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## **The Role of Lexical Chunks in Promoting English Writing Competence among Foreign Language Learners in Saudi Arabia**

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### **Abstract**

This study examines the effect of enhanced input of lexical chunks on the performance of Arabic-speaking English learners' writings. Lexical chunks, containing their forms, meanings, and functions, stored and recovered as a single component in brains, may alleviate language processing problems and increase language proficiency. The research examines if enhancing exposure to lexical chunks might advance foreign language learners' writing in Saudi Arabia. The study attempts to find an answer to the following question: What is the potential impact of rich input of lexical chunks on Arabic-speaking learners of English e-mail writing competence? A total of 34 female university students were divided into two groups and given a pre-test and post-test in which they wrote and composed e-mails in English. The experimental group was then exposed to a treatment (i.e., extensive exposure to lexical chunks available via an e-mail phrase bank). After eight weeks of treatment, the experimental group outperformed the control group on the post-treatment test. The results demonstrate that learners with more lexical chunks are more likely to perform better and vice versa. The results indicate that the experimental group had a favorable attitude about lexical chunks through the e-mail phrase bank. The results suggest that abundant input of lexical chunks aids in improving learners' writing performance. The findings also suggest that increased input of lexical chunks may lessen the potential negative transfer of the mother language, therefore refining writing in terms of collocations, grammatical structures, and discourse coherence.

**Keywords:** Arabic, English, input, exposure, Lexical Approach, lexical chunks, Saudi foreign language learners, e-mail writing, competency

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## Introduction

Lexicon has typically been signified to only words, it is manifest that a considerable amount of lexis is made of sequences of words that function as single constituents, with meanings distinctive from isolated words. Tang (2013) reported several expressions to denote this form of succession: *lexical chunks*, *lexical bundles*, *formulaic language*, and *collocations*. The term “lexical chunks” is adopted in this study as described by Wray (2002) “An uninterrupted or continuous successions of words or other components that is, or seems to be, inserting: that is, saved and recovered entirely from primary memory of the use, instead of subjected to language grammar production or evaluation” (p. 9).

Lexical chunks are patterns of stable or semi-stable multi-expression entities that frequently appear; for instance, *as far as I know*, *there is no doubt that* etc. They are typically stored as a whole, deprived of formation or creation, according to some structural constraints. Thornbury (2017) pointed out that lexical chunks are generated by meanings, not structural rules that are mastered all at once mechanically during language development. The approach of lexical chunks relied on the notion that language is constituted of ‘grammatical lexis’ ideally of ‘lexicalized syntax’, according to Lewis (1993) and Wang (2017) claims. Several lines of evidence suggest that lexical chunks play a substantial role in our daily interaction and trigger confidence, accurateness, and competency in the basic skills, including listening, writing, speaking, and reading. Furthermore, linguistic chunks are a fruitful process to advance learners’ writing of English as a foreign language (henceforth EFL), as White and Delaney (2018), and Al-Khazaali (2019) suggested.

A growing body of literature recognizes the significance of lexical chunks in mastering a foreign language. The current research was advanced to determine the role of direct enhanced input of lexical chunks to endorse EFL writing. One major issue implicates that learners lack of essential lexis for delivering e-mails written in English, resulting in the absence of comprehension of the meaning behind it. Many EFL learners in Saudi Arabia find writing a massive obstacle that has negatively influenced their EFL development. Low levels of writing make it challenging to communicate effectively. If EFL learners suffer from some shortage of required vocabulary, they cannot communicate successfully, whether oral or written. The current study investigates the efficiency of mastering lexical chunks to advance EFL learners’ writing. Whether learning more lexical chunks can efficiently promote EFL learners’ writing competence. The current study not only sheds light on the significance of lexical chunks in enhancing writing competency but also proposes some pedagogy recommendations forwards.

It looks pretty likely that writing e-mails is not a simple task for EFL learners. As an instructor with extensive years of teaching English in Saudi Arabia, I usually notice that learners often avoid sending e-mails in English. As major English students, they must communicate with teachers via official e-mails written in excellent English. This need has increased mainly during the Covid-19 lockdowns, where most office hours had become virtual. Many EFL learners often send e-mails that show some language inadequacy, including several unacceptable grammatical patterns (e.g., lack of subject-verb agreement), a limited amount of vocabulary, evidence of informality, evidence of mother tongue transfer etc.

Furthermore, empirical evidence suggests that EFL learners seem to encounter difficulty with different forms of communication due to the limited number of lexical entries they are familiar with and the shortage of lexical knowledge. Moreover, while writing, they often attempt to translate chunks from their first language (i.e., Arabic) into the target language (i.e., English). As a result, their compositions appear primarily foreign or strange, if not grammatically improper. Sometimes, their e-mails include some traces of interlanguage representations that are not a mirror image of their L1 or the target language.

Although university students in Saudi Arabia are typically introduced to some academic skills embodied in different courses, such as the course titled *Study Skills*, the provided content is not sufficient. As it lacks authentic and real-life context activities. Lack of familiarity with lexical chunks constitutes a classic learnability problem. The logical problem for Arabic speaker learners of English is that the input is unlikely sufficient to signal the difference between the target forms and their L1-specific forms concerning e-mail writing. Evidence found in the random selection of e-mails written by Arabic-speaking intermediate-level learners of English reveals some traces of L1 transfer, which attributes to initial representation based on their L1. Learners are likely to converge on some neither non-L1 nor non-L2 representation “interlanguage” in specific settings where input is insufficient to motivate adjustment, perhaps incomprehensible or lacking.

Several studies have adapted the Lexical Approach and investigated the receptive skills, mainly speaking and listening, which are documented as worthy of critical prominence and have received considerable attention. However, this research adds to the growing literature knowledge considering the logical problem and investigating the possible impact of lexical chunks in the activities of EFL learners on the productive skill of writing. The findings should make an essential contribution to the field by offering other experimental evidence that gives further support to the proposition that knowledge of lexical chunks is likely to help in advancing EFL learners’ writing proficiency and support in tackling several problems that learners may encounter in writing, e-mail writing in particular.

The growing body of literature recognizes the importance of the lexical chunks approach. This study endeavors to determine the role of lexical chunks in enhancing learners’ writing proficiency. Namely, to determine whether or not increasing the input of lexical chunks will improve Arabic EFL learners writing. Empirically, whether there are any significant differences between the two groups (i.e., control and experimental) mean scores on their performance in the post-test after the treatment (i.e., access to rich input of lexical chunks frequently used in writing e-mails). The lexical approach is adopted here as a remedy for the logical problem, i.e. poverty of the stimulus. This proposal is regarded as a relatively novel field of inquiry.

The current study is guided by the following research question:

RQ1: What is the potential impact of rich input of lexical chunks on Arabic-speaking learners of English writing competence?

To answer this question and determine if lexical chunks are efficient in boosting EFL learners’ writing competence, the researcher examines the number of lexical chunks mastered by EFL learners to determine whether it correlates with their writing scores.

Furthermore, the study set out to test one main research hypothesis:  
 $H_0$ : The rich input of lexical chunks does not have any significant impact on Arabic EFL learners' writing levels.

$H_1$ : The rich input of lexical chunks has a significant impact on Arabic EFL learners' writing levels.

Two scenarios are expected. The first hypothesis states that there will be no statistical significance variations in the mean scores of the two groups in the pre-test e-mail writing performance. On the other hand, the second hypothesis states that in the post-test, there will be statistically significant variations in the mean scores of the two groups' e-mail writing performance.

### **Lewis's Lexical Approach**

Altenberg (1998) claimed approximately 80% of the language elements are ranges of lexical chunks in place of independent expressions, which are the minimum component to function recall, input, and return of the relevant context. As a result, if EFL students can grasp many lexical chunks, considering the meanings and roles of discourse may be valuable. Nattinger and DeCarrico (1992) classified vocabulary lexical into three types: social functioning, required topics, and conservation devices. According to Lewis (1997) and Allison, Wee, Zhiming & Abraham (1998), lexical chunks are typically grouped into the forms listed in Table one.

Table 1. *Type of lexical chunks adapted from Lewis (1997) and Allison et al. (1998)*

Type of lexical chunks	Definition	Example
<b>Poly-words</b>	Brief and fixed lexical expressions with no flexibility are linked with a wide range of functions.	Shifter: <i>by the way</i>
<b>Phrasal constraints</b>	Brief to average length expressions with different lexical and phrasal categories are linked with other functions.	Relator: <i>as well as</i>
<b>Institutionalized utterances</b>	Lexical expressions of sentence length, with little flexibility. They are used for specific social interactions.	Accepting suggestions: <i>that sounds great</i>
<b>Sentence builders</b>	Lexical terms offer the structure for entire presentations, comprising slots for opinions for the expression of whole notions and allowing some substantial flexibility.	Suggesting: <i>the point is that</i>

Lewis (1993) introduced *the Lexical Approach*, which is based on the theory of chunks. The lexical approach in language training denotes the concept that the building blocks of any linguistic system are lexis, or words and their arrangements, rather than syntax, or other components. In the lexical approach, rhetorical components are seen as the essential part and base of understanding the target language (whether it is a second or foreign language); as Lewis (1993) argued "Language is made up of lexicalized lexis rather than lexicalized grammar" (p. 34). Most representations, according to the lexical approach, are not recently generated, and where lexical chunks in the development of

joined word components or learned representations give the production of fluent words that happened in regular contact. Lexical chunks, according to the lexical method, may effectively enhance the pace of language processing and creation. Lewis (1993) claimed that the lexical method is based on three assumptions: 1) language is composed of grammatical lexis rather than lexicalized grammar, 2) structural representations are recognized as beneficial but lexical representations are of critical importance to language instruction, and 3) language is composed of multi-word 'lexical chunks'. Lewis (1993) accepted the conservational method's efficacy in second/foreign verbalization teaching. As an alternative, he asserted that the lexical technique might enhance and progress the communicative approach. Learners must increase their awareness of lexical chunks and improve their ability to join chunks properly. As Linlin (2004) noted, the lexical method implicitly stresses strengthening language; with adequate repetition and practice, which are critical to assisting learners in retaining and use lexical chunks.

According to Richards and Rodgers (2001), "the primary components of language communication and interaction, according to a lexical model of teaching, are lexis, or word and word combinations, rather than syntax, function, ideas, or any other part of lesson design" (p. 132). From this vantage point, it is possible to suggest that lexical chunks have a crucial role in language development, particularly in the early stages (Hakuta, 1976). Lexical chunks may aid in managing language output and increasing adequate comprehension. Some of the advantages of employing lexical chunks in writing, according to Sun and China (2014) and Khazaali (2019), include boosting the fluidity of writing, improving creativity, and supporting the structural competency of discourse. Previous studies suggest that lexical chunks are an effective strategy to alleviate anxiety and stimulate motivation in language learning (Nattinger & DeCarrico, 1992).

Lewis (1993) and Pawley and Syder (1983) discovered that native speakers employ a large number of pre-installed lexical chunks to assure flow and accuracy. Thus, to learn a new language, learners must grasp not just individual vocabulary but also how to connect them correctly. Learners must use many lexical chunks to improve accuracy without resistance or disfluency. Learners can easily remember and generate them without having to assemble them by word selection and grammatical rules. Therefore, lexical chunks may significantly reduce and smooth learners' language processing. Pawley and Syder (1983) similarly asserted that learners must acquire the capacity of native-like chunking, that learners must be acquainted with correct blocks, and that learners must communicate their ideas like native speakers. As Zhao (2009) claimed, language correctness may be ensured if learners depend on ready-made lexical chunks that make up a significant percentage of native speakers' production.

### ***Previous Studies***

The lexical method emphasizes the need to introduce lexical chunks to EFL learners. According to existing empirical evidence (e.g., Cowie & Howarth, 1996), lexical chunks have a significant role in motivating writing skills in a foreign language. Cowie and Howarth (1996) compared the writing of less-skilled native speakers with more fluent non-native speakers. They discovered that such lexical chunks represent a significant component of non-native speakers' speech. Nonetheless, Granger (1998) found that "learners apply fewer word knowledge and are less attentive to collocational linkages than natural counterparts" (p. 151). Granger (1998) found that low-level and medium EFL learners created fewer lexical chunks than native English speakers.



Previous research suggests that lexical chunks are beneficial to foreign language development because they promote fluency, correctness, innovativeness, and consistency, as well as considerably increasing learners' motivation. Sun and China (2014) claimed that lexical blocks stored as a complete component have a vital function in lowering anxiety and increasing confidence. Low levels learners are more prone to experience anxiety and, as a result, have low levels of confidence.

There have been many studies done on lexical chunks to determine whether they affect mastering foreign languages (e.g., Yu Xiulian, 2008; Hou, Loerts & Verspoor, 2016), including competence in listening (e.g., ZengQingmin., 2012) and speaking in particular (e.g., Chen, 2010). Early studies focused on the importance of the lexical approach on EFL learners' speaking proficiency. However, the small number of studies that have been done to the lexical approach concerning foreign language learners' writing did not account for the function of lexical chunks as triggering input that promotes adapting the target systems (Tang, 2012; Abdulqader, Murad & Abdulghani, 2017; Mohamad, Mohaini & Nath, 2020).

Zhao (2009) conducted a study to explore the effect of lexical chunks on English mastery. Zhao (2009) investigated the possible association between learners' skills with lexical chunks and their production by evaluating the results of numerous written exams and a writing test. The data showed that students with high lexical chunks are more likely to perform well on the writing test. Zhao (2009) found that lexical chunks are substantial in learners' development of the target language. According to Zhao (2009), lexical chunks promote vocabulary smoothness, increase vocabulary accuracy, allow for the formation of novel terms, govern language output, and increase learners' motivation.

Abdulqader (2016) examined the impact of lexical chunks on the performance of Kurdish college students' English writing, i.e., descriptive essay. Abdulqader (2016) attempted to determine whether drawing learners' attention to the lexical chunks in different contexts aid in better performance in EFL essays writing versus the traditional instruction approach. The researcher adapted the two groups pre-test post-test design. Following three weeks of treatment, the findings suggest that the experimental group statistically outperformed the control group in their essay writing. Similarly, Abdulqader, Murad & Abdulghani (2017) examined the impact of using the Lexical Approach on the English essay writing performance of college students. Also, two groups' (i.e., control and experimental) and pre-test and post-test design were used. Following six weeks of treatment adapting the Lexical Approach, the results showed that the experimental group statistically outperformed the control group and significantly gained scores in the post-essay-writing test. The control group, nevertheless, did not show a statistically significant increase in the post-essay-writing test. The Lexical Approach was advantageous to the students' writing. Abdulqader et al. (2016) concluded with some pedagogic implications.

Furthermore, Al-Khazaali (2019) examined the significance of lexical chunks to the writing proficiency of Iraqi university students studying English as a foreign language. Al-Khazaali (2019) investigated if improving EFL learners' understanding of lexical chunks often used in diverse contexts aids in the advancement of EFL essay writing as compared to the traditional way of instruction. Before and after the test, two groups (i.e., control and experimental) completed a questionnaire. After four weeks of treatment, Al-Khazaali (2019) discovered a significant difference between the two groups

after the test. As predicted, the experimental group outperformed the control group. Khazaali (2019) observed that using lexical chunks as a language learning strategy improves the writing of EFL learners.

Several lines of evidence suggest that EFL learners' lexical chunks significantly add to their language proficiency. EFL learners can only acquire native-like fluency and accuracy in their language output if they master many ready-made lexical chunks. The more advanced the EFL learners are, the more competent they are likely to be in employing lexical chunks and vice versa. To date; to the best of the researcher's knowledge, no study has examined the role of lexical chunks in promoting Saudi-speaking learners of English as a foreign language in real-life contexts such as e-mail writing.

## Methods

The purpose of the current study was to determine the possible impacts of lexical chunks on the writings of EFL learners. This study explores the potential effects of increasing the input of lexical chunks on the writing of Arabic EFL learners. The method used in this study is pre-post e-mail writing tests.

## Participants

Two groups' design was adapted for the study. The researcher randomly selected two parallel groups of female university students at Taif University in Saudi Arabia and carried out the current empirical study that lasts one academic semester (during a summer course that lasts for eight weeks, 2021).

The participants ( $n=34$ ) were randomly assigned into two groups, experimental and control, each group includes 17 respondents. All the participants are English department majors. Before joining the department, they studied English for at least six years. The two groups' English demonstrates to be roughly identical. They shared the following features: Part of their entry requirement to the English department. They must attain a particular score (47 as a minimum) in the Standardised Test of English Proficiency (STEP) as evidence that they have a relatively good command of English language proficiency. Thus, the researcher did not need to carry out another placement test. They were all Saudi upper intermediate English learners. So, they are all beyond the initial state of grammar. They learned at public schools before joining the university. All participants were of the same gender (females), and their ages ranged from 20 to 23. Both groups were attending a writing skill course (Writing III) using the same textbook (Oshima & Hogue, 2014) and taught by the same instructor (the researcher) at the same time. All participants signed informed consent. The research was approved by the Research Ethics Committee of Taif University, Saudi Arabia (Application code: 43-105).

The researcher compared the performance of both groups on the pre-test to a random selection of spontaneous e-mails written by native speakers of British English ( $n=10$ ) studying at the University of Leeds, the United Kingdom. To determine whether there is a noticeable gap between the learners' performance and that of the non-native speakers of English before the treatment. To test the predictions of Granger (1998) who claims that "in comparison to original speakers, trainees employ fewer lexical pieces" (p. 15).

**Research Instruments and Procedures***Stimulus: Pre-task and Post-task (E-mail Writing)*

The two tests signify the participants' performance with lexical chunks in language production and e-mail writing. The two groups took a pre-test and post-test in the research to examine and comparing their English writing proficiency. The experimental group was given the treatment between the two tests. As a starting point, to assess the learners' competence in writing, the researcher instructed both groups to compose a formal e-mail (word limit: 250) and send it to the researchers' e-mail on a selected topic of three relevant to some academic issues, e.g., asking for an assignment extension, showing appreciation, apologizing (see Appendix A).

Throughout the treatment, the experimental group extensively used lexical chunks provided by the researcher and composed various e-mails about different topics. They were instructed to make the most of lexical chunks in their writings. On the other hand, the control group did not obtain any instructions or access any input concerning lexical chunks or how to write e-mails professionally. After treatment, the researcher again instructed both groups to compose another e-mail in English and send it to her for the same topics they responded to in the pre-test with the same words limit (250) (see Appendix B). They were given 30 minutes to finish the task each time.

Following the pre-test, the experimental group was subject to treatment. After the E-mail Phrase Bank (EPB) was designed, the participants had access to it, and they were instructed to practice using some of the selected lexical chunks for a diverse selection of purposes for a period of eight weeks that extended from the 15<sup>th</sup> of June to the 17<sup>th</sup> of August in 2021. They were extensively exposed to the bank of lexical chunks for two sessions of 20 minutes a week via a telegram channel designed for language development at different skills. In each session, the experimental group was exposed to a different diverse of lexical chunks, mainly those that are frequently used in e-mail communication, such as *I hope this e-mail finds you well*, *It might be worth trying to*, *I wondered if you had any ideas related to etc.*

The experimental group was instructed to underline the lexical chunks and put them into use to master them appropriately. Next, they were requested to practice the lexical chunks by composing e-mails in which those chunks were implemented. The researcher selected lexical chunks according to their frequency and formality, counting more useful lexical chunks in writing formal English e-mails. Following the eight weeks, both groups were post-tested in e-mail writing. The participants were asked to write and deliver e-mails for different reasons and keep using the EPB each time they sent an e-mail to an instructor. During data analysis, the researcher considers the participants' improvement concerning e-mail writing by concentrating on the number of lexical chunks and their forms, meanings, and functions.

The E-mail phrase bank was planned to offer systematic guidelines for writing professional e-mails, including *opening lines*, *body lines*, and *closing lines*. Furthermore, it aimed to represent a wide range of widely used forms, their meanings, and their functions. That is, the bank was intended to offer limitless commonly used expressions for writing e-mails in English to deliver different functions, including *greetings*, *the reason for writing*, *requests*, *reminders*, *saying what you are attaching*, *apologizing*, *gratitude*, *offering help*, and *closing* (see Figure one). The design considered the degree of formality: the proposed expressions range from formal, neutral to informal



<b>Opening Lines</b>	O1. Socializing e.g., <i>I hope this email finds you well.</i>	O2. Emailing first e.g., <i>I am writing to you with regards to/regarding/concerning/in connection with...</i>	O3. Replying e.g., <i>Thanks for your feedback on/your invitation/your suggestion.</i>	O4. Apologizing e.g., <i>Please accept our apologies for any inconvenience caused.</i>	O5. Appreciating e.g., <i>Just a quick note to say many thanks for...</i>		
<b>Body Lines</b>	B1. Attaching e.g., <i>kindly find attached .....</i>	B2. Requesting e.g., <i>I'd really appreciate if you could...</i>	B3. Asking for clarifications e.g., <i>If you could please shed some light on this topic, I would really appreciate it.</i>	B4. Sharing info e.g., <i>Just a quick/friendly reminder that...</i>	B5. Approval e.g., <i>What are your thoughts (on this)?</i>	B6. Scheduling e.g., <i>I'm afraid I can't make it on [day]. How about...?</i>	B7. Giving bad news e.g., <i>After careful consideration, we have decided (not) to ...</i>
<b>Closing Lines</b>	C1. Expecting e.g., <i>Looking forward to hearing from you soon.</i>	C2. Offering help e.g., <i>For the meantime, if you have any questions or concerns, don't hesitate to let me know.</i>	C3. Apologizing e.g., <i>Once again, please accept our apologies for any inconvenience caused.</i>	C4. Greetings e.g., <i>Thank you for your consideration.</i>			

Figure 1. Examples of the E-mail phrase bank (EPB)

Throughout the treatment, the experimental group was instructed to make the most of lexical chunks in their e-mail writings. They used lexical chunks and wrote plenty of e-mails on different topics, and later they presented and discussed them in the writing class. The control group, on the other hand, did not access any input regarding lexical chunks. They only accessed the traditional lecturing delivered in the approved textbook.

The experimental group went through the following phases:

- Recognizing input and noticing the gap: The researcher introduced lexical chunks and drew the participants' attention to them. They were likely to identify and observe lexical chunks when disclosed to the manipulated input, and that was likely to promote awareness towards using them. The learners were encouraged to recognize some of the non-target-like productions that have previously been generated and to suggest some alternatives from the designed bank. After recognizing lexical chunks, the participants were directed to boost their knowledge of implementing lexical chunks and generate writing on the amalgamation of lexical chunks. Considering the fact that awareness is the essential method of remembrance, awareness of the lexical chunks is critical in the technique to hold and retrieve linguistic information and determine representations. Distinguishing lexical chunks of writing is likely to reduce the memory burden of learners and lead learners to produce native-like writing effectively.
- Practicing lexical chunks: The researcher designed and developed the EPB to support learners in noticing and practicing using lexical chunks in writing. Writing is a slow and gradual procedure. Thus, mastering chunks must be advanced gradually. The researcher began by

presenting three or four sentences, after which the participants were instructed to write down the lexical chunks they read. Consequently, the researcher requests the participants to examine lexical chunks and analyze them to be familiar with the construction of lexical chunks, their meanings, and how they function. This procedure allows learners to comprehensively understand the structure of the lexical chunks commonly used in writing.

- c. Mastering lexical chunks: Learners have found their knowledge of lexical chunks and bestowed themselves with the competency of recognizing and practicing using lexical chunks in writing e-mails in English.

Following the post-test, the participants were individually interviewed within 10 minutes. The participants were instructed to respond to three questions about their e-mail writing practices and attitudes towards writing using preassembled lexical chunks (see Appendix C). The aim of interviewing the participants is to access further qualitative data.

Task	Groups	n	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	Df	Sig. (2 tailed)
Writing scores	NS	10	13.60	3.23	19.33	42	<b>0.000</b>
	NNS	34	2.65	0.54			
Number of lexical chunks	NS	10	9.90	0.31	34.17	42	<b>0.000</b>
	NNS	34	3.21	0.60			

### Findings

Some descriptive and inferential statistics are generated to determine the likely effect of the role of lexical chunks on EFL learners' writing performance. This section present the major findings.

Table 2. Independent samples test of the results of the NS and NNS

Table two shows that the non-native speakers (NNS) performance significantly diverges from that of the native speakers (NS) of English. There was a significant difference in the scores of the native speakers ( $M=13.60$ ,  $SD=0.23$ ) and non-native speakers ( $M=2.65$ ,  $SD=0.54$ ) conditions;  $t(42)=19.33$ ,  $p=0.000$ . Furthermore, there was a significant difference in the number of lexical items produced by the native speakers ( $M=9.90$ ,  $SD=0.31$ ) and non-native speakers ( $M=3.21$ ,  $SD=0.60$ ) conditions;  $t(42)=34.17$ ,  $p=0.000$ .

The researcher noticed that native speakers of English produced more lexical chunks, such as *just to let you know, feel free to, just a reminder, it would be great if you could share, I do not doubt regarding, please advise, just wondering if* etc. Interestingly, they produced more phrasal verbs, such as *assigned in and out, bring over, let you in, heading down, stick around, coming over, ran over, etc.* The learners, on the other hand, produced fewer lexical chunks and fewer phrasal verbs as well. A sensible justification for native speakers' accuracy and productivity is that they rely heavily on much of the exact representations frequently rather than constructing new representations every time they write.

#### *The Learners' Performance in the Pre-test*

The experimental and control groups are assumed to be comparable in this study, and the difference between the two groups is not signed before the experiment. Putting it differently, the two groups are predictable to show no significant differences concerning their highness of writing. They should be of uniformity regarding their writing proficiency before the experiment.

Table 3. *Independent samples test of the two groups on the pre-test and post-test*

Tests	Groups	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	df	Sig. (2 taile
<b>Pre-test</b>	Control	17	2.53	0.514	-1.27	32	0.212
	Experimental	17	2.76	0.562			
<b>Post-test</b>	Control	17	2.12	0.781	12.23	32	<b>0.000</b>
	Experimental	17	12.65	3.463			

Table three also reveals that the experimental group and control group's means are statistically near to one other in the pre-test (2.53 and 2.76). Thus, the results statistically suggest that the learners in the two groups do not vary significantly from each one concerning their mail writing. In outcomes, the *t*-value of the pre-test is -0.27, and *p* is 0.212. Table three shows that the value of *t* is not significant at *p* (0.212), which suggests that the two groups are roughly equal concerning their EFL writing competency before the study.

#### *The Learners' Performance in the Post-test*

Table three also shows the means of the experimental group (12.65), which is more than the average score of the control group (2.12). The outcomes after the test demonstrate, that the two groups significantly vary at various highness of 0.000 ( $p < 0.05$ ), this can be accounted for after the lexical approach with the rich input is being adopted, the experimental group's writing is significantly developed. Whereas the traditional approach with a limited input shows no significant development in refining learners' writing proficiency of the control group.

Table three also demonstrates the difference between the lexical chunks produced by the experimental group more significant than the difference of those produced by the control group following the eight weeks experiment. The experimental group made a large number of English lexical chunks. The performance of the two groups is significantly varied at the highness of 0.00 ( $p < 0.05$ ). Table three demonstrates that the means of the experimental group on the post-test was 9.89, which is above the test. The experimental group is notable *t* at the level of  $p = 0.000$ . Whereas interestingly, the mean of the control group in the pre-test was 2.53 and 2.12 in the pre-test. The findings suggest

that the performance of the control group has significantly decreased. It can be concluded from Table three that only experimental group performance was significantly enhanced in the post-test.

Turning to the critical assumption of the study is that the participants are unlikely to show significantly comparable levels of writing competency after treatment. After extensive exposure to lexical chunks, the two groups perform considerably variously on the highness of their e-mail writing competence. As is indicated in Table three, the mean deviation among the two groups produces bigger in the post-test, with the  $p$ -value of  $0.000 < 0.05$ . Considering that other factors are under control, different inputs may be the likely factor to explain the observable divergence. The most plausible justification for the difference is that the rich input of lexical chunks is extensively efficient in advancing EFL learners' performance in writing. Table three reveals that the experimental group can generate more lexical chunks in the post-test. The findings suggest that mastering lexical chunks effectively supports EFL learners to boost their performance in using grammatical rules and forming sentences correctly. A possible justification for these findings perhaps is that the learners had more opportunities of functioning with lexical chunks in different contexts. For the control group, the lack of improvement was because they did not have access to sufficient input of lexical chunks. They just accessed standard input and did not have access to lexical chunks in various contexts. Consequently, the control group did not show any progress in the post-test. Hence, the difference between the control and experimental group's mean scores in the post-test was demonstrated to be significant owing to accessing rich input of ready-made lexical chunks.

TABLE 4. *Correlation between the number of lexical chunks and EFL learners' writing scores*

		Number of lexical chunk	Writing scores
Number of lexical chunks	Pearson Correlation	1.00	.745**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	0.000
Writing scores	Pearson Correlation	.745**	1.00
	Sig.(2-tailed)	0.000	.

\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

\*\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Although Table four reveals that participants in the experimental group have significantly developed their writing competency, the elephant is still in the room. Namely, does development in writing correlate with mastering more lexical chunks? To answer this question, a correlation analysis was carried out. Table four shows the relationship between the number of lexical chunks and the participants' writing scores: a close positive correlation that suggests that the many lexical chunks participants master, the higher rates they may attain in their writing. Namely, there was a robust positive correlation between the number of lexical chunks and the writing scores  $r(17) = .745$ ,  $p < 0.001$ . The findings suggest that when the number of lexical chunks increases, the writing scores increase, evidence that their language proficiency enhances. Namely, learners with higher lexical chunks are more likely to attain higher scores in writing and vice versa. The findings suggest that lexical chunks have a significant positive impact on learners' production of the target language.

## Discussion

The results indicate that learners with higher lexical chunks are more likely to score highly in writing and vice versa. The findings suggest that lexical chunks help in reducing the load and the time of selecting individual words and joining them together according to grammatical rules that may not consistently be successful. Lexical chunks accelerate the process and refine the quality of learners'

production to be more native-like and enhance fluency and accuracy accordingly. The findings support the lexical approach that highlights extensively introducing lexical chunks. These lexical chunks have a substantial role in improving writing, as Cowie and Howarth (1996) claimed. The results suggest that the lexical approach refines learners' writing skills. The lexical approach emphasizes that knowledge of implementing lexical chunks is beneficial internalizing the relevant input and linguistic development. Just when learners are aware of the gap between their production and that of native English speakers, will they be able to close the gap. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected in favour of the alternative hypothesis—concluding that the rich input of lexical chunks have a significant impact on Arabic EFL learners' writing levels.

Moreover, the findings support the lexical approach, which highlights the importance of mastering individual lexis and observing them as an entire component held in memory. Learners may learn them as a complete if necessary, instead of arranging them consistent with grammatical rules, which can lessen the anxiety of language coding and save much time and effort for information processing, thus boosting language fluency which supports Lewis (1997) claims. Furthermore, as a blend of forms, meanings, and lessons, the findings suggest that lexical chunks learned as a complete can considerably decrease the difference of non-target-like collocations and advance the exact and authenticity of the target language.

The current study provides further empirical evidence that both groups (i.e., experimental and control) do not master a sufficient number of lexical chunks in the pre-test compared to the production of the native speakers, who remarkably use a large number of lexical chunks (Lewis 1993; Pawley & Syder 1983). The data reveals some traces of the L1 effect in the pre-test, which suggests that the EFL learners are still stuck with some of their L1 representations, although they are all beyond the initial state. They overused a limited vocabulary and showed the tendency to repeat certain transitional words and phrases such as *also*, *but*, *I think*, *I believe*, rather than producing a wide variety of lexical chunks, such as *in addition to*, *apart from this*. The findings suggest that they do not master sufficient lexical chunks. This supports Granger (1998), who claimed that EFL learners produce fewer lexical chunks than native speakers of English. A sensible justification for native speakers' accuracy and productivity is they rely heavily on much of the exact representations frequently rather than constructing new representations every time they write, as Pawley and Syder (1983) indicated.

Learners frequently look for individual English counterparts of Arabic words and then bond them word-by-word to build an English utterance. Misused lexical chunks were relatively frequent in the pre-test, such as *in another word* 'in other words'. Sometimes, the participants could not deliver the meaning clearly and fluently, or their production seemed awkward, unacceptable, or non-native-like even if it is grammatically acceptable. Evidence of non-standard expressions and Chinglish found in the data, such as *\*past weekend* 'last week' and *\*enter the English department* 'join the English department'. If learners have a good command of lexical chunks, they will not waste time relying heavily on grammatical rules while picking up individual words and combining them. Besides, the output of this process is not always guaranteed. The learners' insufficient lexical knowledge may be attributed to ambiguous input and inadequate exposure to the target language that does not result in the necessary adjustments to accommodate the target representations. Evidence of logical problem was found in the pre-test.



After treatment, the experimental group produced more lexical chunks than the control group and somewhat overcame the L1 effect, and converged on the relevant properties. Their writing sound more cohesive, understandable, and attractive than the control group. This improvement may be due to their recurrent access to abundant input of the target data that triggered the required adjustments. The target representations emerged gradually, triggered by the ample and rich input. The findings suggest that lexical chunks competency plays a significant role in EFL learners' proficiency. The fact that the control group shows poor performance with insufficient lexical chunks perhaps accounts for why they do not demonstrate higher ability in English compared to the experimental group with native-like language production that embraces an adequate number of lexical chunks. The findings support Abdulqader (2016) and Abdulqader et al. (2017), who concluded that drawing learners' attention to the lexical chunks in different contexts aid in better performance in EFL writing than the traditional approach of instruction.

During the interview, most of the experimental group said that the e-mail bank helped them enhance their confidence when composing e-mails. The findings show that understanding lexical chunks will help EFL learners improve writing confidence. Mastering lexical chunks may help learners reduce a load of recollection, lowering the effort of learning a foreign language. The pragmatic function associated with lexical chunks may assist EFL learners in acknowledging context, which contributes to EFL writing fluency and reduces response time. These may help EFL learners become more confident and relaxed while composing e-mails, which guarantees effective communication. The results back up Al-Khazaali's (2019) claim that lexical chunks kept as a complete portion and that learners with poor language competence are especially prone to undergo anxiety and lack confidence throughout the writing process. Mastering lexical chunks may help reduce anxiety about writing, which is regarded as the most challenging task.

Furthermore, lexical chunks might help learners eliminate target-like perceptions generated by lexical choice, improving language accuracy and fluency. Learners write more smoothly after extended exposure to the vast collection of lexical chunks, which reduces anxiety during the writing process and enhances their confidence. After eight weeks of intensive exposure to lexical chunks, it is clear that learners' EFL writing skill has significantly improved.

The majority of participants reported during the interview that lexical chunks are not given much attention in English classrooms. Because lexis is ignored, grammatical rules get a lot of attention and rely on semantics correlating Arabic and English as the primary way of learning. The majority of participants reported that they devote a significant amount of time learning grammatical rules and specific lexis, yet their English proficiency has not improved. Individuals with high scores recognized the importance of lexical chunks and, as a result, learned the lexical chunks independently. However, they found it difficult to recollect all lexical fragments independently. Participants with low scores, instead, are unaware of the relevance of lexical chunks.

There is a positive association between EFL learners' proficiency in mastering lexical chunks and their writing. When learners can master adequate lexical chunks and put them into practice correctly, they are more likely to attain better fluency, higher accuracy, and greater cohesion, consequently delivering native-like performance in language production in writing. Moreover, if EFL learners can put lexical chunks into practice correctly, their motivation can be enlarged, which is

advantageous to their EFL proficiency. The experimental group pointed out that their motivation to write e-mails in English has increased because of the EPB. The findings support the findings of Zhao (2009). They find the EPB a good resource and writing e-mails less painful than before. Thus, integrating lexical chunks into English classrooms can have a massive impact on EFL development.

Learners maintained that it is challenging to match Arabic counterparts of their mother tongue words. And that they often literally translate from Arabic into English word by word. They pointed out that it is challenging to deliver the intended meaning of the message, although they have excessively various thoughts to declare. Both groups claimed that word selection is the trickiest task they encounter when writing in the target language. They consider finding words to deliver the intending meanings a waste of time and effort. Furthermore, they mentioned that they often selected the wrong words that did not match their thoughts.

One of the more significant findings to emerge from this study is a positive correlation between EFL learners' proficiency with lexical chunks and their production. Once EFL learners master adequate lexical chunks and practice them correctly, they are more likely to accomplish better fluency, enhanced accuracy, and cohesion, producing more target-like representations. Moreover, once EFL learners become proficient with using lexical chunks correctly, their motivation towards mastering the target language can be boosted, which is beneficial in terms of language proficiency. Thus, more exposure to lexical chunks is likely to offer countless benefits for mastering EFL.

The findings suggest that enriched input can boost learners' knowledge of the relevant lexical chunks, significantly advancing their frequency of producing lexical chunks, and hence contribute to advance their EFL writing competency. Introducing individual words and grammatical rules is not sufficient for native-like production. The results of this investigation give some hints to EFL instruction, particularly writing. Initially, the results suggest that rich input of lexical chunks seems advantageous. Concepts related to introducing the lexical chunks must be changed, and awareness of the position of lexical chunks must be emphasized. EFL learners must be guided to determine familiarity with lexical chunks and habitually encourage learners to put lexical chunks into practice productively in everyday interaction to advance learners' communicative skills. Also, due to the massive number of lexical chunks, it is not adequate to gather, use and master lexical chunks in artificial contexts such as classrooms. Learners are highly encouraged to practice using dictionaries, relevant corpus, and available online resources to master using lexical chunks daily in authentic and real-life contexts. For better fluency and higher accuracy, Arabic-speaking learners of English are encouraged to pick up and keep written records of the different forms of lexical chunks whenever they listen to native speakers of English, such as listening to the radio, watching television, reading newspapers or magazines, watching native speakers via social media platforms etc.

By combining the roles of lexical chunks, EFL learners can be aware of the importance of lexical chunks. In the classroom setting, lexical chunks must be implemented. For example, while delivering the lexical chunks, EFL learners may be reminded of the value of this form of lexical chunks, will not only signal the direction of the whole context but will also make the context more understandable. Furthermore, to enhance linguistic awareness, learners should be urged not to interpret chunk-by-chunk instead of word-by-word. Moreover, as Lewis (1993) proposed, offering more lexical chunk-related input, including more exercises and games, would aid in increasing language proficiency, improving linguistic appropriateness, and smoothing linguistic output.

The most prominent finding to emerge from this study is that rich, diverse, and more sophisticated comprehensible input of lexical chunks can effectively boost EFL learners' writing competency. The study strongly supports the claim that adequate intake of lexical chunks accompanied by adequate practicing of using them can enhance the storage of language information. The evidence from this study suggests that the difference in lexical chunks nearly correlates with EFL learners' writing competency. The current data highlight the importance of expanding the input of lexical chunks to advance EFL learners' abilities to master lexical chunks during foreign language development.

### Conclusion

The main goal of the current study was to determine whether or not lexical chunks play a significant role in mastering writing among Arabic-speaking learners of English. The most prominent finding from this study is that several lexical chunks nearly and positively correlate with EFL learners' writing results. The findings indicate that lexical chunks can simply enhance EFL learners' writing competence. The findings suggest the input of lexical chunks seems beneficial to EFL instructions as it supports storing the ready-made lexical constituents in learners' minds, which profits target-like production. The findings of this study have several essential implications for future practice, particularly for pedagogical purposes. Finally, future research should determine how to better apply the lexical approach to all aspects of language to improve learners' inclusive competence.

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The author declared no potential conflicts of interest concerning the research, authorship, and publication of this article.

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**Appendices**  
**Appendix A**  
**Pre-Test. Writing an e-mail**

**Instructions:**

For this section, you are allowed 30 minutes to write an e-mail in English and send it to [r.mohamad@tu.edu.sa](mailto:r.mohamad@tu.edu.sa). You should write 250 words in response to one of the following topics:

- 1) Asking for an assignment extension.
- 2) Appreciation
- 3) Apologizing

**Appendix B**  
**Post-Test. Writing an e-mail**

**Instructions:**

For this section, you are allowed 30 minutes to write an e-mail in English and send it to [r.mohamad@tu.edu.sa](mailto:r.mohamad@tu.edu.sa). You should write 250 words in response to one of the following topics:

- 1) Asking for an assignment extension.
- 2) Appreciation
- 3) Apologizing

**Appendix C**  
**Interview**

Questions for the interview (lasts for approximately 10 minutes)

Q1: What issues do you usually encounter in writing e-mail in English?

Q2: Do you think it is essential to have access to some knowledge of lexical expressions (e.g., E-mail phrase bank), and does it have a role in advancing your EFL proficiency in writing?

Q3: Do you think access to such knowledge of lexical expressions lowers your anxiety and increases your motivation and confidence while writing?



