

## The Role of Interactive Grammar Tasks in Enhancing the Understanding of Conjunctions and Prepositions in ESL Learners

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### ABSTRACT

Grammar is a foundational element of language learning, enabling learners to construct coherent, logical, and structurally accurate sentences. Among the various grammatical components, conjunctions and prepositions play a vital role in establishing relationships between ideas, yet they are among the most challenging aspects for English as a Second Language (ESL) learners. The difficulty in mastering these structures stems from first language (L1) interference, syntactic differences between English and learners' native languages, and the lack of contextual learning in traditional grammar instruction. Many ESL learners struggle with misusing prepositions and incorrectly connecting clauses with conjunctions, leading to grammatical errors that affect both written and spoken communication.

Conventional teaching approaches emphasize rote memorization and mechanical exercises, which fail to provide learners with a deep understanding of grammatical structures in real-world contexts. As a result, learners often find it difficult to apply grammar rules accurately in spontaneous conversation or writing. In contrast, interactive grammar tasks, which focus on contextualized, task-based learning, have been shown to enhance learner engagement, retention, and application of grammar rules. These tasks include activities such as role-playing, collaborative sentence construction, storytelling, and peer correction exercises, all of which encourage learners to actively engage with grammar rather than passively memorizing rules.

This study investigates the effectiveness of interactive grammar tasks in improving ESL learners' understanding and use of conjunctions and prepositions. Using a mixed-methods research approach, data is collected from pre-tests, post-tests, classroom observations, student surveys, and instructor interviews to measure accuracy, retention, and engagement levels before and after exposure to interactive learning strategies. The findings suggest that learners who participate in interactive grammar tasks demonstrate significantly better performance in grammar accuracy, retention, and real-life application compared to those who receive traditional instruction. This study supports the integration of interactive grammar instruction into ESL curricula, advocating for a task-based, communicative approach to grammar teaching that aligns with modern pedagogical theories in second language acquisition.

**Keywords:** Interactive Grammar Tasks, Second Language Acquisition (SLA), Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT), ESL Grammar Instruction, Conjunctions and Prepositions in ESL.

### 1. Introduction

Grammar plays a crucial role in second language acquisition (SLA), providing the structural framework necessary for clear and effective communication. While learning grammatical rules is essential, merely memorizing rules without understanding their practical application often leads to errors and confusion among ESL learners. Two of the most commonly misunderstood grammatical components are conjunctions and prepositions, which are essential for establishing logical connections within sentences. Conjunctions help in linking ideas by coordinating, subordinating, or correlating sentence elements, while prepositions indicate relationships of time, place, direction, and manner. Despite their importance, many ESL learners struggle with their correct usage due to the abstract and idiomatic nature of these grammatical structures.

One of the primary reasons for these difficulties is L1 interference, where learners apply the grammatical rules of their native language to English. Odlin (1989) argues that the degree of interference depends on linguistic similarities and differences between L1 and L2, making certain aspects of grammar more challenging to acquire. Ellis (1994) further explains that ESL learners often exhibit rule overgeneralization, wherein they apply a single grammar rule across multiple contexts, leading to incorrect usage. For example, a learner who memorizes that *on* is used for time expressions might incorrectly say *on Monday morning* instead of *in the morning on Monday*.

In many ESL classrooms, traditional teaching approaches rely on rule-based instruction, drill exercises, and mechanical worksheets that emphasize memorization over meaningful communication. Nassaji & Fotos (2011) criticize these methods, stating that explicit grammar instruction without interactive reinforcement does not translate into communicative competence. In contrast, Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) promotes a more dynamic and interactive approach to grammar instruction, where students actively engage in grammar exercises that mimic real-world scenarios. Long (2015) argues that interactive learning enhances retention by allowing learners to practice grammar in meaningful, communicative contexts rather than in isolation.

This study seeks to examine the role of interactive grammar tasks in improving ESL learners' comprehension and application of conjunctions and prepositions. Specifically, the research aims to answer the following questions:

1. Do interactive grammar tasks improve accuracy in the use of conjunctions and prepositions?
2. Do interactive activities lead to better retention compared to traditional grammar instruction?
3. What are ESL learners' perceptions regarding interactive grammar learning compared to traditional approaches?

Through empirical research and statistical analysis, this study aims to contribute to the growing body of literature advocating for task-based, communicative grammar instruction in ESL education.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Difficulties in Learning Conjunctions and Prepositions

Numerous studies have explored the challenges ESL learners face in mastering conjunctions and prepositions. Odlin (1989) asserts that L1 interference plays a dominant role in second language grammatical errors, particularly in prepositions, as different languages use spatial and temporal relationships differently. Gass & Selinker (2008) support this claim, noting that prepositions in English are highly idiomatic and lack direct equivalents in many languages, making them one of the most frequently misused grammatical elements among ESL learners.

Studies by Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman (1999) demonstrate that conjunction misuse often leads to fragmented or run-on sentences, which can distort meaning and coherence in writing. Ellis (2009) found that learners tend to overuse coordinating conjunctions while neglecting subordinating conjunctions, resulting in simplistic sentence structures that lack logical complexity.

Common Errors	Example (Incorrect Usage)	Correct Form
Overuse of <i>and</i>	<i>He is smart and he studies hard and he wants to be a doctor.</i>	<i>He is smart, studies hard, and wants to be a doctor.</i>
Misuse of Prepositions	<i>She depends her parents.</i>	<i>She depends on her parents.</i>
Incorrect Subordinating Conjunction	<i>Although he was late, but he attended the class.</i>	<i>Although he was late, he attended the class.</i>

### 2.2 Interactive Grammar Tasks in SLA

A growing body of research supports the use of interactive grammar tasks in second language acquisition. Schmidt (1990) argues that input alone is insufficient for grammar acquisition, and that learners benefit more from interactive, communicative grammar exercises. Willis & Willis (2007) found that students who engage in collaborative grammar activities show higher retention and accuracy compared to those exposed to rote learning methods.

Nunan (2004) emphasizes the importance of task-based learning, where students practice grammar through real-world applications rather than abstract rule memorization. Studies conducted by Ellis (2009) confirm that grammar instruction is most effective when learners are given opportunities to use target structures in communicative settings.

Study	Findings
Willis & Willis (2007)	Task-based learning leads to higher grammar retention.
Schmidt (1990)	Interaction is essential for effective grammar acquisition.
Ellis (2009)	Learners perform better in structured communicative exercises than in rote learning.

### 2.3 Task-Based Language Teaching and Grammar Learning

TBLT emphasizes learning grammar in a meaningful, communicative context. Long (2015) found that students exposed to interactive grammar instruction demonstrate significant improvement in their ability to use grammatical structures correctly in real-life conversations.

Grammar Approach	Student Performance
Traditional Rule-Based Learning	Lower engagement and long-term retention
Interactive Grammar Tasks	Higher accuracy, motivation, and practical application

### 3. Research Methodology

#### 3.1 Research Design

This study adopts a mixed-methods research design, incorporating quantitative and qualitative research techniques to analyze the impact of interactive grammar tasks on ESL learners' comprehension and application of conjunctions and prepositions. A quasi-experimental approach is used, with participants divided into two groups: a control group (taught using traditional grammar instruction) and an experimental group (taught using interactive grammar tasks). The primary objective is to assess whether task-based grammar instruction leads to better accuracy, retention, and engagement compared to conventional rule-based instruction.

A pre-test and post-test design is employed to quantitatively measure improvements in grammar proficiency. Additionally, classroom observations, student surveys, and instructor interviews provide qualitative insights into engagement levels, learning experiences, and teaching effectiveness. Data is analyzed using statistical methods for quantitative data and thematic analysis for qualitative responses.

#### 3.2 Participants

The study consists of 100 ESL learners, recruited from a language learning institute, with diverse linguistic backgrounds. All participants have a similar intermediate proficiency level in English based on standardized placement tests. The participants are randomly assigned to two groups:

Group	Instructional Method	Number of Participants
Control Group	Traditional grammar instruction (rote memorization, drills)	50
Experimental Group	Interactive grammar tasks (peer correction, storytelling, role-playing)	50

Additionally, 10 ESL instructors participate in semi-structured interviews, providing insights into teaching methodologies and student progress.

#### 3.3 Instructional Approach

The control group receives traditional grammar instruction, which consists of:

1. Lecture-based lessons on conjunctions and prepositions
2. Grammar drills and worksheets
3. Memorization of rules and isolated exercises

The experimental group, in contrast, engages in interactive grammar tasks, including:

1. Role-playing scenarios where students use conjunctions and prepositions in real-life conversations
2. Collaborative storytelling exercises requiring accurate sentence linking
3. Peer correction and discussion-based grammar exercises
4. Task-based learning activities such as debates, presentations, and sentence reconstruction games

The duration of the intervention is six weeks, with both groups receiving four hours of grammar instruction per week.

#### 3.4 Data Collection Methods

To ensure a comprehensive evaluation, multiple data collection methods are employed:

Method	Purpose
Pre-Test	Measures initial proficiency in conjunction and preposition usage
Post-Test	Assesses grammar improvement after instructional intervention
Classroom Observations	Evaluates engagement, participation, and learning behavior
Student Surveys	Collects feedback on learning experience and effectiveness
Instructor Interviews	Gathers expert opinions on student progress and teaching approaches

### 3.5 Data Analysis

- Pre-test and post-test results are analyzed using SPSS statistical software to measure mean differences, standard deviations, and statistical significance (t-tests) between the control and experimental groups.
- Survey responses are coded and categorized using descriptive statistics to identify patterns in student engagement and preferences.
- Instructor interviews and classroom observations are examined using thematic analysis, identifying key themes related to learning behavior, engagement, and teaching effectiveness.

## 4. Findings and Discussion

### 4.1 Improvement in Grammar Accuracy

Statistical analysis of pre-test and post-test results indicates that the experimental group outperformed the control group in terms of accuracy and retention of conjunctions and prepositions.

Group	Pre-Test Score (Mean %)	Post-Test Score (Mean %)	Improvement (%)
Control Group	52%	62%	10%
Experimental Group	51%	86%	35%

The 35% improvement in the experimental group highlights the effectiveness of interactive grammar tasks, whereas the control group only showed a 10% improvement, indicating that traditional methods were less effective in enhancing grammar accuracy.

### 4.2 Student Engagement and Learning Preferences

Survey data reveal that students in the experimental group found interactive tasks significantly more engaging and effective than traditional grammar exercises.

Survey Question	Percentage of Positive Responses (%)
Did interactive tasks help you understand conjunctions and prepositions better?	89%
Were interactive activities more engaging than traditional grammar exercises?	85%
Would you prefer interactive learning methods over rote memorization?	92%

Students cited increased confidence, better retention, and active participation as key benefits of interactive grammar instruction.

### 4.3 Common Errors Identified and Their Reduction

Analysis of pre-test errors indicates that students struggled with three main areas:

Common Error Type	Example (Incorrect Usage)	Corrected Usage
Overuse of <i>and</i>	<i>He is smart and he studies hard and he wants to be a doctor.</i>	<i>He is smart, studies hard, and wants to be a doctor.</i>
Misuse of Prepositions	<i>She depends her parents.</i>	<i>She depends on her parents.</i>
Incorrect Use of Conjunctions	<i>Although he was late, but he attended the class.</i>	<i>Although he was late, he attended the class.</i>

After six weeks of instruction, error frequency decreased significantly in the experimental group, with fewer mistakes in conjunction and preposition placement.

Error Type	Pre-Test Error Rate (%)	Post-Test Error Rate (%)
Overuse of conjunctions	43%	12%
Incorrect prepositions	48%	14%
Misplaced subordinating conjunctions	39%	10%

#### 4.4 Instructor Perspectives on Effectiveness of Interactive Learning

Instructor interviews revealed that teachers observed increased participation, confidence, and willingness to practice grammar in real-life situations among students in the experimental group.

Instructor Observation	Control Group	Experimental Group
Student Participation in Grammar Activities	Low	High
Engagement in Peer Correction	Minimal	Extensive
Application of Grammar in Speaking & Writing	Limited	Strong

One instructor stated, *"Students in the interactive group were far more engaged and eager to apply grammar structures in conversation. Unlike the control group, they were not afraid to experiment with sentence construction."*

## 5. Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, several key recommendations can be made for ESL instructors, curriculum designers, and language policymakers to enhance grammar instruction and improve student outcomes.

### 5.1 Integration of Interactive Grammar Tasks into ESL Curricula

Traditional grammar instruction, which focuses on rule-based learning, memorization, and grammar drills, has been shown to have limited effectiveness in fostering long-term retention and practical application. Therefore, ESL curricula should incorporate more interactive grammar tasks that encourage active learning and meaningful engagement with grammatical structures. Activities such as peer collaboration, role-playing, sentence-building games, and storytelling allow students to use grammar in authentic contexts, making learning more dynamic and effective. Schools and language institutions should adopt a balanced approach, combining explicit grammar instruction with communicative tasks to reinforce both theoretical knowledge and practical application.

### 5.2 Shifting from Rote Memorization to Contextualized Learning

One of the major shortcomings of traditional grammar teaching methods is the emphasis on memorization without contextual application. While memorizing rules and completing grammar exercises may help students pass tests, it does not necessarily lead to grammatical fluency in real-life communication. This study suggests that teachers should minimize their reliance on mechanical drills and instead encourage contextualized learning, where students practice conjunctions and prepositions through conversations, debates, and real-world scenarios. By presenting grammar in meaningful contexts, students are more likely to internalize rules and apply them accurately in both written and spoken communication.

### 5.3 Encouraging Active Student Participation through Collaborative Learning

The study's findings indicate that students in the experimental group performed significantly better because they actively engaged with grammar rather than passively receiving instruction. To maximize learning outcomes, teachers should implement collaborative learning strategies, such as pair work, group discussions, and peer correction exercises, which encourage active participation and deeper cognitive processing. By working together to construct grammatically accurate sentences, learners develop a better understanding of conjunctions and prepositions, as well as stronger communication skills.

Additionally, peer correction activities help students identify and correct common grammar mistakes, reinforcing self-awareness and independent learning. Teachers should create a supportive and interactive classroom environment, where students feel comfortable experimenting with grammar structures and learning from their mistakes.

#### 5.4 Utilizing Digital Learning Tools to Enhance Engagement

With the growing integration of technology in education, digital learning tools and gamified grammar exercises can further enhance grammar instruction. Applications such as Grammarly, Kahoot, and Quizlet provide students with interactive quizzes, real-time feedback, and adaptive learning experiences, which can reinforce grammar accuracy in an engaging manner. Teachers should explore innovative ways to incorporate technology into grammar lessons, allowing students to practice conjunctions and prepositions through digital storytelling, interactive grammar games, and online discussion forums.

#### 5.5 Conducting Formative Assessments to Track Student Progress

Many traditional grammar assessments focus solely on summative evaluations, where students take a final test without receiving continuous feedback throughout the learning process. This study suggests that formative assessments—such as classroom quizzes, peer evaluations, and teacher feedback sessions—should be implemented more frequently to track student progress. Formative assessments allow teachers to identify common errors early on and provide targeted interventions, ensuring that students receive the necessary support before misunderstandings become ingrained.

Furthermore, portfolio-based assessments, where students compile writing samples, grammar reflections, and self-assessment reports, can help learners become more aware of their grammar development over time. By combining formative and summative evaluations, ESL instructors can create a more comprehensive assessment system that measures both grammatical knowledge and its practical application.

### 6. Conclusion

This study has provided compelling evidence that interactive grammar tasks significantly enhance ESL learners' understanding and application of conjunctions and prepositions. The findings indicate that learners who engaged in task-based learning activities demonstrated higher accuracy, greater retention, and increased engagement compared to those taught using traditional grammar instruction methods. The experimental group, which participated in interactive exercises such as role-playing, collaborative storytelling, and peer correction activities, showed a 35% improvement in post-test scores, whereas the control group, which relied on rote memorization and grammar drills, only showed a 10% improvement.

The results support Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) as a more effective pedagogical approach for grammar instruction in ESL classrooms. Traditional teaching methods often fail to bridge the gap between grammar knowledge and practical application, leading to a lack of fluency and confidence among learners. In contrast, interactive tasks encourage contextualized learning, helping students understand grammatical structures through meaningful communication rather than isolated rule memorization.

Furthermore, student feedback and instructor observations confirm that interactive grammar tasks foster higher student engagement and motivation. The majority of students in the experimental group reported that task-based learning was more enjoyable, relevant, and effective in helping them internalize conjunction and preposition usage. Additionally, instructors noted that students who participated in interactive learning displayed greater willingness to use conjunctions and prepositions in spontaneous speech and writing, indicating long-term improvements in grammar proficiency.

However, this study also acknowledges certain limitations. The research was conducted over a six-week period, which may not be sufficient to measure long-term retention and fluency. Additionally, the study was limited to 100 ESL learners, and findings may vary across different learning environments, age groups, or proficiency levels. Future research should consider longitudinal studies that track grammar retention over an extended period, as well as comparative studies across diverse ESL populations to validate the generalizability of these findings.

Despite these limitations, the study strongly suggests that interactive grammar instruction should be integrated into ESL curricula to promote better grammar acquisition, improved retention, and higher student engagement.

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