

## Identifying Areas of Error In The Use of Correlative Conjunction by EFL Students at Tadulako University

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### ABSTRACT

This study investigates grammatical errors in the use of correlative conjunctions in EFL students' academic writing, particularly in maintaining parallel structure and correct word order. The objective of this study is to identify and classify the types of errors made by students in using correlative conjunctions. This research employed a descriptive qualitative method, with data collected from 17 students' written texts and analyzed using content analysis based on the Surface Strategy Taxonomy proposed by Dulay, Burt, and Krashen, which includes omission, addition, misformation, and misordering. The findings revealed that a total of 16 errors were identified in students' writings, with misordering errors as the most dominant type, followed by misformation, omission, and addition as the least frequent. These errors mainly occurred because students had difficulty maintaining grammatical parallelism and correctly arranging sentence elements within correlative conjunction structures. The study concludes that although not all students made errors, some still face challenges in applying correct grammatical rules, especially in constructing balanced sentence structures; therefore, greater emphasis on teaching parallel structure and sentence organization is needed to improve students' writing accuracy.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Academic writing requires grammatical accuracy and structural balance to convey ideas clearly and logically. One important grammatical feature that contributes to sentence balance and coherence is the use of correlative conjunctions, such as *both...and*, *either...or*, *neither...nor*, and *not only...but also* [1]. These paired conjunctions function to connect parallel elements within sentences and are commonly used in formal and academic texts. However, inappropriate use of correlative conjunctions may result in unbalanced sentence structures and reduced clarity in written communication [2]. Despite their importance, many

students still misuse correlative conjunctions, leading to structural imbalance and lack of coherence in academic writing.

For EFL learners, mastering correlative conjunctions remains challenging due to differences between English grammatical structures and those of learners' first language [3]. Many students tend to focus on vocabulary development while paying less attention to grammatical parallelism, which is essential in academic writing. Consequently, errors frequently occur when students attempt to construct complex sentences involving paired conjunctions, affecting both grammatical accuracy and textual coherence [4]. This indicates that students have not fully mastered the rules of parallel structure required in correlative conjunctions.

Error analysis has long been recognized as an important approach in understanding learners' interlanguage development. According to James [5], analyzing learners' errors provides insight into the nature of their linguistic competence and the specific areas of difficulty they encounter. From a second-language acquisition perspective, errors are not merely signs of failure, but indicators of developmental processes as learners construct their interlanguage system [6]. In the context of academic writing, Hyland [7] emphasizes that grammatical control and the appropriate use of cohesive devices are essential for producing clear and effective texts. Therefore, analyzing errors in correlative conjunctions is essential to understanding how students construct parallel structures in academic writing. These theoretical perspectives suggest that examining errors in the use of correlative conjunctions can reveal not only surface-level inaccuracies but also deeper structural challenges EFL learners face in organizing parallel constructions.

Previous studies on grammatical errors in EFL writing have reported various error types, including omission, addition, misformation, and misordering [8]. Several studies have identified omission as the most common error type, indicating learners' tendency to omit necessary grammatical elements in sentence construction [9]. However, previous studies have predominantly relied on controlled grammar tests and have reported omission errors as the most frequent type, which may not fully reflect students' actual writing performance.

Moreover, although error analysis has been widely conducted using various frameworks, relatively few studies have employed the Surface Strategy Taxonomy to examine errors in correlative conjunctions in academic writing [10]. Therefore, applying this taxonomy in the context of authentic students' writing can provide more comprehensive insights into their grammatical difficulties. This taxonomy allows a more detailed classification of error patterns and provides insight into learners' underlying grammatical difficulties.

Previous research indicates that EFL learners commonly experience difficulties in academic writing, particularly in maintaining grammatical accuracy and cohesion, which in turn affects overall sentence structure and clarity [11]. In specific contexts, errors in conjunction usage have been identified as a recurrent problem among EFL writers [12], and cohesive devices such as conjunctions are critical for coherent peer writing [13]. Studies on error patterns in English writing reveal that both structural and grammatical errors remain significant challenges for learners [14], [15]. Research on Indonesian and other EFL contexts also shows that grammatical and cohesive issues negatively affect clarity and coherence in

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student essays [16], [17]. In broader ESL writing contexts, persistent difficulties with the correct use of cohesive devices have also been documented [18].

Addressing this gap, the present study investigates errors in the use of correlative conjunctions produced by EFL students at Tadulako University. Unlike previous studies that reported omission as the most frequent error type, this study finds that misordering errors occur most frequently. This result suggests that students experience greater difficulty in arranging sentence elements in parallel structures rather than merely omitting grammatical components. Therefore, this study aims to identify and classify error types and determine the most dominant error in the use of correlative conjunctions in EFL students' academic writing, using the Surface Strategy Taxonomy, with the expectation of providing pedagogical implications for improving grammar instruction in EFL academic writing. The findings are expected to contribute both theoretically to error analysis studies and practically to improving grammar instruction in EFL academic writing.

## 2. METHOD

This study employed a descriptive qualitative research design to investigate errors in the use of correlative conjunctions in EFL students' academic writing. The participants were third-semester students of the English Education Study Program at Tadulako University selected through purposive sampling, as they had completed basic grammar courses and were assumed to have prior knowledge of correlative conjunctions. The data were obtained from 17 undergraduate students' written texts, which served as the primary data for analysis. The data consisted of students' written assignments assigned by the course lecturer and submitted as part of their academic coursework. Content analysis was applied as the primary technique to systematically examine and code sentences containing correlative conjunctions, including *both...and*, *either...or*, *neither...nor*, and *not only...but also*. The research procedure was conducted chronologically by identifying sentences containing correlative conjunctions, selecting those with incorrect usage, classifying the errors based on the Surface Strategy Taxonomy into omission, addition, misformation, and misordering, calculating the frequency of each error type, and interpreting the results descriptively to determine the dominant error patterns. To ensure the validity and reliability of the data analysis, peer checking was conducted by involving another reviewer to examine the classification of errors. In addition, coding reliability was maintained by applying consistent criteria from the Surface Strategy Taxonomy throughout the analysis. The findings were then presented in tables and descriptive explanations to support further discussion and pedagogical implications. Ethical considerations were observed in this study. All participants were informed of the research's purpose, and their consent was obtained prior to data collection. The data were kept confidential and used solely for academic purposes.

## 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the study's results and a comprehensive discussion of the findings. The results are presented in tables to provide a clear and systematic description of the types of errors in the use of correlative conjunctions found in students' academic writing. The discussion is organized into several sub-sections based on the identified error types.

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### 3.1. Results

This section presents the results of the study concerning the types of errors in the use of correlative conjunctions found in EFL students' academic writing. The results are organized into the four error categories proposed in the Surface Strategy Taxonomy: omission, addition, misformation, and misordering. Each error type is described separately and supported by representative examples presented in tables to facilitate a clearer understanding of students' error patterns.

#### Error of Omission

The following sentences present omission errors identified in students' written assignments.

Table 1. Errors of Omission

Students Initial	Erroneous Sentence	Explanation	Corrected Sentences
NAN	"Because flood not only water <b>but that</b> thing bring a sharp thing, wood from the tree."	This error is categorized as omission because the word <i>also</i> is missing from the correlative conjunction. As a result, the structure <i>not only...but also</i> is incomplete. The corrected sentence restores the missing element.	"Because floods bring <b>not only water but also sharp</b> , like wood from the trees."
NAN	"The effect of flood can make people lost everything not only stuff <b>but our lives</b> as a human."	The sentence is classified as an omission error because the word <i>also</i> is omitted. This results in an incomplete correlative conjunction. The corrected sentence includes the missing element.	"The effect of floods can make people lose everything, <b>not only stuff, but also our lives as human.</b> "
NS	"It is not only by doing with copy paste <b>but we maximize</b> the use of artificial intelligence."	This error is categorized as omission because the correlative conjunction <i>not only...but also</i> is incomplete. The absence of <i>also</i> affects sentence balance. The corrected form completes the structure.	"It is not only by doing copy-paste <b>but also maximizing</b> the use of artificial intelligence."

As shown in Table 1, omission errors mainly involved the absence of the word *also* in the *not only... but also* construction. This omission resulted in incomplete and

grammatically incorrect sentence structures, indicating that some undergraduate EFL students have not fully mastered the complete form of correlative conjunctions.

### Errors of Addition

The following sentences present addition errors identified in students' written assignments.

Table 2. Errors of Addition

Students Initial	Erroneous Sentence	Explanation	Corrected Sentences
R	"Both inside <b>and inside</b> and outside"	The phrase <i>and inside</i> is unnecessarily repeated, resulting in redundancy within the correlative conjunction structure.	"Both inside <b>and outside</b> "

As shown in Table 2, addition errors mainly involved the insertion of unnecessary elements in correlative conjunction constructions. This addition resulted in grammatically incorrect sentence structures, indicating that some undergraduate EFL students still experience difficulties in applying correlative conjunctions accurately.

### Errors of Misformation

The following sentences present misformation errors identified in students' written assignments.

Table 3. Errors of Misformation

Students Initial	Erroneous Sentence	Explanation	Corrected Sentences
NS	"Those snacks and drinks not <b>only delicious but also give comfort and warmth.</b> "	The sentence lacks a verb in the first clause and shows non-parallel structure between the two elements.	"Those snacks and drinks <b>are not only delicious but also comforting and warming</b> "
ADU	"Through flexible and interactive teaching strategies, <b>it not only enhance</b> the educational process but also equips students to handle the challenges of digital world."	The verb <i>enhance</i> does not agree with the singular subject, resulting in incorrect verb form.	"Through flexible and interactive teaching strategies, digital media <b>not only enhances</b> teaching but also equips students to handle the challenges of digital world."
FM	"This community has not only become part of the community but also <b>maintains their unique tradition.</b> "	The sentence contains incorrect word forms and lacks parallel verb structure.	"This community <b>not only becomes part of the community but also maintains their unique traditions.</b> "
AM	"This philosophy does not only serve as a moral	The verb <i>strengthen</i> does not agree with the	"This philosophy doesnot only serve as a

Students Initial	Erroneous Sentence	Explanation	Corrected Sentences
	code but also <b>strengthen social harmony and unity</b> among Bugis communities.”	subject, causing incorrect verb form.	moral code but also <b>strengthens social harmony an unity</b> among Bugis communities.”
NAD	“It is not only <b>a personal the girl</b> but also remainder to the community about importance of guiding and supporting young women as they grow into adults.”	The noun phrase is incorrectly formed, making the sentence unclear and ungrammatical.	“This philosophy doesnot only serve as a moral code but also <b>strengthens social harmony an unity</b> among Bugis communities.”

As shown in Table 3, misformation errors mainly involved the use of inappropriate grammatical forms in correlative conjunction constructions. This misformation resulted in grammatically incorrect sentence structures, indicating that some undergraduate EFL students still experience difficulties in selecting and applying the correct grammatical forms when using correlative conjunctions.

### Errors of Misordering

The following sentences present misformation errors identified in students’ written assignments.

Table 4. Errors of Misordering

Students Initial	Erroneous Sentence	Explanation	Corrected Sentences
NS	“It is not only by doing with copy paste <b>but we maximize</b> the use of artificial intelligence.”	The correlative conjunction is not arranged in a parallel structure, resulting in an unbalanced sentence.	“It is not only by doing copy-paste <b>but also maximizing</b> the use of artificial intelligence.”
NV	“In AI not only teachers find the <b>materials but also students from AI their find the answer</b> for teachers material.”	The word order in the second clause is incorrect, making the sentence unclear and structurally unbalanced.	“It is not only by doing copy-paste <b>but also maximizing</b> the use of artificial intelligence.”
KA	“The ceremony is not only about death but <b>also carries deep spiritual significance.</b> ”	This error is classified as misordering because the elements connected by <i>not only...but also</i> are not parallel. One part is a prepositional phrase, while the other is a verb phrase. The corrected	“The ceremony is not only about death, <b>but also about deep spiritual significance.</b> ”

Students Initial	Erroneous Sentence	Explanation	Corrected Sentences
		sentence balances both elements.	
AM	“Constructing a phinsi is not only about craftsmanship <b>but also involves rituals and cultural heritage of humanity.</b> ”	This sentence is categorized as misordering because it does not maintain parallel structure. The two elements connected by the correlative conjunction have different grammatical forms. The corrected sentence revises the structure to make it balanced.	“Constructing a phinis is not only about craftsmanship <b>but also about the ritual and cultural heritage of humanity.</b> ”
RS	“These values not only reflect their closeness to nature <b>but also their deep respect for their ancentors.</b> ”	The error occurs because the second clause lacks a verb. This causes the sentence to be structurally unbalanced. The corrected form adds a verb to maintain parallelism.	“These vaues not only reflect their closeness to nature <b>but also reflect their deep respect for their ancentors.</b> ”
NAN	“Because flood not only water <b>but that thing bring a sharp thing, wood from the tree.</b> ”	This sentence contains a misordering error due to incorrect word arrangement. The structure of <i>not only...but also</i> is unclear and disorganized. The corrected sentence rearranges the elements into a clearer form.	“Because floods bring <b>not only water but also sharp, like wood from the trees.</b> ”
NAN	“The effect of flood can make people lost everything <b>not only stuff but our lives as a human.</b> ”	This error occurs because the correlative conjunction is not used in a parallel structure. The sentence becomes awkward and unclear. The corrected form reorganizes the sentence to improve clarity.	“The effect of floods can make people lose everything, <b>not only stuff, but also our lives as human.</b> ”

As shown in Table 4, misordering errors mainly involved the lack of structural balance between elements connected by correlative conjunctions. This misordering resulted in grammatically incorrect and unbalanced sentence structures, indicating that some undergraduate EFL students still experience difficulties in organizing sentence elements correctly when using correlative conjunctions.

### 3.2. Discussion

Based on the findings, the most frequent type of error in students' use of correlative conjunctions was misordering. These errors indicate that students experience greater difficulty in organizing sentence elements than in simply recognizing or completing conjunction pairs. In several cases, one element appeared as a phrase while the other appeared as a clause or verb phrase, resulting in unbalanced sentence construction. For example, in the sentence "*It is not only by doing copy-paste but also maximizing the use of artificial intelligence,*" the elements connected by the correlative conjunction are not structurally parallel.

From a theoretical perspective, misordering errors are classified as intralingual errors caused by learners' incomplete mastery of syntactic rules [4]. This finding is consistent with previous studies by Febrianti and Said [19], who reported that misordering errors frequently occurred in students' academic writing due to difficulties maintaining sentence parallelism. Similarly, Mayasari and Sari [20] found that students often misarranged sentence elements when using complex grammatical structures, including correlative conjunctions. The results of the present study support these findings, indicating that sentence organization and syntactic parallelism remain major challenges for learners. These findings reinforce that syntactic organization and parallelism remain major challenges for EFL learners.

The second most common error identified in this study was misformation errors. These errors occurred when students used incorrect grammatical forms in correlative conjunction constructions, particularly in verb forms and agreement. For instance, in the sentence "*digital media not only enhance teaching but also equips students,*" the verbs connected by the correlative conjunction do not share the same grammatical form, which violates grammatical parallelism.

According to Dulay, Burt, and Krashen [4], misformation errors reflect learners' developmental stage in second-language acquisition, in which grammatical rules are partially understood but not yet fully internalized. This explanation aligns with the findings of Dasra et al. [21], who reported that misformation errors often resulted from learners' confusion in consistently applying grammatical rules. In addition, Hardi et al. [22] found that misformation errors commonly occurred when students attempted to construct more complex sentences, suggesting that increased syntactic complexity often leads to inaccurate grammatical realization. The findings of the present study confirm that learners still struggle to apply correct grammatical forms when using correlative conjunctions.

Omission errors were also found in the students' writings, although they occurred less frequently than misordering and misformation errors. These errors occurred when students failed to include obligatory elements of correlative conjunctions, leading to incomplete sentence structures. For example, in the sentence "*floods bring not only water sharp objects,*" the omission of the word *also* caused the correlative conjunction to be incomplete.

Both interlingual and intralingual factors can explain omission errors. Dulay, Burt, and Krashen [4] explain that learners tend to omit grammatical elements that are absent or less emphasized in their first language. This explanation is supported by Pangga and Bunau [23], who found that omission errors were influenced by first language interference and

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learners' tendency to focus more on meaning than grammatical accuracy. Likewise, Febrianti and Said [19] reported that omission errors frequently occurred when students overlooked obligatory grammatical components in complex sentence constructions. The findings of this study support these explanations, although omission errors were not the most dominant type found.

Meanwhile, addition errors were identified as the least frequent type of error in this study. These errors occurred when students added unnecessary elements to sentences, which negatively affected grammatical accuracy. According to Dulay, Burt, and Krashen [4], addition errors are often caused by overgeneralization of grammatical rules. This finding aligns with Hardi et al. [22], who reported that addition errors resulted from learners' misunderstanding of grammatical constraints and limited awareness during the editing process. Although addition errors occurred less frequently, they still indicate learners' difficulties in distinguishing between obligatory and non-obligatory elements in correlative conjunction constructions.

Interestingly, the findings of this study contradict some previous research, which reported omission errors as the most frequent type of error in the use of correlative conjunctions. Rahayu and Oktavia [24] found that omission errors were the dominant problem among second-year English department students, particularly when students failed to complete correlative conjunction pairs correctly. In contrast, the present study revealed misordering errors as the most dominant type. Variations may influence this difference in research design and data sources. Rahayu and Oktavia [24] employed grammar tests focusing on sentence completion and sentence combination, which tended to highlight omission-related problems.

Meanwhile, the present study analyzed students' authentic written texts, allowing more complex sentence constructions to emerge and revealing misordering errors more prominently. This suggests that error patterns may vary depending on task type, writing context, and the level of syntactic complexity required. This suggests that analyzing authentic writing provides a more accurate representation of students' grammatical difficulties, particularly in sentence organization and parallel structure.

Overall, the findings indicate that misordering and misformation errors were the dominant error types in students' use of correlative conjunctions. These results support the theoretical framework proposed by Dulay, Burt, and Krashen [4], which views grammatical errors as a natural part of second language learning. At the same time, the variation in dominant error types compared to previous studies indicates that error patterns are influenced by task type, writing context, and methodological approach.

#### **4. CONCLUSION**

This study emphasizes that undergraduate EFL students still encounter difficulties in using correlative conjunctions in academic writing, particularly in maintaining grammatical parallelism and organizing sentence elements effectively. These difficulties indicate that students' challenges are not merely about recognizing conjunction pairs, but rather about their ability to construct structurally balanced and grammatically accurate sentences. The findings suggest that incomplete mastery of syntactic rules remains a key factor influencing

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students' errors, particularly in sentence organization and form accuracy. Therefore, grammar instruction should place greater emphasis on parallel structure, sentence construction, and syntactic awareness rather than focusing solely on the forms of correlative conjunctions. However, this study is limited by its relatively small sample size and its focus on specific forms of correlative conjunctions within a particular academic context, which may not fully represent broader EFL writing situations. Future research is recommended to involve larger, more diverse datasets, examine different genres of academic writing, and explore effective instructional strategies to improve students' ability to apply parallel structures accurately. Overall, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of grammatical error patterns in EFL academic writing and is expected to provide educators and researchers with valuable insights for developing more effective approaches to teaching grammar.

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