# USE OF COLLOCATIONS IN ESSAY WRITING BY FOREIGN ARABIC LANGUAGE LEARNERS

**[1]Mahmud Abubakar Garba, [2]Abd Rauf Hassan, [3]Mohd Azidan Abdul Jabar & [4]Mohd Isha Awang**

[1]Department of Arabic, Faculty of Humanities, Umaru Musa Yar'adua University Katsina, Nigeria.
[2&3]Department of Foreign Languages, Faculty of Modern Languages and Communication, University of Putra, Malaysia.
[4]School of Education, Universiti Utara Malaysia, Malaysia

*[2]Corresponding author: raufh@upm.edu.my*

## ABSTRACT

Several advancements are being made in the field of foreign language learning with the aim of facilitating the learning process and rendering it more accessible. Among these advancements are collocations which are an important aspect of foreign language learning, as they greatly enhance fluency and accuracy in language learning. The current study aims to explore the impact of collocations on the improvement of essay writing among Arabic learners as a foreign language in Nigeria. In this study, a quasi-experimental design was adopted, incorporating pre and post-test measurements.  Seventy (70) undergraduate students from an intact class in the third year at the Department of Arabic during

the 2022/2023 session at Umaru Musa Yar'adua University Katsina, Nigeria, were purposefully selected to participate in this essay writing training. The participants were divided into an experimental (n=35) and a control (n=35) group. During the training session, the data were collected through essay writing in pre and post-tests. An inferential statistic was employed to evaluate the significant difference between the two groups, thereby enabling the researchers to make a decision. The study found that the overall experimental group ($M = 58.60$, $SD = 13.705$) scored higher than the control group ($M = 40.17$, $SD = 5.08$). The independent sample t-test result was $t$ (7.45), )$p = .000$(. Therefore, there was a significant difference between the two groups. This implies that collocations play a vital role in enhancing the essay writing performance of Arabic learners as a foreign language at Umaru Musa Yar'adua University Katsina, Nigeria. It should be a great idea for instructors of Arabic as a foreign language at the Umaru Musa Yar'adua University, Katsina, Nigeria to prioritize collocations in their classroom activities, especially when teaching Arabic essay writing. The significance of the study lies in the potential of integrating collocations in the context of instructing Arabic essay writing to learners of Arabic as a foreign language. In addition, the findings can be advantageous to the university's management by improving the Arabic syllabus and incorporating collocations to enhance the learning of Arabic essay writing. Finally, the study is beneficial to the participants because it helps them learn the Arabic language through its original forms and structure.

**Keywords:** Collocations, Foreign Language Learning, Lexical Approach, Essay writing, Grammar and Translation.

## INTRODUCTION

The Arabic language has witnessed a notable surge in the number of non-Arabic speakers evincing an inclination towards learning it as a foreign language for various purposes (Ali, 2017). One of the primary objectives of learning a foreign language is to attain proficiency in the domains of writing and speaking skills (Al-Naqa, 1985). This objective can be realized through the use of appropriate vocabulary in appropriate contexts. According to Hill (2000), students should know how to use words in their natural combinations with other lexical items that are commonly referred to as collocations. According to

Wray's (2002) research, collocations are group of words that are used together to create fixed or semi-fixed expressions, and they make up a sizable portion of a native speaker's linguistic competence. However, Lewis (1997: 51) refers to collocation as "a predictable co-occurrence of lexical items such as *fast food, human errors, do homework, make friends*". Additionally, Firth, as cited by Vasiljevic (2014) posits that "you shall know a word by the company it keeps". With respect to collocations, this means that their relationships with other words are predictable. Furthermore, collocations, as defined by Du et al. (2022), refer to a group of two or more words that commonly occur together and form a noticeable arrangement of words or conjoining of linguistic elements. Therefore, the major argument for this approach is that many multi-word items are word-like in their qualities, and share the arbitrariness of words, Lewis (2008).

In writing, collocation refers to the regular or natural pairing of words that appear frequently together in a language. These word pairings are not random; rather, they establish patterns that native speakers of a language recognise intuitively. Collocations are an important part of writing because they improve the fluency, naturalness, and efficacy of written communication. Collocations have significance in good writing because they make text seem more natural, improve clarity, and improve overall communication. Writers can benefit from becoming more aware of collocations and carefully employing them to convey their desired message.

Moreover, with regard to attaining writing proficiency in the process of foreign language learning, the integration of collocations into writing endeavors has been observed to yield significant improvements in terms of fluency and proficiency, as found by Munirah et al. (2021). This implies that the application of collocations has the potential to enhance both accuracy and fluency in language production. Learners who have a good grasp of collocations are likely to have a higher level of overall language proficiency. Thus, the incorporation of collocations can serve as an effective strategy for enhancing language learning accuracy and fluency while studying a foreign language (Bui, 2021). Furthermore, collocations hold immense value as they represent common combinations of words in a language, thereby rendering them indispensable for language learners to master, as highlighted by Suleiman (2018). This is exemplified in the study of McCrostie (2007), as cited in Junjoen (2017), which affirmed that learners with a large

number of lexical units, such as collocations, demonstrate heightened competence in language learning and communicate effectively. Similarly, Hill (2000) upholds that the mastery of collocation usage leads to greater fluidity in both written and oral communication. He also contends that 80% of written language contains collocations. In the previous research, there were several studies on collocations, such as (Noor Al-Alfiya, 2021; Salam & Nur, 2020; Hindu, 2020; Nawi & Zainuddeen, 2018; Suleiman, 2018; Azlan et al, 2017; and Al-Dubyan, 2016) which validated the efficacy of collocations in promoting lexical competence. This, in turn, provides foreign language learners with the necessary tools to effectively communicate their feelings in either written or spoken form.

However, learners of Arabic as a foreign language in non-Arabic-speaking countries, such as Nigeria, experience a deficiency in their lexical competence. This inadequacy prevents them from effectively conveying their thoughts in written expression due to errors in the use of collocations, resulting in substandard performance in their essay writing. Despite having devoted several years to the study of the Arabic language, their written expression remains below the standard as confirmed by Usman (2017) in his error analysis study and Yusuf (2017) in his linguistic proficiency test which identified their writing skills as the weakest among the language skills. According to Zayir and Ayiz (2014), the neglect of the importance of collocations in writing activities deprives learners of a foreign language of the opportunity to use language in its natural form, leading to the development of linguistic errors. Bar'awan (1994) opined that the root causes of these problems lie in the teaching of Arabic through the Grammar and Translation method. Al-Qahtani (2019) further observed that learners of Arabic who underwent this method were unable to use the language in its natural form, resorting to words that may be contextually inappropriate or socially unacceptable. Thus, it is imperative that a different approach to vocabulary learning in writing activities to be adopted for the learners of Arabic as a foreign language in Nigeria so that a link between vocabulary learning through collocations and its effects on improving essay writing could be established. However, the Lexical Approach, which emphasizes learning vocabulary through collocations instead of the Grammar and Translation method, present a potential solution to this problem thereby improving the participants' essay writing performance. Because the results of a study conducted

by Nguyen and Duong (2021) regarding the perceptions of English-major juniors and English lecturers at Van Lang University on the usage of collocations for academic writing exhibited the impact of collocations on enhancing written expression.

To this effect, the present study aims to examine the significance of collocations in enhancing the essay writing performance of Arabic foreign language learners in the Department of Arabic Language at Umaru Musa Yar'adua University, Katsina, Nigeria. This research is motivated by the widespread belief that collocations are the fundamental aspect of achieving linguistic competence and improving writing skills in foreign language learning (Lewis, 1993). Furthermore, collocations can serve as a means of preventing linguistic errors in written expression and facilitating the attainment of lexical competence. This study contributes to minimizing the inappropriate use of vocabulary in essay writing due to the nature of collocations by simplifying and promoting vocabulary learning in the form of collocations with the ultimate goal of enhancing the essay writing performance of the study participants. According to the Oxford Collocations Dictionary for Students of English (2000: vii), the selection of appropriate collocations by students during the learning process "will make his speech and writing sound much more natural, more native-like, even when basic intelligibility does not seem to be at issue". Moreover, the benefits of collocations have been tested within the context of language assessment, whether in the domains of speaking or writing (Nguyen & Duong, 2021). This inquiry discovered that collocations are a source of fluency, as an author with the knowledge of how to appropriately combine words in a way that sounds natural and appropriate can produce text that is easier to read and understand (Dimir, 2017). Therefore, mastering collocations is the most crucial step in learning a foreign language, Lewis (1993).

To achieve the objective of this experiment, the researchers divided the participants into an experimental group and a control group. Furthermore, they applied the theory of Lexical approach, as proposed by Lewis (1993) and the model of Jacob et al. (1981) for evaluation of foreign language writing. Therefore, the experimental group was exposed to essay writing through the use of collocations in the Lexical Approach, while the control group went essay writing training through

the utilization of the Grammar and Translation method. With regard to the contribution of the research, the current study stands out from the previous studies by focusing, specifically, on the contribution of collocations in the prevention of linguistic errors in and the development of lexical competence, as well as their application in the enhancing the essay writing, which is almost not available in the past literature. Therefore, the study was structured into five sections, beginning with an introduction section that discussed the background of the study and the related literature surrounding the topic at hand. This section also identified a research gap and established the research objective. The second section detailed the methodology employed by the researchers to collect data and address the identified problem. The third section presented the results obtained from the study, while the fourth section discussed the principal findings. Finally, the fifth section offered a concluding statement.

## METHODOLOGY

The current study's aim, as well as its data collection and interpretation, necessitated the adoption of a quasi-experimental design with two distinct groups, one experimental and the other control. The researchers opted for this method as it allows the study of an intact group. Therefore, Al-Nuaimi et al. (2015) stated that this design contains a pre-test and a post-test, whereby the group is measured with the dependent variable before any treatment is applied, followed by the training or experiment, and the same test is carried out as a post-test. Accordingly, the researcher used a paired sample t-test and an Independent samples t-test to compare the pre- and post-test means to determine the impact of the training on the experimental group.

**Table 1**

*Quasi-experimental Design*

| Groups | Pre-test | Training | Post-test |
|---|---|---|---|
| Experimental group | $O_1$ | X | $O_2$ |
| Control group | $O_1$ | - | $O_2$ |

X=Training
O= Measure of Dependent Variables

## Settings & Sample

The study was conducted at the Department of Arabic Language, Faculty of Humanities, Umaru Musa Yar'adua University, Katsina, Nigeria. The sample for this study was an intact class of third-year students enrolled in a composition writing course in the academic year 2022-2023. The class comprised seventy (70) undergraduate students between the ages of 18-45 which consisted of fifty-seven (57) males and thirteen (13) females; all of them passed Composition I. The participants were chosen based on purposeful sampling, which is a type of non-probability sampling technique whereby the selection is based on the fact that the sample achieves the purposes of the study through the availability of necessary data for the researcher in the unit of the sample (Duwaidiri, 2000). In this regard, it is noteworthy that the data collection method employed in this study was essay writing. Consequently, the researchers opted for the intact class, wherein the essay writing course is being taught. In addition, the participants' previous experience with studying the Arabic language for the past three years was taken into account before their selection as a sample. Furthermore, it is worth noting that collocations, being a complex aspect of language learning, require a more extensive background. It is pertinent to mention that all the participants are native Nigerians belonging to the Hausa ethnic group. Nonetheless, it is essential to acknowledge that the study's design has a significant limitation due to the lack of randomization in the sampling methodology, which would not make it possible for the researchers to generalize its findings. With regard to ethical considerations, the researchers obtained permission and an approval letter from the department's head where the data was collected. Then, they proceeded to inform the participants by providing them with an information sheet. This sheet included detailed information about the project, data storage, participant rights, and their involvement. Additionally, the participants were given the option to withdraw from the study at any point of their choosing and were required to fill out a consent form if they desired to participate in the research. To ensure anonymity, pseudonyms were assigned to each participant.

## Instruments & Materials

The study used the essay writing test to collect its data before and after the training. The aim of the instrument was to enable the researchers to

evaluate the level of proficiency of the students in using collocations in essay writing before and after the training. According to Ta'ima (1986), the essay test entails responding to a query that requires the student to write a topic or a written expression to address the question. The choice of the topic for the essay writing in the pre and post-test was grounded on the contents of their Composition course in their syllabus. However, according to AL-Naqa (1985), the choice of a topic for essay writing should be in the context of what is related to the daily lives of the students and their experiences. Khatir et al. (1998) further added that the chosen topic should be within the scope of the student's experiences. Moreover, Lewis (2000) suggested that teachers must provide learners with the necessary vocabulary prior to the commencement of essay writing. For this purpose, the researchers trained the participants on sixty (60) collocations in preparation for the post-test over a period of six (6) weeks, with two sessions per week. To evaluate the participants' essay writing, the present study has adopted the model proposed by Jacob et al. (1981) in pre and post-test, with slight modifications made to be in line with the objectives of the study. The said model has been extensively employed to evaluate the essay writing of foreign language learners and has been successfully used in several studies, including those conducted by Mukhtar (2017) and Jun Joem (2017). This model contains five distinct components, which have been modified to the following three components: the content of the writing, the use of vocabulary in the form of collocations, and the use of language, in order to suit the objectives of this study.

**Procedure for Data Collection**

Following the approval to conduct the research from the university where the training was conducted, the researchers introduced a pilot study to ascertain the suitability of the instruments for data collection.

**Inter-Rater Reliability**

A pilot study was conducted on fifteen students who were similar to the real study sample. The study adopted the scale of Jacob et al. (1981) to evaluate the participants' essay writings on the topic "Huquq al-Tariq ala al-jalis" which means "Rights of the Way for the Seated." In order to avoid bias and commitment to credibility, the researchers used two raters from Arabic language teachers, who have a decade

of experience in teaching Arabic, especially in the areas of language skills, at the Department of Arabic Language, Umaru Musa Yar'adua University. The teachers were first drilled on how to use the model in score distribution. After evaluating the essay writings, the researchers ran an inter-rater reliability test to determine the extent of consistency between the scores of the two raters. A high agreement was detected between the scores of the raters (F= 43.089, p= .000, 95% CI [.931-992]). The average measure of ICC was .977, which indicates a high level of agreement between the first and second raters.

After confirming the suitability of the marking scales through the existence of a high agreement between the first and second-rater, the researchers turned to the real study as follows:

**Pretest for Experimental and Control Groups**

At the first meeting, the participants were provided with a comprehensive overview of the purpose of the training and their prospective involvement therein. Additionally, each participant was given an information sheet that featured pertinent details about the project, the storage of data, their rights, and their involvement. Moreover, the participants were also given the option to withdraw from the study at any point if they wished to do so. Then, pseudonyms were assigned to each participant to ensure anonymity.

Then, the researchers proceeded and conducted a pre-test for the two groups on the topic "Huquq al-watan ala al-muwatinin" which means "the right of the homeland to its citizens ", which was evaluated based on the Jacob et al. (1981) model scale. The aim of the test was to ensure that the two groups were equal in lexical competence, particularly with regard to the student's ability to compose an essay utilizing collocations, by focusing on the writing content, using vocabulary in the form of collocations, and language usage.

The study involved the simultaneous training of two distinct groups over a period of six (6) weeks, with two sessions per week. The control group was instructed in the Grammar and Translation method, while the experimental group received its training in collocations through the Lexical Approach method. The training was divided into three phases according to the model of teaching collocations proposed by

McCarthy and O'Dell (2008). The first phase involved searching for collocations in a given passage in the book كيف تكتب موضوع إنشاء *Kaifa taktubu maudu ̍a insha'in* written by Abubakar Abdul-Alim, which was spread across three sessions. In this phase, the researchers assisted the participants in searching for collocations like ولد فيها الإنسان *wulida fiha* (Man was born there), نشأ بها وترأرأ فيها *Nasha'a biha watara' ara' fiha* (He was born and raised in it), تأمين مستقبل أفضل *Ta'amin mustaqbalin afdal* (Securing a better future), الوفاء بالعهد *al-wafa'u bi al-ahd* (Fulfillment of the Covenant).

The second phase is the recording phase, which entailed recording collocations and forming sentences by using the recorded collocations identified in the first phase, which also took three sessions. Then, the practical phase, where the researchers assisted the participants in joining the identified collocations to produce coherent sentences and paragraphs that were ultimately incorporated into essay writing. The duration of these activities spanned four sessions, with the post-test being administered in the final session.

**Post-Test For Experimental and Control Groups**

The post-test was administered after the completion of the training for both groups. The experimental group underwent instruction in the Lexical Approach method by using collocations, while the control group was taught using the Grammar and Translation method. The aim of this test was to determine the impact of the instructional program by drawing comparisons between the two groups to identify the presence of a significant difference in order to reject the null hypothesis.

**Data Analysis**

The researchers used the statistical package for the social sciences version (26 v.) to analyze the data collected. Specifically, the paired sample t-test was run to compare the means and standard deviations obtained within the two groups before and after training in the components of the essay writing rubric. Then, the independent samples t-test was run to find the statistical significance between the two groups.

# RESULTS

The study was conducted at the Department of Arabic Language, Faculty of Humanities, Umaru Musa Yar'adua University, Katsina, Nigeria. The participants of this particular study consisted of an intact class of 70 undergraduate students in their third year, enrolled in the essay writing course, comprising males and females, ranging in age from 18-45, for the academic year 2022-2023. The sample includes 57 males and 13 females, all of them from the Hausa ethnic group in Nigeria. They were chosen purposefully and were divided into the experimental group (n = 35) and the control group (n = 35). Both groups received different training from each other.

**Table 2**

*Demographic Data of Experimental and Control Groups*

| Variables | | Experimental group (n=35) | % | Control group (n=35) | % |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Gender | Male | 28 | 80 | 29 | 82.9 |
| | Female | 7 | 20 | 6 | 17.1 |
| Age | | | | | |
| | 18-24 | 11 | 31.1 | 10 | 28.6 |
| | 25-34 | 16 | 45.7 | 19 | 54.3 |
| | 35-44 | 8 | 22.9 | 6 | 17.1 |

Prior to conducting the inferential analysis, the researchers checked and confirmed the data was normally distributed; after that, they proceeded and performed the statistical analysis.

**Table 3**

*Independent t-test for the experimental and control group in pretest*

| Groups | Mean | Std. div. | Df | t-value | Sig. (2-tailed) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Experimental | 39.49 | 6.28 | 68 | .365 | .71 |
| Control | 38.94 | 6.16 | | | |

The above table (3) shows the result of the independent samples t-test where the level of significance was greater than (0.05) which was (p=.716, df=68, t=.365). This means that there was no significant difference between the two groups before the training in terms of

lexical competence in essay writing. The homogeneity assumption of the variance was met; the groups are equal.

**Table 4**

*Independent t-test for the experimental and control group in post-test*

| Groups | Mean | Std. div. | Df | t-value | Sig. (2-tailed) |
|--------|------|-----------|-----|---------|-----------------|
| Experimental | 58.60 | 13.70 | 68 | 7.45 | .000 |
| Control | 40.17 | 5.08 | | | |

The above table (4) shows the result of the independent samples t-test where the level of significance is less than (.05) which was (p=.000, df=68, t=7.458) signifies the difference between the experimental group and the control group. This means that the experimental group's performance in lexical competence in essay writing post-test was better than that of the control group.

**Table 5**

*Paired t-test results for the experimental and control group in post-test*

| Groups | Mean | N | Std. Div. | Std. error mean |
|--------|------|---|-----------|-----------------|
| Experimental | 58.60 | 35 | 13.70 | 2.31 |
| Control | 40.17 | 35 | 5.08 | .85 |

The above table (5) shows the mean scores of the experimental group were higher than the mean scores of the control group, which is an indication of an improvement for the experimental group.

**Table 6**

*Paired t-test result for the experimental group pre and post-test writing components' scores*

| Components | Pre-test mean | Post-test Mean | Mean diff | SD | t-value | Sig.(2 tailed) |
|------------|---------------|----------------|-----------|------|---------|----------------|
| Content | 12.03 | 19.17 | -7.143 | 4.53 | -9.32 | .000 |
| Collocations | 9.11 | 14.06 | -4.94 | 5.98 | -4.88 | .000 |
| Language use | 8.60 | 10.94 | -3.23 | 2.60 | -5.33 | .000 |

The above table (6) shows the significant improvement in all the components of the participants' essay writing after they received training on collocation use in essay writing.

The following figure shades more light on the improvement in the participants' writing components within the experimental group before and after the training sessions:

**Figure 1**

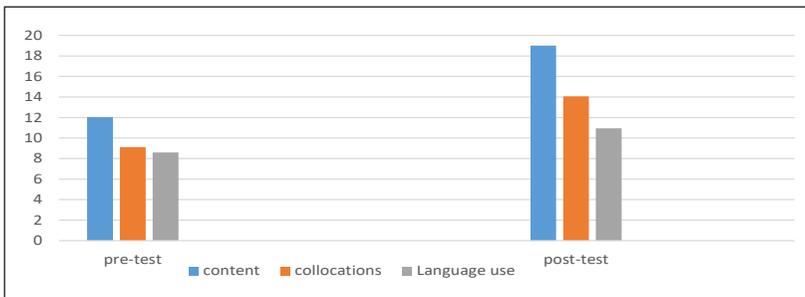*Experimental Group Pre and Post-Test Writing Components' Scores*



**Table 7**

*Paired t-test result for the Control group pre and post-test writing components' scores*

| Components | Pre-test mean | Post-test Mean | Mean diff | SD | t-value | Sig.(2 tailed) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Content | 11.40 | 11.49 | -.086 | 1.46 | -.34 | .73 |
| Collocations | 9.17 | 9.34 | -.171 | 1.29 | -.78 | .43 |
| Language use | 8.63 | 8.86 | -.229 | 1.00 | -1.34 | .18 |

The above table (7) shows there was no significant difference in the components of the participants' essay writing in the control group in pre and post-test scores. The group received training on the Grammar and Translation method.

To give more details, the following figure shows the participants' scores in the control group in the pre-test and post-test:

**Figure 2**

*Control group pre and post-test writing components' scores*
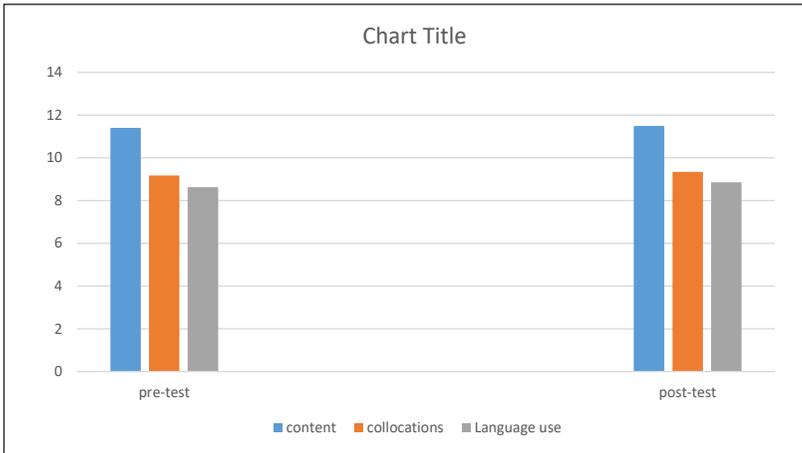


**DISCUSSIONS**

This study investigated the impact of collocations on enhancing the writing performance of Arabic language learners at Umaru Musa Yar'adua University, Katsina, Nigeria. The researchers observed a deficiency in the participants' writing performance, which was attributed to their lack of knowledge regarding the use of collocations. To this end, an intact class of seventy (70) students from the 300 level, enrolled in the course of essay writing, were divided into experimental and control groups. The experimental group was exposed to essay writing that was based on collocations in the Lexical approach, whereas the control group was instructed through the method of Grammar and Translation. The statistical analysis of the participants' writing scores revealed that there was a significant difference between the experimental and control groups. The experimental group underwent writing training through the use of collocations, which emerged from the Lexical Approach, while the control group received instruction through the Grammar and Translation approach, which involves a focus on learning grammar rules and vocabulary with an emphasis on translation exercises between the target language and the learner's native language. The improvement in the essay

writing of the participants in the experimental group, as well as the significant differences between the two groups, could be attributed to the application of the collocations strategy in vocabulary learning. Therefore, the current findings are consistent with several previous results that have demonstrated the efficacy of collocations in enhancing essay writing. For instance, Hindu's (2020) investigation found the impact of collocations on the development of lexical competence and the production of well-formed sentences in essay writing among non-Arabic-speaking learners at the Al-Azhar institution for non-Arabic-speaking learners. However, the study of Salam (2020) also collaborated with the current findings, where the research proved the effectiveness of collocations in improving the writing skills of non-Arabic speaking learners through the application of collocations in an Arabic composition book. In addition, the current study concurs with the conclusion of Noor Al-Alfiya (2021), who reported a high level of proficiency in collocation usage with an average score of 80.68 in composition writing among tenth-grade students at the Al-Mawaddah Islamic Institute for Girls, Juffair Jetis Fonorogo. The current study also reaffirmed the importance of collocations in facilitating foreign language learning. This finding aligned with the findings of Nawi and Zainuddin (2018), who conducted a survey to examine the perspectives of Arabic language instructors regarding the teaching of collocations for non-Arabic-speakers in a Malaysian school. The results indicated that the participants agreed with the importance of collocations in facilitating the learning of the Arabic language for non-Arabic speaking learners and attaining lexical competence. Another noteworthy finding of the current study was the role of collocations in the prevention of linguistic errors. Notably, the researchers observed that the participants' writing demonstrated a decrease in linguistic errors in the post-test as compared to the pre-test. These findings align with the study of Ibdah and Ubabanah (2020), which emphasizes that collocations serve as a safeguard against linguistic errors. According to Nation (2008) collocations can minimize the grammatical error since the learners can produce correct sentences without storing a large amount of vocabulary in their mental lexicon. Many researchers, such as (Salam & Nur, 2020; Suleiman, 2018; Al-Dubyan, 2016' Nawi, & Hamimi, 2018; and Unver, 2018) have agreed that the best linguistic tools that can be presented to the learners of a foreign language to develop their lexical competence and improve their performance in the target language are collocations. Similarly, Ismail (2017)

performed experimental research regarding the implementation of the lexical chunk approach in the instruction of writing for 48 diploma students from KPTM. The obtained results indicated a decrease in both lexical and grammatical errors in the participants' essay writing subsequent to the treatment. Therefore, this is in view of the fact that collocations create a stable linguistic structure that curtails the possibility of substitution, deletion, or addition during language production (Ibdah & Ubabanah, 2020). Consequently, this feature of collocations contributes to a smooth and pleasurable learning process.

Moreover, the results of the current study substantiated the proposition by Lewis (1993) in his theory of Lexical Approach that the key to success in learning a foreign language lies in giving priority to the collocations and their various forms in the learning process rather than focusing on grammar and individual words, as posited by Jack and Theodore (2010). Another significant finding was that the study confirmed the effectiveness of collocations in improving the quality of essay writing's content because collocations serve as a means of attaining linguistic competence, as stated by Wray (2002) and McCarthy (1990). It also proved the assertions of Nation (2008) and Ibdah and Ubabanah (2020) that collocations minimize grammatical errors as learners are able to produce grammatically correct sentences without having to store a large amount of vocabulary in their mental lexicon. Notably, one peculiar thing that distinguishes the findings of the current study from previous research was the comparative analysis of two distinct methodologies, namely the Grammar and Translation method and the Lexical Approach method, from which the collocations emerged in foreign language learning. In addition, the present study sets itself apart from previous research in various aspects. Firstly, it strengthens its findings by employing a control group. Secondly, it applied unique theories which were not combined in the previous research. Thirdly, the study took place in the context of Nigeria, contrary to past literature. Fourthly, it investigated three components of essay writing, namely: content, vocabulary in the form of collocations, and use of language. Lastly, and perhaps most importantly, the study's source of data was from the students, a feature which was obviously lacking in most previous research. The relevance of collocations in enhancing Arabic essay writing has been demonstrated in the present study, which can undoubtedly assist Arabic learners as a foreign language in improving their

writing. Another novelty of this research is the presentation of a novel framework which has the potential to be integrated into the pedagogy of Arabic as a foreign language at Umaru Musa Yar'adua University. Moreover, this study can serve as a valuable reference point for instructors of Arabic as a foreign language and policymakers in the field of education to include its findings in their syllabus contents. Therefore, the result of the current research is a valuable contribution and addition to the existing literature on Arabic language learning as a foreign language based on empirical findings.

In order to effectively integrate collocations into the teaching of Arabic essay writing, it is suggested that instructors adhere to the collocation instruction model as proposed by McCarthy and O'Dell (2008) used in this study. This particular model is comprised of three distinct phases. The first phase, referred to as the searching phase, requires instructors to guide their students in the identification and search for collocations and their respective meanings within a given text. In the second phase, known as the recording phase, students are tasked with recording the identified collocations from phase one and utilizing them in the formation of sentences. The third and final practical phase necessitates instructors to provide support and guidance to their students in the formation of well-formed sentences and paragraphs through the proper utilization of collocations.

Nevertheless, the study is not devoid of some limitations that may affect the quality of its conclusions. Although the researchers managed to reduce the effect to the barest minimum. Some of these limitations include a limited sample size due to the utilization of an intact class, which makes the generalization of the findings very challenging. Then, there was the lack of randomization as it was a quasi-experimental design. Moreover, the length of the research, during which the researchers had only six (6) weeks to collect data, while ideal experimental research needs a longer timeframe. Finally, the research design was quasi-experimental which is less strong than the true-experimental design.

However, the researchers believe that the findings of this study will help teachers of Arabic as a foreign language in Nigerian classrooms to update the content of their lesson plans, change the method of their instruction to incorporate the Lexical Approach and raise the learners'

awareness of collocations during their learning process, among other things. According to Schmidt (2000, cited in Nasrin, 2016), the objective of collocation learning in a foreign language is not for the students to learn all the collocations in a particular language but rather to expose them to the nature of collocations in general. Likewise, Lewis (2000) emphasized that learners need guidance to comprehend the nature of collocations. The integration of collocations into the teaching of Arabic essay writing among instructors of Arabic as a foreign language at Umaru Musa Yar'adua University is highly recommended. This recommendation is based on the McCarthy and O'Dell (2008) model of collocation learning utilized in the present study. Moreover, the results of this study are a valuable addition to the previous literature on Arabic language learning methods because previous studies have identified a lack of empirical research on the learning of collocations in the context of learning Arabic as a foreign language. Predominantly, the previous research focused on examining the effect of collocations in some selected Arabic texts to make them easier to understand among the learners, instead of using written or spoken language by the learners to find a solution to their learning problems. Despite those limitations, the researchers hope that this study will be a starting point for similar research on improving Arabic language learning skills in Nigeria. The study suggests exploring collocations in the other components of language skills as well as giving priority to collocation research in the corpus linguistics approach due to its significant importance in foreign language teaching and learning.

## CONCLUSION

As the number of Arabic language learners as a foreign language is unprecedentedly increasing, coupled with the emergence of various challenges in the learning process, it becomes imperative to focus on how to improve the learning process. This will, in turn, facilitate the ease of overcoming the challenges faced by Arabic language learners. For instance, the current research investigated the effect of collocations on improving the essay writing performance of learners of the Arabic language as a foreign language in Nigeria. Prior to the research, it was observed that the participants exhibited poor essay writing performance, which could be attributed to their lack of lexical competence due to their inability to effectively use collocations. The study used an intact class of seventy (70) undergraduate students in

their third year of study who enrolled in the course of essay writing in the Department of Arabic Language, Umar Musa Yarʾadua University, Katsina, Nigeria. The students were divided into experimental and control groups to test the effect of collocations on essay writing through the Lexical Approach. The experimental group received training through the use of collocation in the Lexical Approach while the control group received their training through the Grammar and Translation method. The study has confirmed the effectiveness of collocations in the Lexical Approach over the Grammar and Translation method in learning Arabic as a foreign language in Nigeria. The result of this study suggests that the teachers of Arabic as a foreign language in Nigeria should focus on collocations during instruction. The current research has confirmed the hypothesis that the use of the Lexical Approach in learning vocabulary, in the form of collocations, may result in the development of lexical competence, and the attainment of fluency, and minimizing of grammatical errors. This means that this method leads to the attainment of lexical sufficiency at the initial stage of learning the Arabic language, and the learners should express their feelings through a few collocations in the essay writing. However, future research on collocations should prioritize exploring additional language skills such as reading, listening, and speaking. Furthermore, there is a need for similar research in corpus linguistics and translation studies. This is due to the fact that previous studies on collocations in the Arabic language have predominantly focused on studying the m in some selected texts, such as the Nobel Qurʾan, the Hadiths Al-Nabawi, and collections of poetry. The idea behind all the arguments lies in the fact that the study does not advocate for students to learn all collocations, but it is sufficient to draw their attention to the importance and nature of collocations in teaching Arabic as a foreign language.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENT

## REFERENCES

Al-Dubyan, I. (2016). Munzilatul Mutalazimat al-lafziyya fi Taʿalim al-Lugha al-thaniyah. *Mujallat al-Jamʿiyyah al-Ilmiyyh al-Saʿudiyyah lil lughat al-Arabiyyah,* (16), p. 9-62. January 20, 2023. Retrieved from: imamjournals.org

Ali, S. A. Z. (2017). *Al-Marjiʿ fi Taʿlim al-lugha al-Arabiyyah li aghradin khasah*. Al-Riyad Al-Saʿudiyyah: Markazu Abdulmalik bin AbdulʿAziz al-Daulii.

Aliyu, M. M. (2017). A problem-based Learning Approach to Develop metacognition and Writing Performance of Nigerian Undergraduates. Unpublished Doctoral thesis, UPM.

Al-Naqa, M. K. (1985). *Taʿlimu al lugha al-Arabyyah lil Natiqina bi lughatin akhra:, Usasuhu_ Madakhiluhu_Turuqu tadrisihi.* Silsilatu daraasaat al-lugha al-Arabiyyah lighairi al-naatiqiina biha, Makka: Universirty of Ummul Qura.

Al-Nuʿaimi, A., Al-Bayaatii, A.T., & Khalipha, A.J. (2015). *Turuq wa manahij al-Bahth al-Ilmi*. Oman: Mu'assasat al-Warraq.

Al-Qahtani, H. (2019). Al-Kifaya Al-Muʿjamiyyah lada al-Natiqina bighair al-Arabiyyah, wal Natiqat bihaa, fil Marhalat al-Jaamiʿiyyah, Darast Muqarant". Alsijillul ilmi lil mu'tamaru al-dauli al-thalis li maʿhd al-lughawiyyat al-Arabiyyah Al-arabiyyah, bi jamiʿat Al-malik saʿudi 6-7 March 2019. January20, 2023. file:///C:/Users/win/Downloads/ep149.pdf. pdf.pdf.

Azlan, S. B., Ashwaq, M. S., & Norhidayah M. N. (2017). Problems in Translating English-Arabic Collocations among Students of Faculty of Major Language Studies Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia. *Al-Qanatir: International Journal of Islamic Studies*, *7*(1). pp. 16-34. https://al-qanatir.com/aq/article/view/65

Bar'awan, D. (1994). *Usasu Taʿlim al-lugha wa Taʿalimuhaa.* Translated by AL-Rajihi A., & Aliyu, A.). Beirut -Lebanon: Daru AL-Nahdah Al-Arabiyyah.

Bui, L. T., (2021). The role of collocations in English Teaching and Learning. I*nternational Journal of TESOL & Education*, *1*(2), pp.99-109. http://eoi.citefactor.org/10.11250/ijte.01.02.006

Dimir, C. (2017). Lexical collocations in English: a comparative study of native and non-native scholars of English. *Journal of Language and Linguistic Studies*, *13*(1), 75-87.

Du, X. Afzaal, M., & Al-Fadda, H. (2022). Collocation Use in EFL Learners' Writing Across Multiple Language Proficiencies: A Corpus-Driven Study. *Frontiers in psychology.* https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.752134.

Duwaidiri, R. W. (2000). *Al-Bahth al-Ilmi, Asasiyyatuhu al-Nazariyya wa mumarisatuhu al-ilmiyyah*. Beirut, Lebanon: Dar al-Fikr al-mu'aasir.

Hill, J. (2000). *Revising priorities: From grammatical failure to collocational success*. In M Lewis' teaching collocation for further development.

Hindu, S. S. (2020). Barnamaj Qa'imun ala al-Talazim al-lafaziy wa al-Taʿabirat al-Istilahiyyah, Li tanmiyat al-tharwa al-lughawiyyah wa al-tarakib li darisi al-al-lugha al-Arabiyyah al-Natiqina bi ghairiha. *Mujallat Kulliyat al-Tarbiyyah bil Mansuurah*, 112(3). Pp. 1180-1204. 10.21608/maed.2020.197946

Jack C. R., & Thedore S. R. (2021). Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching. Cambridge university Press, pp. 132-140. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511667305.015

Junjoen, P. (2017). The effectiveness of lexical collocation instruction on students' collocation knowledge and writing ability. (Unpublished master's thesis), Songkhla, University.

Khatir, M. R., Al-Hamaawii, Y., Al-Maujuud, M. I., & Taʿimah, R. A. (1998). *Turuqu Tadris al-Lughat Al-Arabiyyah wa al-Tarbiyyah al-Diniyyah fi Dau'i al-ittijahat al-tarbiyya al-hadithah*. Kuwait: Mu'assasat al-Kutub al-Jami'iyyah.

Lewis, M. (1993). *The lexical Approach: The state of ELT and a way forward*. Hove: Language teaching Publication.

Lewis, M. (1997). *Implementing the lexical approach*. Hove: Language teaching Publication.

Lewis, M. (2000). *Teaching Collocation*: *Further Development in Lexical Approach*. England, Language Teaching Publication.

Lewis, M. (2008). *Implementing the lexical approach,* Cheriton House, North Way, Andover, Hampshire, SP10 5BE, United Kingdom.

McCarthy, M., & O'Dell. F. (2008). *English vocabulary in use*, (Advanced), Cambridge University Press.

McCarthy, M. (1990). Vocabulary. Oxford University Press.

Munirah L. et al. (2021). Learners' Collocation Use In Writing: Do Proficiency Levels Matter?. *Indonesian journal of applied linguistics,* 11(2), 418-426. https://doi.org/10.17509/ijal.v11i2.31632

Nasrin, S. A. (2016). Teaching Collocations in EFL Classroom. *Arab World English Journal, 7*(4), pp. 13-20. doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2898613

Nation, I. S. P. (2008). *Teaching vocabulary: Strategies and techniques*. Boston:Heinle Cengage Learning.

Nawi, A, & Hamimi, N. Z. (2018). Ittijahat al-muʿallimhin fi Tadrisi al-Mutalazimat al-lafiziyyah lil Mutaʿalimmina ghair al-Natiqina bil lughat al-Arabiyyah fi Marhalatl iʾidaadi al-Jaamiʿii. *Al-Dad Magazine*, 2 (1), pp. 29-48. URL: https://oarep.usim.edu.my/jspui/handle/123456789/13066

Nguyen, N. D.T., & Duong, D. T. H. (2021). Using Collocations to Enhance Academic Writing: A Survey Study at Van Lang University. Proceedings of the 17th International Conference of the Asia Association of Computer-Assisted.

Salam, Y., & Fatri Nur. (2020). *Tatwir Kitab Taʿlim al-Insha'I ala assasi al-Musahaba al-Lughawiyyah bi al-tatbiqi ala talabat qism al-Lugha al-Arabiyyah, bi Jamiʿat Fonorgo Al-Islamiyyah, (*unpublished thesis.) Department of Arabic Fonorgo Al-Islamic Universty

Suleiman, J. M (2018). Al-Mutasahabat al-lugawiyyah wa tatbiqatijha fi Taʿalim al-lugha Al-Arabiyyah. *Mujallat al-Uluum al-Tarbawiyyah*. Special edition, pp. 283-209. http://search. shamaa.org/PDF/Articles/EGJes/JesSpecialIssueY2018/ jes_2018-spen_281-309.pdf

Ta'ima, R.A. (1986). *Al-Marjiʿ fi Taʿlim al-lugha al-Arabiyyah lil al-Natiqina bi lughatin ukhra.* Silsilat Darasat fi taʿlim al-Arabiyyah: Makah: Jamiʿat Umil Quraa.

Unver, Meral Melek. (2018), Lexical Collocations: Issues in Teaching and ways to raise awareness, *European Journal of English language teaching, 3*(4),p. 114-125.

Usman, M. A. (2017). Tahliil al-akhta' al-Nahwiyyah li Tullab al-Firqa al-Raabiʿa 2014/2015. unpublished thesis, Umaru Musa Yar'adua University Katsina.

Vasiljevic, Z. (2014). Teaching collocations in a second language: Why, what and how? *ELTA Journal, 2*(2), 48-73. https:// scindeks.ceon.rs/article.aspx?artid=2334-96621402048V

Wray, A. (2002). *Formulaic language and the lexicon.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Yusuf, Z. A. (2017). Al-Tadribaat al-Lughawiyyah wa faʿliyyatuha fi Tanmiyat al-kafaa'a al-lughawiyyah li mutaʿallimi al-lugha al-Arabiyyah, Umaru Musa Yar'adua University katsina. (Unpublished Thesis.) African University Sudan.

Zahra, Y. Saleh, E. A., & Kafipour, R. (2014). The Relationship among Collocation Knowledge and Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing Proficiency of Iranian Elf Learners. *Journal of International Scientific*, 8, pp. 408-419. URL: https://www. researchgate.net/profile/Reza-

Zayir, S. A., & Ayiz, I. I. (2014). *Manahij al-lugha al-Arabiyya wa Taraaʿiq Tadrisuha*. Jordan: Daru Safa'in