



ISSN: 2617-6548

URL: [www.ijirss.com](http://www.ijirss.com)



## An investigation into the use of collocations in essay writing among English-majored students: A case study at the selected high schools in Binh Duong province

Tran Thanh Du<sup>1\*</sup>,  Au Minh Triet<sup>2</sup>,  Nguyen Le Ngoc Thy<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1,2,3</sup>Thu Dau Mot University, Vietnam.

Corresponding author: Tran Thanh Du (Email: [dutt@tdmu.edu.vn](mailto:dutt@tdmu.edu.vn))

### Abstract

Collocations, as fixed expressions of word combinations, play a crucial role in enhancing the fluency and accuracy of language production, particularly in essay writing. However, most students, especially high school students, face significant challenges when applying collocations in their essay writing. The current study investigates the use of collocations in essay writing among high school students in Binh Duong Province. Employing a mixed-methods approach, the study combines quantitative analysis of written texts with qualitative data from interview surveys. The quantitative component involved collecting and analyzing a sample of essays written by high school students, focusing on the frequency and correctness of collocation usage and errors. The qualitative aspect provided insights into students' perceptions, challenges, and strategies regarding collocation usage in their essay writing. The findings reveal a significant variation in the students' ability to use collocations correctly, with many displaying a limited range of collocational knowledge. This limitation often results in less natural and sometimes awkward expressions in their writing, thereby affecting the overall coherence and quality of their essays. The study also identifies a gap between students' passive recognition of collocations and their active application in written production. The research concludes that incorporating systematic collocation teaching into the English curriculum could significantly improve students' writing proficiency, enabling them to produce more native-like and contextually appropriate language. Further exploration should be conducted into the impact of collocation-focused instruction on different aspects of language learning such as developing students' natural and academic vocabulary knowledge, enhancing their academic writing skills, and improving the fluency of their speaking, with implications for curriculum design and language teaching practices at the tertiary level.

**Keywords:** Collocations, Essay writing, High school students, Language proficiency.

**DOI:** 10.53894/ijirss.v8i3.7167

**Funding:** This study received no specific financial support.

**History: Received:** 27 March 2025 / **Revised:** 30 April 2025 / **Accepted:** 2 May 2025 / **Published:** 19 May 2025

**Copyright:** © 2025 by the authors. This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

**Competing Interests:** The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

**Authors' Contributions:** All authors contributed equally to the conception and design of the study. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

**Transparency:** The authors confirm that the manuscript is an honest, accurate, and transparent account of the study; that no vital features of the study have been omitted; and that any discrepancies from the study as planned have been explained. This study followed all ethical practices during writing.

**Publisher:** Innovative Research Publishing

## 1. Introduction

Collocations, or fixed word combinations, are essential for mastering a second language accurately and fluently, as noted by scholars like Skrzypek [1], Siyanova-Chanturia [2] and Sonbul and Schmitt [3]. Despite their significance, defining collocations remains challenging due to their application across various theoretical frameworks and fields of study [4]. The use of collocations significantly influences the naturalness of language production. Learners use collocations to enhance their writing style, improve readability, and facilitate comprehension, providing more options and creative ways to express their thoughts. The book *English Collocations in Use: Intermediate* emphasizes that learning collocations is vital for vocabulary acquisition, offering students an opportunity to explore the culture behind these phrases. *The Oxford Collocations Dictionary* highlights that mastering collocations allows for precise expression. A limited knowledge of collocations can result in lower scores on written exams due to a lack of lexical resources.

Learning a foreign language is challenging, requiring proficiency in listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Writing is crucial for developing other language skills, and as noted by Ariana [5], it is considered one of the core pillars of language acquisition. Writing encourages critical thinking, idea organization, and reflection on language experiences. As collocational errors often occur in writing, negatively impacting its quality, understanding and instructing collocations are key to improving writing proficiency and overall language skills.

When it comes to coming up with collocations, an increasing number of learners are realizing that they are faced with an enormous amount of difficulties. Because of this, students experience feelings of worry and nervousness anytime they begin working on any kind of writing assignment, which makes it far more challenging for them to build their writing skills. As stated above, many people do believe that academic writing is the most challenging of the four skills related to the English language, and that it is impossible to employ collocations to make the process of writing more thrilling and convenient.

The absence of collocational knowledge significantly hinders students' capacity to express ideas logically and convincingly, given that writing necessitates the integration of vocabulary, syntax, and structure. The growing significance of English in international communication and academics amplifies the necessity for ESL learners to understand collocations, as expertise in this domain markedly improves their writing quality, readability, and comprehension. Addressing these challenges through targeted research and enhanced instructional techniques will equip educators with the necessary tools to assist students in mastering the intricacies of collocation usage, hence promoting superior writing proficiency and comprehensive language comprehension.

The purpose of the current study was to investigate the usage of English collocations in essay writing among high school students in Binh Duong province through the investigation and analysis of their collocational errors and interview surveys. From the collected data, the writers examine the collocation patterns utilized by the students in their essay writings, explain their errors in the usage of English collocations, and then provide a better understanding of the prevalent challenges associated with learning English collocations before offering appropriate solutions and strategies for the teaching and learning of English collocations. In directing the research, the following questions were put forward: (1) *What are common collocational errors in essay writing committed by high school students in Binh Duong province?* (2) *What are the causes of these errors?* (3) *What strategies should be adopted to help students avoid these errors in their essay writings?*

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. Definitions of Collocations

The word "collocation" originates from the Latin verb "collocare," which means "to join together" or "to combine." Deignan [6]. Linguists from around the world may agree that "collocation" refers to the appearance of two or more concepts simultaneously, noting that its defining trait is the co-occurrence of ideas. Collocations are series of words or terms that are used together, following the natural rules of language, creating fluency and accuracy in the language, as well as reflecting how native speakers use their language in reality. Regarding the current study, collocations are considered fixed phrases that play a significant role in enhancing students' English language skills, especially fluency and accuracy in essay writing.

### 2.2. Classification of Collocations

Collocations can be classified into two main categories: free combinations and idioms, with various gradations in between. Handl [7] suggests that although free combinations and fixed combinations are fundamental, a continuum exists between them.

Benson et al. [8] identify four broad categories of word combinations: free combinations, collocations, transitional combinations, and idioms (p.252).

In Bahns and Eldaw [9] framework, collocations are categorized as free combinations, fixed combinations, and idioms, with fixed combinations lying between free combinations and idioms. Fixed combinations are used literally but have more restricted combinations than free combinations.

Howarth [10] introduces the continuum model, distinguishing between free combinations, idioms, and restricted collocations, with idioms further divided into figurative and pure idioms.

Adopting collocational error analysis model, McCarthy and O'Dell [11] classifies English collocations into five broad categories:

- (i) *combination of verb + noun*, e.g., submit an assignment
- (ii) *combination of noun + noun*, e.g., a TV channel
- (iii) *combination of adjective + noun*, e.g., a tough decision
- (iv) *combination of verb + adverb*, e.g., apologize sarcastically
- (v) *combination of verb + preposition*, e.g., bounce off

Although many classifications of collocations have been proposed Handl [7], Benson et al. [8], Bahns and Eldaw [9] and Howarth [10] the current study will apply the collocational error analysis model adopted from McCarthy and O'Dell [12] and Hill [13]. The reason for choosing these five collocation patterns is that they are commonly employed in current English and are valuable for EFL students. This is the explanation behind the selection of these five patterns of collocation.

### *2.3. Roles of Collocations in Essay Writing*

When it comes to collocations, the English language is full of them, and their use has an impact on how natural language is produced. A rising number of individuals use them to express their views in a more appealing and vivid manner. As a result, the potency of collocations has become one of many academics' current interests in studying and teaching English.

It is common knowledge that collocations are an essential component of second language acquisition. They are also essential for non-native speakers of a language to accurately and fluently master the language [1-3, 14].

Benson, et al. [8] recognizing the importance of including the study of English collocations in language instruction has compelled authors of language teaching and learning products to take this occurrence into account Namvar and Ibrahim [15] concur that collocations are very significant in language production, particularly in writing, and that employing them correctly provides EFL/ESL students with a fantastic opportunity to improve their English writing abilities. Additionally, awareness of collocations is an excellent indicator of overall ESL competency [12]. This may be partly explained by the fact that the natural use of collocation distinguishes writings produced by native speakers from those written by professional or near-native speakers. As a result, adopting collocations is a vital aspect of developing language ability. This calls for the need to include the use of collocations as one of the important criteria in the current VSTEP writing rating scale, which has been issued by the Viet Nam Ministry of Education and Training.

Collocations are seen as tools that promote better writing and offer students inventive potential. As stated by Lewis [16], an important part of language acquisition is "the ability to produce lexical phrases as chunks and that these chunks become the raw data by which learners perceive patterns of language traditionally thought of as grammar" (p.1). Based on the viewpoint that the strategy for increasing vocabulary includes the use of collocations, Lewis [16] believes that vocabulary should be the top priority of English language training. Students whose writing contains frequent use of collocations will benefit from having access to this research to improve their writing and reduce the number of errors they make.

Pawley and Syder [17] it is claimed that the ready-made prefabricated units in native speakers' thoughts are one of the primary secrets underlying their language proficiency. Carter and McCarthy [18] also state that students do not need to reassemble the language every time they wish to express anything; rather, they may employ these collocations as pre-packaged building blocks. Students who do not possess knowledge of collocation often hesitate during discussions as they struggle to find appropriate expressions to communicate their views. This is also acknowledged by Hill [13], who noted that collocations facilitate thought since they enable us to find and develop complicated concepts without focusing on the structure of the words. Hill [13] also claims that students with solid ideas often receive lower scores because they are unaware of the top four or five collocations of a term that is essential to what they are writing (or speaking) about. Collocations should always be employed to represent a range of viewpoints using pre-made sentences.

It has been widely accepted that learners like using collocations to enhance their writing style because collocations may provide their language with more diversity, make it read better, and make it simpler to comprehend. Learning and using collocations is an engaging activity that may be done to alleviate the monotony and rigidity associated with writing. When writing, students will have more options to choose from and other methods to communicate their thoughts, some of which may be more creative while others may be more straightforward. Collocations are an aspect that makes each language distinct in its own unique way, which is another astonishing feature. Due to their important roles, the knowledge and ability to use collocations are essential for language learners and the naturalness of language. By employing collocations appropriately, learners not only improve their writing style and broaden their vocabulary to express their thoughts, feelings, and emotions in alternative and more vivid ways but also make their language more colorful, vibrant, precise, and native-like.

## **3. Methodology**

### *3.1. Research Design*

#### *3.1.1. Mixed-Method Application*

With the objective of investigating the use of collocations among high school students, the current study was designed to include both quantitative and qualitative approaches to data gathering and analysis processes. Regarding quantitative data, the researcher implemented a survey through document analysis to find out students' collocational errors used in their essay writing. Interviews with both student and teacher participants were also conducted to collect qualitative data related to students' usage of collocations, providing more insights into the topic under discussion, strengthening the interpretation of the data collected from the questionnaire. This design is believed to be effective as the quantitative results can be supported by insights from the qualitative data, thus contributing to the reliability of the results and the arguments raised in the study. While the qualitative approach is used to describe and analyze the errors, the quantitative approach aids in determining the frequency of these errors. The sequential explanatory design was also used, characterized by both qualitative and quantitative data. In general, the current study aims to provide deeper insights into the types of collocational errors and their causes from students' essay writings.

#### *3.1.2. Instruments*

In the current study, documents were employed and analyzed to obtain information related to these errors, and semi-structured interviews were also employed to achieve the goal of obtaining more information, which is utilized as supporting

evidence for the results of the document analysis.

### *3.1.3. Documentation*

The primary method for data collection used in the current study was documentation. Document analysis is widely used in the social sciences and humanities, and it is essential in the creation of databases for research topics [19]. This method provided authentic, spontaneously occurring data that allows for detailed analysis of collocation usage and related issues. In the current study, documentation was utilized to gather data from the essays written by high school students themselves. The errors were identified and measured using a variety of criteria, including the frequency with which they occurred as well as the percentages of various error categories. Documentation was applied as a method to identify additional potential causes of collocation problems in student writings. By examining the students' work, the researchers gained more insights into how they use collocations.

### *3.1.4. Interviews*

Semi-structured interviews were also employed to gather more in-depth information regarding the use of collocations among the participants. An interview is a type of data collection in which researchers use questions to obtain answers from one or more research participants. In a qualitative study, semi-structured interviews are often employed and are the most prevalent source of qualitative data in research. This method of data collection often involves a conversation between the researcher and the participants, led by a flexible interview process and augmented by follow-up questions, probes, and comments. The use of interviews was intended to achieve the goal of obtaining more information, which may also be obtained via the use of other types of instruments [20-22]. This method enables the researcher to gather open-ended data, investigate participants' views, attitudes, and opinions about a certain subject, and dig deeply into personal and, at times, sensitive matters [23]. In the current study, the interviews were conducted by the research group themselves. In order to efficiently analyze the interview results, all of the meetings were carefully recorded with the agreement of the participants and reexamined afterwards. The research group assured the respondents that their responses would not be used in any way other than for the purpose of the study, and they made it very clear that the data would not be used for any other reason. After completing the interview, the researchers re-listened to the audio, input the data into Microsoft Excel, and then began to analyze and contrast the various participants' comments.

## *3.2. The Setting, Subjects and Participants of the Study*

### *3.2.1. The Settings of the Study*

Five high schools in Binh Duong province were involved in the current study. Within the English language curriculum, the expectation of these schools is mainly to promote students' speaking and writing skills, as they are key to success in their later studies and work. According to the current English curriculum used in these schools, writing is among the important skills that students are required to master to prepare for their upcoming graduation exams.

The five schools were selected to ensure representativeness regarding geographical locations, teaching conditions, and diversity in student populations. More specifically, all selected schools are public schools in Binh Duong, operating under the direct management of the Department of Education and Training. In addition, the geographical locations of these schools are widespread across Binh Duong province, including suburban, urban, and rural areas.

The English teachers at these schools are considered qualified professionals, with several teachers having over seven years of teaching English. These schools frequently organize professional teaching seminars and academic activities for teachers to help enhance the quality of English teaching. Additionally, all five schools often foster the application of various new teaching methods in English classes, especially learner-centered methods. At these schools, the teachers not only teach the main curriculum but also create opportunities for the students to be regularly exposed to the English language and enhance their language skills by allowing them to participate in various foreign language-related activities such as English clubs, academic competitions, and collaborative learning projects.

Regarding the teaching conditions, the facilities are relatively well-invested to support teaching and learning English. Most classrooms of the five schools are fully equipped with modern electronic equipment including projectors, interactive boards, and audio-visual aids. Also, the library of each school provides significant supplementary document systems to enable students to research and practice outside of class. Moreover, teaching materials and learning aids are increasingly invested in these schools, enabling the creation of favorable conditions for students to comprehensively enhance their language skills. Besides the main English textbooks, a wide range of English learning reference materials and practice tests are provided for students to help them practice their English language.

In these schools, writing skills are taught by integrating a variety of exercises from sentence writing and paragraph writing to essay writing, and incorporating creative learning activities. With the focus on writing skills and active teaching contexts, the five chosen schools are suitable environments to conduct research on the use of collocations in students' English essays.

### *3.2.2. Subjects of the Study*

The subjects of the study were the totality of 200 essay papers randomly selected and generated by 12th-grade high school students (40 essays per school). These papers were submitted based on the task of writing an essay between 250 and 300 words in length given by the teachers. These students are at the age of 17 or 18 and have been learning English for at least 7 years. Their general English level is supposed to be pre-intermediate. These students were chosen due to the fact that the use of collocations is considered one of the requirements in their writing skills as stated in the objectives of the book. The

book "Tiếng Anh 12" served as the source for the essay topics, and its primary objective was to provide the students with the opportunity to practice their writing skills. The use of collocations throughout these papers was then evaluated and sorted out by the Grammarly software and later rechecked by the research group themselves. This was done in order to guarantee the accuracy and validity of the data collected.

### *3.2.3. Participants of the Study*

The interview participants involved 30 students who had previously submitted their writing papers and 20 teachers who had been teaching reading and writing courses at the investigated schools. All of these students have spent at least 7 years experiencing English courses along with other courses in the curriculum. These students are also supposed to be homogeneous in terms of their English learning conditions and share the same cultural background. As the teacher participants all have at least 5 years of experience in teaching English to these students, they are quite aware of their students' writing abilities in general and in using collocations in particular. These participants were randomly selected.

### *3.3. Research Procedures*

After being permitted by the boards of directors, the researcher gained access to the schools under investigation. As the research information was carefully explained, the research group was highly supported and provided with the most reliable data. As the objectives of the survey were clearly stated by the researcher himself right at the beginning of the survey, all of the students showed their interest and deliberation in answering the interview questions.

### *3.4. Documentation Procedures*

Adopting the error analysis theory suggested by Corder [24], the following steps are taken into consideration in the current study: (i) collecting the sample of writings; (ii) identifying the errors in these pieces of writing; (iii) classifying these errors into various types; (iv) analyzing and explaining the errors; (v) evaluating the errors and providing recommendations.

After classifying collocations errors into categories and explaining them, the Microsoft Excel version 2016 software was used to calculate the percentage of each kind of error and its causes. The results were presented via tables and charts. This stage helps draw a conclusion about collocational errors made by the students. Through analyzing those errors, the author surmised some of the reasons for the errors and suggested solutions to assist the students in avoiding committing these collocational errors.

For the classification of the data, the model of collocational error analysis suggested by McCarthy and O'Dell [11] and the content analysis technique suggested by Kumar [25] were used. Based on the model, collocations in English can be classified into five broad categories: (i) *combination of verb + noun*; (ii) *combination of noun + noun*; (iii) *combination of adjective + noun*; (iv) *combination of verb + adverb*; (v) *combination of verb + preposition*, e.g., bounce off.

As stated in English Collocation in Use (Advanced) by McCarthy and O'Dell [11], the reasoning for choosing these five collocation patterns is that they are commonly employed in current English and are valuable for EFL students. This explains the selection of these five patterns of collocation.

### *3.5. Interview Procedures*

For the interview survey, the researchers randomly selected 30 students and 20 teachers from the five schools. Due to the fact that several participants who joined the interview sessions had their own personal businesses and certain scheduling difficulties, they were each questioned separately regarding the three interview questions at a time that was convenient for them. In order to efficiently conduct the findings during the interview, the researchers recorded the meetings to examine them afterward with the agreement of the participants. The recording device used for recording interviews was a smartphone with a high-quality voice recording function, ensuring clear and complete sound capture. The researchers assured the respondents that their responses would not be used in any way other than for the purpose of the study, and they made it very clear that the data would not be used for any other reason. After completing the interviews, the researchers re-listened to the audio, input the data into Microsoft Excel, and then began to analyze and contrast the various participants' comments. After being provided with full transcriptions, interview data were then organized according to the research objectives. The author also identified and coded pertinent themes.

### *3.6. Validity and Reliability*

*For validity*, the collocation classification framework suggested by McCarthy and O'Dell [11] was used to identify and analyze the errors committed by the participants. To ensure students' full understanding of collocations and their roles in essay writing, necessary information related to these issues was carefully provided prior to the interviews. The student interviews were also conducted in Vietnamese to avoid misinterpretation of the questions, thus providing the most accurate data for the study.

*For reliability*, all of the interview participants were asked similar questions in the same order. The consistency in the questions ensures that each participant responds to the same prompts, reducing the risk of variation caused by differences in interview content and structure. Adopting a predetermined set of questions also helps minimize the possibility of interviewer bias, which reduces the effects of personal perceptions or leading questions. Furthermore, the fixed question order enhances the comparability of collected data across participants, making it easier to identify patterns and conduct thematic analysis. Meanwhile, to ensure the reliability of documentation, the researchers ensure that all students' essay papers are analyzed based on primary criteria, including collocational frequency and accuracy. The criteria are also consistent when analyzing all students' writings.

### 3.7. Ethical Considerations

In order to obtain full voluntary participation and high consent from the respondents, and for the purpose of collecting reliable data, the researcher clearly stated the research objectives and the survey procedures, assuring and making it very apparent that their responses would not be used in any way other than for the purposes of the study, and the data collected would not be linked to other data by anyone else as well.

Personal privacy was also respected by not revealing any personal information. No manipulated data were included as the names of the schools, teachers, and students were not revealed. To disguise these organizations and participants, the names of the schools were coded as S1, S2...S5; the names of the teacher participants coded as T1, T2,...T20; and the names of the students coded as S1, S2, ...S30.

## 4. Findings and Discussion

### 4.1. Results

#### 4.1.1. Results from Document Analysis

The students' essays were carefully read and studied by the author and another English teacher involved in the study. Each student's score was calculated by dividing the English collocations by the collocational errors produced by the same student. Average, mean, and standard deviation were also utilized to establish the students' collocation ability.

**Table 1.**  
Group results in English collocation ability

| Total number of essays | English collocations | Collocation errors | Average score | Mean  | Standard deviation |
|------------------------|----------------------|--------------------|---------------|-------|--------------------|
| 200                    | 252                  | 260                | 1.06          | 1.057 | 0.932              |

As can be seen in Table 1. The students' ability in the realm of collocations was an average of 1.06 and a mean of 1.057. Nevertheless, the standard deviation was 0.932, indicating that the group's collocation abilities were not close to each other. The classification of 65 cases of collocation errors by the students is presented in Table 2.

**Table 2.**  
The errors of collocation production in students' essays.

| Types              | Number of cases | Percentages |
|--------------------|-----------------|-------------|
| Verb + Noun        | 120             | 46.14%      |
| Verb + Adverb      | 12              | 4.62%       |
| Noun + Noun        | 36              | 13.85%      |
| Adjective + Noun   | 60              | 23.08%      |
| Verb + Preposition | 32              | 12.31%      |
| Total              | 260             | 100%        |

Table 2 organizes the many types of collocation errors that may be found in student writing, from the most regular to the least regular frequency of occurrence with which they occur. The vast majority of the Verb + Noun/pronoun problems (prepositional phrase) that students struggle with are readily apparent. This combination results in the highest number of errors among those generated by the production of collocations in student writings. However, collocation errors of Noun + Verb and Verb + Noun combinations are not seen. This is due to students using these combinations so seldom, and when they do, they use them properly. The type of collocation error that occurs most often is probably the one that is the most difficult or demanding for students of English as a Foreign Language to overcome. In contrast, the types of mistakes that occur at lower rates cannot be considered the easiest.

### 4.1.2. Results From the Interview

#### 4.1.2.1. Results From Student Interviews

To gain a deeper understanding of students' perspectives on vocabulary and collocations in English learning, interview questions were composed to explore their experiences, attitudes, and challenges. The interviews aimed to uncover the students' goals in learning English, their awareness of collocations, and their perceptions of the role collocations play in both general language acquisition and academic writing. The interviews also assessed how collocations are taught in their classes, how often they use them in essay writing, and their confidence levels in applying them effectively.

In response to the first question, "*What are your goals in learning English?*" students shared various motivations that reflect personal and academic aspirations. Many emphasized that mastering English is crucial for future career opportunities, particularly in fields that require international communication. Student 23 remarked "*Being proficient in English will enhance my job prospects and enable me to work in a global environment.*" Several students also highlighted the significance of English for academic success, noting its role in accessing educational resources, participating in exchange programs, and pursuing higher education abroad. Student 17 stated "*Most academic materials and research papers are in English, so improving my English skills will benefit my studies.*" Beyond professional and academic ambitions, some students viewed English as a means for personal development. Student 12 expressed "*Learning English enables me to connect with people from different cultures and broaden my worldview.*" Similarly, Student 16 underscored the importance of English in entertainment and personal enjoyment, stating that it enhances their understanding of movies, books, and online content.

Despite these varied motivations, a few students confessed that they lacked a clear and structured goal, learning English simply because it is a compulsory subject rather than a personal endeavor.

In response to the second question, *“What are your perceptions of the role of vocabulary in English language learning?”* students widely acknowledged the critical importance of vocabulary in achieving language proficiency. Many emphasized that a robust vocabulary foundation is essential for developing reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills. Student 1 remarked *“Vocabulary constitutes the cornerstone of language acquisition.”* Student 2 pointed out that vocabulary is a fundamental building block of language proficiency. Student 22 noted that it becomes challenging to construct meaningful sentences and express ideas effectively without an adequate vocabulary. Several students linked vocabulary knowledge to increased confidence in communication. Student 11 stated *“The more words I know, the more comfortable I feel when speaking and writing in English.”* This sentiment was echoed by Student 14, who observed that expanding their vocabulary enhanced their ability to participate in discussions and articulate complex thoughts more precisely. Five students highlighted that vocabulary acquisition is an ongoing process, and regularly learning new words improves overall fluency. Additionally, students emphasized the significance of vocabulary in academic settings. Student 21 explained *“Academic vocabulary is necessary for understanding textbooks and writing structured essays.”* Similarly, Student 27 pointed out that mastering a diverse range of vocabulary is beneficial for standardized tests such as the IELTS and TOEFL, where lexical variety contributes to achieving higher scores. Some students also stressed the importance of strategies for retaining vocabulary, including using flashcards, reading extensively, and practicing in context.

In response to the third question, *“How do you know about collocations?”*, the students exhibited a comprehensive understanding of collocations. Many students indicated that their teachers had explicitly introduced the notion of collocations during instructional lessons. They reported acquiring knowledge of collocations through targeted exercises or vocabulary lessons that focused on word combinations. Student 3 attributed their understanding of collocations to *“formal instruction and extensive reading”*, highlighting the importance of structured classroom education and independent study in their learning process. Similarly, Student 7 noted that participation in an English club, where he practiced conversational skills, facilitated his ability to employ collocations more naturally in spoken discourse. Additionally, three students reported that their comprehension of collocations was enhanced through peer interactions, particularly during group discussions and language exchange sessions. These students highlighted the tendency to assimilate phrases or word combinations from friends or classmates during informal conversations. Student 11 asserted that English articles and textbooks constituted the most effective resources for acquiring new collocations. In a related vein, Student 17 pointed out that reading English narratives or novels substantially contributed to the development of language skills by exposing them to collocations frequently utilized by native speakers, thus enabling their adequate comprehension and application in context. Student 4 echoed this perspective, asserting that targeted exercises and contextual learning were instrumental in grasping collocations. Student 26 remarked on the relevance of diverse English content on the Internet, particularly on social media platforms, which often featured collocations that effectively articulated opinions. Students 29 and 30 further emphasized that their exposure to collocations was significantly enhanced by watching English-language videos and films, thereby illustrating that learners often integrate their personal interests into the language acquisition process, rendering it more engaging. Students 15 and 25 indicated that their understanding of collocations was often shaped through trial and error, frequently supplemented by corrective feedback from instructors or peers.

In response to the fourth question, *“What are your perceptions of the roles of collocations in English language learning?”*, students emphasized the importance of mastering collocations as essential components of effective communication. Many recognized that collocations enhance their spoken and written fluency, allowing them to produce more natural and contextually appropriate expressions. Student 9 highlighted that *“knowing the common word combinations associated with a new vocabulary item is crucial for its correct application.”* This suggests that collocations offer a more structured approach to language learning beyond just individual words. Similarly, Student 10 noted that *“example sentences featuring collocations help in retention and practical application,”* reinforcing the idea that collocations support long-term vocabulary acquisition and contextual usage. Students also viewed collocations as instrumental in reducing errors that arise from translation. Student 19 pointed out the usefulness of bilingual dictionaries and language learning apps, which provide context-based examples of collocations, making it easier to internalize these phrases for real-life communication. Moreover, collocations were essential for improving writing and speaking skills. Student 22 explained that using collocations correctly helps convey ideas more precisely and fluently, reducing hesitation when speaking and enhancing the coherence of written texts. Several students agreed that recognizing collocations in listening and reading materials allows them to process information more quickly, as they can predict meanings based on familiar word combinations. Students perceived collocations as crucial for bridging the gap between vocabulary knowledge and practical language use. Mastering collocations is seen as a way to enhance accuracy, fluency, and comprehension, making communication more natural and improving the sophistication of academic writing.

In response to the fifth question, *“What are your perceptions of the roles of collocations in essay writing?”*, the findings indicate a strong consensus among the participants regarding the importance of collocations in producing natural and fluent written texts. Most of the students emphasized that collocations are essential for enhancing the naturalness and fluency of their essays. Students acknowledged that collocations significantly contribute to the overall flow of their writing, making it more idiomatic and less mechanical. Many participants noted that understanding and using collocations improved their essays' fluency and made them more engaging for readers. Student 5 stated, *“Collocations play a critical role in enhancing the fluency and readability of written texts,”* emphasizing that the appropriate use of collocations adds to the coherence and sophistication of academic writing. Many students highlighted that collocations help them avoid awkward or unnatural phrases that may result from direct translation from Vietnamese. Student 6 stressed the importance of effective written

communication, stating that collocations “allow writers to express ideas more succinctly and accurately.” Students made several additional points regarding the roles of collocations. Student 8 noted, “Collocations improve the quality of my essays by making them more cohesive.” Expressions like “reach a decision” or “handle an issue” enable readers to understand and follow the text more easily. Moreover, many students acknowledged that collocations are necessary for exam preparation. Student 13 mentioned that understanding various collocations is crucial for achieving higher scores on exams like the IELTS, as it demonstrates a firm grasp of English vocabulary, allowing the writing to stand out and sound more advanced. Student 15 emphasized that one of the key benefits of collocations is the time they save writers when composing essays, as they eliminate the need to think about which phrases naturally go together. More than half of the students interviewed agreed that using collocations would enrich, diversify, and formalize their writing, making it sound more scholarly. Additionally, fifteen students noted that studying and applying collocations helped them enhance their vocabulary in practical ways. Student 16 illustrated that collocations provide learners with ready-made expressions that can be easily incorporated into their writing.

In response to the sixth question, “How are collocations taught in your English classes?”, students provided diverse insights regarding the extent and effectiveness of collocation instruction. Some students mentioned that their teachers introduced collocations during vocabulary lessons but did not offer explicit or systematic instruction. Student 23 noted “Collocations are often highlighted in reading materials, but we do not have specific lessons dedicated to them.” Similarly, Student 16 indicated “Collocations appear in textbooks, but teachers rarely focus on them unless students request clarification.” Several students acknowledged that they learned collocations through textbook exercises, although they felt these activities were often limited in scope. On the other hand, some students described a more structured approach to teaching collocations. Student 3 stated “During language classes, I was introduced to the concept of collocations as recurrent word combinations that contribute to natural language use.” Student 12 mentioned “Our teacher includes collocation-focused exercises in writing practice, which helps us understand how to use them naturally.” Student 18 highlighted that their instructor emphasized collocations through contextual learning, incorporating real-life examples and sentence-building activities. Additionally, some students pointed out that peer discussions and group work were essential in reinforcing their understanding of collocations. However, a few students expressed frustration and wished for more targeted practice and feedback on their collocation usage.

In response to the seventh question, “How often do you use collocations in your essay writing?”, students provided various answers based on their confidence levels, exposure, and the support they received in instruction. Some students reported using collocations frequently, stating they actively included them in their essays to enhance fluency and coherence. For example, Student 7 mentioned that he consciously incorporates collocations into his writing as often as possible. Student 17 said “Using collocations naturally enhances my writing and makes my arguments more persuasive”. These students credited their proficiency with collocations to regular practice and the familiarity gained from reading and writing exercises. In contrast, several students admitted to using collocations only occasionally or inconsistently. Student 13 noted “I use collocations when I remember them, but sometimes I struggle to recall the right combinations while writing under time pressure”. Similarly, Student 19 explained “I know collocations are important, but I often hesitate to use them because I am not always sure if I am using them correctly”. These responses suggest that a lack of confidence and limited exposure hinder students from fully utilizing collocations in their essay writing. Additionally, some students revealed that they rarely or seldom used collocations in their essays. Student 23 acknowledged “I do not pay much attention to collocations while writing because my focus is more on grammar and content”. Some students also mentioned that their teachers did not emphasize collocations during writing instruction, making it less likely for them to prioritize their use.

In response to the eighth question, “How confident are you in using collocations in your essay writing?”, students expressed varying confidence levels. Some students, like Student 7, reported a deliberate effort to incorporate collocations, noting that “consistent practice and awareness of common collocations have improved the fluidity and persuasiveness of my academic arguments.” Others supported this viewpoint, stating that exposure to collocations through reading, writing tasks, and classroom activities helped internalize these word combinations. Student 12 highlighted that writing multiple drafts and receiving teacher feedback improved their ability to use phrases correctly. Participation in English clubs or online writing forums also allowed students to practice and enhance their confidence in collocations. For these students, collocations became a natural extension of their vocabulary, relying on their prior knowledge and experience during essay writing. Conversely, many students reported difficulties with collocations, which diminished their confidence. Student 8 admitted to challenges with consistent use, feeling uncertain about correct word pairings. Student 11 recognized common collocations during reading exercises but struggled to recall them under time pressure. Similarly, Student 24 noted the difficulty of distinguishing between similar collocations, leading to hesitation. Around one-third of the interviewed students mentioned that their confidence in using collocations depended on the support and resources available to them. Those with access to structured collocation lists, practice exercises, and clear examples in textbooks or online resources felt more confident using these phrases effectively. Student 17 emphasized the importance of instructor support, stating that extensive explanations and corrections in writing courses helped him grasp the complexities of collocations. Fifteen out of thirty students identified context and familiarity as additional factors influencing their confidence. They felt more comfortable using collocations related to everyday themes than academic or formal contexts. Understanding the settings where certain collocations are used boosted their confidence, enabling them to choose appropriate expressions more accurately. This highlights the significance of exposure to various contexts in developing expertise.

#### 4.1.2.2. Results from Teacher Interviews

To gain deeper insights into teachers' perspectives on the roles of collocations in English language learning, especially in essay writing, as well as their students' ability to use collocations, a set of eight interview questions was applied in



interviews with teachers. The interviews aim to discover teachers' essay writing teaching experiences, their awareness of collocations, and perceptions of the roles of collocations in various aspects, including general language acquisition and academic writing. The interviews also focused on investigating students' ability to use collocations, common types of collocation errors that students make, as well as their causes. Common collocation teaching approaches and strategies to help students avoid collocation errors in essay writing were also discovered through these interviews.

In response to the first question *"How long have you been teaching essay writing?"*, interviews with 30 teachers revealed a diverse range of professional backgrounds. Many teachers indicated that they had been teaching English for several years before focusing on essay writing. More specifically, one teacher mentioned starting to teach essay writing after five years of teaching English. Some teachers have extensive expertise, including a few with over 20 years of experience in essay instruction, while others are relatively new to the field, with teaching experience spanning between 2 and 6 years.

In response to the second question, *"What are your perceptions of the roles of collocations in English language learning?"*, findings from the interviews highlighted the significant role collocations play in English language learning in these teachers' perceptions. Several teachers noted that collocations contribute to a deeper understanding of the English language and its cultural nuances. One participant remarked, *"Learning collocations can be seen as learning the culture of native English speakers through their habitual language use."* Another teacher noted that mastery of collocations improved comprehension, making it easier for learners to align their language use with that of native speakers. Besides, many teachers believed that collocations were vital for improving vocabulary retention and development, with some mentioning that learning words in phrases is more effective than memorizing single words. This approach not only aids students in remembering vocabulary better but also helps them understand the cultural aspects of the language. One teacher even suggested that learning collocations brought students closer to how native speakers use the language.

In response to the third question, *"What are your perceptions of the roles of collocations in essay writing?"*, data collected indicates that many interviewees emphasized the contribution of collocations to the overall quality of essays as well as their critical role in enhancing essay writing. For instance, one teacher pointed out *"Effective use of collocations enhances the precision of an essay and mitigates potential misunderstandings."* One teacher remarked *"Using appropriate collocations can improve coherence and clarity,"* explaining that collocations enhance students' writing skills by helping them create more effective arguments and express their thoughts more clearly. Participants also noted that collocations significantly contributed to the naturalness and fluency of students' writing, making it sound more native-like. One participant stated *"Collocations make essays natural and impressive"* while another confirmed *"Using collocations skillfully demonstrates writers' fluency and proficiency in English."* They asserted that using the right collocations could make essays sound more professional and polished, stressing collocations' significance in an academic context. Collocations play a crucial role in essay writing by enhancing fluency and naturalness, making the writing sound more polished and sophisticated. One teacher remarked *"An essay that employs appropriate collocations demonstrates the writer's proficiency in expressing their ideas."* The majority of the teachers believed that collocations improved coherence and cohesion, enabling students to convey complex ideas in a structured and understandable manner. They noted that effective use of collocations could lead to clearer and more academic writing. This sentiment echoed throughout the interviews, with respondents emphasizing the importance of using appropriate word combinations to enhance clarity and coherence in writing. Several teachers highlighted that collocations enriched vocabulary and improved writing, making students' language use more meaningful.

In response to the fourth question, *"What do you think about your students' ability to use collocations in essay writing?"*, answers from teachers are varied, with many concerns about students' inconsistent use of collocations in essay writing. One teacher stated, *"Some students seem to have a good grasp of collocations and use them to enhance their arguments."* Meanwhile, many others noticed that a considerable number of students struggled with using collocations. One teacher explained, *"Some of the students attempt to use collocations, but they don't always get them right."* Another noticed, *"Some of my students focus more on simple vocabulary and grammar structures rather than collocations."*

In response to the next two questions, *"What types of collocation errors do your students often make in their essay writings?"* and *"What are the causes of these errors?"*, the responses identified common collocation errors that revealed challenges faced by students. According to these teachers, students often made verb-noun mismatches, such as saying "make a decision" instead of the correct phrase "make a decision". Students frequently "translate collocations directly from their native language", which results in phrases like "I teach English to children" instead of the correct "I teach English to children". This tendency highlights the need for targeted instruction on appropriate collocational pairings. Errors also occur in adjective-noun combinations, where students might say "heavy rain" instead of "heavy rain", or "great opportunity" rather than "great opportunity". Incorrect preposition usage is another common mistake; students might mistakenly say "discuss" instead of simply "discuss", or "depend on" rather than the correct "depend on". As mentioned by participants, these errors often stem from a lack of familiarity with English collocations, leading to awkward or unnatural phrasing that detracts from the overall clarity of their essays. One participant stated, *"Without a strong knowledge of collocations, students' writing can sound awkward or unnatural."* Another significant issue is first language interference, where students apply elements of their first language, Vietnamese, to their English writing. One teacher reported, *"My students probably transfer English collocations to equivalent Vietnamese collocations."* The interview results further underscored the necessity for explicit instruction in collocations within the writing curriculum, with participants unanimously agreeing on the value of integrating collocation training. They advocated for teaching common collocations and recommended providing resources, such as collocation books, to support this instruction.

In response to the seventh question, *"How are collocations taught in your classes?"*, findings indicate that collocations are not systematically instructed in their classes. One teacher explained, *"Our curriculum focuses more on grammar and vocabulary. We don't have specific lessons on collocations."* Another teacher admitted, *"I usually detect and correct my*

*students' collocation mistakes in their essays, but I don't have enough time in class to systematically teach collocations.*" Consequently, students are often left to learn collocations without structured guidance, resulting in their reliance on translation from the first language and intuition for their language use. Many teachers also admitted that students need more explicit instruction and practice on collocations to avoid mistakes in language use.

In response to the last question, "*What are your strategies to help students avoid collocation errors in essay writing?*", teachers shared various methods to assist students with collocations. Many emphasized the importance of using collocation dictionaries. One teacher stated, "*I often introduce my students to collocation dictionaries to help them find appropriate combinations independently.*" This suggests that such tools can aid students in their self-directed learning. Using authentic reading materials, such as essays and academic articles, was another highlighted method. By examining collocations in context, students can see how words naturally fit together. One teacher noted, "*I use authentic reading materials to show students how collocations appear in context.*", emphasizing the value of learning from real examples.

To further assist students' improvement, some teachers provided feedback on errors related to collocations to clarify correct usage. Hands-on exercises, such as gap-fill activities and sentence rewriting, were also important components of their teaching. One teacher mentioned, "*After teaching a set of collocations, I ask students to write short essays.*" This practice reinforces their learning and encourages students to incorporate collocations into their writing.

## 4.2. Discussion

### 4.2.1. Collocation Errors and Causes

Document analysis reveals that the students' collocation ability was not similar, as responses collected from interviews with teachers and learners demonstrate that a considerable number of students struggle to use collocations properly, aligning with the research by Phuong [26] and Dang and Nguyen [27].

Regarding the first research question "*What are common collocational errors in essay writing committed by high school students in Binh Duong province?*", results from document analysis and the interviews indicate that students in this study make the most common mistakes with verb-noun collocations, followed by adjective-noun combinations and prepositional phrases. These errors, categorized into various types, highlight the complexities students face when attempting to use English collocations correctly. These types of collocations are crucial in essay writing, as they significantly affect the coherence and clarity of the text [28]. The students often made errors by using incorrect verbs with nouns (e.g., *make* a mistake vs. *do* a mistake), which are essential for constructing meaningful and grammatically correct sentences and can confuse the reader and disrupt the flow of the essay [28]. These errors stem from the students' tendency to translate directly from Vietnamese to English, leading to inappropriate collocational choices. The misuse of adjectives with nouns such as *strong tea* being replaced by *powerful tea* also illustrates a lack of awareness of the naturalness and frequency of certain word combinations in English. Besides, the incorrect application of prepositions in prepositional phrases like *in the weekend* instead of *on the weekend* further complicates the students' writing, making it less precise and sometimes difficult to understand. This reveals students' challenges in mastering the subtle nuances of English prepositions. The types of collocational errors found in this study are also found to be the types of collocations English language learners usually misuse in the work of Do and Le [29], Hong et al. [30] and Kamarudin et al. [31]. This reinforces the popular issue of difficulties with collocations in second language acquisition.

The second research question "*What are the causes of these errors?*" is addressed by examining the underlying factors contributing to the students' difficulties with collocations and the causes of collocation errors committed by high school students in essay writing. Research results indicated that the occurrence of collocation errors in essay writing among high school students can be attributed to a variety of underlying factors, among which are native language influence, limited collocational exposure, synonymous usage, overgeneralization, and approximation.

### 4.2.2. Perceptions of the Roles of Collocations in Essay Writing

#### 4.2.2.1. Student's Perceptions

The insights gathered underscore the importance of collocation competence in enhancing students' writing skills and overall academic performance. Students recognize that the use of collocations facilitates smoother transitions between ideas, thereby improving the clarity and organization of their work. They noted that employing natural word combinations keeps readers engaged and aids in articulating their arguments more effectively, especially in essays that require logical progression. Although collocations are introduced in English classes, their instruction is often incidental. As indicated by Alsehibany and Abdelhalim [32], many students depend on exposure through reading and indirect learning rather than systematic teaching, which creates a gap that undermines their confidence in utilizing collocations in their writing. Students expressed a desire for more structured learning opportunities. This desire aligns with research indicating that explicit instruction is crucial for second-language acquisition. Those who participated in targeted activities and received instructor feedback reported greater ease and confidence in applying collocations. The variation in students' responses also reveals differing levels of awareness and confidence regarding collocations. Frequent users, often exposed to collocations through reading or structured exercises, integrate them naturally into their writing, resulting in more fluent essays. In contrast, those with limited exposure struggle with recall and application, highlighting the need for explicit instruction to internalize collocation patterns.

#### 4.2.2.2. Teachers' Perceptions

The findings also highlight the significant role that collocations play in English language learning. Interviewed teachers strongly agree that collocations are essential for achieving naturalness in using language. They emphasize the importance of using appropriate word combinations to enhance clarity and coherence in writing. Collocations are also mentioned as

contributing to a deeper understanding of the English language and its cultural nuances. This perspective highlights that mastering collocations not only aids in language proficiency but also enriches cultural understanding [33]. These findings have shown alignment between the participants' perceptions and the proven key role of collocations in previous studies [1-3].

Teachers' responses also indicated that collocations were vital for improving vocabulary retention and the overall quality of essays. This underscores the direct impact of collocational knowledge on a learner's ability to communicate ideas effectively and accurately. Collocations were not merely frequent word combinations but were integral to achieving idiomatic and contextually appropriate language use. [34]. The interviews provided compelling evidence that collocations played a crucial role in English language learning and essay writing. In the view of Webb and Kagimoto [35], collocations enhanced fluency and coherence, enriched vocabulary and cultural understanding, and ultimately led to more effective communication. Teachers' perceptions indicated that collocations play an essential role in vocabulary development. They not only aid students in remembering vocabulary better but also help them understand the cultural aspects of the language.

Findings from the research provide practical insights into what teachers think about their students' use of collocations in their writing. In spite of a few reports of accurate collocation usage by some students, the majority of the interviewees show concerns regarding students' collocation misuse and limited use of collocation in writing essays. This issue raises a need for more effective teaching of collocations for students' learning.

Teachers' responses illustrate that, in their teaching practice, collocations are not the central focus, and most of them are aware that collocations are insufficiently taught mainly due to the lack of time and focus in the teaching curriculum. This results in students' limited understanding of collocation usage and mistakes in their writing. Teachers shared a variety of strategies for teaching collocations, which are essential for achieving clear and coherent writing. One important point that emerged during the interviews is the necessity for direct instruction on collocations relevant to the topics students are writing about. The importance of reading widely was emphasized, with teachers encouraging students to engage with authentic English texts, such as articles and news stories. This exposure enables students to observe how collocations are used in real-life contexts, enhancing their vocabulary and understanding [36]. Teachers identified valuable resources, including collocation dictionaries and subject-specific collocation lists. These tools are crucial for improving students' writing skills.

#### *4.2.2.3. Strategies*

To enhance collocational usage and address the root causes of collocation errors in high school students' essay writing, a comprehensive and integrative approach is necessary. It begins with raising students' awareness of the significance of collocations in essay writing and developing effective vocabulary learning strategies tailored to their individual needs and learning styles [33]. Teachers play a pivotal role in this process by actively training students in these strategies, ensuring they are contextually embedded within regular classroom activities. In the view of Duong and Nguyen [37] presenting collocations in meaningful contexts not only aids retention but also reinforces their practical application, making them more accessible to students. Encouraging students to engage with English outside the classroom—through extensive reading, listening, and the use of multimedia resources—further enhances their exposure to natural language use, thereby improving their collocational competence.

To effectively address the various causes of collocation errors, instructional methods must be coupled with active student engagement. For instance, the English language curriculum should prioritize the explicit teaching of collocations, integrating them into all language skills with a particular focus on writing. Teachers should be trained to emphasize the importance of collocations, providing ample practice opportunities through authentic texts and exercises that highlight common collocations. As indicated in Bui [38] to counteract the negative influence of the native language, educators should implement contrastive analysis, helping students recognize differences between their first language and English collocational patterns. This can be further supported by presenting common collocation errors and providing corrective feedback, which not only highlights discrepancies between the two languages but also fosters an environment where students become more vigilant in their language production. On the other hand, drilling is also a useful technique for teachers to adopt in their classes as it can aid in forming language patterns, contributing to instilling correct language habits [39]. Thus, integrating the drilling technique focusing on forms with other meaningful communicative activities focusing on writing can foster students' retention and correct use of collocations.

Addressing the misuse of synonymous words requires guiding students to understand that not all synonyms are interchangeable in collocations. Teachers can design exercises that focus on identifying and practicing correct collocations with various synonyms, reinforcing the importance of context in word choice. Encouraging the use of collocation dictionaries and other resources can also assist students in making more informed decisions [40]. To prevent overgeneralization, it is essential for students to develop a deeper understanding of the nuances of English collocations. Teachers can introduce activities that compare and contrast similar collocations, helping students discern the specific contexts in which each is appropriate. In the view of Ellis et al. [41], providing targeted feedback on their writing, especially on common overgeneralizations, can refine students' understanding and usage of collocations. Finally, addressing the issue of approximation involves encouraging students to slow down and think critically about the collocations they use, rather than relying on approximate translations or guesses [40]. Proofreading strategies focused on collocation accuracy and peer review sessions can offer students additional perspectives, further enhancing their writing skills [38]. By employing these strategies, educators can help students overcome the challenges that lead to collocation errors, ultimately improving their overall language proficiency and writing quality and contributing valuable insights for future studies.

#### 4.2.2.4. Implications for language education

As the causes for the identified common collocation errors have thoroughly been investigated in this study, useful strategies and methods have been suggested to help students avoid these errors. The effectiveness of each method frequently relies on students' proficiency levels. Explicit teaching is often helpful for low-level learners, but high-level students will end up learning better under implicit forms [35]. Regarding the retention and transfer aspect, explicit instruction may lead to greater immediate acquisition, but implicit approaches might result in deeper retention and greater ability to produce collocations flexibly in novel contexts [42]. Therefore, the integration of implicit and explicit methods and the use of technology-supported learning tools into language classrooms is recommended. Teachers can design tasks providing both meaningful exposure and focused practice, such as pre-teaching collocations and reading tasks. Regarding materials development, it is worth noticing that collocations should be introduced in specific contexts. All of these approaches complement each other, contributing to reinforce learners' collocation knowledge and usage consciously and subconsciously. This not only supports long-term retention but also improves learners' ability to use accurate word pairings in different contexts. As a result, it can be said that the combination of explicit explanation and meaningful exposure is the key for more effective vocabulary learning outcomes.

## 5. Conclusion

The study of collocation errors in essay writing among high school students reveals that verb-noun combinations are particularly problematic, reflecting broader issues within the context of the Vietnamese Ministry of Education and Training's standard curriculum. These errors are primarily attributed to a lack of collocational exposure, substantial native language influence, tendencies toward overgeneralization, and reliance on approximation and synonymy. The evidence indicates that students frequently encounter difficulties in accurately employing collocations due to these factors, with native language interference often leading to incorrect usage patterns in English. It is indeed possible that these causes are related to the fact that each student's capabilities and experiences with employing collocations are distinct. There is ample proof of native language influence among Vietnamese high school students. Despite the fact that Vietnamese and English are quite different languages, some of the traits of Vietnamese have been observed in English. Based on these results of the study and related literature review, the researcher recommends several strategies and principles that both teachers and students can use to improve their students' vocabulary learning based on the findings of the study, which include (i) *raising students' awareness of the roles of collocations in essay writing*; (ii) *developing effective vocabulary learning strategies for the students*; (iii) *presenting collocations in context*

- Funding Disclosure: This research received no external funding.
- Ethical Approval: The authors are always honest, rigorous, transparent, respectful, and protective of participants, and they adhere to accepted ethical standards of real research. If ethical approval has not been obtained, the authors are responsible for any statements that may be made.
- Author contributions: All authors participated in the paper, reviewed the analysis, discussed, and assigned tasks.

## References

- [1] A. Skrzypek, "Phonological short-term memory and L2 collocational development in adult learners," *EUROSLA Yearbook*, vol. 9, no. 1, pp. 160-184, 2009. <https://doi.org/10.1075/eurosla.9.09skr>
- [2] A. Siyanova-Chanturia, "Collocation in beginner learner writing: A longitudinal study," *System*, vol. 53, pp. 148-160, 2015.
- [3] S. Sonbul and N. Schmitt, "Explicit and implicit lexical knowledge: Acquisition of collocations under different input conditions," *Language Learning*, vol. 63, no. 1, pp. 121-159, 2013. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9922.2012.00730.x>
- [4] N. Nesselhauf, "The use of collocations by advanced learners of English and some implications for teaching," *Applied linguistics*, vol. 24, no. 2, pp. 223-242, 2003. <https://doi.org/10.1093/applin/24.2.223>
- [5] S. M. Ariana, "Some thoughts on writing skills," *Annals of the University of Oradea, Economic Science Series*, vol. 19, no. 1, 2010.
- [6] A. Deignan, "Corpus-based research into metaphor," *Researching and Applying Metaphor*, vol. 177, 1999. <https://doi.org/10.1017/cbo9781139524704.012>
- [7] S. Handl, "Essential collocations for learners of English: The role of collocational direction and weight," *Phraseology in Foreign Language Learning and Teaching*, pp. 43-66, 2008. <https://doi.org/10.1075/z.138.06han>
- [8] E. Benson, E. Benson, and R. Ilson, *Lexicographic description of English*. Van Haren Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.1075/slcs.14>, 1986.
- [9] J. Bahns and M. Eldaw, "Should we teach EFL students collocations?," *System*, vol. 21, no. 1, pp. 101-114, 1993. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0346-251X\(93\)90010-E](https://doi.org/10.1016/0346-251X(93)90010-E)
- [10] P. Howarth, "Phraseology and second language proficiency," *Applied linguistics*, vol. 19, no. 1, pp. 24-44, 1998. <https://doi.org/10.1093/applin/19.1.24>
- [11] M. McCarthy and F. O'Dell, *English collocations in use*. Cambridge University Press, 2008.
- [12] M. McCarthy and J. O'Dell, "Why good language teachers should take collocations seriously," *World of Better Learning*, 2018.
- [13] J. Hill, "Revising priorities: From grammatical failure to collocational success. In M. Lewis (Ed.), *Teaching collocation*." London: Language Teaching Publications, 2000, pp. 47-67.
- [14] M. M. Jaén, "A corpus-driven design of a test for assessing the ESL collocational competence of university students," *International journal of English studies*, vol. 7, no. 2, pp. 127-148, 2007.
- [15] F. Namvar and N. Ibrahim, "Construction of collocations in the writing of postgraduate students," *International Journal of Arts & Sciences*, vol. 7, no. 2, pp. 487-497, 2014.
- [16] M. Lewis, *Teaching collocations: Further development in the lexical approach*. Oxford University Press, 2000.

- [17] A. Pawley and F. H. Syder, "Two puzzles for linguistic theory: Nativelike selection and nativelike fluency. In J. C. Richards & R. W. Schmidt (Eds.)." London, England: Language and Communication, 1983, pp. 191-225.
- [18] R. Carter and M. McCarthy, *Vocabulary and language teaching*. London: Longman, 1988.
- [19] G. A. Bowen, "Document analysis as a qualitative research method," *Qualitative Research Journal*, vol. 9, no. 2, pp. 27-40, 2009.
- [20] J. W. Creswell, *Educational research: Planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research*, 4th ed. Boston, MA: Pearson, 2012.
- [21] L. R. Harris and G. T. Brown, "Mixing interview and questionnaire methods: Practical problems in aligning data," *Practical Assessment, Research & Evaluation*, vol. 15, no. 1, 2010.
- [22] M. M. N. H. Ja'ashan, "Perceptions and attitudes towards blended Learning for english courses: A case study of students at University of Bisha," *English Language Teaching*, vol. 8, no. 9, pp. 40-50, 2015. <https://doi.org/10.5539/elt.v8n9p40>
- [23] M. DeJonckheere and L. M. Vaughn, "Semistructured interviewing in primary care research: A balance of relationship and rigour," *Family Medicine and Community Health*, vol. 7, no. 2, p. e000057, 2019. <https://doi.org/10.1136/fmch-2018-000057>
- [24] S. P. Corder, "The significance of learners' errors," *International Review of Applied Linguistics in Language Teaching*, vol. 5, pp. 161-170, 1967. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1515/iral.1967.5.1-4.161>
- [25] R. Kumar, *Research methodology: A step-by-step guide for beginners*, 3th ed. New Delhi: Sage, 2011.
- [26] D. T. Phuong, "Collocations in New Headway Pre-Intermediate' and common errors in English collocations by non English major students at Hanoi university of science and technology," Unpublished Master Thesis. University of Languages and International Studies, Hanoi, Vietnam, 2012.
- [27] T. B. D. Dang and D. Nguyen, "Difficulties in understanding and applying collocations in writing of English-majored juniors at a university in the Mekong delta, Vietnam," *European Journal of English Language Teaching*, vol. 7, no. 3, 2022. <https://doi.org/10.46827/ejel.v7i3.4329>
- [28] B. N. Sari and I. Gulö, "Observing grammatical collocation in students' writings," *TEKNOSASTIK* vol. 17, no. 2, p. 25, 2019. <https://doi.org/10.33365/ts.v17i2.325>
- [29] N. H. M. Do and Q. T. Le, "Lexical collocation errors in essay writing: A study into Vietnamese EFL students and their perceptions," *International Journal of Language Instruction*, vol. 2, no. 2, pp. 1-20, 2023. <https://doi.org/10.54855/ijli.23221>
- [30] V. T. T. Hong, T. T. T. Quyen, T. T. T. Nhu, L. T. M. Duyen, and T. T. T. Yen, "An investigation into the use of collocations in academic essays of english-majored students of the high-quality program at can Tho University, Vietnam," *European Journal of English Language Teaching*, vol. 7, no. 6, 2022. <https://doi.org/10.46827/ejel.v7i6.4540>
- [31] R. Kamarudin, S. Abdullah, and R. A. Aziz, "Examining ESL learners' knowledge of collocations," *International Journal of Applied Linguistics and English Literature*, vol. 9, no. 1, pp. 1-6, 2020. <https://doi.org/10.7575/aiac.ijalel.v.9n.1p.1>
- [32] R. A. Alsehibany and S. M. Abdelhalim, "Overcoming academic vocabulary errors through online corpus consultation: The case of Saudi English majors," *Computer Assisted Language Learning*, pp. 1-27, 2023. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09588221.2023.2249503>
- [33] B. Asadova, "The role of collocations in English language teaching," *Acta Globalis Humanitatis Et Linguarum*, vol. 1, no. 2, pp. 9-19, 2024. <https://doi.org/10.69760/aghel.01024061>
- [34] P. Szudarski, *Collocations, corpora and language learning*. Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108992602>, 2023.
- [35] S. Webb and E. Kagimoto, "The effects of vocabulary learning on collocation and meaning," *Tesol Quarterly*, vol. 43, no. 1, pp. 55-77, 2009. <https://doi.org/10.1002/j.1545-7249.2009.tb00227.x>
- [36] W. Sun and E. Park, "EFL learners' collocation acquisition and learning in corpus-based instruction: A systematic review," *Sustainability*, vol. 15, no. 17, p. 13242, 2023. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su151713242>
- [37] D. T. H. Duong and N. D. T. Nguyen, "Using collocations to enhance academic writing: A survey study at Van Lang University," presented at the In 17th International Conference of the Asia Association of Computer-Assisted Language Learning (AsiaCALL 2021) (pp. 275-287). Atlantis Press, 2021.
- [38] T. L. Bui, "The role of collocations in the English teaching and learning," *International Journal of TESOL & Education*, vol. 1, no. 2, pp. 99-109, 2021.
- [39] H. D. Brown, *Principles of language learning and teaching*. White Plains, NY: Pearson Education, 2000.
- [40] E. Hamed Mahvelati, "Explicit and implicit collocation teaching methods: Empirical research and issues," *Advances in Language and Literary Studies*, vol. 10, no. 3, pp. 105-116, 2019. <https://doi.org/10.7575/aiac.alls.v.10n.3p.105>
- [41] R. Ellis, S. Loewen, and R. Erlam, "Implicit and explicit corrective feedback and the acquisition of L2 grammar," *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, vol. 28, no. 2, pp. 339-368, 2006. <https://doi.org/10.21832/9781847691767-015>
- [42] E. Yoon, R. M. Lee, and M. Goh, "Acculturation, social connectedness, and subjective well-being," *Cultural Diversity & Ethnic Minority Psychology*, vol. 14, no. 3, p. 246, 2008. <https://doi.org/10.1037/1099-9809.14.3.246>