



## Research Paper

### Examining the Impact of Lexical Bundle Instruction on IELTS Candidates' Writing Ability

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#### ABSTRACT

The instruction of Lexical Bundles (LBs) has been a challenging issue in language teaching. This study strived to determine the effect of the instruction of LBs on IELTS candidates' performance on IELTS writing task 2. To this end, first, 100 male and female IELTS candidates were randomly selected from among 150 English learners as participants. Second, these participants were assigned to the experimental group and the control group, each with 50 learners. Both groups were then administered IELTS writing task 2 as a pretest. The experimental group was provided with ten sessions of instruction on LBs. The control group, however, did not receive any instruction. Finally, the researchers administered IELTS writing task 2 to both of the groups anew as a posttest. The results suggest that teaching the relevant bundles had some positive impacts on IELTS candidates' general performance of the relevant writing tasks, grammatical range and accuracy, vocabulary knowledge, as well as observing cohesive ties and coherence in their writing. The results may provide some useful insights regarding the instruction of LBs in IELTS preparation courses.

**Keywords:** *EFL writing, IELTS, Lexical bundles*

## INTRODUCTION

A close scrutiny of the relevant literature ( Bitchener & Basturkmen, 2006; Fatemi & Vahidnia, 2013; Flower & Hayes, 1981; Lavelle, 2006) accentuates that instruction of writing skill has been a recurrent line of research in the field of Second Language Acquisition (SLA). The widespread interest in this skill has prompted the SLA researchers to offer various definitions of writing. The examination of the early definitions of this skill (e.g. Wood, Bruner, & Ross, 1976) highlights the fact that, these definitions were based on comparison with the speaking skill. That is to say, these definitions conceptualized the writing skill as the graphic equivalent of the speaking skill due mainly to its productive nature.

However, over the course of time the SLA researchers ( Casanave, 2002; Charles, 2007) refined their conceptions of the writing skill and defined it as a skill which depended on the development of a complete set of requisite competencies which differed from the competencies of the speaking skill. In this regard, a number of researchers ( Adel & Erman, 2012) have argued that the writing skill depends on the learning of specific skills which are not naturally developed by the speakers of natural languages. Among these skills, the learners' skill at using the *vocabulary* may significantly influence the learners' writing performance (Shin, 2018).

An examination of the related literature on second language vocabulary ( Biber, & Barbieri, 2007; Lan & Sun, 2019; Staples, Egbert, Biber, & McClair, 2013) emphasize the fact that the SLA researchers have been concerned with the instruction of *phrasal vocabulary* or the *formulaic sequences*. Adel and Erman (2012) averred that the formulaic sequences of the target language encompass the strings of words which are commonly used with each other across diverse linguistic contexts for performing specific linguistic functions. According to them, in most of the cases the joint meaning of these sequences differs from the total literal meanings of their individual vocabulary items. As they concluded, among the various types of formulaic sequences LBs have attracted considerable attention in the field of SLA.

Biber, Conrad, and Cortes (2004) defined LBs as the sequences of a specific number of words which are more frequently used with each other in comparison with the other word sequences across different linguistic contexts. In the field of SLA, certain studies (Ellis & Simpson-Vlach, 2009) have highlighted the fact that the language learners' acquisition of the relevant bundles has a positive effect on their processing of the second language information due mainly to their formulaic nature (Wei & Lei, 2011). Furthermore, as Biber et al. (2004) pointed out, the learners' knowledge about LBs may significantly affect their performance on the writing tasks of proficiency tests including the IELTS test.

Van Waes and Leijten (2015) pointed out that IELTS writing tasks differ in the IELTS Academic and IELTS General Training tests. As they explained, the writing tasks of IELTS Academic focus on the language learners' ability to perform writing tasks in educational settings including the language classrooms. On the other hand, the writing tasks of IELTS General Training focus on the learners' ability to perform real world writing tasks which are considered to be the essential requirements of migration. As they concluded, there is a need for certain empirical studies that provide a satisfactory understanding of the factors that affect the learners' performance on these tasks.

An examination of the relevant empirical studies of second language writing, LBs, and IELTS writing tasks shows that the SLA researchers have focused on certain lines of research to the exclusion of others. More specifically, a number of the studies of writing ( Boroujeni, Roohani, & Hasanimanesh; 2015; MacArthur, Graham, & Fitzgerald, 2008) have examined the degree to which the instruction of diverse



grammatical structures improved native and non-native English speakers' writing performance. Moreover, other studies ( Askarzadeh Torghabeh & Yazdanmehr, 2010; Keyvanfar & Vafaeikhoshkhou, 2015) have focused on the language learners' attitudes towards the writing tasks of the proficiency tests including TOEFL. Furthermore, certain studies ( Rezai, 2022) have focused on the effects of feedback including peer feedback on the language learners' performance on IELTS writing tasks. In addition, a few studies ( Esfandiari, Ahmadi, & Schaefer, 2021) have tried to specify the functions of LBs in EFL texts. Finally, very few studies (e.g. Cooper, 2013) have compared the ESL learners' uses of the LBs on IELTS Task 2 and their university writing tasks.

Nonetheless, the relevant studies have disregarded the examination of the utility of LBs for improving the language learners' performance on the diverse aspects of IELTS writing tasks. This study made an endeavor to deal with this inadequacy of research in the EFL context of Iran. More specifically, it strived to answer the following questions:

- 1) Does teaching LBs to Iranian IELTS candidates have any significant effect on their Task2 writing performance in general?
- 2) Does teaching LBs to Iranian IELTS candidates have any significant effect on their grammatical range and accuracy in Task2 writing performance?
- 3) Does teaching LBs to Iranian IELTS candidates have any significant effect on their lexical resource (vocabulary) in Task2 writing performance?
- 4) Does teaching LBs to Iranian IELTS candidates have any significant effect on their task response in Task2 writing performance?
- 5) Does teaching LBs to Iranian IELTS candidates have any significant effect on their cohesion and coherence in Task2 writing performance?

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Writing Tasks in IELTS

Van Waes and Leijten (2015) pointed out that IELTS writing tasks differ in the *IELTS Academic* and *IELTS General Training* tests. As they explained, the writing tasks of IELTS Academic focus on the language learners' ability to perform writing tasks in educational settings including the language classrooms. On the other hand, the writing tasks of IELTS General Training focus on the learners' ability to perform real world writing tasks which are considered to be the essential requirements of migration.

However, according to them, the writing tasks in both of the above-mentioned modules of IELTS can be classified into two underlying categories including the *controlled writing tasks* and *free writing tasks*. In both of the versions of these tests, Writing Task 1 prompts the language learners to perform certain writing tasks in response to the provided pieces of material. For instance, in IELTS Academic Task 1, the language learners are prompted to expound on the various aspects of a chart in a concise way. Likewise, in IELTS General Training Task 1, the language learners are asked to write different kinds of letters including letters of request to apprise native speakers of their difficulties and to make requests of them based on the task requirements.

As Segalowitz (2010) pointed out, the scrutiny of the requirements of these tasks highlights the fact that the language learners' lack of the knowledge of the formal aspects of the target language and their



lack of world knowledge may exacerbate their performance of the controlled IELTS writing tasks (i.e. Task 1). He explained that, the language learners' lack of knowledge regarding the grammatical structures and vocabulary items may not allow them to express their intended meanings in a satisfactory way. Furthermore, as he noted, the learners' lack of the required schemata may prevent them from performing the real- world writing tasks such as writing letters of request.

On the other hand, Van Waes and Leijten (2015) stated that, in both of the modules of IELTS, Task 2 constitutes a free writing task which prompts the learners to brainstorm ideas regarding a certain topic of interest, to organize their ideas in a logical way, to take advantage of the second language to express their ideas coherently, and to produce the intended outcome of the relevant writing tasks. For instance, in a typical IELTS Academic Writing Task 2, the language learners are prompted to expound on their perspective on a certain issue and to write a persuasive paragraph to support their point of view in an acceptable way. Likewise, in a regular IELTS General Training Task 2, the language learners are asked to write an essay about one of their preferred topics in order to persuade the readers into supporting their ideas.

Segalowitz (2010) noted that, the perusal of the characteristics of the Task 2 in both of the versions of IELTS accentuates the fact that the learners may experience difficulties in performing these tasks due mainly to their inadequate understanding of the second language culture, limited knowledge of the rhetorical conventions of the second language, lack of ability to use the cohesive devices in an effective way, and inadequate knowledge of the phrasal vocabulary of the target language including the *lexical bundles* among others.

As Segalowitz (2010) explained, the learners' lack of familiarity with the cultural issues may prevent them conveying their intended meanings in an acceptable way and may result in the native speakers' misunderstanding of the learners' intentions. Moreover, he pointed out that, the learners' negative transfer of the rhetorical conventions of their first language to the second language writing may have a negative impact on the coherence of their writing tasks. Furthermore, according to him, a large number of learners are not able to take advantage of cohesive devices in order to connect the various pieces of discourse to each other in a satisfactory way. As he pointed out, this issue may have a deleterious impact on the native speakers' understanding of the learners' intended meanings and their evaluation of the learners' writing competence. Finally, as he stated, the learners' lack of ability to use the phrasal vocabulary of the target language including the LBs may affect their writing *accuracy* and *fluency* in an adverse way. As he concluded, there is a need to focus on the instruction of the LBs in order to ameliorate the learners' performance of the writing tasks including IELTS Writing Task 2 in academic settings.

### **The Role of LBs in Writing**

An examination of the related literature on second language vocabulary ( Biber, & Barbieri, 2007; Lan & Sun, 2019; Shin, 2018; Staples, Egbert, Biber, & McClair, 2013) accentuates the fact that the SLA researchers have been concerned with the instruction of *phrasal vocabulary* or the *formulaic sequences*.

Adel and Erman (2012) averred that the formulaic sequences encompass the strings of words which are commonly used with each other across diverse linguistic contexts for performing specific linguistic functions. According to them, in most of the cases the joint meaning of these sequences differs from the total literal meanings of their individual vocabulary items. As they pointed out, these formulaic sequences



encompass various kinds of linguistic sequences such as *idioms*, *expressions*, and *collocations* among others. As they concluded, among the various types of formulaic sequences *LBs* have attracted considerable attention in the field of SLA.

Biber et al. (2004) defined *LBs* as the sequences of a specific number of words which are more frequently used with each other in comparison with the other word sequences across different linguistic contexts. An examination of this definition highlights the fact that it characterizes the lexical items in terms of *frequency*. Considering this definition, a number of researchers (e.g. Ellis, 2012; Ellis & Simpson-Vlach, 2009) have determined threshold levels of frequency, which range from 10 times per million words to 40 times per million words, for determining the prevalent lexical bundles in various types of corpora.

Nonetheless, the frequency criterion has been criticized due to the fact that the above-mentioned threshold levels have been determined subjectively (Grabowski, 2015). Consequently, a number of researchers (Gries & Ellis, 2015) have applied the criterion of *dispersion* for specifying the lexical items.

As Grabowski (2015) pointed out, this criterion refers to the number of texts which encompass the relevant *LBs*. As he concluded, these definitions of *LBs* highlight the fact that the SLA researchers have been concerned with their instruction.

### Teaching and Learning *LBs*

A close examination of the literature on the instruction of *LBs* (Hyland, 2008; 2012; Nesi, & Basturkmen, 2006; Rahimi Azad, & Modarres Khiabani, 2018) highlights the fact the SLA researchers have adopted the Lexical Approach to the teaching of the pertinent bundles in various settings.

The lexical approach was developed by Lewis (1993) as an approach which gave priority to the instruction of the lexical phrases including the diverse types of formulaic sequences over the teaching of its grammatical structures and functions. Lewis (1993) averred that the language instruction has to target the frequent fixed sequences of co-occurring words in both written and spoken discourse due mainly to the fact that they constitute a large portion of the native speakers' language use in different academic settings.

In his later work, Lewis (1997) provided more information on this approach in order to facilitate its implementation in the language classrooms. He expounded on four types of materials which could be used to expedite the learners' acquisition of the formulaic language including *LBs*. The first type of these materials involved the textbooks and their accompanying audio files which were developed based on the most frequent *LBs* in the native speaker corpora. The second type of the materials involved a large number of *LB*-learning tasks which were arranged based on their difficulty level and the language learners' processing capacity. The third type of the materials involved the printed pieces of corpora which could be analyzed by the learners in terms of the frequent *LBs*. Finally, the fourth type of the materials involved the software on computer platform which was used to analyze the corpora and to determine the functions of various types of *LBs* in different linguistic contexts.

The third and the fourth categories of the materials of the Lexical Approach resulted in the development of Corpus-Based Language Learning (Kim, 2009). As Grabowski (2015) noted, this approach was a more learner-centered approach to the instruction of *LBs* due mainly to the fact that it



gave priority to the learners' discovery learning in comparison with the Lexical approach. As he explained, in this approach the language learners are provided with either the printed pieces of the native speaker corpora or with the digital corpora on the computer platform and are asked to analyze the relevant corpora in order to determine the frequent lexical bundles which are used to perform various textual functions in the relevant written or spoken discourse. As he concluded, there is a need for more empirical research on the utility of the corpus-based approach to the teaching of the LBs in both second and foreign language learning contexts.

## METHOD

### Participants

The participants were 60 IELTS candidates (i.e. 25 male & 35 female) candidates who took part in the mock exam in Pardis Institute in Tabriz (Iran). These participants were randomly selected out of a pool of 150 EFL learners in line with Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) sample size determining table for research activities. These participants were of different age groups and intended to take the IELTS academic module. The willingness and tendency of the candidates to participate in the study was the key factor considered in this regard. The participants were also informed in terms of ethical issues. Moreover, they were apprised of the fact that the information they presented would be used to attain study objectives. The participants with overall scores of 4 and 5 out of 9 for Task 2 of writing were considered as the intermediate-level learners and constituted the participants. Those who received the total band scores of 4-5 were selected as the main study participants and were assigned to LB group and control group. The LB group received instructions in line with LBs in addition to the scheduled IELTS preparation course in writing. On the other hand, the control group (CG) received only the schedule of IELTS writing course.

### Materials and Instruments

#### IELTS as a General Proficiency Measure

An IELTS test that involved 25 listening items, 35 reading items, and 2 types of writing was used to examine the participants' general proficiency. The test was administered to the learners for selecting the appropriate candidates for the study. Based on the test manual and leaflet, the KR-21 reliability indices of the listening and reading sections of the test are 0.92 and 0.94 respectively. Likewise, the KR-21 reliability indices of the speaking and writing sections of the test are 0.89 and 0.87 respectively.

#### IELTS Writing Task as a Pretest

In the present study, the researchers used task 2 writing of academic module of the standard IELTS in order to examine participants' writing ability prior to onset of treatment sessions. The participants performed this task in a 40-minute period of time.

#### IELTS Writing Task as a Posttest

The researchers took advantage of another task 2 writing of academic module of the standard IELTS for examining the participants' writing ability subsequent to the termination of the treatment sessions. Similar to the writing pretest, the participants completed this task in 40 minutes.



### **Scoring Rubric for IELTS Task 2**

The study used the data on the candidates' performances on the IELTS writing pretest and posttest. These scores were the results of inter-rater method of scoring and constituted the quantitative, product-oriented data which were analyzed. The scoring rubric was the rubric that was issued by the IELTS center of the British Council. The IELTS examiners assessed an IELTS essay using the 4 criteria of task response, coherence and cohesion, lexical resource (vocabulary), and grammatical range and accuracy. Each criterion accounts for 25% of total marks for task 2. Candidates are given a band score for each criterion and a total score for task 2. Likewise, in the present study, the researchers focused on these criteria for answering the relevant research questions. These raters were IELTS mock examiners and were completely familiar with the task2 scoring.

### **Scoring**

The researchers asked two raters to score participants' writing performances. They used the manual of European Council for scoring the participants' writings. The results of analysis highlighted the fact that the inter-rater reliability index (.87) was satisfactory.

### **Procedure**

Considering the aim of the study, first, the researchers randomly selected 60 male and female language learners from among 150 IELTS candidates who participated in mock academic IELTS at Pardis institute in Tabriz (Iran) as the participants. Second, the researchers obtained written informed consent from all of the participants prior to the onset of the study. Third, they randomly assigned the participants to the LBG and the CG. Fourth, they administered the writing pretest of the study to both of these groups. The participants took this test in 40 minutes. Fifth, during the treatment sessions, LBG was provided with LB instruction for ten 90-minute sessions in a five-week period of time (i.e. 2 sessions per week). More specifically, this group received the instructions for IELTS task 2 writing in an academic module and was provided with explicit teaching of LBs in line with Hyland and Jiang's (2018) perspective on phrasal bundles. Nonetheless, the researchers took advantage of traditional language teaching for providing the participants of the CG with IELTS writing task 2 instruction and did not use the LB instruction in this group. Sixth, the researchers administered the writing posttest to both of the groups subsequent to the termination of the treatment sessions for examining the effectiveness of the treatment of the study. Lastly, they used SPSS 24 for analyzing the collected data.

### **Data Analysis**

SPSS 24 was used to perform the data analysis. Considering the objectives, Independent-Samples t-test and MANOVA were utilized for answering the research questions.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Results**

This section answers the raised questions by providing the results of data analysis:



- 1) Does teaching LBs to Iranian IELTS candidates have any significant effect on their Task2 writing performance in general?

The t-test was used to analyze the data and to answer the first research question. Table 1 and Table 2 show the descriptive statistics.

**Table 1**

*Descriptive Statistics; Pretest of Task 2 writing by groups*

	Group	N	M	SD	SEM
Pretest of task 2 writing	LBG	30	2.12	.431	.11
	CG	30	2.23	1.432	.247

**Table 2**

*Descriptive Statistics; Posttest of Task 2 writing by groups*

	Group	N	M	SD	SEM
Posttest of task 2 writing	LBG	30	4.66	.583	.107
	CG	30	3.03	1.181	.216

According to this table, LBG (M = 4.66, SD = .583) had a higher mean compared to CG (M = 3.03, SD = 1.18). Table 3 provides the results of the independent-samples t-test:

**Table 3**

*Independent-Samples t-test; Posttest of Writing by Groups*

	Levene's Test		t-test						
	F	Sig.	T	Df	Sig.	MD	SED	95% CI	
								Lower	Upper
Equal variances	14.602	.000	6.751	58	.000	1.623	.240	1.142	2.105
Non-Equal variances			6.751	42.368	.000	1.623	.240	1.138	2.108

As shown in Table 2, LBG significantly outperformed CG ( $p < .05$ ).

- 2) Does teaching LBs to Iranian IELTS candidates have any significant effect on their grammatical range and accuracy in Task2 writing performance?

- 3) Does teaching LBs to Iranian IELTS candidates have any significant effect on their lexical resource (vocabulary) in Task2 writing performance?

- 4) Does teaching LBs to Iranian IELTS candidates have any significant effect on their task response in Task2 writing performance?

- 5) Does teaching LBs to Iranian IELTS candidates have any significant effect on their cohesion and coherence in Task2 writing performance?

A MANOVA was used for comparing the LBG and CGs' means on posttests of writing components encompassing 1) grammatical range and accuracy, 2) lexical resources, 3) task response, and 4) cohesion and coherence to probe the second to fifth question. Table 3 shows the results of the Levene's test:



**Table 4***Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variances; Posttests of Components of Writing*

	Levene`s Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
Post Grammatical	10.075	1	58	.002
Post Lexical	10.300	1	58	.002
Post Task Response	13.339	1	58	.001
Post Cohesion and Coherence	16.368	1	58	.000

The results showed that the variances were homogeneous. If groups have equal sample sizes, the violation of this assumption cannot influence the results. Table 4 shows the results of the Box's test of homogeneity of covariance matrices:

**Table 5***Box's Test of Equality of Covariance Matrices; Posttests of Components of Writing*

Box's M	32.235
F	1.949
df1	15
df2	13544.526
Sig.	.015

Box's test results ( $M = 32.23$ ,  $p > .001$ ) highlighted the fact that the covariance matrices were homogeneous. The results of MANOVA are provided in Table 5:

**Table 6***Multivariate Tests; Posttests of Components of Writing by Groups*

Effect		Value	F	Hypothesis df	Error df	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Intercept	Pillai's Trace	.957	242.077	5	54	.000	.957
	Wilks' Lambda	.043	242.077	5	54	.000	.957
	Hotelling's Trace	22.415	242.077	5	54	.000	.957
	Roy's Largest Root	22.415	242.077	5	54	.000	.957
Group	Pillai's Trace	.640	19.167	5	54	.000	.640
	Wilks' Lambda	.360	19.167	5	54	.000	.640
	Hotelling's Trace	1.775	19.167	5	54	.000	.640
	Roy's Largest Root	1.775	19.167	5	54	.000	.640

The results ( $F(5, 54) = 19.16$ ,  $p < .05$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .640$  representing a large effect size) showed that there were significant differences between the LBG and CGs' means on posttests of components of



writing. Table 6 provides the descriptive statistics for the LB and control groups on posttest of components of the Task2 writing test:

**Table 7**

*Descriptive Statistics; Posttests of Components of Writing by Groups*

Dependent Variable	Group	M	SE	95% CI	
				LB	UB
Post Grammatical	LBG	4.550	.175	4.199	4.901
	CG	3.517	.175	3.166	3.867
Post Lexical	LBG	4.867	.190	4.486	5.248
	CG	3.583	.190	3.202	3.964
Post Task Response	LBG	4.700	.182	4.335	5.065
	CG	2.533	.182	2.169	2.898
Post cohesion and coherence	LBG	4.583	.161	4.262	4.905
	CG	3.117	.161	2.795	3.438

Based on the results, LBG had higher means compared to CG on posttests of all the components of writing. Table 7 shows the results of mean comparisons:

**Table 8**

*Tests of Between-Subjects Effects; Posttests of Components of Writing by Groups*

Source	Dependent Variable	Type III	df	MS	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
		Sum of Squares					
Group	Post Grammatical	16.017	1	16.017	17.391	.000	.231
	Post Lexical	24.704	1	24.704	22.741	.000	.282
	Post Task Response	70.417	1	70.417	70.701	.000	.549
	Post Cohesion and Coherence	32.267	1	32.267	41.696	.000	.418
Error	Post Grammatical	53.417	58	.921			
	Post Lexical	63.008	58	1.086			
	Post Task Response	57.767	58	.996			
	Post Cohesion and Coherence	44.883	58	.774			
Total	Post Grammatical	1045.500	60				
	Post Lexical	1158.750	60				
	Post Task Response	913.000	60				
	Post Cohesion and Coherence	966.500	60				



The results indicated that

A: The LBG (M = 4.55) significantly outperformed CG (M = 3.51) on posttest of grammatical range and accuracy ( $F(1, 58) = 17.39, p < .05, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .231$ ).

B: The LBG (M = 4.86) significantly outperformed the CG (M = 3.58) on posttest of lexical resources ( $F(1, 58) = 22.74, p < .05, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .282$ ).

C: The LBG (M = 4.70) significantly outperformed the CG (M = 2.53) on posttest of task response ( $F(1, 58) = 70.70, p < .05, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .549$ ).

D: The LBG (M = 4.58) significantly outperformed the CG (M = 3.11) on posttest of cohesion and coherence ( $F(1, 58) = 41.69, p < .05, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .418$ ).

## DISCUSSION

Question one made an effort to specify the degree to which teaching LBs to Iranian IELTS candidates influenced their general Task 2 writing performance. The results highlighted the fact that teaching LBs significantly improved these candidates' general performance on the pertinent writing task. The results corroborate the findings which were reported by Kazemi, Katiraei, and Rasekh (2014), and Shamsabadi, Ketabi, and Eslami Rasekh (2017).

Bychkovska and Lee (2017) noted that the instruction of various types of phrasal vocabulary including LBs may have an advantageous impact on language learners writing ability in various academic contexts. They explained that LBs empower the learners to organize their *thought patterns* in an efficient way and to express their intentions using various logically arranged sentences, clauses, and paragraphs. Similarly, Chen and Baker (2010) pointed out that learning diverse types of LBs helps learners to use the different structural patterns of language. They explained that LB use distinguishes the non-proficient language users' stilted writing from the proficient language users' authentic writing in various academic writing tasks including the IELTS writing tasks.

Consequently, the instruction of the relevant LBs significantly improved the IELTS candidates' general Task 2 performance since it enabled them to arrange their thought patterns and helped them to express their intended meanings with the help of logically arranged pieces of second language discourse. Furthermore, the teaching of the relevant bundles facilitated IELTS candidates' natural and native-like language use by substituting the LBs for the vocabulary items whose use results in stilted writing performance on the relevant IELTS task.

Question 2 examined the effect of LB instruction on the IELTS candidates' grammatical range and accuracy in Task 2 writing performance. Based on the obtained results, the instruction of the above-mentioned bundles had an advantageous impact on these writing aspects. These results support the results of the studies by Ahmadi, Riasati, and Bavali (2019), and Chen and Baker (2010).

As Hyland (2008) noted teaching diverse types of LBs may have a beneficial impact on the language learners' grammatical accuracy. He stated that the different categories of the phrasal vocabulary including the lexical bundles are acquired and maintained as separate units in the long-term memory. The processing of the relevant units does not depend on the learners' knowledge of the grammatical structures. That is, learners may not commit grammatical errors and make structural mistakes in the process of LB use during the performance of writing tasks. Moreover, Ren (2021) noted that the learning



of the LBs may enable the learners to use various types of grammatical structures which are beyond their current level of competence. He stated that the LBs draw the learners' conscious attention to the various grammatical structures which can be used to express certain meanings and prompt them to take advantage of them to perform their writings tasks.

Based on these issues, it can be averred that LB teaching significantly ameliorated IELTS candidates' grammatical range and accuracy in IELTS Task2 writing performance since it expedited their processing of the relevant bundles as single vocabulary items whose retrieval was not challenging in the process of task performance. Moreover, it made the learners cognizant of the range of the grammatical items which could be used to express their intended meanings and encouraged them to utilize them in the process of writing task performance.

Question three made an endeavor to examine the impact of LB instruction on the IELTS candidates' lexical resource (i.e. vocabulary items) in Task2 writing performance. According to obtained results, LB teaching had an advantageous effect on the IELTS candidates' acquisition of the relevant vocabulary items. These results corroborate the results of the studies by Mirzaei, Vinchek, and Hashemian (2020) and Dastpak, Riasati, and Hadipourfard (2021).

Staples and Reppen (2016) pointed out that the instruction of the phrasal vocabulary is likely to ameliorate the language learners' acquisition of single vocabulary items along with the phrasal lexical units. They explained that the phrasal vocabulary items draw the learners' attention to the single words which are combined to form the phrasal units including the various types of collocations and LBs and prompt them to look for their meanings and to acquire them apart from the phrasal units themselves. Similarly, Chen and Baker (2010) pointed out that LB learning makes the learners cognizant of the utility of vocabulary items in the process of writing and encourages them to make an effort to learn diverse types of words in the context of classroom.

Considering the above-mentioned issues, it can be averred that LB teaching significantly ameliorated IELTS candidates Task2 writing performance since it motivated them to focus on their individual constituent units and to learn their meanings. Moreover, it made the learners cognizant of the consequential role of the vocabulary items in writing and prompted them to make an endeavor to acquire the meanings of the pertinent vocabulary items in order to ameliorate their performance of the relevant writing task.

Question four examined the effect of LB teaching on IELTS candidates' task response in Task2 writing performance. The obtained results showed that the teaching of these bundles significantly improved these candidates task response in the relevant writing task. These results support the results of the studies by Staples and Reppen (2016) and Yin and Li (2021).

Yin and Li (2021) noted that the instruction of the various types of LBs is likely to have a beneficial effect on task response in writing tasks. As they explained, the acquisition of various LBs makes learners cognizant of their functions and motivates them to use them to arrange and to express the main ideas and their supporting details in their writing tasks. Likewise, Ren (2021) stated that LBs direct the language learners' attention to the organization of the thought patterns in the second language discourse and encourage them to use them in a native-like way.

Consequently, LB instruction significantly improved IELTS candidates' task response in Task2 writing performance due largely to the fact that it provided them with information on the functions of the



bundles and helped them to express the main ideas of the task along with their supporting details in an effective way. Furthermore, it empowered the learners to organize their thought patterns and to express their intentions in an appropriate way in the relevant tasks.

Finally, question five strived to determine the effect of LB teaching on IELTS candidates' cohesion and coherence in Task2 writing performance. The obtained results corroborate the results of the studies by Mirzaei, Vincheh, and Hashemian (2020), and Dastpak, Riasati, and Hadipourfard (2021).

As Bychkovska and Lee (2017) noted LB teaching may improve cohesion and coherence of the language learners' writing tasks. They noted that LBs make the learners aware of inter-relationships among different pieces of second language discourse and enable them to express their intended meanings in a more cohesive and coherent way. Similarly, Staples and Reppen (2016) pointed out that, LB learning helps learners to logically relate the pieces of discourse to each other and to ameliorate the cohesion and coherence of their writings tasks.

Therefore, LB teaching significantly ameliorated IELTS candidates' cohesion and coherence in Task2 writing performance since it provided them with adequate information on the relationships between the different pieces of second language discourse and assisted them to perform the relevant tasks in a more cohesive and coherent way. Moreover, it empowered the learners to logically relate the various pieces of their writing task discourse to each other and to express their intended meanings in an effective way.

### CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This study strived to determine the impact of the LB teaching on IELTS candidates' writing ability in IELTS Task 2. The obtained results highlighted the fact that teaching the relevant bundles had a beneficial impact on these candidates' general performance of relevant writing tasks. Moreover, the instruction of LBs significantly improved the candidates' grammatical range and accuracy in the pertinent task. Furthermore, LB instruction ameliorated candidates' vocabulary knowledge and task response. Lastly, learners' acquisition of the relevant lexical bundles empowered them to perform the relevant IELTS tasks in a more cohesive and coherent way.

Certain conclusions may be drawn based on these results. First, there is a need to make a number of structural adjustments to the current teacher education courses. The teacher education course developers have to revise the content of these courses and should include a certain module in the relevant courses which provides instructors with adequate information about various categories of phrasal vocabulary including LBs and informs them about the important role of these bundles in the process of the learners' writing task performance. Furthermore, the course developers should include a specific module in these courses in which the teachers can obtain sufficient information on the characteristics of the international language tests including the IELTS and the requirements of their different tasks including the writing tasks.

Second, there is a need to reinstruct teacher educators to empower them to provide prospective teachers with information on the LBs which may influence learners' writing ability on the writing tasks of international language tests. The examination of the teacher educators' characteristics shows that most of them are experienced instructors with diverse teaching certificates. Consequently, the teacher



educators are mainly concerned with the practical issues of language teaching and may not be able to raise the language teachers' awareness about the theoretical aspects of the target language including the beneficial impact of LB instruction on the writing task performance. This issue highlights the necessity of providing the teacher educators with state-of-the-art knowledge on the theoretical discussions of second language acquisition.

Finally, it can be argued that the EFL syllabus designers should redress the instructional materials of the language courses in various academic settings in both the second and foreign language learning contexts. More specifically, the syllabus designers need to add certain parts to the EFL materials that provide language learners with the opportunity to study and learn various categories of the LBs along with the single vocabulary items in authentic texts.

The previous studies of lexical bundles (e.g. Esfandiari, Ahmadi, & Schaefer, 2021; Pearson, 2021; Shahmoradi, Jalali, & Ghadiri, 2021) have focused on their functions in EFL texts and their significance in EFL learners' academic writing tasks. This study made an effort to examine a different aspect of the LBs. To this end, it investigated the usefulness of LB teaching for improving IELTS candidates' performance on IELTS writing task 2. Nonetheless, there is a need to conduct more studies of LBs to obtain adequate information on their significance in language learning. Accordingly, future studies need to deal with the mentioned problems in this study such as researchers' lack of ability to administer IELTS to the participants which forced them to take advantage of the Mock IELTS Writing Task 2 for collecting the data of this study. More specifically, the relevant studies have to involve larger samples and should control the impacts of the participants' personal, educational, and cultural characteristics on their obtained results. Moreover, they have to focus on the language learners in various academic settings including university settings. Furthermore, they need to examine the utility of the acquisition of the LBs for ameliorating the language learners' performance on the other writings tasks of the well-known international language tests. In addition, the relevant studies have to examine the effect of LB teaching on language learners' listening, reading, and speaking tasks on the above-mentioned tests. Finally, the future studies have to be carried out in diverse contexts.

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