

A Comparative Study between the Use of Adjectives and Adjective Clauses Based on Bloom's Taxonomy in Writing Sentence Levels Versus Paragraph Levels

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper was to examine English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students' comprehension of adjectives and adjective clauses by writing in different phases. The first phase, students were writing an individual sentence by using adjectives and adjective clauses. The next phase was creating paragraphs using the same rules that they used previously. The framework of the present research was Bloom's taxonomy to examine students' development from the lowest levels of cognition into the highest levels of the hierarchy. The design of this study was descriptive qualitative research focusing on 20 students' writing who used the target grammatical structures. To analyze the collected data, the author used themes to divide the data based on a sentence level and a paragraph level. The results of the research revealed EFL students' success in applying the target grammatical rules at the lowest cognitive levels by composing an individual sentence. However, the findings showed that only six students out of 20 were able to reach the highest levels of cognitive to create paragraphs using adjective clauses; whereas, the rest of the students failed to create paragraphs using adjective clauses. However, all students successfully composed simple and accurate individual sentences using both one adjective and the other for using adjective clauses, which is considered the lowest levels of the hierarchy.

Keywords: adjectives, adjective clauses, Bloom's taxonomy, sentence levels, paragraph levels

1. Introduction

Freire and Macedo (1921) invited scholars to re-examine and think about the literacy crisis; their emphasis is important in higher level order to deal with literacy and tightly connect it to the world. However, in the very beginning levels of learning English, second and foreign learners need to be exposed to the basic knowledge and skills, then develop their literacies in a critical and deep way. Based on Bloom's taxonomy, one of the basic and essential knowledge is receiving and developing language structure. Grammatical structure is considered the bridge to receiving and transferring ideas and thoughts through different proficiency skills; using accurate grammar structure would lead to comprehension production (Alqahtani, 2022).

At the beginning level, learners learn how to use language skills including reading, writing, speaking, and listening. One of the most complex skills that learners encounter difficulty with is writing because they learn "...how to write with coherence, how to use the suitable grammar and lexical structures, how to employ acceptable spelling and how to correctly choose the appropriate language register" (Dragomir & Niculescu, 2020, p. 202). In other words, Written output develops communication between interactors by integrating vocabulary, knowledge, and feelings (Genc-Ersoy & Gol-Dede, 2022).

In teaching English structures, most of the attention is given to understanding the rules separately and using textbook exercises. Thus, most EFL students try to memorize the rules and activities because they are not ready to lose marks in their exams. Learners also resist integrating any other skills during learning grammatical rules because they do not have enough knowledge or believe that combining new rules are difficult to apply using English proficiency (Alvarado, Hermida, & Macias, 2023). Their poor attitude and motivation might be related to their experiences, perceptions, or expectations toward learning English (Al-seghayer, 2014).

Regarding conducting research on grammatical structures, various studies focused on discussing and comparing between conjunctions, such as (Puba, 2017; Aidinlou & Reshadi, 2014; & Unubi, 2016; Wilinski, 2018; Saady, 2020; Rahmawati & Subyanto, 2021). Other studies focused on using Bloom's taxonomy through either defining the hierarchy, assessing textbooks, or designing lessons or tasks related to students' levels and needs, such as (Forhand, 2011; Riazzi & Mosalanejad, 2010; Colak-seker & Demir, 2022; Shareef & Sadiq, 2023). However, no attention is paid to the integration between adjective clauses and examining EFL students' understanding and development through writing skills based on the hierarchy of Bloom's taxonomy. Therefore, this present study focused on investigating EFL students' comprehension and production of adjective clauses through writing sentences and paragraphs that they have been exposed

to during the semester. The current study seeks to answer the following research question:

Q1. How do EFL students apply adjectives and adjective clauses in sentence levels versus paragraph levels?

Q2. What are the hierarchies of Bloom’s taxonomy that EFL students achieved through using adjectives and adjective clauses in sentence levels versus paragraph levels?

2. Literature Review

2.1 Adjectives Vs. Adjective Clauses

Adjectives are words which describe nouns and pronouns. In other words, adjectives that precede the noun are considered attributive, while adjectives that follow the nouns are predicative (Putra, 2019). Subiyanto (2021) defined the word attribute as “...the ability of an adjective to provide information about the nature of the status of things that are referred to as a noun” (p. 689). An example of attributive adjectives, *My sister has a beautiful dress*. However, to use predicative, adjectives follow the nouns but not directly; for instance, *Rose is young*. In the example, the adjective *young* follow the noun *Rose*, but the verb *be is* inserted between them.

In English, a clause is a common term in the grammar domain that means a dependent or independent sentence (Saady, 2020). Saady pointed out that independent clauses are considered main and understandable sentences; while dependent clauses rely on another clause to be completed and comprehended. These dependent clauses may include adverb clauses and adjective clauses. In dependent clauses, learners need conjunctions to connect ideas. Conjunctions are connectors to link thoughts, phrases, or clauses in spoken or written production (Unubi, 2016). Arats (2001) stated that “Conjunctions belong to a closed class of words that have a linking function” (p. 45).

Conjunctions have three different types, which are coordinating, correlative, and subordinating (Purba, Arsyad, Pulungan, 2017). Coordinating is the first type of conjunction. It means that linking two independent sentences, nouns, or verbs, but generally coordinators “...connect sentence elements of the same grammatical class such as nouns with nouns ...They also link two sentences that do not depend on each other for meaning” (Unubi, 2016, p. 204). However, correlative conjunctions include two parts, such as *either...or, neither...nor, both...and...etc*. Correlative conjunctions “...get their names from the fact that they work together (co-) and relate one sentence elements to another” (Unubi, p. 208). Last, subordinating conjunctions include words, such as *that, before, although, if, as...etc*, to link the main clause to the subordinate clause for meaning (Unubi).

There are different cases of developing adjective clauses. In the current study, the main source has relied on Azar, Kock, & Hagen (2009) who focused specifically on limited rules as shown in table1; this table was created by the author of the current study.

Table 1. Different rules of adjective clauses with examples

	Structures	Cases	Examples
1	Using Who/that/whom	Describing people	The lady who I meet her is cute.
2	Using Which/that	Describing things	The laptop that I bought was expensive.
3	Using prepositions	-	The teacher whom Rose talked to was nice.
4	Using whose	Showing possession	I know a girl whose father is popular.

2.2 Bloom’s Taxonomy Framework

Bloom’s Taxonomy is the different hierarchy that is divided into six levels of thinking starting from knowledge until the evaluation level as the highest level (Bloom, et al., 1956). This framework has been relying on three domains including the cognitive, the affective, and the psychomotor (Colak-seker&Demire, 2022). However, this taxonomy has been revised by changing the categories from noun to verb (Forehand, 2011). For instance, the old version starts with *knowledge*, but the new version begins with *remembering*. In this present study, the author used the new version of Bloom’s Taxonomy. For the classification, the lowest levels of thinking include remembering, understanding, and applying; whereas, the highest levels are analyzing, evaluation, and creation (Saud, 2022).

This framework helps English teachers to correspond their lesson plans, activities, and exams based on the proper levels of thinking in order to achieve the main objectives of the course (Shareef & Sadiq, 2023). Through learning English at the early stages, learners begin from the lowest levels of thinking until develop their higher-order thinking to achieve the highest level of cognitive taxonomy (Rahman &Manaf, 2017).Based on each level of Bloom’s taxonomy, the researcher, in this present study, has been connected adjectives and adjective clauses to specific terms and definitions as following:

1. Remembering: recognizing and recalling the rules of adjectives and adjective clauses.
2. Understanding: Constructing the meaning, the use, and the form of adjectives and adjective clauses.
3. Applying: Using and implementing adjectives and adjective clauses.
4. Analysing: Breaking out the adjectives and adjectives clauses and determining how each part connect to another one.
5. Evaluating: Critiquing and checking the adjectives and adjective clauses based on the rules that learners have exposed to.
6. Creating: reorganizing and putting elements together through producing adjectives and adjective clauses by writing paragraphs.

3. Methodology

This research is a qualitative study; the data had collected and analyzed to describe EFL students’ comprehension of adjectives and

adjective clauses based on Bloom's taxonomy. The study has been applied in one of Saudi Arabia universities. A total of the participants was around 20 students who are in level one of the English and Translation Department. They all passed the intensive course and be prepared for university life and department courses. While collecting and working on data, the only researcher had access to the data to ensure the privacy of each participant. They all signed the consent form before applying the research and understood the purpose of the study.

Based on the hierarchy of Bloom's taxonomy, the instructor designed the lesson plans and activities that related to the adjective clauses chapter. The instructor spent four weeks working on this chapter with the students to explain it in detail and let them practice the target rules. Thus, the tasks and activities were designed based on two sections. The first section was related to the lowest levels of Bloom's taxonomy; whereas, the other section was tightly connected to the highest-order thinking of the hierarchy. At the beginning, the instructor asked the participants to write a sentence using adjectives and another sentence using adjective clauses if they could. By this way, the instructor tested their knowledge and the background before teaching adjectives and adjective clauses. At the beginning of teaching and learning the target rules, the students were in the lowest levels of cognitive taxonomy, which are remembering, understanding, and applying because they did not expose to adjective clauses before, but they have background and learned about adjectives before this class. During the first two weeks of working, students started recalling the rules, comprehending the structure, and implementing adjectives and adjective clauses in different exercises and activities.

After that the instructor tried to impulse the participants to the highest levels of cognitive taxonomy by analyzing, evaluating, and creating. They analyzed different written texts by breaking down the patterns. They also evaluated their peers' writing of adjectives and adjective clauses. Last, they have been asked to create a sentence and a paragraph by writing about a specific topic, which was neighbors and used the adjective and adjective clauses in separate paragraphs.

To analyze the data, the written tasks have been divided into two sections including sentence levels and paragraph levels. The sentence level is considered connected to the lowest levels of cognitive taxonomy because the participants still understand and learn how to apply what they learned at a simple level. On the other hand, the paragraph level is considered the highest level of cognitive taxonomy because the participants should be ready to create paragraphs including more than five sentences about the chosen topic selected by the instructor.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Using Adjectives Versus Adjective Clauses in Sentence Levels

The data showed the students' ability to use adjectives and adjective clauses through writing only an individual sentence for each rule. For using adjectives, all students wrote complete, accurate, and understandable sentences. The examples below presented their application of adjectives.

- (1) I have a white car.
- (2) I was wearing a pink earring.
- (3) I have a long hair.
- (4) Nora is tall.
- (5) The man is kind.
- (6) They are clever.
- (7) The cat is small and black.

It seems that the students have solid information about using adjectives because they recognized that they could use nouns right after the adjectives and use articles if they needed it. As in example 1, 2, and 3, the students used article *a* because they added nouns after the adjectives. While the rest of instances 4, 5, 6, and 7 above, the students did not use articles or nouns because they knew the rules of applying adjectives. Obviously, most students used common adjectives in their sentences, such as long, kind, clever, and small. Regarding the sentence level, the results revealed that the students preferred to structure short and simple sentences instead of compound sentences. From their writing, it was easy to write an individual sentence using only adjectives because the grammatical rules of using adjectives were one of the concepts that EFL learners have exposed to in the early stages of learning English.

For applying adjective clauses, most students could compose an individual sentence in a clear and comprehended way. They followed the structure that they learned during class time by using subordinating conjunctions, such as *who*, *which*, *whom*, and *that*. From the data, it seems that they understood the importance of using relative clauses while applying adjective clauses because they were included in their production. The instances below showed their comprehension of the adjective clauses.

- (1) I talked to a woman who is kind.
- (2) The girl who wear a glasses is friendly.
- (3) My friend who live near to me is helpful.
- (4) The girl that I met was smart.
- (5) The girl who lives next to me is friendly.

- (6) The man who lives next to me is friendly.

Although the students were able to use relative clauses with adjectives, some students still dropped the verb *be* as in examples 2 and 3 above. Missing the verb *be* did not affect the meaning because they tried to structure the sentence in an accurate way. In fact, their usage of writing a sentence using adjective clauses could be interpreted for different reasons. First, the students might comprehend the structure and be able to create their own sentences. Second, the students might produce accurate sentences because of their practicing right after learning the grammatical rules, which is related to their short-term memory. Thus, the students in using both adjectives and adjective clauses were able to produce accurate and full sentences based on the sentence level.

4.2 Using Adjectives Versus Adjective Clauses in Paragraph Levels

The participants have been asked to create two separate paragraphs that one included adjectives and the other was applying adjective clauses by writing about neighbors. The data reflected different performances while using adjectives and adjective clauses.

Regarding writing a paragraph using adjective clauses, six students out of 20 followed the rules that they have learned. Those six students tried to use subordinating conjunctions including *who*, *that*, *which*, and *whom*, while writing their paragraphs. This indicated students' comprehension of the rules of adjective clauses; for example, they used *who* and *that* while describing people. They were aware of the significance of including relative clauses to produce adjective clauses. They reached the level where they could differentiate between using adjectives and adjective clauses. The other issue that some students did was missing the verb *be* or missing adding *-s* to the verb such as the examples 4 and 7 below. However, they still were able to compose understandable paragraphs based on the required grammatical structures. The examples of different sentences below have been taken from different paragraphs that shared similar practices and applications.

- (1) The man that lives up is nice.
- (2) His wife that I met was nice.
- (3) The neighbor that I have is very sweet.
- (4) Their house which next to our house is very big.
- (5) My neighbor who live next to me is very kind.
- (6) I know a man who is kind to everyone.
- (7) The neighbor that live next to me is very kind.

The students' examples above were very similar to the examples that the instructor used during class time, which were also as the textbook samples. One of the instructor's provided instances was *the man who lives next to me is friendly*. Comparing the provided examples to students' writing, it indicated that the students might want to be in their comfort zone and not try to create different sentences to avoid making errors. Overall, those six students were able to write comprehended paragraphs while using adjective clauses. One of the written paragraphs below spotlighted a student's creation:

My neighbor who live next to me is very kind. She has a car which I use sometimes. She always gives me some food that she cooked. I like to play with her cat that she has it. She let me play with her children who are cute.

Although the paragraph level should include a topic statement, details, and a conclusion (Chuenchaichon, 2022), but still this paragraph above reflected the student's ability to create her own ideas by connecting them together while following the required rules. On the other hand, most students had an issue with creating their paragraphs. They instead tried to write sentences and put them in one short paragraph. The findings revealed that they did not focus on coherence and cohesion; they only focused on how to use adjective clauses while writing about the required topic. The instance below showed how the student tried to write different sentences without thinking about the connection and synthesizing the ideas:

The neighbor that live next to me is very kind. The neighbor who have a cat is nice. The neighbor who live next to me he have two kids.

Regardless of the length of the paragraph and the other issues including spelling and grammatical errors, the student's attention made her only focus on the topic and the required structures.

Another issue that the findings presented was that most students failed to use subordinating conjunctions with the adjective clauses, which affected the structure of the sentences. In other words, they composed incomplete sentences while adding relative pronouns. Different examples below reflected incomplete sentences that have been taken from the students' paragraphs indicating their trials of using adjective clauses.

- (1) My neighbor Alex who live next door.
- (2) My neighbor live in the last street who have two girls and one boy.
- (3) The people whose are friendly.
- (4) My neighbor that is kind and reliable person.
- (5) My neighbor who lives beside us.

It seems that most students recognized the essential rule of using relative clauses, but only six students could use them properly and accurately. Those six students could complete their thoughts and paragraphs using relative clauses while providing more descriptions of the target people or things.

On the other side, for creating paragraphs using adjectives, the students did not have a problem creating paragraphs presenting their thoughts clearly. They easily and smoothly composed understandable and connected ideas about neighbors. The example below showed one of the participants' paragraphs using adjectives:

The neighbor that I have is very sweet. One day we went to the mall which new in town. She decided that she is going to buy a red dress. We were searching everywhere. She bought a dress which is long and red. Then, we went home. She told me that she wants to watch the new film. We enjoyed that scary movie. I am lucky to have that amazing neighbor.

Although their paragraphs using adjectives were not perfect since they had misspellings or other grammatical errors, they still were better than their performance of using adjective clauses. Most students used common and simple adjectives, such as nice, small, good, kind...etc.

Comparing the paragraphs that the students created between adjective and adjective clauses, they successfully were able to create comprehended paragraphs using adjectives. Whereas, a few students wrote connected and understandable paragraphs using adjective clauses. In using adjective clauses, most students still used adjectives to produce paragraphs even when the instructor asked them to write a paragraph using adjective clauses.

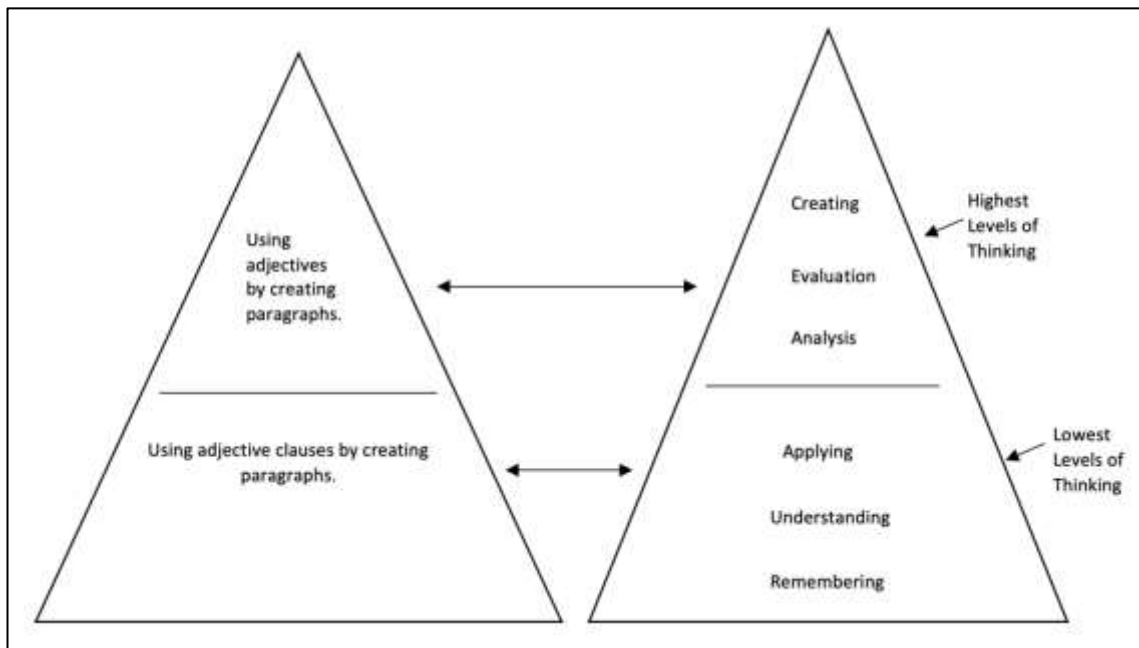


Figure 1. The hierarchies that students achieved based on Bloom's taxonomy

Based on Bloom's Taxonomy framework, the participants successfully passed the lowest levels of cognitive because they had the ability to compose an accurate and individual sentence by using adjectives and adjective clauses (see figure. 1). In other words, the data showed clearly from the participants' examples above that they remembered, understood, and applied the rules of adjectives and adjective clauses properly as the first part of the hierarchy. This process of teaching and learning grammatical structures helps teachers to ensure their students' comprehension and assist students to grasp the information of the new concepts that they would learn (Fadhil, 2018).Sagkol (2022) indicated that Bloom's taxonomy helped teachers to create and develop their grammatical lessons to be proper for higher-order thinking. For achieving higher-order thinking, the results spotlighted two different concepts. First, the students successfully achieve higher-order thinking while creating paragraphs using adjectives. In contrast, the results indicated the participants' failure to create written paragraphs while using adjective clauses. In this study, the instructor did not rely only on memorization and comprehension of the rules, but also she tried to move to the next section of the highest levels of cognitive taxonomy which was creating a paragraph using the same rules. Riazi and Mosalanejad (2010) indicated that English teachers focus on preparing their students to pass the exams, which let the students memorize and care more about getting grades more than developing their higher levels of cognitive.

4.3 Participants' Reflections toward Their Writing

The results of the participants' reflections reflected common elements that the students experienced. First, they indicated that they comprehended the rules of both adjectives and adjective clauses. They were ready and able to compose an individual sentence using the learned rules. Second, the students' viewpoints toward creating paragraphs using adjectives were positive because they took their time

practicing adjectives in their products before taking this course. They were able to define and talk about the adjectives in their reflections. Unlike using adjectives, the students reflected on the complexity and challenges of creating paragraphs by using adjective clauses. In their reflections, they could define and talk about the rules including the relative clauses. Also, they confessed that they did not have an issue writing either a sentence or a paragraph by using adjectives because they were exposed to and had background about adjectives. However, they struggled to structure paragraphs using an adjective clause because they did not expose to this concept before, and that's why they felt that they were still in comprehension levels, which is considered a low level of taxonomy. They emphasized that they needed more time to be able to achieve a higher level of thinking to produce accurate and understandable paragraphs using the adjective clauses; thus, they were not sure if one semester was enough to write more than a sentence. Oktavia and Noviani (2022) found out that students had difficulty applying adjective clauses, especially in producing irregular verbs of past participles. Also, Haryani and Fatimah (2020) presented different issues in students' adjective clauses production, such as using subject-verb agreement, constructing restrictive and nonrestrictive adjective clauses, and forming sentence elements. In conclusion, they stressed that they only could identify and differentiate between both adjectives and adjective clauses. Based on Bloom's taxonomy, the participants struggled to achieve the highest level of cognition using adjective clauses, but they moved to the higher levels of thinking using adjectives while creating paragraphs.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

In conclusion, this qualitative paper investigated EFL students' understanding and their use of adjectives and adjective clauses based on Bloom's Taxonomy. This hierarchy helped in exploring students' receiving and applying what they learn in their production starting from the basic levels of thinking into the higher levels of cognition. The results revealed EFL students' abilities to successfully use adjectives in both the lowest and highest levels of cognitive taxonomy. However, they struggled and encountered difficulties to reorganize the elements together and create a paragraph using adjective clauses. The data indicated that the participants understood the rules of adjective clauses, but they were not ready to apply them in their writing. Based on the participants' reflections, certain reasons have arisen for having issues with using adjective clauses in creating paragraphs. One of the reasons was that they were never exposed to adjective clauses, which affected their practice in writing. Second, some students believed that they should not practice writing in grammar classes and should only focus on grammatical structures. Third, they resisted practicing writing because they indicated that they did not use to write except in writing courses. Fourth, they needed time to assimilate and then be ready to practice adjective clauses. All these reasons restrained the students to move from the lowest levels to the highest levels of Bloom's Taxonomy. To sum up, the approaches in writing should be applied in EFL classes to develop learners' cognitive levels. I recommend EFL teachers use Bloom's taxonomy while preparing their lesson plans and activities to ensure the appropriateness to their students' levels. Fadhil (2018) also agreed of using the hierarchy while assessing, designing, and creating lessons and tasks to meet students' needs and levels. I also recommend English instructors start first with composing an individual and single sentence to create a paragraph to activate their background and help them to be ready to create their own writing by practicing what they learned during the grammar rules.

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