, as a result etc.), these connectors are used to introduce information that is a result or a consequence of the preceding discourse. A consequential relationship between sentences occurs; when the subject part in the sentence can be seen to have been caused, to be a consequence of, or to logically follow from the material presented in the preceding sentence (s). Such a sentence (i.e. cause and effect), will typically begin with the causal connector. And finally, ‘the temporal’ connectives (e.g., first, second, next, previously, at last, simultaneously etc.), these temporal connectives are employed to relate two discourse units sequentially.

Table (1): Classification of Connective words based on the classification by Quirk et al. (1985)*

Classification	Example
Listing	firstly, secondly
Summative	in sum, altogether
Appositive	for example, namely.
Resultive	as a result, consequently
Inferential	therefore, in that case
Contrastive	but, rather
Transitional	by the way, meanwhile

*Source: Quirk, etal. (1985) “ A comprehensive Grammar of the English Language”

Menzel, et al. (2017), classify discourse connective words, as ‘primary connectives’ which are significantly different from the other categories ‘i.e. secondary connectives’. In one hand, ‘Primary connectives’ are mainly conjunctions and structuring particles that are mainly one- word. ‘Primary connectives’ mostly do not allow

modification, such as: 'generally but*', 'only and*' etc., with some exceptions like 'mainly because.' There are also multiword phrases like 'this is the reason why,, 'generally speaking, the result is, this means that, etc... . These phrases also express discourse relations within a text, for instance the phrase 'generally speaking,' signals a relation of generalization, but these functional words are significantly differ from primary connectives, in the sense that most of them may be inflected, such as, 'for this reason – for these reasons', and can be modified, for example 'the main/ important/ only condition is ...' . In the other hand, 'the secondary connectives', or multi phrases like 'this the reason why...', 'generally speaking', 'the result is ...', 'it was caused by ...', 'this means that...' etc. Again, it is worth mentioning that, the secondary connectives are significantly differ from primary connectives, as mostly can be inflected, for instance, 'for this reason', and 'for these reasons', and can also be modified for example, 'the main/ important /only condition is ...' etc.).

Generally speaking, 'secondary connectives' are multi word phrases forming open or fixed collocations, and function as follows: 1- sentence elements, such as: 'due to this ...'. 2- Clause modifier, e.g. 'simply speaking...'. 3- As a separate sentence, e.g., 'the result was clear'. Menzel, et al. (2017), add that, concerning the part of speech membership, 'secondary connectives' are very heterogeneous group expressions. Very often, contain nouns which identify the ideas of: difference, reason, condition, result, conclusion, etc., in other words, nouns that directly indicate the semantic type of discourse relations. Similarly, verbs, such as: 'to mean', 'to contrast', 'to explain', 'to cause' etc., and prepositions like: 'due to', 'because of', 'in spite of', 'in addition to', 'on the basis' etc.

The Syntactic Structure of Connectives:

Connectives can have different syntactic forms. They can be coordinators, (e.g. and), subordinators (e.g. because), adverbial connectors (e.g. however), or Meta- discourse markers (e.g. to sum

up). These categories are the commonly English grammatical devices for joining words, or phrases into larger units. Lohmann, A. (2014), investigates the frequencies of different coordination strategies found in present- day English; he stipulates that the coordination is regulated by a number of conditions which differ according to whether the coordination is copulative, disjunctive or adversative. He adds that the most important restriction to the implementation of coordination come from syntax, he stresses that the members of coordination elements must be codified in the same structural ranking, in other words, these elements should be at the same level , and fulfill the same semantic role and they must share some categories. Thus, in order to fit into any of these patterns of coordinating or conjoining, the words or phrases must have functional similarity. Therefore, the juxtaposition is only possible between pairs of conventionalized concepts (e.g. ‘boys and girls’, ‘bows and arrows’). This similarity does not necessarily mean that their internal structure will be similar. For example, it would be very strange for an English speaker to use ‘and’ to join expressions of different functions, as in the example like: “*she went yesterday and to the city*”, where it seems very odd to join the temporal expression ‘i.e. yesterday’ with the location expression ‘i.e. to the city’. In this context, it should be noted that, the problem lies in the differences of function rather than the differences of internal structure. In general, the English connecting words include the followings:

1. Coordinating conjunctions: this category is the simplest kind that shows the quality of relationship between the ideas they join. Coordinating words may join a single word, or they may join groups of words, but they must always join similar elements, such as: subject+ subject, verb phrase+ verb phrase, or sentence + sentence. Generally speaking, when a coordinating conjunction is used to join elements, the new element becomes a compound element. Coordination is regulated by a number of conditions, which differ according to whether the coordination is copulative, disjunctive or adversative (e.g. and, or, but, etc.).

2. Correlative/ paired conjunctions because they use two different words correlated together, one before the first main phrase and the other before the second. The terms 'conjunctive' and 'disjunctive' are applied to this type, for example, both...and, either ... or, and neither... nor (negative conjunction). This category restricted to structural coordination within the sentence level.
3. Subordinating conjunctions this category includes words that introduce a subordinate clause (e.g., because, although, when, if etc.). Here, when a dependent clause precedes an independent clause, the dependent clause should be separated by a comma.
4. Relative pronouns: As connective words because they join ideas together by creating adjective or noun clause (e.g., that, who, which etc.).
5. Linking/ Transition or Conjunctive adverbs (e.g., however, thus, to sum up, etc.): This group makes up a very strong category of conjunctions, because these words show logical relationships between two independent sentences, or between two sections of paragraphs, or between the entire paragraphs in the text.

However, Cornwell (1863), mentions that the coordinated sentences are often contracted, that is one of the following elements: (1) the subject, (2) the predicate, or (3) the object should be omitted in the second part of the sentence. For instance, considering (1), i.e. the omission of the subject in the second part, Cornwell provides the following example, "*the child laughs and talks*", it is not necessary to say, "*and the child talks*," because, the subject in the previous example, i.e. '*the child*', is already expressed in the first part. With regard to omission of predicate in (2), he illustrates that one may say "*the boy and the girl laughed*," , and it is not necessary to say, '*the boy laughed and the girl laughed*' he asserts that it is enough to express the predicate '*laughed*' in one part. Finally, the omission of the object in (3), Cornwell explains that one may say "*he struck and killed the dog*," . It is not necessary to express the object, '*the dog*' twice. Suffice to express it in the second part. If the object is expressed in the

first part, it is then generally represented by a noun in the second; as “*he struck the dog and killed it.*”

Considering the position of the discourse connectives, Cornwell (1863), goes on to demonstrate that an improper placing of discourse connectives destroy the clearness, the compactness, and the force of the sentence, and therefore it is ought to be avoided. In this regards, he states that the connecting words ‘*not only*’ should be inserted before the word which is to be made emphatic, and is to have an antithetical sentence at the end. As illustrated in the following sentences : (1) “*Not only George was talking all the morning {but Frederick too}*” , (2) “ *George was not only talking all the morning {but playing}*”, (3) “ *George was talking not only all the morning { but all the afternoon}*.” Thus, in the first sentence ‘*George*’, is the emphatic word, and the antithetical sentence is ‘*not only George but Frederick.*’ In the second, ‘*talking*’ is the emphatic word, and the contrast is ‘*not only talking – but playing.*’ In the third sentence, ‘*all the morning*’ is the emphatic words, and the antithetical sentence is “*not only all the morning – but all the afternoon*’. So, in these sentences the position of this connective word cannot be changed without destroying or altering the intended meaning.

Educational Implications:

In order to develop the skills necessary to comprehend better discourse connectives syntactic and semantic rules, Sudanese EFL Secondary School Students may need to be exposed to a high degree of English connectives, and assigning the students a lot of reading and writing assignments. Therefore, it is seen by the researcher that a pedagogically sound instruction design for connective materials, can help Sudanese EFL Secondary School students to write more accurate and coherent written discourse, and also will increase students’ register awareness with regard to connective words usage in expository writings. Here, it is worth mentioning that, EFL teachers at Secondary level should be aware that too much connection, or in other words, a high frequency of connectives is also a problem, as this may

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result in sentences which contain too many facts, and therefore, are hard to understand. Thus, for the sake of clarity sometimes connectives are removed from the written texts. In this case, teachers should encourage students themselves to figure out the implicit relationships, between clauses or sentences. However, understanding implicit relationships between clauses and sentences (i.e., a syndetic), could be harder than explicit connectives (i.e., syndetic). Davison et al. (1980), observe that, sometimes textbook designers appeared to be moving explicit connectives from sentences in order to make the passages conform to lower readability levels. According to Davison's view "*discourse connectives are marked explicitly in humanities sciences,*" but not as often in natural sciences, he points that this is "*because the latter readers are able to infer the connectives due to their prior knowledge of the subject.*" Davison et al (1980), add that the readers of humanities texts need explicit connectives relationships, in order to understand the text as a coherent whole. Oshima and Hogue (1997), suggest that there are two things that teachers can do to improve the teaching of this important syntactic topic (i.e., connective words). Firstly, to explain contextual subtleties that influence choices forms, among the individual connectors within the specific group. Secondly, teacher should provide more practices that force the students to speak and write sentences using discourse connectives. Oshima and Hogue proceed to state that, providing definitions of connectives is not enough, even if the students know the connectives. Thus, based on what has been mentioned, teachers should not only teach students the meaning of the connectives, but provide many examples of how these connectives occur in different reading texts to create meaningful relationships between the sentences and also between the paragraphs in the text.

Previous Studies

The researcher has surveyed in - depth a number of related previous studied. For example, the first previous study is an M. A.

dissertation which is a case study carried- out by Mohammed I., entitled “*Teaching Writing through Practice,*” conducted at Faculty of Education- Hantoub, University of Gezira in (2006). The study showed that most of the students did not master the basic skills of writing like Grammar, Punctuation, and cohesion. The study showed that the students were incapable of using cohesive devices properly. The researcher attributes the lack of cohesion in students’ writings to many factors, such as the lack of connective words in the students’ writings. The second reviewed study is also an M.A. dissertation which was carried-out by Najla, A., at Faculty of Education- Hantoub, University of Gezira in (2011), which is entitled “*Influence of Arabic as A mother Tongue on Using English Coordinating Devices in EFL Students’ Written Works.*” The main objective of Najla’s study was to investigate how Arabic as mother tongue influences the choice of English coordinating devices in EFL students’ written works. The sample of the study consisted of thirty (30) teachers of English Language at secondary school in Wad Medani, and a diagnostic test administered on a sample of a hundred students at Ibrahim EL Tigani Secondary School for Girls in *Umm Sonont* in Wad Medani, Sudan. The most important findings are that, the EFL Students’ mother tongue affects the process of learning English coordinating devices. She also finds that more exposure of EFL students to coordinating devices help in improving students’ written works.

Generally speaking, these previous studies bear some thematic relations with the current study with regard to that they have been conducted in the area of writing. While the baseline of the previous studies focused only on the problems confronting EFL students in academic discourse writing, but seldom referred to the reasons behind the misuse and the classifications of English connective words in the linguistics Literature. However, the bottom-line of the present study is to fill these blanks and seeks to find out the reasons for why EFL students at Secondary level misuse, underuse or overuse some types of English connective words.

Methodology

The Sample and Procedures of Data Collection:

The participants comprised a group of '30' Sudanese EFL Secondary School students, who were taught writing expository composition which is offered to the third class students, during the academic year (2018- 2019), at Wad Medeni Secondary School for Boys in Greater Wad Medeni Locality, Gezira State, Sudan. A written diagnostic test was chosen as a tool of data collection to pin point how the 3rd class students at secondary level employ English discourse connectives in writing a well-organized composition. The test was administered on 7th November (2019). The participants were asked to write a short expository composition entitled, "Money is the root of all evils" within (30) minutes. The test was designed to examine how well the EFL Sudanese students' at Secondary level incorporate discourse connectives in their written discourse texts. The researcher invokes for the possible explanation for some major problems of teaching and learning processes of discorsal connectives, in order to gain deeper understanding of the acquisition of connectives by the EFL Sudanese Secondary School students. The process of the analysis of the students' applicability of connectives was analyzed according to the following bases: Firstly, the discorsal use of each connective word was counted in terms of its frequency and percentage occurrences throughout each student's written compositions. Secondly, the obtained data from the participants of the study will be descriptively analyzed and presented in tables.

Data Analysis:

The procedures of the data analysis were first to count down the number of connective types used in the students' written compositions, as shown in Table (2) below. Halliday and Hasan's (1972), taxonomy and their framework of connectives, as indicated in Table (2) below, were used for the data analysis. Then, the students' proper and improper usages of discourse connective - words were calculated separately.

Table (2): The Classification of Discourse Connectives by Halliday and Hassan*

Connector	Example
Additive	and, or, nor, furthermore, alternatively, etc.
Adversative	yet, but, though, although, however, etc.
Clausal	because, so, hence,, consequently, etc.
Temporal	at the same time, simultaneously, just then, etc.

*Source: Halliday, M. and Hassan (1976): "Cohesion in English"

Results and Discussion

Results:

Table (3) illustrates that the additive connectives are used most frequently (45%), and then, temporal connectives with (25 %), adversative with (19 %), and the least utilized category was causal connectives with (11 %). As shown in table (4), the discourse connective words were occurred with different instances in the students' written compositions. As for additives, the participants' used simple additive connectives, such as: and (300, i.e. 43 %), also (250, i.e.36 %), in addition to (145, i.e. 21 %). The additive 'and' is the most listed and used additive connective word in the students' written compositions. As indicated in table (5) for adversative connectives occurrences, the participants' utilized 'but' (548, i.e.44%), 'although' (312, i.e. 25%), 'in spite of' (270, i.e. 22%) 'however' (118, i.e. 9 %). In regard to temporal connectives, as it can be seen in table (6), 'first' (522, i.e. 39%), 'second' (453, i.e. 33%), 'third' (378, i.e. 28%). What is crucial to notice about the causal connectives is that, the participants rarely use causal connectives in their writings. With references to table (7), one can argue that the participants tend to depend excessively on the simple causal connective words, namely: 'because' and 'so', whereas they tend to under use some complex ones like 'due to', 'owing to the fact that', which are not identified and used by the study subjects. The participants' frequently demonstrated the misuse of the causal connectives in their written compositions, namely: 'because, and 'so', this erroneous use is due mainly to syntactic and semantic aspects. Therefore, it seems obvious that, the participants encounter difficulties to signal cause and effects relationships in their writings.

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Table (3): Frequencies of each connective type used in Students' written discourse

No of Essays	Type of connectives (%)			
30	Additives	Adversative	Causal	Temporal
	45	19	11	25

Table (4): Total Occurrences Frequency of Each Additive Connective words

Type of connective	Word	Frequency	Percent
Additive Connectives	And	300	43%
	Also	250	36%
	In addition	145	21%
	Total	695	100%

Table (5): Total Occurrences of Each Adversative Connective words

Type of Connective	Word	Frequency	Percent
Adversative Connectives	But	548	44%
	Although	312	25%
	In spite of	270	22%
	However	118	9%
	Total	1248	100%

Table (6): Total Occurrences of Each temporal Connective words

Type of Connective	Word	Frequency	Percent
2- Temporal Connectives	First	522	39%
	Second	453	33%
	Third	378	28
	Total	1353	100%

Table (7): The Total Occurrences of Each Causal Connective words

Type of Connective	Word	Frequency	Percent
2- Causal Connectives	Because	400	66%
	So	200	34%
	Total	600	100%

Table (8): The participants' Correct and Incorrect usage of Connectives

Connective type	Word	Correct		Incorrect	
		True	%	False	%
Additive connectives	And	280	93	20	7
	Also	70	28	180	72
	In addition	39	27	106	73
Adversative connectives	But	140	75	408	25
	Although	52	17	260	83
	In spite of	65	24	205	76
Temporal connectives	However	20	25	88	75
	First	360	31	162	69
	Second	320	71	133	29
Causal connectives	Third	290	77	88	23
	Because	40	10	360	90
	So	30	15	170	85

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Table (9): Total frequencies of Students' Correct and Incorrect usage of Connectives

Discourse Connective- types	Correct	Incorrect
The total connective- words Occurrences	1706	2180
Percentage	44%	56%

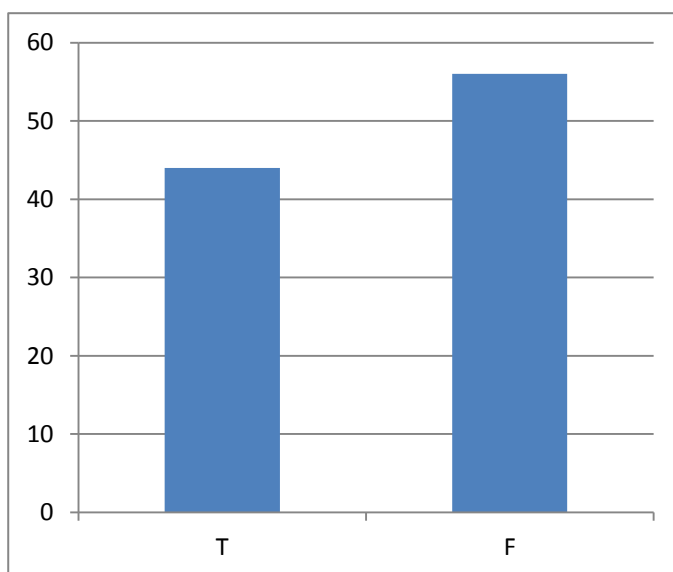


Figure (1): Total frequencies of the participants' Correct and Incorrect usage of connectives

Key: T stands for True and F for false

Based on tables (8) and (9) above, it is quite apparent that most of the participants have obstacles in understanding English connective words, since the total number of their correct responses is (1706, i.e. 44%), in comparison with their incorrect ones (2180, i.e. 56%). This may indicate that most EFL Sudanese students at Secondary level do not know how to employ discourse connectives properly in their writings, as can be seen in the average proportions for each group.

This is may be due to the students' insufficient knowledge about the syntactic variations and semantic properties of English connectives, which subsequently reflected in the students' writings processes. Thus, the study subjects tend to often rely on a small subset of connectives, for example the participants of the study rely heavily on 'because', and 'so' to express clausal relationships.

With reference to table (3), the frequency of each type of connective type is ranked in a descending order as follows: additive is (45%), temporal is (25%), adversative is (19%), and causal is (11%). The significant observation here is that the frequency of additive is higher than the frequency of other types of the connectives used. So, EFL Sudanese Secondary School students employ the additive connectives 'and', 'also', and 'in addition' more frequently than the other types of additive connectives, such as: 'furthermore', 'besides', 'moreover' which totally have low frequencies in the participants' written compositions. As regard , the adversative connectives, especially the use of 'but' which is the most frequent among the participants, this is may be owing to the fact that it is easily identified and used, while the other adversative words such as, 'although', 'in spite of', 'however' are used incorrectly by them. The participants' employed temporal connectives with a relative frequency percentage (25%). Among the students' significant temporal connective words, is the use of 'first', 'second', 'third', whilst the use of other types of temporal connectives, such as, 'hence', 'then', 'meanwhile', 'after that' etc. are totally not existent. The causal connective 'because' and 'so' are the most frequently used, while the other types of clausal connectives such as 'as a result of', 'as a consequence', 'due to' etc. are not identified by the students.

Discussion

The results showed in table (9), reveal that the participants seem to underuse and misuse English discourse connectives, since the total number of the participants' correct usage of connectives is lower (44%) than that of the incorrect usage (56%) in their written

compositions. Additionally, table (8) shows altogether that most students at Secondary level are more likely to be correct when they use 'additives' to express addition relationships than when they use 'causal' and 'temporal' connective words. The results shown in table (8) also indicate that the participants have a limited repertoire of English connectives, and therefore, tend to often rely on a small set of connectives to link their ideas. Such as, 'And', 'also', 'in addition' which are simple connective words used for signaling additive relationships. For adversative connectives, the participants tend to over use 'but,' 'although', 'in spite of', 'however'. For temporal connectives, the subjects used 'first', 'second', 'third' to signal sequential relationships. Whereas, they constantly underuse the causal connectives, for instance, the two dominant- connectives 'because' and 'so', are frequently pervasive throughout the participants' written compositions to clarify the cause and effect relationships.

Conclusion

As already mentioned before, the study focuses on how Sudanese EFL secondary school utilize English discourse connectives as linguistic expression devices , which significantly contributing to a text coherence, and generally helping to better understanding the semantic relations within a text. The study revealed that most EFL Sudanese Students at Secondary level have remarkable problems on the use of English connective words in their written discourse. Therefore, the researcher recommends that much attention should be attached to the teaching of English connective discourse words, so as to help EFL Sudanese Secondary School students to consolidate and master these vital connective words. Additionally, Sudanese EFL secondary School Students should be aware of the different usages among the various kinds of connective words, in order to become aware of the stylistic restriction of some English discourse connectives.

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Ammar Musa Ahmed Hassan

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