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Lexical Analysis; A study of Essays at Secondary Level of Grade 8th

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Abstract: *The study was carried out to identify the words used by students in their essay writing at the Secondary level. The following study has carried out Lexical analysis in student's essays and aimed to find out lexical differences between the essays of government and private school students. To collect data, a quantitative method was used. Two schools were selected and thirty essays were collected from the students of the eighth class. The study showed that the students have used nouns more frequently both by government and private school students. The students of government are short of vocabulary as they rely on memorization. While private school students use appropriate words in their essays and have a rich vocabulary. The researcher recommends that the teacher should assess the students in terms of their creativity, the teacher should encourage the students towards creative writing, and develop their vocabulary.*

Key Words: Lexical Analysis, Essays, Students

Introduction

This chapter includes framework of this study, description of the problem, purpose, and aim of the study, questions, and importance of the study, scope, and limitations of the study.

The interpretation of the term lexical in the lexical analysis has been taken from the word lexeme. Lexeme is the component of morphology in linguistics. Lexical analysis of essays refers to the analysis of the words that students make use of in their essays. Writing an essay is a skill that is so productive and consists of the greatest level of sentences. Essays are the units in linguistics that are both written and spoken. Readers interpret the essays. In essays, there should be a continuous relationship

between sentences. A good essay shows the relationship of one sentence with the other and the basic requirement for making an essay effective and a good one, cohesion, and good choice of words are important. This study throws light on the words used by the students of the eighth class of secondary level of both sectors in Pakistan i.e Government and private.

The most important factor of language improvement and educational achievement among students includes the capability to attain communicative skills and competence in their writing. Mukulu et al. (2006) pointed out that the major skill that needs to be developed by the students is to improve their individual growth and academic achievement is to improve their writing skills. In addition, Adams

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& Keen (2000) pointed out that complete mastery of writing skills allows students to successfully perform their professional exercises and contexts, and effectively respond to their academic needs. Students are expected to create particular writing genres, in the academic framework for example in writing summaries, essays or reports. Dudley-Evans, (2001) and Tangpermpoon (2008) said that writing is the most complicated skill as compared to other language skills such as reading skill, speaking skill and listening. To write a well written text, a writer should have lexical and syntactic information. Myles (2000) said that we do not learn writing naturally from the surrounding while contact with the language. But he says that writing is learned as a set of practices in a formal instructional setting. There is a lack of ability for creative writing in Pakistan. It has been observed by Rahman in 2002 that students does not have the ability to write creatively or to create any composition on their own, thus most of them go for cramming simply. In some of the schools of Pakistan, opportunities for expressing creative thoughts or ideas by the students in their writing are very rare. If compared, these opportunities are given or provided in private schools but are very rare in the government schools of Pakistan. Students in school are exposed to either copying from blackboard, text writing, tracing the letter formation, and filling the workbooks and worksheets. While in some schools there are students who can do creative writing on some selected topics. When teachers guide them and tell them the main ideas, it is easier for the students to produce their own work. This methodology should be used in every school so that the students can write on their own.

Choice of words in writing is defined as the use of such words and language that gives information not only in a functional way but also to enlighten the reader. For example the use of jargon should be avoided, focus should be on using denotations and connotations, and such words should be used that gives straightforward meaning. Choice of right words is crucial for success. In writing an essay one should use such words that can clearly express

his idea. Strong choice of words makes the reader understand the concept clearly. The following research has examined the word choice of students while writing essays between students of private and government schools.

Through creative writing grammatical structures can also be practiced, like practicing Lexis. Learning grammar is a complex process. Learning the rules of grammar does not mean that the students will only understand them and use them by themselves. Students should be able to transfer the knowledge to other people and should be able to use the language in front of everyone. Students should do creative writing and practice not only the newly acquired grammatical structures but also the patterns of language that students have learned in the past. On practicing various aspects of grammar stories, jokes, poems, articles, and fairy tales, etc can be focused. Students should do more writing because it will be better for their English language practice.

In Pakistan the writing skills of students is weak. English language users in Pakistan have increased from 49% to 2% throughout the year but still students face issues in creative writing. These issues generally arise from lack of using appropriate vocabulary. These factors have been categorized into some broad domains by previous studies for example teacher's incompetence and student's lack of interest. However further research is needed to explore these factors so that the issues of students creative writing should be improved.

By learning through repetition, the writing skills of students can be improved. A study was conducted in Karachi and they found out that students lack writing skills and the teachers does not use a proper process for practicing writing skills. Teachers should use appropriate strategies and should make the students practice creative writing in order to improve their writing skills.

English language is taught as a second language in Pakistan. It is the Language for medium of instructions in educational institutes. In the curriculum the academic achievement of students is made through writing. Writing skills and its performance of

secondary level is of great concern. In Pakistan the writing skills of students are really weak and they have problems in creative writing. These problems generally arise due to lack of using appropriate vocabulary and word choice. It is stated that in every country in the world and in Pakistan too there are education systems that are different but in Pakistan, there are two sectors of education that are government and private. In Pakistan nowadays private education system is gaining mass acceptance as compared to the government sector. Therefore, this study will pay attention to creative writing skills with the precise aim of investigating the word choice in essay writing of secondary school students in Mardan so that the difference between the essays of public and private schools are explored.

This aim of this study is to provide teachers and educational planners that how they will guide the students in order to cope with this kind of situation. After finding out the problems teachers and educational planners will provide guidance to students in English language teaching at the secondary level.

Such kind of research questions will be asked in this study.

- What sorts of words are used by the students in their essay writing at the secondary level?
- What are the contextual reasons for certain words instead of others in essay writing at the secondary level?
- What is the lexical difference between the essays of government and private school students?

Literature Review

One major factor that affects writing is the use of appropriate words in a context. Lexical competence means that the writer make use of appropriate word at the right place, this use of suitable vocabulary helps to determine the worth of writing. The vocabulary of a person has been observed as really important in the interpretation of texts.

A study related to “academic achievements” concerning lexical richness was

conducted at Calgary University. This study considered non native students that speak English language. Their major aim was to see the achievements of native and non native speakers of English language with their lexical richness”. They found out that “there is a direct relation between built-in vocabulary and academic performance. Those who have higher lexical vocabulary performed better as compared to students having lower lexical richness. The result was that those students who used appropriate vocabulary and right choice of words performed better in the English writing test as compared to the students that didn’t use correct vocabulary. Eventually, they came to know that the students who used correct vocabulary and right choice of words performed better in studies. Therefore teachers should use such teaching methods in order to enhance the vocabulary of students.

English is the “dominant language” over all others in terms of its importance and uses in non-English speaking countries. English writings are becoming more dominant both in professional and educational writings. (Leki, 2001). Writing is a skill that is most desired in secondary school. It is more difficult for ESL learners to write something in English firstly because they are not a native speaker and secondly, lack vocabulary and grammatical competence.

The relationship between vocabulary knowledge and language use is complementary. Language usage influences an increase in vocabulary knowledge and, conversely, vocabulary knowledge facilitates language use. Vocabulary is important both within and out of schools. In a classroom, successful students possess the most sufficient and accurate vocabulary.

English is a global language and it is one the major source of communication. With the passage of time there is a constant increase in learning English language around the world. There is a constant rise in the number of courses that are taught in English language.. Besides its use as a major source of communication many people speak it as a symbol of prestige and higher social status.

Pakistan has different cultures and people speak many languages. The number of major languages that people speak in this country are six and the number of minor languages is 59. Learning of English language is really important in the education system of Pakistan. English language in Pakistan was introduced due to British colonial rule in the nineteenth century. Since Pakistan came into being people use English language for official purposes and it is a dominant language.. Newspapers in Pakistan mostly use English language as a means of communication. It is a language that is being used in many centers for example political, economic, military, the elite class and private organizations.

Learning vocabulary means to become capable to use the other language with respect to different skills i.e. speaking and writing etc. Vocabulary is indispensable from language, as language is a combination of different words. Learning of appropriate vocabulary plays an important role in written and spoken texts (Nation and Laufer et.al). Moreover, Nunan and Rivers, demonstrated that learning of appropriate vocabulary is really important for speaking English language because without an adequate and extensive vocabulary, we will be unable to utilize the functions and structures we may have acquired for comprehensible communication. Huckin conducted his research in 1995 and according to his lack of appropriate lexical knowledge is a fence for L2 readers and users because L2 writers rely on acquired vocabulary. In composition, when we want to explain any concept then we need suitable vocabulary, which can best explain that concept. If learners are being properly assisted then this would help them to improve their lexical variety and the overall lexical richness.

According to Pakistan's 1973 constitution, English will continue to be the country's official language until provisions can be made for Urdu to take its place, which is expected to take 15 years. Urdu will remain the country's national language. The truth is that English is regarded as the language of personal and professional development in Pakistan since it is the language of the armed forces, the civil service,

and higher education. English frequently serves as a gatekeeper because it is required for admission to universities and programmers that lead to positions of authority, like Pakistan's public services.

Academic vocabulary lists and typologies based on frequency appearances in various texts across disciplines have been developed as a result of corpus-based research examining the lexical aspects of academic writing. The General Service List (GSL), created by West in 1953, is the first list of vocabulary that includes the 2000 most commonly used words in the corpus of written English.

According to Coxhead, "up to 76% of the academic corpus" is covered by the GSL in order to study the academic word list (p. 214). Excluding the GSL, Academic Word List (AWL) identifies general academic words that are frequently found in texts across disciplines and is compiled from "a corpus of 3.5 million running words of written academic texts" from 28 subject areas across four broad disciplines (p. 213). About 10% of words in academic writings are covered by the 570 commonly used academic terms in the AWL, which spans disciplines. Vocabulary typologies were developed with the help of corpus data and vocabulary lists. for instance, distinguished three main kinds of academic vocabulary: (1) generic words that are used in daily language and across academic disciplines; (2) academic words that are widespread in various disciplines; and (3) technical words found in particular academic areas. The latter two groups typically contain extremely specialised terminology.

Research Methodology

The methodology that was used to achieve the study objectives was such that two schools from District Mardan were selected and 30 students were taken as the population for this study. Two groups having 15 students each represented their school. The students were of class 8th and aged between 13-14. The schools' names were, The Government School Mardan and Beacon house school Mardan. Both the schools were English medium schools and the

students were studying English as a compulsory subject for the last 8 years. There were six lessons in a week. The class timings were 40 minutes and English language is being taught to the students as a foreign language.

The quantitative research method was employed for this study. Quantitative method gives clear results and can be efficiently calculated. Samples of 30 essays from the students were collected. All the essays were collected for analysis. They were collected from two schools in district Mardan. The goal of collecting these essays was to analyze lexical items to write English essays at the secondary level of school.

Before starting the activity in each school permission was asked from the principals of the associated schools. They were requested to grant permission for a written activity for students. The aim of the study was to analyze

the student's choice of words in writing essays. Students were given a topic. "My Favorite Personality" They were given 40 minutes to write an essay about their favorite personality. The aim of the study was to examine the choice of words used by the learners at the secondary level of school in Mardan.

Analysis and Interpretation of Data

Lexical Analysis in Students Essay

The goal of this study was to recognize the lexical choice in the students' English essays and to analyze the frequency and percentage of these lexical items and to explore the difference between the lexical choice of students' essays between government and private schools. For the purpose of analysis, the students' essays were collected. The frequency of lexical items, the percent of lexical items is given in the table below.

Table 1

Government School Essays

Lexical items	Frequency	Percentage
Nouns	16	21.44
Verbs	09	09.11
Adjectives	08	10.00

Table 2

Private School Essays

Lexical items	Frequency	Percentage
Nouns	14	19.55
Verbs	11	13.11
Adjectives	09	14.66

Analysis of Lexical Items

After the data analysis, many of the lexical items found in the writing of English essays in which nouns are 222, verbs were 69, and 81

adjectives. While in private school essays nouns are 222, verbs 123, and adjectives are 144.

Government School Essays

The nouns, verbs, adjectives collected from the essays are given below:

Table 3

Nouns, Verbs, and Adjectives

NOUNS	NOUNS	VERBS	ADJECTIVES
Muhammad	Islam	Pray	Born
Grandfather	Decision	Embrace	Honorable

NOUNS	NOUNS	VERBS	ADJECTIVES
Year	Abdullah	Migrate	Mutual
World	Father	Spread	Trustworthy
Thousand	Monday	Preach	
Uncle	Rabiulawal	Created	20th
People	Nation		
Prophet	Amina		

Table 4

Nouns, Verbs, Adjectives

NOUNS	NOUNS	VERBS	ADJECTIVES
Month	Respect	Last	Holy
Birth	Worship	Grow up	Honorable
Trace		Call	Trustworthy
Prophet		Forbade	Very
Muhammad	Abdullah		Much
Makkah		Die	My
People			His

Table 5

Nouns, Verbs, Adjectives

NOUNS	NOUNS	VERBS	ADJECTIVES
QuaideAzam	Poet	Start	Fond
Pakistan	Ability	Realize	Born
Karachi	Muslims	Sigh	Great
December	India	Struggle	Trustworthy
Freedom	Relief		Brave
Movement	Leader	Challenge	Capable
India	Night		Historical
Hand	Work		Selfless

Table 6

Nouns, Verbs, Adjectives

NOUNS	NOUNS	VERBS	ADJECTIVES
Favorite	Messenger	Grow up	Trustworthy
Personality	Father	Pray	Holy
Hazrat	Abdullah	Embrace	Honorable
Muhammad	Mother	Preach	Much
Prophet	Amina	Pass	National
Monday	Cave	Matriculate	19th
Makkah	Time	Did	Intermediate

NOUNS	NOUNS	VERBS	ADJECTIVES
Allama Muhammad Iqbal	Write		Mystic
Poet	Poetry		Great
November	Urdu		Deep
Sialkot	Persian		Born
Exam	Inspiration		
Government	While		
College	Study		
Lahore	Law		
Philosophy	England		

NOUNS: Most of the students have used abstract nouns.

VERBS: Most of the students have used Intransitive verbs

ADJECTIVES: Most of the students have used descriptive adjectives.

Private Schools Essays

The nouns, verbs, adjectives collected from the essays are given below:

Table 7

Nouns, Verbs, and Adjectives

NOUNS	VERBS	ADJECTIVES
Mother	Struggle	Precious
God	Give	Much
Sacrifice	Suffer	My
Pain	Worrying	Eldest
Sleep	Provide	Good
Family	Takes	Emotional
Responsibility	Tolerate	Every
Hands	Trouble	Complete
Cook	Solve	Another
Problem	Gets	
Facilities	Try	
Lady	Wish	
Doctor		

Table 8

Nouns, Verbs, and Adjectives

NOUNS	NOUNS	VERBS	ADJECTIVES
Imran khan	Country	Brought	Politic
Cricketer	Going	Got	Politic
Played	Mind	Retire	Intelligent
Pakistan	Chance	Entered	Idolize
Trophy		Want	Good
Years		Bring	Happy

Opportunity	Change
Prime minister	Follow
Chose	Can

Table 9

Nouns, Verbs, Adjectives

NOUNS	VERBS	ADJECTIVES
Student	Admire	Used
School	Teaches	Good
Imam	Want	Best
Masjid	Know	Same
Conclusion	Like	Whole
Father	Have	Only
Son		One
		My
Person		Happy
		Such

Table 10

Nouns, Verbs, Adjectives

NOUNS	Nouns	VERBS	ADJECTIVES
Favorite	Study	Died	Full
Personality	Gain	Admire	Born
Muhammad	bin Knowledge	Persuaded	Intelligent
Qasim			
City	Army	Got	Teenage
Tai'f	Kid	Know	High
Father	Leadership		Brave
Governor	Qualities		Great
Basra	Administrator		Ranked
Child	Lover		General

Table 11

Nouns, Verbs, Adjectives

NOUNS	Nouns	VERBS	ADJECTIVES	Adjectives
Prophet	Discipline	Idolize	Small	Helpful
Muhammad	Well	Died	Holy	Adult
Introduction	Quality	Last	Many	Still
Born	Characteristics	Admire	Very	
Rabi-ul-Awal		Would	Special	
People		Try	Young	
Idol	Islam	Spreading	Contained	Forced
World		Persuaded	Manner	
Muslims		Gave up	Obedient	
Age			Humble	

NOUNS: Most of the students have used abstract nouns.

VERBS: Most of the students have used Intransitive verbs as well as transitive verbs.

ADJECTIVES: Most of the students have used descriptive adjectives.

Findings

The study has been conducted to find out the word choice, contextual reasons of word choice of students at the secondary level, and also to find the difference between the word choice of students between government and private schools. Data analysis revealed that the students have used nouns more frequently both in government and private school students. The essay topics were also analyzed. Government students have written essays that are in their textbooks and cannot write on their own for example Hazrat Muhammad SAW, QuaideAzam, and Allama Muhammad Iqbal only. While private school students have written on their favorite personalities like My Father, My Mother, and Imran Khan. Government school students have used 222 nouns, verbs 69, and adjectives are 81. While private school students have used nouns 222 times, verbs 123 and adjectives are 144. The students have used abstract nouns, intransitive verbs, and descriptive adjectives. There is differentiation between the students of public and private schools students word choice. The private school student has used more appropriate vocabulary as compared to government school students and relied on creative writing instead of memorization.

Discussion

This study has examined the word choice of the students and differentiation between the choice of words used by public and private school students in their essays. Their choice of words were analyzed. The performance of different variables were analyzed. Result was made which expanded to 30 tables. But here only the result of 10 tables is given. From the study they found out the differentiation between the outcomes of public and private school students. The private school students are more proficient in writing they use a lot of words and are thus more creative than the students of public schools.

The private school students have used nouns, verbs, and adjectives equally. They have

used academic language in their essays as they are focusing on the person. They have used abstract nouns more than concrete nouns which can describe the person more appropriately. All the nouns used in the essay contribute towards the development of the person under discussion in one way or the other. Nouns and adjectives are also correlating in harmony developing the theme of personality. They have used the demonstrative adjective to describe the personality. However, they have used verbs less frequently. While the government school students have used nouns more frequently as compared to verbs and adjectives. This means that they are focusing on the person, not on his doings.

The results of the study can relate with the findings of Saville-Troike that vocabulary was the most crucial factor for ESL students to be academically successful. The good word choice of the students during writing can prove successful and can achieve their communicative competence thus focusing on the word choice is necessary. Therefore, this study has been conducted to analyze the importance of word choice to be academically successful.

Students should know how to use appropriate words in order to write skillfully. Through direct instructions, teachers can help the students how to write creatively and skillfully. Instructions and exposure in classrooms for using good choice of words is important because schools is the only place where students can learn creative writing. This study has analyzed the word choice of students while future researchers can conduct a study on cohesion and graphological analysis of essays as well.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Conclusion

The present study analyzed the word choice in English essays written by the secondary level students from government and private schools in district Mardan Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. From

the data collection and finding, the differentiation between public and private schools is demonstrated. The private school's students used comparatively appropriate words in their essays while the government school students showed a lack of vocabulary as well as they relied on memorization as they wrote the same essays as in the textbooks while the private school student wrote the essays of their own choice.

At the Secondary school level in Pakistan, English essay writing is a part of course content. The students of the 8th class are not creative in writing and do not use appropriate and accurate vocabulary to convey their meaning or concept. To investigate the word choice of students, the researcher conducted an activity of English essay writing at the secondary level in government and private schools in Mardan Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. 30 essays were conducted in government and private schools. The target population was 8th class students. The time given to the participants was 40 minutes and the word limit for them was 150-200 words. The students were given the following topic "My Favorite Personality"

The data feasibility was checked thoroughly. From data collection, different types of words were found but the researcher confined himself to nouns, verbs, and adjectives only. Lack of appropriate vocabulary and accurate word choice was found

From the pedagogical perspective, the government school students are not creative in writing English essays as compared to private school students, thus creating a need to focus on their methodology. The present study has

focused on a limited corpus of essays. Therefore, more studies are required to have an in-depth investigation of writing skills. Anyhow, the study may be useful for the educational planners and teachers to get familiarized with the issue. It may also provide an insightful guide to future researchers to further explore this area.

Recommendations

After the whole research, analysis, and study, the researcher suggests that before entering the class a teacher should make a proper lesson plan for the class focusing on word choice and creativity in writing. English should be taught by a specialized and experienced teacher and students should be motivated and encouraged for creative writing. There should also be a separate class for creative writing. The teacher should assess the students in terms of their creativity, not on cramming or memorization. Both students of Private and Government schools should be encouraged towards writing and should be given full attention so that they can learn properly.

The present study has provided awareness about nouns, verbs, and adjectives that are used by students in their essays and their importance. However, still further research is needed to find out the reasons and factors behind why the Private school students writing skill is better than that of Government school students and why they are rich in vocabulary and also to identify what could be the possible strategy for improving the writing skill of students of a Government school to provide a guideline for teachers.

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