AN EXPLORATORY STUDY ON WRITTEN CORRECTIVE FEEDBACK IN THE USE OF CONJUNCTIONS AMONG MALAYSIAN ESL LEARNERS

EVON LEE YIN CHENG

FACULTY OF LANGUAGES AND LINGUISTICS
UNIVERSITY OF MALAYA
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ABSTRACT

This study explored the extent of influence of metalinguistic corrective feedback on Malaysian ESL learners' appropriate and inappropriate use of conjunctions and investigated the learners' perceptions on the use of metalinguistic corrective on conjunctions use in writing practice. 30 students were recruited as samples in this mixed-method study and data were collected from three different sources: students' essays, questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. This study obtained 90 writing assignments in the form of three essays from 30 students to explore the extent of influence of metalinguistic corrective feedback on the learners' appropriate and inappropriate use of conjunctions. Survey questionnaire were gathered from the 30 students and subsequently six students (two high proficiency, two intermediate proficiency, and two low proficiency) were interviewed to investigate the learners' perceptions on the use of metalinguistic corrective on conjunctions use in writing practice. The appropriate and inappropriate use of conjunctions for each category: additive conjunctions, causal conjunctions, temporal conjunctions, and adversative conjunctions were counted for three writing assignments (expository essay, cause and effect essay, and problem-solution essay). The results showed that additive conjunction was most frequently used by the learners whereas adversative conjunction was least frequently used. In addition, the results also displayed positive influence of metalinguistic corrective feedback on the ESL learners' use of conjunctions as the percentage of appropriate use shows positive increasing trend and the percentage of inappropriate use gradually decreased for all four categories of conjunctions for each subsequent writing task. Based on the response from the survey questionnaire, the findings generally revealed positive perceptions by the ESL learners on metalinguistic corrective feedback in three main aspects: the helpfulness of coded metalinguistic corrective feedback, their feelings receiving metalinguistic corrective feedback in their

writing, and their preferences on receiving feedback. Last but not least, the interview also discovered the learners' positive perceptions on the efficacy of metalinguistic corrective feedback focusing on the feedback as mediator tool, a trigger for noticing, and a favourable correction aid for conjunctions use in writing in this study.

ABSTRAK

Tujuan utama kajian ini dijalankan adalah untuk mengkaji pengaruh strategi maklum balas metalinguistik untuk meneliti penggunaan kata hubung yang sesuai and tidak sesuai dalam penulisan serta mengkaji persepsi pelajar terhadap penggunaan strategi maklum balas metalinguistik dalam penulisan. Data kajian gabungan kaedah kuantitatif dan kualitatif ini merangkumi 90 esei yang ditulis oleh 30 pelajar warganegara Malaysia yang sedang melanjutkan pelajaran di dalam institusi pengajian swasta. Di samping itu, borang soal selidik turut dikumpul daripada 30 pelajar tersebut bersertakan sesi temubual dengan 6 pelajar (dua pelajar berkebolehan tinggi, dua pelajar berkebolehan pertengahan, dan dua pelajar berkebolehan rendah dalam Bahasa Inggeris) terpilih daripada kumpulan pelajar yang sama. Berdasarkan keputusan yang diperolehi, strategi maklum balas metalinguistik menunjukkan kata hubung gabungan paling banyak digunakan dan kata hubung pancangan paling kurang digunakan oleh para pelajar. Malahan, didapati keberkesanan dalam meningkatkan penggunaan kata hubung yang sesuai dalam penulisan semakin meningkat dan penggunaan kata hubung yang kurang sesuai dalam penulisan semakin menurun bagi setiap esei, maka mempengaruhi prestasi penulisan para pelajar. Hasil soal selidik yang dikumpul turut memperlihatkan persepsi yang positif terhadap penggunaan strategi maklum balas metalinguistik dalam tiga aspek utama: kelebihan penggunaan kod maklum balas metalinguistik, perasaan pelajar terhadap menerima maklum balas metalinguistik dalam penulisan mereka, dan pilihan utama pelajar bagi maklum balas metalinguistik. Akhir sekali, hasil temu bual mendapati pelajar mempunyai persepsi yang positif terhadap efikasi strategi maklum balas metalinguistik terutamanya sebagai alat pengantara, faktor perhatian, dan bantuan pembetulan bagi penggunaan kata hubung dalam penulisan untuk penyelidikan ini.

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LIST OF SYMBOLS AND ABBREVIATIONS

For examples:

%	:	Percentage
ZPD	:	Zone of Proximal Development
CF	:	Corrective feedback
ESL	:	English as Second Language
EFL	:	English as Foreign Language
L2	:	Second Language
WCF	:	Written Corrective Feedback
EAP	:	English for Academic Purposes
SPM	:	Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia
MCE	:	Malaysian Certificate of Education
GCE	:	General Certificate of Education
H1	:	Student 1 with high proficiency
H2	:	Student 2 with high proficiency
I1	:	Student 1 with intermediate proficiency
I2	:	Student 2 with intermediate proficiency
L1	:	Student 1 with low proficiency
L2	:	Student 2 with low proficiency

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.0   Background of the study

The skill to produce well-constructed texts is often essential to achieve success in educational settings across various subjects in the curriculum aspect. However, writing is constantly a daunting and challenging component for learners simply because writing is indeed a complex process which requires the comprehensive knowledge base of grammar, vocabulary, syntax, and comprehension. According to Berman and Cheng (2010), students perceive the productive components, speaking and writing, as more difficult compared to listening and reading.

Although numerous studies for writing focused mainly on grammar and content (Gustilo & Magno, 2012; Vardi, 2012), another essential element in writing, organization, should also be given equal importance. Ghasemi (2013) emphasized that "Language learners indispensably need to write coherent and cohesive texts if they wish to prove to be qualified English writers, whether they are EFL or ESL learners" (p. 1615). Majority of academic assignments at tertiary level comprise of written coursework and examinations which emphasize the importance of being able to write coherently. Basturkmen and von Randow (2014) underlined that, "In EAP, cohesion and coherence are often discussed in conjunction. Cohesive devices can contribute to text coherence as they can guide the reader." (p. 15). Thus, most students utilize the use of connectives in their writing to produce a good and cohesive piece of assignment. In addition, as cited in Muftah Hamed (2014), Ting (2003) highlights that "conjunctions are important elements for creating coherent texts; their presence should cause coherence and hence contribute to the quality of the text" (p. 109).

Besides the issue on coherence, evaluation and marking techniques on students' writing generally vary across different levels and institutions, thus students are not properly trained to respond effectively to the evaluation or feedbacks they receive from their teachers (Louw, 2008). Students nowadays tend to be dependent on their teacher's feedback as a yardstick of their academic performance. If students are not provided with clear and effective feedback, they will most likely be deprived on further learning progress and remain incompetent in the language. According to Ellis (2012), there are two dimensions of corrective feedback (CF): "strategies for providing CF" and "how students respond to the feedback". Studies have proven favourable effects for indirect and direct CF (Ferris, 2006). The coded metalinguistic corrective feedback strategy has proved to be more effective as compared to other strategies in assisting the process of L2 writing, (Sheen; 2007, Ferris; 2006). The nature of metalinguistic corrective feedback which combines both explicit and implicit feedback would be ideal to accommodate learners of different proficiency levels.

This study will consider a sociocultural viewpoint when administering metalinguistic corrective feedback where learning takes place as a social phenomenon. One of the key concepts of sociocultural theory includes mediation. It can be agreed that language is the most important symbolic tool that mediates greater forms of human mental development. According to Vygostsky (1978), optimal learning progress which results in internalization is achieved in the zone of proximal development (ZPD). Based on this notion, learning is the capacity of achieving something under the learner's mediation in the ZPD. Typically, mediation is bridged with assisted learning through verbal or written medium, and in this study's case, written metalinguistic corrective feedback as a mediation tool between the teacher and students.

1.1 Problem statement

Writing challenges is a common dilemma in the teaching and learning process, especially for ESL and EFL learners. This issue has been gradually growing from lower to higher levels of learning in institutions. "A major challenge that universities and lecturers face is improving the written output of their students" (Vardi, 2012). Additionally, more and more students are deprived of independent learning skills due to the nature of the typical Malaysian learning culture of being dependent on their teachers from primary to secondary levels. As they embark on higher education degree in Malaysia, the students find themselves desolate and despairing when lecturers are no longer spoon-feeding them or able to provide them as much attention or guidance. Due to the nature of large size classes (typically more than 50 students in each class) in some Malaysian universities, the students are expected to rely on themselves, or collaborate with their course mates to complete their assignments. However, their learning progression may be disrupted when they submit their assignments but do not receive much or clear feedbacks from their lecturers. Because of that, students would probably then find themselves in a limbo as they lack a clear sense of direction to further improve themselves. It has been identified that one of the dimensions of writing problems is coherence. Generally, Malaysian students employ the use of conjunctions for coherence in their writing (Nuruladilah Mohamed, 2016). As cited in Vardi (2012), "One major area of difficulty identified is coherence: how students integrate one part of the text with another" (p. 167). Furthermore, difficulties in the selection, sequencing, and clustering of content; imbalances and lack of comprehensiveness in the introduction, body, and conclusion of the texts; and ambiguous or insufficient indications and signals to guide the reader through the text have been identified (Kaldor, Herriman, & Rochecouste, 1998). Thus, this study's intention is to explore Ellis's (2012) concept of two dimensions of corrective feedback: "strategies for providing CF" and "how students

respond to the feedback" focusing on the influence of metalinguistic feedback on ESL learners' appropriate and inappropriate use of conjunctions for writing and to elicit students' responses to the feedback provided on conjunctions in their written assignments.

1.2 Significance of the study

Firstly, the two main issues most of the studies (Evans et al.; 2010, Vardi; 2012, Eyengho & Fawole; 2013, Ebadi; 2014, Chen et al.; 2016) generally focus on are conducted within a cognitive framework: the effects of corrective feedback on language progression and evaluations of different corrective feedback strategies on learners. Due to the insufficient studies on corrective feedback from a sociocultural point of view, Chen, Lin, and Lin (2016) recommended that, "The finding of these studies have been inconclusive so researchers propose that a sociocultural perspective should be considered to provide innovative insights for CF research. Currently, few studies on corrective feedback have been conducted from a sociocultural perspective, especially from the ZPD theoretical perspective." (p. 90). Secondly, Chen, Lin, and Lin (2016) further stressed that "considering the fact that most present studies have been carried out in laboratory contexts, with focus on learners' end products, there is further work to be done in terms of more longitudinal qualitative studies tracing individual learners' developmental process during their engagement with CF in naturalistic settings" (p. 90). Echoing this stance, this study is conducted in natural classroom learning setting with no experimental 'treatments' given to the students. The data collected from this research can contribute to the current pool of knowledge on the use of metalinguistic corrective feedback as a tool for teachers to provide written feedbacks in classrooms as opposed to the indirect technique of circling and underlining errors or having to spend more time giving oral feedback to each student individually. As stated in Park et al. (2015), "It

would be pedagogically important to examine the utility and potential benefits of indirect feedback (which requires less time from teachers) by examining to what extent learners successfully perceive the target of the indirect feedback, and whether or not they are able to self-correct their own errors when given the chance to do so" (p. 2). Therefore, the findings of this study will contribute to the pool of knowledge in the field of metalinguistic corrective feedback from a more sociocultural point of view.

1.3   Aims of the study

According to Ellis (2012), there are two dimensions of corrective feedback (CF): "strategies for providing CF" and "how students respond to the feedback". Following his ideas, this study aims to explore the extent of influence of metalinguistic corrective feedback on the ESL learners' appropriate and inappropriate use of conjunctions and to investigate the learners' perceptions on the use of metalinguistic corrective on conjunctions use in writing practice.

1.4   Research questions:

1. To what extent does metalinguistic corrective feedback influence ESL learners' appropriate and inappropriate use of conjunctions for writing?

2. What are the ESL learners' perceptions on the use of metalinguistic corrective feedback for conjunctions in writing?

1.5 Conclusion

This chapter outlines the relevant background information to the study. The next chapter will review the key concepts relevant to this study such as the concepts of metalinguistic corrective feedback, research conducted on corrective feedback and studies on conjunctions among others.

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.0 Introduction

This chapter discusses theories and empirical studies related to written corrective feedback in writing. The first section of this chapter deliberates the theories and hypothesis related to written corrective feedback. The second section of this chapter presented research evidences of written corrective feedback, followed by strategies of corrective feedback, significances of metalinguistic feedback, arguments for and against corrective feedback as well as learners' feedback on strategies and writing for written corrective feedback. Finally, the importance and functions of cohesion will be elaborated in this chapter.

2.1 Theoretical perspectives

For the past three decades, sociocultural theory and Noticing hypothesis remain to be influential in the studies of English as Second Language learning among researchers. These studies have brought impacts and establishments in the field of language learning and acquisition in various contexts.

2.1.1 Sociocultural theory

Sociocultural theory is reflected as a basis from Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) where "the distance between the actual development level as determined by independent problem solving" being associated to "the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance, or in collaboration with more capable peers" (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86). This theory underlines that learning for humans is fundamentally a social process. For example, in Sampson (2012), his study stated that "this distance constitutes the difference between what a

person can achieve when acting alone and what the same person can accomplish when acting with support from someone else" (p. 495).

Lev Vygotsky (1978) pioneered the fusion of applying psychology theories in learning acquisition where he conferred that "a child acquires knowledge through contacts and interactions with people as the first step, then later assimilates and internalises this knowledge adding his personal value to it" in Turuk (2008, p. 246). In other words, Vygotsky then claims that what happens in school is a form of natural growth, "Students do not merely copy teachers' capabilities; rather they transform what teachers offer them during the processes of appropriation" (Turuk, 2008, p. 246).

Many would concur, that the sociocultural theory significantly influenced the field of education and second language teaching. Vygotsky's sociocultural theory has been extensively referred to in second language learning studies (Donato, 1994; Ohta, 2000; Gutiérrez, 2003). The era where learning no longer functions in ways where learners absorb and regurgitate what is being taught by their teachers has emerged. The process of learning then becomes a process of discovery and understanding on the learners' part. In Turuk's study (2008), Vygotsky is detailed as the pioneer for sociocultural theory which became a platform in the development of advanced forms of learning capabilities such as "voluntary attention, intentional memory, logical thought, planning, and problem solving" (p. 245).

According to Lantolf (2000), as cited in Kao (2010), "Mediation is a central concept of sociocultural theory" (p. 115). The fundamental view of sociocultural theory features that the human mind is mediated. Through mediation, different tools can facilitate learners' learning and improve their abilities. Thus, according to Vygotsky, "mediation represents the use of tools, which refers to things which are adopted to solve a problem or reach a goal", as cited in Kao (2010, p. 116).

On the other hand, William and Burden (2009) indicate that *mediators* can possibly be individuals such as parents, teachers or even peers who hold an significant role in steering the child's learning "by selecting and shaping the learning experiences presented to them" (p. 40). Any form of interaction or exposure to people with different skills or knowledge generally results in effective learning, which then helps learners to advance to the next level of understanding or learning progress. Rather than merely be knowledge providers and guides, mediators should ensure they provide learners with the essential knowledge and skills, and continuously mould them to become self-directed learners as advocated by Williams and Burden (1997), education should function as "not just theories of instruction, but with learning experiences meaningful and relevant to the individual, with developing and growing as a whole person".

The writing process is technically a mediated task where learners use various resources or tools that they have learned to formulate the content of writing. It can be contended that sociocultural theory complements with feedback as a tool for mediation when feedback is given by the teacher in hope to help improve the learners' writing. Thus, numerous literatures on second language pedagogy advocate the relevance and impact of sociocultural theory in L2 learning which includes writing (Barnard & Campbell, 2005; Nikolay, 2015).

Recent years, researchers such as Bitchener, (2012), K. Hyland and F. Hyland, (2006), and Polio, (2012) highlighted that interaction relationship in the social context should be focused more in corrective feedback and the means on how to accommodate corrective feedback to individual learners. Thereafter, only few studies (e.g. Nassaji & Swain, 2000; Rassaei, 2014) executed to investigate the potential role from sociocultural viewpoint.

Lantolf and Thorne (2007) proposed that students receiving help of other means within ZPD in the form of corrective feedback can potentially enable the L2 learners to progress independently or, to become self-regulated in sociocultural terms. Therefore, Sociocultural Theory supports that corrective feedback may contribute its efficacy to L2 learning if it is aligned carefully with learners' ZPD.

2.1.2 Noticing hypothesis

Noticing is considered to be a certain degree of awareness that encompasses understanding, noticing, and detection by attracting learners' selective attention. Schmidt (1990) hypothesized that noticing is a crucial condition for L2 learning, thus what is noticed becomes intake. According to Schmidt (2010), the noticing hypothesis highlighted that "input does not become intake for language learning unless it is noticed, that is, consciously registered" (p. 722). This means, the learner must notice and attend to features of the knowledge that they are receiving in order for the knowledge to become a source of learning intake. As stated in Asiah Kassim and Ng (2014) study, noticing, hypothesis testing, and metalinguistics are the three functions of the Output hypothesis (Swain, 2005). It is stated that when noticing of specific linguistic item ensues in a language production, language acquisition is achieved and the "gap" in learners' interlanguage system is bridged with the information through noticing. In order for learning to be effective, De Bot, Lowie and Verspoor (2005) highlighted that, "it is commonly accepted that some level of attention is required to be able to notice something, and that noticing is crucial in obtaining new information or uptake" (p. 8). For noticing to take place, teachers can initiate their students to direct their attention to various important aspects for writing, such as content, organization, and grammar in the learning setting. Over the years, evidence and studies that claim noticing has a significant effect on ESL and EFL learning continue to accumulate. Logan, Taylor, and

Etherton (1996) stressed that "people learn about the things they attend to and do not learn much about the things they do not attend to" (in Schmidt, 2010, p. 725).

On the opposite end of the spectrum, some researchers contended that noticing may not be a necessary action to be taken for learning to take place. Tomlin and Villa (1994) argued that unconscious learning without intention is possible and that noticing is a conscious effort and learning experience. It is also highlighted by Iwanaka (2011) in his study, that Schmidt (1990) indicated "it should be made clear that he has not claimed that noticing is necessary and sufficient for L2 learning" (p. 57).

Ultimately, noticing hypothesis remains to be an important element in the learning process, as Carroll (1966) stressed the importance of noticing as a necessary element in almost any discipline: "In learning a skill, it is often the case that conscious attention to its critical features and understanding of them will facilitate learning" (p. 105).

2.2   Written corrective feedback

Written corrective feedback has come a long way to play its role in the pedagogical arena. Earlier studies on written corrective feedback since the past decades pioneered by Lalande (1982) and Robb et al. (1986) remain to be a popular field of research for language acquisition and further expanded to English as Second Language (ESL) or English as Foreign Language (EFL) learning. Lyster and Ranta (1997) classified six different categories for both oral and written corrective feedback: clarification request, explicit feedback, recasts, metalinguistic feedback, elicitation, and repetition. Today, written corrective feedback categories structured by Ellis (2009) is the most universally used: direct feedback, indirect feedback, metalinguistic feedback, focused/unfocused feedback, electronic feedback and reformulation feedback. According to Ellis (2009), "the typology of corrective feedback strategies encompasses two dimensions; (1)

strategies for providing corrective feedback (for example, direct, indirect, or metalinguistic feedback), (2) how students respond to the feedback (for example, revision required, attention to correction only required)." (p. 97). The terminology for various written corrective feedback strategies varied across numerous literatures but they can be generally classified as *direct* and *indirect* (Bitchener, 2008).

2.2.1 Strategies of written corrective feedback

2.2.1.1 Direct corrective feedback

Generally for direct corrective feedback, teachers provide correct form in learners' output such as eliminating unnecessary word or phrase, indicating missing word or morpheme, and providing the accurate form near or above the error made (Bitchener, 2008, p. 105). The main advantage for this form of feedback is where learners are provided with clear guidance or corrections to mend their errors. Ferris and Roberts (2001) perceived that feedbacks for low levels of proficiency students, direct corrective feedback is possibly better than indirect corrective feedback. With the direct corrective feedback provided to learners, they will be more inclined to correct their errors. Also, Sheen (2007) suggested that in the case of building acquisition proficiencies for specific grammatical items, direct corrective feedback can be more effective in particular for low intermediate ESL or EFL learners. Bitchener and Knoch's (2008c) study reported that "those more in favour of direct feedback suggest it is more helpful to students because it (1) reduces the type of confusion that they may experience when they fail to understand or remember, for example, the meaning of error codes used by teachers, (2) provides them with sufficient information to resolve more complex errors in, for example, syntactic structure and idiomatic usage, (3) offers more immediate feedback on hypotheses that may have been made" (p. 415). As cited in Park et al. (2015), Bitchener and Knoch (2010) study compared three different types of feedback (two

types of direct feedback, and one indirect feedback via circling errors) and found significant benefits were conserved in a delayed post-test for the two direct feedback groups, but not for the indirect feedback group. Bitchener and Knoch (2010) further recommended direct feedback with simple 'meta-linguistic explanation, in forms of clarification of rule(s) with example(s)' for learners' long term retention. Conversely, one of the disadvantages of this feedback is that it limits processing and constructive learning for the learner. Hence, direct feedback may not have a greater impact on long-term learning although it potentially helps them to identify the correct form when the students revise their writing.

2.2.1.2   Indirect corrective feedback

Indirect corrective feedback involves in signifying that an error has been made by the student but without providing them with correct forms. With indirect feedback, an error is stressed to the student's attention using various strategies such as underlining or circling errors, writing in errors in the margin of a given line, confirmation checks, and requests for clarification (Bitchener, 2008). According to Ferris (2004), "indirect error correction technique occurs when the teacher indicates that an error has been made but leaves it to the students to solve the problem, and correct the errors" as cited in Eyengho and Fawole (2013, p. 1614).

At the same time, the teacher is in the position of determining whether or not to indicate the exact location of the error when evaluating. The main advantage of indirect corrective feedback according to Lalande (1982), this approach tailors to learning with guidance and problem solving skills, and motivates students to reflect and process the linguistic forms, thus assuming the possibility to promote long-term learning (Ferris & Roberts, 2001). Additionally, as cited in Asiah Kassim and Ng (2014) study, Storch and Wigglesworth (2010) suggested that in contrary to direct corrective feedback, indirect

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corrective feedback can potentially be more effective to help learners' learning process and retaining accurate linguistic forms in written assessments. While direct corrective feedback proved to provide more efficacies with grammatical errors, indirect corrective feedback was found to be more effective with non-grammatical errors i.e. spelling and punctuation which is equally as essential in writing (Van Beuningen, De Jong, & Kuiken, 2012). On the other hand, one main disadvantage of indirect corrective feedback would be for less proficient learners as they may not be able to mend their errors if they are unsure of the correct form. Although learners may attempt to correct their errors but they cannot be certain that they are doing it correctly.

2.2.1.3   Metalinguistic corrective feedback

Metalinguistic feedback can be regarded as one of the more systematic feedback as this involves providing some mode of explicit comment to the learners on the errors they have made; (1) using error codes (i.e. abbreviated codes for various types of errors indicated in the text or margin), (2) metalinguistic explanations of their errors (i.e. providing metalinguistic remarks or numbering errors at the end of the text). Schmidt (1993) and Sheen (2007) define metalinguistic feedback as a method that involves "the careful and systematic location of an error by the teacher and providing the correct form by explaining the correct term or metalinguistic code" as cited in Eyengho and Fawole (2013, p. 1614). In other words, this method of metalinguistic written corrective feedback "combines elements of both direct and indirect CF with the purpose of saving students' time and frustration while still pushing them to take initiative to reflect and to draw on their own resources, which might lead to student-generated repair" (Sun, 2013, p. 22).

2.2.2 Significance of metalinguistic feedback

Providentially, metalinguistic feedback has been proven to be beneficial for learners in writing. Lizotte (2001) studied the effect of coded written corrective feedback with Hispanic bilingual and ESL students in a U.S. community college, and he reported that over one semester, both groups of students reduced errors in their writing significantly. Greenslade and Félix-Brasdefer (2006) on the other hand conducted a study to investigate the effects of two types of indirect written corrective feedback (coded vs. underlining) on learners' capacity to self-edit on two-draft composition. The researchers reported that even though both types of corrective feedback strategies helped the Spanish students to write substantially more accurate, the coded feedback strategy presented more effectiveness in enabling learners to self-correct. In another investigation conducted by Sheen (2007), a comparison of direct and metalinguistic corrective feedback were reported to be effective in improving accuracy in the students' use of articles in subsequent writing which was done promptly upon receiving the corrective feedback treatment. Ultimately, metalinguistic corrective feedback proved to be more effective than the direct corrective feedback in the long term as observed in students' new piece of writing written two weeks after the treatment. Based on the study by Bitchener and Knoch (2010), three treatment groups of advanced ESL learners who received only one-time treatment on the two focused functional uses of the English article system which include: (1) written metalinguistic description with examples but no direct correction, (2) circling of errors, and (3) written metalinguistic WCF along with a 15 minutes oral review and discussion. The study resulted in all three treatment groups outperforming the control group in the immediate post-test. In a more recent study by Van Beuningen, De Jong, and Kuiken (2012), the effectiveness of comprehensive direct and coded written corrective feedback with 268 Dutch secondary schools students with multilingual backgrounds in the context of Dutch immersion

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content-based course were investigated. The study's results showed that both direct and coded corrective feedback groups equally outperformed the control group on the measure of accuracy.

2.2.3 Arguments for and against written corrective feedback

As conveyed by various researchers, Truscott (1996, 1999, 2004, 2007) contended his views that error correction as impractical and also detrimental to the accuracy in students' writing. Truscott (1996) refuted that grammar correction is counter effective and harmful for L2 writing. In his study, he disapproves of corrective feedback as the teaching practices are dependent on the transfer of knowledge, providing corrective feedback hinders the processes underlying the development of the language system. Thus in his opinion, as language development system is complex, students cannot be expected to reproduce the correct structure or form if they are corrected before. Moreover, as Truscott (1996) believe there is a natural sequence of acquisition for all learners, corrective feedback will be futile if the learners are not ready to receive the corrections. Traditionally, students acquire grammatical rules and structures in a specific and progressive order as they learn the English language. Hence, according to Truscott, corrective feedback is not operative if learning sequences are not consistent with the feedback given by the teachers. In a separate recent study, it is found that corrective feedback may affect the learners' motivation and self-esteem in the process of mastering the language skills. For instance, Sampson (2012), "upon finding that their communicative competence is sufficient for conveying most meanings in most situations, may feel little motivation to eliminate errors even when these are corrected by a teacher" (p. 495). Additionally, due to the limited level of proficiency, corrective feedback can result in negative light. Thouësny (2011) found that some students in her failed to attend to the metalinguistic corrective feedback provided because they could

not comprehend the linguistic terms listed in the metalinguistic corrective feedback such as auxiliary, indirect object, pronoun.

However, despite Truscott's claims against corrective feedback, several studies collectively agree that corrective feedback aids language learner in improving their accuracy in writing. To negate Truscott, Ferris (1999) stated that there are effective methods to respond to error correction in L2 writing as writing is a complex process. Moreover, Chandler (2003) examined the effect of corrective feedback on the efficacy of corrective feedback in writing. In the study, 31 students were distributed into two groups and the students were educated in the same way and at the same time received the same feedback. The main difference was the students received different treatments. The underlined errors were instructed to be corrected for the experimental group before handing in their second assignment whereas the control group was instructed to make corrections after the first drafts were submitted. Chandler (2003) found that the experimental group of students who completed their corrections after being given corrective feedback performed better than the control group students. This ascertained that students who took the initiative to make corrections after receiving corrective feedback improved in their writing accuracy. Babalola and Akande (2002) further stressed that students' writing should be properly corrected especially for second language learners to ensure consistent learning progress. A number of studies on error correction received acknowledgments from teachers that this strategy indeed helps improve in accuracy overtime (Sommers, 1982; Chandler, 2003; Hyland, 2003). As highlighted in Asiah Kassim and Ng (2014) study, Peterson and McClay (2010) stated that "most teachers believe corrective feedback is imperative to help students know what is wrong and what is right with their work" (p. 119-120).

2.2.4 Learners' views on written corrective feedback

2.2.4.1 Learners' preferences on written corrective feedback strategies

Among the indirect feedback strategies, it can be perceived that metalinguistic feedback is generally preferred by most learners. Chandler (2003), Carless (2006), and Nakazawa (2006) reported that their students preferred coded written corrective feedback, even though there was not any significant difference of effect between the coded or uncoded corrective feedback found in their study. In a more recent study by Guénette and Simard (2013), the participants commended indirect written corrective feedback by stating that it was the only means to learn, by discovering for the right answer independently. In Hyland and Hyland (2006), it is stated that studies also suggest that students are keen to receive written corrective feedback along other sources, including sessions of discussions (Arndt, 1993; Hedgcock & Lefkowitz, 1994) and they are also positive towards indirect feedback on errors that give them indications rather than forms of corrections since they acknowledge that it encourages them to be more responsive in their use of feedback (Arndt, 1993; Saito, 1994). Anderson's (2010) study further revealed that students desire and appreciate receiving corrective feedback on their errors. Learners in his study reported to prefer "direct corrective feedback with an explanation (86%) or indirect metalinguistic corrective feedback (69%)" (p. 92), over other corrective feedback strategies.

2.2.4.2 Written corrective feedback in writing

Corrective feedback has come a long way and proved to be an important component in helping and improving students' writing. As highlighted by Ramsden (1998), "effective feedback to students has been identified as a key strategy in learning and teaching" (p. 143) as cited in Poulos and Mahony study in 2008. In consideration with

various correlated aspects in writing besides level of language proficiency such as time constraint, corrective feedback serves as a systematic and effective strategy for teachers to address large number of students' error in writing. "Feedback must therefore be seen as an opportunity for learning and encouraging an orientation towards learning goals; feedback must indicate how the student can develop in respect of future work" (Knight & Yorke, 2003, in Poulos & Mahony, 2008, p. 144). Due to the nature of writing being a complex process for students, a teacher's feedback is crucial for learning to be achieved by the students. However, by giving the correct forms to replace their errors do not necessarily promote learning for the students as it lack thinking effort. According to Park et al. (2015), "it would be pedagogically important to examine the utility and potential benefits of indirect feedback (which requires less time from teachers) by examining to what extent learners successfully perceive the target of the indirect feedback, and whether or not they are able to self-correct their own errors when given the chance to do so". By doing so, learners can continue to progress and be better writers. Metalinguistic corrective feedback role in improving learners' writing proficiency is gaining prominence in recent studies. Ferdouse's (2013) study in Stanford University Bangladesh reported that with the assistance of corrective codes provided by the teacher, Group A students resulted to become more proficient in writing adept paragraphs. Her study also revealed that the learners gained more advantages from receiving coded feedback as compared to non-coded feedback. In Ebadi's study (2014), 30 Iranian intermediate EFL students were given focused meta-linguistic feedback and significant progress was found, "Employing focused meta-linguistic CF improves Iranian EFL learners writing ability. In other words, employing focused meta-linguistic feedback led to a significantly fewer errors in writing and helped learners to become aware of their own errors and monitor themselves. The student become more independent learners and develops autonomy." (p. 882).

2.3   Conjunctions as cohesion in writing

2.3.1   Cohesion in academic writing

Besides content and grammatical aspects in writing, organization plays a crucial part in producing a good writing product. 'Organization' for writing includes the arrangement of content points and also appropriate connectives used in the writing to connect the entire writing piece together coherently. Halliday and Hasan (1976, 1989) "believed that cohesion and coherence, as the two important textual elements have long been recognized as important features of good writing" (p. 1615) as cited in Ghasemi's (2013) study. In addition, Castro (2004) describes coherence as "the link in a text connecting ideas and making the flow of thoughts meaningful and clear for readers". According to Asabe Sadiya Mohammed (2015), cohesion is "a relationship between elements in a discourse, whereby the interpretation of an element is dependent on that of another". Studies have shown encouraging relations between writing quality and the construction of cohesive devices used in text in particular for L2 learners. Liu and Braine (2005) investigated a selection of cohesive devices and stated that the overall essay quality scores for Chinese L2 learners correlated moderately with the total number of text cohesion used as cohesive devices in the writing. Moreover, the study found that the quantity of lexical cohesive devices correlated strongly with overall writing quality. A later study by Yang and Sun (2012) compared the differences between the argumentative essay writing of undergraduate Chinese L2 learners. The study result reveals differences in the amount of local cohesive devices: pronouns, conjunctions, ellipsis, and lexical overlap, and discovered strong associations between the total amount of accurate use of cohesive devices and writing quality. This study showed the L2 writers' development in writing with the use of cohesive devices over the period of

one semester. Thus, cohesion plays a vital role in characterizing the overall unity of texts to ensure comprehensibility of the text.

Generally in any text, each sentence with the exception of the first indicates some form of cohesion with an earlier sentence, generally with the sentence directly before it. The structure of cohesion functions in four means; conjunctive, ellipsis, lexical organization and reference. Conjunctions are incorporated for creating transition in the construction of text and form connections between clauses: 'referential chains' are a reference that constructs cohesion by linking the elements in between. Substitutions and ellipsis are replacement of a structure and in lexical organizations, cohesion is attained through the selection of lexical items. Although specific grammatical items are crucial in producing a writing text, the overall cohesion and structuring of the text content should not be disregarded. Ghasemi (2013) emphasized that "Language learners indispensably need to write coherent and cohesive texts if they wish to prove to be qualified English writers, whether they are EFL or ESL learners" (p. 1615). Writing is constantly a daunting and challenging component for learners simply because writing is indeed a complex process which requires the comprehensive knowledge base of grammar, vocabulary, syntax, and comprehension. Besides ensuring grammatical accuracy, learners as writers should aim to write a cohesive and well-constructed text. "L2 writers should always keep in their mind that readers would not be able to trace the ideas in any written text unless they signal the interconnections of the preceding and following pieces of message through contextual clues." (Ghasemi, 2013, p. 1615). To stress the importance of cohesion in writing, Zhang (2000) examined the relative significance of different grammatical items and discourse structures from essay samples written by L2 learners and discovered that raters are profoundly depended upon cohesion in assessing the overall quality of the written essays.

2.3.2 Conjunctions use in writing

According to Halliday and Hasan (1976), conjunction is classified under cohesion, which is further categorized into grammatical classification and semantic classification. The taxonomy focused in this present study will be semantic classification that consists of additive, causal, temporal and adversative conjunctions. Conjunctions are elements commonly and extensively used in writing composition when cohesion is concerned.

According to Basturkmen and von Randow (2014), cohesion and coherence are regularly deliberated in the form of conjunction in English as Academic Purposes. The use of cohesive devices can steer readers to organize their ideas, thus is can positively enhance the text coherence. For instance, the use of conjunctions as cohesive devices can indicate valid relations and therefore "signpost the path of coherence for the reader" (Lorenz, 1999, p. 55).

Halliday and Hasan (1976, p. 239) devised a structure of four categories to distinguish between the different types of conjunctive components; 'additive' (for example 'and', 'also'), 'causal' (for example 'so', 'therefore'), 'temporal' (for example 'firstly', 'then') and 'adversative' (for example 'yet'). The elements are further elaborated and detailed in the following table:

Table 2.1: Types of Conjunctive Relations and their meanings

Conjunctions	Examples of items	Meaning
Additive	And, also, moreover, but, yet, however, nor, for example, for instance, specifically, in particular, in other words, in the same way, likewise, similarly	Inclusion
Temporal	In the first place, then, next, just then, hitherto, previously, finally, in the end, soon, after a while, next time, that morning, until then, at this moment, at the same time	Related to time, a short time duration
Causal	Hence, consequently, because of that, as a result, on account of this, for this purpose, likewise, similarly, therefore, thus	Relating to or being a cause or result of something
Adversatives	Even though, in that case, otherwise, if not, however, despite, even so, nevertheless, instead, on the contrary, apart from that, alternatively, yet	One depends on or contrast another

(Halliday & Hasan, 1976, p. 349)

Studies focusing on the use of conjunctions among ESL or EFL learners due to the popular application of conjunctions as cohesion in writing continue to grow gradually over the years. Kiany and Khezrineshad (2001) discovered that less proficient learners used fewer conjunction as compared to intermediate or high proficiency learners. In addition, due to the limited number of lexical items, low usage of conjunctions by less proficient students resulted in repeated use of words was reported by Kang (2005) and Wen (2009). Another study by Abdalwahid (2012), the use of conjunctions by Arabic students were investigated describing conjunction errors in terms of "overuse", "underuse" and "misuse". Muftah Hamed's (2014) study on Libyan students' application of conjunctions in argumentative writing diagnosed that the EFL learners faced difficulty in the use conjunctions in their essay. Last but not least, Nuruladilah Mohamed's (2016) study on the use of conjunctions in argumentative essay by Malaysian ESL undergraduates revealed that appropriate and inappropriate use of

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conjunctions occurred due to limited exposure and comprehensibility on the variety of conjunctions.

The effectiveness of written corrective feedback reported varying results from previous studies and thus the current study is conducted to investigate the influence of metalinguistic written corrective feedback on one specific but broader linguistic feature, which is conjunction use in writing and the learners' perceptions on metalinguistic corrective feedback.

2.4 Conclusion

This chapter presented some significant elements in the study of corrective feedback by reviewing the literature on various aspects which include theoretical perspective, followed by written corrective feedback history, strategies arguments, and learners' feedback, and lastly focusing on cohesion. In the next chapter, the research design underpinning the methodology used in this current study will be discussed in detail.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

3.0   Introduction

The main objective of this study is to determine the influence of metalinguistic corrective feedback on ESL learners' appropriate and inappropriate use of conjunctions for writing. A secondary objective is to explore learners' perceptions on the use of metalinguistic corrective feedback for conjunctions in writing. The education status and background information of the Malaysian ESL learners' in this study is provided in this chapter, followed by research design, site of study, research data source, data collection procedure, and data analysis procedure.

3.1   Research design

According to Creswell (2014), there are three main different approaches of designing a research: quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods approaches which belong to different paradigms. Different paradigms relevant to these approaches with different ideas about reality include positivism, constructivism, realism, and pragmatism. The pragmatism approach revolves around consequences of actions, is problem-centred and diverse, and real-world practice oriented. According to Cherryholmes (1992), "the research in pragmatic tradition seeks to clarify meanings and looks to consequences" (p.13). Generally, Malaysian students' essays are assessed in a more holistic manner or the teachers will only underline or circle the errors mainly due to time constraint and large number of scripts to manage. Because of that, most students are unable to clearly identify and correct their errors in writing, resulting in repeated errors in their next writing pieces. Experimental studies fashioned to examine the effectiveness of corrective feedback on targeted groups of participants are not able to justify the efficacy of the practice of written corrective feedback in natural classroom settings where

various variables come into play, such as the number of students is bigger, level of students' proficiencies may not be homogenous, and syllabus to complete in a short amount of time. As Denzin and Lincoln (2000) stated, "qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or to interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them" (p. 3).

This study's mixed-method approach adopts the pragmatic worldview with the construct of both quantitative and qualitative data drawn from three sources: students' essays, questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. In Creswell (2014) the pragmatic framework is fashioned in accordance with, "a broad survey in order to generalize results to a population, then, in a second base, focuses on qualitative, open-ended interviews to collect detailed views from participants" (p. 18). The essays were written in class by Malaysian ESL students as part of their coursework assignments and were provided with written corrective feedback codes on the appropriate and inappropriate use of conjunctions; hence this data source is not experimental. Nguyen's (2012) study utilized the pragmatism paradigm by collecting both quantitative and qualitative data "since they develop a rationale for mixing and they can incorporate their data at different stages of the research process" (p. 164).

Firstly, to answer the first research question: 'To what extent does metalinguistic corrective feedback influence ESL learners' appropriate and inappropriate use of conjunctions for writing?', this study obtained 90 writing assignments in the form of three essays from 30 students. The three writing assignments consist of each student's three writing tasks completed in one semester: expository essay, cause and effect essay, and problem-solution essay.

Secondly, to answer this study's second research question: 'What are the ESL learners' perceptions on the use of metalinguistic corrective feedback for conjunctions in writing?', this study gathered responses from 30 participants through the survey questionnaire and subsequently the researcher interviewed six students (two high proficiency, two intermediate proficiency, and two low proficiency). The derived data from the questionnaire serve as a triangulation component to corroborate the findings gathered from the interview for the second research question in this study which are reported under three main themes: positive perceptions on metalinguistic corrective feedback, negative perceptions on metalinguistic corrective feedback, and the efficacy of metalinguistic corrective feedback in conjunctions use for writing.

3.2 Participants

Table 3.1: Overview of the participants' background

Course	Age	Gender	State origin	Degree Major	Year	Total Students
English 2	18 years old (1) 19 years old (2) 20 years old (5) 21 years old (1) 22 years old (1)	6 female 6 male	Selangor (4) Perak (4) Melaka (1) Penang (3) Kedah (0) Sarawak (0)	Accounting & Finance (12)	1 (5) 2 (7)	12 students
Academic English	18 years old (2) 19 years old (6) 20 years old (6) 21 years old (2) 22 years old (2)	12 female 6 male	Selangor (4) Perak (4) Melaka (3) Penang (2) Pahang (1) Kedah (3) Sarawak (1)	Mass Communication (11) Hospitality & Tourism (7)	1 (9) 2 (9)	18 students
Total	30 students					

The participants in this research consisted of 30 Malaysian ESL students from a private university in Selangor. These participants were studying the compulsory English for Academic Purposes (EAP) courses offered by their respective degree studies specifically 'English 2' course for Accounting and Finance degree students and 'Academic English' course for Mass Communication and also Hospitality and Tourism degree students. The 'English 2' course consisted of 12 students (6 females, 6 males) and the 'Academic English' course consisted of 18 students (12 females, 6 males). In this study, students for both courses were considered as one group as the textbook and syllabus used for the English language courses were the same.

The participants in this study were selected based on convenience sampling. This is due to ease of access to the samples as they are the researcher's students. Though these participants were selected based on convenience sampling, the students are a homogenous group of Malaysian students who completed similar education systems and they are from various Malaysian states such as Selangor, Perak, Melaka, Penang, Pahang, Johor, and Sarawak.

All participants have obtained a minimum of 11 years of formal learning of English language in primary and secondary schools respectively. At secondary (high school) level, the students have acquired a minimum pass (grade C) of *'Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia'* (SPM, formerly known in English as Malaysian Certificate of Education (MCE)) and from the same examination, students obtained 1119 (GCE-O level) by Cambridge University for their English subject. Upon admission to the university, all students have sat for the Cambridge English Language placement test and were all placed in Upper-Intermediate level.

3.3   Site of study

This study was conducted in a private university in Selangor where local Malaysian and international students pursue their higher education in various courses offered and the university personnel permitted the researcher to conduct this study with minimal interruptions. Thus, it was convenient to make arrangements for questionnaires to be distributed and collected and in addition for interviews to be conducted with the students.

As part of the requirement to obtain their degree, all university students must complete the compulsory EAP language courses which are 'English 2' and 'Academic English' course, depending on the requirement of the respective faculties. Both courses used the same textbook, content syllabus and final exam paper although they were named differently. The 'English 2' and 'Academic English' course are equivalent to Upper-Intermediate level for first and second year degree students at the university. The main objectives of this EAP language courses are: (1) to equip students to be proficient in college level reading and writing skills, and (2) to display sufficient amount of understanding and presentation skills to share ideas and perspectives.

Both courses comprise of a 3-hour session class once a week conducted in the span of one semester (14 weeks). The total number of hours for this course was 42 hours. From the total of 14 lectures in one semester, 5 classes (a total of 15 hours) were allocated for writing lessons and in-class assessments. The remaining 27 hours of classes focused on reading, listening and speaking lessons. Generally, the size of each class consist around 50 to 60 students with the combination of local Malaysian and international students.

Unsurprisingly, with such big number of students in each class, lecturers may not able to attend to each student in class most of the time given the fact that the lecturer only have once a week contact with the students in class. Although, students are encouraged to set an appointment aside classroom time to meet with the lecturer should they have any additional questions or issues to clarify especially on their assignments. Students in this private university typically take up five or six different courses in one semester as part of their academic plan in order to graduate within the stipulated time frame. Due to the nature of numerous courses to juggle, students' workloads and schedule are constantly hectic. This resulted in less face-to-face contact time with lecturers to discuss academic issues or feedback.

3.4   Instruments

This study gathered data from three different sources which include writing tasks in the form of essays, written responses from questionnaires and verbal responses from interview to uncover additional insights.

3.4.1   Writing tasks

One of the major sources of data for this study's instrument was the three writing tasks each student has to complete in one semester: one expository essay, one cause and effect essay, and one problem-solution essay based on the syllabus provided by the university. A total number of 90 essays were collected from three separate writing sessions as data samples from all 30 students. Each student was given 1.5 to 2 hours to write between 300 and 350 words for each essay in class, which is a normal practice at the university.

The expository essay written by the students as their first writing task at the beginning of the semester in week 4, was a descriptive essay in line with the themes from their textbook such as environment, social issues, education, and technology. The expository essay topic given to the students for both courses was: "It is common to see public properties being vandalized and left in a bad condition where people will not be able to use them, particularly in emergency situations. Explain.".

The cause and effect essay was collected as the second writing task in the middle of the semester in week 8. Before the students started writing their second essay, the first essays were assessed along with the written metalinguistic feedback. These were returned back to them one week before the second writing assignment was given in class. This allows students to observe and respond to the feedback before the next in-class writing task. For the second essay, students were asked to write about a social issue topic: "Working adults today are adopting part-time or two jobs to sustain the increasing cost of living. Discuss the cause and effect."

For the final writing task, students were given a problem-solution topic towards the end of the semester in week 12: "The influence of advertisements has brought about various problems. Discuss the problem and provide solution to this issue." By this time of the semester, students would have received metalinguistic corrective feedback from two separate assignments prior to this final writing task.

Since these essays were part of the course requirements, they were all graded with the university's course essay marking rubric (Appendix A) consisting of 5 scale-score for four main components: (1) content, (2) organization, (3) mechanics and (4) sentence structure, diction and usage. Regular grading techniques (underlining and circling) were used to assess the overall essay with the only exception for conjunctions which were graded with metalinguistic corrective feedback abbreviated codes: *Ad* (Additive), *Caus*

(Causal), *Temp* (Temporal) and *Adv* (Adversative). For each writing task, students were not required to revise their essays. In order to retain authentic classroom learning environment and process, a new writing task was used to determine the influence of metalinguistic corrective feedback on ESL learners' appropriate and inappropriate use of conjunctions for each subsequent writing task.

3.4.2 Questionnaire

The main function of the questionnaire (Appendix C) is to gain the students' perception on the use of metalinguistic corrective feedback provided in their writing tasks focusing on conjunctions. The questions were adapted from Anderson (2010) in his study on "The effects of tiered corrective feedback on second language academic writing" which was also adapted by Balanga et al. (2016) in their study on high school students' beliefs towards written corrective feedback based on the framework of Anderson (2010).

Anderson's (2010) study particularly focused on the effects of tiered focused metalinguistic corrective feedback on grammatical errors (articles, lexical category, and subject-verb agreement) on three separate groups. The themes employed in Anderson's (2010) 36-items questionnaire to answer two of his study's research questions which investigated students' perceptions towards corrective feedback are: "(1) The role of grammar; (2) The role of feedback; (3) Learner history feedback; (4) General feedback preferences; (5) Specific feedback preferences (what types of corrective feedback do the students prefer); (6) Attentiveness toward corrective feedback; (7) Perceptions of efficacy of corrective feedback; and (8) Constructivism" (p. 74). This study's second research question on the other hand, solely focused on the learners' perceptions on the use of metalinguistic corrective feedback and its efficacy on conjunctions use in writing

tasks thus, only 11 questions from themes (4), (6), (7) were adapted for the current study which include feedback preferences, attentiveness toward corrective feedback and perceptions of efficacy of corrective feedback.

Section A consisted of 6 demographic and education background information questions: age, gender, state origin, degree major, year, and current course. The remaining 11 questions in Section B were 5-point Likert scales ranging from (1) 'strongly disagree', (2) 'disagree', (3) 'neutral', (4) 'agree', to (5) 'strongly agree'. Question items 7, 8, 10, 11, 12, and 13 in this study's questionnaire consisted of the adapted questions from Anderson's (2010) questionnaire from theme *(4) General feedback preferences* to determine how Malaysian ESL learners perceive metalinguistic corrective feedback helped in terms of if metalinguistic corrective feedback improve their use of conjunctions in writing tasks, the amount of feedback they would prefer to receive, and their feelings towards the feedback that they receive in their writing tasks.

Question items 14 and 15 is in line with theme *(6) Attentiveness towards corrective feedback*. These questions intend to gather learners' perceptions on their noticeability of their errors through metalinguistic corrective feedback provided in their writing tasks and finally, question items 9, 16, and 17 emphasize on theme *(7) Perceptions of efficacy of corrective feedback* to gauge learners' perceptions if metalinguistic corrective feedback is successful in prompting students to correct their mistakes and at the same time enhance their learning experience.

All 30 students participated in the questionnaire and the questionnaires were collected in week 14 after the students have completed and received all three of their graded writing tasks.

3.4.3   Interview

Utilizing interview as a research instrument possesses a distinct advantage over questionnaire. According to Bell (2005), the researcher can adapt the questions to delve deeper into the participants' thoughts, perspective and feelings on the subject matter. For this study, six students consented to be interviewed. In order to elicit more in-depth data for the second research question, the researcher nominated two students to represent each category: high proficiency, intermediate proficiency, and low proficiency. The students were shortlisted based on the average percentage score for all three writing tasks and all six students volunteered to participate in the interview. The interview was conducted in week 17 after the students have completed their final exam.

The interview checklist (Appendix E) consisted of eight semi-structured questions and each student was interviewed with all the questions. Where necessary, some additional questions were asked for further information. As stated earlier, this study's second research question exclusively explored the learners' perceptions focusing on learners' feelings (interview question 1, 6), opinions (interview questions 2, 3, 4, 5), and the influence of the efficacy of metalinguistic corrective feedback on conjunctions in their essay writing tasks (interview questions 7, 8).

3.5   Data collection procedure

The data for this study were gathered during one semester (17 weeks). At the beginning of the semester, the students were taught to write the 5-paragraph essay structure for all three essay types: introduction paragraph, three-point body paragraphs, and conclusion paragraph. Additionally, a list of conjunctions (Appendix B) as notes for reference were provided to the students. In the list, conjunctions are categorized into four categories; Additive (*Ad*), Adversative (*Adv*), Causal (*Caus*) and Temporal (*Temp*).

Furthermore, the students were briefed on additional marking technique of metalinguistic corrective feedback codes as marking symbols for inappropriate conjunctions use (eg. *'temp'* for temporal conjunction, *'ad'* for additive conjunction, *'caus'* for causal conjunction, and *'adv'* for adversative conjunction) in their essays. The overall assessment for their essay will be graded with the rubric (Appendix A) provided by the university which will be used to assess their essays throughout the entire semester. The rubric will allow students to identify which sections of their essay gained or lost marks. The conjunctions use will be graded under the *'organization'* section of the rubric which encompasses the overall cohesion of the essay. Each writing task word limit is approximately 300 to 350 words.

Data collection started in week 4 for the first set of essay, expository essay. The duration of each class is 3 hours; for the first hour, the lecturer discussed with the students the structure and strategy for composition on essay. Subsequently, students were given 1.5 to 2 hours to complete their writing task in class and the students were required to submit their essays immediately once completed. The second set of essay, cause and effect essay were collected on week 8, and finally the third set of essay, problem-solution essay were collected on week 12. Throughout the writing task, students were monitored by the researcher-lecturer in class while they were completing their writing task and they were allowed to use notes or dictionaries for spelling and vocabulary references. However, as standard practice, students were not allowed to bring their writing task home to eliminate any possibilities of plagiarism.

The essays were then graded with the university's course syllabus rubric consisting of 5 scale-score for four main components: (1) content, (2) organization, (3) mechanics and (4) sentence structure, diction and usage. As mentioned in the earlier section, as these essays were part of course requirements, they were all graded with regular implicit

techniques (underlining and circling) with the only exception for cohesion devices (conjunctions) which were graded with metalinguistic corrective feedback codes.

The assessed writing tasks with metalinguistic corrective feedback on conjunctions and total percentage score were given back to students in the following week after they have completed the essays. Due to the nature of a large class size (50-60 students), no verbal feedback were given by the lecturer and students were expected to identify their errors accordingly based on the metalinguistic written corrective feedback given to them. Students were allowed to set an appointment to meet with the lecturer for additional feedback throughout the semester. Typically, only about 10 to 20 percent of the class will take the initiative to set an appointment once or twice throughout the entire 14-weeks semester to clarify or discuss their progress or issues.

After all three essays were completed, collected, and returned to the students, the questionnaires were distributed to all 30 samples. The questionnaires were completed and collected in class on the final week 14 of the semester before the students leave for the one-week study break. Most students took approximately 10 to 15 minutes to complete the 17 items questionnaire. The researcher was there to assist with any queries from the students.

The interview with six students was conducted in week 17, two weeks after the students completed their final exam. The six students consented to be interviewed for this study comprise of two high proficiency, two intermediate proficiency, and two low proficiency students. The interview was conducted in one of discussion room in the university's study area where it was not too crowded and noisy. Each interview session with students took approximately 5 to 10 minutes. The interview was recorded with the researcher's mobile phone and important points were noted on paper simultaneously.

Table 3.2: Data collection procedure
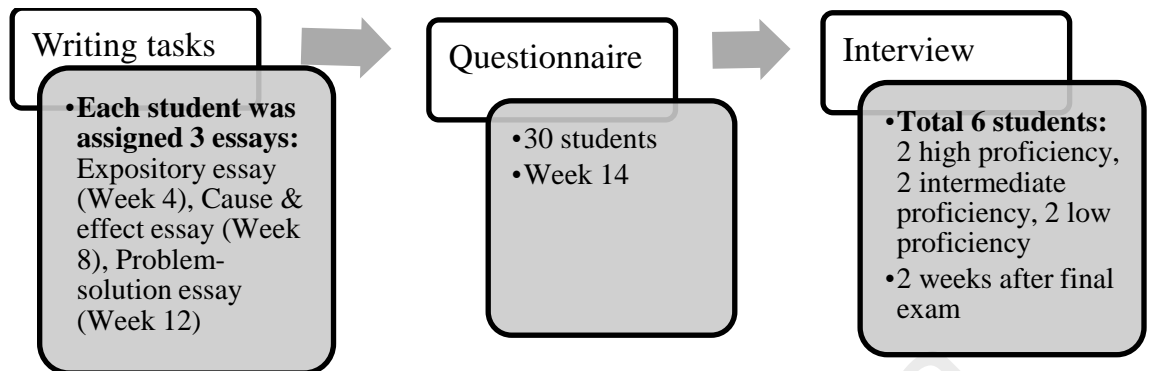
3.6   Data analysis procedure

Data analysis procedure to answer research question one is based on previous studies on the use on conjunctions in writing conducted by Muftah Hamed (2014) and Ong (2011). Their studies examined conjunctions identification, classification, and error analysis. However, this study will focus on the identification, classification, and the appropriate and inappropriate use of conjunctions (Muftah Hamed, 2014) to explore the extent of metalinguistic corrective feedback influence on ESL learners' use of conjunctions in essay writing.

According to Cohen et al. (2007), content analysis refers to the process of summarising and interpreting written data in an extensive sense, whereas, it is "a strict and systematic set of procedures for rigorous analysis, examination and verification of the contents of written data" (p. 475) in a narrower context. One of the key features of content analysis is that extensive texts with large number of words are then represented by smaller amount of words or expressions. The quantitative content analysis is reflected to be deductive and caters for numerical results and statistical methods. The qualitative approach provides descriptions and it draws attention to specific themes that portray the various perceptions of the phenomenon, rather than statistical significance of the frequency of particular concepts.

Cohen et al. (2007) outline content analysis as the process of four "C"s: coding, categorising, comparing, and concluding. Coding mainly reduces or simplifies the data at the same time emphasising their specific features to connect them in wider concepts and categorising functions to create meaningful groups such as words, phrases or sentences. Subsequently, comparing is used to create links between categories and finally concluding includes eliciting theoretical considerations on the basis of the text and the results of the analysis.

Content analysis was employed to describe the findings from the data to elucidate the influence of metalinguistic corrective feedback on conjunctions use and the learners' perceptions on metalinguistic corrective feedback which will be explained in separate sub-sections.

3.6.1 Students' writing tasks

Halliday and Hassan (1976, p. 239) devised a structure of four categories of connectives to distinguish between the different types of conjunctive elements; '*additive*' (for example 'in addition', 'and', 'also'), '*causal*' (for example 'as a result', 'therefore'), '*temporal*' (for example 'firstly', 'then') and '*adversative*' (for example 'yet', 'even though'). To examine the data, the classifications of frequency, appropriate, and inappropriate use of conjunctions are compartmentalized to explore the influence of metalinguistic corrective feedback on the use of each category of conjunctions in each writing tasks. The first step of the procedure involved scanning and categorizing the conjunctions from students' essays from each writing tasks.

For each writing task, the quantitative description in forms of percentages for each conjunction category distribution according to types was reported to investigate to what extent metalinguistic corrective feedback influence the students' use of conjunctions. At

the same time, quantitative content analysis of appropriate and inappropriate use of each conjunctions category for all three writing tasks was presented.

3.6.2 Questionnaire

30 students answered 17 items in the distributed questionnaire with 6 questions of demographic and education background information and 11 questions related to their perceptions on metalinguistic corrective feedback for conjunctions use in writing. Each question is formatted using the 5-point Likert scales format ranging from 'strongly disagree' (1) to 'strongly agree' (5) and classified. The data obtained from the questionnaires are represented in percentage calculations and are described using qualitative content analysis in different themes along with the findings of the interview in Chapter 4.

3.6.3 Interview

Utilizing face-to-face interview as a research instrument in a study possesses a distinct advantage on top of questionnaire. According to Bell (2005), the researcher can adapt the questions to delve deeper into the participants' thoughts, perspective and feelings on the subject matter. Downe-Wamboldt (1992) asserted, "The goal of content analysis is to provide knowledge and understanding of the phenomenon under study" (p. 314). All six interviews with the students were examined using content analysis and this analysis was done by extracting key words or phrases from the interviewees' responses. Additionally, the responses from the high, intermediate, and low proficiencies were further analysed for any similarities or differences in preferences for metalinguistic corrective feedback. For this study's interview, the participants were informed to express their opinions without any hesitation even if they might have negative comments. Moreover, the students were told that the researcher intend to obtain

authentic students' views regarding the perceptions on the use of metalinguistic corrective feedback, specifically focusing on the students' feelings when dealing with corrective feedback, what are their thoughts and opinions about it, the issues or difficulties they face during corrections, as well as if students showed any improvement in the appropriate use of conjunctions following the provision of metalinguistic corrective feedback. Although all six interviewees' responses (Appendix F) were generally quite short and straightforward, the data collected was sufficient to enrich the finding of the questionnaire on their perceptions on the use of metalinguistic corrective feedback for conjunctions use in their writing tasks. The data gathered from the interview is further supported by the responses from the questionnaire. Finally, content analysis was used to describe and interpret the interview data, focusing on learners' perceptions on metalinguistic corrective feedback and its efficacy.

3.7   Validity and reliability

3.7.1   Writing tasks

In order to ensure consistency in the grading, the scores were checked for interrater reliability. The essays collected were graded by two independent raters to score for the students' 'organization' component for their writing tasks. Raters 1 and 2 are English language lecturers from the university's Language Centre and they are both experienced in teaching the writing component for tertiary level students and has been teaching similar courses for the past 5 and 3 years respectively to achieve the level of agreement for scoring. Each rater was given a total of 15 scripts of essays (3 expository, 3 cause and effect, 3 problem-solution essay) which is 10% of the total scripts for each essay type, along with the marking rubric (Appendix A) to score the 'organization' component to observe the level of agreement for scoring. The uses of conjunctions fall

under the organization component according to the scoring rubric, for example 'coherence between sentences and paragraphs'.

Table 3.3: Interrater reliability for writing tasks

Writing Tasks	Interrater reliability (average)
E1: Expository	85.34%
E2: Cause & Effect	86.00%
E3: Problem-Solution	88.30%

The overall level of agreement for all three writing tasks is reported to be reliable. As cited in Creswell (2014), according to Miles and Huberman (1994), "the consistency of the coding to be in agreement at least 80% of the time for good qualitative reliability" (p. 203).

3.7.2   Questionnaire and interview

The questionnaire questions were adapted from Anderson (2010) due to its relevance to this study's scope of study. Eight interview questions were devised to probe the students' perceptions on the use of metalinguistic codes as a feedback tool on the use of conjunctions in writing and its efficacy from the students' point of view. Both instruments, the questionnaire and interview questions were reviewed by a panel of expert to ensure that the questions are relevant to this study's second research question.

3.8   Conclusion

This chapter presented the design of the study, the description of the participants, data collection and data analysis. The next chapter will describe and discuss the results obtain from the data collected.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.0 Introduction

This study has set out to explore the influence of metalinguistic corrective feedback on ESL learners' appropriate and inappropriate use of conjunctions for writing. In addition, this study aims to divulge learners' perceptions on the use of metalinguistic corrective feedback for conjunctions in writing. Metalinguistic corrective feedback codes were provided for the students' three writing tasks: expository essay, cause and effect essay and problem-solution essay. At the end of the third writing task, all 30 students were given a questionnaire. This was to determine the learners' perceptions on the use of metalinguistic corrective feedback for conjunctions in essay writing. In addition, face-to-face interviews conducted on six students in order to gain more insights on how the students feel when dealing with corrective feedback, what are their thoughts and opinions, the issues or difficulties they face during corrections, as well as if students feel they were guided and have achieved any improvement in the accurate use of conjunctions following the provision of corrective feedback. Specifically, this study aims to answer the following research questions:

(i) To what extent does metalinguistic corrective feedback influence ESL learners' appropriate and inappropriate use of conjunctions for writing?

(ii) What are the ESL learners' perceptions on the use of metalinguistic corrective feedback for conjunctions in writing?

The findings of each research question are presented in this chapter and the research outcomes are discussed.

4.1 Data analysis for research question 1

To answer research question 1, this study employed quantitative content analysis for the first instrument: students' essays for three writing tasks. The use of conjunctions were tabulated and reported to see if metalinguistic corrective feedback influence the frequency use of conjunctions and also to describe the ESL learners' appropriate and inappropriate use of conjunctions in all categories: additive, causal, temporal and adversative, for each subsequent essay.

4.2 Overall scoring of the appropriate and inappropriate usage of conjunctions in the writing tasks

The initial data of this study were analysed and described through identifying the overall distribution of total usage for conjunctions to observe the trend of appropriate and inappropriate use for all three writing tasks, bearing in mind that E1: Expository writing task was written by all participants who have not received or been exposed to metalinguistic written corrective feedback technique. This means, the feedback they received for their first writing task was the first time they were introduced to metalinguistic corrective feedback, whereas for E2: Cause and Effect and E3: Problem-Solution writing tasks, participants have received metalinguistic corrective feedback for the first and second time respectively.

Table 4.1: Appropriate uses of conjunctions

Writing Tasks	Appropriate uses of conjunctions	Total Conjunctions (N)	Overall %
E1: Expository	591	671	88.07%
E2: Cause & Effect	901	973	92.60%
E3: Problem-Solution	889	942	94.37%

It can be observed that the total use of conjunctions fluctuates across three writing tasks, E1 (671), E2 (973), and E3 (942) due to the nature of the different essay types

that require different uses of conjunctions. Despite the fluctuations, the overall percentage for appropriate uses of conjunctions gradually increased from 88.07 percent for E1, to 92.60 percent for E2 and finally 94.37 percent for E3 after the students received corrective feedback for every writing task. Moreover, a substantial increase from 671 for E1 to 973 for E2 on the use of conjunctions for the second writing task (E2) can be observed after the students have received metalinguistic corrective feedback for the first time.

Table 4.2: Inappropriate uses of conjunctions

Writing Tasks	Inappropriate uses of conjunctions	Total Conjunctions (N)	Overall %
E1: Expository	80	671	11.92%
E2: Cause & Effect	72	973	7.39%
E3: Problem-Solution	53	942	5.62%

The inappropriate use of conjunctions include misuse of conjunctions, overuse of conjunctions in sentence or paragraph, and the underuse of conjunctions as applied in Muftah Hamed (2014) study. From Table 4.2, it can be inferred that the inappropriate uses of conjunctions consistently reduced for each subsequent writing task, 80 for E1, 72 for E2, and 53 for E3. Concurrently, the percentage of inappropriate use for conjunctions gradually decreased for every subsequent new writing task from 11.92 percent, 7.39 percent, and finally to 5.62 percent.

4.2.1 Appropriate and inappropriate use of each subcategory of conjunctions

To provide a specific scoring of the conjunctions, Halliday and Hassan's (1976) cohesion framework for connectives is employed for the students' appropriate and inappropriate use for each subcategory of conjunctions for all three writing tasks: expository essay, cause and effect essay, and problem-solution essay. Three scripts (10%) from the total of 30 essays were scored by two raters for each writing task. The

data below has been ranked from the highest to the lowest overall usage of subcategory of conjunctions for all three writing tasks, (1) additive, (2) causal, (3) temporal, and (4) adversative.

Table 4.3: Appropriate and inappropriate use of additive conjunctions

Writing Tasks	Appropriate	Inappropriate	Total (N)	Percentage (%)	
				Appropriate	Inappropriate
E1: Expository	348	36	384	90.62	9.37
E2: Cause & Effect	530	31	561	94.47	5.52
E3:Problem-Solution	524	25	549	95.44	4.55
Total	1402	92	1494		

Table 4.3 shows the appropriate and inappropriate use of additive conjunctions for all three writing tasks. The total number of additive conjunctions appeared in the students' expository essays was 384 times. After the students have received metalinguistic corrective feedback for the first time from their first writing task, a substantial increase to 561 in total for the use additive conjunctions can be seen in their second writing task (E2: Cause & Effect). The total number of additive conjunctions used for the third writing task (E3: Problem-Solution) was 549 times.

The data shows that the appropriate uses of additive conjunctions improved from the first writing task to the third writing task. Out of the 384 additive conjunctions used in the expository essays, the students were able to appropriately use 348 of the additive conjunctions, which is 90.62 percent. Subsequently, the students used 530 additive conjunctions appropriately out of the total 561 additive conjunctions for their cause and effect essay, which show an increase: 94.47 percent. For the final problem-solution writing task, a total of 549 additive conjunctions were used and the students were able to use 524 appropriately, which is 95.44 percent. These findings show an increasing trend of appropriate use for additive conjunctions for each subsequent writing task.

The result of this study shows that the inappropriate uses of additive conjunctions reduced consistently from the first writing task to the third writing task. The total number of additive conjunctions appeared inappropriately in the students' first essay, the expository essays, was 36 times, (9.37%). For the subsequent cause and effect essay, the students used additive conjunctions inappropriately 31 times, a considerable decrease in percentage to 5.52 percent. For the third writing task, problem-solution essay, the inappropriate use of additive conjunctions decreased to 25 times. Generally, the percentage of inappropriate use of additive conjunctions gradually decreased from 9.37 percent, to 5.52 percent, and finally to 4.55 percent which shows a very positive trend.

Table 4.4: Appropriate and inappropriate use of causal conjunctions

Writing Tasks	Appropriate	Inappropriate	Total (N)	Percentage (%)	
				Appropriate	Inappropriate
E1: Expository	129	19	148	87.16	12.83
E2: Cause & Effect	222	18	240	92.50	7.50
E3:Problem-Solution	206	11	217	94.93	5.06
Total	**557**	**48**	**605**		

Table 4.4 shows the appropriate and inappropriate use of causal conjunctions for all three writing tasks. Out of the total 605 causal conjunctions used in all three writing tasks, the students were able to appropriately use 557 of the causal conjunctions and only inaccurately used the causal conjunctions 48 times. The total number of causal conjunctions appeared in the students' expository essay is 148 times, followed by 240 times for cause and effect essay, and 217 times for problem-solution essay. The Malaysian learners increasingly used causal conjunctions appropriately for 129 times (87.16%) in expository essay, 222 times (92.50%) appropriately in their cause and

effect essay writing, and finally 206 times (94.93%) appropriately for problem-solution essay.

It can be seen again that causal conjunctions displayed an encouraging trend with the gradual decrease of inappropriate use from the first writing task to the third writing task. Causal conjunctions were used inappropriately 19 times for the first writing task, which is 12.83 percent. For the second writing task which is cause and effect essay, the inappropriate use of causal conjunctions by the ESL learners was 18 times (7.50%). Finally, for the problem-solution essay, the inappropriate use of causal conjunctions continues to decrease to only 11 times, 5.06 percent.

Table 4.5: Appropriate and inappropriate use of temporal conjunctions

Writing Tasks	Appropriate	Inappropriate	Total (N)	Percentage (%)	
				Appropriate	Inappropriate
E1: Expository	71	8	79	89.98	10.12
E2: Cause & Effect	94	9	103	91.26	8.73
E3:Problem-Solution	105	6	111	94.59	5.40
Total	**270**	**23**	**293**		

Table 4.5 shows the appropriate and inappropriate use of temporal conjunctions by the learners. The overall total number of temporal conjunctions used in the 30 students' three writing tasks was 293 times. The overall number of temporal conjunctions appeared in the students' expository essay is 79 times, followed by 103 times for cause and effect essay, and 111 times for problem-solution essay. Based on the result, it can be concluded that the temporal conjunctions was less frequently used compared to additive and causal conjunctions. Overall, the students were able to use temporal conjunctions appropriately 270 times and inappropriately only 23 times.

The initial number of temporal conjunctions used by the students for their first writing task, E1: Expository essay, was 79 times. From the overall total, the students were able to use 71 (89.98%) of the temporal conjunctions appropriately. For the second writing task, E2: Cause and effect essay, the number of appropriate use for temporal conjunctions increased to 94 from the total of 103, which is 91.26 percent, and the number continued to increase to 105 (94.59%) appropriate use of temporal conjunctions for the third writing task, E3: Problem-solution essay.

Similar to additive and causal conjunctions, it can be seen that temporal conjunctions displayed gradual decrease of inappropriate use from the first writing task to the third writing task. The temporal conjunctions were inappropriately used 8 times (10.12%) for the first writing task. Although the number of inappropriate use of temporal conjunctions increased to 9 from 8 for the second writing task, the percentage reduced to 8.73 percent from 10.12 percent. This shows a positive improvement on the overall appropriate use of temporal conjunctions among the students from the first to the second writing task. For the third writing task, which is the problem-solution essay, the number of times temporal conjunctions were used inappropriately reduced to 6 times (5.40%).

Table 4.6: Appropriate and inappropriate use of adversative conjunctions

Writing Tasks	Appropriate	Inappropriate	Total (N)	Percentage (%)	
				Appropriate	Inappropriate
E1: Expository	43	17	60	71.66	28.33
E2: Cause & Effect	55	14	69	79.71	20.28
E3:Problem-Solution	54	11	65	83.07	16.92
Total	**152**	**42**	**194**		

Table 4.6 shows the appropriate and inappropriate use of adversative conjunctions for all three writing tasks. The total number of adversative conjunctions used in the 30 students' three writing tasks was 194 times. Based on the results, the adversative

conjunction was least frequently used compared to additive, causal and temporal conjunctions. Overall, the students were able to use adversative conjunctions appropriately 152 times and inappropriately 42 times. The total number of adversative conjunctions appeared in the students' expository essays was 60 times. For the second writing task, the total number of adversative conjunctions only increased to 69. The total number of adversative conjunctions used for the third writing task is 65 times.

The data show that the appropriate uses of adversative conjunctions presented similar range of total use from the first writing task to the third writing task. Out of the 60 adversative conjunctions used in the expository essays, the students were able to only appropriately use 43 times, which is 71.66 percent. Subsequently, the students used 55 adversative conjunctions appropriately out of the total 69 adversative conjunctions for their cause and effect essay, which show an increase at 79.71 percent. For the final problem-solution writing task, a total of 65 adversative conjunctions were used and the students were able to use 54 appropriately, which is 83.07 percent. These results show a gradual increasing trend of appropriate use for adversative conjunctions for each subsequent writing task.

It can be inferred from the data that the inappropriate uses of adversative conjunctions declined steadily from the first writing task to the third writing task. The total number of adversative conjunctions appeared inappropriately in the students' expository essays was 17 times, (28.33%). The students used adversative conjunctions inappropriately 14 times over the total of 69, a considerable decrease in percentage (20.28%) for the cause and effect essay. For the third writing task, problem-solution essay, the inappropriate use of adversative conjunctions decreased to 11 times from the second essay. Generally, the percentage of inappropriate use of additive conjunctions gradually decreased from 28.33 percent, to 20.28 percent, and finally 16.92 percent.

In summary, it can be seen that additive conjunction was most frequently used whereas adversative conjunction was least frequently used by Malaysian learners in this study. This result corroborate with past research Nuruladilah Mohamed's (2016) study, as it was reported that the additive conjunction was also most frequently used by Malaysian ESL learners. In another study by Do and Vo (2014), the highest frequency for additive conjunctions used and lowest frequency for adversative conjunction used by their EFL learners. Generally, metalinguistic corrective feedback influenced the use of conjunctions in writing in an encouraging manner. The percentage of appropriate use shows positive increasing trend and the percentage of inappropriate use gradually decreased for all four categories of conjunctions for each subsequent writing task. The progress shown by learners in this study echoes the findings in Ebadi's study (2014) where the EFL learners' writing ability improved after receiving metalinguistic corrective feedback.

4.3   Data analysis for research question 2

To answer research question 2: "What are the ESL learners' perceptions on the use of metalinguistic corrective feedback for conjunctions in writing?", this study employed qualitative content analysis for the second and third instrument: questionnaire and semi-structured interview which gathers learners' perceptions on the use of metalinguistic corrective feedback for conjunctions in writing. At the initial stage, the survey questionnaire was intended to extract the learners' general perceptions of metalinguistic corrective feedback through their level of agreement. The response from the questionnaire (Appendix D) were tabulated and reported in percentage calculation to see the overall students' perceptions on metalinguistic corrective feedback in terms of improved appropriate use of conjunctions in writing tasks, the amount of feedback they

would prefer to receive, and their feelings towards the corrective feedback that they receive in their writing tasks.

Six participants (A, B, C, D, E, and F) from the 30 samples consented to be interviewed to support richer insights: two high proficiency learners; participants E (H1) and F (H2), two intermediate proficiency learners; participants C (I1) and D (I2), and two low proficiency learners; participants A (L1) and B (L2). Three main themes were identified using content analysis: positive perception on metalinguistic corrective feedback, negative perception on metalinguistic corrective feedback, and efficacy of metalinguistic corrective feedback in conjunctions use for writing. Based on the themes, responses from the interview with six samples were included to contribute more in-depth information on the ESL Malaysian learners' perceptions on metalinguistic corrective feedback. Learners' perceptions on the use of metalinguistic corrective feedback are as follow:

4.3.1 Positive perception on metalinguistic corrective feedback

Based on this study's findings, Malaysian ESL learners generally perceived metalinguistic corrective feedback in a positive light in terms of helpfulness, feelings receiving corrective feedback, and preferences. Based on the questionnaire Q7: *'Metalinguistic corrective feedback (codes provided to indicate error) helped improve my use of conjunctions in writing',* 14 out of 30 students (46.66%) strongly agreed and 11 students, 36.66 percent of the participants agreed that metalinguistic corrective feedback helped improve their use of conjunctions in writing. Four students (13.33%) remained neutral, one student (3.33%) disagreed, and none strongly disagreed that metalinguistic was helpful. This shows that a majority of Malaysian ESL learners in this study perceived metalinguistic corrective feedback as a helpful tool for feedback in writing. This notion is agreeable with Hyland (2013) study where, "most students

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believed that feedback can help them in their studies" (p. 182). This shows majority of the Malaysian learners in this study generally responded positively and verified to have benefited from metalinguistic corrective feedback.

In terms of the learners' perceptions on their feelings towards metalinguistic corrective feedback for conjunctions in writing, the majority of the participants claimed that the feedback does not make them feel bad based on the response from the questionnaire Q10: '*Metalinguistic corrective feedback makes me feel bad about my writing'*. According to the data gathered from the questionnaire, nine students, 30.00 percent strongly disagreed and 16 students, 53.33 percent disagreed that metalinguistic corrective feedback makes them feel bad about their writing. Five students (16.66%) remained neutral, where it can be assumed corrective feedback neither makes them feel bad or vice versa. No students agree to the notion where metalinguistic corrective feedback makes them feel bad. Although there are studies that suggest that corrective feedback may impede their confidence and feelings, making them feel discouraged (Truscott, 1996), it is proven otherwise in this study for Malaysian ESL learners where they tend to be more receptive to metalinguistic feedback given to them.

Typically, Malaysian students' errors in essay writing will be underlined or circled by their teacher. This indirect method of assessing may further confuse and demotivate students to acknowledge and correct their errors. In this study, students' use of conjunctions in essay writing was assessed with metalinguistic corrective feedback and their perceptions and feelings were explored. Six samples from the group of 30 Malaysian ESL learners participated in the interview, and a similar question posed from the questionnaire were given during the interview (Appendix F) to gain deeper insight on their perceptions of their feelings towards metalinguistic corrective feedback, *"How do you feel when you receive written feedback from your teacher?"* Three out of six

participants expressed positive response and participant E (H1) felt that the feedback was helpful. Participants C (I1) and F (H2) personally felt that more detail and attention was paid on their essay writing. Participant C (I1) said, "I will think that the teacher mark my essay very detailed. I will read the comments and I will find out where and what is the problem." Additionally, participant F (H2) responded that the feedback was a form of motivation, "I feel the teacher paid attention to my essay and is encouraging me to do better." Interestingly, participants B (L2) and E (H1) highlighted that this form of feedback is better than the usual marking that they receive, which is underlining or circling their errors. This is reflected in Greenslade and Félix-Brasdefer's (2006) study which investigated the effects of two types of indirect WCF (coded vs. underlining) on learners' ability to self-edit on two-draft composition. The researchers found that although both types of WCF conditions helped the 21 students of Spanish as a foreign language to write considerably more accurate, the coded feedback condition exhibited more effectiveness in enabling learners to self-correct. Participant D (I2) however, conveyed apprehension with the feedback and codes, "A bit unclear because it's a new style of marking" as compared to the common underlining or circling.

On the aspect of preferences on corrective feedback, the majority of the students would like teachers to provide more feedback. According to Q11 of the questionnaire: '*I would like my teacher to provide more metalinguistic corrective feedback in my writing assignments'*, a total of eight students, 26.66 percent, strongly agreed and 17 students, 56.66 percent, agreed that they would like their teacher to provide more metalinguistic corrective feedback in their writing whereas five (16.66%) students remained neutral. To ensure the response to question 11 was validated, Q12 proceed to reaffirm their preferences on metalinguistic corrective feedback, *'I would like my teacher to provide less metalinguistic feedback in my writing assignments'*, 11 students (36.66%) strongly disagreed, 18 students (60.00%) disagreed and only one student remained neutral

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(3.33%). This is followed by Q13, *'I prefer to receive no corrective feedback'*, majority of the learners strongly disagreed (23 students, 76.66%) and disagreed (7 students, 23.33%) to receive less or not receiving feedback. This notion further affirms that Malaysian learners pay importance to feedback and perceive metalinguistic corrective feedback positively.

Based on the interview question 2, *"What are your thoughts or opinions on these methods in which feedback is given for conjunctions?"* Participants B (L2), C (I1), and F (H2) expressed positive viewpoints because this form of feedback is clearer than the conventional marking techniques (i.e underline and circle). From the interview, the response gathered was that the learners feel metalinguistic corrective feedback is better than receiving circles and underlines to indicate their errors in writing pieces. Additionally, Participant B (L2) stated that, "It's good because can see what is wrong and I can try to connect my paragraphs. For examples, for new paragraphs I start with 'besides that' or 'next', last time I just write the sentences only."

As for participants A (L1) and D (I2), they preferred the codes to be explained verbally too although they generally feel they have benefited from receiving this form of feedback. Participant A (L1), "If the lecturer explain what the codes mean will be easier to understand. I think overall the flow of my essay improved because I remember to connect my sentences or ideas better now." However, when asked if he will approach the lecturer to clarify if he doesn't understand the codes, he replied that he wouldn't but will ask his friends instead. This finding is similar to Carless's (2006) study that found students do not take the initiative to approach lecturers for verbal feedback (p. 226). When further probed for the reason why he does not consult the lecturer, participant A (L1) responded, "I feel at college level we have to find out our own and be independent".

Participants E (H1) and F (H2) were able to grasp the function of metalinguistic corrective feedback and benefited from it but preferred to have the coding feedback on other errors at the same time. Participant E (H1), "Well, at first glance I think it's a bit confusing maybe because it's the first time I receive this method of feedback. But after the second and third time it's easy and clear for me to spot my mistakes or where I can improve better. I believe it'll be better to get feedback on other mistakes as well." It can be seen, that participant E, who is a high proficiency learner portrayed higher motivation to further improve his writing skills in other aspects as well. This affirmed Goldstein's (2006) claim that learners with higher degree of motivation have more interest in engaging in a higher level of analysis of corrective feedback.

To delve deeper on their perceptions, the interview question 4 probed for other additional perceptions on metalinguistic corrective feedback, *"What would you like to comment on this symbol or coded marking?"* all six participants provided positive comments for metalinguistic corrective feedback, highlighting that it is a good technique to help them improve their writing. For example, Participant F (H2), "I think it's a good way to get feedback instead the normal of underline and circle style of marking. At least after we know what the symbol means, we can fix our own mistakes" In addition, participants A (L1) and E (H1) conveyed that the written corrective feedback would be better if supplemented with verbal explanation. Participant A (L1), "It's good if we get verbal comments also. We can clarify immediately and can remember better what the teacher say too." Based on the finding, it can be claimed that Malaysian ESL learners, too, prefer written and verbal feedback which corroborates with Carless (2006) findings where students express it will be better to have verbal explanation by lecturers (p. 226).

In conclusion, the majority of Malaysian learners perceive metalinguistic corrective feedback favourably in terms of usefulness where they feel their use of conjunctions in writing has generally improved. Also, their feelings and preferences towards metalinguistic corrective feedback are positive as it is notably clearer and more helpful than circling or underlining their errors in writing.

4.3.2 Negative perception on metalinguistic corrective feedback

From the response gathered some drawbacks in perceptions toward metalinguistic corrective feedback in terms of confusion and some negative feelings on some aspects upon receiving corrective feedback are highlighted. The main shortcoming based on the learners' perceptions on metalinguistic corrective feedback is that the codes can be confusing at first. According to the interview question 5, *"What are the issues (or difficulties) you face when you receive this form of corrective feedback?"* participants A (L1), B (L2), D (I2), E (H1), and F (H2) initially faced some challenges to interpret and understand the corrective feedback codes. Although all participants were given the list of codes and explanations at the beginning of the class, they still needed clarification and explanation upon receiving the codes being given as part of their essay writings' feedback and markings. Subsequently, the intermediate and high proficiency learners, participants C (I1), D (I2), E (H1) and F (H2), stated that they were able to understand the codes better from the second writing task onwards. As stated in Park et al. (2015), Chandler (2003) found that indirect feedback may create confusion as learners make their own corrections.

Based on the finding, the additional drawback was the issue where some of the learners were still unable to fix the mistakes on their own and needed guidance from the teacher. This is because the codes may appear to be unclear to accurately explain the learners' complex mistakes, for example at sentence level. As highlighted by Ferris and

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Roberts (2002), learners are unable to correct their errors if they cannot identify the correct form and although learners may proceed to correct their errors but they cannot be sure that they are correct. Moreover, Bitchener and Knoch (2010) and Ferris (2010), indicated that, "Learners with low L2 proficiency are less likely to benefit from indirect feedback as learners need a certain level of linguistic competence to be able to self-correct their errors" (p. 4), as stated in Park et al. (2015).

All participants A (L1), B (L2), C (I1), D (I2), E (H1), and F (H2) expressed that there were some errors they were unable to fix without further guidance from the teacher. Participant C (I1) only attempts to fix mistakes that are simpler in nature, "Sometimes, depends on what the codes means. If it's something easy to correct like a simple conjunction word, for example like change the additive conjunction to a different one, I think I can fix my mistake. But if the conjunction mistake is sentence problem, I will find it harder to correct". In another case, participant E (H1) shared, "I remember there's one essay I see a lot of 'Ad' in the same paragraph. At first I don't understand what is wrong, but after I asked you, I see I overused a lot of 'and' in the same paragraph which makes the sentence too long." For such cases, it can be inferred that metalinguistic corrective feedback by using codes alone may not be effective or explicit enough for complex errors. This is stated by Chandler (2003) where he asserts that the indirect approach may be futile due to the nature of indirect corrective feedback that provides inadequate information to fix complex errors, such as syntactic errors.

In terms of learners' perceptions towards their feelings on metalinguistic feedback, one participant in particular, participant A (L1) expressed somewhat feeling bad if she didn't do well but will check the mistakes later and try not make the same errors again based on the first interview question which asked about their feelings towards metalinguistic corrective feedback. This is not uncommon as Carless (2006) found some

of his interviewees felt dejected or pressurised when receive poor feedbacks or marks, but will look into how to do it better next time (p. 229) thus, "for the weaker students feedback carries more risk of being discouraging and/or misunderstood" (p. 230).

Conclusively, the negative perceptions towards metalinguistic corrective feedback mainly revolved around confusions to interpret the metalinguistic feedback where some students face difficulties to correct their errors. Furthermore, a minimal number of learners expressed their dejected feelings on the use of metalinguistic corrective feedback on conjunctions use in their writing although they would try to correct their inappropriate use of conjunctions.

4.3.3 Efficacy of the metalinguistic corrective feedback in conjunctions use for writing

The efficacy and effectiveness of corrective feedback has been continuously researched on and majority of the studies reported positive outcomes (Lee, 1997; Ferris, 2006; Anderson, 2010; Herrera, 2011; Ferdouse, 2013; Gholaminia, I., Gholaminia, A., & Marzban, A., 2013; Ebadi, 2014). There are several factors contributing to why the utilization of metalinguistic feedback was implemented in some studies which could potentially result in writing improvement (Mahnaz Azizi, Fatemah Behjat, & Mohammad Amin Sorahi, 2014). In their study, they stated that, "It gives learners information about the errors they just made, so that they are prompted to think about the structures they used and consequently take responsibility for their own learning." (p. 60). When learners benefit from metalinguistic corrective feedback, the efficacy of this mode of feedback is achieved. Another possible factor can be due to growing awareness of the language rules and noticing as an important element of language learning (Schmidt, 1993). Schmidt's (2001) noticing hypothesis stresses the significance of drawing the learners' attention to certain features of language to achieve linguistic

growth. Thus, metalinguistic corrective feedback could be a beneficial way of encouraging learners to consciously recognise the "gap" or disparity between their interlanguage and the language features, and at the same time motivate students to develop their writing. The perception on the efficacy of metalinguistic corrective feedback by Malaysian ESL learners in this study are explored on the basis of the function of the feedback as mediator tool, noticing factor, and correction aid through questionnaire and interview.

Firstly, item 9 in the questionnaire aims to gather response from the participants if metalinguistic corrective feedback functions as mediator tool: *'Metalinguistic corrective feedback alone is enough to improve my conjunctions use in my writing'* inspects learners' perceptions if metalinguistic corrective feedback alone is enough to improve their conjunctions use in their writing. Six students (20.00%) strongly agree that metalinguistic corrective feedback helped improve their conjunctions use, and a total of 13 students, 43.33 percent agreed to the notion. Six students (20.00%) remained neutral and five students, 16.66 percent disagreed. On top of feedback functioning as guidance, the metalinguistic codes highlighting the errors became a noticeable pattern for learners to see their main conjunctions mistakes too. Participant D (I2) stated, "Yep, because I feel the teacher pay attention to my mistakes and with the codes I can try to understand what mistakes I make. Sometimes I can see what type of mistakes I make the most also".

Echoing the response from the questionnaire, interview question 6 seeks to corroborate if learners perceive the efficacy of metalinguistic corrective feedback as a guide or mediator tool for their process of learning writing, *"Do you feel your writing is guided by the teacher when you receive this form corrective feedback? If yes, or no, can you elaborate?"* Collectively all six participants felt their writing was guided because

the error codes exhibited the teacher's detailed attention and concerns on their writing. Moreover, corrective feedback appeared to be a form of encouragement for students to pay more attention to their writing progress. Participant C (I1) personally expressed, "Yes. Because I feel the teacher is very concern with my writing and put a lot of attention when marking my essay… because most of the time the teacher 'tick' only, then I feel maybe my essay looks okay but I feel the teacher never really read what I write." When the interviewer proceeded to ask if the student will fix the mistakes if any errors are spotted when the essay is being marked in that manner, the student responded, "No, I usually don't feel like I have to correct it". From here, we can infer that students will only take their learning seriously when they feel their writing is being taken seriously by their teacher in the first place. When learning process has taken place, learners will most likely attain a certain level of improvement at their own pace.

Secondly, this study's questionnaire proceeded to gather learners' perceptions if the metalinguistic corrective feedback codes play a role as a noticing factor for them when the correction symbols were provided in their writing assignments Q14: *'I always pay attention to the metalinguistic corrective feedback in my writing assignments'* Based on the response for Q14, 12 students, 40.00 percent of the learners strongly agreed and four students, 17.00 percent agreed that they paid attention to the metalinguistic corrective feedback in their writing assignments. Only one student (3.33%) remained neutral and none of the learners disagreed. The questionnaire progressed to inquire if the learners perceive paying attention to the feedback helped improve their use of conjunctions, Q15: *'Paying attention to the feedback helps to improve my use of conjunctions in writing'*. 10 students, 33.33 percent strongly agreed and 14 students, 46.66 percent agreed that they perceived paying attention the metalinguistic feedback helped improve their conjunctions use in writing. Only six students, 20.00 percent remained neutral on the notion and none of the students disagreed. Schmidt (1990) hypothesized that

"noticing is a necessary condition for L2 learning; what is noticed becomes intake". Thus, noticing is reflected as a degree of awareness that encompasses understanding, noticing, and detection. This result supports the positive role of noticing in L2 learning; Mackey (2006) used multiple methods of noticing and development in a classroom context to examine whether feedback stimulates noticing of L2 forms and if there is an association between responses of noticing and learning effects by the learners. The results of this study reported that learners testified more noticing was exercised when feedback was given. In addition, students who showed more noticing progressed better than students who noticed less.

The interview question 3 attempted to expand the learners' response on the depth of their noticing, *"What do you notice about the teacher's comments or markings in your essays? What will you usually do about them?"* Participants A (L1), C (I1), and E (H1) confessed that they usually noticed the marks for their essays first, before looking at the comments or error codes although they stated that they will try to do some corrections by themselves or with external help and not repeat the same mistakes again. From their response, it can be inferred that Malaysian learners are keen on receiving feedback to improve their language proficiency. Carless (2006) found that "several students stated, unsurprisingly, that they would look first at the mark awarded, but also noted that they wanted to improve and were interested in tutors' responses to their work" (p. 225).

Through this interview question, it can be identified that motivation plays an important factor for learners' when it comes to writing proficiently. Learners with higher degree of motivation will place more priority in engaging in a higher level of the analysis of corrective feedback (Goldstein, 2006). Participant B (L2) noticed the comments and mistakes but stated that he wouldn't do anything to fix them due to the nature of his Accounting degree major which do not emphasize on English writing

proficiency. This finding is resonates Hyland's finding (2013), "Many students, however, discover that grammar is not valued as much in their disciplines as they expected it would be" (p. 182).

Another interesting finding to be highlighted, participant F (H2) felt the codes function as a reminder. This is because when the teacher asked why one particular causal conjunction, 'therefore' was scratched off and changed to 'hence' in her third writing task which is the problem-solution essay, the participant responded that she realized that she consistently used 'therefore' in her last two essays, so she tried to find another conjunction that possesses the same function for her third piece of essay. Additionally, participants A (L1), D (I2), and E (H1) confirmed that the codes made it easy for them to spot their errors elicited from interview question 4. This may be a beneficial feature for their learning process as the codes can function like magnets to encourage noticing. According to Schmidt (2001) in Rassaei's study (2013), "noticing acts as a catalyst in the internalization of L2 features into learners' developing L2 system" (p. 481).

Thirdly, in attempt to gather learners' perceptions in terms of metalinguistic corrective feedback functioning as a correction aid to prompt and guide them on improving their use of conjunctions, their views were gathered from the questionnaire item Q16: *'I fix the mistakes after my teacher gives me metalinguistic corrective feedback on my conjunctions use errors'*. This resulted in 10 students, 33.33 percent of the learners strongly agreed and 15 students, 50.00 percent agreed that they would fix the errors after receiving metalinguistic corrective feedback in their writing assignments. Only five students (16.66%) remained neutral and none of the learners disagreed. As reported by Ferdouse (2013), the results in her study contributed confirmation of the effectiveness of correction codes in enhancing self-correction.

In order to gauge the efficacy of metalinguistic corrective feedback as a correction aid, the interview further investigated all six participants' perceptions if the metalinguistic corrective feedback they receive for every writing task prompts them to widen their usage of conjunctions in their writing. Each interviewee's three writing tasks was analysed to identify the most frequently used conjunction and the learners were being posed interview question 7, *"Besides the conjunctions (X) you use regularly in your writing, are there new ones you have attempted to include or use in your writing after receiving the corrective feedbacks?"* Participant A (L1) most frequently used 'in addition', participant B (L2) 'besides that', participant C (I1) 'also', participant D (I2) 'nowadays', participant E (H1) 'furthermore', and participant F (H2) 'for example'.

Four out of six participants claimed that they will try to use new conjunctions in their writing upon receiving corrective feedbacks. When students are aware that grammatical errors are being focused and tended to, this encourages them to try improving their writing by attempting to upgrade their choice of conjunctions regularly used in their writing. For example, Participant C (I1), "I will try to change because when I see I use the conjunctions correctly for one essay, I will use a different one because after the ~~I~~ teacher mark I can see if I am correct or not." When asked by the interviewer to provide an example, the participant shared, "I will try change the harder one like from 'even though' to 'despite' to see if I use it correctly or not. Then I will try change from the normal conjunction I use like 'also' to 'furthermore'." In addition, Participant E (H1) demonstrated learning progress by utilizing the corrective feedback as an opportunity and channel to experiment using different forms conjunctions in writing, "Yes, I usually try use different ones because after the teacher mark my essay, I can see if I use it correctly or not. If I used it correctly, then I will be confident to use it again for other essays. If it's wrong, at least I can try correct my mistakes the next time around."

Participant F (H2) displayed a level of awareness which prompts the attempt of different conjunctions to be employed, for example, "Now I do try and sometimes use 'for instance'… or 'hence', instead of 'therefore' which I use a lot too." According to Schmidt's Noticing Hypothesis (Schmidt, 1990), "intake is that part of the input that the learner notices" (p. 139).

However, participant B (L2) stated that he will not attempt to change and only use the conjunctions that he's confident to use them correctly in his writing. For participant D (I2) who is an intermediate proficiency student, demonstrated a slower pace of learning stated that she will only attempt to change the simpler form of conjunctions, for example 'nowadays' (temporal conjunction) or 'moreover' (additive conjunction).

In order to gauge the efficacy of metalinguistic corrective feedback as a correction aid, this study seized the opportunity to supplement an additional interview question to determine if all six students are able to understand and correct their errors on conjunctions when metalinguistic corrective feedbacks are given with the final interview question 8, *"Please take a look at this sentence in your own essay: How would you correct this?"* Based on the response, only participant B (L2) stated that he was not sure how to correct the error shown to him. Participants A (L1), C (I1), D (I2), E (H1), and F (H2) were able to successfully correct their own errors during the interview.

Figure 4.1: Student A Cause and Effect Essay Sample
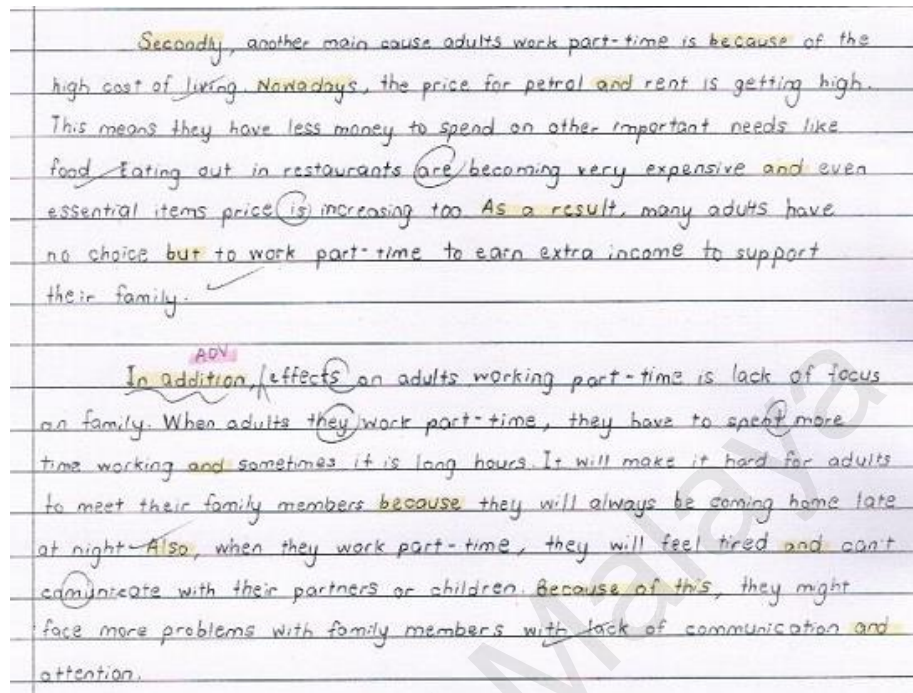
Student A (L1)'s actual cause and effects essay script (Figure 1.1) entitled, *"Working adults today are adopting part-time or two jobs to sustain the increasing cost of living."* were shown and the interviewer asked the student to correct one particular error which is an erroneous use of additive conjunction: ***"In addition, ADV effects on adults working part-time is lack of focus on family."*** After giving it a thought, participant A (L1) responded that she will change 'in addition' to 'on the other hand' and when asked to explain why, she said, "Because 'in addition' means I add some more, but now since I start a new point and it's contrast to my last point, I think it's better I use 'on the other hand'."

Another example (Figure 1.2), the interviewer asked participant E (H1) to correct the error in his problem-solution essay entitled, *"The influence of advertisements on consumers has brought about various problems. Discuss the problem and provide solution to this issue."*

Figure 4.2: Student E Problem-Solution Essay Sample
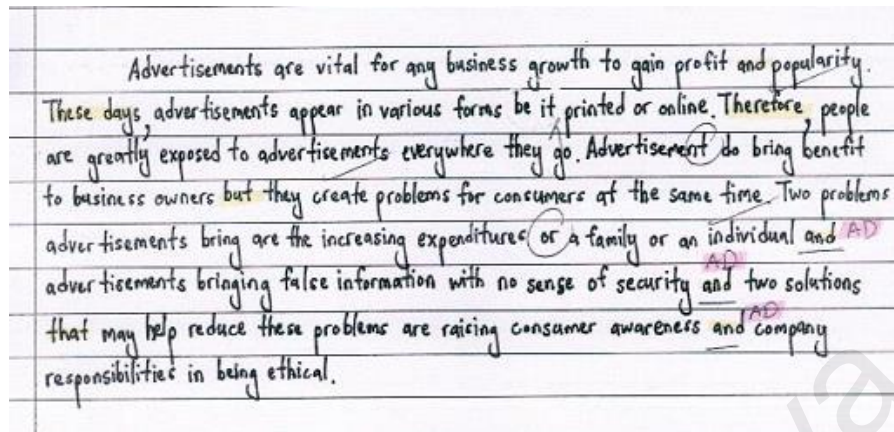
Participant E (H2)'s initial essay with the erroneous overuse of additive conjunction, *"Two problems advertisements bring are the increasing expenditures or a family or an individual and **AD** advertisements bringing false information with no sense of security and **AD** two solutions that may help reduce these problems are raising consumer awareness and **AD** company responsibilities in being ethical."* As a response, participant E (H1) stated, "There's too many 'and' in one sentence, right? I'll separate the sentence into two parts, 'Two problems advertisements bring are the increasing expenditures or a family or an individual and advertisements bringing false information with no sense of security. Thus, the two solutions that may help reduce these problems are raising consumer awareness and company responsibilities in being ethical.'" Clearly, the revised version appears to be much more coherent with the appropriate use of conjunctions. Based on the results, Malaysian ESL learners' perception on metalinguistic corrective feedback as a correction aid is in line with Ferris's (2006) finding, "Based on the findings of this study, we can conclude that focused meta-linguistic CF would most probably be more efficacious in comparison with the traditional based corrective feedback" (p. 882). In addition, the codes used in metalinguistic corrective feedback can potentially function as "mediator tool" based on sociocultural theory which encourages students to be more responsible with their

learning. According to Lantolf (2000), the basic concept of sociocultural theory is that the "human mind is mediated" (p. 1) and Vygotsky is credited for recognizing a significant role of 'tools in humans' to assist them with understanding. One will be able to utilize it in various settings accordingly once a new tool is acquired or mediated.

The final questionnaire question Q17: *'It is better for my learning to discover answers on my own through metalinguistic corrective feedback codes'*, aims to gather learners' perception on metalinguistic corrective feedback's efficacy as a tool to promote independent learning. Five students, 16.66 percent strongly agreed and 12 students, 40.00 percent agreed that it is better for their learning to discover answers on their own through metalinguistic corrective feedback codes. Based on the learners' responses, the main functions and intentions of metalinguistic corrective feedback can be justified. Moreover, this method of metalinguistic corrective feedback combines features of both direct and indirect corrective feedback with the aim of encouraging learners to initiatively reflect on and process the feedbacks and at the same time to depend on their own resources, which can potentially lead to student-generated repair. According to Bitchener and Knoch (2008b), learners will gain more advantage from indirect approach because "it requires pupils to engage in guided learning and problem solving and, as a result, promotes the type of reflection that is more likely to foster long-term acquisition" (p. 415). However, eight students (26.66%) remained neutral and five students (16.66%) disagreed that it is better for their learning to discover answers on their own through metalinguistic corrective feedback codes. A possible reason is ~~due to~~ the level of competency; learners with lower proficiency need more directed guidance. As reported by Anderson (2010), students with lower proficiency tend to prefer direct feedback as it provides a clearer feedback which helps them with corrections.

Learning at higher tertiary level should be independent and a self-discovery process. At the same time, students should be guided and given the opportunity to self-assess and make necessary corrections according to their own level of understanding. By utilizing metalinguistic corrective feedback as a teaching and learning tool, learners can potentially be able to achieve progress and be accountable for their own learning. As stressed by Gholaminia, I., Gholaminia, A., and Marzban (2013), "Corrective feedback can be a means of assessing students' accuracy and helping them to be aware of the errors and more importantly, to make fewer errors in writing. Metalinguistic error feedback helped learners to become aware of their own errors and monitor themselves. The students learned to be responsible for their own errors and become more independent learners." (p. 320).

Ultimately, numerous studies have contended that corrective feedback can be a useful teaching and learning tool for both facilitators and learners but as highlighted by Maclellan (2001) in Carless (2006, p. 229), "unless students are monitoring and regulating the quality of their own learning, feedback in itself, regardless of the degree of detail, is unlikely to generate improvement in writing". Based on the positive perceptions on metalinguistic corrective feedback, it is hoped that the dependent learning culture among Malaysian ESL learners can transcend to a more independent learning curve.

4.4   Conclusion

This chapter summarizes the key findings of the study, and deliberated them with reference to this study's two research questions. The findings on the influence of metalinguistic corrective feedback on writing in terms of appropriate and inappropriate use of conjunctions and learners' perceptions on metalinguistic corrective feedback in three main aspects: the helpfulness of coded metalinguistic corrective feedback, their

feelings receiving metalinguistic corrective feedback in their writing, and their preferences on receiving feedback have also been discussed in relation to previous studies.

In conclusion, Chapter 4 serves as a report on findings and discussions obtained in this study. The summary of the findings and implications for pedagogical practices and future research will be discussed in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER 5: OVERVIEW OF FINDINGS

5.0   Summary of key findings

From this study, it can be inferred that metalinguistic corrective feedback influenced the frequency of conjunctions used in writing, in particular, additive conjunction was most frequently used by the learners, followed by causal conjunction, temporal conjunction, and adversative conjunction was least frequently used. Additionally, metalinguistic corrective feedback also positively influenced the gradual increase of appropriate use and at the same time decreased inappropriate use for all conjunctions category for each subsequent writing task.

In terms of perception, the findings generally posed positive perceptions by the ESL learners on metalinguistic corrective feedback in three main aspects: the helpfulness of coded metalinguistic corrective feedback, their feelings receiving metalinguistic corrective feedback in their writing, and finally their preferences on receiving feedback. On the whole, the learners perceived metalinguistic corrective feedback to be helpful and from their response through the questionnaire and interview, majority agreed that the feedback helped improve their use of conjunctions in writing. Moreover, majority of the participants perceived their feelings towards metalinguistic corrective feedback to be favourable and the learners generally appreciated receiving metalinguistic corrective feedback although it invoked some confusion in interpreting the codes initially. In terms of perceiving their preferences on metalinguistic corrective feedback, most of the learners expressed preference for metalinguistic corrective feedback over circling or underlining, and some conveyed their preference for verbal explanation to be supplemented with the written feedback.

This study discovered the ESL learners' minimal negative perceptions on metalinguistic corrective feedback. Firstly, some of the learners found the codes quite confusing to interpret and needed additional explanation or guidance. In addition, it was found that some students were unable or not keen to correct complex errors specifically less proficient students. Finally, a minority of students still feel bad receiving huge amount of metalinguistic corrective feedback that highlight their errors on conjunctions use.

Last but not least, learners' perceptions on the efficacy of metalinguistic corrective feedback focusing on the feedback as mediator tool, noticing factor, and correction aid for conjunctions use in writing were identified in this study. As Malaysian university students suffer from large size classes, majority of the ESL learners agreed that written corrective feedback can potentially play a role as mediator to gain valuable feedback from their lecturers as opposed to the traditional method of circling and underlining errors that usually leave students demotivated and sometimes frustrated with their errors. In addition, most learners affirmed that upon receiving metalinguistic corrective feedback as a mediator tool, the learners are most likely to correct their errors accordingly based on the codes that they receive.

From the findings, learners' perceptions were generally agreeable that metalinguistic corrective feedback play a role as noticing factor and prompts learners to fix their errors although less proficient learners may not fix some complex errors. From the interview response, the learners conveyed that they tend to notice and were more conscious of their usage of conjunctions whether they overuse a certain conjunctions. In addition, they even began to start a new paragraph with a conjunction rather than immediately write the main topic sentence to enhance cohesion in their writing. This finding further contributes to the efficacy of metalinguistic corrective feedback in writing.

Finally, metalinguistic corrective feedback functioning as a correction aid credits to its efficacy in the same vein where learners are encouraged to self-correct and practice independent learning. Based on the findings, the Malaysian ESL learners in this study perceived metalinguistic corrective feedback as a promising correction aid for their conjunctions use in writing. A majority of these students were able to correct their errors and even attempted to vary different conjunction use in their writing knowing that they will be able to find out if they used the conjunction appropriately when they receive corrective feedback from their teacher later. Five out of six interviewees with exception of one low proficiency student were able to correct their errors marked with written corrective feedback symbols when presented a sample sentence extracted from their previous written task during the interview session.

As a final point, majority of the learners perceived that it is better for their own learning experience when they discover answers on their own guided through metalinguistic corrective feedback codes and this further indicate positive efficacy of metalinguistic corrective feedback among Malaysian ESL learners.

5.1 Implications

Metalinguistic corrective feedback is indeed helpful as compared to the conventional marking style; circling or underlining errors as the codes are instructive to guide learners to correct their errors. However, thorough preparation is needed to be made to mentally prepare and familiarize students to receive metalinguistic coded feedbacks by providing the learners clear explanations and perhaps a list of codes and its description. Moreover, the teacher should take to consideration of students' proficiency level to ensure that the corrective feedback will be feasible for the learners to attend to them. At the same time, a delayed test can be conducted to ascertain whether the efficacy of corrective feedback extends over a period of time.

5.2   Limitations and recommendations

Even though the findings of the study portray that metalinguistic corrective feedback played a role in improving appropriate use of conjunctions in writing, there are a few limitations to the present exploratory research that should be recognized and considered for future research. The sample size for this study is relatively small (n=30), therefore the results and findings are not able to represent the general population of Malaysian students and the sample was limited to the context of private university where the setting may differ from other learning institutions. Besides that, the different essay types which were used as part of the data for this study may create issues on reliability. Some crucial variables for this study were not taken into consideration, such as the teacher, learners' goals and motivation of learning English should be involved within the socio-cultural framework to ensure an ideal learning setting.

For future research, it is important to increase the number of participants in order for the data to be generalizable. Besides, more themes for discussion can be identified to yield a richer set of finding and response. On top of that, other aspects of treatable errors can be investigated in a qualitative approach besides conjunctions use as cohesion in writing.

5.3   Conclusion

This study revealed that written corrective feedback is influential on the appropriate and inappropriate use of conjunctions in writing to some extent although the study lacked statistically significant findings, the trend suggest metalinguistic corrective feedback within a sociocultural framework leads to improved appropriate use of linguistic accuracy. Therefore, this finding refutes Truscott's (1996) notion that error correction is non-beneficial nor productive for students' L2 writing development. It is

also found that indirect metalinguistic corrective feedback, which was claimed to encourage independent learning, was favoured by Malaysian students in this study. The result showed that students generally perceive metalinguistic corrective feedback positively. The efficacies of metalinguistic corrective feedback perceived by the students were highlighted in three main aspects in this study: corrective feedback as mediator tool, corrective feedback as noticing factor, and corrective feedback as correction aid and again the students generally perceived the metalinguistic corrective feedback efficacies favourably.

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