

Chapter I

Introduction

This chapter attempts to elucidate the basic consideration of the present study, concerning a brief outline of the erroneousness of lexical collocation production committed by EFL students in their writing, then followed by various detailed explanations regarding the previous studies which can be a reference and support the present study. Moreover, this study has two research questions and two key aims in undertaking the study. The complete elucidation of the significances of the study, in terms of theoretical and practical contribution, is also illustrated clearly in this chapter. In the last part, the scope of the study is presented as well as several definitions of essential terms.

Background of Study

Collocation is the way words combined each other in a language to produce natural-sounding and to carry an exact single unit of meaning both in writing and speaking. The collocation terms are commonly defined in different ways by some linguists in the world such as Nesselhauf (2005). She argues that collocation is a type of word combination which is essentially made up of two or more words and lexically or syntactically fixed to a certain extent (Nesselhauf, 2005). It occurs when two or more words are combined and then formed naturally to have a single meaning. Some examples are, *make an effort*, *fast car*, *good work*, *walk slowly*, etc. These types of examples are categorized as English lexical collocation. They are formed one another neither freely combinable nor individually analyzable. Therefore, their co-occurrences still adhere to some lexical and grammatical principles.

There are two main types of English collocation (Benson et al., 1997) i.e., lexical collocation and grammatical collocation. Lexical collocation typically consists of open word classes such as a verb, noun, adverb, and, adjective, while grammatical collocation mostly consists of closed word classes, for instance, a preposition, to-infinitive, infinitive, gerund, clause, and other parts of grammar structure. Similarly, Baker as cited in Shooshtari and Karami, (2013) explains that kinds of lexical collocation consist of dominant words such as adverbs, verbs, adjectives, and nouns. Grammatical collocation, in contrast to lexical collocation, is mainly composed of nouns, adjectives, verbs, adverbs, prepositions, or other parts of the grammatical structure such as an infinitive, a clause, and a gerund. For example, *take off your coat, at night, extend to, good at, interested in, to be afraid that, etc.* Considering the above-detailed explanation, it can be inferred that grammatical collocation is much more complex rather than lexical collocation since lexical collocation does not contain other parts of grammatical structure.

This kind of collocation plays an essential role in English language teaching because understanding the types of collocation will significantly develop students' communicative skills as well as their linguistic abilities (Sughair, 2011). Moreover, Brown proposes a comprehensive explanation that learning English collocations do not only broaden students' collocation knowledge, but also improve their spoken fluency, reading comprehension, writing skill, and, listening skill (cited in Dravishi, 2011). With regard to these notions, by applying independent learning of collocational material can be worthwhile in the process of foreign language vocabulary acquisition. Thus, mastering English collocation enables EFL students to use correct expressions or to say something in different ways, and to assist students

to realize the language chunks used by English native speakers both in speaking and writing.

Moreover, having in-depth collocation knowledge will contribute to producing a good style of academic writing and other types of writing. In the case of writing an academic essay, for example, EFL students have to devote particular attention to the use of correct lexical collocation in writing since it is considered to be a mechanism that provides cohesion to the text. Hence, the use of correct lexical collocation will make the sentence meaning of the essay sounds more natural, understandable, and academic.

Equally important, in writing academic essays, students also need to have a good vocabulary capacity to aid them to write the essay. It is such an essential thing because, without sufficient English vocabulary knowledge, students will not be able to understand people's expressions both in written and spoken production. Moreover, they will have difficulty writing their ideas into good sentences by using proper words. As stated by Viera (2017) that vocabulary knowledge is considered a vital part of mastering any language skills for EFL students. In summary, having in-depth vocabulary knowledge will contribute to the students' comprehension of written and spoken texts.

As a foreign learner of English, students are urged to understand the relationship of each word used in their writing because knowing a word means knowing the type of relations both its collocation and its relative. This is to learn how words are bound with each other in terms of both paradigmatic and syntagmatic nature (Viera, 2017). The phrase *warmest regards* (greeting), for instance, is a certain combination of an adjective and a noun as the dominant word with lexical collocation. The phrase *warmest regards* is the correct collocation instead of

expressing *hot regards* or *hearty regards*. It is considered as the correct combination because the collocator *warmest* carries an exact meaning if it is collocated with the base *regards*. Moreover, it has an equivalent meaning in Bahasa Indonesia, *salam hangat*. Therefore, such an ability is essential for EFL students to know how words are formed correctly in sentences.

In light of the above discussion, this recent study focuses on investigating the erroneousness of lexical collocation in students' argumentative essays. An argumentative essay is considered as the research object of this study because it is one of the subjects in Universitas Negeri Gorontalo, specifically in the Department of English Education curriculum. This can be inferred that students of the English Department have studied how to write an argumentative essay properly. It is often incorporated in academic essays as the essay requires the students to use academic words, advanced grammar as well as to present powerful arguments, evidence, and logical reasons. At this point, the English Department students must have been required to use academic words, proper punctuations, and appropriate grammatical and lexical collocations in writing the essay. However, based on personal communication with two writing lecturers in Universitas Negeri Gorontalo, Faculty of Letters and Culture, Department of English Education; they inform that English Department students frequently use baby words, formulate ungrammatical sentences, and make incorrect punctuation as well in their writing (Abid & Usu, personal communication, September 26th - October 2nd, 2019). This worsened by the issue of the erroneous use of grammatical and lexical collocation in students' writing. Therefore, students' style of writing is still influenced by their native language (NL) i.e., Indonesian Language, the less profound knowledge related to the mastery of lexical collocation, and other parts of grammar.

Furthermore, students have problems with putting or constructing words together in a characteristic “*natural*” English native speaker-like manner during writing. Students tend to use strange lexical collocation expressions and express unclear meaning, therefore, students’ writing does not sound natural and does not seem academic. Moreover, some students do not understand and are not familiar with lexical collocation. The students, therefore commit plenty of erroneousness of lexical collocation. Many literature reviews have also revealed several factors behind such the erroneousness of lexical collocation production committed by EFL students in their writing. The students have no deep understanding of the lexical collocation concept. Moreover, they often translate the source language (SL) into the target language (TL) literally. This is probably due to the intervention of students’ first languages (FL), lack of paraphrasing skills, and a shortage of their collocational knowledge (Matelli, 2004; Walsh, 2005; Al Gazhali, 2006; and Shitu, 2015). These factors can be the possible reasons for explaining why EFL students frequently commit the erroneousness of lexical collocation in their writing. Even though many students still ignore and lack of knowledge about lexical collocation but lexical collocation must become the paramount consideration for EFL students in writing to ensure the sentence meaning is lexically correct and conveys a precise meaning. Moreover, it is an essential thing to construct sentences in the essay to be more natural and stimulating.

Considering the above discussion, the correct usage of lexical collocation must be taken into account in writing as it requires more than guessing. EFL students must devote extra time and attention to learn how to use appropriate lexical collocations in writing since it is considered to be a mechanism that provides cohesion to the text such as an academic essay. As has been explained in Oxford

Collocation Dictionary that by mastering the use of lexical collocation will significantly develop students' communicative skills, especially writing, in which the students' writing will sound more natural, idiomatic, and more similar to the way it is written by the native writers (Oxford Collocation Dictionary, 2002). Thus, this kind of material should become one of the main focuses on English language teaching as a foreign language, principally in Writing, and Grammar classes. Both lectures and students have to master the use of lexical collocation, thus they can produce natural language production in writing and it will be more understandable both lexically and by its meaning.

Based on Moehkardi's (2002) study, the erroneous use of lexical collocation was commonly made by such following expressions:

1. *I clean the bed. (suggested correction: I make the bed)
2. *A cup of thick coffee. (suggested correction: A cup of strong coffee)

The first example represents lexical collocation error consisted of open word classes i.e., verb and noun/pronoun (PP). In this case, the student utilized the incorrect collocator to collocate with the base *bed*. This erroneousness occurred due to the influence of students' native language. To illustrate, in Bahasa Indonesia, the word *membersihkan* is frequently translated into English as *clean*, therefore the student stated the expression of *membersihkan tempat tidur* in English as *clean the bed*. It, however, is an error of lexical collocation formation. Oxford dictionary suggested the correct collocator is the verb *make* to collocate with the phrase *the bed*. It is considered correct because the word *merapikan* carries an equal meaning to the English word *make* on this occasion. This collocation *make the bed* refers to tidy the sheets and covers after people get up. Here is the example, *Please, do not forget to make your bed before departing to school!*

The second example shows a collocation error of the adjective + noun combination. This is also taken place due to the students' native language influence. The adjective *thick* does not seem a correct collocator to collocate with the base *coffee*, because it refers to something that has a great extent from one surface or side to the opposite. For example, a thick book, a thick slice, a thick envelope, etc. *Thick coffee* is commonly used by Indonesian students to express *secangkir kopi kental*. However, English native writers commonly use *a cup of strong coffee*. The word *strong* expresses an equal meaning to the Indonesian word *kental* and it is the appropriate adjective to collocate with the noun *coffee* instead of using the adjective *thick*. Here is another example that native speakers widely use, *I need some strong coffee to wake me up*.

Furthermore, the study of lexical collocation has been being conducted by many researchers in the past few decades. The first previous study was by Martelli (2004) about a study of English lexical collocations written by Italian advanced students. Martelli's study aimed to examine the errors of the learners in producing word combinations. Those lexical collocation errors were quantitatively and qualitatively analyzed by using the theory of Bahns in 1993. There were 30 essays analyzed which taken from the Italian university students' essays. It consisted of 20,000 words of each essay. The study revealed 102 collocation errors in the essay. From those results, there was no adverb + verb collocations found, 6 were collocations in which the entire expression is involved, 50 were adjective + noun collocations, and 46 were verb + noun collocations. In conclusion, the study showed that the influence of students' L1, structural properties, and degree of fixedness of wrong collocations contributed to making errors of lexical collocation in the analyzed essay.

The second study was furthermore conducted by Shitu (2015), a study entitled collocation errors in English as Second Language (ESL) essay writing. The study was conducted in the English Department, Federal College of Education Kano, Nigeria. Her study aimed to investigate the percentages and the numbers of lexical collocation error occurrence, to identify the error of lexical collocation production, especially the pattern subtypes found in students' essays, and also to discover the sources of the errors. The errors were analyzed by using the theory of Benson et al., (1997). Furthermore, 300 advanced level ESL students were the participants of her study. The students are required to write an essay on three different topics and different classes, however still in the same length. The topics were about *a stranger in the house*, *the advantage and disadvantages of mobile phones*, and *kidnapping*. After the students had finished writing the essays, there were 900 essays were taken into account. However, because of the time limit, uncontrolled factors, and other considerations, the number of essays that would be analyzed was reduced to half of the number of essays collected. Therefore, only 450 essays were analyzed in her study.

From the 450 essays analyzed, her study revealed 320 errors of lexical collocation which equal 71.11% and 130 free of error which equal .28.9%. From those results, it consisted of several subtypes of lexical collocation errors, they were 100 errors of verb + noun/prepositional phrase, 67 were noun 1 +noun 2 collocation, 50 were adjective + noun collocation, 40 were verb +adverb collocation, 28 were adverb + adjectives collocation, 18 were noun + verb collocation, and 17 were verb+noun collocation. In conclusion, overgeneralization, mother tongue (ML) influence, subject-verb agreement, and lack of collocation knowledge were believed behind such errors.

Moreover, in 2016 Ahmad Buchari carried out a study entitled an analysis of lexical collocation error in students' writing. This quantitative study focused on two types of lexical collocation errors i.e., *verb+noun* and *adjective+noun* combination which committed by students in their writing (blog). The participants were English Department students in the fifth-semester, the academic year of 2012, Universitas Negeri Gorontalo. His study provided the correct lexical collocations which were commonly used by native English writers in academic writing. Furthermore, an observation was the instrument of data collection technique on his study in which all data were collected from the students' articles posted on their blog and were analyzed each datum by finding out the sentences with lexical collocation errors. The errors were identified by using Hausmann's theory (1980). As a result, his study found 14 data, and the data comprised six data of *verb+noun* and eight data of *adjective+noun*. Lack of lexical collocation knowledge was one of the possible reasons behind such errors in his study.

Compared to the above studies, the source of data was from the students' written essays and blog whilst the data source of this study is from a corpus of students' writing samples, particularly argumentative essays. In which the students have written the essay based on the provided topics from the lecturers during their class is ongoing. In the present study, the argumentative essay refers to an essay comprising evidence, reason, and fact provided by the writers to show their arguments and opinion. This type of essay is considered an appropriate tool to be the source of data since it will encourage the students to write the essay critically, use academic words, and advanced grammar as well. Due to those aspects, it is likely the erroneous use of lexical collocation will be found in students' essays.

Furthermore, the first study only focuses on investigating the errors of the three types of lexical collocation; they are *verb + noun*, *adjective + noun*, and *verb + adverb*. Additionally, the third study focuses on exploring the errors of two types of lexical collocation; *verb + noun*, and *adjective + noun*. In contrast to both studies, the present study focuses on seven types of lexical collocation provided by Benson et al., (1997). Moreover, this study intends to discover the causal factors of committing lexical collocation errors while those both previous studies did not. Further, the theories, aims, and methods used are also different from those three previous studies with this present study. Thus, it will affect the data analysis used by this research and those research. The identification and categorization of the data are similar to this research. Therefore, those three previous studies will be beneficial to become a guideline for the current study in analyzing the data found.

Hereafter, the first to the third study analyzed the errors of lexical collocation formation committed by students in their writing. Similarly, this study will also analyze the error of lexical collocation. Since this kind of study is arguing what the official definition of *error* and *mistake* is, moreover it causes a lot of confusion in this case. Thus, this is crucial to differentiate the definition between these two debatable terms. One thing that needs to be emphasized here is that the term of *error* and *mistake* does not have equal meaning. According to Norrish as cited in Hasyim (2002), an *error* on competence particularly is a systematic or a consistent deviation in which students have not learned something and it consistently gets wrong when they apply things they do not master. Similarly, Corder as cited in William and Owu-Ewie (2017) provided a clear explanation that *error* indicates the systematic deviation from a set of norms of the second language or foreign language being learned by students. In contrast to *error*, *mistake* refers to an unsystematic deviation

that occurs in one's mother tongue (MT) and is not significant to the language learning process (Corder as cited in William and Owu-Ewie, 2017). Hence, a *mistake* is also a deviation of a set of language norms, however, it is not systematic. It indicates that the norms used in a language, particularly in sentences are sometimes wrong and sometimes true. Moreover, it commonly occurs in a person's MT while an *error* is a systematic deviation that occurs because students do not master the rules system of the language being learned. The more detailed discussions about these two terms will be elaborated in chapter two.

By considering this basic consideration, the main focus of the present study is laying on two aspects i.e., investigating the types and the causal factors of lexical collocation error found in students' argumentative essays and interview sessions, specifically the students of Universitas Negeri Gorontalo, Faculty of Letters and Culture, Department of English Education.

Research Question

Concerning the background of the study, this present study focuses on two following research questions;

1. What are the types of lexical collocation errors committed by students in their argumentative essay?
2. What are the causal factors that drive the students to commit lexical collocation errors in their argumentative essay?

Aim/s of Study

Based on the above research questions, this study is set out to investigate the types of lexical collocation errors committed by students in their argumentative essay.

Moreover, to find out the causal factors which lead the English Department students to make lexical collocation errors.

Significances of Study

As a scientific work, the current study has two-fold significances. They are divided into theoretical and practical significance; regarding the disciplines of a study as clearly explained below.

Theoretically, the result of the study is expected to gain a profound new understanding of the importance of English lexical collocation both in writing and speaking. Additionally, it is also expected to provide a substantial contribution towards the knowledge not only on linguistics but also on EFL teaching.

In terms of practical significance, this study is expected to provide a significant contribution, specifically for English Department students in which they can write academic essays without committing many lexical collocation errors in their writing. Moreover, to English lecturers, understanding this study in practice may aid them to prepare a better pedagogical approach throughout the learning process. Last but certainly not least, this study can be utilized as one of the further references for the other researchers who want to conduct a study in a similar interest.

Scope of The Study

The present study has its limitations in setting out the result of the data interpretation by discussing the finding of the study. Thus, the coverage of this study lies on two aspects. Firstly, the types of lexical collocation errors made by English Department students in their argumentative essays. Secondly, the causal factors that lead students to commit lexical collocation errors. The scope of this study is not similar to earlier studies. The first and second previous studies only focused on three and

two types of lexical collocation and did not cover the causes of lexical collocation errors meanwhile this study focuses on seven types of lexical collocation and attempts to find out the causes of errors. Despite having similarities, the third previous study covered more than two aspects like what this present study does not. It covered the number and percentages of occurrences of lexical collocation errors, identified the types of lexical collocation errors, determined the similarities and differences of lexical collocation errors, and the sources of the errors itself. Thus, these differences will clearly differentiate between the previous study and this current study.

Furthermore, this research is conducted at the Department of English Education, Faculty of Letters and Culture, Universitas Negeri Gorontalo by recruiting students from the three classes including the class of 5A, 5C, and 5D, the academic year of 2017 as the research participants. Moreover, this study has limited participants. Where only several students are recruited as the participant in the present study who fulfill the predetermined requirements. In terms of concerning the requirements, the students must have passed all writing subjects, i.e., Writing for General Communication, Writing for Professional Context, and Writing for Academic Purposes. The students' score in Writing for Academic Purposes must be 3.70 (A-) minimally. Moreover, the students must have accomplished the Morphology subject, Basic English Grammar, and Advanced English Grammar subjects. After all the requirements are applied, the researcher has sixteen participants in this study. The further explanation related to participant is elucidated clearly in participant subtopic.

Definition of Terms

Various essential terms under the current study are defined explicitly in order to gain profound understanding. The definitions are presented as follow;

Collocation

Collocation is a lexical unit that is composed of a group of two or more words from different parts of speech that always go together to carry a single unit of meaning (Benson et al., 1997). Moreover, Firth (1957) defined collocations as the natural co-occurrence of lexical elements or words at the syntagmatic level. Therefore, it can be inferred that collocation is a group of two or more lexical items that have a strong relationship with one another to have a certain meaning at the syntagmatic level.

Lexical Collocation

Lexical collocation is two or more lexical elements that unite with another lexical item, such as a verb, adverb, noun, and adjective then forming naturally to express an exact meaning (Benson et al., 1997).

Grammatical Collocation

Grammatical collocation is two or more lexical elements that go together with other grammatical elements such as preposition, to-infinitive, infinitive, clause, (Benson et al., 1997).

Error

An *error* is visible deviations from the grammar system of native speakers which reflect the interlanguage competence of the learner (Brown, 2000). Thus, this means that students do not have a profound knowledge of the foreign language rules system they are learning, therefore it leads them to commit an error.

Mistake

Brown (2000) defined a *mistake* as a performance error in which the students fail to utilize a known system correctly. Hence, this *mistake* takes place due to students' failure in applying the knowledge they knew.

Argumentative Essay

Hasing as cited in Sikorova (2013) outlined that argumentative essay is a type of essay that presents ideas, arguments, advantages, and disadvantages about both sides of the issue. All the evidence, reason, and fact which elucidated in an argumentative essay have to be able to be accounted for by the writers.