

# Syntactic and Semantic Analyses on English Contrastive Conjunctions in Magazine Articles

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## Abstract

The aims of this study are describing and analyzing the kinds of contrastive conjunctions, the discourse units connected by the conjunctions, and their meanings found in *Discover* and *National Geographic* Magazine articles. This study employed descriptive qualitative method. The grand theory of conjunction proposed by Quirk et al.'s (1985) is used as theoretical framework in analyzing the data. The results of the study showed that there are four kinds of contrastive conjunctions found in the *Discover* and *National Geographic* magazine articles. They are reformulatory, replacive, antithetic, and concessive contrastive conjunction. The contrastive conjunctions can connect different sizes of discourse units. They connect sentence with sentence, sentence with larger unit (several preceding sentences), and connect subordinate clause to main clause. For the meanings of the contrastive conjunctions, they are fully determined by their own types. It implies that in determining the contrastive conjunction meanings, we should consider their types as well as the context and relationship between discourse units connected by them.

**Keywords:** contrastive conjunctions, syntactic and semantic analyses, magazine articles

## 1. Introduction

Cohesion in a written genre text is considered one of the important features. It is because a text functions to communicate ideas of the article's writer/contributor to the readers. Cohesiveness of a text, as first introduced by Halliday and Hassan (1976) cited in Kennedy (2003), can be gained through the use of 'logical connectors' or in Quirk et al.'s (1985) terminology 'conjunction'.

The importance of this kind of connector has also been emphasized in Liu's (2008) study in which he asserts that this kind of connector plays important role in discourse cohesion. Considering this matter, the writers first assume that the connector/conjunction has been widely used. However, some studies (Altenberg & Tapper, 1998; Bolton et al., 2002; Chen, 2006) have reported that there were difficulties experienced by English learners in using this kind of connector.

This circumstance has inspired and encouraged the writers to conduct a study on this topic. The writers fully expect that the result of this study will be helpful for nonnative English learners in understanding the use of conjunction particularly in their writing. It is also expected that by understanding this, the nonnative English learners will be able to improve their reading comprehension on English written texts.

The writers conduct this study to describe and analyze the contrastive conjunctions found in magazine articles both syntactically and semantically. It focuses on describing the kinds of contrastive conjunctions, the discourse units connected by the conjunctions, and their meanings. The writers focus the study to the contrastive conjunctions found in *Discover* and *National Geographic* Magazine articles.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Syntactic Unit

Syntax, as defined by grammarians like O'Grady, Dobrovolsky, Katamba, (1996), Radford (2004) and Tallerman (2005), is considered as the study of sentence construction or formation. In a broader sense, syntax also studies others construction such as clauses and phrases (Brinton, 2000; Tallerman, 2005). From the definitions, it can be inferred the elements of syntax studies (sentences, clauses, and phrases) are considered as syntactic units.

As one of syntactic units, a clause can be described as a construction consisted of two main elements: subject and predicate. Predicate itself, according to Quirk et al. (1985) and Kennedy (2003), can be subdivided into four elements: verb (V), object (O), complement (C), and adverbial (A).

Subject in a clause has function to tell the agent or doer of the action. It usually in the forms of noun or noun phrase. Verb (transitive and intransitive) conveys an understanding of the action expressed, or it conveys the state of the subject. Following the verb, there is another element called an object which functions to answer the question 'what?' or 'whom?'. Like a subject, an object usually comes in form of a noun phrase (pronoun, noun or noun clause). Another element that usually follows the verb is called as complement. A complement in a clause functions as elements which refers back to the subject. It means that a complement describes the situation or characteristics of the subject. The last subelements is adverbial. An adverbial has function to answer the

questions ‘when?’ or ‘where?’ or ‘why?’ or ‘how?’. It is usually realized in the form of single adverb, preposition/noun phrase, and adverbial clause.

In the following subsection, the writers will describe adverbial in detail since this clause element is the umbrella term of the contrastive conjunct. The description will cover the definitions and grammatical functions as proposed by grammarians.

## 2.2 Adverbial

As it is already defined in the previous section, the term ‘adverbial’ refers “words or groups of words that can modify sentences, verbs, adjectives or other adverbs” (Kennedy, 2003:238). Therefore, adverbials are also called as sentence modifiers. Leech and Svartvik (2002:177) put a quite similar definition by describing adverbial as a clause element which gives additional information “about the action, happening, or stated described by the rest of the sentence”.

In relation to the characteristics of adverbials, Biber et al (1999:762-763) list six characteristics of them as follow.

- 1) Adverbials perform a variety of functions: adding information, giving a speaker’s comment on the clause proposition, and serving connective function.
- 2) They fulfill a variety of semantic roles by expressing location, time, reason, concession, agency, and attitude.
- 3) Adverbials can be realized in the form of single adverbs, prepositional phrases, and clauses.
- 4) Adverbials can be placed in initial, medial, and in final position.
- 5) Multiple adverbials can occur in a clause.
- 6) Most adverbials are optional.

Regarding the adverbial functions, Quirk et al. (1985) and Kennedy (2003) identify four main grammatical functions of adverbials as follow.

### 1) Adjunct

As the most typical adverbials, adjuncts function to give information that answer the questions of where, when, how often, how, why, under what circumstances something occurs. Adjuncts can be subdivided into two: predication adjuncts (obligatory and optional) and sentence adjuncts.

### 2) Subjunct

Unlike other adverbials, subjunct is seen as having two kinds of subordinate role: wide orientation and narrow orientation. In wide orientation role, the subjunct becomes subordinate of the whole clause. Meanwhile, in narrow orientation the subjunct may be subordinated to certain clause element (usually the subject). Quirk et al (1985:567) have subdivided wide orientation subjuncts into two: viewpoint and courtesy subjuncts. They also subcategorized the narrow orientation subjunct into emphasers, intensifiers, item, and focusing subjuncts.

### 3) Disjunct

Disjunct adverbials are also known as sentence modifiers. It is because they may be placed outside the rest of the sentence (Kennedy, 2003). Some of disjunct’s characteristics are their superior role over other clause elements in which they are ‘superordinate’ of others and their characteristic of having a scope that extends over the sentence as a whole (Quirk et al., 1985). Disjunct can be classified into content and style disjunct. Content disjunct is used to comment the actual content and truth condition. On the other hand, style disjunct is used to convey the speaker’s comment on the style and form of the utterance.

### 4) Conjunct

Conjuncts are believed to share a similar characteristic with disjuncts in which conjuncts also have “a relatively detached and ‘superordinate’ role as compared with other clause elements” (Quirk et al., 1985:631). Conjuncts differ from disjuncts in which conjuncts serve the linking function. Regarding this linking function, there are seven types of conjunct that could be identified namely listing, summative, appositive, resultive, inferential, contrastive and transitional. In the following section, the writer will describe contrastive conjunct in a more detail since this kind of conjunct becomes the focus of this present study.

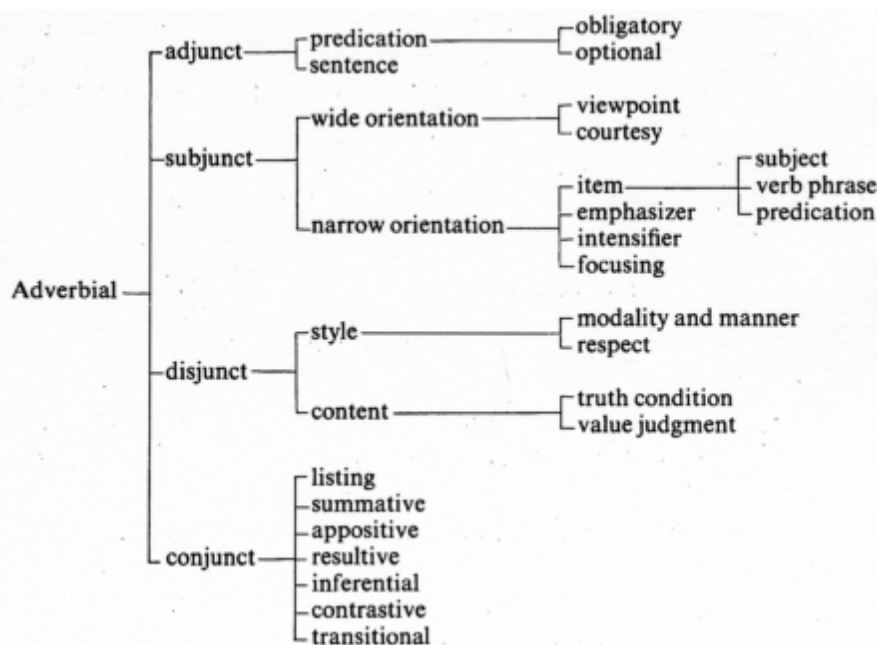


Figure 1. Quirk et al.'s Adverbials Grammatical Functions (1985:503)

### 2.3 Contrastive Conjunct

As can be seen in the figure 1, contrastive conjunct is one of seven types of conjunct in Quirk et al.'s classification of adverbials' grammatical functions. This kind of conjunct, according to Quirk et al (1985) has four subtypes: reformulatory, replacive, antithetic, and concessive.

All the four subtypes of contrastive conjunct has their own roles. Reformulatory contrastive conjunct has the role to add information to what has been said previously. Replacive contrastive conjunct is used when speaker/the writer withdraws an item, not to express it better but to replace it by a more important one. Antithetic conjunct is used when an item is contrasted with the preceding one by introducing a direct antithesis. The concessive indicates that one item is unexpected in the light of the other. The following sentences are the examples of the four subtypes.

- 1) He invited several friends, or *better*, several people that he thought were friends. (reformulatory)
- 2) He was opposed by his mother or, *rather*, by both his parents. (replacive)
- 3) He expected to be happy but *instead* he felt miserable. (antithetic)
- 4) She didn't get the award after all. *Still*, her results were very good. (concessive)

Other contrastive conjuncts are better, rather, more accurately, more precisely, alternatively, in other words (reformulatory); again, rather, better, worse, on the other hand (replacive); contrariwise, conversely, in contrast, by way of comparison (antithetic); however, nevertheless, nonetheless, in spite of that, in any case (concessive).

The roles mentioned above are closely connected with the contrastive conjuncts' meanings in sentence or other larger discourse units. Additionally, in some cases the roles may be overlapped. Therefore, it is necessary to put more attention and be careful in determining the types of contrastive conjuncts in order to be able to determine the precise meanings of them.

### 2.4 Semantics

When analyzing certain syntactic units in a sentence, it is possible to analyze them not only from their syntactic features but also from their meanings. When considering the meaning, it means we study the units semantically or we apply semantics in studying the units.

As it is already acknowledged, semantics in one of linguistic branches that studying meaning. This is in line with Saeed's (2001:3) statement that "semantics is the study of the meanings of words and sentences."

Dealing with the meaning, there are two kinds of meaning that should be considered: lexical and grammatical meaning. Lexical meaning refers to the words' meaning as stated in a dictionary or "having the same meaning as vocabulary or dictionary" (Lyons, 1995:47). In other words, lexical meaning refers to the meaning of the word itself without connection with other words or contexts. Grammatical meaning, on the other hand, is a meaning derived from the relation between elements in a sentence construction, for example: "*Alma loves playing piano*", *Alma* equals with the subject grammatical meaning (the agent who loves playing piano).

### 3. Methodology

This study is considered as a qualitative descriptive study. It describes the kinds of contrastive conjuncts, their function regarding discourse units that are connected by them, and their meanings.

As stated in the introduction section, the data for this study are contrastive conjuncts found in magazine articles. The writers choose articles from *Discover Magazine* January/February 2015 edition and *National Geographic Magazine* January 2015 edition as the data sources.

The procedures of collecting the data are sorting the sentences in the articles. The next step is identifying the contrastive conjuncts in the data sources. The last is displaying the emerged contrastive conjuncts as the corpus data.

After collecting the data, the writers describe and analyze the data syntactically and semantically. The syntactic analysis involves classifying and describing types of the contrastive conjuncts found in the articles. It also involves determining the discourse units connected by the conjuncts. The semantic analysis is determining the meaning of the contrastive conjuncts. The writers use Quirk et al.'s (1985) conjunct theory as the grand theory which is supported by other grammarians like Biber et al (1999 and Kennedy (2003).

### 4. Data and Analysis

#### 4.1 The Analysis of Kinds of Contrastive Conjuncts

After collecting the data, it is found that the four subtypes of contrastive conjuncts are emerged in the *Discover Magazine* (DM) and *National Geographic Magazine* (NGM) articles. Those are reformulatory, replacive, antithetic, and concessive conjuncts as described in the following subsection.

##### 4.1.1 Reformulatory Contrastive Conjunct

Data (1) This frozen state — intangible and invisible to human eyes — is a brand-new behavior for light. And Houck is planning a bigger device with 200 wires. Such a system may help scientists understand matter's behavior when it gains or loses mass or energy. **In other words**, freezing photons could help shed light on the material world. (DM, 32)

Data (2) "That implies to me that these people didn't just arrive here." **In other words**, whoever lived here wasn't just passing through; they knew this land and its resources intimately. (NGM, 137)

**In other words** in data (1) and data (2) are both considered as reformulatory contrastive conjuncts since both of them function to add information about what has been said previously. **In other words** in data (1) adds information about the characteristic of freezing photons and **in other words** in data (2) adds information about the reason why people decide to live in the land.

##### 4.1.2 Replacive Contrastive Conjunct

Data (3) Perhaps the explosion of creativity we see on the walls of these caverns was inspired in part by their sheer depth and depth and darkness—or **rather**, the interplay of light and dark. (NGM, 57)

In data (3) the contrastive conjunct **rather** is classified as replacive contrastive conjuncts because it replace the previous statement (*their sheer depth and depth and darkness*) by a more simple and clearer description (*light and dark*).

##### 4.1.3 Antithetic Contrastive Conjunct

Data (4) But 11- and 12-month-olds showed more activity in their auditory systems when they heard their native language. When they heard foreign words, **on the other hand**, it was their motor systems that lit up on the brain scan, indicating they had to work harder to imitate them. (DM, 73)

Data (5) The researchers expected the children who'd watched the videos to show the same kind of learning as the kids tutored face-to-face. **Instead**, they found a huge difference. (NGM, 71)

On the other hand in data (4) and instead in data (5) show the contrast relationship between the preceding and the following sentence. **On the other hand** in data (4) is used to contrast the preceding statement about students' brains auditory systems activity when heard native language with the following statement about their motor systems activity when heard foreign language. **Instead** in data (5) show the contrast about the researcher expectation with what they found.

##### 4.1.4 Concessive Contrastive Conjunct

Data (6) Viewed from most angles, the block reflects light like a mirror. At exactly 55 degrees from vertical (35 degrees from the block itself), **however**, it appears transparent, totally clear. (DM, 53)

Data (7) Some uncertainty would still persist because cosmologists don't fully grasp the underlying physics behind inflation. But the story of our universe's first moments would, **nevertheless**, come into sharper focus than ever before — far beyond what many observers had deemed possible. (DM, 17)

Data (8) The virus that causes dengue has four types, and the vaccine appears more effective against some than others. **Still**, researchers say it holds great promise for combating the disease. (DM, 30)

Data (9) Ocher is common in this part of Africa and has been used for millennia for everything from body paint to a food preservative. This piece, **though**, was different: Roughly 75,000 years in the past, some clever person had carefully etched on it a pattern of overlapping, parallel, triangular markings. (NGM,

39)

Data (10) **In spite of** the harsh conditions, the richness of the archaeological sites indicates that population sizes in the Aurignacian were growing. (NGM, 44)

Data (11) Tourism is largely absent here—one comes to Lagos strictly to do business—and **yet** at the same time it is a strangely inviting place, a city of optimists. (NGM, 92)

All the contrastive conjuncts above (data 6-11) are concessive contrastive conjuncts. They indicate that the following item is unexpected. For example, **in spite of** in data (10) show concessive relationship in which although in bad condition, the Aurignacian populations were still growing.

#### 4.2 The Analysis of Discourse Units Connected by Contrastive Conjuncts

From the collected data, it is found that contrastive conjuncts can connect different size of discourse units. In this study, contrastive conjuncts connect sentence with sentence, sentence with several preceding sentences, and subordinate clause to the main clause. The following are the examples of each of them.

##### 4.2.1 Contrastive Conjuncts Connected Sentence with Sentence

Data (12) According to Anderson, that upends the traditional belief that the brain perceives feelings first and then processes them in its emotional centers. **Instead**, seeing and feeling both happen at the same time. (DM, 76)

Data (13) In the first few months of their lives, babies show a knack for discriminating between sounds in any language, native or foreign. Between six and 12 months of age, **however**, they start losing the ability to make such distinctions between similar phonetic sounds in Mandarin. (NGM, 71)

**Instead** in data (12) and **however** in data (13) connect the previous with the following sentence. They directly show the relationship between two sentences.

##### 4.2.2 Contrastive Conjuncts Connected Sentence with Several Preceding Sentences

Data (14) This frozen state — intangible and invisible to human eyes — is a brand-new behavior for light. And Houck is planning a bigger device with 200 wires. Such a system may help scientists understand matter's behavior when it gains or loses mass or energy. **In other words**, freezing photons could help shed light on the material world. (DM, 32)

Data (15) The dark matter detectors currently operating are so technologically sophisticated as to resemble Fabergé eggs constructed for the delectation of future archaeologists. One of them, the two-billion-dollar Alpha Magnetic Spectrometer, is perched on the International Space Station and hunts for evidence of dark matter particles colliding near the center of our galaxy. Most of the detectors, **however**, look for interactions between particles of dark matter observable universe, covering the southern night sky up to ten times each month. (NGM, 115)

**In other words** in data (14) and **however** in data (15) connect the following sentence with several preceding sentences in which **in other words** connects the subsequent sentence with several preceding sentences about *frozen photons* and **however** connects the subsequent sentence with several preceding sentences about *the detectors*.

##### 4.2.3 Contrastive Conjuncts Connected Subordinate Clause with Main Clause

Data (16) No one knew, **though**, whether the water would make it that far downstream. (DM, 25)

Data (17) If I had the right kind of income, **of course** I'd live on the island," he said. (NGM, 92)

Both in data (16) and in data (17) the contrastive conjuncts **though** and **of course** are used to connect the subordinate clause to the main clause. In data (16), **though** connects the *wh-* subordinate clause to the preceding main clause. In data (17), **of course** connects the *if-* clause to the following main clause.

#### 4.3 The Analysis of Contrastive Conjuncts' Meanings

As mentioned earlier, the meanings of contrastive conjuncts are closely related to their roles. Therefore, to analyze their meanings, the writer took the examples data based on the kinds of contrastive conjuncts found in the magazine articles.

Data: "That implies to me that these people didn't just arrive here." **In other words**, whoever lived here wasn't just passing through; they knew this land and its resources intimately. (NGM, 137)

Analysis: The second sentence in the data above contains reformulatory contrastive conjunct **in other words** which is used to add information to the previous sentence. The sentence above has the meaning that the speaker assumed that the reason of people to live in that place was not only that they suddenly arrived there but also because they already knew the place together with its resources.

Data: Perhaps the explosion of creativity we see on the walls of these caverns was inspired in part by their sheer depth and depth and darkness—or **rather**, the interplay of light and dark. (NGM, 57)

Analysis: The sentence in the data above contains replacive conjuncts **rather** which is used to replace the previous unit with a better explanation. The meaning of this sentence is that the explosion activities seen in the caverns' walls were precisely generated by the interaction between light and dark.

- Data: But 11- and 12-month-olds showed more activity in their auditory systems when they heard their native language. When they heard foreign words, *on the other hand*, it was their motor systems that lit up on the brain scan, indicating they had to work harder to imitate them. (DM, 73)
- Analysis: The second sentence in the data above contains antithetic conjunct *on the other hand* which has role to contrast the preceding and the following sentence. Therefore, the sentence means that the auditory systems of infants of 11- and 12-month-olds were more active when they heard their native language whereas when they heard foreign language, what were more active was their motor system.
- Data: The virus that causes dengue has four types, and the vaccine appears more effective against some than others. *Still*, researchers say it holds great promise for combating the disease. (DM, 30)
- Analysis: *Still* in the second sentence above is one of concessive conjunct used to show that one item is unexpected in the light of the other. Thus, the sentence above might mean that although the vaccine is only effective for some of dengue viruses, the disease can be cured.

## 5. Conclusion

This study revealed that all four subtypes of contrastive conjuncts (reformulatory, replacive, antithetic, and concessive) as proposed by Quirk et al. (1985) are found in the *Discover* and *National Geographic* magazine articles. The contrastive conjuncts found are *in other words* (reformulatory), *rather* (replacive), *on the other hand*, *instead* (antithetic), *however*, *nevertheless*, *still*, *though*, *in spite of*, *yet*, *at the same time*, *of course* (concessive). The contrastive conjuncts found in this study can connect different sizes of discourse units. They connect sentence with sentence, sentence with larger unit (several preceding sentences), and connect subordinate clause to main clause. In this study, there is also found that the meanings of contrastive conjuncts in sentences are correlated with their semantic roles (their types). Moreover, to determine their meanings, it is also necessary to consider the context and relationship between discourse units.

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