

The effects of input flood and input enhancement techniques in teaching collocations to EFL learners

Bunyamin Celik

English Language Teaching Department, Tishk International University, Erbil-KRI 44001, Iraq; bunyamin.celik@tiu.edu.iq

ARTICLE INFO

Received: 7 December 2023
Accepted: 28 December 2023
Available online: 30 December 2023

doi: 10.59400/fls.v6i1.2088

Copyright © 2023 Author(s).

Forum for Linguistic Studies is published by Academic Publishing Pte. Ltd. This article is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY 4.0).
<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>

ABSTRACT: Input flood and input enhancement are two prominent techniques to develop learners' writing competence. While the former refers to offering multiple sources to increase students' gains, the latter implies highlighting certain linguistic items to attract attention. A plethora of studies have been conducted to measure the effectiveness of both techniques. However, a gap in the literature has been noticed in comparing input flood with input enhancement technique in terms of writing improvement in Iraq. Thus, the present study was conducted to measure the impacts of the input flood technique to teach collocations on 48 EFL learners who joined an intensive language learning program at the Language Preparatory School of Tishk International University in Erbil, Iraq. Participants, chosen by convenience sampling method, were exposed to input flood or input enhancement techniques to expand their colloquial expression knowledge within six weeks in the 2022–2023 academic year spring semester. Data were collected via writing exams and interviews as a part of the explanatory sequential research design. The findings, analyzed by SPSS 27 and MAXQDA, revealed that experimental group students who received the instruction via input flood increased their writing marks more significantly than control group students whose instruction was via input enhancement. Likewise, students who received the instruction with input flood had more positive views than students receiving input enhancement. The findings of the study may have several implications for educators who think about teaching collocations via input flood and input enhancement techniques professionally.

KEYWORDS: academic writing; input flood; input enhancement; vocabulary breadth

1. Introduction

English is a global language with immense importance in various aspects of life. It serves as a lingua franca with 1.5 billion native speakers to communicate with people from other nationalities, so language barriers can be eliminated mostly thanks to establishing two-way communication successfully (Celik, 2023a). Its reflections can be overtly seen in various contexts. To name a few, the English learning and teaching process starts at kindergarten in many countries. Likewise, a growing number of educational institutions offer English medium instruction to pave the way for a brilliant career for the graduates of such institutions. Similarly, students who seek some opportunities to improve their English virtually can have decent opportunities to contact native speakers via countless platforms. In addition, English is used commonly in international trade and business because the percentage of websites in

English has exceeded 70% (Daskan and Yildiz, 2020). Proficient speakers of English can commence and finalize business deals efficiently, so their chance to climb the career ladder increases significantly when compared to other colleagues who have difficulty in conveying messages in English in the same workplace. In addition, English is used extensively in media because the gap between media corporations and clients has reduced considerably thanks to the advancements in technology. Thus, users can access English news and videos from various countries within seconds. Moreover, English facilitates the completion of tasks in tourism, so knowing English has been regarded as the key to moving to different countries to work or visit tourist attractions. Subsequently, English helps close the cultural gaps, so cross-cultural understanding has been fostered to establish harmony and tolerance between the nationals of different countries. Afterwards, English plays an integral role in the dissemination of academic publications, which have been released in English by more than 90% (Rao, 2019). Thus, readers and authors can get information, cross-check validity, foster critical thinking, offer sensible solutions, and get inspired to put theory into practice via published articles, proceedings, or books, thereby being exposed to intellectual development incessantly. As it is obvious, learning English is multifaceted, uncovering many reflections in people's lives at different stages.

Language is not a set of rigid rules based on grammatical conventions. In contrast, it should be accompanied to convey the meaning creatively, either in a spoken or written form. In this regard, academic writing is activated to convey the meaning eloquently in written contexts. It offers several advantages in academic, social, and professional life because it guides the learners to define, exemplify, categorize, compare, contrast, connect, synthesize, and summarize the concepts academically (Yucedal et al., 2022). Academic writing skills are required while writing essays, official e-mails or petitions, conference papers, articles, dissertations, and theses, so it has an irreplaceable place in individuals' lives throughout their lifespans. There are four types of academic writing which are descriptive, analytical, persuasive, and critical (Strobl et al., 2019). Descriptive writing is designed to provide facts and information, which can be exemplified by writing the summary of an article or the results of an experiment. Conversely, analytical writing is initiated to reorganize the facts and information in an analysis or comparison mode, which can be exemplified with movie or novel analysis. On the other hand, persuasive writing urges the authors to go one step further by embedding their points of view into essays to convince the readers, which can be exemplified by writing on controversial topics such as mobile phone addiction or global warming. The last academic writing type is critical, which requires comparing different points of view, which can be exemplified by the effects of web-enhanced tools in English classes as an academic article. It can be assumed that someone who takes academic writing classes can internalize the given instruction to be successful in life, whereas others who underestimate the importance of academic writing may have some drawbacks in their lives. Thus, academic writing has played an essential role in English classes to seize the opportunity in several domains of life.

Collocations are at the forefront of representing formulaic sequences in language learning and teaching process, along with phrasal verbs, idioms, transitions, and proverbs. Formulaic sequences support learners in articulating lexical bundles, which paves the way for increased proficiency in English (Khatami et al., 2023). In the same vein, collocations fulfill vitally important functions in written and spoken English as lexical partnership contributes to learners' English levels significantly on different occasions. To name a few, integrating collocations into the conversation helps close the gap between native and non-native speakers. Additionally, they ensure semantic precision, thereby eliminating the barriers to conveying the meaning in conversations accurately. Subsequently, they push the learners to figure out the differences between literal and figurative language. Likewise, collocations guide the

learners to form grammatically correct sentences because learners get the instruction to use colloquial expressions in a sequence precisely. Similarly, collocations unlock the learners' potential in writing because they can add collocations into sentences to write more creatively (Bui, 2021; Kara and Abdulrahman, 2022). It is unambiguous that learners can seize numerous opportunities in written and spoken English once they grasp essential collocations. Thus, renowned publishing companies release their collocation dictionaries, embed sections in English course books, and insert some collocations into videos, audio tracks, reading passages, and sample writing excerpts in English textbooks to reap the benefits of colloquial expressions and capture readers' attention instantly.

Providing comprehensible input for the learners is an indispensable necessity in English classes, so the cycle to gain additional information continues. Richards and Renandya (2002) point out that inputs are valuable sources to internalize and initiate the language learning process. Designing classes with the aim of increasing comprehensible input has several other benefits, such as decoding language patterns automatically, reducing anxiety, building a firm foundation, and figuring out details in context incidentally. Although there are various techniques to offer input, two techniques, input flood and input enhancement, stand out with their distinguishing features. The former suggests that target language items will be flooded frequently in different contexts and at different times, whereas the latter means emphasizing the language item via highlighted, bold, italicized, or underlined forms. Szudarski and Carter (2016) elucidate that highlighting the target linguistic items captures the attention of the learners as visual stimuli, thereby multiplying the chance of retention rate. Likewise, Pigada and Schmitt (2006) attest that encountering unknown items several times sharpens learners' minds considerably, thereby contributing positively to their language learning journeys. It is obvious that both techniques have their own merits.

Research significance

The focus of this study is two-fold which is exploring the ways to integrate collocations into the Academic Writing course and comparing two prominent collocation teaching techniques with each other by emphasizing the strengths and weaknesses. Although input flood and input enhancement techniques have been explored in a plethora of studies to develop writing skills, no research has been conducted to compare input flood with input enhancement in terms of sharpening writing skills in Iraq. Thus, this research is an attempt to fill the void in the Iraq context. In addition, writing skills have been regarded as one of the most challenging ones for many students (Pineteh, 2014). Thus, this study will seek opportunities to expand students' vocabulary knowledge in a stress-free environment where English is taught with the means of the latest technological tools such as smart boards, CALL, and MALL. The underlying reason is to raise the awareness of participants in writing classes, thereby increasing their motivation to develop their writing skills substantially with a well-established plan.

2. Literature review

English language education has witnessed a paradigm shift, with a growing emphasis on communicative competence and natural language use since Hyme's (1967) pioneering attempts. He emphasized communicative competence, in contrast to Chomsky's Grammatical Competence. Likewise, his model highlighted goal-oriented functional English to meet the needs in daily life and academic circles simultaneously. His model also formed the basis for the Common European Framework (CEFR) in 1991 when the influence of communicative competence spanned many countries in increasing numbers. Since then, native-like fluency has been the common goal to be realized in English classes. Correspondingly, combining words harmoniously through collocations has gained prominence in

sharpening learners' communicative competence naturally and accurately in written and spoken English. A growing number of scholars have postulated the positive impacts of covering collocations in English classes. To name a few, Hill (2000) and Web (2013) state that collocations help learners combine words precisely and convey the meaning in various forms, such as making an appointment, doing business, and coming to a decision. Similarly, they can be formed by combining verbs with adverbs, such as apologizing publicly or smiling proudly. Figuring out collocations can close the gap between native and non-native speakers because they can find more common grounds to communicate abruptly without having barriers (Deveci, 2007; Mangubhai, 2001; Winke, 2013). Book floods and comprehensible input floods: Providing ideal conditions for second language acquisition. Granger and Bestgen (2014) assert that using collocations effectively can increase the motivation of English speakers so that they can express their ideas more confidently. In the same vein, Gablasova et al. (2017) contend that learners can put the theory into practice once they command collocations thoroughly because collocations are used frequently in daily life. Similarly, Bui (2021) states that integrating collocations into English classes inspires students to learn by inquiry because they are inclined to expand the breadth of collocations through websites as they use them in their lives regularly.

Input flood and input enhancement are two well-known techniques coined by Sharwood Smith in 1993 to teach collocations. Since then, their popularity has increased exponentially thanks to ensuring gains linguistically. For instance, input flood urges educators to provide comprehensible input in various formats frequently. On the other hand, input enhancement drives educators to highlight linguistic items to be noticed starkly by the learners within bolded, italicized, or underlined forms. Several studies have investigated the role of input flood and input enhancement techniques on students' language learning competencies with varying findings and implications for future studies. To illustrate, Szudarski and Carter (2016) conducted a study in Poland on Polish EFL learners at a secondary school which culminated in a considerable gain in terms of teaching collocations by employing the input enhancement technique. Conversely, students whose lessons were enriched with the input flooding technique did not progress significantly. Subsequently, Webb et al.'s (2013) study revealed that Taiwanese students at the tertiary level outperformed their peers once they were exposed to input flooding. A notable study was conducted by Dastjerdi and Farshid (2011) on Iranian EFL learners at a university which revealed that input flooding was more effective than input enhancement in terms of teaching collocations in daily English. In other words, highlighting words to foster students' learning via input enhancement was not as effective as input flooding which prioritizes repetition to teach linguistic items in sets consecutively. Additionally, Öztuna (2012) carried out a study on Turkish EFL learners to measure the effects of input flooding and input enhancement techniques which displayed that input flooding helped learners to figure out collocations more instantly than input enhancement. In a similar vein, Sanchez (2015) found that incidental instruction to teach collocations via input flooding was more beneficial than input enhancement on EFL and ESL learners studying at a university in the UK.

However, some studies unearthed conflicting results. For instance, Peters (2012) investigated the effects of input enhancement on German EFL learners which uncovered that directing attention to specific forms to teach collocations did not yield satisfactory results in terms of colloquial expansion. Similarly, Jabbarpoor and Tajeddin (2013) found that input enhancement may not yield satisfactory results if not implemented in cooperation. Their studies hint that some students may lose their concentration for the highlighted items, but their chance to figure out the meaning increases collaboratively.

Research aims and research questions

To meet the objectives of this study, the following research questions were formulated:

RQ1. Do students' writing marks differ significantly in terms of receiving instruction with input flood or input enhancement technique to learn collocations?

RQ2. Do students' opinions change about learning collocations through input flood and input enhancement techniques?

3. Materials and methods

3.1. The study

The principles of a mixed methods research design were adopted in this study to address research questions. According to Fetters et al. (2013), there are several advantages of employing a mixed methods research design, such as gathering both qualitative and quantitative data to come to more accurate interpretations and complementing the weaknesses of a single research design with strong points of the other one. More specifically, collected data were cross-verified to ensure robustness and accuracy via explanatory sequential mixed-method design in which qualitative data succeeded quantitative data. With this respect, descriptive study procedures were adopted to gather quantitative data through pre-test and post-test writing exams, whereas the interviews were held to collect qualitative data. In the final phase, a t-test was employed to measure the difference between groups statistically based on writing exam results, while content analysis was the primary method to classify common themes and interpret participants' inclinations in the interviews.

3.2. Sample selection

Participants were 48 (24 female and 24 male) students who were studying English intensively at the language preparatory school of Tishk International University in Iraq spanning two semesters in the 2022–2023 academic year spring semester. The students were placed at this level after taking a professionally conducted standardized proficiency exam run by the university and inspected by testing experts to ensure content validity. All macro-skills and micro-skills including reading, listening, speaking, writing, grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation were included in the proficiency exam to determine participants' levels precisely. The university offers English-only instruction in all departments, so a common language has far-fetched effects to remove the communication barriers between members of the various nationals, including British, German, Kurdish, Arab, Turkmen, and Assyrian. Students studying in language preparatory schools take English lessons with proven techniques in a blended learning environment. In other words, students are expected to go through A1, A2, B1 and B2 levels consecutively. The convenience sampling method was preferred to distinguish 48 participants from the population, amounting to 100 students. It has been used in social sciences to narrow the population and reach the participants conveniently. Once they were chosen, students were informed about the sequence of the study with some possible reflections. Accordingly, all students joined the study voluntarily except three students whose excuses were valid to be excluded. Students who were hesitant to join the study were replaced with new participants.

3.3. Instruments and procedures

Prior to the treatment period, the students took a preliminary test on their writing competence. The topics were chosen based on Oxford Longman Academic Writing Series 3 by the exam committee members. The committee determined ten topics, one of which was directed to students commonly, so

they could compose their ideas. Meanwhile, the topics were piloted on students who had similar characteristics and levels with the participants. Cronbach Alpha index was 0.87 which was adequate to meet internal consistency criteria in the piloting period. The committee also created a rubric to grade students' writing performance fairly. Two raters graded students' essays blindly, which were finalized by the chair of the committee in order not to make a grave mistake by trusting only one rater. Thus, inter-rater reliability was assured with the contributions of experts to remove the weaknesses of the item and increase the intelligibility of the writing prompts.

Control group and experimental group students underwent a period to join a common workshop to figure out the basics of each technique and have some opinions to weigh the pros and cons of each technique, so they were able to convey their sincere opinions about the distinguishing qualities of each technique. The conduct of lessons changed considerably in the subsequent phases. Control group students were exposed to input enhancement, whereas input flood was the primary technique to develop students' writing skills via collocations. To illustrate, control group students read the sample essays with highlighted forms of the collocations, while experimental group students read the sample essay by focusing on the colloquial expressions. The difference lay in the repetition of the colloquial expressions which was once in the control group and multiplied in the experimental group. In other words, the collocations were highlighted for the control group students, while the same collocations were exploited in the sample, video, contextualized or illustrated form, and other reading excerpts for the experimental group. The way of instruction is illustrated starkly below in **Table 1**.

Table 1. Common writing topics.

Weeks	Topic	Control	Experimental
1	Online versus traditional shopping	Highlighted collocations	Repetition of collocations
2	Living abroad versus home country	Highlighted collocations	Repetition of collocations
3	The best movie of your life	Highlighted collocations	Repetition of collocations
4	Reasons to read books	Highlighted collocations	Repetition of collocations
5	Life in the 2050s	Highlighted collocations	Repetition of collocations
6	Tips to lead a healthy lifestyle	Highlighted collocations	Repetition of collocations

According to **Table 1**, writing topics were varied and up to date to capture their attention and increase their motivation to write correspondingly. To name a few, doing online or traditional shopping is a controversial topic that was included in the study. In addition, seeking opportunities abroad or staying in the home country is a tough decision in individuals' lives which was integrated into the study. After that, movies and books are at the heart of our lives, which urged the researcher to cover this topic in the study. Afterwards, forecasting has been frequently used in writing classes to foster students' imagination and creativity which was realized with the writing topic on life in the 2050s. The final topic was adopting some strategies to lead a trouble-free lifestyle in terms of health. Meanwhile, all the regulations of input flood and input enhancement were applied according to the pre-defined plan. In the final phase, the participants took a post-test and responded to the prompts in the interview which was in line with the sequence of explanatory sequential mixed-method design.

Collocations in the sample essays

Some collocations were covered in the sample essays and other learning materials which were repeated several times or highlighted based on the technique, adopted in their groups. More specifically, doing shopping, being entitled to a massive discount, getting a refund, seeking new career opportunities,

overseas jobs, serving the home country, watching a blockbuster movie, shooting a big-budget film, being immersed in a remarkable novel, stimulating imagination, making an accurate prediction, a misleading forecast, staying fairly healthy were expanded through collocations.

3.4. Data analysis

SPSS 27 (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) and MAXQDA were the primary tools to insert data and come to reliable interpretations. Kuckartz (2010) asserts that SPSS and MAXQDA have been widely used in social sciences to analyze quantitative and qualitative data with top-notch features. In this respect, students' writing exam results were compared to determine whether the differences were significant statistically through independent samples and paired samples *t*-test, whereas MAXQDA was used to transcribe the recordings, classify common themes, and depict reflections of students' opinions on each instruction technique meticulously. In the final phase, quantitative and qualitative data were cross-checked to notice whether they were in harmony.

4. Results

4.1. Descriptive results

Independent samples *t*-test was run to compare students' writing scores in terms of pre-treatment and post-treatment periods. The analysis is depicted in **Table 2**.

Table 2. Independent samples *t*-test analysis.

Variables	Groups	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>
Pre-test	Control	24	53.57	8.644	-	-	-
Pre-test	Experimental	24	53.93	8.128	0.113	26	0.911
Post-test	Control	24	57.29	11.579	-	-	-
Post-test	Experimental	24	77.50	4.27	4.006	266	0.001

Note: $p < 0.05$.

In **Table 2**, the descriptive statistics of both groups are described meticulously. When mean scores were analyzed in the pre-test, they were homogenous because their mean scores were almost the same with 53.57 and 53.93 in the control and experimental group, respectively. On the other hand, the gap between the control and experimental groups became wider in the post-test. More specifically, control group students increased their marks by only 3.72 points with a 57.29 mean score, whereas experimental group students' rise was 23.57 points with a 77.50 mean score. These findings were in line with *p*-values as well. The *p*-value was recorded as 0.911, so the difference between the control and experimental groups was not noticeable in the pre-test. However, the *p*-value was 0.001 which was less than the significance level, so a considerable difference was found between the control and experimental group in the post-test. It can be concluded that experimental group students who learned the collocations with input flood performed better than control group students whose writing lessons were enriched with input enhancement. The stark difference between control and experimental group students can also be observed in **Figure 1**.

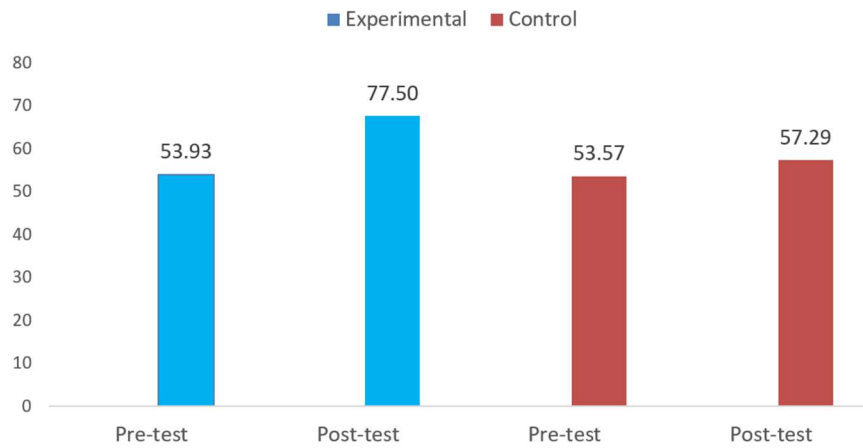


Figure 1. Writing scores of students in terms of pre-test and post-test.

Figure 1 also visualizes the difference between each group unambiguously. Experimental group students took advantage of the input flood technique to figure out collocations thoroughly, while control group students could not progress as much as their peers.

Paired samples *t*-test was activated to measure the differences in each group separately. Paired samples *t*-test analysis in the control group is illustrated in Table 3.

Table 3. Paired samples *t*-test analysis in the control group.

Paired samples test								
Paired differences								
	Mean	Std. deviation	Std. error mean	95% confidence interval of the difference		<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	Sig. (2-tailed)
				Lower	Upper			
Control Pre-test Post-test	-0.714	13.281	3.549	-8.382	6.954	-0.201	13	0.844

According to the collected data from the control group in two measurements, the *p*-value obtained was reported as 0.844, indicating a value greater than the significance level in Figure 1. Consequently, no significant difference was noticed. Furthermore, the mean score, standard deviation, standard error of the mean, computed test statistic, and degrees of freedom were documented as -0.714, 13.281, 3.549, -8.382, 6.954, -0.201, and 13, respectively. The statistics presented in this study were consistent with the findings of the independent samples *t*-test, indicating that input enhancement was not as successful as input flood in improving students' writing scores. Paired samples *t*-test analysis in the experimental group is described in Table 4.

Table 4. Paired samples *t*-test analysis in the experimental group.

Paired samples test									
Paired differences									
		Mean	Std. deviation	Std. error mean	95% confidence interval of the difference		<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	Sig. (2-tailed)
					Lower	Upper			
Experimental	Pre-test post-test	-13.571	10.818	2.891	-19.818	-7.325	-4.694	13	0.000

Table 4 illustrates two measurements for the experimental group clearly. The calculated *p*-value was found to be 0.000, indicating statistical significance at a significance level. The data collected indicates a notable difference between the pre-test and post-test scores of the experimental group. Furthermore, the following statistical measures were documented: the mean score was observed to be -13.571, the standard deviation was calculated as 10.818, the mean was determined to be 2.891, the standard error was computed as -19.818, the test statistic was found to be -7.325, the computed test statistic was -4.694, and the degrees of freedom were recorded as 13. Furthermore, the aforementioned figures provide additional support for the findings obtained from the independent samples t-test, which demonstrated a statistically significant difference between the experimental and control groups.

4.2. Perceptions towards input flood and input enhancement techniques

Semi-structured interview questions were also proofread by the committee to clear up any ambiguity. Details of the interview are given as follows:

- Are you in favor of input flood or input enhancement techniques to learn collocations?
- How did this study affect your attitude towards improving writing skills by collocations?

Content analysis of the interview is reflected in **Table 5** to present stronger and weaker points of each technique.

Table 5. Advantages and disadvantages of each technique.

Type of instruction	Advantages	Disadvantages
Input flood	Facilitating recalling information	Time consuming
	Sharpening memory	Overwhelming
	Increasing self-confidence	Distracting
Input enhancement	Breaking monotony	-
	Offering self-study tips	-
	Visually stimulating	Monotonous
	Intelligible	Uniform

Transcripts of the interview uncovered essential points to be considered through content analysis which included themes, categories, and codes to display the positive sides and drawbacks of both techniques. To illustrate, the positive impacts of input flood were given under five points in **Table 5**. More than half of the participants held the opinion that being exposed to input flood facilitated recalling information:

It was so tough to recall information previously. However, learning the same collocations from different materials helped me a lot to remember what I had learned through the input flood technique. I wish I had joined such a game-changer activity earlier. My English level would have been far better. (St 2)

It hints that repetition increases the chance of learning to store in long-term memory, so any information can be recalled upon request.

Additionally, most of the participants postulated that they sharpened their memory to learn more effectively and shoot their responses instantly once the need arose:

We watched and read in increasing numbers to learn certain collocations. Each means was informative to get some lessons about learning more effectively because tutors used various techniques to attract our attention. When we increased our knowledge and stored it to be used practically, this gain encouraged us to respond more

sensibly in written and spoken tasks. (St 3)

This finding shows that receiving comprehensible input from various stimuli yields better results in using memory more efficiently.

Subsequently, most participants stated that their self-confidence increased exponentially as they became more knowledgeable via input flood:

The more we expanded our colloquial expression breadth, the better we spoke. When we enriched our skills in the conversations, we were driven to be more proactive in classes thanks to figuring out given collocations via input flood. (St 4)

It unleashes that there is a positive correlation between boosted self-confidence and receiving instruction through the input flood technique.

Furthermore, all participants reiterated that input flood paved the way for breaking the monotony in classes thanks to being exposed to the same collocations in different forms such as videos, articles, blogs, podcasts, or e-dictionaries:

Reading the text and instilling a sense of discipline through drills are traditional methods which lost their popularity. However, embarking on new language learning journeys via web-enhanced tools, such as videos, games, quizzes, and puzzles can have positive influences in English classes which was realized in this study with input flood technique to teach collocations. (St 5)

It is safe to conclude that using various means to enrich the lessons increases the motivation and enthusiasm of the learners considerably.

The final code that emerged to illustrate the advantages of input flood was offering self-study tips. Approximately all participants pointed out that being directed to various learning materials inspired them to develop more effective self-study tips:

We were directed to multiple sources to increase our knowledge and use collocations more frequently and accurately. During those endeavors, we saw different techniques to develop our skills gradually. I imitated some of them to learn easily, which worked excellently. For example, I looked up the dictionary to know the exact meaning of a collocation, used it in my daily conversation with my pen-pal on Facebook, and integrated it into my essays if relevant. This cycle urged me to repeat and reap the benefits of collocations in my daily life with various examples. (St 6)

It can be argued that activating different learning channels via multiple materials can drive the learners to equip them with self-study habits because they can expand their learning with various materials and apply them to their personal lives:

On the other hand, some drawbacks of input flood were expressed by participants. To name a few, consuming much time, being exposed to many materials consecutively, and unable to track the sequence of the materials were postulated by a few participants:

I was unable to track the activities after a while because the number of activities was bountiful which demotivated me. I would rather have seen fewer materials. Thus, it does not take much time for me to learn. Additionally, I could focus on other tasks which were more appealing and urgent. (St 8)

It can be assumed that balancing the time, intensity, and degree of difficulty matters to increase positive feedback of the participants.

The advantages and disadvantages of the input enhancement technique were unleashed in the interview. To

illustrate, the majority of the participants pointed out that visually stimulating forms by italicizing, bolding, or underlining the collocations captured their attention, so they focused on collocations more than other items that were written in an ordinary way.

I prefer learning intentionally to incidental learning, so this study was beneficial to focus on highlighted items in the sample essays and do further activities to figure out. In addition, we understood how to use them in context. In short, emphasizing target collocations paid off substantially in this study. (St 17)

It hints that highlighting target items via suitable features can appeal to more learning styles, thereby increasing their concentration.

They also attested that highlighting the collocations increased the intelligibility of the collocations, so learners were able to figure out form, function, and meaning without having much difficulty:

Learning the text and understanding the concepts subconsciously are tough for me. Instead, I would rather concentrate on target collocations and use them in a meaningful context. In addition, we can channel our energy into learning the same collocation in various settings, so they can be applied to various situations conveniently. (St 20)

It unearths that raising awareness through highlighted words can encourage the learners to grasp details more instantly.

However, some disadvantages of input enhancement were expressed, such as being limited, monotonous, and uniform. They held the opinion that emphasizing the collocations needed to be more adequate for understanding the meaning and internalization. They also postulated that learning from a single source was monotonous, which discouraged them from exploring further:

Highlighting certain collocations seemed sufficient at first. However, it became a tiring and monotonous activity for us after a few weeks because we wanted to learn the same collocations with the help of some presentations, podcasts, movie scenes, or picture dictionaries. (St 25)

It can be claimed that the drawbacks of input enhancement should be taken seriously to solve rationally.

Once all perspectives are weighed fairly, it can be noticed starkly that input flood receives more compliments from the participants, whereas the rate of compliment was far from being noticeable in the input enhancement category.

5. Discussion

This study sought the effects of input flood on students' writing competence through exams and an interview. In other words, a wide-scale comparison was made between input flood and input enhancement techniques while teaching collocations in an Academic Writing course at the tertiary level in Iraq. Quantitative and qualitative findings revealed that input flood ensured far better results in academic writing classes, whereas the effects of input enhancement were less than significant levels. To name a few, writing exams uncovered that input flood was a more effective tool to increase students' writing performance which is consistent with Safdari's (2019) study. He postulates that input flood offers several advantages for learners, so they can seize tremendous opportunities to develop their writing competence markedly. In addition, participants reiterated that the learning cycle was sustainable during the instruction with the input flood because they focused on various means to learn the same collocations. This finding was in line with Mahvelati and Mukundan's (2012) study which revealed that repetition paid off to increase the performance of learners once various relevant materials were

presented with a well-established plan. In the same vein, participants held the opinion that participants' self-confidence was boosted as they grasped the meaning, function, and usage of the collocations with engaging activities on different platforms. Kara (2023) asserts that combining traditional lessons with web-enhanced tools increases students' motivation to learn and express their ideas more confidently. After that, participants elucidated that text-based learning without switching to additional materials was boring which was broken with this study via learning collocations from multiple sources as input flood technique implies. Mahvelati and Mukundan (2012) point out that students' boredom in classes can be handled easily by integrating technology into English classes, particularly in writing tasks. Subsequently, participants expressed that having the privilege to learn English from different sources under the guidance of the lecturer urged them to develop more effective self-study habits. They stated that it was an unprecedented experience to examine learning tools and get some precious ideas to study in a more disciplined and effective way. According to Rabia et al. (2017), being exposed to various teaching methods can grant the freedom for learners to choose the most suitable one for them and set their study habits correspondingly. On the other hand, some negative aspects of input flood were uncovered which were consuming a lot of time, spending so much effort, and losing enthusiasm. This finding is harmonious with Mkhelif (2021) and Yucedal's (2023) studies which hint that the number of extra materials should be balanced in English classes, otherwise, some adverse effects of supplementary materials can be inevitable. Apart from input flood, input enhancement was also explored in detail with appealing and negative qualities. To illustrate, input enhancement was at the forefront to reach visually stimulating items in an easily understandable format which is consistent with Celik's (2021b) study. Conversely, the uniform style of the highlighted version was cited as the drawback of input enhancement which fed the monotonous cycle based on the genuine opinions of the participants in the interview. Izumi (2002) and Küçük (2023) attest that following writing activities monotonously discourages the learners from joining the lessons ambitiously. Varied web-enhanced activities to attract the learners' attention and break the monotony can yield better results in improving writing competence.

6. Conclusions

In this study, it was aimed to measure the effects of the input flood technique on improving learners' writing competence through a mixed-method research design. Accordingly, pre-defined collocations were inserted into sample essays in an academic writing course. Subsequently, they were repeated with other means, such as definitions, videos, presentations, articles, and podcasts. Revealed data showed that the input flood technique increased students' motivation to figure out the meaning and usage of collocations significantly. They regarded the input flood technique as an essential tool for sharpening memory, gaining self-confidence, breaking the monotony, and deriving inspiration to develop effective self-study habits, albeit citing some negative aspects, such as taking up much time and being exposed to excessive materials.

7. Pedagogical implications

The findings of this study may have certain implications for promoting the use of collocations via input flood in academic writing courses globally. Considering the perspectives of the participants, the input flood technique can be seized in all phases of writing classes. Additionally, enriching classes with web-enhanced materials can be considered increasingly to reap the benefits of repetition via online sources. Moreover, input flood paves the way for stimulating different learning channels in an embedded way thanks to reading, watching, listening, and writing simultaneously, so integrated writing

instruction can be examined more professionally to promote learners' proficiency holistically. After that, the input flood technique can be used more commonly to break the monotony and write more creatively. Furthermore, guiding the students to write more eloquently via colloquial expressions can be adopted as a standard universally, so learners' awareness to write more effectively can be increased, thereby affecting their overall attitudes towards learning English positively. Subsequently, pre-service teachers can be trained more systematically to integrate collocations with the assistance of input flood technique into writing classes on a global scale.

Some recommendations can be made for future studies. This study's population was limited to a university in Iraq, which can be extended to other universities. In addition, only 28 students joined the study which can be enlarged to represent the opinions of students more reliably. Afterwards, only input flood and input enhancement techniques were included in the study which can be extended with hybrid techniques. Finally, only writing exams and interviews were employed to gather data which can be enriched with the questionnaire to get a more in-depth analysis.

Conflict of interest

The author declares no conflict of interest.

References

- Bui TL (2021). The role of collocations in the English teaching and learning. *International Journal of TESOL and Education*, 1(2), 99-109.
- Celik B (2021). Prospective foreign language teacher candidates' views on the use of communication technologies in foreign language education and their self-efficacy beliefs: Case of Erbil, Iraq. *International Journal of Social Sciences and Educational Studies*, 8(1). doi: 10.23918/ijsses.v8i1p59
- Celik B (2023). EFL learners' perceptions on QR code enriched instruction in developing macro-skills. *International Journal of Social Sciences and Educational Studies*, 10(3). doi: 10.23918/ijsses.v10i3p326
- Daskan A, Yildiz Y (2020). Blended learning: A potential approach to promote learning outcomes. *International Journal of Social Sciences and Educational Studies*, 7(4), 103-108. doi: 10.23918/ijsses.v7i4p103
- Dastjerdi HV, Farshid M (2011). The role of input enhancement in teaching compliments. *Journal of Language Teaching and Research*, 2(2). doi: 10.4304/jltr.2.2.460-466
- Deveci T (2007). Why and how to teach collocation. *English Teaching Forum*, 34(1).
- Fetters MD, Curry LA, Creswell JW (2013). Achieving integration in mixed methods designs—Principles and practices. *Health Services Research*, 48(6pt2), 2134–2156. doi: 10.1111/1475-6773.12117
- Gablasova D, Brezina V, McEnery T (2017). Collocations in corpus - based language learning research: Identifying, comparing, and interpreting the evidence. *Language Learning*, 67(S1), 155–179. doi: 10.1111/lang.12225
- Granger S, Bestgen Y (2014). The use of collocations by intermediate vs. advanced non-native writers: A bigram-based study. *International Review of Applied Linguistics in Language Teaching*, 52(3). doi: 10.1515/iral-2014-0011
- Hill J (2000). Revising priorities: From grammatical failure to collocational success. In: Lewis M (editor). *Teaching Collocation: Further Developments in the Lexical Approach*. LTP. pp. 47–67.
- Izumi S (2002). Output, input enhancement, and the noticing hypothesis. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, 24(4), 541–577. doi: 10.1017/s0272263102004023
- Jabbarpoor S, Tajeddin Z (2013). The effect of input enhancement, individual output, and collaborative output on foreign language learning: the case of English inversion structures. *Resla*, 12(1), 267-288.
- Kara S (2023). The effects of web 2.0 tools on foundation english students' success rates at a private university in Iraq. *International Journal of Social Sciences and Educational Studies*, 10(1). doi: 10.23918/ijsses.v10i1p22
- Kara S, Abdulrahman SA (2022). The effects of direct written corrective feedback (WCF) on language preparatory school students' IELTS independent writing section score. *Canadian Journal of Language and Literature Studies*, 2(4). doi: 10.53103/cjlls.v2i4.58
- Khatami E, Ameri S, Navidinia H (2023). Watching videos and foreign language acquisition: Formulaic sequences in focus. *Media and Intercultural Communication: A Multidisciplinary Journal*, 1(2), 40-60.
- Kuckartz U (2010). Realizing mixed-methods approaches with MAXQDA. Available online:

- <https://www.maxqda.com/download/Mixmethmaxqda-Nov01-2010.pdf> (accessed on 28 December 2023).
- Küçük T (2023). Technology integrated teaching and its positive and negative impacts on education. *International Journal of Social Sciences and Educational Studies*, 10(1). doi: 10.23918/ijsses.v10i1p46
- Hamed Mahvelati E, Mukundan J (2012). The effects of input flood and consciousness-raising approach on collocation knowledge development of language learners. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics and English Literature*, 1(6), 182–192. doi: 10.7575/ijalel.v.1n.6p.182
- Hamed Mahvelati E, Mukundan J (2012). The role of cognitive style in the collocational knowledge development of Iranian EFL learners through input flood treatment. *English Language Teaching*, 5(10). doi: 10.5539/elt.v5n10p105
- Mangubhai F (2001). Book floods and comprehensible input floods: providing ideal conditions for second language acquisition. *International Journal of Educational Research*, 35(2), 147–156. doi: 10.1016/s0883-0355(01)00012-x
- Mkhelef AZ (2021). *Investigating Iraqi EFL University Students' Knowledge of Grammatical Collocations in English* [PhD thesis]. University of Leicester.
- Ztuna S (2012). *Effects of Input Flood and Negative Evidence on Learning of Make/Do Collocations: A Study with Seventh Grade Turkish EFL Students* [PhD thesis]. Anadolu University (Turkey).
- Peters E (2012). Learning German formulaic sequences: the effect of two attention-drawing techniques. *The Language Learning Journal*, 40(1), 65–79. doi: 10.1080/09571736.2012.658224
- Pigada M, Schmitt N (2006) Vocabulary acquisition from extensive reading: A case study. *Reading in a Foreign Language* 18(1), 1–28.
- Pineteh EA (2013). The academic writing challenges of undergraduate students: A South African case study. *International Journal of Higher Education*, 3(1). doi: 10.5430/ijhe.v3n1p12
- Rabia M, Mubarak N, Tallat H, Nasir W (2017). A study on study habits and academic performance of students. *International Journal of Asian Social Science*, 7(10), 891–897. doi: 10.18488/journal.1.2017.710.891.897
- Rao PS (2019). The role of English as a global language. *Research Journal of English*, 4(1), 65-79.
- Richards JC, Renandya WA (editors) (2002). *Methodology in Language Teaching*. Cambridge University Press. doi: 10.1017/cbo9780511667190
- Safdari M (2019). Input flooding, input enhancement and writing performance: Effects and percepts. *International Journal of Instruction*, 12(4), 281–296. doi: 10.29333/iji.2019.12418a
- Strobl C, Ailhaud E, Benetos K, et al. (2019). Digital support for academic writing: A review of technologies and pedagogies. *Computers and Education*, 131, 33–48. doi: 10.1016/j.compedu.2018.12.005
- Szudarski P, Carter R (2014). The role of input flood and input enhancement in EFL learners' acquisition of collocations. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 26(2), 245–265. doi: 10.1111/ijal.12092
- Webb S, Newton J, Chang A (2012). Incidental learning of collocation. *Language Learning*, 63(1), 91–120. doi: 10.1111/j.1467-9922.2012.00729.x
- Winke PM (2013). The effects of input enhancement on grammar learning and comprehension. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, 35(2), 323–352. doi: 10.1017/s0272263112000903
- Yucedal HM (2023). Integration of web 2.0 tools in EFL classes: Barriers and solutions. *Revista Amazonia Investiga*, 12(63), 109–122. doi: 10.34069/ai/2023.63.03.10
- Yucedal HM, Abdulrahman SA, Kara S (2022). Process-genre approach in teaching writing to language preparatory school students at a private university in Iraq. *Canadian Journal of Educational and Social Studies*, 2(5). doi: 10.53103/cjess.v2i5.64