

Investigating English Conjunctive Adverbs Problems Encountered by Libyan Undergraduate Students of English

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Abstract:

This study investigated the students' knowledge about the use of some common conjunctive adverbs in writing. The subject of the study was 20 students majoring in English at the Faculty of Education, Misurata University. The data was drawn from a multiple choice test, consisting of 17 items. Every item included a different conjunctive adverb. The data was analyzed statistically and presented in two tables and one graph. The results of the study showed that the majority of the students of English were not able to use the conjunctive adverbs appropriately in the given sentences. Their knowledge about the conjunctive adverb was not the same and different from one student to another. More specifically, among the 17 conjunctive adverbs used in the test, only two adverbs were answered by a good number of students answered them correctly. From the students' answers, it seemed that most of the students find some difficulties in understanding and using these conjunctive adverbs in writing. In general the students' answers were below the required level and the students of English need more practice on the use of this type of conjunction.

Key words: cohesive devices, conjunctive adverbs, conjunction.

دراسة مشكلات الظروف المتصلة في اللغة الإنجليزية التي يواجهها طلاب اللغة الإنجليزية

الليبيين في المرحلة الجامعية

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الملخص:

استقصت هذه الدراسة معرفة الطلاب حول استخدام بعض الظروف الموصولة الشائعة في الكتابة، وكانت عينة الدراسة 20 طالبا في تخصص اللغة الإنجليزية بكلية التربية جامعة مصراتة، تم استخلاص البيانات من

اختبار الاختيار من متعدد مكونا من 17 فقرة، كل فقرة بها ظرف مختلف عن باقي الفقرات، وتم تحليل البيانات إحصائيا وعرضها في جدولين ورسم بياني واحد. وأظهرت نتائج الدراسة أن أغلب طلاب اللغة الإنجليزية لم يفعلوا تلك القدرة على استخدام الظروف الموصولة بشكل مناسب في الجمل المعطاة، وكانت معرفة الطلاب بالظرف الموصول مختلفة من طالب لآخر، وتحديداً؛ من بين 17 حالة عطف مستخدمة في الاختبار، تم الرد على ظرفين فقط من قبل عدد لا بأس به من الطلاب الذين أجابوا عليهما بشكل صحيح، ومن إجابات الطلاب يبدو أن معظم الطلاب يجدون صعوبة في استخدام بعضها في الكتابة. عموماً كانت إجابات الطلاب أقل من المستوى المطلوب وطلاب اللغة الإنجليزية بحاجة إلى مزيد من الممارسة على استخدام هذا النوع من الاقتران.

الكلمات المفتاحية: أدوات الربط، الظروف المتصلة، حروف العطف.

1.Introduction

Cohesive devices play very important role in writing since they can achieve a clear, logical flow of thought from sentence to sentence and from paragraph to paragraph. Writers usually use these words to help the reader to interpret his ideas. These transitional words are usually used to help the reader understand and follow the writer's train of thought, what has been read and what will be read. Zamel (1983) states that "*Cohesive devices are crucial in writing, for they turn separate clauses, sentences and paragraphs into connected prose, signaling the relationships between ideas, and making obvious the thread of meaning the writer is trying to communicate.*". Without transitions, paragraph and entire essays can become disjointed and difficult to follow.

The use of conjunctions can help the readers to interpret the pragmatic connection in a text in relation to the writer's thinking as well as expressing the semantic relations between clauses (Hyland, 1998). Conjunction are used to help maintain text cohesion and coherence in academic discourse. They help to create the semantic unity. Halliday and Matthiessen (2014) refer to conjunctive cohesion as how the writer creates and expresses logical relations between the parts of a text using conjunctions.

Our concern in this study is to investigate and explore some of the conjunctive adverbs problems that our students encounter in their writing at the English Department, Faculty of Education, Misrata University.

2. Problem of the Study

It has been noticed that EFL learners focus almost exclusively on the sentence level rather than on the level of the whole discourse that is textual coherence. The focus on writing has been on generating grammatically correct sentences, feeling that correct grammar is the only tool they depend on in writing English essays. Therefore, they rely on what they have learned about grammar.

Cohesion has often been neglected in language teaching, where sentences have been created, manipulated and assessed in isolation. It has been assumed that students' difficulties arise primarily from lack of vocabulary or the complexity of grammatical structure at sentence level, whereas difficulties can as easily arise from problems with cohesion: finding the referent for pronoun, for example, or recovering a phrase or clause lost through ellipsis (Cook, 1989: 127)

There is a general consensus at the Department of English, Faculty of Education, University of Misrata, that the students of English have many difficulties in the subject of writing, and find it very difficult to write, especially, when they are asked to write full composition or essay. They face many problems and commit many mistakes in their writing. They produce disconnected sentences which lead to vague and meaningless text, although their knowledge of the grammatical rules and lexical items of English language may be high. They are not able to connect their ideas and they seldom use the available English sources that help them in achieving coherence, and making the relationship between their sentences and paragraphs stronger than they appear. One of the problems facing our students at the English Department is the use of conjunctive adverbs and the disability to use it correctly in their sentences. This problem pushes the researcher to investigate the use of these devices and explore the knowledge of the students about them.

3. Aim of the Study

This study aims to achieve the following objectives:

1. Identifying some of the problems of conjunctive adverbs that Libyan learners of English encounter in their writing.
2. Identifying which of the conjunctive adverbs are more difficult than the others to understand and use.

3. Giving some recommendations and suggestions for the teachers of English when teaching these devices.

4. Literature Review

According to Halliday and Hasan (1976), the primary factor of whether a set of sentences do or do not constitute a text depends on cohesive relationships between and within the sentences which create texture: "A text has texture and this is what distinguishes it from something that is not a text The texture is provided by the cohesive relation (1976 : 2). The cohesive relationships within a text are set up where the interpretation of some elements in the discourse is dependent on that of another. The one presupposes the other in the sense that it cannot be effectively decoded except by recourse to it" (1976 : 4). Consequently, a relation of cohesion is set up and presupposed and presupposing elements are integrated into a text. The presupposition and the fact that it is resolved provide cohesion between sentences and they create text.

These devices are divided into two main sections, grammatical and lexical. Under the grammatical cohesion, we see three kinds serving as cohesive ties among the sentences and paragraphs. The conjunctive adverbs which is considered as one of the grammatical cohesive devices plays very important role in connecting the ideas among the paragraphs and the whole composition.

A conjunctive adverb is considered as a kind of adverb that is conjunction by its character and an adverb by its design. Conjunctive adverbs are adverbs that not only qualify a word but also connect different clauses or sentences. A conjunctive adverb is also known as an adverbial conjunction. It brings together two complete thoughts like conjunction. The second clause is used to modify the first clause like an adverb by using a conjunctive adverb. It follows a semi-colon or a period and a comma after them. (Net 1)

4.1 Conjunctions

According to Halliday and Hasan (1976: 226), conjunction is the fourth and final type of grammatical cohesive devices. It is different from the other types of grammatical cohesion (references, ellipsis and substitution), and it is not simply anaphoric relation. While the instances of references, substitution and ellipsis are clearly identifiable in most cases, conjunction is not definable

in such clearcut terms and the relationship expressed by the conjunctions are termed as conjunctive relations.

Conjunctions operate as logical connections between clauses, sentences and paragraphs in discourse. These conjunctions can link such sentences and paragraph in different ways to perform different functions such as: adding information, making comparisons between sentences, sequencing them in time, or explaining their causes, purpose or conditions. i.e. Different conjunctions serve different purposes within a text. For example, in stories, conjunctions can be used to link events together in sequence in time, while in persuasive texts, they can be used to construct the logic of an argument from hypothesis to evidence to conclusion (Martin 2004).

Conjunctive elements are cohesive not in themselves but indirectly, by virtue of their specific meaning; they are not primarily devices for reaching out into the preceding (or following) text, but they express certain meanings which presuppose the presence of other components in the discourse.

Although the types of conjunctive relations are classified differently, Halliday and Hasan (1976: 238) subdivided conjunctions into four categories, additive, adversative, causal, and temporal. The following example with the four items adopted by Halliday and Hasan (1976) gives a scheme of just four categories:

1- *For the whole day he climbed up the steep mountainside, almost without stopping.*

- a- *And in all this time he met no one.* (additive)
- b- *Yet he was hardly aware of being tired.* (adversative)
- c- *So by night time the valley was far below him.* (causal)
- d- *Then, as dusk fell, he sat down to rest,* (temporal)

The four conjunctive relations are clearly expressed in the items *a* to *d* by the words *and*, *yet*, *so* and *then* as mentioned next to each one above.

(i) Additive Relation

The most common word used to express this type of conjunctive relation is *and*. But not all the relations expressed by *and* is additive one. *And* can

express two different relations – structural and cohesive. So learners of English should be able to distinguish between 'and' as a structural relation (coordinate) and 'and' as a cohesive relation (additive). The *and* relation expressed in example 'a' below is different from the *and* relation given in example 'b'.

- a- *Men and women*
- b- *He heaved the rock aside with all his strength. And there in the recesses of a deep hollow lay a glittering heap of treasure.*

In example 'a', *and* joins two nouns and the relation represented here is a coordination relation, while in 'b', *and* is used cohesively to link one sentence to another to give cohesion to a text or rather to create text. (Halliday and Hasan, 1976:234). In addition, there are a large number of conjunctive expressions (EMPHATIC) which have the same meaning expressed by 'and' relation when it occurs in an internal sense, e.g: *further, furthermore, again, also, moreover, what is more, besides, additionally, in addition, in addition to this, not only that but*. When using such conjunctives, the speaker/ writer usually has the intention of wanting the two sentences as it were added together and reacted to in their totality.

The word *or* is also considered a cohesive device although it appears in the form of coordination. The conjunctive 'or' relation basically means ALTERNATIVE. In external sense, it is confined to questions, requests, permissions, and predictions. The words *and, or* and *nor* are all used cohesively, as conjunctions and all of them are classified here as additive. A related pattern of semantic SIMILARITY is also used to establish cohesion. It makes some sort of comparison between what is being said and what has gone before. This sort of additive relation can be established by forms such as *similarly, likewise, in the same way*. The meaning of dissimilarity can also be expressed by forms such as *on the other hand, by contrast, as opposed to this*.

Two other related relations which can be under the type of additive conjunction, EXPOSITION and EXEMPLIFICATION. Relation of Exposition can be expressed by items such as *I mean, that is, that is to say, in other words, to put it another way*, while in the exemplificatory sense, the most frequent items are *for instance, for example, thus*.

(ii) Adversative Relation

Adversative relation is the second type expressed by conjunctives to establish cohesion between sentences. It simply means "contrary to expectation" which is usually based on the previous content or the communication process - the speaker- hearer situation. As in the additive relation, cohesion can be found on both plane, internal and external. The word *yet* in initial position expresses an external adversative relation as in the following example:

All the figures were correct; they'd been checked. Yet the total came out wrong.

Items such as *but*, *however* and *though/although* can also perform very similar function as achieved by *yet*. Besides, *nevertheless* and *still*, and prepositional expressions such as *in spite of this* are also used to express adversative relation between sentences. Many other words can be used to perform different relation under the subcategory of adversative relation. These items are *on the other hand*, *at the same time*, *in fact*, *as a matter of fact*, *actually*, *instead*, *rather*, *on the contrary*, and so on.

(iii) Causal Relation

The most important words used to express causal relation are *so*, *thus*, *hence*, *therefore*, *consequently*, *accordingly*. Some other expressions like *as a result (of that)*, *in consequence (of that)*, *because of that* can also be used in this type of relation. Another type of conjunctive relation that should be mentioned here is conditional type. Conditional type which means "under these circumstances", is closely related to causal relation.

(iv) Temporal Relation

Temporal relation is the fourth type of conjunctive relation which simply means "sequence in time". It occurs between two sentences when one is subsequent to the other. It is mostly expressed by the word *then* or *and then*, as in the following example:

Alice began by taking the little golden key, and unlocking the door that led into the garden. Then she set to work nibbling at the mushroom...

Some other words may also be used to express this kind of relation such as *next, afterwards, after that, subsequently* as well as *a number of other expressions*.

In addition, some other individual items such as *now, of course, well* and *surely* can also be used with a cohesive force in the text. These words are simply referred to as continuatives.

4.2. Related Study

Several empirical studies were conducted to investigate the use of conjunctions in ESL/EFL learners' writing.

Hidayati (2014) conducted his research to describe the mistakes and errors that were committed by students in their argumentative essays. This study reveals that there were some types of errors such as omission of additional connectives or conjunctions and omission of cause effect conjunctions.. The researcher also found some other mistakes such as misinformation in using additional conjunctions and miss information in using cause effect conjunctions.

Granger and Tyson (1996), (cited in Darweesh 2016) conducted a study to investigate the use of connectors in essays written by French students. Qualitative analysis was adopted to compare and contrast between French learners of English and native English speakers pertinent to connector usage. The results illustrated that no overuse of conjunctions in the French students' writings when compared with the writings of native speakers. The researchers also found that the eight conjunctions, based on the list in Quirk et. al (1985), "*however, instead, though, yet, hence, therefore, thus, and then*" were underused by the French students. The overuse and misuse of the conjunctive adverb *indeed* in the French students' writings was coterminous with such uses in L1 writings.

Aiblu (2019), in his PhD study, investigated the amount of conjunctive adverbs used by the students of English in their writing at the same Faculty , Faculty of Education, in Misrata University. The students were asked to write a complete essay. The study revealed that the students used 37 conjunctive adverbs with different number of occurrence frequency in their writing. The additive conjunctives had the biggest number of frequency, while the

adversative devices appeared with lowest number of frequency. In general, the conjunctive adverbs that had more frequency in the writing of students were: also (59 times), so (40 times), for example (19 times), on the other hand (17 times), however (12 times), then (10 times), firstly and in conclusion (8 times), therefore and finally (5 times).

5. Methodology of the Study

The data of the study was collected from a test given to 20 students of English at the English department, Faculty of Education - Misrata University. The majority of the students are female at advanced level. The test consists of 17 multiple choice items, the student are asked to select one item from three or four choices. The test was taken from two websites mentioned on the reference page . The data was analysed through the appropriate statistical analysis, and the calculations were carried out by means of the SPSS statistical program, and the results were presented in table 1. The table is followed by bar chart to give more clearance to the results of this study.. The discussion and comments of the researcher followed the results of the study.

6. Results and Discussion

In the following table, we can see the conjunctive adverbs which were checked in the test. The table was provided with the correct and wrong answers of the all students' answers as well as the percentage of each. In addition, the results of P-value and general understanding rate were included in the table.

Table 1: Statistical Analysis for the Students' Test

No. of item	Adverb	correct answer	percentage of correct answer %	wrong answer	percentage of wrong answer %	P-value	general understanding rate
1	again	8	40 %	12	60 %	.385	average
2	otherwise	8	40 %	12	60 %	.385	average

3	then	13	65 %	07	35 %	.186	average
4	nevertheless	10	50 %	10	50 %	1.000	average
5	besides	9	45 %	11	55 %	.666	average
6	instead	15	75 %	05	25 %	.021	high
7	also	10	50 %	10	50 %	1.000	average
8	subsequently	9	45 %	11	55 %	.666	average
9	however	10	50 %	10	50 %	1.000	average
10	therefore	11	55 %	09	45 %	.666	average
11	in contrast	8	40 %	12	60 %	.385	average
12	undoubtedly	10	50 %	10	50 %	1.000	average
13	furthermore	4	20 %	16	80 %	.004	low
14	indeed	7	35 %	13	65 %	.186	average
15	hence	3	15 %	17	85 %	.000	low
16	moreover	12	60 %	08	40 %	.385	average
17	consequently	9	45 %	11	55 %	.666	average

Through the results in the previous table, it is clear that there are a large number of errors in the students' answers and that the degree of understanding of these devices is mostly average. The answers to the items of the test were not the same, except in a few number of certain adverbs. We find that the highest percentage of correct answers is for the conjunctive adverb *instead* (75 %), and the lowest percentage of correct answers was for the conjunctive adverb *hence* (15 %). This can be a good indicator that the conjunctive adverb *instead* is the easiest one, while the conjunctive adverb *hence* is the most difficult one. It seems that the other conjunctive adverb *furthermore* can be a very difficult one due to the small number of the students who knew the correct answer. Second, we can see that the questions including the seven devices (*indeed*, *otherwise*, *again*, *in contrast*, *consequently*, *subsequently* and *besides*) were answered correctly only by 7 to 9 students. This indicates that a good number of the students still face some difficulties in understanding these devices. Knowing the answer by 7 to 9 students (out of 20) shows that the level of these students was not good. The four adverbs *undoubtedly*, *however*, *also* and *nevertheless* were answered correctly by 10 students, half of the students, with a percentage of

50 %. We can say that the knowledge of the students about these four conjunctive adverbs, to some extent, is acceptable.

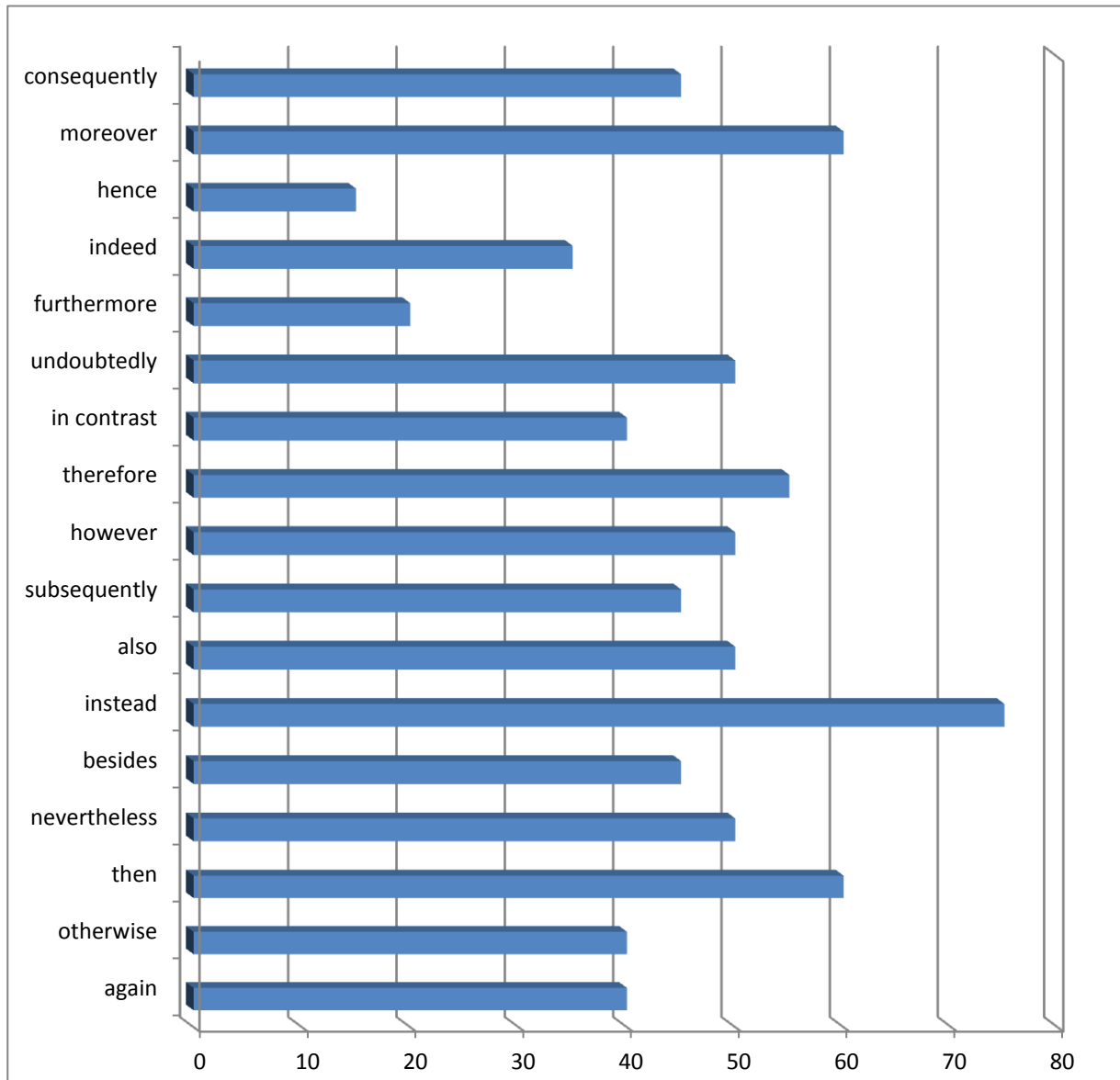
From a different angle, we can look at the students' marks presented in table 2 below and get more information on their performance. This can give a clearer picture on the students' understanding when they use the conjunctive adverbs.

Table 2: Test Marks for the Students

Students' no	Marks	Total mark	Notes
1	09	17	
2	05	17	
3	10	17	
4	08	17	
5	07	17	
6	06	17	
7	05	17	
8	06	17	
9	09	17	
10	08	17	
11	11	17	
12	05	17	
13	09	17	
14	06	17	
15	09	17	
16	04	17	lowest mark
17	07	17	
18	14	17	highest mark
19	12	17	
20	05	17	

Table two shows all the marks of the students' test which was scored with a total mark of 17. It can be said that the highest mark is 14 (student 18), while the lowest mark is 04 (student 16). Seven students get above 50 % (their marks were from 9 to 12) and can be considered as average. The other twelve students can be considered as weak or very weak students due to their low marks/scores.

Figure 1: Percentage of Correct Answers of Conjunctive Adverbs



7. Conclusion

This study was an attempt to investigate and identify the students' ability to understand some conjunctive adverbs at the English Department, Faculty of Education. It is clear that the students' abilities to understand and use these links are not as it is required. The results and the statistic process employed in this study has showed that the students' level, in general, was average and most of the students commit many mistakes and their choices were not correct when using these devices.. More specifically, the students face some difficulties in using certain adverbs more than the others. For example, the conjunctive adverb *instead* can be considered the easiest one due to the highest percentage of correct answer (fifteen students could get the right answer). On the other hand, the conjunctive adverb *hence* seemed to be a very difficult one since the correct answer was restricted to three students only. In general, the students' knowledge about the conjunctive adverbs was different from one conjunct to another. The whole correct answers of the students to every adverb were restricted between three and fifteen.

8. Recommendations and Suggestions

Based on the results of this study and the review of literature, some suggestions and recommendations can be introduced to the teachers of English when teaching conjunctions. They are as follows:

1. Students should be able to distinguish between the types of conjunctions such as coordinating conjunctions, subordinating conjunctions and conjunctive adverbs. Moreover, students should learn that coordinating conjunctions connect independent clauses, and subordinating conjunctions transform the independent clauses to which they are appended into subordinate ones, and conjunctive adverbs are semantic, but no grammatical function.
2. Practice on using conjunctive adverbs should not be limited to sequences of pairs of sentences. It should be extended to longer units of discourse. For example, students can be presented with given texts and they are asked to identify the linking devices in order to determine the relationships they signal between sections of these texts.
3. The focus of the teachers, when teaching conjunction, should be on the exercises that can help students to learn how a particular connection indicates a particular relationship between the ideas presented.

4. Students should get more practice on the use of conjunctive adverbs and more attention should be given to the more difficult conjunctions such as *hence, furthermore, indeed, otherwise*, and so on.
5. Students should be aware of the punctuation marks which appear before or after the conjunctive adverbs. When this device connects two independent clauses in one sentence, it is preceded by a semicolon and followed by a comma. And if a conjunctive adverb is used in any other position in a sentence, it is set off by commas.

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Students' Test

Choose the best, most natural-sounding conjunctive adverb (adverbial conjunction) for each sentence:

- 1) The third batter struck out; _____, the Pirates had not scored.
☐ besides ☒ again ☐ otherwise ☐ finally
2. I will try to get a discount; _____, I won't buy this TV.
☐ subsequently ☒ otherwise ☐ still
3. We got to the beach; _____, we swam in the ocean.
☐ then ☐ nevertheless ☐ besides
4. He is great tennis player; _____, he couldn't beat Roger

Federer.

- ☐ then ☐ besides ☒ **nevertheless**

5. I totally disagree with his interpretation; _____, he's no authority on the subject.

- ☐ then ☒ **besides** ☐ nevertheless

6. Frank didn't give his brothers presents; _____, he gave each of them an envelope with \$50.

- ☐ subsequently ☒ **instead** ☐ also

7. I don't like her face; _____, she smokes, which is something I hate.

- ☐ instead ☒ **also** ☐ subsequently

8. James finished his degree at Oxford University; _____, he settled in London and took up a position with a large international bank.

- ☐ instead ☐ also ☒ **subsequently**

9. We wanted to go to the beach; _____, it started to rain and we stayed at home.

- ☐ otherwise ☒ **however** ☐ namely

10. She is a very smart woman; _____, it is not at all surprising that she got the job.

- ☐ nevertheless ☐ similarly ☒ **therefore**

11. John has very little money; _____, his brother Jacob is a millionaire.

- ☒ **in contrast** ☐ nonetheless ☐ similarly

12. He has a terrible voice; _____, he will go down in history as the worst singer ever.

- ☐ **undoubtedly** ☐ otherwise ☐ still

- 13) I overslept this morning; _____, I was late for school.
☐ however ☐ consequently ☒ **furthermore** ☐ besides
- 14) It is not unusual for Phil to be late; _____, he is seldom on time.
☐ nevertheless ☐ besides ☐ then ☒ **indeed**
- 15) We were caught in traffic; _____, we missed the beginning of the movie.
☐ again ☐ besides ☐ finally ☒ **hence**
- 16) Al is reliable; _____, he is never late.
☐ besides ☒ **moreover** ☐ then ☐ finally
- 17) Ellen\'s new bike was a bargain; _____, she needed one.
☐ besides ☒ **consequently** ☐ finally ☐ then

Thanks for cooperation