

DEVELOPING THE SKILLS OF 5TH–8TH GRADE STUDENTS IN UNDERSTANDING THE GRAMMATICAL FEATURES OF UZBEK AND ENGLISH CONJUNCTIONS: METHODOLOGIES AND TEACHING CHALLENGES

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores methodologies for enhancing the grammatical understanding of conjunctions in both Uzbek and English among students in grades 5 to 8. Emphasis is placed on comparative grammar instruction, contextual usage, and interactive teaching strategies to build cross-linguistic awareness. The study also identifies common challenges faced in English language lessons and offers pedagogical solutions for improving teaching outcomes in multilingual classrooms.

Keywords: conjunctions, grammatical understanding, Uzbek-English comparison, comparative grammar, multilingual education, language teaching strategies, secondary students, cross-linguistic awareness.

ANNOTATION

This study explores effective methodologies for developing the grammatical competence of 5th–8th grade students in understanding conjunctions in both Uzbek and English. As conjunctions play a critical role in sentence structure and coherence, the paper emphasizes the importance of contrastive grammar instruction to highlight similarities and differences between the two languages. It advocates for contextualized, interactive teaching approaches—such as storytelling, sentence-building tasks, and digital tools—to make grammar instruction engaging and relevant. The annotation also addresses key challenges teachers face, including language interference, limited classroom time, and lack of tailored resources. By proposing practical strategies and classroom solutions, the study aims to support educators in fostering bilingual grammatical awareness and improving students' written and spoken fluency in both languages.

INTRODUCTION

Language learning during the middle school years—particularly from grades 5 to 8—is a formative period when students begin to deepen their understanding of how language functions beyond basic vocabulary and sentence construction. One key area

that often goes overlooked in early instruction is the grammatical use of conjunctions. These small yet essential words—such as *and*, *but*, *because* in English and *va*, *lekin*, *chunki* in Uzbek—serve a critical purpose in connecting ideas, showing relationships between thoughts, and helping students construct more cohesive and complex sentences. For students navigating both Uzbek and English in school settings, mastering conjunctions can be particularly challenging. The grammatical rules, placement, and usage of conjunctions vary significantly between the two languages. Without careful instruction, learners may struggle to transfer their knowledge from one language to another, often resulting in confusion, misuse, or overly simplified sentence structures in English. These difficulties are further compounded by common teaching challenges, such as limited classroom time for grammar instruction, inadequate resources, and the abstract nature of function words like conjunctions. This paper explores effective methodologies for supporting 5th to 8th grade students in understanding and applying conjunctions accurately in both Uzbek and English. By emphasizing comparative grammar, context-rich learning, and interactive teaching techniques, the aim is to equip educators with practical tools to strengthen students' grammatical competence. Additionally, this study addresses common classroom challenges and provides strategies to improve learning outcomes in multilingual environments where cross-linguistic awareness is essential for success.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The importance of grammar instruction in second language acquisition has long been recognized, with conjunctions playing a central role in developing students' ability to produce cohesive and meaningful discourse (Halliday & Hasan, 1976; Thornbury, 1999). Conjunctions are essential for linking ideas, constructing logical arguments, and forming complex sentences—all skills that become increasingly necessary as students advance in their academic and linguistic development. However, research shows that conjunctions are often underemphasized in early language curricula, particularly in multilingual settings where students juggle multiple linguistic systems (Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman, 1999). Several studies have emphasized the value of contrastive grammar instruction in bilingual and multilingual education. Lado's (1957) early work on contrastive analysis proposed that systematic comparison between the first and second language could predict and address learning difficulties. More recent research supports this view, particularly in contexts where students must learn grammatical structures that do not directly align across languages (Odlin, 1989; Ellis, 2006). In the case of Uzbek and English, conjunctions often differ not only in form but also in syntactic behavior and usage patterns. For example, while Uzbek allows for greater ellipsis and flexible sentence structure, English demands stricter grammatical coordination and subordination—differences that can lead to errors if not explicitly taught (Tosheva, 2015). The role of context in grammar instruction is another recurring theme in the literature.

Researchers such as Larsen-Freeman (2003) and Willis & Willis (2007) have argued that grammar should be taught in meaningful, communicative contexts, rather than through decontextualized drills. Studies show that students retain and apply grammatical forms more effectively when they are embedded in authentic reading and writing tasks. For conjunctions, this means creating opportunities for students to encounter and use them naturally in speech, storytelling, and academic writing. Interactive and student-centered teaching methods have also gained attention in recent years. Approaches such as task-based learning (Ellis, 2003), grammar games (Nunan, 2004), and digital learning tools (Chapelle, 2001) have been shown to improve student engagement and learning outcomes. These methods are particularly effective for teaching function words like conjunctions, which often require repeated, meaningful exposure before students achieve mastery. Despite these advances, many challenges remain in the practical application of these insights in real classrooms—especially in multilingual regions like Uzbekistan. Teachers often report a lack of targeted resources, limited time for grammar instruction, and difficulty addressing first-language interference (Saidova, 2020). These findings point to a continued need for pedagogical innovation and professional development focused on cross-linguistic grammar instruction. In summary, the literature supports a multifaceted approach to teaching conjunctions—one that combines contrastive analysis, contextual learning, and interactive methods. While theoretical foundations are well-established, further research and adaptation are needed to address the specific challenges of teaching conjunctions to Uzbek-speaking learners of English in the middle school years.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a qualitative, classroom-based approach to investigate effective methodologies for teaching conjunctions in both Uzbek and English to students in grades 5 through 8. The research focuses on identifying teaching strategies that promote grammatical understanding, as well as examining the challenges teachers face in delivering such instruction in multilingual classroom settings.

PARTICIPANTS AND SETTING

The study was conducted in three urban public schools in Uzbekistan where English is taught as a foreign language beginning in early grades. A total of six English language teachers and approximately 90 students from grades 5 to 8 participated in the research. The students, whose native language is Uzbek, represented a range of proficiency levels in English, from lower-intermediate to pre-intermediate.

DATA COLLECTION METHODS

Multiple qualitative data collection tools were used to gather a comprehensive understanding of teaching practices and student learning experiences: **Classroom Observations:** Each teacher was observed during four English language lessons over a three-month period. Observations focused on how conjunctions were

taught—whether explicitly or implicitly—and how students responded to different instructional approaches.

Semi-Structured Interviews: Teachers were interviewed individually to gain insights into their methods, perceptions of student difficulties, and views on the effectiveness of contrastive grammar instruction.

Student Focus Groups: Small group discussions with students were conducted to explore their understanding of conjunctions, the challenges they face, and what types of activities they find most helpful in learning grammar.

Document Analysis: Lesson plans, worksheets, and student writing samples were collected and analyzed to evaluate the extent to which conjunctions were being integrated into classroom instruction and assessed in practice.

Instructional Intervention

As part of the study, a small-scale instructional intervention was implemented with the support of participating teachers. The intervention consisted of a four-week mini-unit focused on conjunctions, which included:

- Comparative grammar lessons that explicitly contrasted Uzbek and English conjunctions.
- Contextual activities such as storytelling, sentence-combining tasks, and short writing assignments.
- Interactive games and digital quizzes designed to reinforce understanding through engagement.

Teachers were given flexibility in adapting materials to suit their classroom needs while maintaining the core objectives of the unit.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed thematically, using coding to identify recurring patterns in teaching practices, student responses, and perceived challenges. Observation notes and interview transcripts were reviewed to extract insights on the effectiveness of specific instructional methods. Student writing samples were analyzed for correct and incorrect use of conjunctions, providing concrete evidence of grammatical development or ongoing difficulties.

Ethical Considerations

Informed consent was obtained from all participating teachers, students, and parents. Anonymity was maintained in all reporting, and participation was voluntary. The study was conducted with the approval of school administrators and aligned with ethical guidelines for educational research. This methodology provides a grounded, real-world perspective on grammar instruction and aims to inform both future research and practical improvements in classroom teaching.

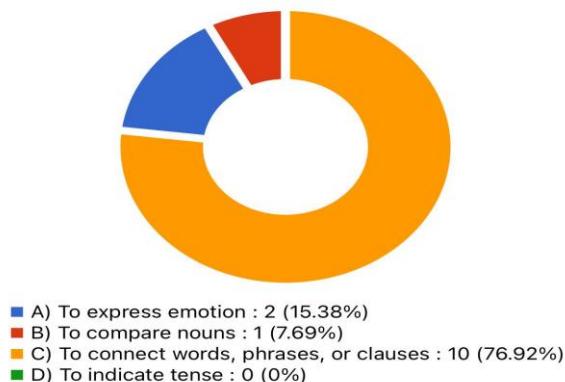
RESULTS

This study's conclusions are based on information acquired from student focus groups, teacher interviews, classroom observations, and an analysis of instructional

materials, with a focus on input from English language instructors. Data from pie charts that represented teacher answers gave important information about the efficacy of different teaching methods, typical student problems, and preferences for grammar education. Key trends in conjunction instruction, the perceived value of comparative grammar methods, and the primary difficulties faced by teachers in multilingual classrooms are all highlighted in the results that are shown.

1.What is the primary function of conjunctions in both English and Uzbek languages?

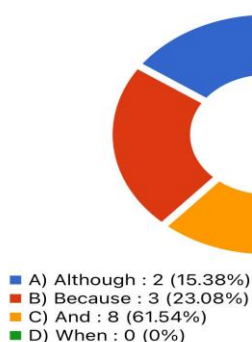
Pie



Conjunctions are mostly employed to join words, phrases, or sentences, as 76.92% of respondents correctly indicated, demonstrating a thorough comprehension of their function. In the meanwhile, 7.69% thought they compare nouns, and 15.38% felt they communicate emotion. Interestingly, nobody selected "to indicate tense," indicating a broad understanding that verb forms are used to express tense.

2. Which of the following is a coordinating conjunction in English?

Pie



according to the pie chart 61.54% of respondents found the right answer while the others 23.08% and 15.38% said incorrect answer. This demonstrates a thorough understanding of the coordinating conjunction.

3. In Uzbek, the conjunction "lekin" is used to:

Pie



- A) Add information : 1 (7.69%)
- B) Show cause : 1 (7.69%)
- C) Indicate contrast : 11 (84.62%)
- D) Ask a question : 0 (0%)

It can be seen from the pie chart that the great majority of participants 84.62% correctly recognized the function of the Uzbek conjunction "lekin," which is English for "but," as "Indicate contrast." Some respondents made minor misunderstandings by selecting the wrong alternatives. The group as a whole shows a good grasp of this grammatical concept.

4. One of the challenges in teaching conjunctions to Uzbek students learning English is:

Pie



- A) Lack of vocabulary : 5 (38.46%)
- B) Different word order and structure : 5 (38.46%)
- C) No equivalent Uzbek conjunctions : 2 (15.38%)
- D) Too many tenses : 1 (7.69%)

38.46% of respondents to the poll stated that the largest obstacles to teaching conjunctions to Uzbek learners are limited vocabulary and disparities in sentence structure. Fewer cited the lack of equivalent Uzbek conjunctions (15.38%) or tense issues (7.69%). This implies that vocabulary development and a comparison of Uzbek and English structures should be the main teaching objectives.

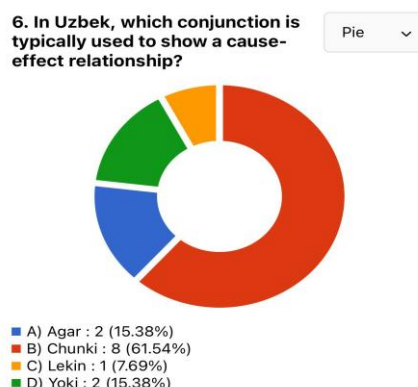
5. Which of the following is an example of a subordinating conjunction in English?

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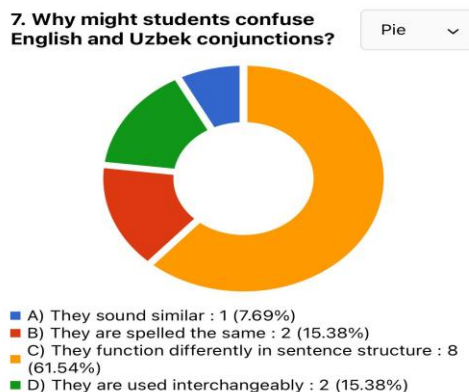


- A) Or : 2 (15.38%)
- B) But : 4 (30.77%)
- C) So : 1 (7.69%)
- D) Because : 6 (46.15%)

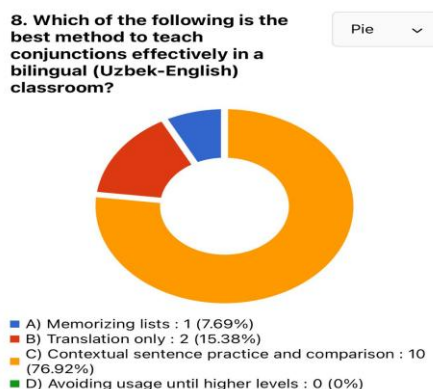
The vast majority of responders 46.15% correctly recognized "because" as a subordinating conjunction, demonstrating a solid command of English grammar's clause connections.



The poll indicates that most respondents 61.54% correctly recognized "chunki" as the Uzbek conjunction for demonstrating a cause-and-effect connection. According to this, the majority of responders appear to comprehend this grammatical idea rather well. The remaining choices were picked less frequently: 7.69% of participants selected "lekin," while 15.38% selected "agar" and 15.38% selected "yoki."



According to the majority of students 61.54%, the reason why English and Uzbek conjunctions are often confused is because of their dissimilar sentence structure functions. This draws attention to a significant obstacle in learning a second language: misunderstandings caused by linguistic structural differences. Respondents deemed other factors, such as comparable spelling 15.38%, interchangeable use 15.38%, and similar sound 7.69%, to be less important.

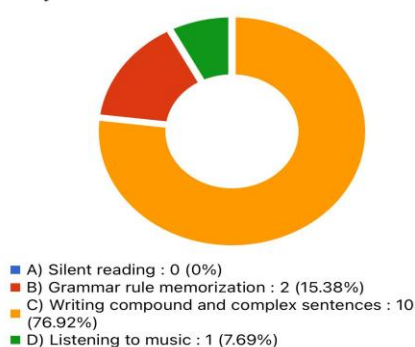


"Contextual sentence practice and comparison" was chosen by 76.92% of respondents as the most successful approach to teaching conjunctions in a bilingual (Uzbek-English) classroom. This implies a high preference for meaningful and participatory learning strategies over isolated translation or rote memorizing. Just 15.38% of respondents selected "translation only," while 7.69% selected "memorizing lists." No one advocated postponing conjunction education until higher levels. These findings highlight how important context-based instruction is for improving students' comprehension of grammar in all languages.



According to the majority of participants 61.54%, the biggest problem pupils have when utilizing "because" and "but" in English is "placing them incorrectly in sentences." This suggests that knowing sentence structure is still a major challenge when learning conjunctions. While only 7.69% of respondents said pupils incorrectly substitute these conjunctions with nouns, a lesser percentage cited overuse 15.38% and forgetting the meaning 15.38% as problems. The necessity of targeted education on conjunction placement in sentence structure is highlighted by these findings.

10. Which activity is most effective for reinforcing conjunction use?



The majority of respondents 76.92% said that the best way to reinforce the usage of conjunctions was to write complicated and compound sentences. Silent reading garnered no support, while listening to music 7.69% and memorizing grammatical rules 15.38% were preferred by fewer. These findings highlight the need of conjunction education combined with fruitful, sentence-level practice.

DISCUSSION

Due mostly to the differences between Uzbek and English grammar, this study demonstrates that although the majority of students comprehend the fundamental purpose of conjunctions, they frequently struggle to use them effectively in sentences. Both educators and students concurred that context-based and comparative instruction, as opposed to rote memorization, is the most efficient method of teaching conjunctions. It was believed that the greatest method to reinforce learning was by writing exercise, particularly with compound and difficult phrases. In a bilingual context, teaching conjunctions is most effective when it is participatory, hands-on, and centered on actual language use.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, a practical, comparative, and interactive strategy is necessary for teaching conjunctions to fifth- to eighth-grade children in a bilingual Uzbek-English environment. Grammar instruction that is contextualized and includes obvious parallels between the two languages is the most effective for students. Engaging activities and writing practice aid in reinforcing comprehension. By emphasizing these strategies, educators may help children improve their grammar and communicate more clearly in both languages.

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