

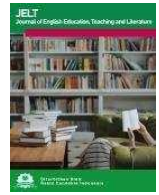


JELT

Journal of English Education, Teaching, and Literature

| e-ISSN: 3026-4812 |

<https://jurnal.rahiscendekiaindonesia.co.id/index.php/jelt>



The Strategy for Learning Main Clause and Subordinate Clause

Fauziah Amna Sipahutar¹, Nazwa Nadia², Romadhan Siregar³, Pausi Rahman⁴, Yani Lubis⁵

¹²³⁴⁵State Islamic University Of North Sumatra, Medan, Indonesia

KEYWORDS

Main clause, Subordinate clause, Clause structure, Teaching strategies

CORRESPONDING AUTHOR(S):

Email: fauziah0403232156@uinsu.ac.id

ABSTRACT

This article discusses the challenges faced by English language learners in understanding main and subordinate clauses. The research involved analyzing respondents who demonstrated difficulties in comprehending basic concepts, identifying conjunctions, and punctuating correctly. Findings revealed that 70% of respondents struggled to recognize conjunctions that mark subordinate clauses, and 60% of respondents experienced difficulties in punctuation. This research supports the importance of explicit instruction in learning clause structures, as well as the need for more visual and practice-based teaching strategies. Using diagrams, concept maps, and context-based exercises is expected to enhance students' understanding of clauses. The article suggests a shift from a theoretical approach to direct practice to help students overcome difficulties in learning clauses.

INTRODUCTION

Grammar plays a pivotal role in language acquisition. Effective language education necessitates a deep understanding of grammatical structures, enabling educators to effectively present and explain the intricacies of the target language. This includes a comprehensive understanding of sentence construction, encompassing the roles of verbs, nouns, and other grammatical elements like conjunctions and complements (Ba'dulu, 2008). A sentence is fundamentally a grammatical unit that begins with a capital letter and ends with appropriate punctuation. While writers often follow these conventions, inconsistencies

can still occur. These irregularities, frequently seen as incorrect punctuation or missing components, are commonly attributed to difficulties in mastering the target language's writing system or broader challenges in constructing coherent sentences. For instance, errors like sentence fragments or misplaced punctuation often reflect learners' struggles with grammar and syntax (Harmer, 2015).

Such challenges can hinder the development of complete and grammatically accurate sentences, particularly when understanding and using independent and dependent clauses. Addressing these issues through targeted instruction and practice is essential to improving learners' grammatical competence and overall language proficiency.

The mastery of clauses, particularly the distinction and interaction between main clauses and subordinate clauses, is critical for constructing grammatically correct and semantically coherent sentences. Main clauses, forming the core of a sentence, express a complete thought, while subordinate clauses, dependent on the main clause, add detail, nuance, or context. The effective integration of these clauses is crucial for conveying complex ideas and achieving clarity in writing. Difficulties in understanding and using clauses often lead to grammatical errors and impede effective communication. Recent studies have highlighted specific challenges faced by students in understanding clause structures. For instance, a study by Bitchener and Knoch (2016) found that learners often struggle with identifying and using subordinate clauses, which can significantly hinder their writing proficiency. Similarly, a study by Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman (2018) emphasizes the importance of explicit grammar instruction, particularly in teaching the nuances of clause usage to ESL students.

Understanding the complexities of clause structures is essential for both native and non-native speakers. For non-native speakers, mastering clauses is a significant hurdle in achieving fluency and accuracy. Research by Zhang (2020) indicates that non-native speakers often face difficulties in distinguishing between main and subordinate clauses, which can lead to confusion and errors in sentence formation. Additionally, a meta-analysis by Spada and Lightbown (2019) suggests that targeted instructional strategies, such as the use of visual aids and structured practice, can enhance learners' understanding of clause structures.

This study, therefore, aims to give effective strategy for learners in learning and using main and subordinate clauses. By employing a mixed-methods

approach that includes surveys of understanding material via gforms, and interview, this research seeks to contribute to the understanding of effective strategies for teaching and learning main and subordinate clauses, ultimately improving grammatical accuracy and communicative competence.

RESEARCH METHODS

This research is included in descriptive qualitative research. The qualitative research approach described by Patrik Aspers and Ugo Corte (2021) focuses on an in-depth approach to the phenomenon under study to generate a better understanding, an iterative process that is crucial in understanding language learning challenges, including clause structures.

In the context of clause learning, this research can utilize a qualitative approach to delve into students' experiences in understanding main and subordinate clause structures. This approach allows researchers to "get closer" to the phenomenon, for example, through interviews or analysis of students' error patterns. The emphasis on a deep understanding of the interaction between main and subordinate clauses, as shown in studies by Zhang (2020) and Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman (2018), aligns with the qualitative approach that highlights the iterative process between empirical data and theory.

The learning strategies described in this research—such as the use of visual aids, structured practice, and surveys—also reflect important qualitative elements, namely, approaching the material in depth to enhance students' understanding. Qualitative research allows for further exploration of how these methods are implemented and received by students, and how this impacts their grammatical mastery and communicative competence. By employing an iterative approach, this research can not only help understand students' challenges in learning clauses but also contribute to the innovation of effective teaching strategies, as described by Aspers and Corte.

Researchers can identify new significant distinctions in students' understanding and use of clauses, ultimately helping to develop better teaching theories in language education.

The population of this study was third-year students at the State Islamic University, North Sumatra, Ilmu Al-quran and Tafsir major and the sample was ten students. The instruments used to collect data in this research were question via gforms, and interview. The interactive model of data analysis, as described by Miles and Huberman (1992), analysis consists of three simultaneous activities: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing.

FINDINGS

1. Difficulty Understanding Basic Concepts

Respondents demonstrated significant difficulty in understanding the fundamental concepts of main clauses and subordinate clauses. This included a lack of clarity about the distinct functions and roles of these clauses in sentence construction. Main clauses, which are independent and convey a complete thought, were often confused with subordinate clauses, which are dependent and add additional detail or context to the main clause. Many respondents struggled to distinguish between the independence of a main clause and the dependence of a subordinate clause. For example:

"She is happy because she wins the game"

(Error: "because she wins the game" as a stand-alone sentence, indicating a failure to recognize its dependence on the main clause.)

They asked: ***"I thought both main and subordinate clauses have the same role because they have verbs and subjects."***

2. Difficulty Identifying Conjunctions

A significant proportion of respondents (70%) encountered challenges in recognizing conjunctions that mark subordinate clauses, such as *because*, *although*, and *if*. This difficulty often led to incomplete or grammatically incorrect sentence construction, as respondents failed to correctly connect clauses or ensure the grammatical accuracy of the subordinate clause.

Respondents struggled to identify subordinating conjunctions and their specific roles in linking dependent clauses to main clauses. For instance:

"He stayed at home although he tired."

(Error: the verb in the subordinate clause should be in the past tense to agree with the main clause.)

This reflects a lack of understanding that conjunctions such as *although* introduce subordinate clauses requiring proper grammatical alignment with the main clause.

Even when respondents could identify subordinating conjunctions, their usage was often inconsistent. Some respondents either omitted the conjunction entirely or placed it incorrectly within the sentence. For example:

"He missed the bus he was late."

(Error: the conjunction *because* was omitted, resulting in a fragmented sentence.)

3. Difficulty Placing Punctuation

Interviews revealed that 60% of respondents struggled to correctly place

punctuation marks in sentences containing subordinate clauses. This difficulty often disrupted the logical flow and readability of sentences, as improper punctuation failed to clearly indicate the relationship between the main and subordinate clauses.

A common issue was the omission of commas after subordinate clauses placed at the beginning of a sentence. For example:

"Because she was late she missed the meeting."

(Error: a comma is required after the subordinate clause to separate it from the main clause.) The lack of a comma can make the sentence harder to read, as it fails to signal the end of the dependent clause and the start of the independent clause.

Respondents also demonstrated confusion regarding punctuation placement when the subordinate clause appears mid-sentence. For instance:

"She stayed at home, because it was raining."

(Error: a comma before the subordinate clause is unnecessary in this context.) This suggests a misunderstanding of the rules governing when and where punctuation is required based on clause placement.

Some respondents used punctuation inconsistently, leading to sentences that were grammatically confusing or awkward. For example:

"Although he was tired, but he continued working."

(Error: combining a comma with an incorrect conjunction creates redundancy and grammatical inaccuracy.)

These errors highlight a lack of clarity about how punctuation interacts with conjunctions and the roles of clauses within a sentence.

4. Insights from Interviews

In addition to the questionnaire findings, interviews provided valuable insights into the learning challenges faced by respondents:

Some respondents stated that they needed direct guidance from teachers to understand the concepts of main and subordinate clauses in more detail. They emphasized the role of teachers in explaining complex grammar rules clearly.

Interviewer: "It is hard to learn clauses without someone explaining them clearly."

Respondents also highlighted the importance of practice in improving their understanding of clauses. They reported feeling more confident and capable after completing structured exercises designed to reinforce their learning.

DISCUSSION

Review of literature

These findings support the results of Zhang (2020) and Celce-Murcia & Larsen- Freeman (2018), which confirm that understanding subordinate clauses is often a challenge for English language learners. The difficulties found in this research are also consistent with Bitchener & Knoch (2016), who highlight the need for explicit instruction in learning clause structures.

Implications of Findings

1. Teaching Strategies

These findings underscore the importance of a more visual and practice-based teaching approach to help students understand the role of subordinate clauses.

For example, using diagrams or concept maps to illustrate the relationship between main and subordinate clauses. Context-based exercises such as completing sentences with appropriate clauses.

2. Shifting Learning Approach

A shift from theory to direct practice is needed. This approach aligns with the recommendations of Spada & Lightbown (2019), who suggest using structured exercises to improve students' understanding of sentence structure.

CONCLUSION

This research indicates that understanding main and subordinate clauses remains a challenge for many English language learners. Respondents struggled to grasp basic concepts, identify conjunctions, and punctuate correctly. These findings align with previous research emphasizing the need for explicit instruction in learning clause structures. Therefore, a more visual and practice-based teaching approach is crucial to help students understand the role and function of clauses. Using diagrams, concept maps, and context-based exercises can enhance student comprehension. Additionally, a shift from a theoretical approach to direct practice should be implemented to achieve a better understanding of sentence structure. By implementing more effective teaching strategies, it is expected that students can overcome the difficulties they face in learning main and subordinate clauses, ultimately improving their communication skills in English.

REFERENCES

- Aspers, P., & Corte, U. (2021). What is qualitative in research. *Qualitative Sociology*, 1-10.
- Ba'dulu, A. (2008). *Teaching and Learning Grammar: A Practical Guide*. Jakarta: Penerbit Universitas.

Bitchener, J., & Knoch, U. (2016). The role of written corrective feedback in

improving students' accuracy in second language writing. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, 31, 1-10.

Celce-Murcia, M., & Larsen-Freeman, D. (2018). *The Grammar Book: An ESL/EFL Teacher's Course* (3rd ed.). Boston: Heinle & Heinle.

Harmer, J. (2015). *The Practice of English Language Teaching*. Pearson Education.

Miles, M. B., & Huberman, M. (1992). *Analisis Data Kualitatif*. Jakarta: Penerbit Universitas Indonesia.

Spada, N., & Lightbown, P. M. (2019). Form-Focused Instruction: Isolated or Integrated? *Language Teaching Research*, 23(3), 354-373.

Zhang, Y. (2020). Challenges in Learning Subordinate Clauses: A Study of ESL Learners. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 30(2), 234-250.