

**GRAMMATICAL CLASSIFICATION AND SYNTACTIC  
FUNCTIONS OF ENGLISH CONJUNCTIONS  
AND COMMUNICATIVE-CONTEXTUAL WAYS OF TEACHING THEM IN  
ESP CLASSES**

*O'qituvchi: f.f.f.d.(PhD), dotsent v.b. Abdimurodov D.D.*

**Mahammadiyeva Mashxura Maxmur qizi**

*Shahrisabz davlat pedagogika instituti Filologiya fakulteti,*

*Xorijiy til va adabiyoti yo'nalishi 4-kurs talabasi*

**Abstract:** *This article investigates the grammatical classification and syntactic functions of English conjunctions and proposes communicative and contextual approaches for teaching them in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) settings. The study synthesizes descriptive grammar, discourse-based writing research, and ESP pedagogy. The analysis confirms that conjunctions are not merely sentence-linking items but functional resources that shape clause relations, textual cohesion, and discipline-specific argumentation. Pedagogically, the article argues that conjunctions should be taught through needs analysis, genre-based noticing, grammar-in-context, task-based interaction, and writing revision. Such an approach is especially relevant for ESP learners who need grammatical accuracy and rhetorical control in professional and academic communication.*

**Keywords:** *conjunctions, ESP, grammar instruction, syntactic function, cohesive devices, contextualized grammar, communicative language teaching, genre-based pedagogy.*

In English language teaching, conjunctions are often introduced as a small grammar topic: words such as and, but, because, or if that join linguistic units. Yet in actual academic and professional communication, conjunctions carry a heavier load. They signal cause, qualification, limitation, sequence, choice, concession, and consequence; they shape the logical flow of argument; and they support cohesion and coherence across clauses, sentences, and paragraphs. For ESP learners, these functions become especially important because they write and speak in genres where precision and relationship marking are indispensable.

A learner of engineering English, for example, must explain processes and contingencies; a learner of medical English must describe evidence, conditions, and outcomes; a learner of business English must compare alternatives, justify decisions, and formulate recommendations. In all of these settings, conjunction choice is tightly linked to the professional purpose of discourse. Therefore, teaching conjunctions in ESP cannot be

reduced to memorizing lists. It must be tied to syntax, text organization, genre expectations, and communicative intent.

The purpose of this article is twofold. First, it provides an academically grounded account of the grammatical classification and syntactic functions of English conjunctions. Second, it develops a pedagogy for ESP classes that combines communicative and contextual principles. The discussion integrates foundational ESP literature, contemporary grammar-in-context research, writing studies on cohesive devices, and recent work on functional grammar in discipline-specific settings. This article uses a qualitative analytical design. It is not an experimental classroom study; rather, it is a theoretically informed pedagogical synthesis. Three strands of scholarship were combined. The first strand consists of descriptive grammar sources used to establish the major classes and functions of conjunctions. The second strand includes research on writing, cohesion, and grammar instruction, particularly studies examining explicit instruction of conjunctions, contextualized grammar teaching, and frequent learner errors in L2 writing. The third strand draws on ESP pedagogy, especially course development based on needs analysis and discipline-sensitive language instruction.

The analysis proceeded in four stages. First, the main grammatical types of conjunctions were identified and defined. Second, their syntactic and discourse functions were mapped. Third, common learner difficulties relevant to ESP settings were synthesized from the literature. Fourth, communicative and contextual teaching procedures were proposed by aligning grammar instruction with target genres and communicative tasks.

Because the aim is pedagogical applicability, examples in this article are oriented toward common ESP domains such as science, engineering, medicine, and business. This applied orientation is consistent with the view that grammar instruction becomes more effective when form is paired with function and when learners can immediately see the relevance of a structure to their disciplinary communication.

The literature consistently identifies two core grammatical groups of conjunctions: coordinating and subordinating conjunctions. Cambridge Grammar describes coordinating conjunctions as items such as *and*, *but*, and *or*, while subordinating conjunctions introduce dependent clauses, as in *because*, *if*, *when*, and *although*. In pedagogical grammar, a third set is commonly highlighted: correlative conjunctions, which operate in paired structures such as *either...or* and *not only...but also*. This three-way classification is especially useful in teaching because each group is associated with a different syntactic pattern and a different type of rhetorical work.

Coordinating conjunctions join units of equal grammatical status. They may connect words, phrases, or independent clauses. Their core value lies in signalling addition, contrast, alternative choice, or consequence. Subordinating conjunctions, by contrast,

establish dependency and specify a semantic relationship between the main clause and the subordinate clause. Correlative conjunctions require parallel structure and often support emphasis, balanced comparison, or restricted choice.

Syntactically, conjunctions do more than join. They regulate the architecture of clause relations. Coordinators enable coordination without subordination; subordinators create hierarchy; correlatives impose structural symmetry. These distinctions matter because they determine word order, punctuation, scope, and information packaging. Learners who know the meaning of a conjunction but ignore its syntactic behavior often produce grammatically awkward or rhetorically weak sentences.

For instance, *because* typically introduces a dependent causal clause, whereas *therefore* functions differently as a connective adverbial rather than a conjunction. Likewise, *but* coordinates two units, while *although* subordinates one proposition to another and creates a different discourse effect. Such contrasts are essential in ESP writing, where logical precision affects professional credibility. The analysis also confirms that conjunctions play a major role in text organization. In writing research, they are treated as cohesive devices, but their contribution goes beyond surface connection. They help writers stage information, qualify claims, introduce limitations, compare options, and guide readers through reasoning. This is particularly relevant in discipline-specific discourse, where acceptable argument development often depends on explicit signalling of logical relations.

Recent research on EFL medical students' writing, for example, reports that cohesion and cohesive devices are among the most frequent areas of error. This suggests that conjunction use is not a peripheral issue; it is central to the development of disciplinary writing competence. Similarly, research on explicit instruction of conjunctions as cohesive devices has shown improvements in paragraph writing quality, supporting the pedagogical value of targeted work on these items.

One reason conjunctions are difficult is that learners tend to acquire them first as lexical items and only later as syntactic and rhetorical resources. They may know that *because* expresses reason or that *although* expresses contrast, yet still misuse them in sentence structure or overuse them in inappropriate contexts. Another difficulty is first-language transfer. Learners often map L1 discourse patterns directly onto English and assume one-to-one equivalence between conjunctions across languages.

A further problem concerns overreliance on a narrow set of connectors. Student writers frequently repeat *and*, *but*, and *because* while underusing more nuanced alternatives or avoiding complex subordination altogether. This leads to flat prose, limited argument structure, and weak disciplinary style. Correlative conjunctions present an additional challenge because they require parallel syntax, something learners often violate.



A communicative approach treats conjunctions as tools for accomplishing professional purposes. In this view, the target of instruction is not the isolated form but the ability to use conjunctions while solving a task, explaining a process, defending a decision, or reporting an outcome. Task-based discussion, information-gap activities, and role-play are therefore highly suitable.

In an engineering ESP class, learners can be asked to explain system failure and propose corrective action. This naturally elicits because, if, unless, therefore, and while. In a business class, learners can compare two market strategies and defend a recommendation, which creates space for however, although, both...and, and not only...but also. Because communicative tasks generate genuine meaning pressure, conjunctions are learned as functional choices rather than inert labels.

Contextual instruction complements communicative practice by embedding conjunctions in authentic or near-authentic texts. Research on grammar-in-context suggests that students make fewer grammatical errors when grammar is taught through texts and integrated with writing rather than delivered as abstract rule explanation alone. In ESP, this principle is especially powerful because disciplinary genres provide rich patterns of conjunction use.

Genre-based teaching can begin with model texts. Students examine where conjunctions occur, what semantic relations they express, and why they are appropriate in that genre. In a lab report, for example, sequence and cause-result relations may dominate. In a recommendation memo, contrast and consequence may be more prominent. In a literature review, concession and addition often organize the argument. Through guided noticing, students learn that conjunction choice is shaped by discourse purpose.

Recent work in discipline-oriented language support has emphasized the pairing of grammatical form with communicative function. This is an important corrective to purely rule-driven teaching. Conjunction instruction benefits from asking not only What form is used? but also What does the writer or speaker need this form to do here? When learners answer both questions, grammar becomes interpretable and transferable.

From this perspective, conjunction instruction should proceed from function to form and back again. Learners first identify the discourse need: adding information, qualifying a claim, marking a condition, expressing a cause, or presenting a contrast. They then choose the grammatical resource most appropriate for that need. Finally, they test whether the chosen conjunction is syntactically and stylistically suitable for the target genre.

Based on the synthesis, a five-step instructional model is proposed. Step one is needs analysis: the teacher identifies the dominant genres and logical relations in the learners' field. Step two is noticing: students analyze authentic texts and classify conjunctions by function. Step three is controlled practice: learners complete sentence combining,

transformation, correction, and parallel-structure exercises. Step four is communicative production: learners perform simulations, case explanations, mini-presentations, or collaborative writing tasks. Step five is revision and reflection: conjunction use is reviewed during feedback, peer response, and self-editing.

This model reflects the core logic of ESP pedagogy. It aligns language instruction with target situations, integrates grammar with discourse, and moves from awareness to use. It also addresses a long-standing concern in grammar teaching: how to preserve accuracy without sacrificing meaningful communication.

The article has shown that English conjunctions deserve more serious treatment in ESP pedagogy than they often receive. Grammatically, they can be grouped into coordinating, subordinating, and correlative types, each with distinct syntactic behavior. Functionally, they organize relations within clauses and across texts. Rhetorically, they help writers and speakers build coherent disciplinary discourse.

For ESP learners, mastery of conjunctions is not simply a matter of grammatical correctness. It is a matter of professional clarity, textual cohesion, and genre awareness. Therefore, conjunctions should be taught through a combination of communicative tasks and contextualized textual analysis. When supported by needs analysis, explicit noticing, controlled practice, authentic production, and revision, conjunction instruction can contribute substantially to grammatical competence and to the broader communicative goals of ESP education.

## REFERENCES

1. Alawerdy, A. S., & Alalwi, F. S. (2022). Enhancing English as a Foreign Language university students' writing through explicit instruction of conjunctions as cohesive devices. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 13.
2. Amin, Y. N. (2015). Teaching grammar-in-context and its impact in minimizing students' grammatical errors. *Lingua Scientia*, 7(1).
3. Basturkmen, H. (2015). *Developing Courses in English for Specific Purposes*. Palgrave Macmillan.
4. Bell, P., & Collins, L. (2025). Grammar instruction in ESL coursebooks and in second language acquisition research: convergences and divergences. *TESL Canada Journal*, 42(1), 65–88.
5. Cambridge Dictionary. (2026). *Conjunctions and linking words - Cambridge Grammar*.
6. Ehsanzadeh, S. J., et al. (2024). Analysis of high-frequency errors and linguistic patterns in EFL medical students' writing. *Scientific Reports*, 14.

7. Ennis, M. J. (2020). *Approaches to English for Specific and Academic Purposes*. Routledge.

8. Martin, J. L. (2025). Grammar for Science: Pairing form and function for technicality, precision, and persuasion. *TESL Canada Journal*, 42(1), 111–135.

9. Salmani-Nodoushan, M. A. (2020). English for Specific Purposes: Traditions, trends, directions. *Studies in English Language and Education*, 7(1), 247–268.

