



The Relationship between Productive Vocabulary and Argumentative Essay Writing Proficiency among IELTS Test Takers in Pakistan

Hayqa Amjad¹, Aleem Shakir², Ayesha Sattar³

Abstract

The current research attempts to examine the correlation between productive vocabulary and writing proficiency. Two different instruments were manipulated to find the link between productive vocabulary and argumentative essay writing proficiency in the present research. The PVLT (Productive Vocabulary Level Test) Parallel version (version A+ version C) designed by Laufer & Nation, 1999 was adopted and utilized as a tool to measure the student's productive vocabulary. To check writing proficiency a prompt of argumentative essay writing was assigned to the students and the time allowed for both tests was 60 minutes. The sample comprised 128 (39 female and 86 male) IELTS test takers in Pakistan. The essay writings were marked by IELTS band descriptors. The data were analyzed by performing the Pearson correlation coefficient. Pearson correlation coefficient analysis revealed that there was no noteworthy correlation between writing proficiency and productive vocabulary.

Keywords: Productive vocabulary, argumentative writing, writing proficiency

1. Introduction

1.1. Background of the study

The international language is English. The concept of the English language as a global method of communication in a diversity of dialects, as well as the trend toward an international standard for the language is known as international English. It is a language that is widely used throughout the world. According to (Lewis, 2009), English is rated third among the most widely spoken languages in the world, with a total of 172 languages.

The teaching of English is given significant priority in educational systems all over the world. It allows pupils to comprehend and speak English, speak English, write English, and read English fluently. As writing is such a crucial part of learning the English language, students must be able to write independently of all forms of support and technological aid. The core of language comprehension and application is vocabulary (Hunt & Beglar, 2005). The importance of vocabulary in writing is self-evident. However, vocabulary is especially important to a practicing instructor of second language (L2) writing since L2 writers sometimes struggle with vocabulary or little vocabulary that has only been partially taught (Nation, 2001). The most common language obstacle that L2 learners have is a lack of productive vocabulary knowledge (Nation, 1990; Schmitt, 1997; Mokhtar, 2010). Nonetheless, until the 1990s, vocabulary study was not as prominent as other areas of L2 research, such as methodology and grammar instruction.

The importance of vocabulary in language learning cannot be overstated. Many studies on vocabulary, vocabulary knowledge, vocabulary training, and vocabulary acquisition have been conducted, with the focus shifting to the impact of vocabulary on second language (L2) learning since the 1990s. The term "vocabulary knowledge" has been defined in a variety of ways. Generalization, application, breadth, accuracy, and availability are the five elements of understanding a term introduced by (Cronbach, 1942). In addition to form, meaning, and application, there is a receptive and productive duality in word knowledge. In a reading passage, an English language learner may identify the meaning of a recently learned term (receptive), but may not be able to spell it correctly, pronounce it intelligibly in speech, or use it correctly in an essay or a conversation (productive). A learner's productive vocabulary knowledge, on the other perspective, consists of the words that the learner can employ correctly and appropriately when writing or speaking (Nation, 2000).

Writing is one of the most significant aspects of our everyday lives. The idea of argumentation has been around for almost 2,500 years, and it has a lot of different meanings. Argumentation is used to persuade readers through Aristotle's theory of rhetoric (Connor, 1996). Argumentative writing is the method of presenting evidence to support a claim or thesis statement to argue for or against a particular proposal. Effective argumentation requires developing arguments as well as comprehending, analyzing, and connecting arguments and counterpoints from various sources and perspectives to support a conclusion, (Nussbaum & Schraw, 2007).

Extensive research has been done on the relationship between productive vocabulary and other factors including reading, listening, and speaking. The most frequent traits among them are oral L2 performance and reading proficiency. A strong association exists between writing proficiency and productive vocabulary. However, there hasn't been much research done on the correlation between argumentative essay writing and productive vocabulary. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to determine the relationship between productive vocabulary and argumentative essay writing among IELTS test takers in Pakistan.

¹ MPhil Scholar, Department of Applied Linguistics, Government College University, Faisalabad, Punjab, Pakistan, amjedrouf7@gmail.com

² Assistant Professor, Department of Applied Linguistics, Government College University, Faisalabad, Punjab, Pakistan, almsha@yahoo.com

³ Lecturer, Department of Applied Linguistics, Government College University, Faisalabad, Punjab, Pakistan, ayesha66007@gmail.com

1.2. Problem statement

Vocabulary knowledge has been thought to place high importance on Both L1 and L2 learners' vocabulary (Laufer & Nation, 1999). Vocabulary knowledge is a reliable predictor of writing ability (Astika, 1993; Kang, 2011) However, there has only been a little amount of prior research on productive vocabulary and writing proficiency of IELTS test takers in Pakistan. Several researchers investigated the relationship between productive vocabulary and writing proficiency outside Pakistan (Lee 2014; Johnson et al. 2016; Usman & Abdullahi 2018). According to a thorough examination of the literature review, there was a significant gap in research on this topic because it wasn't examined with a sizable population of IELTS test takers in Pakistan. The sample size of the current research was 128 Pakistani IELTS test takers which are greater than past research. There was a need to use the statistical procedure (Pearson correlation coefficient analysis to examine the degree of association between the productive vocabulary and writing proficiency of Pakistani IELTS test-takers.

1.3. Objective of the study

The objective of the current research was to examine the correlation between productive vocabulary and argumentative essay writing proficiency of IELTS test takers in Pakistan. This study examines if there is a strong or weak, positive or negative association between productive vocabulary and argumentative essay writing, as well as what are the reasons for such findings.

2. Literature Review

The main purpose of this study will be to find the relationship between productive vocabulary and argumentative writing proficiency among IELTS test takers in Pakistan. Productive vocabulary and argumentative writing are essential for academic achievement. Given that writing is a kind of production and that learning a language requires a certain degree of vocabulary, it may be argued that vocabulary plays a crucial role in writing by facilitating the active use of the language.

2.1. Productive vocabulary

Vocabulary is seen as a critical component of language, as all other parts rely on it to function properly. Because the learning of the four language skills is dependent on vocabulary, experts have labeled it as being crucial to both intellectual endeavors and mastery of a second language (Leki, Cumming & Silva, 2008; Laufer & Goldstein, 2004). According to Bintz (2011: 44), a person's vocabulary is made up of all the words they know and can use to communicate successfully. The importance of vocabulary knowledge in both L1 and L2 learning has long been recognized (Laufer & Nation, 1999). The knowledge of words is referred to as vocabulary knowledge (Nation, 1990, 2001; Laufer et al., 2004; Milton 2009). In vocabulary study, vocabulary knowledge is sometimes referred to as vocabulary depth, which refers to the level to which a word is grasped by speakers.

Learners' vocabulary knowledge can be classified into two types: productive and receptive (Laufer, 1998; Laufer & Paribakht, 1998; Nation, 2001; Read, 2000). Productive vocabulary knowledge is an advanced degree of knowledge than receptive vocabulary knowledge, according to Nation's (1990) classification, because it involves more extensive information beyond understanding a single word. Speaking and writing are frequently connected with productive knowledge, but listening and reading are usually associated with receptive knowledge (Laufer & Goldstein 2004). Productive vocabulary size is known as the number of words that a learner can retrieve and output effectively in written form when needed. While learners can create the right word when speaking or writing, they have productive knowledge of the word. In addition to the number of words learned, productive vocabulary knowledge has a substantial influence on the production of words in one's writing skills. Before it, (Rosni, 2009) proved that learning the word receptively is the first step before the learner may form words in written language. The ability to articulate meaning in the right spoken or written word form is required for productive vocabulary knowledge. Words that learners comprehend and can pronounce are considered to be part of their productive vocabulary knowledge. Students can use these words well in both writing and speech.

As a result, developing a productive vocabulary can be viewed as a lively word process since students can create phrases to communicate their ideas and emotions to others (Webb, 2005). The ability to recall a word's shape and meaning is a sign of productive vocabulary knowledge (Laufer et al., 2004; Webb, 2008), or to transmit the word in the native language of the learners (Webb, 2009)

2.2. Argumentative Writing

Argumentative writing is referred to as "tries to promote a contentious elucidate or defend a stance on which there is disagreement (Richards & Schmidt, 2002, p. 337). According to McWhorter, an argumentative essay tries to convert the reader to the perspective of the author. While trying to persuade the reader of the truth of his or her opinion, the writer can be serious or humorous. The essay may make an argument outright or make a subtle attempt to persuade the reader through irony or sarcasm. Contrary to persuasion, the goal of argumentation is to persuade the reader using reasons and logic. A written document with a structure that communicates one's perspective is known as argumentative writing. According to (Nadell et al. 2009), the author attempts to persuade readers of the validity of a specific viewpoint on a contentious issue by using clear reasoning and logic. The essay is referred to as persuasive if the author employs emotive language and dramatic appeals to the readers' worries, beliefs, and values while attempting to persuade them. A written document with a structure that communicates one's

perspective is known as argumentative writing. The purpose of an argumentative essay, according to (Spangler, 1986), is to demonstrate that the writer's beliefs on a certain subject are correct or more truthful than other opinions on the subject. Effective argumentation requires developing arguments as well as comprehending, analyzing, and connecting arguments and counterpoints from various sources and perspectives to support a conclusion, (Nussbaum & Schraw, 2007).

Based on the concepts discussed above, it can be said that an argumentative essay tries to convince the reader of a particular point of view and offers opposing viewpoints.

2.3. Relationship between Productive Vocabulary and Writing Proficiency

Several researchers (e.g., Baba, 2009; Kang, 2011; Kim & Ryoo, 2009; Shinwoong Lee 2014; Johnson et al. 2016; Usman & Abdullahi 2018 Karakoç & Köse, 2017) investigated the relationship between vocabulary knowledge and writing ability. Kang (2011) probed the relationship between writing quality and two dimensions of lexical proficiency (general vocabulary knowledge and depth of vocabulary knowledge. Baba (2009) researched the influence of the lexical proficiency of EFL learners on their summary writing in English, controlling for several linguistic abilities in English and Japanese. Kim & Ryoo (2009) tried to identify the relationship between the student's active vocabulary knowledge measured by the Lexical Frequency Profile (LFP, hereafter) and their reading and writing proficiency, and also examined the effect of topic on vocabulary use.

To assess how well Korean university students write in English concerning their productive vocabulary size, Lee 2014 analyzed the receptive and productive vocabulary sizes of Korean university students. The findings showed a substantial relationship between the students' productive vocabulary size and the four writing-related factors of a topic, language use, vocabulary, and techniques. A significant correlation ($r=.41$) between the productive vocabulary size of the students and their composite writing scores was measured by ECP. The results of the current study were in line with the ones reported in previous studies (Baba, 2009; Kang, 2011) in which vocabulary knowledge was found to have a strong relationship with the quality of writing.

In the study by Johnson et al., 2016 the overall score on the test for productive vocabulary was moderately linked with the score for overall writing quality ($r =.38$, $p =.003$), with a significant correlation value of ($\alpha = 0.01$). The findings suggest that writing performance in the L2 language may be more strongly correlated with productive knowledge of high-frequency vocabulary. In this study, however, the actual use of high-frequency vocabulary words was additionally strongly linked to poorer L2 writing ability. This result seems to confirm past studies that linked the usage of low-frequency word forms to better L2 writing performance (Coniam, 1999; Johnson et al., 2013; Laufer, 1994; Laufer & Nation, 1995).

According to Usman & Abdullahi (2018), there is a strong link between vocabulary and the participants' level of intelligence. The data indicate a significant and positive link between mechanics and vocabulary. However, Organization, Content, and Mechanics were used to evaluate the respondents' writing abilities. Vocabulary profile and mechanics are correlated at 0.05 (1-tailed) $r = 387$, $n = 20$, and $p > 046$. The results are consistent with those of Mokhtar et al. (2010), who looked at the vocabulary proficiency of ESL students in Malaysia and discovered that it was low.

In 2017 Karakoç & Köse conducted a study on 175 students of an intensive language course to measure the relationships between receptive and productive vocabulary size, the connection between receptive vocabulary size and reading proficiency, and the relationship between productive vocabulary size and writing proficiency. According to the findings, the receptive vocabulary of participants was more extensive than their productive vocabulary. Additionally, It was demonstrated that vocabulary knowledge had a significant impact on reading, writing, and proficiency in foreign languages.

3. Methodology

To examine the degree of correlation between productive vocabulary and writing proficiency the current study used a correlational research approach. The researcher investigated the extent of the relationship between productive vocabulary and writing proficiency by performing a Pearson correlation coefficient analysis. For the current research population is selected from different IELTS academics in Pakistan. There were 128 participants in all. The numbers of female participants were 42, whereas the numbers of male participants were 82. Male and female participants ages ranged from 17 to 20 years old. Convenience base strategies were used for sampling data

3.1. Research Instrument

There were three instruments used in the present study first one was the Productive Vocabulary Levels Test (PVLT) (Laufer & Nation 1999), the second was argumentative essay writing and the third was the rubric of IELTS band descriptors for the evaluation of argumentative essays. These tools were chosen with the study's goals, objectives, and research questions in mind.

3.1.1. Productive Vocabulary Levels Test (PVLT)

PVLT (Productive Vocabulary Levels Test) (Laufer & Nation 1999) assesses vocabulary knowledge using word-frequency bands as a guide. PVLT, as is well known as the acknowledged global standard for testing productive vocabulary.

The test consists of 5 levels: 2000-word level, 3000-word level, 5000-word level, University Word List (UWL), and 10000-word level. The participants were given the beginnings of sentences, and they added the missing words. The Productive Vocabulary Levels Test is a credible, accurate, useful, and way to track vocabulary acquisition (Laufer & Nation, 1999: 44). It's simple to use and can be accomplished in a short amount of time.

3.1.2. Argumentative Essay Writing

The writing proficiency of IELTS candidates was assessed through argumentative essay writing. Students were asked to write an argumentative essay of 250 words in response to the given prompt "some people think that men are naturally more competitive than women". To what extent do you agree or disagree with this statement? and the writing samples gathered. Participants were allowed 40 minutes to complete the essay.

The argumentative essay writing of IELTS test takers was scored by one rater of the British Council. The essays were marked according to IELTS band descriptors. The scores are bands 0-9.

3.2. Data Analysis

Data from this study were analyzed using SPSS 23. Runs test, outlier analysis, normality test, and Pearson product-moment formula are used to calculate the correlation coefficient between the two continuous variables. The essential requirements were examined to determine the appropriateness of Pearson product-moment correlation which demonstrated that test was suitable for the data.

3.2.1. Normal distribution

The data is deemed normal if the skewness value is between $+-1$. Second, according to the central limit theorem, sampled data may be regarded as normally distributed if the size of the sample is large enough (30 or above). According to these two guiding principles data of both continuous variables (productive vocabulary score and IELTS writing band score) may be considered as normally distributed. According to the descriptive statistics table, the productive vocabulary test's skewness value was $-.046$ whereas the IELTS essay band score was $.099$. The sample included 128 cases (more than 30) (Male 86 & females 42). The volume of the sample and the skewness values both revealed that the data was normally distributed.

3.2.2. Linearity

Linearity check is the requirement of Pearson correlation. The purpose of the linearity test was to establish whether the continuous variables (productive vocabulary) scores and IELTS essay band scores) were appropriate for Pearson product-moment correlation.

Table 1: ANOVA

		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Essay_Band	* Between Groups (Combined)	95.217	108	.882	1.229	.313
	Linearity	.906	1	.906	1.263	.275
	Deviation from Linearity	94.311	107	.881	1.229	.313
	Within Groups	13.625	19	.717		
		Total	127			

As it is obvious from the above table, the *p*-value was greater than 0.05 ($.313 > 0.05$), which indicated that the relationship between the two continuous variables (productive vocabulary scores and IELTS band scores) is linear. In summary, the data meets the requirements of Pearson product moment correlation because the data passed the randomness test, both continuous variables involved (productive vocabulary score and IELTS essay band score) were continuous, the observations were independent, the data was free of outliers, both dependent variables were normally distributed, the data assumed homogeneity of variances and the continuous variables had a linear relationship.

4. Result and discussions

4.1. Descriptive Statistics

The accompanying table of gender representation frequencies (GEN) reveals that there were total 128 numbers of cases in the data, of which 86 were men and 42 were women.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics of Gender

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid				
Male	86	67.2	67.2	67.2
Female	42	32.8	32.8	100.0
Total	128	100.0	100.0	

The results could have been impacted by the fact that the percentage of men is more than double that of women. This suspicion is refuted by the results of Levene's test of homogeneity of variances, which show that both continuous variables' outcomes have equal variances (i.e., productive vocabulary score and IELTS essay band score).

Descriptive statistics are provided for both continuous variables in the statistics tables below (i.e., productive vocabulary score and IELTS essay band scores).

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics of productive Vocabulary and IELTS Essay-band

		Prod_Vocab	Essay_Band
N	Valid	128	128
	Missing	0	0
Mean		26.623	3.785
Std. Error of Mean		.5105	.0818
Median		27.013	4.000
Mode		30.5	4.0
Std. Deviation		5.7761	.9258
Skewness		-.046	.099
Std. Error of Skewness		.214	.214
Kurtosis		-.215	-.274
Std. Error of Kurtosis		.425	.425
Minimum		10.7	2.0
Maximum		39.4	6.5

Initially, the Productive Vocabulary Level Test had a total score of 47. (Part 1: 7, Part 2: 9, Part 3: 9, part 4: 11, and part 5: 11. For the purpose to give each part equal weighting, the marks obtained in all parts were counted out of 10. Following this weighting, the test's overall score was 50, with 10 points assigned to each part. The PVLT had a mean score of 26.623 (total score of 50), a median score of 27.013, and a mode of 30.5. A normal distribution is shown by the skewness value (i.e., -.046) falling inside the +/-1 range.

IELTS essay received a 9 band rating. The mean essay band was 3.785, and the standard deviation of essay band scores was .9258 both of which showed that there wasn't enough variation in the essay band scores. The PVLT, on the other hand, had a standard deviation of 5.7761, which indicated that it was relatively more spread. The IELTS band score's skewness number (i.e. .099), which is within the +/-1 range, shows that the data was normally distributed.

In conclusion, the IELTS essay band score and productive vocabulary score descriptive statistics indicated that the data on both variables were normally distributed.

4.2. Correlation between Productive Vocabulary and Argumentative Essay Writing

The hypothesis of this study related to the relationship between productive vocabulary scores and IELTS essay band scores. It was hypothesized that productive vocabulary was not related to IELTS essay band scores. A Pearson correlation coefficient was computed to evaluate the relationship between productive vocabulary and writing proficiency of IELTS test takers the result of which appears below.

Table 4: Correlations between productive vocabulary and writing proficiency

	Prod_Vocab	Essay_Band	
Prod_Vocab	Pearson Correlation	1	.091
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.306
	N	128	128
Essay_Band	Pearson Correlation	.091	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.306	
	N	128	128

The above table shows, there was no relationship between productive vocabulary and IELTS essay band scores($r(126) = .091, p=.306$).

4.3. Discussion

The scholarly investigation was provided to answer the research question What is the relationship between productive vocabulary and argumentative essay writing proficiency among IELTS test takers in Pakistan? A Pearson correlation coefficient was performed to evaluate the relationship, between the PVLT and IELTS essay

band score. The results of the Pearson correlation coefficient of PVLT and IELTS essay bands indicated that there was no correlation between productive vocabulary and writing proficiency.

The results of previous studies do not support the findings of the current study, Usman and Abdullahi 2018, Shinwoong Lee 2014, Johnson 2016. Usman&Abdullahi 2018 conducted a study on 150 students of English language in a university in Nigeria to investigate the level of productive vocabulary and the writing quality of ESL learners and the relationship between writing quality and vocabulary knowledge. The findings reveal that there was an observable correlation between writing quality and vocabulary. Lee 2014 conducted a study to investigate the connection between productive vocabulary and English writing ability the result of a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) indicates that there was a strong relationship between writing ability and students' productive vocabulary. Kang (2011) looked into the relationship between two lexical competencies— general vocabulary knowledge and depth of vocabulary knowledge and writing quality. The results revealed a strong association between writing quality and depth of vocabulary knowledge, but less so with broad vocabulary knowledge. Johnson 2016 researched Vocabulary Knowledge and Vocabulary Use in Second Language Writing. The findings of the research show productive knowledge of high-frequency word group were related to writing performance. Karakoç & Köse 2017 conducted a study to measure the correlation between productive vocabulary and writing proficiency of 175 students of the intensive language course. The findings revealed that there was a significant positive correlation between writing performance and productive vocabulary knowledge.

The result of the current study was unexpected. It may be the reason the current research does not support the previous research. Because the researcher collected the data from IELTS test takers and the age of participants was 17 to 18 years they have a lack of vocabulary knowledge that may affect the result of the current study.

5. Conclusion

The purpose of the study was to determine the relationship between the productive vocabulary and writing proficiency of IELTS test-takers in Pakistan. To address the aforementioned research question, the researcher used the correlational design of the study. In contrast to Pakistan, the researcher reviewed several articles in the literature. However, the study sought to examine the problem in the context of Pakistan to determine how closely or dissimilarly the findings of these students compared to those of the earlier studies.

To gather the necessary data, the researcher worked with two instruments productive vocabulary level test (PVLT) and argumentative essay writing. Data was collected from different IELTS academies in Pakistan and employed a practical sampling approach. In the present study sample size was 128 IELTS test takers from Pakistan. Pearson correlation coefficient analysis was computed to measure the correlation between productive vocabulary and writing proficiency of IELTS test-takers. The results of the study indicated no correlation between productive vocabulary and writing proficiency.

5.1. Limitations and Suggestions

In a different setting, the connection between productive vocabulary and writing proficiency has been investigated. However, there is still a huge gap in Pakistan when it comes to investigating this topic utilizing different statistical analysis methodologies with a large sample size. The huge sample is made up of many groups with varying degrees of linguistic proficiency. The researchers should also gather data from all provinces of Pakistan. The researcher should set a reward for participants so that participants may give genuine data.

The results of the research would be better if the sample size is larger. Second, the essay writings were evaluated by only one rater due to the high cost which is not affordable for me. The results would be more appropriate if the essay writings were evaluated by two raters. The main limitation of this study was the process of data collection. Data for the research was collected in the summer season that high effects because the weather was too hot so the students were not ready to participate. The results would be more authentic if data was collected from November to march. The fourth limitation is that there was no reward for participants which is the reason they were nonserious most of the students just wasted the sheets. From the above limitations, it is suggested that the sample size should be larger nearly 500 sample size. If the research is conducted in Pakistan the data should be collected from November to march. The essay writings should be evaluated by two evaluators.

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