



RESEARCH PAPER

An Analysis of the Use of Collocations in English Essay Writing at Undergraduate Level

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to examine the use of Collocation in English Essay Writing at Undergraduate Level. Collocations in language acquisition is important moreover, learning a second language is not just a matter of learning, its grammar and vocabulary only but also the proper use of it. The researcher focused in on examining the utilization of lexical collocation, blunders and syntactic collocation mistakes by the students of B.S. English at KFUEIT. Cluster random sampling technique was used. 250 students were selected out of 700 students of BS 1st semester, Fourth semester and 7th semester. Selected sample wrote an easy on the topic "My Experience as a Student at KFUEIT". After the collection of data, it was analyzed by using "Antcoc" software. The results showed that the frequency of lexical collocation errors were greater than the frequency of grammatical collocation errors. In these results, the researcher found that Lexical 1 (Verb + Noun) and Lexical 2 (Adjective + Noun) collocation errors were mostly found.

KEYWORDS Collocation, ESL, Grammatical Collocation, Lexical Collocation

Introduction

Collocations are combinations of formulaic sequences of words (Granger, 2018; Hernandez et al., 2018) . Collocations occasionally include non-compositional and ambiguous idioms, and in some cases, they are compositional and transparent combinations of words (Aguinaga Echeverria, 2018). Collocations are both stored and retrieved from the memory as single words and there is also no need for language users try to formulate these combinations based on syntactic rules (Kim & Oh, 2020).

Collocations play a vital role in the acquisition as well as rapid and fluent production of language. They help the producers to better express ideas and convey meanings. In fact, using formulaic language is not a matter of grammatical restrictions but it is a matter of convention. Normally, life-long exposure to conventions of a language makes their acquisition easy and conscious. That is why first language learners have no difficulty in acquiring these important aspects of language. But these conventionalized strings of words should be taught to foreign language learners due to their limited exposure to the target language (Shehata, 2008).

Moreover, the language-specific nature of collocations may require learners to create combinations which are common in their first language but unconventional or

impossible in the second language. Therefore, students who are writing in a language other than their native language may have little awareness about the use of these collocations in comparison to expert writers (Groom, 2009) .

The native language speakers drive the bases of the collocations. In order to master the linguistic requirements there is a dire need to select or target a language for the purpose of learning. However, the chosen language may affect the efficient usage of native language.(Fan, 2009). The people who want to learn the collocations want to learn the English language should learn the proper usage of the words.

Collocations seem to be important in learning a language because words are learned and used in context, and without knowing the proper context in which a word can be used, one cannot make a claim that he or she has mastered that word. "Collocation represents true or false meaning of a sentence" (Molinaro&Carreiras, 2010). In this scenario the purpose of the study is to an analysis of the use of collocation in English Essay Writing at BS Level".

Literature Review

Shitu (2015) conducted research study on Collocation Errors in English as Second Language (ESL) Essay Writing. Both native speakers and people learning a second language make mistakes when trying to become proficient in the target language. Collocation deals with the relationship of meaning between lexical items. When a word appears in a sentence, the related or naturally co-occurring word will automatically come to mind because there is a sort of "natural order" in which words are arranged or relate to one another in sentences. Therefore, it is an error when students improperly pair or arrange such lexical items that 'naturally' occur together in a text. The majority of the research group's participants who are learning a second language make collocation mistakes, it has been observed. Such a study is very important because it sheds light on the types of mistakes that students commonly make. As a result, the language instructor will be better able to pinpoint the root causes of these errors and correct them, assisting the students in acquiring some level of language proficiency. The study's goal is to comprehend the nature of these mistakes as roadblocks to producing quality essays. The goal of the study is to identify the errors, examine their structural makeup to see if there are any commonalities among students in this area, and look for any patterns that might help the researcher comprehend the causes and origins of these errors. As part of a descriptive study, the researcher samples about 900 essays from 300 undergraduate English language learners at the Federal College of Education in Kano, North-West Nigeria, or three essays per student. The essays, which were presented during three different lecture periods, shared a common theme (i.e., the same subjects), and they ranged in length (i.e. same number of words). At three different lecture events, the essays were written during the lecture hour.. The errors were found in a systematic way, and even if they appeared multiple times in students' essays, they were only recorded once. The identified numbers of occurrences were converted into percentages in order to compile the data using percentages. According to the study's findings, there are patterns in the similarities and regular and repeated errors. The pattern found led researchers to the conclusion that students' collocation errors were caused by inadequate teaching and learning, which led to incorrect rule generalization.

Nesselhauf (2003) *The Use of Collocations by Advanced Learners of English and Some Implications for Teaching*. The current study examines the use of three different proficiency levels of Hebrew native speakers' written English verb-noun collocations.

We assembled a learner corpus—roughly 300,000 words—of argumentative and descriptive essays for this purpose. We chose LOCNESS, a corpus of young adult native English speakers, for comparison. In order to extract verb-noun collocations, we retrieved the 220 nouns that appeared the most frequently in both the learner corpus and the LOCNESS corpus. After that, we conducted two different kinds of comparisons: learners were compared with native speakers on the frequency of collocation use, and learners were compared with other learners of various second-language proficiency levels on the frequency and correctness of collocations. The results showed that learners produced significantly fewer collocations than native speakers' at all three proficiency levels, that the number of collocations only increased at the advanced level, and that errors—particularly interlingua ones—persisted even at advanced levels of proficiency. In light of the characteristics of collocations and communicative learning, we discuss the findings and make some pedagogical recommendations. Multiword units are crucial, and there are learning issues related to them that have been recognized for a very long time and have been discussed ever since (Brown, 1974; Granger, 1998; Lewis, 2000; Marton, 1977; Palmer, 1933; Pawley & Syder, 1983; Richards, 1976; Schmitt, 2004; Sinclair, 1991; Wray, 2002). In light of the characteristics of collocations and communicative learning, we discuss the findings and make some pedagogical recommendations. Multiword units are crucial, and there are learning issues related to them that have been recognized for a very long time and have been discussed ever since (Brown, 1974; Granger, 1998; Lewis, 2000; Marton, 1977; Palmer, 1933; Pawley & Syder, 1983; Richards, 1976; Schmitt, 2004; Sinclair, 1991; Wray, 2002). Multiword units, also known as prefabricated patterns, preassembled units, chunks, ready-made utterances, and so on (Foster, 2001; Howarth, 1998; Nattinger & DeCarrico, 1992; Wray, 1999), are now considered to be an essential part of second-language (L2) lexical competence in addition to the knowledge of single words. The reason for this is that understanding multiword units enhances the clarity and fluency of both spoken and written language. Mastery of the idiomatic dimension of language makes the learner come across as proficient and fluent (Boers, Eyckmans, Kappel, Stengers, & Demecheleer, 2006) and distinguishes advanced learners from intermediate ones (Thornbury, 2002). According to Gledhill (2000, p. 1), "it is impossible for a writer to be fluent without a thorough knowledge of the phraseology of the particular field he or she is writing in." This is due, in part, to the fact that a significant portion of the procedural vocabulary used in academic disciplines is composed of predicate structures like "make a claim," "reach a conclusion," "adopt a strategy," and "set forth criteria" (Howarth, 1998). On the other hand, a lack of this knowledge might make it more challenging to understand what students are saying. According to Hill (1999, p. 5), students with good ideas frequently lose points because they are not aware of the four or five most important collocations for a key word that is essential to the topic of their essay. As a result, they produce longer, occasionally grammatically incorrect, and ineffective utterances that fail to convey what they are trying to say.

Material and Methods

Population

A comprehensive set of fundamentals can be students or things in general that own some standard features illustrated by the criterion set out the by the scholars. The population for this research study was all students of BS-English studying at KFUEIT.

Sample

A sample of the research is understood as a set of data that can be collected from both primary and secondary sources and empirically using preconceived selection method-random techniques adopted for the data collection. About 250 students were selected randomly out of 500 students as a sample from selected semesters of BS- English (1st, 4th, 7th).

Instruments

Based on the literature review and required information, the researcher developed an essay-type test after necessary amendment in the light of the expert opinion; the test was finalized. The collocation system and patterns by Benson and Ilson were applied to analyze the data to surface the collocation mistakes. This method was first employed by the British National Corpus (BNC) to find out the subjects regarding collocation mistakes. Then this analysis was categorized into two domains; lexical and grammatical according to Benson and Ilson method. (1986).

The examples mentioned below are extracted from the British National Corpus to further understand the reason of collocation errors.

Collocation mistakes were found in the compositions. We do not have to wear a big hat, in this sentence the adjective big makes collocation of the noun hat in a quite rough way.

1. The BNC method was also employed to find the phrase but a 'big hat ' was nowhere to be found.
2. Albeit, many examples can be found with the word hat in the corpus for instance,
3. The mobile call ended. Jack put on his hat and stood in the dark, peeping through the window at the empty streets ahead of him
4. For John, a big hat for short Brian would be too ugly. He is sick of competing with his peers and their fancy hats. Hence, the right adjective to collocate with the hat was found a heavy instead of big.

Results and Discussion

Data Analysis

Researcher collected data about use of collocation in English essay writing at undergraduate level. This particular research study focused on identifying the use of lexical and grammatical collocations and frequency of mistakes made by the undergraduate students while using the collocations in their essay writings.

The researcher analyzed the essays of random classes (1st, 4th, 7th) from BS first semester to the students of BS English 7th Semester. Researcher analyzed total 250 essays from all random classes of BS English which were selected as sample to conduct this research study. Researcher analyzed 36 essays from each class and analyzed the usage of collocations in their writings and the frequency of right and wrong use of collocations.

Table 1

BS-English 1st		
Error Type	Error Pattern	Number of collocation errors
Lexical1	Verb +Noun	22
Lexical2	ADJective+ Noun	15
Lexical3	Noun+Verb	18
Lexical4	Noun of Noun	3
Lexical5	Adverb + Adjective	8
Lexical6	Verb +Adverb	11
Lexical7	Conjunction	13
Grammatical1	Noun +preposition	18
Grammatical2	Noun to infinitive	6
Grammatical3	N + that clause	7
Grammatical4	Preposition + Noun	13
Grammatical5	Adjective +Preposition	5
Grammatical6	Adjective + to infinitive	8
Grammatical7	Adjective clause	0
Grammatical8	Subject + Verb -ing form	11
Total frequency of wrong collocation		2459
Total frequency of right collocation		2617
Total words in comprehension		513
Total Type of words used		15041
Total Collocates words in comprehension		1632

Table 1 showed that total 15041 words are written in comprehension paragraph with type of 1632 by the BS- English first Total 2617 collocates words are used in this data with 513 types. Data results indicated that L1 has 22 types of collocation (V+N) verb and noun errors. For example, "I would definitely tell them to make friends with some upper classmen who can help them with learning" instead of "I prefer to interact with seniors for better learning". For instance, "Time has been flying by its hard to believe that we have been on campus for three months already". L3 have 18 lexical collocation mistakes in the using of noun and verb. L4 have 3 mistakes of (N+N) noun and noun in their writing. For example, they used wrong word "Enjoyable Experience" instead of right word "Joyful Experience". L5 have 8 error of Adverb and adjective it is also considered the most common mistakes of lexical collocation. For example, "This urbanization continued since then and now the city is one of the modern district headquarters in Punjab with decent civic facilities and infrastructure" instead of the right collocation "The development in city lead to vast urbanization. L6 has 11 faults of verb and adverb where students wrong used of these parts of speech. For example, students used "Before I enrolled" instead of "Before I am enrolling" L7 has 13 mistakes of conjunction. For example students wrote "learn book" this wrong collocation in context. The right collocation is "read books" but students used it as a right collocation. G1 has 18 mistakes of noun and preposition where students wrong used of noun and preposition. For example, "They debate with" instead of "They debate on". G2 has 6 mistakes of noun and (to) infinitive like "to readtogo" etc. G3 has 7 mistakes of noun and that clause. For example, students used wrong collocation of "understand this" instead of "understand that" G4 has 13 mistakes of preposition and noun students used wrong preposition instead of right. For example, "my university experiences thus far have been amazing" instead of correct collocation "my university gave me all kind of experiences in such a short time". G 5 has 5 mistakes of adjective and preposition. For example, they

used wrong collocation "First day is tough for everyone cause it is school college or university they all are same for every person it is teacher or student" but the right collocation is "First day at university is full of nervousness as everything is new" G6 has 8 mistakes of adjective and (to) infinitive. For example, wrong collocation is "Hard time to bear" instead of right collocation "Difficult time to bear". G7 has no mistake of adjective and that clause. G8 has 11 mistakes of subject and present participle form. Like "Giving transport" instead of "Providing transport". These are the most common mistakes in grammatical collocation. It is indicated that total 158 wrong collocation and 2459 right collocation were found in class BS. English First Semester.

Table 2
BS-English 4th

Error Type	Error Pattern	Number of errors
Lexical1	Verb +Noun	14
Lexical2	ADJective+ Noun	12
Lexical3	Noun+Verb	22
Lexical4	Noun of Noun	7
Lexical5	Adverb + Adjective	10
Lexical6	Verb +Adverb	13
Lexical7	Conjunction	18
Grammatical1	Noun +preposition	16
Grammatical2	Noun to infinitive	10
Grammatical3	N + that clause	15
Grammatical4	Preposition + Noun	08
Grammatical5	Adjective +Preposition	09
Grammatical6	Adjective + to infinitive	11
Grammatical7	Adjective clause	17
Grammatical8	Subject + Verb -ing form	10
Total frequency of wrong collocation		5161
Total frequency of right collocation		5353
Total words in comprehension		787
Total Type of words used		810
Total Collocates words in comprehension		209

Table 2 showed that total 3988 words are written in comprehension paragraph with type of 907 by the BS- English 3rd. Total 869 collocates words are used in this data with 314 types. Data results indicated that L1 has 14 types of collocation (V+N) verb and noun errors. For example, "Set the game" instead of "Win the game". L2 has 12 mistakes of (Adj +N) adjective and noun where adjective and noun is the most lexical collocation errors used by the students. For example, students used wrong collocation "Large dreamer" instead of "Big dreamer". L3 has 22 lexical collocation mistakes in the using of noun and verb. For example, students used wrong collocation "Fear display" right collocation is "Fear showed". L4 has 07 mistakes of (N+N) noun and noun in their writing. For example, they used wrong collocation "Feel of pride" instead of "Sense of pride". L5 has 10 errors of Adverb and adjective it is also considered the most common mistakes of lexical collocation. For example, they used wrong collocation "Realcompetitive" instead of "Extremely competitive". L6 has 13 faults of verb and adverb where students wrong used of these parts of speech. For example, they used "Giggle hysterically" instead of "Laugh hysterically". L7 has 18 mistakes of conjunction. For example, wrong collocation is "Watch or a pen" instead of the right "Watch and a

pen". G1 has 16 mistakes of noun and preposition where students wrong used of noun and preposition. For example, wrong collocation "Relevance to" but the right collocation is "Relevance of". G2 has 10 mistakes of noun and (to) infinitive like. For example, "Contribution of" is a wrong collocation "Contribution to" is a right collocation. G3 has 15 mistakes of noun and that clause. For example, they used "Suspect so" instead of "Suspect that". G4 has 08 mistakes of preposition and noun. Students used wrong preposition instead of right preposition like "In adapt" instead of "To adapt". G 5 has 09 mistakes of adjective and preposition. For example, "Terrible from" is a wrong collocation but the right collocation is "Terrible at". G6 has 11 mistakes of adjective and (to) infinitive. For example, they used "Happy that" instead of "Happy to". G7 has 17 mistakes of adjective and that clause. For example, "Obvious so" instead of "Obvious that" G8 has 04 mistakes of subject and present participle form. For example, students used wrong collocation "Care too much instead of the right collocation "Caring too much". These are the most common mistakes in grammatical collocation. It is indicated that total 192 wrong collocation and 5161 right collocations were found in class BS. English Fourth Semester.

Table 3
BS-English 7th

Error Type	Error Pattern	Number of errors
Lexical1	Verb +Noun	06
Lexical2	ADJective+ Noun	04
Lexical3	Noun+Verb	07
Lexical4	Noun of Noun	05
Lexical5	Adverb + Adjective	07
Lexical6	Verb +Adverb	10
Lexical7	Conjunction	04
Grammatical1	Noun +preposition	08
Grammatical2	Noun to infinitive	09
Grammatical3	N + that clause	03
Grammatical4	Preposition + Noun	09
Grammatical5	Adjective +Preposition	11
Grammatical6	Adjective + to infinitive	14
Grammatical7	Adjective clause	04
Grammatical8	Subject + Verb -ing form	06
Total frequency of wrong collocation		107
Total frequency of right collocation		6323
Total words in comprehension		6430
Total Type of words used		1692
Total Collocates words in comprehension		1161
Total Type of collocates words used		433

Table 3 showed that total 6430 words are written in comprehension paragraph with type of 1692 by the BS- English 3rd. Total 1161 collocates words are used in this data with 433 types. Data results indicated that L1 has 06 mistakes like "I want to Tell the reality" is a wrong collocation but right collocation is "Tell the truth ". L2 has 04 mistakes of (Adj +N) adjective and noun where adjective and noun is the most lexical collocation errors used by the students. For example, students used wrong collocation "To get admition in kfueit is a big Distribute for my family" instead of "Big deal". L3 has 07 lexical collocation mistakes in the using of noun and verb. For example, students used wrong collocation "Endanger involved" right collocation is "Risk involved". L4

has 05 mistakes of (N+N) noun and noun in their writing. For example, they used wrong collocation "Assign union" instead of "Credit union". L5 has 07 errors of Adverb and adjective it is also considered the most common mistakes of lexical collocation. For example, students used "Strongly sense" instead of "Strongly feel". L6 has 10 fault of verb and adverb where students wrong used of these parts of speech. For example, "Restart shortly" instead of "Resume shortly" L7 has 04 mistakes of conjunction. For example, students used "Watch or a pen" instead of "Watch and a pen". These lexical mistakes suggest hat how students apply literal words for the translation of the words to learn in English language. G1 has 04 mistakes of noun and preposition where students wrong used of noun and preposition. For example, wrong collocation "Devotion for" but the right collocation is "Devotion to".G2 has 03 mistakes of noun and (to) infinitive like. For example, "Suspect so" is a wrong collocation "Suspect that" is a right collocation. G3 has 0 mistakes of noun and that clause. G4 has 06 mistakes of preposition and noun. Students used wrong preposition instead of right preposition like "In adapt" instead of "To adapt". G 5 has 12 mistakes of adjective and preposition. For example, "Terrible from" is a wrong collocation but the right collocation is "Terrible at". G6 has 03 mistakes of adjective and (to) infinitive. For example, they used "Happy that" instead of "Happy to". G7 has 09 mistakes of adjective and that clause. For example, "Obvious so instead of "Obvious that". G8 has 04mistakes of subject and present participle form. For example, students used wrong collocation "Eat a plum instead of the right collocation "Eating a plum". These are the most common mistakes in grammatical collocation. It is indicated that total 107wrong collocation and 6323 right collocation were found in class BS. English Seventh semester.

Table 4
Frequency of the Use of Collocations by BS English Students

Class Name	Total No of Essays Analyzed	Total No of Collocation used in the Essays	Total No of words Analyzed	Frequency of Use of Collocations
BS English 1 st Semester	36	1632	15041	9.21 %
BS English 4 th Semester	36	2200	25000	14.5%
BS English 7 th Semester	36	2600	26000	15.5%

Table 4 showed the usage of collocations in English essay writing by the students of BS English from one to seven semesters. Results of the content analysis presented that BS English 1st semester have used total type of 1632 collocation with total collocate words of 15041, 9.21% frequency out of total words. BS English 4th semester have used total type of 2200 collocation with total collocate words of 25000, 14.5% frequency out of all words. BS English 7th semester have used total type of 2260 collocation with total 2600 collocate words, 15.5% frequency out of all words. This frequency showed that the use of collocations increased with the seniority level of semesters as shown in the above mentioned table.

Table 5
What types of mistakes students make in using collocation in narrative essay writing at Undergraduate level

Error Type	Error Pattern	Total Errors
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Lexical1	Verb +Noun	30
Lexical2	Adjective+ Noun	22
Lexical3	Noun+Verb	35
Lexical4	Noun of Noun	20
Lexical5	Adverb + Adjective	33
Lexical6	Verb +Adverb	53
Lexical7	Conjunction	58
Grammatical1	Noun preposition	33
Grammatical2	Noun+ infinitive	23
Grammatical3	Noun Plus Clause	30
Grammatical4	Preposition + Noun	28
Grammatical5	Adjective /Preposition	22
Grammatical6	Adjective + to infinitive	25
Grammatical7	Adjective + that clause	20
Grammatical8	Subject+ Verb-ing form	25

Conclusion

The present research has its main focus on identifying and labeling the mistakes and grammatical errors that students generally make while using collocation in narrative essay writing. In English language collocation is used on large scale to complete the sentence and to add the value of one's speech. To achieve the first and the foremost objective of the current study, the researcher asked the students of KFUIET to submit an essay on the topic "University Experience as a Student at KFUEIT". The researcher selected the students from BS English semester one to seven as his population and drew a sample of 255 students. The sample was asked to write an essay so that the researcher can identify the lexical and grammatical collocations. Below mentioned types of collocation mistakes are examined by the researcher from the submitted essays by the participants.

Table 6

Error Type	Error Pattern
Lexical1	Verb +Noun
Lexical2	Adjective+ Noun
Lexical3	Noun+Verb
Lexical4	Noun of Noun
Lexical5	Adverb + Adjective
Lexical6	Verb +Adverb
Lexical7	Conjunction
Grammatical1	Noun preposition
Grammatical2	Noun+ infinitive
Grammatical3	Noun Plus Clause
Grammatical4	Preposition Noun
Grammatical5	Adjective /Preposition
Grammatical6	Adjective + to infinitive
Grammatical7	Adjective + that clause
Grammatical8	Subject+ Verb-ing form

By analyzing the essays thoroughly, collected from the selected sample, the researcher identified total 457 overall collocation mistakes out of 14400 words which

were being scrutinized. Among these identified 457 mistakes by the researcher, 251 errors were lexical in nature and 192 mistakes were grammatical.

The second major purpose of this research work was to label the frequency of wrong use of collocation in English essay writing at BS level in the university students. The findings of this logical piece of work revealed that collocation mistakes were found by BS-English. First semester students made (158) mistakes out of 2617 mistakes, BS-English Fourth semester students made (192) mistakes out of 5353 mistakes, and BS-English Seventh semester students made (107) mistakes out of 6430 mistakes. Total mistakes of collocations by all BS-English classes both lexical and grammatical were 457 out of 14400 collocations .

The Third main purpose of this research was to explore the right use of collocation in English essay writing at BS-Level. The findings of this research study showed that the researcher found total right collocations used by BS-English First semester students used 2459 right collocations out of 2617, BS-English Fourth semester students used right collocations (5161) out of 5353, and BS-English Seventh semester students also used right collocations (6323) out of 6430 collocations. Total right collocations used by all BS -English classes were 13937 collocations out of 14400 collocations. These were both lexical and grammatical collocations.

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