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The Effect of Multi-Word Expression Technique on Iraqi Preparatory School Students' Writing Skills

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to determine the effect of the multi-word expression (MWE) technique on the writing ability of Iraqi preparatory school students and to determine the level of writing competence of Iraqi preparatory school students. "In order to perform the study and achieve its objectives, the following hypotheses are established:"

1 -There is no statistically significant difference in post-test mean scores between the experimental group taught using the multi-word expression approach and the control group taught using the standard method. To accomplish the objective and validate the hypotheses, a quasi-experimental design with Group Pretest-Posttest is used. The current study sampled (86) fifth-stage students from schools selected from Omar Al-Mukhtar preparatory school during the academic year 2021-2022 "for males." Both groups have been equalized in terms of educational attainment of parents, testees' age, English grade accomplishment in the fourth stage, and both groups' post- and pre-test performance. The trial lasted three months, and the researcher taught the two groups from 2011 to 2012.

"Various statistical methods were utilized to assess the gathered data, including many T-tests for two independent samples. " Following statistical treatment of the data, the following conclusions are drawn:
1 .Teaching students utilizing the multi-word expression technique has been shown to be successful in improving students' writing abilities.

Based on the findings and conclusions reached in this study, relevant "recommendations and ideas for more research are made".

Keywords: Multi-Word Expression, Writing Skill, EFL

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1.1. Statement of the Problem

Scientific inquiry begins with a question. Choosing and framing a problem is a critical component of researching any subject. However, there is no way to research before an issue is identified and articulated. The researcher must select a specific question to be addressed and must specify precisely how the topic will be addressed. To properly understand guided writing implementation, the researcher must analyze the MWEs approach and determine whether it is effective at increasing students' writing skills.

MWEs are regarded to be the connecting components between syntactical structures and lexical items, with a preference for vocabulary over grammar [1]. Several early research on MWEs focused on native speakers and examined learners' vocabulary knowledge [2]. Another topic of study has been the impact of MWEs across many fields [3]. MWEs have also been shown to have a beneficial effect on productive abilities in research. Numerous research indicated that MWEs had a beneficial effect on oral proficiency [4].

MWEs are "lexical units bigger than a word that can have both idiomatic and compositional meanings," according to a current definition. The phrase "multi-word expression" is a pre-theoretical concept that encompasses a spectrum of phenomena ranging from collocations to fixed expressions" [5].

Apart from structural considerations, research on MWEs has grown in importance in the domains of lexicography, text linguistics, first and second language acquisition, second language education, and machine translation. MWE research, in particular, has developed into a significant component of (both theoretical and empirical) psycholinguistics, addressing issues such as MWE comprehension, storage, mental representation, MWE acquisition and loss, and speech production [5].

The researcher believes, based on the statement and data above, that pupils continue to struggle with writing. It affects their linguistic abilities. As a result, guided writing has to be improved.

1.2. The Aims of the Study:

This study aims at:

- 1- Investigating the effect of multi-word expression technique on Iraqi preparatory school students writing skill
- 2- Finding out the effect of multi-word expression techniques on improving EFL writing skills.

1.3. Hypotheses of the study

This study is hypothesized that:

- 1- There is no statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental group which is taught by multi-word expression technique and the mean scores of the control group which is taught by the conventional method in the post-test.

1.4. Limits of the Study

This study is restricted to EFL students (Boys) in (Omar Al-Mukhtar preparatory school during the academic year 2021-2022). The sample of the study comprised (86) students in the fifth preparatory school. The experimental group was taught by the Multi-word expressions technique and the control group was taught by the conventional strategy.

1.5. Value of the Study

This study is expected to be valuable for:

1. EFL teachers who are compelled to alter their approach to foreign language instruction by applying the multi-word expressions technique.
2. Curriculum designers must incorporate some contemporary information into the development of textbooks for them to be used by instructors in the classroom.

1.6. Procedures of the Study

The procedures listed below are followed:

- 1 .At random, divide the population into two groups: experimental and control.
- 2 .Performing a pretest and a posttest.
- 3 .Using a pre-test on experimental and control groups to ensure that other factors such as the academic level of the father and mother and the children's accomplishment in the preceding school year 2020-2021 are equalized.
- 4 .Conducting post-tests on both groups after the trial.
- 5 . Presenting the post-test data and evaluating them using relevant statistical techniques, as well as establishing the findings, conclusions, comments, and recommendations.

1.7. Definitions of Terms

1.7.1. Collocation: Coincidence of two distinct nouns [6]. Additionally, bigrams and two-word multi-word expressions were defined in this research.

Corpus: Corpora are collections of machine-readable spoken or written resources that may be used to conduct linguistic analysis [7].

Multi-word expressions (MWEs): Compounds of separate words that are kept in the brains of language users as a single entity [8].

1.7.2. Definition of Writing

- writing is an intellectual activity that entails the discovery of ideas and the consideration of how to communicate and organize them into a statement or paragraph that is easily understood by the public. This means that authors are expected to demonstrate their thoughts and structure them into a well-written essay. Additionally, writing conveys the writer's concept of a subject to the audience. It necessitates the orderly writing of thoughts [9].

2.Theoretical Background

2.1. MWE Definition and Extraction

Words as a unit have long been considered to be the simplest and most basic of all linguistic units. A single word is a distinct entity in a paragraph that is spaced apart from other words. They've long been considered the foundation of the language, whether in print or electronic. It is because of this that many individuals who work in the domains of language analysis and teaching perceive a single word [10]. There is no credible writing without the usage of multi-word sentences, there'd be no way to sound authentically American without MWEs [11],[12].

Collocations, binomials, idioms, and lexical bundles are all examples of MWEs, which are linguistic units produced by at least two lexical units, such as "kick the bucket" and "war and peace" [13]. The discipline employs several terms to describe MWEs, even though their explanation is simple. While some words may refer to the same phenomena in different contexts, others may be used to describe two separate events [14].

2.1.1. Multiword Expressions

The term "multi-word phrase" refers to a syntactic element composed of at least two orthographic words that are not idiomatic in form or meaning. Combinations of article nouns (the dog, those children), verb phrases (grab the ball), and full utterances (It's my turn) are all examples. These units should not be confused with multi-word expressions, which are explored in the syntactic and computational literature and relate to "idiosyncratic interpretations that transcend borders or gaps" [15].

Multiword expressions are those that include two or more words that relate to a particular style of expressing something [16]. They are sometimes referred to as collocations, to stress their components' frequent co-occurrence. Multiword phrases are ubiquitous in human language, appearing in all types of writing and speech. They may be noun phrases like strong tea and weapons of mass destruction, phrasal verbs like makeup, break up, and give in, or stock phrases like wealthy and powerful (Unsupervised Learning of Multiword Expressions Ioannis [17]).

Multiword expressions as collections of words that co-occur more often than by chance and are either decomposable into numerous simple words or are idiosyncratic. These characteristics include multiple

forms and degrees of idiom ("lexico-syntactic, semantic, pragmatic, and statistical"), "institutionalization, situatedness, identifiability, figuration, and single-word appropriability"[18].

2.1.2. The concept of Writing as a Skill

Four abilities have been identified as critical for English language instruction. "The language users have designed two modes of receptive performance and two modes of producing performance. Listening and reading are receptive modes of performance since they are the way through which language is received via texts and audio recordings. On the other hand, productive forms of performance, such as writing and speaking, are necessary when people express themselves" [19].

While both "spoken and written language may be termed reflections in comparison, this is not entirely accurate. Although they coexist in a variety of circumstances, spoken and written language should be considered distinct modes of communication, owing to their distinct purposes in interaction. While oral communication has a natural environment that influences the way it flows, written language does not need a context at the time of composition". On the other hand, it requires meticulous preparation and supervision [20].

Another distinction between spoken and written communication is the presence of the audience; whereas the audience may be present during a spoken conversation, the author must envisage the situation's future possibilities during a written engagement. To enlarge the boundary between written and spoken language, she highlights key distinctions in her fundamental work [21].

2.1.3. Academic Writing

"Academic writing as a kind of writing used to connect with college instructors and classmates. Studies on academic writing have attracted significant attention from academics, who are interested in anything from the breadth and depth of academic writing to effective methods for training future academic writers"[22]. "As pedagogical ramifications have been questioned, academic writing research has usually depended on the first language, although this has been questioned in the field" [23].

"Many recent developments to explain why this interest exists. The first aspect is that higher education has historically been accessible to a broad range of socioeconomic, age, and ethnic groups. These historically marginalized populations bring distinct identities and educational backgrounds to the classroom. Thus, tutors cannot expect students to have the same degree of writing proficiency to match the objectives of their courses"[24].

Audits of teaching quality. Increased emphasis is being placed on instructional procedures, including student writing since writing skills are critical for professional development programs. The last factor is the English language's global dominance as a research language. English has evolved into a necessary academic competence rather than a learnable language". As more students in the academy are expected to pursue professional employment, the need for academic writing grows[24].

3. Methodology and Procedures

The experimental design is "the blueprint for the techniques by which the researcher may test hypotheses by obtaining accurate conclusions regarding the relationship between independent and dependent variables" [25]. The experimental design is a "traditional method for doing quantitative research or testing an idea (or practice or process) to discover whether it affects an outcome or dependent variable" [26]. The table summarizes the study's experimental design (1)

Table 1. The Experimental Design

Groups	Independent variable	Posttest
Experimental	Multiword Expressions Technique	Multiword Expressions
Control	Traditional method	Technique test

3.1. The Population

The population is defined as the individuals whose data will be gathered [27]. The current study's population totals 86 fifth preparatory school pupils enrolled at Omar Al-Mukhtar preparatory school for the academic year 2021-2022. Students are divided into two groups: (A, and B). Sections (A) and (B) were randomly assigned to constitute the experimental and control groups, respectively, with a total of (86). Section (A) has 42 pupils, whereas section (B) has 44 students. (12) students are not permitted to participate in section (A), and (14) students are not permitted to participate in section (B). A portion of those pupils will be hired as part of the pilot study. Thus, (30) students from section (A) were assigned to the experimental group, while (30) students from section (B) were assigned to the control group. As a result, the total sample size is (60), which represents 69.76 percent of the original population.

3.2. Test Construction

Researchers utilize post-tests as a way to verify whether there are statistically significant changes between control and experimental groups, therefore they designed a test based on the subject chosen at the beginning of their study.

3.3. Face Validity

Face validity "refers to a researcher's evaluation of an instrument's presentation and importance depending on whether the characteristics seem relevant, reasonable, unambiguous, and clear". "Validity is linked to the fact that the test is important since students must be confident that the exam tests what is called a test" [28].

3.4. Content Validity

Content validity is a qualitative kind of validity in which the conceptual domain is established and investigated to determine whether the measurement properly represents the domain [29].

3.5. Reliability of the Achievement Tests

Reliability refers to the degree to which a test, whatever it measures, is stable; it should be stable [30]. "Dependability as a testable metric of consistency. For example, if a person takes two different copies of the same test on two different days, their findings should be similar. The post-reliability of a test is determined using the Alpha-Cronbach formula". The coefficient (0.87) indicates that the test questions are homogenous [31].

3.6. Pilot Study

The pilot test is used to prepare a small representative group of examiners to determine their appropriateness and efficacy [32]. Twenty-six kids are selected from two sections (12 from group A and 14 from group B, as specified in the population of Omar Al-Mukhtar preparatory school).

3.7. Item Analysis

Item analysis is the process of evaluating test items based on their difficulty and discriminating strength. Item analysis as a tool that assists the test writer in locating test content and determining the difficulty or ease of an item. As a result, it is capable of identifying and distinguishing substandard learners [33].

3.7.1 Difficulty Level

The difficulty level is "measured as the percentage of students that properly answered each question" [34]. "The term "item difficulty" relates to the degree to which an item seems challenging or facilitated for a certain set of preferences". It merely indicates the proportion of learners that correctly answer the question. "The most relevant test item will have a difficulty level of 0.15 to 0.85" [35]. The items of the post-test range from (0.31) to (0.74).

3.7.2 Discrimination Power

"Discrimination power is a term that refers to " determining the degree to which the findings of a single item correspond with the outcomes of the whole test" [36] "the degree to which an item differentiates between excellent and bad tastes are referred to as item discrimination. If an item gets right responses from excellent students and erroneous responses from bad students, it has a high discriminating power". "It's worth noting that strong discrimination power is close to 1.0, whereas no discrimination power exists at all" [35]. So, the discrimination power of the test items is considered acceptable which ranges between (0.28) to (0.66).

4.0 Analysis of Data and Discussion of Result

4.1 Result Related to Pupil's performance in writing

The results of the statistical analysis using the t-test for two independent groups indicate that the mean value for "multiword expression in the control group is (61.33) with a standard deviation of (12.53), whereas the mean value in the experimental group is (75.60) with a standard deviation of (12.53). (12.53). The calculated t-value is (4.608), which is more than the tabulated t-test result of (2.00), at a 0.05 level of significance and one degree of freedom (58)". This indicates "that there are statistically significant differences in favor of the experimental group that was inductively exposed to the multiword expression method and the control group that was not exposed to the multiword expression approach".

It is concluded that there are statistically significant differences in scores between the experimental and control groups in terms of improving writing abilities, in favor of the experimental group, and the null hypothesis is rejected as a consequence of this. As seen in the table (2) below.

Table 2. Data on Means, Standard Deviation, and t-Values for the Achievement Test's two groups of students

Groups	No. of students	Mean	SD.	T-Value		DF	Level of Significance
EG.	30	75.60	12.53	Calculated	Tabulated	58	0.05
CG.	30	61.33	11.41	4.608	2.00		

4.2. Discussion of Result

The superiority of the experimental group's students, as determined by the turn-taking technique, results in the following:

- 1- This technique employs a systematic scientific methodology to assist students in developing their writing abilities via the use of multiword expression capabilities while teaching English.
- 2- The multi-word expression technique contributes to the classroom climate of pleasure by attracting children's attention via activities and projects.
- 3- The multi-word expression approach aids in increasing students' enthusiasm to participate and demonstrates what they learn via images of acting performance and writing ability.
- 4- The technique of multiple-word expression promotes learners to be more adaptable in their language usage and to increase their capacity to form words.
- 5- The multi-word expression approach contributes significantly to student motivation by allowing kids to engage in activities and roles freely and respectfully reflected on their inductive comprehension of the content.
- 7- The conventional approach does not accomplish the educational process triangle (encouraging the instructor, preparing suitable activities for students, developing curricular plans, and pupils engaging with the topic), which the multi-word expression methodology does.
- 9- The multi-word expression is a contemporary strategy that aids in the development of a cooperative, research-oriented, and persevering mentality.

5.1. Conclusions

The application presented a framework for integrating MWEs into writing skills that enables extrinsic assessment of the utility of MWEs with varying degrees of compositionality. The present research used a quasi-experimental approach to explore the association between learners' usage of MWEs and their writing and overall ability. The present study's findings indicated that the percentage of MWEs employed by students was a strong predictor of their writing skills. Additionally, the present research found that mean scores were more predictive of learners' writing skills than t-scores of the MWEs. The present research, however, discovered a strong link between learners' MWE usage and their overall competency in favor of the experimental group.

5.2. Recommendation

Several suggestions may be made in light of the present study's findings:

1. Iraqi English language instructors are asked to include the MWE in their classroom instruction.
2. Teachers should use digital tools in their classes to produce dynamic, engaging lessons and to aid students' learning.
3. Teaching tactics should be geared at improving students' writing abilities.
4. EFL instructors should assist and encourage students to build their personalities via confidence and boldness.

5.3. Implications for Further Research

Several recommendations for further research may be made in light of the present study's results and limitations. The present research comprised learners with comparable levels of language competency. Future research may include students with varying degrees of competency. Having individuals with varying degrees of skill may provide inconsistent findings on the link between MWE usage and overall competency.

Another possibility would be to research various abilities or components of an exam. MWEs have no discernible association with total language competence. However, research that examines the usage of MWEs in learners' oral output and maybe their reading and listening abilities during an exam may reveal a stronger correlation between the use of MWEs and learners' overall competence levels.

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