

SEMANTIC APPLICABILITY OF SUBORDINATORS IN COMPLEX SENTENCE CONSTRUCTIONS OF SELECTED UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS OF ENGLISH FOR ACADEMIC PURPOSES IN MAKURDI

Adaje Ambrose Ochigbo

&

Ngozi Augustina Anyanwu

Abstract

The paper assesses semantic applicability of subordinators in complex sentence constructions of selected undergraduate students of English for Academic purposes (EAP) in Joseph Sarwuan Tarka University, Makurdi. The structural grammar description of the primary meanings of subordinators provides theoretical basis for assessment of semantic suitability of subordinators in the students' written complex sentences; the model is, also, employed to design a proficiency test, tagged *Meanings of Subordinators in English*, and administered to forty-eight students, randomly sampled from an EAP lecture group. The results show semantic inapplicability of subordinators in the students' written complex sentences, which is evident from their incomprehension of the primary semantic imports of subordinators in some selected standard complex sentences and incapability to construct complex sentences with certain subordinators to convey the semantic notions. The study proves that some EAP students cannot employ subordinators meaningfully in complex sentence construction. Therefore, the study recommends that semantic imports of subordinators should be taught EAP students.

Keywords: Semantic inapplicability of subordinators, EAP students' complex sentences

Introduction

Subordinators are veritable conjunctive linguistic devices which are employed to generate complex sentences so as to convey some semantic notions such as time, place, condition, concession, contrast, result, contingency, reason, proportion, similarity, preference, purpose, comparison and exception, among others, in English. Subordinators as well as coordinators are learnt in early school grammar class in Nigerian formal school system as sentence connectives. However, studies on the written English of Nigerian university students have identified subordinators among grammatical items which undergraduates' misuse. (Bodunde & Sotiloye, 2013; Amuseghan & Tunde Awe, 2016; Tsakuwa, 2016; Adekemi, 2021; Afolabi & Otemuyiwa, 2018; Ojo, 2018). This finding of previous studies warrants a further study to establish EAP students' comprehension of the semantic imports of subordinators. The purpose of the study is to assess the semantic applicability of subordinators in the contexts of written complex sentence of selected EAP students in Federal University of Agriculture, Makurdi. There are two specific objectives to this study, namely, to assess the students' knowledge of the basic meanings of subordinators in English usage and to also assess their competence in using subordinators to convey some semantic notions in their complex sentence constructions. To accomplish these tasks, a literature review of the primary meanings of subordinators is undertaken to provide valid theoretical grammatical basis for assessment of semantic applicability of subordinators in the students' written complex sentences and their comprehension of the semantic notions of subordinators in Standard English usage. The theoretical framework for the study is structural grammar description of modern English language because of its detailed explication of the various semantic imports of subordinators. (Greenbaum, 1996; Huddleston & Pullum, 2002; Azar, 2003; Vince, 2003; Biber, Conrad & Leech, 2003; Carty &

McCarthy, 2006; Quirk, Greenbaum, Leech & Svartvik, 2007; Foley & Hall, 2008; Ansell, 2000; Swan, 2009; Thomson and Martinet, 1986; Leech and Svartvik, 2002). The literature review that follows provides the meanings of subordinators with illustrations of their respective contexts in modern English usage. Subordinators introduce clauses with different meanings. For instance, the subordinator *since* can be used to express temporal or casual meaning, as exemplified in these sentences, respectively:

1. He has been here *since he arrived in the morning*
2. *Since he didn't turn up for the job interview*, someone else was interviewed and employed.

However, to avoid complexity, the semantic analysis which is undertaken here focuses on the primary meanings of subordinators.

A Review of Semantic Notions of Subordinators in Modern English Usage

Subordinators are adverbial conjunctive devices employed to integrate two or more ideas in a single sentence structure, referred to as complex sentence. English has several subordinators, namely, simple, complex, correlatives, marginal subordinators as well as other formal indicators of subordination (Quirk, *et al* 2007). Examples of simple subordinators are *after, although, as, because, before, directly, if, immediately, lest, like, once, since, that, though, till, unless, until, when, whenever, where, wherever, whereas, whereupon, while* and *whilst*. Quirk, *et al* (2007) further explains complex subordinators divide into ones that end with *that* as in: *but that, in that, in order that, insofar that, in the event that, save that* and *such that*. Ending with *that* is optional in others: *assuming (that), considering (that), excepting (that), given (that), granted (that), granting (that), provided (that), providing (that), seeing (that), supposing (that), except (that), for all (that), now (that), so (that)*. Also, some complex subordinators end

with *as*: *according as*, *as far as*, *as long as*, *as soon as*, *for as much*, *in as much as*, *in so far as*, *in so much as*. Other complex subordinators are: *as if*, *as though*, *in case*.

In correlative subordinators (Quirk, *et al* 2007), the second correlative endorses the meaning of the first; correlative subordinators classify into five sets: proportional correlative: *as...so*; comparative correlatives, such as, *as...as*, *so...as*, *such...as*, *so...(that)*, *such...(that)*, *less...than*, *more...than*, *no sooner...than*, *barely...when*, *hardly... when*, and *sincerely... when*; proportional correlatives: *the...the*; the correlatives *whether ...or*, *if ... or* and finally the correlatives that have an initial subordinate adverbial clause with an optional conjunct in the matrix clause: *although*, *even if*, *though*, *while...yet*, *nevertheless*, *etc.*, *if*, *once*, *since* (reason), *unless*, *if... then*, *in that case*, *because*, *seeing* and *seeing that ...therefore*. The range correlative subordinators can be extended to include, for instance, *when...there* and *whenthen*, particularly in literary writing.

Marginal subordinators, according to Quirk, *et al* (2007), include *ever if*, *if only*, *the moment (that, every time (that), during the period when... until such time as, since the days that, the fact that, because of the fact that, due to the fact that, on account of the fact that, in (the) light of the fact that, in spite of the fact that and regardless of the fact that, supposing (that), assuming that, provided that, seeing now, and considering how*

Structural grammar (Quirk, *et al* 2007), further recognizes other indicators of subordination which include *wh-elements* like *who*, *whom*, *whose*, *which*, *when*, *where*, *what*, *why*, *how*; *whoever*, *whomever*, *whichever*, *whenever*, *whatever*, *however*, *whosoever*, *whomsoever*, *whosoesoever*, *whatsoever* and *howsoever*. Others are *that* and the subject-operators, *had*, *were*, *should*, *could*, and *might*.

However, the review focuses on the basic meanings of these subordinators and the sentential contexts in which their primary meanings are realized in usage. Quirk, *et al* (2007) identifies such basic

semantic notions as time, contingency, place, concession, contrast, excerption, result, reason, comparison, similarity, proportion and preference.

Subordinators such as *after*, *as*, *before*, *once*, *till*, *until*, *when*, *whenever*, *while*, *whilst*, *now that*, *as long as*, *so long as*, *as soon as*, *immediately* and *indirectly* are used to denote time. The subordinators are used to introduce adverbial-*ing*, adverbial-*ed* and verbless clauses of time, as illustrated below:

3. You have to be careful *when crossing that major highway road*.
4. Lettuce is delicious *when it is eaten raw*.
5. *When in difficulty*, consult the machine manual.

Subordinators may express the time of the matrix clause to be precious, subsequent or simultaneous with the time of the adverbial clause. In other words, subordinators can express *time before*, *same time* and *time after* which are respectively demonstrated in sentences 4, 5 and 6 below:

6. I dislike Mathematics *until I got to be taught by an Indian teacher*.
7. She cut herself *while peeling yam*.
8. She put off the journey *immediately she heard the bad news*.

Subordinators like *when*, *whenever*, *once*, *where*, *wherever* and *if* that primarily express time, place or condition may be neutralized to convey the notion of recurrent or habitual contingency meaning:

9. *When there is smoke*, there is fire.
10. *Once they are known*, such facts are reported.

11. *If it is possible*, I want you to test all the moving parts of the machine.

To convey the notion of condition, two simple subordinators, namely, *if* and *unless* are employed. These subordinators are used in conditional clauses to convey that the situation in the matrix clauses is dependent on that in the subordinate clause:

12. *If you put the baby down*, he will scream.

13. *Unless the pap is warm*, it has little taste.

Other subordinators that express the notion of condition are *as long as*, *so long as*, *assuming*, *assuming that*, *given*, *given that*, *in case*, *in the event that*, *just so*, *just so that*, *on condition*, *on condition that*, *provided*, *provided that*, *providing*, *providing that*, *supposing*, *supposing that*. Also, subordinators like *before*, *when*, *whenever*, *once*, *only* and *except that* can express condition.

The notion of concession is chiefly expressed by *although*; or, its informal variant, *though*:

14. No goal was scored, *although it was an exciting football match*.

Other subordinators that convey the notion of concession are *if*, *even if*, *even though*, *when*, *whereas*, *while*, *whilst*, *as* and *that*.

15. *Genius, though, Jane is*, she is unassuming.

16. She used my mower *even though I told her not to*.

17. *Even if she is poor*, she is honest.

In expressing concession, subordinators are used to imply that the situation in the matrix clause is unexpected in the light of that in subordinate clause:

18. *Although cybercrime is a tuition-fee course in the university*, candidates hardly apply for it.

The notion of contrast is also expressed by several of the subordinators that introduce concession: *whereas*, *while* and *whilst*. The subordinators convey contrast between two situations:

19. *Whereas Nigeria has great petroleum wealth*, Ghana has comparatively little.

20. Mr. White teaches physics *while* Mrs. White teaches *Mathematics*.

Subordinators such as *but that*, *except*, *except that*, *expecting*, *expecting that* and *save that* are usable in expressing the notion of exception.

21. Nothing would satisfy the woman *but that the husband buys her a car*.

22. He would pay you now *except that the he does not have any money on him*.

The subordinators *because*, *since*, *as* and *for* are used to express the notion of reason:

23. I lent John the money *because he needed it to pay rent*.

24. *As Martha is the eldest*, she looks after the other children.

25. *Since, we are in the town*, we feel we should visit grandma.

The reason subordinators convey some aspects of reason relationships such as *cause and effect*, *reason and consequence*, *motivation*

and result, circumstances and consequence which are respectively illustrated in sentences 26, 27, 28 and 29:

26. The old man is thin *because he doesn't eat enough*.

27. The gardener watered the flowers *because they were dry*.

28. She will help me *because she is my friend*.

29. *Since the economy has improved*, the government will fund foreign study.

Primary subordinators of purpose are *in order to* and *so as to*:

30. The Madam left the door open *in order for the maid to hear the baby*.

31. Students should take notes during lectures *so as to make revision for examination easier*.

Other purpose subordinators include *so that*, *so*, and *in order that*:

32. The school closed earlier *so that the pupils could reach home before dark*.

The subordinators *so that* and *so* are used to convey result, mostly:

33. The mason was paid immediately, *so that he left satisfied*.

34. I didn't take notice of him, unintentionally, though, *so he withdrew from me throughout the wedding celebration*.

The subordinator *that* also expresses result:

35. What has she done *that he should insult her?*

The notion of result can also be expressed by correlatives *so ... (that)*, *such... (that)* in which *so* and *such* are intensifiers:

36. He is *such* a good lecturer (*that*) *all his courses are full*.

37. Susan gave her baby so many toys (*that*) *him couldn't possibly play with them all*.

38. Mary cooks the local soup *as her mother does*.

39. Please, plain the plank *exactly as I have shown you*.

To express comparison, the subordinators *as if*, *as though* and *like* are employed:

40. The old man looks *as if he is getting better*.

41. Woman treats the maid *as though the girl is a stranger*.

42. She acts *like she has had a stint with the military*.

The concept of proportion can be introduced by subordinators like *as*, or with the correlatives *so.....as*, and *the....the*.

43. *The harder he work, the happier he feels*.

44. *As the widow grew disheartened, her health deteriorated*.

45. *As the widow grew sorrowful, so her health declined*.

The subordinators *rather than* and *sooner than* explicitly convey preference:

46. *Rather than go there by air, I would take the safest train*.

47. The soldiers will fight to the finish *sooner than surrender (themselves to the enemy army)*

The above short survey of the primary meanings of subordinators in standard complex sentences in English is meant to provide a theoretical grammatical basis for assessing the students' knowledge of the semantic notions of subordinators in English. The investigation is premised on the fact that if the students have not learnt

the meanings of subordinators, they (the students) are unlikely to use subordinators meaningfully in English.

Methodology

This expo-facts study was conducted among first-year undergraduate students of English for Academic purposes in Federal University of Agriculture, Makurdi. A research proficiency test, tagged *Meanings of subordinators in English*, was developed from structural grammar description of the semantic imports of subordinators in English (Quirk, et al, 2007; Hornby, 2005). The proficiency test has two sections: The first, tasks the students to choose words, from a word bank, that depict the semantic notions of subordinators used in twenty-five standard complex sentences. The second section demands the students to construct complex sentences with some subordinators to convey specified basic semantic notions associated with them. The test was administrated to forty-eight students randomly sampled from an EAP lecture group. The students' responses were analysed with frequency count, percentage and mean score statistics, using 0.5 mean score as decision-criterion score. In other words, all items in which the students' scores range from 0.00 to 0.40 are considered as poor performance indicating deficient knowledge of the primary meanings of subordinators whereas all items with 0.50 to 1.00 mean scores are construed as evidence of proficiency.

Results of Data Analysis

The result of data analysis, based on the research objectives, are displayed on Table 1 and Table 2 below. The first table shows the extent of the students' comprehension of the primary meanings of some selected subordinators employed in some Standard English complex sentences. The table also provides a list of selected subordinators; exemplary uses of the subordinators in English; the contextual

meanings of the illustrated subordinators and the competence ratings of the students' comprehension of the contextual meanings of the illustrated subordinators. Table 2 shows the result of the assessment of the students' uses of some selected subordinators in sentence construction to convey certain meanings in English. The table lists some subordinators with their primary meanings which the students are tasked to convey in their complex sentence constructions. A column also shows Standard English complex sentence illustrations of the listed subordinators with the required meanings. The illustrations which are adopted from Quirk, et al (2007) and Hornby (2015), serve as examples of similar uses of the subordinators which are expected in the students' complex sentence constructions. A last column displays competence ratings of the students' complex sentence constructions illustrating the selected meanings of the subordinators.

Table 1: Assessment of Some EAP Students' Comprehension of Primary Meanings of Subordinators in Standard English Usage.

	Selected Subordinators	Test items on Selected Subordinators	Contextual meanings of Selected Subordinators	Competence ratings of EAP Students' Comprehension of the Meanings of Selected Subordinators		
				X	%	X
1	Before	I sent a donation <i>before</i> I was used to	Time	34	70.8	0.70
2	As soon as	<i>As soon as</i> she left, she bursts out laughing	Time	18	37.5	0.37
3	Whenever	<i>Whenever</i> there's smoke, there is fire	Contingency	0	0.00	0.00

4	Once	<i>Once</i> known such facts have been reported	Contingency	0	0.00	0.00
5	Where	<i>Where</i> I saw only wilderness, they saw abundant signs of life	Place	35	72.9	0.72
6	After	The road stops just <i>after</i> it goes under a bridge	Place	10	20.8	0.20
7	If	<i>If</i> you put the baby down, she'll scream	Condition	22	45.8	0.45
8	As long as	she may go, <i>as long as</i> she goes with her	Condition	19	39.5	0.39
9	Although	No goals were scored, <i>although it</i> was an exciting game	Concession	6	12.5	0.12
10	Even though	She used my mower <i>even though</i> I told her not to	Concession	12	25	0.25
11	While	Mr. John teaches Biology, <i>while</i> Miss Joan teaches Physics	Contrast	3	6.25	0.06
12	Whilst	The house must have been burgled <i>whilst</i> we were asleep		4	8.33	0.08
13	But	It never rains <i>but</i> it pours	Exception	14	29.1	0.29

14	That	Nothing would satisfy the child but <i>that</i> I place her on my lap	Exception	5	10.4	0.10
15	Because	You will help me <i>because</i> you're my friend	Reason	26	54.1	0.54
16	As	<i>As</i> June was the eldest, she worked after the others	Reason	8	16.6	0.16
17	So as	Turn the volume down <i>so as</i> not to wake the baby	Purpose	5	10.4	0.10
18	In case	They evacuated the building <i>in case</i> the wall collapsed	Purpose	12	25	0.25
19	That	What have I done, <i>that</i> you should insult me	Result	5	10.4	0.10
20	So	I took no notice of him <i>so</i> he flew into a range	Result	7	14.5	0.14
21	Like	Do the peeling exactly <i>like</i> I did	Similarity	10	2.08	0.28
22	As	Fill in the application form <i>as</i> instructed	Comparison	4	8.33	0.08
23	As if	She winked at me <i>as if</i> to say anything	Comparison	6	12.5	0.12
24	The	<i>The</i> harder they worked, the happier the felt	Proportion	7	14.5	0.14

25	Rather than	<i>Rather than</i> go there by air, I would like the slowest train	Preference	15	31.2	0.31
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Using the earlier stated decision-criterion mean score of 0.5, Table 1 shows an average performance in task items 1, 5 and 15; but utter failure is exhibited in the other task items. This performance implies that the students have knowledge of the primary semantic notions of subordinators *before*, *where* and *because* in English but they lack knowledge of the basic notions which are associated with these subordinators: *as soon as*, *whenever*, *once*, *after*, *if*, *as long as*, *although*, *even though*, *while*, *whilst*, *but*, *but that*, *as*, *so as*, *in case*, *that*, *so*, *like*, *as*, *as if*, *the...the* and *rather ...that*.

Table 2: Assessment of Some EAP Students' Complex Sentence Constructions to Convey Primary Meanings of Some Subordinators

	Selected subordinators	Selected meanings of the subordinators	Illustrations of the selected meanings of the subordinators	Competence ratings of the students' complex sentence constructions illustrating the selected meanings of the subordinators		
				X	%	X ²
1	Until	Time	Let's wait <i>until</i> the rain stops	25	52	0.52
2	When	Contingency	<i>When</i> he worked harder, he felt happier	1	2.08	0.02
3	Wherever	Place	<i>Wherever</i> can he have gone to	26	54.16	0.54

4	Given that	Condition	It was surprising that the government was re-elected <i>given that</i> they had raised taxes so much	12	25	0.25
5	While	Concession	<i>While</i> not wanting to seem obstinate, I insisted on a definite reply	4	8.33	0.08
6	Whereas	Contrast	Some of the eggs in the basket are gotten <i>whereas</i> others are good	10	20.83	0.20
7	Save that	exception	They found out nothing more <i>save that</i> he had been borne a child	4	8.33	0.08
8	Since	Reason	We thought that, <i>since</i> we were in the area, we would stop by and see him	14	29.1	0.29
9	In order	Purpose	She arrived early <i>in order</i> to get a good seat	29	60.4	0.64
10	So that	Result	Nothing more was heard from him <i>so that</i> we began wonder if he was dead	9	18.7	0.18
11	As	Similarity	Repeat these five steps <i>as</i> in the last exercise	4	8.33	0.08

12	As though	Comparison	He behaved <i>as though</i> nothing had happened	16	33.3	0.33
13	As	Proportion	<i>As</i> he grew disheartened, his work deteriorated	2	4.16	0.04
14	Sooner than	Preference	She would <i>sooner</i> share a house with other students <i>than</i> live at home with her parents	5	10.4	0.10

Using the decision-criterion mean score of 0.5, Table shows average performance in only three task items, namely, 1, 3 and 9; but poor performance exists in the other 11 task items. The performance reveals that the students can use *until*, *where* and *in order* to express the notions of *time*, *place* and *purpose* respectively in their complex sentence constructions. Contrarily, the students cannot use each of these subordinators to convey the semantic notion enclosed in bracket: *when* (contingency), *given that* (condition), *while* (concession), *whereas* (contrast), *save that* (exception), *since* (reason), *so that* (result), *as* (similarity), *as though* (comparison), *as* (proportion), and *sooner than* (preference).

Discussion of Findings

The main finding of the research is that some EAP students' use of subordinators is semantically inapplicable in the contexts of their complex sentence constructions; in other words, they are unable to use subordinators to convey semantic notions associated with the items in English. The first finding of this work is that the students are unable to comprehend, interpret or specify semantic significations of subordinators in Standard English usage. The students are tasked to choose from a word bank, words that correctly interpret the semantic

notions of subordinators in some selected Standard English complex sentences. The tasks are twenty-five. The students are unable to identify the semantic notions of twenty-two tasks items. They cannot comprehend the semantic significations of the subordinators in the contexts of these sentences. The primary semantic notions are italicized at the end of each task below:

Task item 2: **As soon as** she left, she bursts out laughing. *time*

Task item 3: **Whenever** there's smoke, there's fire. *contingency*

Task item 4: **Once** known, such facts are have been reported. *contingency*

Task item 6: The road stops just **after** it goes under a bridge. *place*

Task item 7: **If** you put the baby down, she'll scream. *condition*

Task item 8: She may go, **as long as** she goes with her. *Condition*

Task item 9: No goals were scored, **although** it was an exciting game
concession

Task item 10: She used my mower **even though** I told her not to
concession

Task item 11: Mr. John teaches biology, **while** Miss Joan teaches physics. *Contrast*

Task item 12: The house must have been burgled whilst we were asleep.
Contrast

Task item 13: It never rains **but** it pours. *Exception*

Task item 14: Nothing would satisfy the child **but that** I place her on lap. *Exception*

Task item 16: **As** Jane was the eldest, she worked after the others. *Reason*

Task item 17: Turn the volume down **so as** not wake the baby. *Purpose*

Task item 18: They evacuated the building **in case** the wall collapsed.
Purpose

Task item 19: What have I done, **that** you should insult me? *Result*

Task item 20: I took no notice of him so he flew into a range. *Result*

Task item 21: Do the feeling exactly **like** I did. *Similarity*

Task item 22: Fill in the application form **as** instructed. *Comparison*

Task item 23: She winked at me **as if** to say that I shouldn't say anything.

Comparison

Task item 24: **The** harder he worked **the** happier he felt. *Proportion*

Task item 25: **Rather than** go there by air, I would like the slowest train.

Preference

That the students are incapable of interpreting the primary meaning of each subordinator in the task items, as italicized at the end of each sentence above, is evidence of their poor comprehension of the basic semantic notions of subordinators in English, possibly due to inadequate learning.

The second finding is that the students are deficient in using subordinators to convey basic semantic notions associated with the items in English. The students are tasked to construct complex sentences with each of these subordinators to convey the semantic notion specified in bracket: *until (time), when (contingency), whenever (place), given that (condition), while (concession), whereas (contrast), save that (exception), as (similarity), as though (comparison), as (proportion) and sooner than (preference)*. With reference to the students' performance in Table 2; the students do not have much difficulty with using *until, wherever* and *in order* to depict the primary meaning of *time, place* and *purpose* in English. But they have extreme difficulty constructing sentences in which the other subordinators are used to depict the primary meanings associated with them. The deficiency is shown in their complex sentence constructions which are extracted below:

Excerpt 1. When (contingency): *When I was in Lagos, I saw a popular celebrity.*

In the excerpt, *when* conveys time. The use of *when* to denote contingency is illustrated in this sentence: *When he worked hard, he felt happier.*

Excerpt 2: Given that (condition): *Given that my sister is with me, I won't have cooked the rice.* The use of *given that* in the extract does not imply the semantic notion of condition. *Given that* expresses condition in: It was surprising that the governor was elected, *given that there was massive misappropriation of public fund in the first tenure.*

Excerpt 3: While (concession): I like watching football *while Terna likes watching handball.* *While* in the construction conveys the notion of contrast. An example of use of *while* to express concession is illustrated in this sentence: *While not wanting to seem obstinate, I insisted on a definite reply.*

Excerpt 4: Whereas (contrast): I was heading to her house *whereas she wasn't around.*

Whereas is meaningless in the sentence; *but* is more applicable and so more meaningful in the context. The contrastive notion of *whereas* is illustrated in this sentence, *whereas Nigeria has great petroleum wealth, Ghana has comparatively little*

Excerpt 5: Save that (exception): I was the one *who save that girl from the fatal accident.*

The phrase, *save that* consists of a verb and a demonstrative adjective. It is not used as a subordinator in the context of the sentence. The use of *save that* as a subordinator to denote *exception* is aptly illustrated in: They found out nothing more *save that he had been borne a child.*

Excerpt 6: since (reason): The teacher started teaching *since 2006 because he is qualified.* *Since* suggests the notion of time rather reason. The use of *since* exemplifies reason in this

sentence: We thought that, *since we were in the area*, we would stop by and see him.

Excerpt 7: so that (result): He took his medication as prescribed *so that he will get well*.

So that denotes reason or purpose in the construction. It does not imply *result* in the context of the sentence. *So that* can be used to indicate *result* as in this sentence: Nothing more was heard from him *so that we began wonder if he was dead*.

Excerpt 8: as (similarity): *As mark is the eldest*, he works for the family. *As* does not imply similarity; rather, it suggests purpose, reason or condition. This further confirms the students' difficulty with using *as* a subordinator to convey the semantic notion of similarity. *As* illustrates similarity in this sentence: Repeat these fore steps *as demonstrated in the last exercise*.

Excerpt 9: as through (comparison): She is beautiful as though mercy is.

As though is meaningless in the excerpt. *As though* conveys the notion of comparison in this sentence: He behaved *as though nothing had happened*.

Excerpt 10: as (proportion): She came in the game *as the captain*.

Besides being ungrammatical, the *as* in the excerpt does not imply proportion; *as* illustrates proportion in: *As he grew disheartened*, his work deteriorated.

Excerpt 11: sooner than (preference). I came home *sooner than john*.

The subordinator, *sooner than*, in the excerpt conveys the motion of time rather than preference. *Sooner than* illustrates preference in: She would *sooner* share a house with other students *than* live at home with her parents.

The seeming source of the linguistic deficiency as analysed above is that the students have not learnt the basic semantic notions of subordinators. The implication of the deficiency is that the students are unable to use the subordinators acceptably in English.

In conclusion the study shows that some EAPs students cannot discern when the usage contexts of these subordinators semantically signifies the notions written in brackets *as soon as (time)*, *whenever (contingency)*, *once (contingency)*, *after (place)*, *if (condition)*, *as long as (condition)*, *although (concession)*, *even though (concession)*, *while (contrast)*, *whilst (contrast)*, *but (exception)*, *but that (exception)*, *as (reason)*, *so as (purpose)*, *in case (purpose)*, *that (result)*, *so (result)*, *like (similarity)*, *as (comparison)*, *as if (comparison)*, *the ...the (proportion)* and *rather than (preference)*. Also, the study further reveals that the students cannot construct complex sentence with each of these subordinators to communicate the semantic notion in bracket: *When (contingency)*, *given that (condition)*, *while (concession)*, *whereas (contrast)*, *save that (exception)*, *since (reason)*, *so that (result)*, *as (similarity)*, *as though (comparison)*, *as (proportion)* and *sooner than (preference)*.

The analysis of the students' responses affirm the conclusion that some undergraduate students of EAP have not sufficiently learned the primary meanings of subordinators; consequently, from this study, they do not comprehend basic contextual semantic notions of subordinators in standard English usage; also, the students cannot use subordinators to convey basic semantic notions associated with the subordinators.

Conclusion, Implications and Recommendations

The study has established that some EAP have not learnt the primary meanings of English subordinators as they are in capable of constructing complex sentences in which subordinators convey their primary semantic notions. In addition, the students are unable to

decipher the meanings of subordinators in some standard complex sentences.

These findings have implications for English for academic purposes course programme for undergraduate students in Nigerian universities. The course has to be tailored to focus more on basic grammatical items which are fundamental to effective use of English; yet undergraduates have poor foundation in use of the items in English. Such items include subordinators, coordinators and others which researches have found to be problematic to Nigerian university students. More attention should be accorded elementary grammar drills and excises to improve the students' base in elementary English grammar for effective communication..

The study recommends that the EAP programme should be reworked to accommodate grammatical problems of undergraduates discovered by previous researches in their written English. On their part, undergraduate students should strive at all times to use Standard English in both informal and formal interactions.

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