

# Collocation Errors in English as Second Language (ESL) Essay Writing

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**Abstract**—In language learning, second language learners as well as Native speakers commit errors in their attempt to achieve competence in the target language. The realm of collocation has to do with meaning relation between lexical items. In all human language, there is a kind of ‘natural order’ in which words are arranged or relate to one another in sentences so much so that when a word occurs in a given context, the related or naturally co-occurring word will automatically come to the mind. It becomes an error, therefore, if students inappropriately pair or arrange such ‘naturally’ co-occurring lexical items in a text. It has been observed that most of the second language learners in this research group commit collocation errors. A study of this kind is very significant as it gives insight into the kinds of errors committed by learners. This will help the language teacher to be able to identify the sources and causes of such errors as well as correct them thereby guiding, helping and leading the learners towards achieving some level of competence in the language. The aim of the study is to understand the nature of these errors as stumbling blocks to effective essay writing. The objective of the study is to identify the errors, analyze their structural compositions so as to determine whether there are similarities between students in this regard and to find out whether there are patterns to these kinds of errors which will enable the researcher to understand their sources and causes. As a descriptive research, the researcher samples some nine hundred essays collected from three hundred undergraduate learners of English as a second language in the Federal College of Education, Kano, North- West Nigeria, i.e. three essays per each student. The essays which were given on three different lecture times were of similar thematic preoccupations (i.e. same topics) and length (i.e. same number of words). The essays were written during the lecture hour at three different lecture occasions. The errors were identified in a systematic manner whereby errors so identified were recorded only once even if they occur severally in students’ essays. The data was collated using percentages in which the identified numbers of occurrences were converted accordingly in percentages. The findings from the study indicate that there are similarities as well as regular and repeated errors which provided a pattern. Based on the pattern identified, the conclusion is that students’ collocation errors are attributable to poor teaching and learning which resulted in wrong generalization of rules.

**Keywords**—Collocations, errors, collocation errors, second language learning.

## I. BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

IN most languages, there exists a kind of ‘natural order’ in which words are arranged or relate to one another in sentences. In English language, this is known as collocation. Lately, the study of collocation in second and foreign language learning has been of uttermost concern to linguists

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and researchers in general. Owing to its perceived significance in second language learning, many researchers have emphasized the importance of direct teaching of collocation and as well as the need for the inclusion of collocation as a requisite aspect of English language teaching, [3], [8], [9], [12], [14], [18], [23], [27], [32], [36], [37], [42], [47]. This is because the knowledge of collocation enhances language and communicative competence, which in the long run, improve language learning leading to the achievement of native-like fluency [23]. Furthermore, it is that the knowledge of collocations result in more natural sounding formulations, improved language processing time and is more efficient in comparison to studying singular lexical items [14]. This study is concern with investigating the kinds of collocation errors produced by ESL learners who are majoring in English language in the Nigerian context.

## II. STATEMENT OF THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

Unlike the Native English language speaker, (ENL), research evidences abound in the literature that show that learners of English as a second language (ESL) and as well as English as a Foreign language learners (EFL) have problems with putting or arranging words together in a characteristic ‘natural’ native speaker-like manner during speech and writing. Collocations are concerned with words i.e. the relationship between a word and other co –words in a sentence. In other words, it deals with how a word goes together, relates, or naturally selects the other word to help define its meaning in a sentence. The seemingly lack of collocation competence among most ESL and EFL learners has been associated to a number of factors. Most studies conducted have point to the effect of native language transfer or interference, inadequate collocation knowledge and learning strategy use on the prevalence of collocation errors among ESL and EFL learners [2]-[4], [6]-[9], [12], [14], [15], [17], [19], [25], [26], [28], [31], [33], [34], [39], [40], [43], [44], [49]-[51]. For example, in their research on collocation errors of Thai EFL students, [58] studied collocation errors of Thai EFL students. They discovered that Thai EFL students with high and low proficiency have problems with English collocation formation as a result of a number of factors among which is native language transfer and use of synonym.[15] investigated Hong Kong ESL learners’ collocation production in writing and reported the effect of L1 Chinese on the use of collocation. Reference [22] studied the collocation errors in University students’ writing and concluded that the EFL students that constitute the sample make collocation errors in their writing because of the interference of their mother

tongue, lack of collocation concept, the inter lingual or intra lingual transfer, paraphrase and their shortage of collocation knowledge. Similarly, [44] investigated the uses of collocation by German EFL learners and reported the influence of L1 on use of English collocations. In Taiwan's EFL context, researchers have been devoted to the studies of collocation errors in learners' compositions e.g., [4], [10], [24], [29], [35], [53]. Similarly, [57] studied the use of collocation among Chinese students majoring in English and non – English majors. His findings indicate that the Chinese students experienced some level of difficulties with English collocations that have no LI translation equivalent. Similarly, [1] conducted a study of the lexical collocation errors in the writings of Iraq EFL learners. The findings show that Iraq learners of English as a foreign language have difficulty with lexical collocations even at the advanced stage. Furthermore, [6] investigated Polish and German EFL performance in English collocation use. The study revealed also that learners make collocation errors.

In a paper titled "Helping ESL to minimize collocation errors", [52] relates the problem of collocation error among ESL learners to the neglect of the conscious teaching of collocation in the ESL classroom. The writer suggested some ways of helping ESL Learners to minimize the errors which include teaching collocations directly. In the same vein, researchers like [14], [56] also agreed that high –frequency collocations should be taught directly. By so doing, the teacher will raise the learners' awareness of collocations. Raising awareness will involve helping the learners to notice their collocation errors in their spoken and written English and thus work towards self –correcting [56].

Despite the large number of studies on collocation errors, yet not much has been done on investigating the collocation errors of ESL students in the Nigerian context as it is been done in this research. The numerous studies cited above were largely conducted in EFL contexts as such the outcomes of such studies may or perhaps may not be applicable to the ESL students in the context of the present study. Thus, this study replicates several of such studies conducted on collocation errors in predominantly English as foreign language context. But unlike the EFL studies, the present study investigates the collocation errors of ESL students who are majoring in English language and at the same time whose medium of instruction in schools is the English language

### III. AIM AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The aim of the study is to understand the nature and kinds collocation errors found in ESL essay writing.

The objectives of the study include:

- i. To identify the number and percentages of occurrence of lexical collocation errors in the essays analyzed.
- ii. To identify the lexical collocation error pattern subtypes found in the ESL Learners essay writing.
- iii. To determine the similarities or differences in the lexical collocation errors produce by students.
- iv. To enumerate the sources and causes of the errors

### IV. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- i. What is the total percentage of the lexical collocation errors found in essays analyzed?
- ii. What lexical collocation error patterns subtypes are found in the essays analyzed?
- iii. Are there any similarities in the errors identified?
- iv. What are the sources and causes of the errors?

### V. SCOPE AND DELIMITATION

This study is concerned with the investigation of collocation errors in ESL essay writing. The study is delimited to the analysis of lexical collocation errors in the three essays that were produced by some advanced level ESL students in this study.

### VI. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

It is hoped that this study will provide useful information to teachers of ESL as well as researchers for improving teaching and research. It will also raise awareness level of second language learners regarding their collocation errors thereby working towards avoiding them.

### VII. LITERATURE REVIEW

#### A. Definition of Collocations

The definition of the term collocation is fraught with problems. The term was first used by [17] to denote the habitual co-occurrence of lexical items at the syntagmatic level (pp. 196). The word Collocation has a Latin origin i.e., 'collocare' which means to 'set in order' or 'to arrange' [37: 2].

Several other researchers and linguists attempt a definition of collocation from a variety of aspects e.g. [3], [5], [21], [23], [31], [38], [40], [50], [51]. For example, [40: 32] gave a morphological analysis of the constituent parts of the word to establish the definition where: "col- means 'together', 'with'; -loc- means 'to place or put'; -ate is a verb suffix, and ion is a noun suffix. The definition of the word collocation as it is understood from this analysis is the placement of words together. Other related definitions to the above include that of [39] whose idea of collocation is close word combination in sentence; [50] also refer to collocations as "items that occur physically together or have strong chances of being mentioned together" (p170). Similarly, [23] refers to collocation as "a predictable combination of words" [32, p. 51], refers to collocation as "the readily observable phenomenon whereby certain words co-occur in natural text with greater than random frequency" (p8). Collocation refers to syntagmatic relationships between words e.g. rotten + food = rotten food; putrid + fish =putrid fish; rancid + butter= rancid butter etc. [38, p. 5]. Reference [22] defined it as the co-occurrence of two words, independent of grammatical types and likely to take place over sentences boundaries (p18). Reference [41] also defined collocations as a habitual association of words that "co-occur with mutual expectancy" (p36).

Despite the numerous definitions provided by linguists and researchers, there is however, a general consensus towards the definition of collocation, from the [17], perspective, as partnership or natural co-occurrence of words. In the present study, collocation is also used as in the above.

### B. Classification of Collocations

The most widely referenced classification of collocation in the literature reviewed so far has been those of [5], [23], [31], who classified English collocations into two major groups: lexical and grammatical.

#### 1. Lexical Collocation:

*Lexical Collocation* is used to refer to the relations between two or more content words that "naturally" appear together in sentence. Although in English language, there are eight open/content word classes, yet only four of these collocate: noun, verb, adjectives, and adverb. For these four classes, a number of classification subtypes have emerged through studies. For example, [5] in [1] and [33] provided seven subtypes:

- i) Verb+ Noun/P (or prepositional phrase) e.g. set an alarm, break a code, lift a blockade, etc.
- ii) Adjective +Noun e.g. strong tea, best wishes
- iii) Noun1 +of+ Noun 2 e.g. a pride of lions
- iv) Verb + adverb e.g. argue heatedly, appreciate sincerely.
- v) Adverb + Adjectives e.g. deeply absorbed, closely related
- vi) Noun+ Verb e.g. bombs explode, water freezes
- vii) Noun + verb e.g. reject appeal, compose music.

On the other hand, [31, p. 133] identified six subtypes of lexical collocation and these are: Adjective +Noun e.g. a difficult decision; Verb +Noun e.g. submit a report; Noun +Noun e.g. radio station; Verb +adverb e.g. examine thoroughly; Adverb + adjective e.g. extremely inconvenient; Noun +verb e.g. the fog closed in. In other studies, [37], [11], [36] identified nine subtypes: Verb +noun (e.g. break a code, lift a blockade; Verb +adverb (e.g. affect deeply, appreciate sincerely);Noun + verb (e.g. water freezes, clock ticks; Adjective + noun (strong tea, best wishes); Adverb + adjective (e.g. deeply absorbed, closely related; Noun + noun (e.g. pocket calculator); Verb+ adjective+ noun (e.g. learn a foreign language); Adverb + verb (e.g. half understand); Verb + preposition (e.g. speak through interpreter).

#### 2. Grammatical Collocations

These are made up of combinations containing a content word, such as noun, an adjective and a function word e.g. a preposition e.g. Speak through. The analysis of the grammatical collocation errors is not however the concern of this study.

In conclusion, this study adopts the lexical collocation subtypes provided [5], because it is more comprehensive.

### C. Causes of Collocations

#### 1. Native Language Influence

Research evidences have shown that Native language/Mother Tongue transfer is a cause of collocation errors among EFL and ESL learners. Researchers and

Linguists like [1], [3], [4], [6], [7], [16], [14], [30], [31], [33], [40], [45], [48], [55], [58], [59] have confirmed using varieties of test techniques that learners' L1 collocation knowledge interferes with the learning of English collocations thereby leading to the making of errors because of the differences in the systems of the two languages.

#### 2. Learning Strategy Type

It has been reported that the use of certain learning strategy types e.g. synonym, repetition and overgeneralization by learners have negative effect on the acquisition of English collocation among EFL and ESL learners. References [7], [16], [25], [39], [47], [48], [59] reported that the EFL learners they studied tend to substitute a word in Second language with a synonym in the First Language thereby leading to errors. Although, Synonyms are words that are similar in meaning yet there are no perfect synonyms in the English language. Therefore, learners who have limited proficiency in English language use this strategy because they lack the competence. Further studies have also identified the use of repetition and overgeneralization strategies as yet another cause of collocation errors. Studies [20], [49], [19], [25] reported that due to limited competence in L2, EFL learners make use of familiar collocations repeatedly instead of using new ones. [59], study reported that overgeneralization or the extension of the use of certain L2 features to another is a source of erroneous collocation combinations among learners.

#### 3. Lack of Collocation Competence

Studies conducted by [10], [23], [28], [33], [34], [43], [52], have cited the lack of collocation competence as a major cause of collocation errors. For instance, [43] reported the learners' lack of knowledge of important collocates of a key word as a factor. In a study conducted with German-speaking learners in free written production, there were wrong choices of verb which are indicative of lack of collocation competence. In another study, [34] reported that a total of sixty –three errors were produced in students' composition out of which the verb+ noun and verb+ preposition patterns are the most frequent errors.

4. Other causes of collocation errors are: approximation, ignorance of rules restrictions, false concept hypothesized etc.

## VII. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

There are three main approaches to the understanding of collocation namely: Lexical, Semantic, and Structural approaches. However, the theoretical frame work adopted for this study is hinged on the structural approach.

### A. The Structural Approach

The structural approach is built on the assumption that a collocation is determined by its structure and occurs in patterns. As such the structural approach linguists opined that Lexis and grammar are the same and so cannot be separated. It came about as an opposition to the lexical and semantic approaches. It rejects the Lexical and Semantic approaches view of lexis and grammar as a separate entity, [13]. The

proponents of this approach opined that grammar, lexis and meaning are one. The structural approach is built on the assumption that lexical peculiarities derive their meaning from both contextual extension of a lexical kind and from generalized grammatical patterns in which they appear. To this end, they identified two types of collocation: lexical and grammatical (already explained elsewhere in this paper). Other theories include Lexical and Semantic Approaches. The structural approach is the theoretical framework, thus, adopted for this study because it is elaborate as it examines more patterns of lexical collocations and also includes grammatical analysis.

## IX. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### A. Research Design

The study adopts the qualitative research paradigm as such it is the intention of the researcher to analyze lexical collocation errors that appear in advanced level ESL students' essay writings. In this study, all the lexical collocation errors identified in the three essays produced by ESL students were underlined according to the six sub types of lexical collocations as suggested in the BBI Dictionary of English Word Combinations by [5] below:

TABLE I  
 THE SIX SUBTYPES OF LEXICAL ERRORS SUGGESTED BY [5]

| Type | Pattern                         | Examples                                |
|------|---------------------------------|---|
| L1   | Verb+ noun/prepositional phrase | Make an impression                      |
| L2   | Verb +noun                      | Reject an appeal                        |
| L3   | Adjective + Noun                | Strong tea                              |
| L4   | Noun +Verb                      | Bees buzz, bomb explodes                |
| L5   | Noun1 +of +Noun2                | A pride of lions, a bouquet of flowers. |
| L6   | Adverb +Adjective               | Strictly accurate, deeply absorbed      |
| L7   | Verb +adverb                    | Appreciate sincerely,                   |

References [54], [46] served as the reference material for determining the correctness of any collocation errors identified in the essays produced by the ESL students.

### B. The Subjects and the Study Setting

The participants were 300 advanced level ESL students from the Department of English, Federal College of Education Kano, Nigeria. They formed an intact group offering an English language course titled EDLA 205: Reading and Writing. They are multilingual and they have been studying English as a second language for the most part of their academic endeavors. The subjects were similar in age, language proficiency and language background i.e. they are all speak at least more than one native language because Nigeria is a multilingual country. It has about 300 or thereabout indigenous native tongues. Therefore, by the time a Nigerian child begins formal school, he or she must have acquired one or more native languages.

### C. The Instrument

The subjects were made to write on three essays topic at different in the class. The three essay topics are: 'A stranger

in the house'', 'the advantage and disadvantages of mobile phones'' and 'Kidnapping''. The essays were written as class work at different intervals. The students' essays were written on a single foolscap sheet i.e. two pages (front and back). The students were told that the essays are going to be used for research purposes. A total of 900 hundred pieces of essays were collected out of which 450 were randomly selected and systematically analyzed to check for various lexical collocation errors. The numbers of occurrences were counted and these were converted to percentages. For the purpose of this study, a lexical collocation is acceptable and counted as valid even if it contained spelling or grammatical error. However, lexical collocation errors so identified in an essay were recorded once even if the same kind appear severally in the essay i.e. each error in a student essay is recorded once even if the same appears twice.

## X. DATA ANALYSIS, INTERPRETATION, DISCUSSION, AND FINDINGS

The data for this study were obtained from the analysis of the lexical collocation errors in some ESL essay writing. A total number of 900 essays written by the 300 samples on three essay topics were collected. However, because of time and other uncontrolled factors, the data size was reduced to only half of the number of essays collected i.e. 450 essays were analyzed. The data analyses presented below are therefore based on the 450 essays sampled.

### A. Research Question 1: What is the Total Percentage Numbers of the Lexical Collocation Errors Found in the Essays Analyzed?

In other to answer the above question, the errors were identified, counted, and converted to percentage as seen in the table below:

TABLE II  
 NUMBER OF LEXICAL COLLOCATION ERRORS IDENTIFIED IN THE THREE ESSAYS, WHERE TOTAL N=450

| Error types | No of essays | Errors | %     | Error free% |
|-------------|--------------|--------|-------|-------------|
| Lexical     | 450          | 320    | 71.11 | 28.9        |

In Table II, it is indicated that the total number of lexical errors identified in the three essays equals 320 representing 71.11% of the total percentages while the number of correct collocations equals 130 representing 28.9%. It is evident that the ESL students in this research group commit a lot of lexical collocation errors in their essays. In response to the first research question, therefore, among the ESL students whose essays were analyzed, the lexical collocation errors featured significantly at 71.11% of 100%.

### B. Research Question 2: What Lexical Collocation Error Pattern Subtypes Are Found in the Essays Analyzed?

The Lexical Collocation Errors subtypes were grouped on the basis of the seven types provided by [5] as in Table III.

TABLE III

THE NUMBER AND PERCENTAGES OF LEXICAL COLLOCATION ERRORS PATTERN SUBTYPES IDENTIFIED IN THE THREE ESSAYS. N= 320

| Types          | Pattern Identified | No. of Occurrence | Total % |
|----------------|--------------------|-------------------|---------|
| Lexical errors | Verb + Noun/pp     | 100               | 31.3    |
|                | Noun1 +Noun2       | 67                | 20.9    |
|                | Adjective +noun    | 50                | 15.6    |
|                | Verb +Adverb       | 40                | 12.5    |
|                | Adverb+ adjectives | 28                | 8.8     |
|                | Noun+ verb         | 18                | 5.6     |
|                | Verb+ Noun         | 17                | 5.3     |

TABLE V

INCORRECT WORD FORM COMBINATIONS PRODUCED BY ESL STUDENTS IN THE STUDY GROUP AND THEIR TARGET MEANING EQUIVALENTS

| Word Form Incorrect      | Equivalent Target Meanings |
|--------------------------|----------------------------|
| Used to goes             | Used to go                 |
| Must goes                | Must go                    |
| Student more hardworkers | Hardworking student        |
| To kidnaps people        | To kidnap people           |
| To various house         | To various houses          |
| Beings experienced       | Being Experienced          |
| Both undergoes           | Both undergo               |
| Self responsible         | Self responsibility        |
| Used go                  | Used to go                 |
| Were-by students         | Whereby students           |
| With-out electricity     | Without electricity        |
| Free-follow of people    | Free flow of people        |
| Free-flow of corruption  | Corruption- free           |
| Students more neatness   | Students more neater       |

From Table III, the number of occurrences of the lexical errors and their percentage are as follows: the verb + Noun/pp occurs 100 times which is 31.3%; the Noun1 +Noun2 occurs 67 times which equals 20.9%; the Adjective + Noun pattern occurs 50 times i.e., 15.6%; the Verb +Adverb pattern occurs 40 times which equals 12.5%; the pattern adverb + adjectives occurs 28 times which equals 8.8%; the Noun + verb occurs 18 time i.e., 5.6%; and finally, the Verb+ Noun pattern occurs 17 times which represents 5.3% respectively. In the overall, the Verb + Noun/pp lexical collocation errors have the highest number and percentage of occurrence. This is followed by, Noun1 + Noun2 pattern while the Noun + verb pattern occurs the lowest. Therefore, among the ESL students in this study, the Verb +Noun/pp are the most common collocation error pattern combinations. It is therefore implied that the ESL students in this study make, to a large extent, more of the Verb + Noun/pp pattern lexical errors rather than others as indicated on the table. The lexical errors identified in these essays have been grouped under three categories as suggested by [36] in [1, p. 42] below:

### 1. Word Choice Errors

The choice of one word or both words are erroneous. Some examples of these as identified in the data collected include:

TABLE IV

WORD CHOICE COMBINATION ERRORS TAKEN FROM THE ESSAYS PRODUCED BY ESL STUDENTS IN THE STUDY GROUP AND THEIR EQUIVALENT TARGET COLLOCATION

| One-Word Incorrect    | Equivalent Target Collocations |
|-----------------------|--------------------------------|
| *Doing inspection     | Conduct inspection             |
| *Something untoward   | Something unforeseen           |
| *Bad peers            | Bad friends                    |
| *Period duration      | Time limit                     |
| *Height quest         | High demand                    |
| *Full happy           | Very happy                     |
| *Applies tales        | Recount tales                  |
| *Educational circular | Educational circle             |
| *Run and errand       | Run (an) errand                |
| *Biggest drawback     | Biggest set back               |
| *Rolled into one      | Roll in one                    |
| *There-by less        | Thereby less                   |
| *Any something        | something                      |
| *Anytime movement     | Free movement                  |
| *Copted together      | Co-opted                       |

### 2. Word Forms Errors

The errors occur when the form of the word use is incorrect, examples taken from the essays include:

### 3. Contextual Errors

Some lexical combinations are often grammatically correct but contextually erroneous and incorrect. There are a large number of these combinations in the essay of the ESL students studied in this research. Some Examples are provided below:

TABLE VI

CONTEXTUAL INCORRECT COMBINATIONS PRODUCED BY ESL STUDENTS IN THE STUDY GROUP

| Contextual Errors                 | Equivalent Target Meanings       |
|-----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| *problem caused due to            | Caused by                        |
| *Suggested to say                 | Wish to say                      |
| *plagued by mass destruction      | Thrown in turmoil/anarchy        |
| *down fall of country             | Collapse of country              |
| *reduced to high rate             | minimize                         |
| *in association to                | In association with              |
| *pay serious attention on         | To Concentrate on                |
| *almost all most Nigerians        | Most Nigerians                   |
| *the both the teacher and student | Both the teacher and the student |
| *Lack of illiteracy               | Educated                         |
| *in current years                 | In recent years                  |
| *to eat three meals               | Take three meal                  |
| *to study deeply                  | Study hard                       |
| *seriously instability            | Serious instability              |
| *highly consideration for         | High consideration for           |
| *academic help support            | Academic assistance              |
| *have not chance                  | Lack of time                     |
| *better certificate               | Good academic result             |
| *yield serious problem            | Leads to serious problem         |

### C. Research Question 3: Are There any Similarities in Lexical Collocation Errors Identified?

To a large extent, there are similarities in the kinds of lexical collocation errors commit by the subjects in this study. This conclusion is implied from the calculation of the percentage number of occurrence recorded for each lexical collocation error types each in Table II. In Table II, it is indicated that the Verb+ Noun/pp pattern occurs most and frequently in every essay representing 31.3% of the total percentage number of occurrence. This is followed by those of adjective+ noun pattern which represent 20.9%; verb + adverb patterns representing 15.6% and Adverb+ adjectives which represents 8.3% each of the total percentage respectively. The higher percentages recorded for the Verb + N/pp only indicate that most students commit this kind of error. Therefore,

because of the higher percentage of occurrence on these patterns, it can be concluded that there are similarities in the kinds of lexical errors students commit in their essays. The students' errors as manifested in the essays investigated share a 'common' feature. In other words, the same subtypes of lexical errors featured almost in all the three essays throughout the analysis.

*D. Research Question 4: What Are the Causes and Sources of the Collocation Errors?*

Based on the analysis of the data collected, the main sources and causes of the lexical and grammatical collocation error reported in this study are Native language influence, overgeneralization of rules, and lack of collocation competence. These are discussed below:

1. The Native Language Influence

In this study, it refers to Mother Tongue interference or intrusion in the learning of the target language resulting in

direct translation from the mother tongue to English resulting in erroneous combinations. A second language situation presupposes the existence of a native language, which in most cases, the learner must have perfected to a certain degree before encountering the target language. The fact also remains that there are usually a lot of differences between the two languages. As a result of these differences, therefore the ESL learner tend to think first in their Mother tongues or First language before translating their thought into the target language in speaking and writing the target language. In this study, many of the lexical collocation error produced were influenced by Hausa language, which is a majority language, spoken by almost all the students as a Mother tongue on the one hand and as a first language to others on the other hand. Several examples of these errors identified in the three essays analyzed include:

TABLE VII  
NATIVE LANGUAGE INDUCED LEXICAL COLLOCATION ERRORS TAKEN FROM THE ESSAYS PRODUCED BY ESL STUDENTS WITH EQUIVALENT TARGET MEANINGS AND NATIVE LANGUAGE SOURCES

| Native Language induced Errors              | Target Meaning                  | Native(Hausa) Language Source                    |
|---|---------------------------------|--|
| *Full happy                                 | Very happy                      | Cike da farin ciki                               |
| *No different a day pass                    | Everyday                        | Babu ranar da zaa ta zo ta wuce                  |
| *Downfall of the country                    | Collapse                        | Faduwar kasa                                     |
| *Reduced to high rate                       | minimize                        | Ragewa sosai                                     |
| *Study deeply                               | study hard                      | Karatu mai yawa/zurfi                            |
| *Adequately expel foreigner                 | Certainly drive away foreigners | ..kore/kori baki                                 |
| *Highly afraid                              | very afraid                     | Tsananin tsoro                                   |
| *Eat their three meals                      | take three daily meal           | Cin abinci sau uku                               |
| *No any body                                | Nobody                          | Babuwanimutum                                    |
| *They did not observe about their friend... | Check on                        | Basu su a kulawa/Lura da tarbiyya abokan yayansu |
| *Youth who are backed up                    | Supported by richmen            | Goyon bayan masu kudi                            |
| *All students get first period              | Attend the morning              | Su na samun darasi na farko a kowace rana        |
| *A very bad idea about                      | lessons                         | Mummunar fassara                                 |
|   | negative impression             |  |
| *Both two of them                           | both of them                    | Dukkansu or su biyun                             |

2. Overgeneralization of Rules

This is yet another cause and source of the lexical collocation errors identified in the three essays that were analyzed in this study. It is manifested in the students' over use, extension, and or overextension of morphological and grammatical rules resulting to incorrect combination of words and phrases. Some examples identified relates to the following:

a. Compounding:

A compound word is made up of two words usually separated with a hyphen. However, there are exceptions to this rule, i.e., some compounds are formed without this separation. However, the evidences from the analysis of the data show that the ESL students in this study produce incorrect compound combinations as a result of overgeneralization of rules resulting in collocation errors. Some of the examples identified include:

TABLE VIII  
WRONG COMPOUNDING TAKEN FROM THE ESSAYS PRODUCED BY ESL STUDENTS IN THIS STUDY

| Wrong Compounding     | Equivalent Target Meaning |
|-----------------------|---------------------------|
| Every- day            | Everyday                  |
| Free-follow up people | Free flow of people       |
| Head-student          | Head student              |
| There-by less         | Thereby less              |
| With-out electricity  | Without electricity       |
| Self- fish            | Self fish                 |
| Lower-class           | Lower class               |
| Free - from           | Free- from                |

3. Subject-Verb Agreement:

To ensure concord i.e. agreement in a sentence, a subject must agree with the verb in number and person. Some of these include:

TABLE IX

WRONG CONCORD COMBINATIONS TAKEN FROM THE ESSAYS PRODUCED BY ESL STUDENTS IN THIS STUDY GROUP

| Wrong Concord Combinations | Target Meanings      |
|----------------------------|----------------------|
| Must goes                  | Must go              |
| Used to goes               | Used to go           |
| their various house        | Their various houses |
| has varieties              | Have varieties       |
| Both...and...has           | Both...and...have    |
| becomes difficults         | Becomes difficult.   |

#### 4. Lack of Collocation Knowledge:

The lack of collocation knowledge is generally manifested in the students' lack of adequate and appropriate words for self expression. Some examples are provided in Table X.

TABLE X

COLLOCATION ERRORS RESULTING FROM LACK OF KNOWLEDGE TAKEN FROM THE ESSAYS PRODUCED BY ESL STUDENTS IN THIS STUDY

| Wrong Combination Resulting from Lack of Knowledge | Equivalent Target Meaning   |
|--|-----------------------------|
| ... not enough time to <u>more read</u> .          | ... to study hard           |
| ...admit students in <u>private tutor</u>          | private class/lesson        |
| ...no chance to <u>go anywhere</u> .               | Leave school                |
| <u>Impacting</u> knowledge                         | Imparting knowledge         |
| Conclusively                                       | In conclusion               |
| ...do every their <u>academic process</u>          | Conduct academic activities |
| Education <u>formats</u>                           | Education systems           |
| <u>Move away</u> from the campus                   | Vacation                    |
| ... <u>back to the</u> parents house               | school closes               |
| ...a place you <u>live at</u>                      | a place you live in         |
| ... <u>give more</u> knowledge                     | educate                     |
| .. <u>living quarter</u> home                      | living quarters             |
| <u>Highly</u> afraid                               | terrified                   |
| ...are adequately <u>attends to</u>                | looked after/cared for      |
| ...a <u>well-balanced</u> daily academic.          | routine academic activities |
| <u>Height</u> quest                                | high demand                 |

#### XI. CONCLUSION, FINDINGS AND SUGGESTIONS

This study investigated the lexical collocation errors found in the essays produced by advanced level ESL students in the Federal College of Education Kano. The findings from the analysis of lexical collocation errors identified in the three essays shows that English as Second Language learners' in this study group commit lexical collocation errors. Specifically, the lexical collocation error subtype: V+N/pp patterns featured most in the three essays analyzed. The findings from this study also corroborate earlier findings (see literature review) which confirmed the role of Mother tongue/native language interference, overgeneralization, and lack of collocation knowledge as the causes of lexical collocation errors. In this study, the Native language interferes with the target by way of transfer of and then direct translation of thoughts and ideas, carefully selected from the ESL learners 'Native language linguistic repertoire, into the target English language. In this process, words, phrases and even longer sentential elements undergo a lot of transformation resulting into erroneous combinations in the target English language especially since the linguistic systems of the two languages differ

#### XII. SUGGESTIONS

To help students to overcome and minimize the making of lexical collocation errors, the following suggestion will be useful:

1. English language teacher should raise the consciousness of learners through direct teaching of collocation. By direct and conscious teaching, the student will become aware of these errors and work towards correcting them.
2. The teacher should not only teach but also provide practice opportunity in which the students would have to put theory into practice, The constant practice with the use of collocation in real life situation will lead to perfection and the making of errors will be minimized.
3. Students should be encouraged to use English collocation dictionaries. These dictionaries are available online and can be downloaded by each student. The English teacher should encourage the students to use these dictionaries all the time.

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