

# THE STUDY OF THE STUDENTS' COLLOCATION PERFORMANCE IN ARGUMENTATIVE WRITING

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**Abstract:** Collocation is used by most of the native speaker in both writing and speaking authentic English. This paper focused on knowing the students' collocation knowledge by examining their lexical and grammatical collocation performance in their argumentative writing. This research, therefore, conducted by analyzing deeply 10 argumentative writings of the third semester students of PBI STAIN JuraiSiwo Metro in academic year 2013/2014. The result of this research showed that there were 41 % errors found in both lexical collocation (25%) and grammatical collocation (16 %) in the students' argumentative writing. It clearly means that students' collocation knowledge still need to be improved. Hence, teachers have an important role to play down the error in applying collocation.

**Keywords:** *Grammatical collocation, Lexical collocation, Argumentative writing.*

## INTRODUCTION

Writing is commonly categorized as the most complex skill among the four basic skills of English. It needs skill to find an idea to create writing, to put an idea into the sentences, and then to organize the sentences into a good paragraph. Those skills are what can be developed naturally by not every native speaker. It is also acknowledged as a tool to measure how high the intelligence of someone is. Moreover, most the scientists believe that a real scientist refers to someone who has successfully created a beneficial art in a writing form.

Brown (2000) stated that the process of writing is totally different set of competence and basicly

different from other skill such as speaking, reading, and listening. In producing a good writing, the writer should have competence to fill the criteria of good writing includes content, organizations, vocabulary use, grammar use, and mechanical consideration such as spelling and punctuation.

However, writing is found difficult by the students because of several factors. One of them is vocabulary building. To create the paragraph, the students cannot use word for word vocabularies. As the way to solve the problem, collocation knowledge is quietly needed in writing a good paragraph. Collocation is the combination of words that appear almost together. It is believed that collocation is what can differ native and foreign learners.

Unfortunately, in composing argumentative writing, the researcher found errors in their collocation. It is being the main reason for the researcher to analyze the fourth semester students' collocation performance in their argumentative writing conducted in English Education Study Program (henceforth PBI Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris) in STAIN Jurai Siwo Metro academic year 2013/2014.

## **THEORITICAL REVIEW**

### **Argumentative Paragraph**

Argumentative paragraph is a kind of paragraph writing which consists of a debatable premise. In other words, in an argumentative paragraph there is a statement which might make the reader disagree. Unlike narrative and descriptive which only focus on giving the readers information, an argumentative paragraph extremely requires the students to search many additional ideas which will make the readers agree with the writer. Therefore, writing an argumentative paragraph might encourage the students to develop critical thinking instead of accepting an idea or argument without questioning.

### **Definition of Collocation**

Terminologically, collocation is a combination of words in a language that happens very often and more frequently than would happen by chance. Michael McCarthy stated that collocation is a combination of words that often occur together (Felicity O'Dell & Michael McCarthy,

2008, pg. 9). In other words, Michael Lewis argued that collocation is particular words that statistically co-occur with greater than random frequency (Michael Lewis, pg. 28). Supakorn Phoochatoensil quoted in International Journal of English Language Teaching published by Canadian Center of Science and Education that Sinclair defines collocation as items which physically come up together or have an intense chance to occur together. In a similar vein, Hill defines collocation as a combination of words which is predictable (Supakorn Phoochatoensil, 2013, pg. 2). Collocation is essential to be learnt by English as Foreign Language (EFL) learners. Hill suggested some reasons about this case. First, vocabulary choice can help the listeners or the readers expect its word partner. Second, English collocation is taking up almost 70% in both spoken and written authentic English. Third, collocation is a measurement of successful and fluent communication in English, because a native speaker uses multi-word units or collocation while EFL learners use word by word or formulaic language (Supakorn Phoochatoensil, 2013, pg. 1).

### **Type of Collocation**

#### ***Grammatical Collocation***

Grammatical collocation is a phrase which consists of a dominant word (noun, adjective, and verb) and a preposition or grammatical structure such as an infinitive or clause (Benson, Benson, & Ilson, 1986, pg. ix). Benson, Benson, and

Ilson separated grammatical collocation into eight mind types:

1. Noun + Preposition combination: *apathy toward*.
2. Noun followed by to infinitive: *an obligation to do, a compulsion to do*, etc.
3. Noun + that clause: *we reached an agreement that she would represent us in court*.
4. Preposition + Noun combination: *in advance, in agony, by accident*, etc.
5. Adjective + Preposition combination: *angry at, hungry for, deaf to*, etc.
6. Predicate adjective followed by to infinitive: *it was necessary to work, she was bound to find*.
7. Adjective + that-clause: *she was afraid that she would fail her examination*.
8. Collocation verb pattern: *he sent the book to his mother, they describe the book to her, she bought a shirt for her*, etc.

### ***Lexical Collocation***

Lexical collocation does not contain grammatical element or function words such as prepositions, infinitives, or clauses (Benson, Benson, & Ilson, 1986, pg. ix). Marianne Celce-Murcia and Elite Olshain argued that lexical collocation builds a semantics and structural bound which can be accessed by native speaker as chunk (Marianne Celce-Murcia, 2000, pg. 83). However, foreign learners face some distraction in using and utilize the same word combination because of interference from their first language or insufficient exposure and attention to the introduction of

collocation in the target language (Marianne Celce-Murcia, 2000, pg. 83).

1. Verb + Noun/Pronoun: *set an alarm, launch a missile, fly a kite, carry a story, do the laundry, conjugate a verb*, etc.
2. Verb + Noun: *rejected an appeal, revoke a license, annul a marriage*, etc.
3. Adjective + Verb: *weak tea, best regard, small fortune, heavy smoker, heavy rain*, etc.
4. Noun + Verb: *alarm go off, bee buzz, dancer dances, bomb explode*, etc.
5. Noun + Noun: *a bouquet of flower, a bar of chocolate, a herd of buffalo*, etc.
6. Adverb + Adjective: *deeply absorbed, closely acquainted, hopelessly addicted*, etc.
7. Verb + adverb: *affect deeply, amuse thoroughly, apologize humbly*, etc.

### **METHOD**

This research is qualitative narrative research which revealed phenomenon by describing it with non-numeric language in scientific paradigm (Pusat Penelitiandan Pengabdian Kepada Masyarakat, 2011, pg.21). In this case, the researcher revealed the phenomenon of students' collocation performance in argumentative writing. The researcher collected ten argumentative writing of the third semester students of PBI STAIN Jurai Siwo Metro in academic year 2013/2014. Furthermore, the researcher took the accurate general information from interview. After

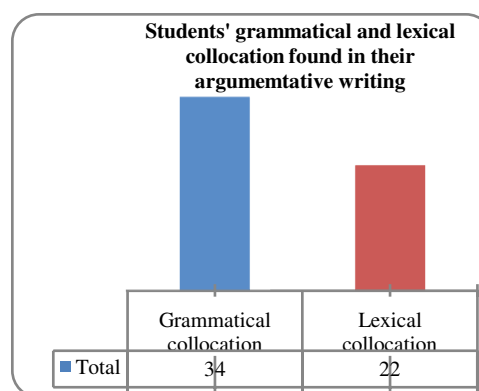
collecting ten students' argumentative writing, the researcher generated it to get the general information and characteristics of the writing. Then, the researcher analyzed the data deeply and did the decoding process to classify the collocation into grammatical and lexical collocation. The result of decoding process, then, was represented by qualitative narrative and interpreted it in diagram or chart.

## FINDINGS

Collocation deals with vocabulary mastery that must be comprehended by the students in writing. It is because without vocabulary there is nothing to write. Also, collocation is beneficially used by native learners in producing authentic English text(s). It induces collocation use makes writing product more natural and acceptable to read. Thus, to create writing product like what native speaker do, the students must have ability to use the appropriate words in composing a good writing.

In this research, the researcher specifically analyzed the phenomena of students' collocation performance especially in grammatical and lexical collocation. As the primary data, the data was collected from the students' argumentative writing product of the third semester in PBI STAIN JuraiSiwo Metro which was conducted as writing competition. The data was taken randomly from ten students of PBI in the third semester. Then, the researcher evaluated collocation use in the students' argumentative writing.

Unfortunately, collocation is low comprehended by the students in the third semester of PBI. From the data which has been collected, the researcher found 56 collocations use in ten students' writings and some errors in combining the words. The collocations found in the students' argumentative writing can be displayed in chart as follow:



*Chart 1. The use of grammatical and lexical collocation in students' argumentative writing in the third semester of PBI STAIN JuraiSiwo Metro.*

Based on the data above, it can be seen that the students are disposed of using grammatical collocation in their writing. It is displayed that there are 34 grammatical collocations and 22 lexical collocation found in the data research. Moreover, from the data collected, the researcher found the mistakes both in grammatical and lexical collocation use, and the percentage of the mistakes found can be identified in the pie diagram below:

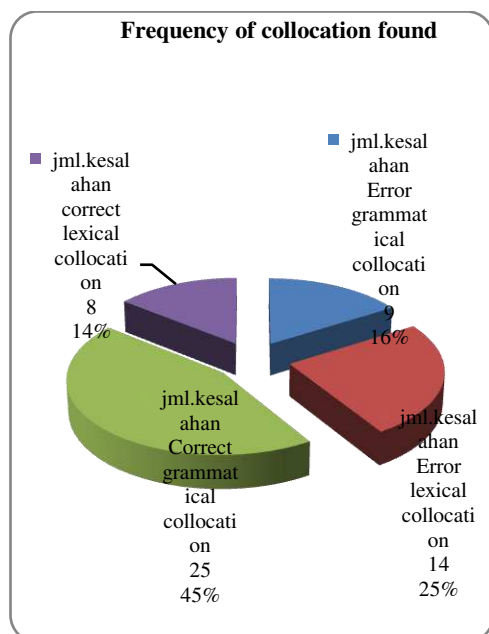


Chart II. Collocation mistakes found in students' argumentative writing in the third semester of PBI STAIN JuraiSiwo Metro.

The diagram points out that the lexical collocation mistakes are occurred frequently which is occupied 25 %. Besides, the students made little mistakes in grammatical collocation (16%).

## The Analysis of Students' Collocation Performance

### Grammatical Collocation

There are 34 grammatical collocations found in the data research and 9 of them are errors. Most of errors in grammatical collocations are in pairing the preposition with the dominant word (noun, adjective, or verb). The errors were discussed as follow:

#### 1. *ban people to smoke*

Dominant word *ban* should not be collocated with preposition *to* because it is more acceptably used preposition *from*. So, the sentence must be '*ban people from smoking*'.

#### 2. *This attention not damage for us*

The word *damage* cannot be collocated by preposition. It is more acceptable when *damage* is directly suit with the object; *this attention does not damage us*. In addition, *damage* is collocated with several adverb only, such as seriously, heavily, severely, badly; *the building was badly damaged by fire*, slightly, permanently, and irreparably; *she may have damaged her health irreparably*.

#### 3. *So, start at now,...*

There are a few prepositions that can be collocated with *start*. *As, by, from, on, and with* are the only prepositions which are able to be matched together with *start*. For example, it *started as* a hobby and grew from there, let's *start* our lesson *by* saying *bismillahirrohmanirrohiim*, so, *start from* now,..., I have finished decorating the bedroom, so I can *start on* the living room, let us *start with* this instrument.

4. ...*the smoker also can get an impact from that smoke...*

The word *impact* is strongly collocated with preposition *of*. In the same words, the sentence should be ...*the smoker also can get an impact of that smoke...*

5. ...*I agree with the title ban people to smoke...*

There are two preposition that occur after *agree*, these are *with* and *on*. *Agree with* is followed by person or animate object, while *agree on* is followed by inanimate object. The error above can be corrected as ...*I agree on the title ban people from smoking*. The collocation *ban from* has briefly explained in previous point (point a).

6. ***In concluding, ...***

In summing up the explanation, preposition *in* occurs together with the word *conclusion*. It means that, the correct collocation form from *in concluding* is ***in conclusion***.

7. *I think it is not fair for the thief.*

The adjective *fair* is tightly collocated with *to*. So, the sentence above must be changed into *I think it is not fair to the thief* so the sentence can be accepted and sounds natural.

8. ***In summing up, ...***

*Is summing up* is considered to be

grammatically correct, but it sounds awkward. As the previous explanation about *in conclusion* in point h, *to sum up* should be more acceptable to the native learners.

9. *It is suitable with the new curriculum...*

*Suitable with* sounds unnatural for the native learners. However, prepositions that occur together with *suitable* are *as*, *for*, and *to*. '*It is suitable for the new curriculum...*' is acceptable for the native instead of *suitable with*. In addition, the example *suitable as; it is not suitable as a word-processing program and suitable to; this condition is suitable to their development*.

The analysis of the data above shows that the use of grammatical collocation in students' argumentative writing is categorized good. It can be seen from grammatical collocation errors that are made by the students. There are found 9 errors from 34 grammatical collocations found in the data research or approximately 16 % from whole data research.

### ***Lexical Collocation***

Lexical collocations that are found in this research are 22, and 14 of them are errors. The following explanations are the result of the analysis of error lexical collocations:

1. They are just *think* of this attention as ***usual advice...***

The writer might want to write the *ignored advice*.

However, the use of adjective *usual* could sound strange in native hearing. The adjective that sounds more natural is *insensible*; *insensible advice* that means the advice that is ignored by many people because they think it is not really important. Several adjectives are collocated with *advice* are wrong; *I think my lawyer gave me the wrong advice*, good; *please come to your mother whenever you need good advice*, sensible; *the citizen pay attention of the sensible advice from the government*, etc.

2. If they have been a **hard smoker**,....

*Hard smoker* means the man that smoke cigarette many times. Meanwhile, native speaker would be more familiar with *heavy smoker* than *hard smoker*.

3. **Slow but sure.**

This phrase in Indonesia is '*pelan-pelan tapi pasti*'. Adjective *slow* might have similar meaning with adjective *gradually*, but *slow* has negative meaning for the native. So, *gradually but sure* is more acceptable in native hearing.

4. Indonesia is one of the education country and the public **the big education.**

After getting interview with the writer about the meaning of this sentence, the researcher can draw the

message from the sentence *the public the big education*. The writer is meant to state that education in Indonesia is getting wide. Therefore, *well-round education* is more accepted than *the big education*.

5. ...smoking has **bad impact** of...

There are many adjectives that are collocated with *impact*, such as high; *a high-impact message aimed at changing people's attitude*, severe; *the severest human impact on the dolphins has been the loss of habitat*, big; *what he said has a big impact to his brother*, etc. In addition, *bad* is unacceptable when it is collocated with *impact*. Thus, the *negative impact* sounds more natural.

6. I can **take the conclusion** that...

Take the conclusion means summarizing. However, verbs that are collocated with conclusion and sound more natural are jump to; *do not go jumping to the conclusions before you know the fact*, base on; *he bases his conclusion on very limited research*, draw; *I cannot draw the conclusion from what he said*, and point to; *it all points to the conclusion that nobody knew what is going on*. Thus, *take the conclusion* becomes more acceptable than *draw the conclusion*.

7. ...in **education field** of our nation.

*Field* and *sector* are similar. Yet, *educational sector* is more understood and accepted by native speaker.

8. ...the school even get **great image** of it.

Many adjectives come after *image* such as tarnished; *the party needs to clean up its somewhat tarnished image*, poor; *the industry had a poor image*, good; *the school has a good image after being the winner of Olympiad of Science in Egypt*, etc. Thus, native speaker is more familiar with *good image* than *great image*.

9. ...this issue ever became **trending topic** in Indonesia.

The word *topic* is naturally collocated with several adjective, such as *related*; *the students must find some articles on religious art and related topics*, *broad*; *she spoke on the broad topic of discipline*, *controversial*; *it might be better to avoid such a controversial topic*. *Favorite*; *pensions are a favorite topic at the moment*. From the examples that are briefly given, the adjective *trending*, in this case, can be changed into *favorite*, because *favorite* occur with *topic* more often than *trending*.

10. ...smoking is **very not good**.

*Very not good* might be understood but

unacceptable to the native speaker. *Dangerous* might represent the expression to be more natural; ...*smoking is dangerous*.

11. Jokowi is **excellent leader**...

There are many adjective that are collocated with *leader*. However, the adjectives that have similar meaning with *excellent* which are co-occurred together with *leader* are good, effective, great, inspiring, inspired, and visionary.

Thus, *good/ effective/ great/ inspiring/ inspired/ visionary leader* would be more accepted than *excellent leader*. Other adjectives collocated with *leader* are corrupt; *the government should not have printed the corrupt leaders*, future; *these young people will be the future leader of our nation*, and so on.

12. **The conclude of my arguments**...

'*the conclude of my arguments*' is defined as the transition to give the conclusion. Nevertheless, this sentence is not accepted for native speaker. *In conclusion* would be understood well by the native speaker. The transition such as *in conclusion*, *in the other hands*, *as a result*, *in addition*, etc are collocated each other. All these transitions are included in grammatical collocation. But in this case, lexical



meaning of *in conclusion* is heard more natural than *the conclude of my arguments*. Hence, the writer should use *in conclusion* instead *the conclude of my arguments*.

### 13. ...life journey...

The word *life* that is defined as period between birth and death often co-occur with several noun, such as *story*; *his life story is so complicated*, *imprisonment*; *life imprisonment is the appropriate choice for the corruptor*, *expectancy*; *Japanese people have a very high life expectancy*, *span*; *the life span of the mosquito is very short*. Accordingly, *life* is collocated with *story* instead of *journey*.

The analysis of lexical collocation reflects that the students' lexical collocation performance in their argumentative writing needs to be enhanced. It showed from the total of errors which was made by the students.

## DISCUSSION

This research was conducted in the third semester students of PBI STAIN JuraiSiwo Metro academic year 2013/2014, it means that the result of this research is defined and limited only on these participant in that place and time. In other words, the result might be different when it is conducted in the different place, time and participant even though it has the same matter.

In addition, from the result of research data analysis in previous elaboration, the researcher found that the students' collocation performance in their argumentative writing requires enhancement. It can be reflected from their mistakes that they had made in using an appropriate word-pair. Furthermore, the researcher have investigated that the students who used the collocation, both grammatical and lexical collocation well, have more resonance of their writing product and also be more natural and various.

It is in line with Hill (2000) statement quoted by SupakornPhoochatoensil that collocation is used almost 70% in both speaking and writing authentic English. Also, he stated that collocation makes communication more natural because native speakers use multi-word unit. In addition, one of criteria of good writing based on Brown's statement is vocabulary use. Thus, the students who determine the collocation in their argumentative writing have been able composing the good and natural argumentative writing.

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