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Legal Criminal Language: A Corpus-Based Study of Conjunctions in Lahore High Court Criminal Judgements

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Abstract

Judicial judgements constitute a highly specialized form of institutional discourse in which language performs decisive legal and social functions. In criminal cases, judges must reconstruct events, evaluate evidence, apply legal principles, and justify outcomes through carefully structured reasoning. Within this process, grammatical cohesion plays a crucial role in ensuring that complex arguments remain interpretable, coherent, and authoritative. This study examines the role of conjunctions as cohesive and discourse-organizing devices in criminal case judgements of the Lahore High Court from 2011 to 2024. Adopting a corpus-based approach, it analyses a specialized corpus of 733 reported criminal judgements, comprising over three million running words. The findings demonstrate that conjunctions are not merely grammatical connectors but essential resources for organizing evidentiary narration, structuring legal alternatives, introducing contrast and limitation, and guiding inferential reasoning. Conjunctions such as and, or, but, so, yet, and nor perform distinct and systematic roles in shaping coherence and argumentative structure, thereby contributing to clarity, precision, and interpretation in judicial discourse.

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Introduction

Judicial judgements represent one of the most consequential forms of institutional writing, as they do not merely describe events but actively construct legally binding interpretations of facts, responsibility, and accountability. In criminal proceedings, the language of a judgement must simultaneously

perform multiple communicative tasks: it narrates the factual background of the case, evaluates evidence and competing claims, interprets statutory provisions and precedent, and justifies the final decision through reasoned argumentation. The coherence of judicial discourse is therefore fundamental, because ambiguity or weak logical progression may affect

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appellate review, legal certainty, and public confidence in the justice system (Tiersma, 2019).

Recent scholarship in legal linguistics and legal corpus linguistics has increasingly challenged the assumption that legal meaning is produced solely through specialised terminology or explicit doctrinal statements. Instead, researchers argue that meaning in legal texts also emerges from recurring grammatical and discourse-structuring patterns that organise how arguments unfold and how readers are guided through complex reasoning processes (Goźdz-Roszkowski, 2021; Römer & Barron, 2024). Corpus-based studies of judicial discourse have shown that courts rely on stable linguistic conventions to manage evidentiary narration, argumentative progression, and evaluative stance across large numbers of decisions. These conventions often operate at the level of grammar and cohesion rather than overt rhetorical strategy.

Within this perspective, conjunctions occupy a particularly important position. Conjunctions encode logical relations such as addition, contrast, causality, inference, and alternatives, which are central to legal reasoning and interpretation (Halliday & Hasan, 2014). In criminal judgements, judges routinely employ conjunctions to accumulate evidence, sequence procedural developments, delimit the scope of legal rules, qualify arguments, and articulate alternative interpretations or outcomes. The selection of a specific conjunction is therefore not a neutral grammatical choice; it shapes how propositions are linked and how legal reasoning is interpreted. Legal disputes frequently hinge on such relations, particularly in criminal cases where responsibility and intent must be established with precision (Solan, 2020).

The importance of conjunctions becomes even more pronounced in lengthy criminal judgements, where courts must integrate factual narration with evaluative and legal reasoning. Additive conjunctions support the cumulative presentation of evidence and procedural history, adversative conjunctions allow judges to introduce limitation or concession, and alternative conjunctions help define the boundaries of legal responsibility. Inferential conjunctions, meanwhile, facilitate the transition from factual findings to legal conclusions. Together, these conjunctive relations form the grammatical infrastructure through which judicial reasoning is made coherent and persuasive.

Despite the growing body of corpus-based research on judicial discourse internationally, Pakistani judicial English remains relatively under-represented in this field. Existing studies focusing on Pakistan have tended to examine lexical choices, metaphorical language, or evaluative stance in Supreme Court judgements (Ahmad, 2023; Mughal, 2025), while grammatical

cohesion across large corpora of high-court criminal judgements has received limited attention. In particular, conjunctions as cohesive devices in Lahore High Court criminal judgements have not been systematically analysed, even though the court plays a central role in shaping criminal jurisprudence in Pakistan.

This study addresses this gap by conducting a corpus-based analysis of conjunctions in criminal case judgements delivered by the Lahore High Court between 2011 and 2024. By integrating cohesion theory with contemporary approaches in legal corpus linguistics, the study investigates how conjunctions function as discourse-organising resources that support judicial reasoning, evidentiary organisation, and textual coherence. Through quantitative profiling and qualitative concordance analysis, the research aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of grammatical cohesion in Pakistani judicial discourse and to broader discussions on the linguistic construction of legal reasoning in criminal adjudication.

Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in a discourse-oriented understanding of cohesion, viewing grammatical cohesion as a central mechanism through which judicial texts achieve coherence, authority, and interpretive clarity. Rather than treating cohesion as a purely formal property of language, the present framework conceptualises cohesive devices as functional resources that shape how legal reasoning is structured and processed. Within this framework, conjunctions are understood as explicit markers of logical-semantic relations that guide readers through complex chains of argumentation, evidentiary evaluation, and legal justification.

The foundational concept of cohesion originates from the systemic functional linguistic tradition, which defines cohesion as the network of relations that enable a text to function as a unified semantic entity rather than as a sequence of isolated sentences (Halliday & Hasan, 2014). In this model, conjunctions differ from other cohesive devices such as reference or substitution because they do not depend on semantic identity between items but instead signal how one proposition relates logically to another. These relations include addition, contrast, causality, inference, and alternativity, all of which are essential to judicial reasoning.

In legal discourse, and particularly in criminal judgements, these logical relations are not abstract linguistic constructs; they correspond directly to institutional reasoning practices. Judges must accumulate facts, weigh competing narratives, delimit the applicability of legal rules, and justify conclusions in a manner that is both procedurally accountable and interpretively defensible. Conjunctions provide the

grammatical infrastructure that enables these operations. Additive conjunctions facilitate the cumulative presentation of evidence and procedural history, adversative conjunctions introduce qualification and limitation, inferential conjunctions support transitions from factual findings to legal conclusions, and alternative conjunctions articulate the boundaries of legal responsibility and interpretation.

Contemporary legal corpus linguistics reinforces the importance of examining such grammatical resources empirically. Recent scholarship emphasises that legal meaning emerges from patterned language use across large bodies of texts rather than from isolated lexical choices or stylistic preferences (Goźdz-Roszkowski, 2021). Corpus-based analysis allows researchers to identify stable grammatical and phraseological conventions that characterise legal genres and to link these conventions to institutional functions. From this perspective, conjunctions are not merely sentence-level connectors but genre-sensitive resources shaped by legal norms, interpretive accountability, and judicial authority.

The relevance of conjunctions to legal interpretation has also been highlighted in legal linguistics and jurisprudential scholarship. Solan (2020) notes that courts frequently engage in close grammatical analysis when resolving ambiguity, particularly in relation to conjunctions such as *and* and *or*, whose interpretation may have significant legal consequences. Corpus-based approaches extend this insight by demonstrating that conjunction usage in legal texts follows conventionalised patterns that inform interpretive expectations. These patterns can influence how judges structure reasoning and how readers infer the scope and limits of legal propositions.

Recent developments in applied legal corpus linguistics further stress the importance of linking grammatical patterning to legal reasoning practices. Römer and Barron (2024) argue that corpus evidence becomes analytically meaningful when it is interpreted in relation to institutional context and legal function. This approach moves beyond frequency counts to examine how linguistic choices contribute to the construction of legal arguments, the management of evidentiary complexity, and the maintenance of judicial neutrality. Within this framework, conjunctions are seen as strategic discourse-organising devices that help judges navigate the tension between narrative exposition and legal evaluation.

Judicial discourse is also shaped by genre-specific constraints that influence conjunction use. Criminal judgements, in particular, require careful staging of reasoning, as judges must acknowledge arguments raised by parties, evaluate evidence against legal standards, and justify conclusions in a manner that anticipates appellate scrutiny. Research on judicial writing has shown that such texts rely heavily on formulaic and semi-

formulaic structures to maintain consistency and authority (Bhatia, 2021). Conjunctions play a key role in these structures by enabling controlled transitions between narrative, evaluative, and justificatory phases of the judgement.

In the Pakistani context, the role of conjunctions gains additional significance due to the bilingual and post-colonial nature of legal discourse. Although English remains the dominant language of higher-court judgements, it operates within a broader socio-legal environment where legal concepts are negotiated across languages and legal traditions. This context places additional pressure on judicial writing to be explicit, coherent, and interpretable. Grammatical cohesion, including the systematic use of conjunctions, therefore becomes a critical resource for maintaining clarity and authority in Pakistani judicial English.

By integrating cohesion theory with contemporary legal corpus linguistics and insights from judicial discourse analysis, the present study adopts a functional view of conjunctions as discourse-organising mechanisms that support legal reasoning in criminal adjudication. This theoretical framework informs both the quantitative profiling and qualitative interpretation of conjunction use in Lahore High Court criminal judgements, enabling the study to link grammatical patterns to institutional meaning-making rather than treating them as isolated linguistic features.

Literature Review

Research on legal language has expanded substantially over the last two decades, with particularly rapid growth in corpus-based approaches that treat legal texts as patterned, conventionalised discourse shaped by institutional roles and communicative constraints. In contemporary legal linguistics, judicial decisions are increasingly analysed not only for their legal doctrine or rhetorical stance but also for their lexicogrammatical choices and recurring discourse structures, which reveal how courts construct authority, organise reasoning, and manage evidentiary complexity (Goźdz-Roszkowski, 2021). This shift aligns with broader developments in legal corpus linguistics, where quantitative evidence from large datasets is used to explain how legal meaning is expressed and how interpretive expectations are formed through repeated usage patterns (Egbert & Römer-Barron, 2024; Römer-Barron, 2024).

A central driver of this development has been the recognition that judicial writing constitutes a highly stable genre, yet one in which variation can still be observed across time, jurisdiction, and case type. Such variation has become increasingly accessible through new corpora and improved corpus-building methods. For instance, the compilation of the Corpus of Contemporary English Legal Decisions (CoCELD),

covering British judicial decisions from 1950 to 2021, has been presented as a response to the long-standing shortage of specialised corpora designed specifically for diachronic and synchronic analysis of judicial language (Rodríguez-Puente & Hernández-Coalla, 2023). The emphasis on corpus construction is crucial because legal discourse has historically been difficult to study at scale due to access restrictions, inconsistent formatting, and limitations in machine-readable availability. As legal corpora become more available and more rigorously designed, scholarship has increasingly moved from anecdotal claims about legal style toward empirically grounded accounts of how judicial discourse functions in practice (Goźdz-Roszkowski, 2021; Egbert & Römer-Barron, 2024).

Within this corpus-informed turn, a major thread of research focuses on how grammatical and discourse resources support legal interpretation. A growing interdisciplinary conversation has emerged between linguists and legal scholars concerning the role of linguistic evidence in statutory and judicial interpretation, particularly under the “ordinary meaning” approach. Scholars in legal interpretation have highlighted that courts often resolve disputes by relying on fine-grained linguistic distinctions, including grammatical relationships that can change legal scope and consequence (Solán, 2020). Corpus linguistics has been positioned both as a resource and as a site of methodological caution in this context, because while corpus data can help contextualise contested language, it can also be misapplied if legal interpretive aims are not clearly aligned with linguistic methods (Solán, 2020). This concern has fuelled more recent work emphasising applied legal corpus linguistics as an interdisciplinary field requiring methodological transparency, genre awareness, and careful inference-making from quantitative patterns (Römer-Barron, 2024; Egbert & Römer-Barron, 2024).

Although much legal corpus linguistics has focused on lexical meaning and collocation patterns relevant to legal interpretation, recent scholarship increasingly stresses that judicial meaning is not built through vocabulary alone. Judicial discourse is also shaped by patterned grammatical choices that structure legal argumentation, narrative sequence, and inferential transitions. Reviews of corpus linguistics in legal discourse underscore that judicial writing contains recurring phraseological and lexico-grammatical patterns that function as part of institutional practice rather than as individual stylistic preference (Goźdz-Roszkowski, 2021). In criminal adjudication, these patterns are particularly salient because judges must integrate factual narration, evidentiary evaluation, procedural history, and legal application into a coherent and accountable line of reasoning, all under the pressure of appellate scrutiny and public legitimacy. This

genre-driven pressure makes cohesion and coherence central to judicial writing, not optional enhancements.

In cohesion-based accounts of text, conjunctions are central because they explicitly encode logical-semantic relations between propositions, helping readers interpret how one segment of reasoning is connected to another. Halliday and Hasan’s cohesion model treats conjunction as one of the primary grammatical mechanisms through which texts form meaningful continuity (Halliday & Hasan, 2014). While cohesion theory is not exclusive to legal discourse, its relevance to judicial writing lies in the fact that legal decisions frequently involve extended chains of reasoning where clarity depends on how relationships such as addition, contrast, cause, inference, and alternativity are signalled. Conjunctions therefore provide a theoretical bridge between sentence-level grammar and discourse-level legal reasoning, because judicial conclusions depend not only on what is stated but on how propositions are logically linked in the text.

Despite this relevance, corpus-based work that specifically foregrounds conjunctions as a central object of analysis in judicial decisions is still less common than studies focusing on legal vocabulary, stance, modality, or evaluative language. Where conjunctions do appear in legal language research, they often arise indirectly through broader investigations of cohesion, translation, or discourse markers. For example, research on cohesive devices in legal translation has drawn attention to how translators manage explicitness and cohesion in legal genres, including the rendering of conjunctive relations in the target language, and has argued that cohesive choices are guided by both linguistic constraints and legal drafting norms (Alharthi, 2022). Although translation studies and judicial discourse analysis are not identical domains, this research is valuable because it reinforces a key point relevant to the present study: conjunctive relations are not merely syntactic choices but are linked to the production of legal meaning and interpretive clarity.

More recent work in applied corpus linguistics and law has also contributed indirectly to the study of conjunctions by emphasising how legal texts structure interpretive pathways. In outlining the development of legal corpus linguistics, Egbert and Römer-Barron (2024) highlight that corpus evidence becomes most useful when it is tied to functional questions about how legal language is used in institutions, rather than treated as a purely descriptive account of frequency. This approach supports the present study’s emphasis on conjunctions as discourse-organising resources in criminal judgements, because the meaning of conjunctive frequency patterns is not located in counts alone but in their stable phraseological environments and their role in building judicial reasoning across phases of the judgement.

Alongside global developments, there is a growing but still limited body of corpus-based research on Pakistani judicial English. Much of this work has focused on the Supreme Court of Pakistan and has tended to emphasise rhetorical or semantic features such as metaphor, evaluation, and stance. For example, Ahmad (2023) reports a corpus-based analysis of metaphors in Supreme Court judgements, demonstrating that figurative patterning constitutes a measurable and functionally relevant component of judicial discourse in Pakistan. Similarly, recent work by Mughal (2025) investigates hedging strategies in Supreme Court judgements, indicating that even within a genre associated with authority and finality, judges employ linguistic devices that calibrate commitment, caution, and interpretive openness. These studies are important for the present research because they establish a precedent for corpus-driven analysis of Pakistani judicial texts and confirm that judicial language in Pakistan can be analysed systematically at scale, revealing patterned linguistic choices linked to institutional function.

Additionally, corpus-based research has begun to explore Pakistani legal English beyond the Supreme Court. A relevant example is a corpus-based study of Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) High Court judgements that describes distinctive linguistic features and patterns in superior-court writing and explicitly frames corpus methods as suitable for legal data because of its large size and institutional complexity (Orient Research Journal of Social Sciences, 2023). While that study does not centre conjunctions specifically, it reinforces the claim that Pakistani high-court judgements constitute a distinct variety of legal English with identifiable linguistic regularities. This strand of research is directly relevant because it supports the broader rationale for analysing Lahore High Court judgements as a specialised genre and for treating grammatical features, including cohesive devices, as central rather than peripheral.

However, across this emerging Pakistani literature, there remains a clear gap concerning grammatical cohesion and, more specifically, conjunction use in criminal judgements of the Lahore High Court. The Lahore High Court is a major judicial institution, and its reported decisions form a substantial, accessible body of legal discourse that is suitable for corpus-driven investigation. Yet, the linguistic study of its judgements has not been developed to the same extent as the Supreme Court-focused literature, and the specific role of conjunctions in structuring evidentiary narration and legal reasoning has not been systematically examined. This gap is significant because criminal judgements frequently rely on cumulative evidentiary sequencing and controlled argumentative contrast, both of which are structurally realised through conjunctive relations. In other words, criminal adjudication is an area where conjunctions are likely to be

especially central to judicial writing, making their analysis both linguistically and institutionally meaningful.

In sum, recent legal corpus linguistics provides a robust foundation for analysing judicial discourse as patterned language use shaped by institutional constraints (Goźdz-Roszkowski, 2021; Egbert & Römer-Barron, 2024). Scholarship on legal interpretation further highlights that grammatical relations can carry legal consequences and therefore warrant systematic analysis (Solan, 2020). Cohesion theory provides the conceptual framework for treating conjunctions as discourse-organising devices rather than as minor grammatical connectors (Halliday & Hasan, 2014). Pakistani corpus-based judicial studies, although growing, have largely focused on metaphor and hedging in Supreme Court texts, leaving high-court criminal judgements and grammatical cohesion comparatively under-studied (Ahmad, 2023; Mughal, 2025). The present study therefore contributes to the literature by extending corpus-based judicial research to the Lahore High Court and by foregrounding conjunctions as a key grammatical resource through which criminal judicial reasoning is constructed, connected, and made interpretable.

Research Methodology

This study adopts a corpus-based research design to examine the distribution and discourse functions of conjunctions in criminal case judgements of the Lahore High Court. Corpus linguistics is particularly suitable for the analysis of legal discourse because judicial texts are extensive, highly structured, and characterised by recurring linguistic patterns that cannot be reliably identified through manual or impressionistic analysis alone. By analysing language use across a large body of authentic judicial texts, corpus-based methods enable the identification of systematic grammatical tendencies and their functional significance within institutional discourse (McEnery & Hardie, 2012; Goźdz-Roszkowski, 2021).

The data for this study consist of reported criminal case judgements delivered by the Lahore High Court between 2011 and 2024. These judgements were retrieved from the official online repository of the Lahore High Court, ensuring that the corpus comprises authoritative and publicly accessible judicial texts. A total of 733 criminal judgements were selected for inclusion. The temporal range was chosen to capture contemporary judicial language while allowing sufficient breadth to observe stable linguistic patterns rather than short-term stylistic variation. The focus on criminal judgements is motivated by the fact that criminal adjudication requires detailed factual narration, careful evidentiary evaluation, and explicit legal reasoning, all of which place significant demands on textual cohesion.

All judgements were initially downloaded in PDF format and subsequently converted into plain text files to facilitate corpus analysis. Text conversion and preprocessing were carried out using Python-based scripts. During this process, non-linguistic elements such as page numbers, headers, footers, and formatting artefacts were removed to ensure that the corpus contained only running text relevant to judicial reasoning. The texts were normalised by converting all characters to lowercase, and extraneous punctuation was removed to avoid distortions in frequency counts. Following preprocessing, the corpus comprised approximately 3,286,751 running words, making it sufficiently large to support reliable quantitative analysis while remaining focused on a specific judicial genre.

The analytical framework for this study is informed by cohesion theory, with particular emphasis on conjunctions as grammatical cohesive devices (Halliday & Hasan, 2014). Conjunctions were operationalised as linguistic items that explicitly signal logical-semantic relations between clauses or sentences, including additive, adversative, inferential, and alternative relations. Rather than treating conjunctions as isolated tokens, the analysis considers their recurrent phraseological environments and discourse functions within judicial reasoning. This approach aligns with recent developments in legal corpus linguistics, which stress that grammatical features must be interpreted in relation to genre-specific functions and institutional context rather than solely through raw frequency measures (Römer & Barron, 2024).

Quantitative analysis was conducted using AntConc (version 4.2.4), which enabled the identification of high-frequency conjunctions across the corpus and the extraction of concordance lines for detailed examination. Frequency lists were generated to determine the relative prominence of individual conjunctions, while n-gram analysis was used to identify recurring phraseological patterns in which conjunctions occur. These quantitative findings provided an empirical basis for selecting focal conjunctions for closer qualitative analysis.

Qualitative analysis was carried out through systematic examination of concordance lines for each selected conjunction. This stage focused on identifying recurring discourse functions, such as evidence accumulation, contrastive evaluation, legal qualification, inferential transition, and coordinated negation. By examining conjunctions in their immediate textual context, the study moves beyond descriptive counting to interpret how conjunctive relations contribute to the organisation of judicial reasoning. This mixed-method approach, combining quantitative profiling with qualitative interpretation, reflects best practice in corpus-based discourse analysis and allows linguistic patterns to be linked meaningfully to institutional

function (McEnery & Hardie, 2012; Goźdz-Roszkowski, 2021).

Ethical considerations were minimal, as the corpus consists exclusively of publicly available judicial documents that do not involve experimental participants or confidential data. Nevertheless, care was taken to treat the texts analytically rather than evaluatively, with the focus remaining on linguistic patterns rather than on the legal merits of individual cases.

Overall, this methodological approach enables a systematic and empirically grounded investigation of conjunctions in Lahore High Court criminal judgements. By combining a carefully constructed specialised corpus with a theoretically informed analytical framework, the study provides a robust basis for examining how grammatical cohesion supports legal reasoning and textual coherence in Pakistani judicial discourse.

Results and Discussion

The corpus-based analysis demonstrates that conjunctions are not peripheral grammatical elements in Lahore High Court criminal judgements but function as core discourse-organising resources through which judicial reasoning is constructed, sequenced, and legitimised. The distributional patterns and contextual uses of conjunctions reveal stable genre-specific conventions that align closely with the institutional demands of criminal adjudication. When interpreted through the lens of cohesion theory and contemporary legal corpus linguistics, these patterns show how grammatical cohesion supports evidentiary narration, evaluative judgement, and inferential reasoning.

The conjunction *and* emerges as the most frequent and structurally dominant item in the corpus, a finding that reflects the cumulative nature of criminal judicial discourse. Criminal judgements frequently require judges to integrate multiple strands of evidence, including witness testimony, documentary material, medical reports, procedural steps, and legal observations. The pervasive use of *and* enables this accumulation to be presented within coherent syntactic frames, allowing complex factual and legal information to be compressed into authoritative narrative sequences. From a discourse-functional perspective, *and* supports additive cohesion that mirrors the legal requirement of establishing guilt through the convergence of multiple evidentiary elements rather than isolated facts. This finding aligns with previous corpus-based observations that judicial writing relies heavily on additive chaining to construct comprehensive and persuasive accounts of legal reasoning (Goźdz-Roszkowski, 2021).

The high frequency of *and* also reflects the genre's preference for coordination over subordination, particularly in evidentiary narration. Coordinated structures allow judges to list facts and observations without overtly prioritising one over another, thereby maintaining an appearance of neutrality and objectivity. This strategy is especially significant in criminal cases, where judicial authority depends on demonstrating that conclusions arise from a holistic assessment of evidence rather than selective emphasis. The extensive use of *and* therefore functions not only as a grammatical connector but as a rhetorical resource that reinforces judicial impartiality.

The conjunction *for* occupies a prominent position in the corpus and plays a critical explanatory and justificatory role. In criminal judgements, courts are under an institutional obligation to justify decisions explicitly, particularly where severe penalties are imposed. The frequent use of *for* reflects this obligation, as it introduces reasons, grounds, and purposes that connect judicial actions and conclusions to articulated legal logic. Concordance analysis indicates that *for* commonly appears in contexts where judges explain why a particular piece of evidence is accepted or rejected, why a legal provision applies, or why a procedural decision is warranted. This explanatory function aligns with cohesion theory's account of causal and inferential relations, demonstrating how conjunctions facilitate logical continuity across extended reasoning sequences (Halliday & Hasan, 2014).

The conjunction *or* functions as a key marker of legal alternativity and scope delimitation. Criminal judgements often require courts to acknowledge multiple possible interpretations, factual scenarios, or legal outcomes before narrowing down the applicable conclusion. The recurrent use of *or* allows judges to articulate these possibilities explicitly while maintaining control over interpretive boundaries. In statutory interpretation and sentencing discussions, *or* frequently signals inclusive or exclusive alternatives that shape the legal consequences of a case. This pattern supports Solan's (2020) observation that conjunctions such as *or* play a decisive role in legal interpretation, as they determine whether legal provisions are read conjunctively or disjunctively. The corpus evidence suggests that Lahore High Court judges systematically employ *or* to manage legal uncertainty and to pre-empt interpretive ambiguity.

Adversative conjunctions, particularly *but*, perform a strategically important evaluative function in the corpus. Although less frequent than additive and alternative conjunctions, *but* is consistently used at critical junctures of judicial reasoning. Concordance analysis shows that *but* typically follows the acknowledgment of a claim, submission, or evidentiary point and introduces limitation, exception, or rejection. This pattern allows judges to demonstrate

procedural fairness by recognising arguments raised by counsel or lower courts while asserting judicial authority through controlled disagreement. Such usage reflects genre-specific expectations that judges must engage with competing viewpoints before articulating their own conclusions. From a discourse-analytic perspective, *but* enables evaluative balance, supporting the judicial stance of reasoned impartiality while maintaining decisional clarity (Bhatia, 2021).

The conjunction *so* appears with moderate frequency and is closely associated with inferential progression. In the corpus, *so* frequently introduces conclusions drawn from prior factual or legal analysis, functioning as a grammatical bridge between assessment and outcome. This inferential role is particularly visible in sections where judges summarise findings or transition from evidentiary evaluation to legal determination. The use of *so* thus supports explicit inferential signalling, which is essential in criminal judgements where conclusions must be demonstrably grounded in articulated reasoning. This finding reinforces the argument that conjunctions serve as markers of reasoning stages rather than mere connectors, guiding readers through the logical architecture of judicial decisions (Römer & Barron, 2024).

The conjunction *yet* occurs less frequently but contributes to nuanced judicial reasoning by introducing contrastive continuation or unresolved tension. In criminal judgements, *yet* often signals that an expected outcome has not been reached or that further evaluation is required despite preceding developments. This usage allows judges to acknowledge complexity or delay resolution without undermining textual coherence. The function of *yet* highlights how conjunctions support subtle evaluative positioning, enabling courts to express caution or reservation while maintaining authoritative control over the discourse.

Finally, *nor* is the least frequent conjunction in the corpus and is primarily confined to coordinated negative constructions. Despite its low frequency, *nor* plays a crucial role in enhancing legal precision, particularly in evidentiary findings where the absence of facts or connections must be clearly established. Its use allows judges to negate multiple propositions simultaneously, reinforcing the definitiveness of judicial conclusions. The restricted distribution of *nor* reflects its specialised function rather than marginal relevance, underscoring that even low-frequency conjunctions contribute meaningfully to legal reasoning.

Overall, the integrated analysis of results and discussion demonstrates that conjunction use in Lahore High Court criminal judgements is systematic, functionally differentiated, and closely aligned with institutional reasoning practices. Conjunctions operate as grammatical infrastructure that

supports accumulation of evidence, articulation of alternatives, evaluative contrast, inferential progression, and coordinated negation. These findings extend cohesion theory into the domain of criminal judicial discourse and contribute to contemporary legal corpus linguistics by showing how grammatical cohesion underpins legal authority and interpretive clarity in Pakistani judicial English.

Conclusion

This study examined the role of conjunctions as cohesive and discourse-organising devices in criminal case judgements of the Lahore High Court. Using a large, specialised corpus of reported judgements, the analysis demonstrates that conjunctions are integral to the construction of judicial reasoning rather than merely grammatical connectors. Additive conjunctions, particularly *and*, support the cumulative presentation of evidence and procedural detail, while *or*, *but*, *so*, *yet*, and *nor* facilitate the articulation of legal alternatives, evaluative contrast, inference, and coordinated negation. Together, these patterns reveal how conjunctions contribute to the logical sequencing, coherence, and authority of criminal judicial discourse.

The findings confirm that conjunction use in Lahore High Court judgements is systematic and genre-driven, reflecting institutional norms and the demands of criminal adjudication. By foregrounding grammatical cohesion, this study extends corpus-based research on Pakistani judicial English beyond lexical and evaluative features and highlights the importance of grammatical patterning in legal reasoning. Future research may expand this approach to other courts, case types, or cohesive devices to further enhance understanding of judicial language and its role in legal interpretation.

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