

# A Comparative Study of the Effects of Two Process-oriented Writing Tasks on Iranian EFL Learners' Conjunction Use in Writing

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**ABSTRACT:** Writing is one of the most difficult skills for EFL learners. In advanced level writing, attention to conjunctions and their usages are very important. This study tries to find a way for improving writing skill by focusing on instruction of coordinating, correlative and transitional conjunctions. After assessing the groups' homogeneity by using a PET test and a writing task as a pre-test, the researcher randomly assigned them into two comparison groups. One group received model essays in the form of cloze activities (conjunctions were omitted). The other group received an enhanced version of a model essay in which three kinds of conjunctions were bolded and underlined. Upon completion of the treatments, both groups were administered a posttest. The results showed that students who had access to cloze activities improved their writing better than students who had access to input enhancement.

**Keywords:** *Cloze Activities, Conjunctions, Formal Instruction, Input Enhancement, Writing Skill*

## INTRODUCTION

As Zamel (1983) mentioned, writing involves the exploration of ideas and thoughts in the process of putting them on paper and the selection of the most appropriate forms to express exactly what one wishes to say. Chastain (1988) pointed out that "Most students, both in their native language and in the second language, have received minimal or no instruction in learning how to write. They receive feedback, - often unhelpful because it is incomprehensible to them- on the product they have submitted for correction and grading, but no one has led them through the process of generating ideas, organizing them into a coherent sequence, and putting them on paper." (p. 251)

Escholz (1980) focused on promoting students to discover their own writing problems. Writing is one of the most difficult skills for learners. There are several ways to improve students' writing, most of which are not effective. However, helping students to discover the correct forms besides formal instruction may be a good method for teaching writing (Marzban & Mokhberi, 2012; Rahimpour & Salimi, 2010; Sahebkhair & Assadi, 2014). So, the researchers in this article tried to improve students writing through cloze activities and input enhancement. Some studies showed effective role of input enhancement on the acquisition of target forms (Abadikhah & Shahriyarpour, 2012; Bakori, 2007; khoii & Tabrizi, 2011; Moaiyedi, 2013; Sang-Ki & Hung-Tzu, 2008). Among these studies, some of them (e.g. Abadikhah & Shahriyarpour, 2012; Bakori, 2009; khoii & Tabrizi, 2011; Sahebkhair & Davatgari, 2014) used input enhancement along with output — a reconstruction task involving learners in the production of input passage as accurately as possible after reading it. Some research (e.g. Sahebkhair & Assadi, 2014; Steinman, 2002; Taylor, 1953) founded the effective use of cloze activities as a teaching instrument for students to practice using context clues as a reading strategy. In their teaching, the methods of teacher-made cloze activities, rational deletion and accepted word scoring were combined with the negotiation of comprehension of the text and discussion of the word choice after the completion of cloze activities. To gain better understanding of input enhancement and cloze activities, we will discuss the usefulness of them as instructional methods in detail.

According to Long and Robinson (1998), formal L2 instruction should give most of its attention to exposing students to oral and written discourse that mirrors real-life, such as job interviews, writing letter to friends, and engaging in classroom debates, nonetheless, when it is observed that learners are experiencing difficulties in the comprehension and or production of certain L2 grammatical forms, teachers and their peers are obligated to assist them notice their erroneous use and/ or comprehension of these forms and supply them with the proper explanations and models of them. Moreover, teachers can help their students and learners can help their peers notice the forms that they currently lack, yet should