

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

The discussions of some important researches on English and Chinese conjunctions are presented respectively in this chapter. Besides, some studies related to the use of conjunctions by ESL learners in Taiwan will be discussed in this chapter.

In this section, the researcher would first review the discussions concerning the function of conjunctions. Secondly, the author continues to review Halliday and Hasan's (1976) research as well as Quirk's (1985). Thirdly, some important researches on conjunctions in Taiwan would be taken into consideration to examine students' performance in conjunctions. Finally, the researcher will consider those important researches on conjunctions and then adopt a suitable and clear classified category to analyze students' compositions.

#### **2.1 The Definitions of English Conjunctions**

According to the definition of conjunctions in grammar books, the types of conjunctions can be mainly divided into three kinds: coordinating conjunctions, subordinating conjunction and sentence connectors. The function of coordinating conjunctions is to connect the ideas in two independent clauses as in example (2.1). Subordinating conjunctions aim to express the relationship between an idea in a dependent clause and an idea in an independent clause. Just like the use of "after" in example (2.2). "After" serves to connect ideas within sentences. Sentence connectors usually express relationships between two or more independent clauses. The use of

“in addition” in example (2.3) demonstrates the usage of a sentence connector.

(2.1) Ilamatar kept the eggs on her knee, *but* eventually they got too hot.

(2.2) *After* Areop-Enap put the snail in the sky, he made people.

(2.3) Areop-Enap discovered two snails living in the shell with him. *In addition*, a worm inhabited the shell, as he later found out. (p.201)

In The grammar book, (Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman,1999) the classification of conjunctions includes: coordinating conjunctions, adverbial subordinators, and conjunctive adverbials. Their usages are given as follows:

Coordinating conjunctions were said (a) to conjoin syntactically equivalent constituents and (b) to lead the listener/ reader to certain interpretations of the way that clauses relate to each other meaningfully. Adverbial subordinators for students and conjunctive adverbials are often called logical connectors. Like some uses of coordinating conjunctions, logical connectors are typically said to be types of cohesive devices, lexical expressions that may add little or no prepositional content by themselves but that serve to specify the relationships among sentences in oral or written discourse, thereby leading the listener/reader to the feeling that the sentences “hang together” or make sense (p. 519).

Thus far, the definitions or usage explanation of English conjunctions are confined to the intra or inter sentential level. Grammar for English Language Teachers (Parrott, 2000) adds discursal function of conjunction into definition. In this book, conjunctions are divided into three categories: coordinating conjunctions, subordinating conjunctions and discourse markers. Coordinating conjunctions include only three words: *and*, *but*, and *or*. They can serve to (a) link together parts of constituents and are therefore contained within the constituent, and (b) to form a link between clauses (p. 262). Subordinating conjunctions serve to link two clauses of unequal importance. They consist of (a) one word, such as *after*, *although* and *if*, (b) two or more words: *as if*, *as soon as*, and *as long as* (p.335). And, those connective elements between sentences indicating logical relationships and sequence are called “discourse markers.”

## 2.2 English Conjunctions at Discourse Level

In this section, the author reviews studies on the classification of conjunctions from discourse perspective. Among various researches on conjunctions, Halliday and Hasan (1976) first classify conjunctions into four types. Besides, Quirk (1985) clearly points out the semantic use of conjunctions. Then, Jiang (1992) cites both Halliday and Hasan (1976), and Quirk (1985) studies and develops a repertoire of common English conjunctions. This is of great help to the author in analyzing students' performance in using conjunctions.

According to Halliday and Hasan (1976), the conjunction is one of the four kinds of cohesive devices in texts, "expressing certain meanings which presuppose the presence of other components in the discourse," and the relationship expressed by the conjunctions are termed as conjunctive relations. Halliday and Hasan (1976) further subdivided conjunctions into four categories, according to the relationship they express: additive, adversative, causal, and temporal conjunctions. They explore the function of conjunctions in great details.

To get a general description of the use of conjunctions, Yu (1990) interprets Halliday and Hasan's four classes of conjunctions as follows: (p. 20-21).

- Additives: The connectives that link units of semantic similarity. The additives introduce discourse units that repeat and emphasize the key points or add relevant new information to the prior expression.
- Adversatives: The connectives that bring in the expressions that are contrary to expectation. The expressions indicate a contrary result or opinion to the content mentioned previously. In this sense, the adversatives signal the beginning of a different viewpoint.
- Causals: The connectives are used to introduce result, reason or purpose. The clauses connected are related to each other either in the cause-and-effect relation or in the conditional relation.
- Temporals: The connectives that express the time order of events. In order to manifest the temporal relations of successive and simultaneous events, this category includes the preceding,

sequential, and simultaneous connectives....

Examples for additive relation include *and, or, likewise, furthermore*, etc. Conjunctive relation of the adversative type is characterized by such conjunctions as *but, however, on the contrary*, etc. The third type is casual relation expressed by conjunctions such as *so, thus, hence, therefore, consequently*, etc. Finally, the temporal relation can be expressed through *then, previously, before that* and so on. Temporal relation also includes the sense of conclusiveness by such items as *finally, to sum up, in short*. (Halliday and Hasan, p. 243).

Halliday and Hasan (1976) treat conjunctions as a type of cohesive ties that relate “linguistic elements that occur in succession.” Besides, Halliday and Hasan (1976) explains that “cohesion is the relation between sentences in a text,” conjunctions are, in fact, linking elements among sentences. In other words, the term ‘conjunctions’ refers to those linking elements occurring inter-sententially, while those used intra-sententially should not be considered as true conjunctions.

Halliday and Hasan’s (1976) model provided a straightforward categories of English conjunctions. The four categories reflected four semantic relations between sentences. It thus helps students to understand the role of conjunctions in organizing discourse.

Quirk’s (1985) study of conjunctions includes both within and beyond sentential level. This definition is different from the one by Halliday and Hasan (1976), who insist that only those conjunctions functioning as cohesive devices above sentence level can be considered as true conjunctions. Quirk (1985) classified conjunctions into seven categories based on the semantic use in Figure 2.1:

1. Listing: a. Enumerative: *first, second, third*  
           b. Additive: i. Equative: *likewise*  
                       ii. Reinforcing: *furthermore*
2. Summative: *to sum up*
3. Appositional: *namely*
4. Resultive: *consequently*
5. Inferential: *in other words*
6. Contrastive: a. Reformulatory: *alternatively*  
                   b. Replacive: *on the other hand*  
                   c. Antithetic: *on the contrary*  
                   d. Concessive: *nevertheless*
7. Transitional: a. Discoursal: *incidentally*  
                   b. Temporal: *in the meantime*

Figure 2.1 The Classification of Conjunctions (Quirk, 1985, p. 634)

Quirk(1985) also describes a syntactic feature of English conjunctions.

According to his explanation, a conjunction can be placed at the beginning, the middle, or the final of a sentence. However, he does not provide a thorough description about the syntactic distinctions among the seven sub-class of English conjunctions in his model.

In view of the above definition of conjunctions, Halliday and Hasan's (1976) model is easier for students to memorize the four categories of conjunctions than seven categories in Quirk's model. But, the subtle difference in meaning within each category may cause another problem for ESL learners in using conjunctions. Those subtle differences in conjunctions will be discussed in next section.

### 2.3 Problems with the Discourse Categories of Conjunctions

In the repertoire of English conjunctions (Halliday and Hasan, 1976), the most commonly seen additives are listed and classified into five subclasses according to their function in connecting sentences and paragraphs. However, just as Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman (1999) point out, "While such a classification is useful at the global level to sort out possible meaning relationships into types, it presents problems

for the definitions of individual connectors” (p. 531). Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman further list three problems that cause errors for learners in choosing the right words.

The first problem is that “the expressions within category are often not interchangeable” (p. 531) The second one is that “certain expressions may find acceptable paraphrases in more than one conjunction” (p. 531) The last one is that “functional labels such as ‘adversatives’ are not always accurate” (p.531) The following examples are given by Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman (1999, p. 531) to further explain the difficulties learners may encounter in using conjunctions.

- (2.4) Calvin wanted to fly to the moon. *However*, he did not know how.
- (2.5) Calvin wanted to fly to the moon. ??*Nevertheless*, he did not know how.
- (2.6) Calvin wanted to fly to the moon. ??*Despite this*, he did not know how.
- (2.7) We can take this apartment, or we can take the other one.  
(But) *in any case*, we have to take something soon!
- (2.8) We may not be able to take our vacation as planned. The area is under six feet of snow.  
(And) *in any case*, we just don’t have enough money.
- (2.9) We may not be able to take our vacation as planned.  
(Or) *in any case*, we won’t be able to make it a long one.

Example (2.4), (2.5), and (2.6) can be used to illustrate the difficulties for learners in using conjunctions. The “however” in example (2.4), the “nevertheless” in example (2.5), and the “Despite this” in example (2.6) are classified under the same label as adversatives which express adversative relations. But, just as Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman (1999, p.531) mention, “the expressions within category are often not interchangeable.” That is, “nevertheless,” and “despite this” can not be applied in every case whenever “however” is used.

And the second problem can be demonstrated in example (2.7), (2.8), and (2.9)

provided above. The use of “in any case” in example (2.7) can be explained as “anyway.” The intended meaning of the whole sentence is: “No matter whether we choose this apartment or another, we have to take something anyway.” But, the “in any case” in example (2.8) can be explained as “besides.” Besides the first reason that the area is under six feet of snow, the lack of money is the second reason that we can not take our vacation as planned. And the “in any case” in example (2.9) conveys the meaning as “at any rate.” The speaker uses “in any case” to emphasize the next statement is the most important thing or the thing he is sure about. From the example (2.7), (2.8), and (2.9) given above, the use of “in any case” can be given many possible interpretations.

As to the last problem, example (2.4) can be applied to illustrate the inappropriate functional label of adversatives. According to Halliday and Hasan’s definition, an adversative is defined as “contrary to expectations” (1976, p. 242-243). But, the use of “however” in example (2.4) can not be interpreted as expressing contrary to expectations. According to Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman (1999), the use of “however” has the quality of showing semantic contrast, “one in which exactly two entities or qualities are set adjacent to each other in order to focus on one or more semantic differences in them” (1999, p.475). As a result, the use of “however” in (2.4) does not tend to deny Calvin’s intention to fly to the moon. On the contrary, it aims to contrast the semantic differences between expectation and reality. Based on the problems suggested by Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman (1999), the ambiguity of conjunctions does exist. This “ambiguity” can lead to confusion and cause difficulties in both reading and writing, especially for ESL learners. As a result, it is not sufficient to classify conjunctions according to the meanings they represent.

William’s (1996) research on conjunctions provides another way for learners to

construct the meanings of the conjunctions. In William's (1996) research, he criticizes the notional idea as "additives" or "adversatives" to classify conjunctions. These labels at best give vague meanings to conjunctions under the same category. In William's view, "an additional element is required in order to come to adequate definitions" (p.531). He further states,

What the majority of these expressions do is call attention to propositional frames that are either explicitly or implicitly encoded in the text. If they are only implicit, the listener or reader will have to reconstruct the frames from the meaning of the clause. (p.531)

From William's propositional frames, many conjunctions which may confuse learners can be clarified. Here are some lists of the propositional frames William provided. (1996, p.531-535).

(2.10) However

However may be used wherever attention is drawn to a difference. The difference may be between expectations and reality, between what is uncertain and what is certain, between antonyms or other kinds of lexical opposition. It may even be used as a discourse marker to change topics in conversation.

(2.11) Nevertheless

X implies Y, and X is true, but Y is not true.

(2.12) On the other hand

X (a) on the other hand X (b)

Here, it is only necessary to have a single topic, which is then contrasted with respected to two contrasting qualities.

(2.13) On the contrary

On the contrary is most usually used to deny a proposition, whether inferred or explicit, that has come before.

The propositional frames above supply learners some ways to determine which conjunctions are appropriate in connecting sentences that convey the adversative relations. Compared with the semantic classification, the propositional frames offer a solution to the problems Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman (1999) come up with. The



prepositional frames can help learners in distinguishing the subtle differences between “on the other hand” and “on the contrary.” “On the other hand,” functions as an Additive, aims to connect two contrastive qualities of a topic. But, “on the contrary,” which belongs to Adversatives, serves to deny the previous argument.

From these discussions above, the choice of appropriate Adversatives under the same subclass is far from easy. What’s more, some Adversatives, like “but,” and “however,” are classified into more than one subclass. This phenomenon adds more difficulties in choosing appropriate adversatives. Furthermore, some conjunctions are defined as belonging to more than just one category, such as English conjunctions “but,” ”and,” and ”on the other hand.” That is, these conjunctions share the characteristic of both additives and adversatives. Therefore, the use of English Adversatives and Additives is rather difficult for learners, let alone those ESL learners when learners take their native language into consideration.

#### **2.4 Researches on Taiwan’s Students’ Performance in Using Conjunctions**

In Taiwan, there is abundant research on teaching conjunctions in English, especially in the analysis of students’ errors in using conjunctions in compositions. Most of related studies on conjunctions focus on college-level students, including Wu (1995), Huang (1990), and Jiang (1992). Wu (1995) and Huang (1990) conduct researches on college students’ compositions. The results shows that college-level Chinese students are more competent in using English conjunctions at the intrasentential level than at intersentential level. Therefore, Wu (1995) suggests that increasing students’ ability in using intersentential conjunctions may be an effective way for improving students’ overall reading ability in English. At the same time, the teacher should spend more time on the teaching of conjunctions used at the

intersentential level. Besides, Huang (1990) suggests that teachers should make good use of the hierarchy of difficulty of error types to help them decide what should be taught and learned with more emphasis. However, the subjects in both studies are college-level students. Do senior high school students have the same kind of problems in the using of conjunctions? Further discussion still needs to be found.

Another important research is Jiang's (1992) contrastive analysis of Chinese and English conjunctions. Jiang (1992) thoroughly examines Halliday and Hasan's (1976) and Quirk's (1985) researches and tries to collect a complete repertoire of English conjunctions. But, Jiang (1992) also points out that his attempt may be time-consuming and impossible due to two main reasons (p.31). First, conjunctions are open class. Second, Chinese ESL learners will not be fluent enough to use all English conjunctions. Therefore, Jiang (1992) adapts Halliday and Hasan's (1976) summary table of conjunctions as well as some items supplied from Quirk's (1985) as a list of common English conjunctions for the need of his contrastive analysis. It is clear that Jiang's (1992) classifies conjunctions in details. Therefore, the author adapts Jiang's (1992) list in Appendix I as the basis of common English conjunctions to analyze students' performance in using conjunctions in their compositions.

Its subjects are also college students. However, Jiang focuses on the structural (syntactic) differences between Chinese and English conjunctions. The semantic and functional differences between Chinese and English conjunctions are neglected. Besides, Jiang reveals the fact that Chinese advanced ESL learners receive certain influences from their first language. This finding provides valuable information for the researcher in analyzing students' errors and also explanations for some errors.

Chiang (1993) focused on high school students' errors in writing and categories those errors in students' compositions. The three most frequent errors in

descending order for elementary subjects are conjunctions, run-on sentences and subjects, objects, complements; for intermediate subjects, the order is run-on sentences, conjunctions, and subjects, objects, complements. Chiang further points out the most frequent errors in the use of conjunctions: the omission of conjunction, the redundant use of conjunctions, and the substitution of conjunctions. In her research, lots of useful teaching implications can be found. However, her research on conjunctions focuses on sentence level. The function of conjunctions in discourse is barely touched.

Fan (1999) states the fact that English coherence serves as a key concept to good writing and it can be introduced to Chinese students to understand a unified and well-organized writing. Therefore, a series of exercises in teaching cohesive devices from sentences, paragraphs to the entire article should be proposed. This opinion corresponds to the concept in Mo's article (1995). Teachers can apply the Chinese rhetorical view: the che-cheng-juan-he (起承轉合) sequence in English writing to compose more coherence compositions. Besides, Yu (1993) further suggests the use of conjunctions to indicate (a) the beginning of paragraphs and (b) the semantic relation between paragraphs. From this point of view, conjunctions serve not only as linking elements within and between sentences, but also as connectors to introduce or separate substantial blocks of a text in discourse. Besides, in Chou's (2002) study, she points out the fact that the use of Adversatives seems to be the most difficult for learners among the four categories of conjunctions. The observation inspires the researcher to further examine the difficulties learners may encounter in learning Adversatives. Because some conjunctions belong to both Additives and Adversatives, it is necessary to look into the function of both Additives and Adversatives to find out the difficult areas learners may have.

From the various classification and researches on conjunctions above, the researcher would define conjunctions as connecting elements, expressing certain semantic relation between clauses, sentences and paragraphs. But, in this study, the author concentrates on the use of conjunctions between sentences and paragraphs. Besides, different researchers may refer to “conjunctions” by different names. For instance, some would use the term “discourse marker” to show the logical relationship between sentences. However, the researcher uses the term “conjunctions” in this study.