CHAPTER 7 Clauses in combination

1 Identifying conjunction in text

I have indicated the embedded clauses, mainly to make it clear why those clauses are not included in the analysis.

from the dissertation

The results showed

\[ \alpha \beta, \text{projecting:} \quad \text{that the non-native speakers’ understanding of the headline of the article} \]

loaction \quad \text{from their own country was extremely high} \]

\[ \beta_1 + \beta_2 , \text{extending} \quad \text{and that they could easily predict the content of the article,} \]

\[ \beta \alpha = \beta \beta , \text{elaborating} \quad \text{which suggests} \]

\[ \beta \beta \alpha \beta \beta , \text{projecting:} \quad \text{that they already had the background knowledge on politics} \]

loction \quad \text{and that they would have certain expectations from that text.} \]

\[ \beta \beta \beta + \beta \beta \beta 2 , \text{extending} \quad \text{On the other hand, the British subjects had great difficulty} \]

\[ \alpha \alpha \alpha \beta \beta , \text{enhancing} \quad \text{in guessing its content} \]

\[ \alpha \beta \alpha , \text{enhancing} \quad \text{judging only from the title} \]

\[ \alpha \times \beta , \text{enhancing} \quad \text{as they could only talk generally about it,} \]

\[ \beta \alpha = \beta \beta , \text{elaborating} \quad \text{being unable to make a successful prediction.} \]

\[ \alpha \times \beta , \text{enhancing} \quad \text{The non-native speaker subjects encountered more difficulties with the} \]

\[ \beta_1 \beta_2 , \text{extending} \quad \text{article from their country on a religious scandal,} \]

\[ \alpha \times \beta , \text{enhancing} \quad \text{maybe because this scandal happened during their absence from home} \]

\[ \beta_1 \beta_2 , \text{extending} \quad \text{and they were not really informed.} \]

\[ \alpha \times \beta , \text{enhancing} \quad \text{On the other hand, they had few problems with the political article} \]

\[ \beta_1 \beta_2 , \text{extending} \quad \text{because this was mainly based on their general knowledge about politics} \]

\[ \alpha \times \beta , \text{enhancing} \quad \text{rather than on the specific event [[that was being described]].} \]

\[ \alpha \times \beta , \text{enhancing} \quad \text{When they came to read the British article,} \]

\[ \times \beta \alpha , \text{enhancing} \quad \text{the non-native speaker subjects faced many difficulties} \]

\[ \alpha \alpha \alpha \times \beta \beta , \text{enhancing} \quad \text{as many of them did not know basic concepts such as [[what ‘Labour’ is and} \]

\[ \times 2, \text{enhancing} \quad \text{which are the most important parties in the United Kingdom]].} \]

\[ \times 2, \text{enhancing} \quad \text{Of course, the subjects [[who had spent more years in the United Kingdom]} \]

\[ 1 \times 2, \text{enhancing} \quad \text{were able to predict the article’s content more successfully} \]

\[ 1 \times 2, \text{enhancing} \quad \text{but at the time they could not reach a total understanding of [[what it was} \]

\[ 1 \times 2, \text{enhancing} \quad \text{going to talk about]].} \]
because their knowledge of the political situation in Britain was still restricted.

What is more surprising is that the British subjects did not have a high understanding of the title

because, like the non-native speaker subjects, they did not mention the reason [[that would cause Labour to lose safe seats]].

Of course this does not indicate

that they do not know the way [[elections work in the UK]].

but maybe they did not consider

it was worth mentioning.

[I have analysed ‘showed’, ‘suggests’ and ‘indicate’ above as if they were verbal processes in projection complexes. In fact, in transitivity they are relational identifying processes (Token \^Value) which are realized through the lexicogrammar of projection (and are thus a kind of grammatical metaphor – see Chapter 9); but, since the focus here is on the conjunctive relations, we need to capture the projection relationship.]

In the Relevant Research Background chapter, there could be a little less weight on general factors [[which affect reading comprehension]], and a little more on cultural factors specifically,

but you show familiarity with, and understanding of, a good range of concepts,

and there is a clear sense of development through most of the chapter,

with different authors brought in in a way [[which suggests that the ideas have been assimilated]].

The methodology chapter is successful:

you worked out a fairly complex procedure for [[setting up the various stages of the data collection and analysis]],

and you not only carry it through skilfully

but explain it carefully and clearly.

Although the fact [[that your non-native speaker subjects had such different amounts and types of experience of British culture]] makes it a little harder to compare the results,

the inclusion of the English native speaker subjects is sensible
α1 + α2, extending and provides some unexpected side-lights on the topic.

The results are presented in a clear way,

1 + 2, extending and you use the concepts [[introduced in the Research Background]] reasonably systematically.

The discussion of the results is thorough and sensible

α xβ1, enhancing though it mostly stays at a relatively simple level:

β1 = β2, elaborating you achieve some perceptive interpretation,

β2 xβ3, enhancing but in places the analysis could be pushed deeper –

β31 = β32, elaborating for example, I would have liked some discussion of the process [[by which, in a few cases, the readers managed to work out the meanings of initially unknown expressions by the end of the reading]].

It is useful [[to look at three case studies]]

α xβ, enhancing to illustrate the general findings;

1 x 2, enhancing but the relatively low scores of the NS readers could have been exploited a bit more

2α 2xβ, enhancing since they reinforce the importance of background knowledge rather than linguistic proficiency.

The conclusions answer your research questions explicitly and appropriately,

1 + 2, extending but, on the other hand, the outline of teaching implications is rather thin and generalised.

2 Discussing conjunction in text

The dissertation extract is from a section in which the writer is interpreting the findings. This is reflected in, and construed by, the relative frequency of enhancement realizing causal relations (6 instances in all). These occur when the writer aims to explain some aspect of the results (external expansion), or to justify her interpretation of the findings (internal expansion). For example, the clause ‘because their knowledge of the political situation in Britain was still restricted’ offers the reason why the subjects did not fully understand the articles, while ‘because … they did not mention the reason that would cause Labour to lose safe seats’ gives the evidence that justifies the writer’s claim that the British subjects did not fully understand the titles. Some of the other relations occur within the scope of these causal relations, extending or elaborating the causes: for example ‘maybe because this scandal happened during their absence from home // and they were not really informed’.

There are also two instances of concessive relations which signal that the effect which might be expected to follow from the cause does not follow (that is, they are a kind of causal relation). For example, ‘but … they could not reach a total understanding’ is represented as unexpected in relation to the preceding information that some subjects were able to predict the content more successfully.

Three of the projection complexes (those which construe identifying processes) perform a very similar
function to these kinds of enhancement, in that they represent an alternative way of realizing the relation between findings and interpretation. This similarity can be seen by the fact that, for example, ‘they could easily predict the content of the article, which suggests that they already had the background knowledge on politics’ could be paraphrased as ‘they could easily predict the content of the article, perhaps because they already had the background knowledge on politics’.

The examiner’s comments also use enhancement to construe concessive relations, but in this case the aim is to balance praise and criticism. The student whose work is being evaluated is therefore both encouraged for what she has achieved and shown where improvements could be made, in a way which is intended to soften the effect of any criticisms. The ordering is varied: in the first sentence it is criticism followed by praise (and the second part includes extending and elaborating relations to expand on the praise); whereas in a later sentence (starting ‘The discussion of the results’) it is praise followed by criticism, again with extending and elaborating relations in the second part, to expand on the criticism. The final sentence uses extension to continue this balance. This involves a slight shift in the type of relation – contrast rather than concession – because the two clauses evaluate different parts of the conclusion chapter, with no implication that answering the research questions well would lead one to expect that the discussion of teaching implications would also be good.

Thus, in both texts, we see different ways of realizing similar relations: expansion and projection in the dissertation to construe the move from findings to interpretation, and expansion and extension in the comments to construe the balance between positive and negative assessments. We also see that some relations are within the scope of others: in particular, elaboration and extension are used to expand the causal or concessive relations which are the key relations that realize the main purposes of the extracts.