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REVIEWER'S REPORT

Manuscript No.: IJAR-59627

Title: Argumentative Connector Use Among Congolese Secondary School Students.

Recommendation: Accept as minor reviosn

Rating	Excel.	Good	Fair	Poor
Originality		√		
Techn. Quality		√		
Clarity		√		
Significance		√		

Reviewer's ID: JPR-212

Detailed Reviewer's Report

This is a carefully designed and honestly reported study of argumentative connector use among Congolese secondary school students. The manuscript is methodologically self-aware, appropriately cautious in its claims, and clearly written. It is among the better-prepared submissions reviewed for this journal, and the revisions required are relatively modest.

Strengths

The research question is clearly framed and pedagogically relevant. The focus on argumentative connectors in the upper secondary humanities track addresses a genuine gap in the literature on French language education in Congo.

The methodological design is sound. The combination of 267 written scripts from two schools with six classroom teaching logs provides both textual and instructional evidence, and the inclusion of two schools to diversify the corpus is appropriate.

The manuscript is commendably honest about its limitations. The repeated insistence that the teaching logs cannot establish causal relationships between teaching practices and performance, that usage percentages reflect the supplied coding rather than a new coding of the original scripts, and that some isolated extracts cannot be fully evaluated without the preceding paragraph demonstrates strong research integrity.

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The qualitative analysis is well structured and carefully reasoned. The organisation of findings by connector function, with parallel presentations of appropriate and inappropriate uses, is clear and pedagogically useful. The discussion of the distinction between semantic appropriateness and grammatical accuracy, particularly in the case of bien que...mais in LNE.84, is analytically sharp.

The quantitative analysis is appropriately cautious. The note that different connectors may occur in the same script and that usage percentages therefore do not sum to 100 percent is a welcome methodological refinement. The observation that a single use of or cannot support a broader inference about mastery is particularly honest.

The discussion of instructional implications, drawing on Puren 2004 and distinguishing learning tasks from social action, is well grounded and practical. The proposed activities in sections 4.2.1 to 4.2.3 are specific and implementable.

The conclusion is appropriately measured and does not overreach. The acknowledgment that the effectiveness of the proposed strategies remains to be evaluated through an instructional intervention is a sign of scholarly maturity.

Weaknesses

Incomplete Table 2. Table 2, which reports the quantitative findings, is presented as an empty template with only the column headings "Connector," "Reported uses (n)," "% of 267," "Correct (n)," "%," "Incorrect (n)," "%." No data appear in the table. The numerical findings are instead reported in the prose of section 3.2.2, which describes the recalculated percentages for par exemple, ensuite, en plus, mais, parce que, certes...mais, bien que, toutefois, néanmoins and or. This is a serious presentation problem. The data should be entered into the table and the table should be referred to in the text. The current arrangement forces the reader to reconstruct the data from the prose.

Missing data for opening connectors. The conclusion acknowledges that "missing numerical data for opening connectors" is a limitation, but this should be stated explicitly in the findings section rather than only in the conclusion. The quantitative analysis reports on additive, opposition, explanatory, concessive, illustrative and restrictive connectors, but not on opening connectors, and this gap should be acknowledged where it occurs.

Incomplete table format. Table 1, presenting the argumentative connectors, is reasonably clear but could benefit from a brief introductory sentence explaining that the categories are conventional rather than exhaustive, and that the same connector may serve different functions depending on context. The manuscript does make this point in the theoretical discussion but not in the table itself.

Reference problems. The reference list contains a typographical error: "Atanna, F. (2013)" should be "Atamna, F. (2013)," consistent with the in-text citation "Atamna (2013)." The reference to Epundu and Onah 2022 includes an unusual journal title, "Revue d'études françaises des enseignants et chercheurs du village," which should be

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verified. The reference to Gouasmia 2021 is cited in the discussion as "Gouasma (2021)," and the spelling should be standardised to match the reference list. The reference to Tugbogh and Lambon 2025 is cited in the introduction as "Tugbogh and Lambon (2025)," and this is consistent, but the journal "Thèse/Synthèse" should be verified as a legitimate scholarly outlet.

Minor language issues. There are a small number of typographical and stylistic issues, including "premierement" for "premièrement" in the extracts from student scripts, which may reflect the original student spelling and should be noted as such, and "en effect" for "en effet" in the extract from LNE.15, which likewise appears to reflect student error and should be flagged. The phrase "First d'abord" in LNE.5 is a mixed-language construction that appears in the student's original text and is correctly preserved as evidence.

Sample representativeness. The manuscript acknowledges that "the available sampling information does not establish statistical representativeness," which is honest, but the reader would benefit from a brief statement of how the classes were selected and what the total population of upper secondary humanities students in Brazzaville is, so that the limits of generalisation are clear.

Recommendation

Minor revision required. This is a strong and publishable manuscript that requires modest corrections. The author should first complete Table 2 with the quantitative data currently reported only in the prose of section 3.2.2, and refer to the table in the text. Second, the author should acknowledge the missing data for opening connectors in the findings section, not only in the conclusion. Third, the author should correct the "Atanna" to "Atamna" reference, standardise "Gouasma" and "Gouasmia," and verify the Epundu and Onah journal title. Fourth, the author should add a brief note to Table 1 clarifying that the categories are conventional and that connectors may be multifunctional. Fifth, the author should add a short statement on how the classes were selected and what the wider population is, to clarify the limits of generalisation. Sixth, the author should check the student extracts for typographical features that reflect original student error and flag these where appropriate. With these minor corrections, the manuscript will be suitable for publication and will make a valuable contribution to the literature on French language education in Africa.