Section 17  conjunctions

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language notes

English has two types of linking word, conjunctions like but and adverbs like however, and these two types of word don’t work in the same way grammatically. Not all languages are structured like this, so some students may take time to get used to connecting clauses correctly with conjunctions.

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language notes

For speakers of languages that work differently from English, it may seem strange to have a conjunction (which joins two clauses) right at the beginning of a sentence instead of between the clauses.

Speakers of some languages may also tend to ‘double up’ linking words:

*Although I was angry, but I didn’t show it.
*As it was late, so I went home.

possible further activities

**Personalisation: more basic practice**  If students need more practice in constructing complex sentences, get them to write sentences about themselves, completing some or all of the following:

I’m sometimes (un)happy because …
I get tired if …
If I need help, I …
I get angry when …
When I’m bored, I …
My life was better/worse when …
I often … while I’m …ing.
When I have a free day, I …
Before I go to bed, I …

**Personalisation: one conjunction is enough**  Get students to complete the following sentences:

I’m (un)happy because …
I’m (un)happy although …

Then get them to rewrite their sentences like this:

…, so I’m (un)happy.
…, but I’m (un)happy.

**Internet**  Get students to look for interesting sentences on the internet beginning “When I’m bored I”

An asterisk (*) indicates an incorrect form or use.
language notes

In students’ languages, time conjunctions may normally be followed by future tenses:
*I’ll phone you when I’ll arrive.

It’s not only time conjunctions and *if that are followed by present tenses with a future meaning. More advanced students will learn that this happens in most subordinate clauses:
*I’ll stop where I find a parking place.
They’ll give us as much as we ask for.
The man who marries my daughter will need a lot of patience.

possible further activities

Personalisation Students complete some or all of the following sentences:
I won’t be happy until …
Life will be better when …
I will get married when …
After the class finishes, …
I want to … before I …

Internet Get students to look for interesting sentences on the internet beginning “I won’t be happy until” or “We won’t rest until”.

possible further activities

Personalisation Get students to complete some or all of the following sentences (telling the truth or not, as they prefer).
I once bought a …, so that I could …
I’m going to get a …, so that I can …
I’m very …, while my (sister/father/best friend/etc) is …
I’ll give the whole class …, provided that …
I …, because of my …
I …, because I …
I …, in spite of my …
I …, although I …

Illustrations Tell students to find and bring to class pictures (e.g. from magazines or downloaded from the internet) which would make good illustrations for the following sentences (or other ‘as if’ situations):
He/She looks as if he/she has had bad news.
They look as if they have had good news.
He/She looks as if he/she has seen a ghost.
He/She looks as if he/she has lost something.

Internet Invite students to look for interesting sentences on the internet containing the words “provided that they”.

➔ Section 17 continues
language notes

English often drops the conjunction *that*; few other languages have an equivalent structure. Although students at this level may be used to the omission of *that* after common expressions like *I know* and *I think*, they may still be confused when they run across the structure in other contexts.

possible further activities

*Personalisation*  Ask students what they feel glad about – probably quite a lot of things. Give them a few minutes to think, supply vocabulary as necessary, and then ask them to write at least five sentences beginning *I’m glad* (followed by a clause without *that*). For example:

- I’m glad the cold weather’s finished.
- I’m glad I live in ….
- I’m glad I’m …. 
- I’m glad I don’t …

language notes

In formal writing, it’s best to balance these structures, so that the same kind of expression comes after each. So for example, *We had time either to see the cathedral or to visit the museum* is better stylistically than *We either had time to see the cathedral or to visit the museum*. The rule isn’t always followed in speech or informal writing, and it’s not a very important point for most students at this level.

possible further activities

*Things that go together*  Say some words, and tell students to put each word in a phrase with another word that makes a pair, using *both … and*. Like this:

- ‘women’ – ‘both women and men’
- ‘cats’ – ‘both cats and dogs’
- ‘green’ – ‘both green and red’

Other possible words:

- hands, France, food, English, Europe, history, iron, schools

Vary it by changing from *both … and* to *either … or* and *neither … nor*.

*Vocabulary expansion*  Do the above exercise, but before doing so, teach or revise other words that can be paired up. Then give students one of each pair, and ask them to try to remember the matching words and make phrases as above. Suggestions:

- physics and chemistry  primary and secondary  industry and commerce
- liquid and solid  natural and artificial  amateur and professional
- subjective and objective  modern and traditional  prose and verse
- fact and fiction  urban and rural
language notes

The choice between perfect and simple verb forms in these structures is not very clear-cut, and often both are possible, depending on several factors (the situation, the precise choice of vocabulary, …). Here we only give simple guidelines.

Sentences with after and before may be confusing for some students. For example, I spent a year in China after I finished studying may be interpreted as meaning ‘I spent a year in China, and afterwards I finished studying’.

possible further activities

Scheduling activities  Divide students into groups of three or four. Tell them that they have to carry out the following tasks; groups have five minutes to decide in what order they will do them. They can leave one out.

- clean the windows
- paint the walls
- take a break
- write a song
- go for a walk
- learn a lot of irregular verbs
- have a party

They then have to report as follows, listing the tasks in their chosen order:
We’ll start by …ing.
After we’ve …, we’ll …
After we’ve …, we’ll …

possible further activities

Vocabulary expansion: related nouns and verbs  Ask students to write sentences about how human life has changed as a result of the following developments, but using passive verbs after since. For example:

- the invention of printing – Human life has changed enormously since printing was invented.
- the development of agriculture
- the discovery of electricity
- the development of antiseptic surgery
- the development of rail transport
- the development of anaesthetic surgery
- the discovery of fire

Can students think of other developments that can be expressed in the same way? Some will need active rather than passive verbs (e.g. since the world population became so large), and others may have to be talked about using different structures.
possible further activities

Personalisation  Ask students to complete the following sentences (telling the truth or not, as they prefer):

- Before going to bed, I always …
- After finishing my English studies, I'll probably …

Internet  How many different kinds of advice can students find on the internet that say “before buying”?

possible further activities

Beginning a story  Ask students to write the first sentence of a story, beginning ‘Putting down her book, Alice …’. Who can produce the most exciting or unexpected beginning? Ask them to do it again, but this time to produce the most boring possible beginning.