



**AND/BUT/OR IN ENGLISH AND VIETNAMESE EQUIVALENTS –  
A CONTRASTIVE ANALYSIS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR  
TEACHING WRITING SKILL AT HUNG YEN UNIVERSITY OF  
TECHNOLOGY AND EDUCATION**

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Received: 01/10/2016

Revised: 31/10/2016

Accepted for publication: 15/11/2016

**Abstract:**

*The study was conducted to make a contrastive analysis of AND/BUT/OR in English and their equivalents VÀ/NHỮNG/HAY-HOẶC in Vietnamese in order to find out whether they are the only equivalents of AND/BUT/OR in all contexts. The results showed that as cohesive devices, the three coordinators AND/BUT/OR appear to be more flexible than their semantic syntactic and logical meanings because these coordinators can function in discourse to create possible implications for the effect of communication. We have 9 implications by AND, 2 by BUT and 5 by OR. VÀ/NHỮNG/HAY-HOẶC are not the only equivalents to AND/BUT/OR in all relation respectively. In fact, for different meanings implied by AND/BUT/OR many other linkers or expressions are found as Vietnamese equivalents of these three coordinators. In general, AND is commonly used to denote ADDITION, BUT shows CONTRAST and OR implies ALTERNATIVE. The study also mentioned some suggestions for teaching writing skill at Hung Yen University of Technology and Education (UTEHY)*

**Keywords:** *and/but/or, cohesive devices, coordinator*

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**Introduction**

No one denies the importance of the English language in the present time as a global language because it has become more dominant around the world than any other languages. However, learning any foreign languages in general and English in particular is not easy. It is a lengthy and effortful process to master English as a native speaker because of a variety of factors. Linguistic knowledge of English accounts for learners' ability to combine phonemes into morphemes, morphemes into words, and words into sentences. That means, when people speak or write they have to convey a certain message by organizing their thoughts and ideas into strings of words to produce sentences, and then combine sentences together to create higher units of discourse. But how to combine sentences to each other and to the rest of the context has been a big question for linguists. Communication is possible

only when sentences which create discourse hang together so that discourse has its unity and the product of our creation would make sense. In other words, knowledge of cohesion and coherence is essential in discourse construction and necessary for successful communication. In discourse, cohesion has an interrelation with coherence; the former is a guide to and part of the latter in both spoken and written language. Awareness of coherence as a quality that makes a text conform to a consistent world picture, to experiences, culture, and convention and cohesive devices as the linguistic means by which elements of a text are arranged and connected is vital for learners of English.

Although a number of theses on cohesive devices in different types of discourse were conducted, they didn't focus on any single word as a cohesive device in order to have a deeper

analysis. That has given the author of this study the idea to examine the uses of conjunctions as cohesive devices in English written discourse. And the three conjunctions AND/BUT/OR are chosen as they are the most central coordinators.

### The purpose of the study

This study is targeted firstly, at making contrastive analysis of AND/BUT/OR as cohesive devices and their equivalent realizations in Vietnamese. Secondly, the author would like to put forward some suggestions as effort to help English-major students at UTEHY overcome the consequences of interference when learning writing skill.

### Literature Review

When speaking or writing we often want to make some links with other things that we are saying or writing. There are several ways of doing this and they provide cohesion in the use of language. According to Halliday and Hasan (1979), "The concept of cohesion is a semantic one; it refers to relations of meaning that exist within the text, and that define it as a text." It can be concluded that cohesion refers to the connection of all parts or elements of a text. Without it, a text would be just a chaotic and even meaningless collection of sentences.

Cohesive relations can be established within a text provide cohesive ties to bind a text together. In their book Halliday and Hasan (1979) give a very comprehensive description and analysis of these devices. They also identify five different types of cohesion: reference, substitution, ellipsis, conjunction and lexical cohesion. As a matter of fact, English conjunctions play a dominant role in creating a system of grammatical sentences of English.

Cook (1989) defines conjunctions as grammatical items: "Conjunctions are words and phrases which explicitly draw attention to the type of the relationship which exists between one sentence or clause and another". Those words may simply add more information to what has already been said (and, further more, add to that) or elaborate or exemplify it (for instance, thus, in

other words). They may contrast new information with old information, or put another side to the argument (or, on the other hand, however). They may relate new information to what has already been given in terms of causes (so, because, consequently, for this reason) or in time (formally, then, in the end, next) or they may indicate a new departure or a summary (by the way, well, to sum up, anyway).

According to Quirk and Greenbaun (1973), sorts of English conjunctions include: coordinating conjunctions (or more simply coordinators) and subordinating conjunctions (subordinators) and correlatives.

As mentioned above, AND/BUT/OR are the most central coordinators which can join two equal clause. Basing on Quirk's view point, AND denotes the relationship between the contents of the clauses, and the relationship between two clauses is explicated by adding an adverbial, which is inserted in parenthesis (wherever possible). There are eight semantic implications of AND:

Firstly, AND is used to denote that the event in the second clause is a consequence or result of the event in the first.

*He heard an explosion and he (therefore) phoned the police.*

Secondly, AND is used to suggest that one event is chronologically sequential to another, but it is not the implication of cause-effect relationship.

*She washed the dishes and (then) she dried them.*

Thirdly, AND suggests that one idea is in contrast to another. AND could be replaced by BUT when this implication is presented.

*Robert is secretive and (in contrast) David is candid.*

Besides, AND is used when the second clause is a comment on the first.

*They disliked John – and this is not surprising.*

In addition, AND is often used before the second clause to introduce an element of surprise in view of the content of the first.

*He tried hard and (yet) he failed.*

What's more? AND is used when the first clause is dependent upon the second, conditionally (usually the first clause is an imperative).

*Give me some money and I'll help you escape.*

In other cases, AND is used before the second clause when it makes a point similar to the first.

*A trade agreement should be no problem, and (similarly) a cultural exchange could be arranged.*

Finally, AND is used when the second clause is a "pure" addition to the first.

*He has long hair and (also) he wears jeans.* BUT

denotes the contrast of one statement with another. The contrast may be in the unexpectedness in light of the first clause.

John is rich, but he is happy.

In other cases, the contrast may be restatement in an affirmative sense of what the first part of the sentence implied in a negative way (sometimes replaced by on the contrary):

He will never break her heart, but he will love her with all his heart.

John did not waste his time in the week before the exam, but he studied hard every evening.

The coordinator OR offers a choice between one statement and another. Four semantic implications by OR are characterized by the following features.

Firstly, OR usually expresses the idea that only one of the possibilities can be realized, excluding one or the other. Yet, the preferred alternative tends to be put first.

You can study hard for this exam or you can fail.

You will do it today or tomorrow.

Secondly, when the content of the clause allows it, OR sometimes is interpreted as inclusive, allowing realization of a combination of the alternatives:

You can boil yourself an egg or make you some cheese sandwiches.

It is possible to clearly include the third possibility by a third clause.

Besides, the alternative expressed by OR may be a restatement, a correction of what is said in the first conjoin.

They are enjoying themselves, or at least they appear to be enjoying themselves.

Lastly, OR also implies a negative condition and its meaning is equivalent to if...not

*Give me some money or I'll shoot.*

Yet, OR generally seldom requires an imperative verb or modal auxiliary in the first clause while that seems compulsory for AND.

### **Methodology**

This study of AND/BUT/OR as cohesive devices in English written discourse is based on the communicative view-point of language teaching and learning. Therefore, the methods of descriptive and comparative analysis are used. The study is presented in order from general theories to detailed descriptions, with theories presented first, then examples given to clarify the theories. In other words, the contrastive analysis between AND/BUT/OR in English and their realizations in Vietnamese are systematically made. For the data, I have chosen at random the samples from several written discourse types such as novels, short stories, magazines and newspapers. The data are also selected from many different grammar books. All of this will lead to the point of finding effective solutions to improve writing skill of students at UTEHY.

### **Findings and discussion**

#### ***Contrastive analysis***

The results showed that both AND in English and VÀ in Vietnamese have some similar syntactic features which mainly affect the mechanism of the logical relation of 'addition'.

Also, the comparison helps to prove that VÀ is not the only equivalent to AND in all relation. In fact, for different meanings implied by AND, many other linkers besides VÀ are put into use, as shown in the following table:

Table 1. Vietnamese equivalents to AND denoting the examined implications

Implications	Vietnamese equivalents
Pure addition	...và... ...và còn... ...hơn nữa còn...
Chronological sequence	...rồi... ...và sau đó... ...tiếp theo...
Similarity / Comment	...và... ...hay nói cách khác...
Consequence (result)	...nên... ...do đó... ...vì thế / vì vậy...
Condition	Nếu...thì... ...thì... Với điều kiện...thì...
Contrast	...nhưng... ...còn...
Purpose	...để (mà)...

The pair BUT – NHỮNG are most frequently and equivalently used implying “contrast”. Nonetheless, BUT can denote another implication rather than “contrast”, that is “condition” which is likely to express in Vietnamese by some link word as NẾU / VỚI ĐIỀU KIỆN. In short, Vietnamese equivalents of BUT to denote different implications can be seen in the following table.

Table 2. Vietnamese equivalents to BUT denoting the examined implications

Implications	Vietnamese equivalents
Contrast	...nhưng... ...nhưng mà... ...song...vẫn...
Condition	...nếu... ...với điều kiện... ...chỉ khi...

Once again, the comparison shows that HAY / HOẶC is not the only equivalent of OR. In other words, OR has different Vietnamese equivalents when expressing different relation.

Table 7. Vietnamese equivalents to OR denoting the examined implications

Implications	Vietnamese equivalents
Alternative (exclusive)	...hay... ...hoặc...
Alternative (inclusive)	Hoặc...hoặc
Correction statement	...hoặc... ...hay...
Negative condition	Nếu không...thì... ...nếu không thì... Hoặc...hoặc...
Deduction	...hay là...

**Implications for teaching writing skill at UTEHY**

It is the fact that cohesive devices play a very important role in writing a paragraph or an essay because they produce cohesion, which is of vital importance in writing. Therefore, it is the job of the teacher to raise students’ awareness of cohesive devices in general and coordinators in particular.

AND/BUT/OR are the most central coordinators, thus, they should be taught thoroughly. The degree of student’s acquisition of these three English coordinators depends, to a large extent, on the teacher’s presentation. The teacher should know how to present them and their usage in a comprehensible way to students. A good presentation is supposed to provide all necessary information. Therefore, it is advisable for the teacher to follow the following steps.

The teacher should, first of all, provide students with some general ideas about the meanings of the three coordinators AND/BUT/OR. Then, the variety of semantic implications by each coordinator is introduced. However, it is not a good idea to teach all of them mechanically at one time as students may get confused. In addition, the teacher should familiarize the students with

various possible semantic relations in specific contexts or situations, which can help students avoid ambiguity and uncertainty when facing these cases. Next, it is suggested that a brief explanation of the cross-cultural differences in the usage of AND/BUT/OR and their equivalents in Vietnamese be mentioned. Finally, the teacher should design many types of exercises for the learners to do until they are proficient enough in using these coordinators.

The teaching materials are also as important as the teaching method. The materials chosen should ensure the clear explanation and the description of the coordinators in consideration. For illustration, pairs of discourse should be given to contrast the good ones with those considered to be a failure due to the inappropriate use of coordinators. Furthermore, the teaching materials should be aimed at communicative purpose of language teaching, so situations set should be familiar and understandable to the learners. Sample discourses with detailed knowledge about science, technology or a certain technical process should be avoided. Last but not less, bilingual materials should be encouraged to ensure the exact use by the learners and to avoid pitiful interference.

In conclusion, the teaching of reading has often focused on the sentence level. Vocabulary and grammar have received a great deal of attention. However, we also need to help students look at relations which exist between sentences and between paragraphs. Teaching cohesion in general and coordinators in particular is a key way of increasing students' awareness of how texts function. Therefore, some types of exercises are reform and length can be interesting topics for other researchers.

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suggested in the hope of helping students avoid making mistakes in using these three English coordinators.

#### Conclusion

The methods of descriptive and comparative analysis has helped the author to give a systematic presentation of the uses of the three central coordinators AND/BUT/OR as cohesive devices as well as made a contrastive analysis of AND/BUT/OR as cohesive devices and their equivalent realizations in Vietnamese. As cohesive devices in English written discourse, the three coordinators AND/BUT/OR appear to be more flexible than their semantic syntactic and logical meanings. AND/BUT/OR in English and VÀ/NHỪNG/HAY-HOẶC in Vietnamese have some similar syntactic features which mainly affect the mechanism of their logical relation. However, VÀ/NHỪNG/HAY-HOẶC are not the only equivalents to AND/BUT/OR in all relation respectively. In fact, for different meanings implied by AND/BUT/OR many other linkers or expressions are found as Vietnamese equivalents of these three coordinators.

As no single research design is all-inclusive and complete, this study cannot cover everything in its field of study. This study only deals with coordinators as cohesive devices in English written discourse within the sentence level only. But discourses are not always long stretches of sentences. There are public notices, proverbs, advertising slogans, etc, where one sentence by itself comprises a complete text. And discourses are not always limited within written form. Therefore, coordinators in various discou

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**PHÂN TÍCH ĐỐI CHIẾU AND/BUT/OR TRONG TIẾNG ANH VỚI CÁC YẾU  
TỐ TƯƠNG ĐƯƠNG TRONG TIẾNG VIỆT VÀ ỨNG DỤNG TRONG VIỆC  
DẠY KỸ NĂNG VIẾT TẠI TRƯỜNG ĐẠI HỌC SƯ PHẠM KỸ THUẬT  
HUNG YÊN**

**Tóm tắt**

*Nghiên cứu được thực hiện với mục đích phân tích đối chiếu AND/BUT/OR trong tiếng Anh với VÀ /NHỮNG / HAY-HOẶC trong tiếng Việt để tìm hiểu xem VÀ /NHỮNG / HAY-HOẶC có phải là từ tương đương của AND/BUT/OR trong mọi văn cảnh hay không.*

*Kết quả cho thấy, đóng vai trò là các phương tiện liên kết, các liên từ AND/BUT/OR linh hoạt hơn ý nghĩa cú pháp và ngữ nghĩa logic của chúng, và chúng có thể mang các ý nghĩa khác nhau trong các văn cảnh khác nhau. Có 9 ý nghĩa có thể diễn tả bởi AND, 2 bởi NHỮNG và 5 bởi OR. VÀ/NHỮNG/HAY-HOẶC không phải là từ tương đương chỉ để AND/BUT/OR trong tất cả các mối quan hệ tương ứng. Trong thực tế, đối với ý nghĩa khác nhau bao hàm bởi AND/BUT/OR, chúng ta tìm được nhiều các từ khác nhau tương đương trong tiếng Việt ngoài 3 từ trên. Nói chung, AND thường được sử dụng để biểu thị sự thêm vào, BUT chỉ sự tương phản và OR chỉ khả năng khác. Cuối cùng, nghiên cứu này cũng đề cập đến một số gợi ý cho việc giảng dạy kỹ năng viết tại trường Đại học Sư phạm Kỹ thuật Hưng Yên.*

**Từ khóa:** *and/but/or, phương tiện liên kết, liên từ*