Research Paper

The Effect of Lexically-Based Language Teaching on Writing Proficiency among Junior EFL University Students in Iran

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Abstract
This study aimed to investigate the effect of Lexically-Based Language Teaching on writing proficiency among junior EFL university students in Iran. Two university classes, including sixty male and female students (N = 60), were selected and assigned equally to experimental and control groups using the convenient sampling procedure. At the onset of the study and to determine the homogeneity of the groups, the groups took the Key English Test. Before experimental intervention, a pretest, in the format of an essay writing task, was given to both groups. The results of the pretest indicated that the experimental and control groups were similar in terms of general writing proficiency, lexical resources subsection, and grammatical range and accuracy subsection. While the participants in the experimental group were taught based on practices and activities which underline the lexical approach to present essay writing, their counterparts in the control group were taught based on conventional techniques to perform the same writing task. At the end of the experiment, both groups took the posttest which was similar to the

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pretest in general format. The researchers used the One-Way Analysis of Covariance to compare mean scores attained by the two groups on the posttest with regard to general writing proficiency along with lexical resources and grammatical range and accuracy subsections of writing. The SPSS program, version 20, was used for this purpose. The results indicated that lexically-based language teaching has a statistically significant effect on both general writing proficiency and the lexical resources subsection of posttest writing. However, no statistically significant effect was observed concerning the grammatical range and accuracy subsection of the writing. The findings suggest implications for English language teachers, material developers, and syllabus designers.

1. Introduction

Having a satisfactory knowledge of vocabulary at English L2 learners' disposal can make a considerable contribution to both language comprehension and production. The leading researchers and scholars in the field of vocabulary learning and teaching have confirmed and documented the major part that vocabulary can play in language acquisition since a considerable proportion of the intended meaning can be expressed by vocabulary (for example, Alavi & Akbarian, 2012; Alsowat, 2022; Lewis, 1993; Mehrpour & Rahimi, 2010; Nation, 2013; Qian & Lin, 2019; Stahr, 2008; Stahr, 2009; Schmitt, 2014; Schmitt & Gonzales-Fernandez, 2020; Thornbury, 2002). Some of the conventional techniques to present vocabulary in a particular instructional course include physical demonstration, verbal explanation, providing students with synonyms and antonyms, translation, using visual aids, asking learners to check the meaning in the dictionary, exemplification, and presenting the word in the context

(Hedge, 2008; Nash & Snowling, 2006; Nation, 2006; Nation, 2013; Thornbury, 2002; Webb, 2019).

However, when it comes to putting vocabulary knowledge into real and practical use, many EFL learners demonstrate limited and inadequate efficacy in using vocabulary to communicate their intended meaning effectively. A number of underlying reasons have been presented for this drawback, including ineffective techniques for teaching vocabulary, resorting to intuition and hunches of researchers and language teachers, curriculum developers, and course trainers in vocabulary teaching (Bloch, 2009, as cited in Rahimi & Momeni, 2012). One possible solution to solve this problem is to resort to the lexical approach's underlying principles and techniques. A Lexically Based Language Teaching (LBLT) refers to an approach of teaching language derived from the belief that building blocks of language learning and communication are not grammar, forms, or functions but lexis, that is, words and word combination (Richards & Rodgers, 2001, p. 132). The Lexical Approach reflects the belief in the centrality of lexicon to language structure, second language learning, and language use and in particular to multi-word lexical units or chunks that are used and learned as single items (Willis & Willis, 2006).

Lexical approach to language teaching assigns more priority to presenting the words along with their most frequent accompaniments, their collocations, in naturally occurring patterns instead of presenting them in isolation (Lewis, 2009). In addition, leaners are provided with enough opportunities to find the authentic examples and patterns of the words in actual use (Lewis, 1993; Lewis, 1997; Lewis, 2006; Nattinger & Decarrio, 1992; Willis, 1990).

Among the most challenging and controversial skills which EFL learners encounter is writing (Mahvelati, 2016). General writing can be defended as

the ability to compose lexically-rich, grammatically correct, and organizationally and structurally coherent paragraphs. According to Jacobs et al. (1981) writing   proficiency includes some components such as content, organization, vocabulary, language use, and mechanic. A large number of EFL learners, be intermediate or advanced, have serious problems with writing tasks to the extent that their writing assignments seem unnatural or defective. Many researchers and leading figures specialized in vocabulary teaching attributed this deficiency to lack of vocabulary knowledge in general and lexical chunks in particular (Duin & Graves, 1987; Lin, 2015; Shamsabadi et.al, 2017; Shi & Qian, 2012; Stahr, 2008; 2009).

One possible gap with the aforementioned studies is that a greater number of them took a holistic approach regarding wiring proficiency instead of following a more discrete-point one. In addition, few of them took all activities and techniques recommended by the lexical approach into consideration. To fill this gap, the current research took a more detailed approach with regard to the lexical approach along with that of assessing EFL learners' writing proficiency. The purpose of this quasi-experiment study was, thus, to investigate the effect of Lexically-Based Language Teaching (LBLT) on the overall writing proficiency, on the one hand, and on the lexical resources and grammatical range and accuracy as two main sub-sections of writing proficiency, on the other hand, among junior EFL university students in the Iranian context.

2. Review of the Literature

English learners who possess greater knowledge of the words, in general, and lexical chunks, in particular, can perform better in both receptive and productive language skills (Nation, 2013; Willis, 1990; Webb, 2019). Many researchers and EFL practitioners internationally and locally have, so far, investigated the role of vocabulary knowledge in listening (Stahr,2009),

speaking (Nation, 2006; Stahr, 2008), reading (Hedge, 2008; Laufer & Nation, 2012, as cited in Gass, 2015), and writing (Nash & Snowling, 2006; Thornbury, 2002; Webb, 2019).

Vocabulary knowledge, in essence, includes a number of subsections such as knowledge of semantic and pragmatic meaning, syntactic knowledge, knowledge of denotative and connotative meaning, collocation competence, and phonological knowledge (Nation, 2013; Thornbury, 2002). In addition, Nation (2006, as cited in Koizumi & In'nami, 2020) took a more practical and down-to-earth classifying criterion regarding vocabulary knowledge along with its relevant sub-components. He delineated three main aspects of vocabulary knowledge as follows:

(a) Form: spoken, written, and word parts;

(b) Meaning: form and meaning, concepts and referents, and associations;

(c) Use: grammatical functions, collocations, and constraints on use (e.g., register, frequency). Each aspect has receptive and productive dimensions (p. 5).

Therefore, collocation knowledge can play an indispensable role in the development of language skills and components. This fundamental dimension of vocabulary knowledge is well documented and supported in Lexical Approach to language teaching according to which "building blocks of language learning and communication are not grammar, forms, or functions but lexis, that is, words and word combination" *(*Richards and Rodgers, 2001*, p. 132).

Unlike conventionally practiced techniques in vocabulary teaching that mainly present words in isolation, Lexically-Based Language Teaching (LBLT) emphasizes presenting words as building blocks of language teaching and language learning in lexical chunks (Lewis, 1997). Simply put, the leading figures in the Lexical Approach, including Lewis (1993, 2006)

and Willis (1990) favor presenting words with their accompaniments. The history of Lexical approach indicates that different classifications of lexical chunks such as sentence frames, idiomatic expressions, phrasal verbs, collocations, institutionalized utterance, poly words, similes, proverbs, and binominals and trinomials have been recommended by different scholars in this field (See, for example, Nattinger & DeCarrico,1992; Lewis, 1997; Nation, 2006).

A number of studies have turned to investigate the possible effect of different lexical chunks, as the cornerstone of the lexical approach such as collocations, phrasal verbs, sentence frames, and idioms on vocabulary learning (Rahimi & Momeni, 2012), reading comprehension (Mehrpour & Rahimi, 2010), speaking proficiency (Staher, 2009), and to less extent on writing proficiency (Ghafarsamar et al., 2018; Ebrahimi, 2021). One possible gap existing in these studies is that they did not consider all activities recommended in the lexical approach. Besides, most of them were limited to the effect of lexical chunks on reading, listening, and speaking. For instance, Debabi and Guerroud (2018) contend that EFL learners are required to have a great repertoire of lexical chunks, be fixed and semi-fixed word combinations, at their disposal to achieve fluency in language use. One possible constraint of this study is that it did not reveal a clear-cut criterion to measure and operationalize fluency in their study.

The findings of a study by Ghafarsamar et al. (2018) indicated that instruction of lexical bundles dramatically improve the quality of writing assignments composed by medical students, particularly in the lexical resources subsection. Their study was, however, restricted to the lexical resources subsection of writing at the expense of other elements making up authentic writing such as grammatical range and accuracy, cohesion and coherence, task response. Some other studies, carried out locally and

internationally, confirmed and documented that a major part is played by lexical chunks in enhancing the quality of writing proficiency (Hsu's 2007; Mounya, 2010; Kazemi et al., 2014, Mahvelati, 2016; Shamsabadi et al., 2017).

In addition, the finding of the study by Kim and Bae (2012, as cited in Fasihzadeh, 2019) indicated that providing instruction which draws upon the underlying practices of the lexical approach, in particular, knowledge of collocation, cannot make a significant contribution to reading comprehension of Korean EFL learners. However, a statistically significant difference was reported with regard to the effect of teaching collocation on writing proficiency. Similar findings were obtained by several Iranian researchers such as Mehrpour and Rahimi (2010) and Alavi and Akbari (2012) regarding the effect of vocabulary knowledge on the reading comprehension of Iranian EFL learners. Given the mixed results of these studies, the possible effect of lexical chunks in language learning seems to be a need for researchers in the field.

Furthermore, the possible influence of lexical chunks on speaking proficiency was also probed in some studies. For example, Sadeghi and Panahifar (2013) found a significant positive correlation between knowledge of collocational and speaking proficiency and also between speaking proficiency and actual use of collocations. However, no significant positive correlation was reported to exist between knowledge of the collocation and their use in speaking. One possible limitation of this study was that the attained progress in speaking proficiency could be attributed to knowledge of other lexical chunks such as idiomatic expressions, sentence frames, institutional combinations, and phrasal verbs not restricted only to collocation competence.

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Lexically-based language teaching focuses mainly on the importance of presenting the intended words with their accompaniments in naturally occurring contexts rather than presenting them in isolation (Lewis, 1997; Willis, 2006) Some studies have also investigated the effect of the lexical approach on vocabulary learning within the Iranian context. For example, the findings of the study carried out by Rahimi and Momeni (2012) revealed that can dramatically enhance vocabulary retention among EFL intermediate learners in Iran. The participants of their study were only high school students who did not have satisfactory command of language proficiency. In addition, more recent studies have also confirmed the effect of explicit knowledge of lexical chunks, in particular lexical collocations, on improving vocabulary knowledge and EFL learner vocabulary size (Pakdaman & Pourhosein Gilakjani, 2019; Khodareza & Ashouri, 2016, as cited in Pakdaman & Pourhosein Gilakjani, 2019).

The effect of Lexically-based language instruction on writing proficiency, compared to other language skills, has been has little been investigated in applied linguistics despite the fact that some studies have turned to probe into the effect of some categories of lexical chunks on wiring proficiency in different contexts. Among the most recent studies aimed to investigate the effect of Lexically-based language teaching on writing proficiency in Iran, are those of Mahvelati (2016), Kazemi et al. (2014), and Ghafarsamar et al. (2018), in all of which the effect of lexical chunks on general writing proficiency of EFL learners has been investigated. Furthermore, most of these studies were carried out among participants whose majors were not English Language Teaching (ELT) and with the primary attention directed only to providing instruction on lexical collocation. The findings of another experimental study carried out by Ebrahimi et al. (2021) indicated that teaching formulaic expression through contrastive lexical approach in which

both English formulaic expressions in conjunction with their Persian equivalents are presented simultaneously can dramatically improve the quality of writing proficiency among pre-intermediate language learners.

 The limitations of these studies, which prompted researchers to reiterate presumably the similar investigation, can be associated with the fact that none of them took an analytical approach with regard to assessing writing proficiency, meaning that none of them investigated the effect of lexically-based instruction on other sections of writing such as grammatical range and accuracy, cohesion and coherence, and task response. Besides, the participants of these studies were mainly advanced and intermediate ones whose majors were different from ELT.

Therefore, the study took a new perspective with regard to the effect of Lexically-based language teaching on junior EFL university students' writing proficiency, not only in relation to general writing proficiency but also with respect to two sub-sections of overall writing proficiency, including lexical resources along with grammatical range and accuracy among junior EFL university students in Iran.

To this aim, the present study addressed the following research questions:
1. Does Lexically-Based Language Teaching (LBLT) have any effect on the essay writing proficiency of junior EFL university students in Iran?
2. Does Lexically-Based Language Teaching (LBLT) have any effect on the Lexical Resource (LR) subsection of the writing of junior EFL university students in Iran?
3. Does Lexically-Based Language Teaching (LBLT) have any effect on the Grammatical Range and Accuracy (GRA) subsection of the writing of junior EFL university students in Iran?

3. Method
3.1 Participants
Two available classes, including male and female (N= 60) junior EFL university students, comprised the research sample of the present study. They

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ranged in age from 21 to 23 years old, majoring in English Language and Literature. They took an essay writing course during the second semester of 2020-2021 academic years at a state university in southwest Iran. None of these students took the internationally administered tests such as Test of English as a Foreign language (TOEFL) or International English Language Testing System (IELTS) previously, nor had they received instruction on these tests in their academic courses. They were homogenous with regard to writing proficiency as revealed in the pretest.   The convenient sampling procedure was drawn upon in order to choose the research sample. In order to determine the homogeneity of the participants, the researchers gave a sample of the Key English Test (KET) to both classes. The classes were, then, assigned randomly to experimental and control groups, each consisting of thirty participants ($N = 30$).

3.2 Design

A pretest-posttest quasi-experimental with control and experimental groups design was utilized in this study. Pretest and posttest were identical in that both of them necessitated composing a piece of essay, descriptive in format. The schematic representation of the research design of the current study is represented as follows:

$$G1 \quad T1 \quad X \quad \quad T2$$
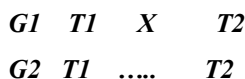$$G2 \quad T1 \quad ….. \quad T2$$

Figure 1. Schematic representation of research design of the study

In Figure 1, G1 and G2 stand for the experimental and control groups, whereas T1 and T2 represent the pretest and posttest, respectively. Finally, X represents the intended instructional treatment applied in the current study, meaning Lexically-based language teaching.

3.3 Instruments

A number of tests, course books, and some electronic software were used as research instruments to collect the intended data. The instruments, along with a short description for them, are as follows:

- **Key English Test**, 2020: A standard test developed and administered by Cambridge University Press that aims to measure the candidates' command in language comprehension and production. With regard to reliability index of the test, statistical analysis performed by Poorahmadi (2014, cited in Pakdaman & Gilakjani, 2019) reported the reliability coefficients of .84 and .90 for the pretest and posttest stages respectively. As far as the current study is concerned, the reliability coefficient of .96 was reported using the Kurdar-Richardson-21(also known as KR-21) Reliability Formula.

- **English Collocation in Use, Advanced, 2020**: A self-study and user-friendly course book for easy reference by students which was published by Cambridge University Press and enumerates collocations and lexical phrases related to the intended theme.

- **Online English Collocation Dictionary, 2010**: A new online sourcebook mainly used to look for different collocations related to intended words learners want to investigate more. It, mainly available online, aims to provide different lexical expressions and collocations in which a particular word appears both in spoken and written language.

- **Pretest and Posttest of Writing**: They were to be given at the beginning and end of the instructional intervention to tap into students' command of writing. They were mainly in the form of descriptive essay tasks necessitating the length of at least 300 words. The criteria applied to score these tests were identical to those

applied and recommended by Bagheri and Riasati (2016), including Lexical Resources (LR), Grammatical Range and Accuracy (GRA), Task Response (TR), and Coherence and Cohesion (CC) (Appendix 2). The writing tasks required the participants to fulfill the criteria necessary for an academic task as well. To determine the validity of this test, the researchers enquired into the perspective of two university instructors with Ph.D. degrees in TEFL. They were teaching essay writing courses in the university. Content validity of the test was approved by the university instructors. Furthermore, the reliability of the test was measured by drawing upon KR-21Reliability Formula. The resultant figure for the reliability coefficient of the pretest was .77.

- **Concordancers:**   According to Richards and Schmitt (2002), concordancers are defined as "a software program that searches for words and displays the selected item or items in conjunction with their surrounding context" (p. 104). Operationally defined, these online softwares are mainly used to show which words usually appear on the right side or left side of the given word, along with the frequency account of words in written and spoken language (Richards & Schmitt, 2002). The main concordance proposed and used by the researchers in the current research was British National Corpus (BNC). The participants in the experimental group were instructed on how to use concordancers and British National Corpus in order to elicit the natural patterns in which particular words or expressions are used.

3.4 Procedure

At the beginning of the study the researchers chose two university classes using the convenient sampling procedure. Then, a sample KET was given to

both classes online to establish homogeneity with regard to overall language proficiency. Then, the classes were assigned to experimental and control group accordingly. Afterwards, the two groups took pretest essay writing task before commencing the instructional treatment. The test was identical to the second writing task of the IELTS, the rating criterion of which was similar to the one suggested by Bagheri and Riasati (2016), including four main sections as lexical resources, grammatical range and accuracy, coherence and cohesion, and task response. None of the participants in the experimental and the control group took IELTS previously. The instructional intervention was then introduced to the participants in the experimental group based on activities and techniques recommended and supported by the lexical approach. The participants in the control group, however, received conventional techniques and tasks in academic writing courses, such as the main components of the paragraph including establishing unity, coherence, and cohesion among paragraphs. The treatment, Lexically-based language teaching, lasted for 14 weeks, held one session during a week. It included exposing the participants to authentic reading passages in which different lexical phrases relating to different themes were presented. The reading passages were chosen from the first twenty lessons of English Collocation in Use, Advanced (2020). Furthermore, the participants in the experimental group were supposed to consult online dictionaries such as Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English and Collins COBUILD Dictionary to find different lexical phrases associated with the intended words and write down the collocations in their collocation notebooks. According to Richards and Schmidt (2002) lexical phrases are "recurrent phrases and patterns of language use which have become instituitionalised through frequent use" (p. 306). They included the following categories with example given for each category:

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- Collocations: *make a difference*
- Idioms: *to kick the bucket*
- Phrasal verbs: *cut down on*
- Fixed expressions*: fast food*
- , Semi-fixed expressions: *take a test*
- Sentence frames: *On the other side*
- Proverbs: *easy come, easy go*
- Metaphors: *Her words stabbed at his heart*.
- Similes: *As fit as fiddle*

In this study, the researchers made attempt to present all these categories to the participants in the experimental group.

Other activities such as intensive and extensive listening and reading comprehension activities along with consulting concordancers were also drawn upon to raise students' awareness of different lexical phrases associated with each word in conjunction with their natural patterns. In addition, the researchers elicited some lines of the concordances from British national Corpus and online collocation dictionary and wanted learners to write down the highlighted expressions in their notebooks so that they can draw upon them in their writing tasks in the posttest. During the instructional intervention, some output-based activities such as paraphrasing the intended passages and summarizing the assigned listening and reading passages using lexical phrases were also included for the experimental group.

During the final stage of the research process, the posttest was given to both groups in a format identical to the pretest. The submitted writing tasks were scored based on four criteria mentioned for the pretest by two raters who received detailed instruction on how to rate the writing tasks. They drew on the scoring procedure recommended for IELTS Task Two public band descriptors available online. In addition, the inter-rater reliability coefficient was determined for both pretest and posttest.

As far as data analysis is concerned, one-way Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) was applied using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20. Prior to the data analysis stage, the underlying assumptions of one-way ANCOVA were checked to see if they were fulfilled in this study.

4. Results

At the outset of the data analysis stage, assumptions recommended for one-way ANCOVA, including the reliability of the covariates, normality, linearity, homogeneity of variances, and homogeneity of regression slopes, were all checked. There were no reported cases of violation of the assumptions.

As mentioned before, the KET was given to both groups to determine their homogeneity with regard to language proficiency. The results of the Independent Samples t-test indicated that the two groups were similar to each other in terms of their language proficiency (Table 1.)

Table 1
The Results of Descriptive Statistics for KET

	Grouping	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
KET proficiency test	Experimental Group	30	73.16	4.441	.810
	Control Group	30	72.9	4.171	.761

As Table 1 shows, the gained mean score for the experimental group is 73.16 (SD= 4.44), whereas the control group's mean is 72.90 (SD= 4.17). Therefore, it can be inferred that there was not a statistically significant difference between the groups at the beginning of the research process and prior to administering the pretest. However, the researchers needed to check the results of significant tests associated with the KET test to guarantee the equality of the variance for the two groups. Levene's Test of Equality of the Variances was used for this purpose (Table 2).

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Table 2
The Results of KET Significance Test

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval	
								Lower	Upper
Equal variances assumed	.26	.61	.24	58	.81	.266	1.1	1.96	2.49
Equal variances not assumed			.24	57	.811	.266	1.1	1.96	2.49

Based on Table 2, the significance value for mean difference is .811(df= 58, *p<0.05)*. Thus, it can be inferred that the two groups were almost equal regarding language proficiency at the onset of research prior to instructional intervention. Furthermore, the figure obtained for Levene's Test for Equality of Variances also approves the equality of variance of the two groups (F= .26, *p*>0.05). Now, the main obtained results associated with each research question are to be accounted for in detail.

The first research question concerns the effect of Lexically-based language teaching on general writing proficiency among junior EFL university students in Iran. The results of descriptive statistics for one-way ANCOVA indicated that the two groups' mean scores on the posttest were different in the sense that the experimental group outperformed the controlled group in overall writing proficiency (Table 3).

Table 3
Descriptive Statistics for Posttest of Overall Writing Proficiency

Grouping	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Control Group	15.008	.755	30
Experimental Group	16.541	.779	30
Total	15.77	1.085	60

As it is revealed in Table 3, the mean score of the participants in the control group is 15 (SD=.75), whereas the same figure for the experimental group is 16.54 (SD=.77). It can, therefore, be inferred that the participants in the experimental group performed much better than their counterparts in the control group as far as the overall quality of writing is concerned. However, this difference might have been due to preexisting differences between the two groups. Therefore, the effect of previously existing differences in the pretest should be controlled to make a more rational claim with regard to the effect of the independent variable, that is, the effect of Lexically-based language teaching. Table of between-subject effects should be consulted for this purpose, more importantly Significant Value and Partial Eta Square (Table 4).

Table 4
Tests of Between-Subjects Effects in Overall Writing Task

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	61.638[a]	2	30.819	224.5	.000	.887
Intercept	1.60	1	1.609	11.719	.001	.171
Pretest	26.371	1	26.371	192.10	.000	.771
Groping	28.511	1	28.511	207.68	.000	.785
Error	7.825	57	.137			
Total	15000.5	60				
Corrected Total	69.463	59				

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As shown in Table 4, the significance value for the independent group is 0.00. Given the statistical fact that the intended figure is lower than 0.05, it can be inferred that the mean difference between the two groups is statistically significant. Besides, the larger value for Partial Eta Square (0.785) proves that about seventy-eight percent of the variance in the post-test was accounted for by the independent variable.

The second research question is related to the effect of Lexically-based language teaching on lexical resources as a subsection of the overall writing. The results of descriptive statistics showed that the two groups were different with regard to their mean scores on the posttest of lexical resources subsection (Table 5).

Table 5
Descriptive Statistics of Lexical Resources Posttest

Grouping	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Control Group	4.2333	.26207	30
Experimental Group	4.6750	.22885	30
Total	4.4542	.33029	60

According to Table 5, the mean scores attained by the participants in the control and experimental groups are 4.23(SD=.26) and 4.67(SD=.22), respectively. It seems that the attained mean scores by the participants in two groups are statistically different (p = .00 <0.05). Therefore, the most important table output of one-way ANCOVA should be consulted to make sure that there is a statistically significant difference between the groups. Figures included in Tests of Between-Subject Effects in the row clipped as Gro, in particular Significant Value and Partial Eta Square, can be referred to for this purpose (Table 6).

Table 6.
The results associated with Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	4.657	2	2.328	74.580	.000	.724
Intercept	1.666	1	1.666	53.373	.000	.484
Lexical1	1.731	1	1.731	55.439	.000	.493
Gro	3.863	1	3.863	123.726	.000	.685
Error	1.780	57	.031			
Total	1196.813	60				
Corrected Total	6.436	59				

As shown in Table 6, the F value is 123.72, and *p*-value is.00 (*p<.05*). So, it can be inferred that the groups' difference is statistically significant when the result of the covariate is controlled for. In addition, the amount of Partial Eta Square shows that about 68 percent of the variance in mean differences on the posttest can be accounted for by the independent variable.

The third research question aimed to explore the effect of LBLT on grammatical range and accuracy subsection of writing. One-way ANCOVA was run for this aim. The results of the descriptive statistics are tabulated below (Table 7).

Table 7
The Results of Descriptive Statistics of Grammatical Range and Accuracy Posttest

Grouping	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Control Group	4.5333	.24330	30
Experimental Group	4.3983	.22495	30
Total	4.4658	.24208	60

Regarding Table 7, the mean scores attained by the experimental and control groups participants are 4.35 (SD=.24) and 4.53 (SD=.24), respectively. Apparently, there is not any statistically significant difference between the experimental and the control groups' mean scores with regard to

grammatical range and accuracy subsection of writing (p= .129 <0.05). To check whether the attained difference is accounted for by covariate, pretest grammatical knowledge, or as the result of introduced treatment, the main output table created as the result of running one-way ANCOVA should be consulted. Statistically speaking, Tests of Between-Subjects Effects, in general, and Significant Value along with Partial Eta Square were consulted for this purpose (Table 8).

Table 8.
Results of Tests of Between-Subjects Effects for Grammatical Range and Accuracy Posttest

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	1.753[a]	2	.877	29.320	.000	.507
Intercept	.674	1	.674	22.557	.000	.284
Gram1	1.480	1	1.480	49.496	.000	.465
Gro	.071	1	.071	2.377	.129	.040
Error	1.704	57	.030			
Total	1200.077	60				
Corrected Total	3.457	59				

As Table 8 indicates, the significance value for the intended posttest is .129 (*p*>.05). It indicates that the two groups were statistically non-significant concerning the mean scores of grammatical range and accuracy subsection of the posttest. The statistically insignificant figure calculated for F value can further rectify the claim that the two groups are identical with regard to the scores on the posttest (F= 2.37). In addition, the attained figure associated with Partial Eta Squared demonstrated that only four percent of the variance in the posttest can be explained by the independent variable, Lexically-based language teaching in this case.

5. Discussion

The study mainly aimed to investigate the influence of Lexically-based language teaching on writing proficiency among junior EFL university students in Iran. In addition, the possible effect of Lexically-based language teaching on subsections of writing, including lexical resources, grammatical range, and accuracy, was also explored. The results of data analysis showed that overall writing proficiency and lexical resources component of writing proficiency are dramatically affected by lexically-based language teaching since there was a significant difference between mean scores attained by the participants of the experimental and control groups in posttests. Furthermore, more detaned analysis proved that considerable proportion of the obtained difference can be attributed to the result of independent variable, lexically-based language teaching, after effect of previously existing differences in the pretest were controlled for. However, no statistically significance difference was found for grammatical range and accuracy subsection of the writing task in the posttests of experimental and control group. In what follows, detailed discussion of these finding in the light of similar or contrary studies available in the literature is provided.

The findings relating to the first research question of the study indicated that LBLT can positively affect the overall writing proficiency among junior EFL university students in Iran. This interesting outcome stresses the important part that vocabulary knowledge in general, and Lexically-based language teaching in particular, can play in the development of writing proficiency among EFL learners. Moreover, it also reiterates the major role of knowledge of the lexical chunks in conveying the intended meaning effectively to the extent that the writing task sounds more natural and native-like. Finally, it approves that some kinds of limitations that EFL learners face in the process of producing language can be resolved by turning to use

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practices and activities supported by the lexical approach. The findings of this study are consistent with other relevant studies done at local and global scales, including those of Faghih and Sharafi (2006), Jafarpour and Koosha (2006), Hsu (2007), Mounya (2010), Rahimi and Momeni (2012), Kazemi et al. (2014), Mahvelati (2016), and Ghafar Samar et al. (2018) in that they all proved significantly positive effect of teaching lexical chunks on improving writing proficiency, vocabulary learning, and language proficiency. The most leading and interesting point about the findings of the current study is that it was built on the findings and premises of other studies on the one hand, while, at the same time, it took a complete perspective with regard to including different types of lexical chunks such as idioms, similes, collocations, and sentence frames. In addition, an attempt was made to incorporate and benefit from, to the possible extent, all underlying practices and techniques associated with the lexical approach.

The results relating to the second research question approved the major part played by LBLT in the lexical resources sub-section of the writing. Considering the paramount importance of vocabulary knowledge in contributing the conveying of the desired message and concept in foreign language comprehension and production, the attained results well support the claim made by some leading figures such as Lewis (2006), Nation (2012), Webb (2019), and Sewbihon-Getie (2021) that vocabulary knowledge along with the knowledge of different lexical chunks, including idioms, collocation, phrasal verbs, sentence frames, proverbs, and similes, can dramatically enhance the quality of writing proficiency. Furthermore, drawing upon the online and printed lines of concordancers can, to a great extent, be beneficial for EFL learners at different levels since they are exposed to the most frequent and naturally occurring patterns of the words in authentic contexts. Similar findings were obtained by similar studies in Iranian and foreign

contexts such as Rahimi and Momeni (2011), Khodareza and Ashouri (2016), Ghafarsamr et al. (2018), Pakdaman and Pourhosein Gilakjani (2019), and Sewbihon-Getie (2021), cornering the positive effect of lexical chunks in conjunction with collocation on vocabulary retention and efficacy on lexical resource sub-section of overall writing task. One of the characterizing features of the present study with regard to vocabulary knowledge, unlike the aforementioned studies, is that it took a more productive perspective on vocabulary knowledge. It requires that EFL learners be able to put into actual and practical use the vocabulary knowledge they have in their disposals. Besides, it indicates, of course implicitly, the major part played by vocabulary knowledge, in general, and collocative knowledge, in particular, in the development of productive language skills, in particular writing proficiency. This finding is consistent with the findings of other similar experimental studies by Laufer and Nation (1995), Hilton (2008), Staher (2008), Stahr (2009), Johnson, et al. (2016), Oya et al. (2009, as cited in Kilic, 2019), on the role played by vocabulary knowledge, in general, and knowledge of various kinds of lexical chunks on improving all language skills, be receptive or productive, in particular.

The findings associated with the third research question denoted that inclusion of LBLT underlying principles and practices cannot significantly improve grammatical range and accuracy in sub-section of writing tasks. This finding seems very surprising on the grounds that the experimental group participants were referred to a line of concordances and an online collocation dictionary in which different morphosyntactic patterns of the words are accounted for. Therefore, learners were supposed to absorb and draw upon these patterns in their written output. However, there was not any significant reported difference among the participants of both experimental and control groups concerning grammatical range and accuracy sub-section of writing.

This finding is in stark contrast with the theoretical underpinnings of the lexical approach since, in this approach, grammatical patterns associated with different lexical items are systematically explored by consulting lines of concordances and collocation dictionaries. The same result was obtained by a similar study by Ghafarsamar et al. (2018) in that no significant difference or progress was observed in the grammatical range and accuracy subsection of the writing task composed by medical students.

6. Conclusion

Having taken the results of the present research into account, the conclusion can be drawn that Lexically-based language teaching can dramatically enhance the overall quality of writing proficiency of university students. In addition, it can be concluded that using the instructional practices, techniques, activities related to the Lexically-based language teaching can have a positive effect on improving the quality of the lexical resources subsection of the learners' writing. EFL learners and university students can greatly improve their performance in lexical resources of writing since they are able to manage lexical complexity and range very easily. Furthermore, the conclusion can be drawn that lexically-based language teaching does not affect the grammatical range and accuracy subsection of the writing. One possible explanation for this limitation can be attributed to the short span on the instructional treatment in this study. It seems that grammatical items need more practice to be retained for the future use.

The results of the current study can bring about a number of implications for different stakeholders in English language teaching in particular for writing course trainers in universities, university students, and trainers of the internationally developed tests. First, those university instructors and trainers who are to present writing courses for university students can devote some part of the class time to consulting concordances, printed version or online,

and collocation dictionary to expose learners to the most frequent and natural contexts of the words and require them to include these patterns in their writing. Second, curriculum developers and syllabus designers who plan writing courses for EFL university students should allocate some part of the writing coverage to vocabulary knowledge and lexical chunks associated with each topic to make their written tasks sound more natural and authentic. Third, course trainers who train Iranian EFL learners, mainly those training in intermediate and advanced levels, can give more attention and cover to teaching different kinds of lexical chunks, including phrasal verbs, idioms, proverbs, and sentence frames so that their trainees can make use of them when taking internationally developed and administered tests (Mahvelati, 2016).

The study investigated the effect of Lexically-based language teaching on general writing proficiency, lexical resources, and grammatical range and accuracy sub-sections of the writing of the Lexically-based language teaching. There are still enough grounds for future investigations to probe into the effect of teaching different types of lexical chunks on listening comprehension, reading comprehension, and speaking proficiency among senior university students and advanced EFL learners.

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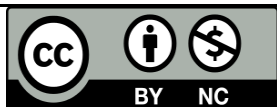
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