Difficulties Faced by Second Language Learners in Using Collocation

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Difficulties Faced by Second Language Learners in Using Collocation

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Abstract, *This paper reviews the challenges encountered by second language learners in the acquisition and utilization of collocations, which are crucial aspects of proficient language use. Collocations refer to the habitual pairing or grouping of words that occur together frequently in natural language. The research synthesizes findings from various studies conducted in the field, highlighting common difficulties experienced by learners across different proficiency levels and linguistic backgrounds. Key factors contributing to these challenges include differences in first language structures, inadequate exposure to authentic language use, limited awareness of collocational patterns, and difficulties in achieving native-like fluency. Additionally, pedagogical implications and effective instructional strategies for enhancing collocational competence are discussed, is to inform language instructors and curriculum developers in building more targeted and effective language learning materials and activities.This research is divided into three sections; section one presents the preliminaries of the study. Section two explains the meaning, types, characteristics, and importance of the study. Section three will apply a test of collocation on the 4th stage of the college to know their weakness points in collocation. Finally, the conclusion is the research.*

Keywords: Difficulties , Collocation, Second Language, production, learners

1. INTRODUCTION

The Problem

A collocation in linguistics is a group of terms or words that occur together more frequently than would be predicted by chance. A collocation in phraseology, is a kind of compositional phraseme, which means that its meaning is apparent from the words that make it up. This is in contrast to an idiom, where the meaning of the whole can be entirely unconnected and cannot be deduced from the parts. There are around seven main kinds of collocations: Adjective + noun: noun + noun (such as collective nouns), noun + verb, verb + noun, adverb + adjective, verbs + prepositional phrase (phrasal verbs), and verb + adverb. (Ilmini, 2021:75).

Collocations are partially or completely fixed expressions that develop via frequent usage in specific contexts. Examples of collocated word pairs are crystal clear, middle management, nuclear family, and cosmetic surgery (ibid).

A number of criteria are needed for collocation processing, but the measure of association—which determines whether the co-occurrence is statistically significant or merely the product of chance—is the most important one. The majority of collocations are categorized as important because language is not random, and the association scores are only used to rank the results. Commonly employed metrics for association include log-likelihood and mutual

information. Collocations can be in a syntactic relation, a syntactic relation (e.g., verb–object: make and decision), or a lexical relation (e.g., antonymy). Understanding collocations is essential for proficient language use since a statement that satisfies grammar rules but disregards collocational preferences will come across as uncomfortable. Because of this, teaching collocation in languages is an intriguing topic (Boers, 2014: 166).

Analyzing collocations in William Shakespeare's Hamlet could involve examining recurrent word combinations to understand themes, character dynamics, or rhetorical devices employed by the author. The problem of the study might focus on identifying patterns of collocation to shed light on linguistic strategies, character relationships, or thematic motifs within the play.

Many questions have to be answered to remove this difficulty such as:

1.What is the meaning of collocation?

2.What are the types of collocation?

3.What is the function of collocation?

4. What difficulties did Iraqi EFL learners have when learning collocations as a second language?

The Aims

The study aims at:

1. Defining collocation.
2. .Presenting collocationś types.
3. Identifying the most frequently used collocation.
4. Discovering the difficulties Faced by Second Language Learners in Using Collocations

The Hypothesis

It is hypothesized that:

1. Most of the students encounter difficulties in producing Collocations
2. Most of them cannot identify the function of Collocations
3. Most of them flunk to aquire the proper use of Collocations.

The Procedures

This study's procedures are as follows:

1. Presenting a literature background of the collocation, concentrating on its types.
2. Testing thirty students from the English department at the University of Babylon to evaluate their performance in using collocationś types.

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

The Definitions of Collocation in English

It is necessary to implement new verb-noun combinations.. Collocations are crucial for foreign language learning as they improve vocabulary, comprehension, and fluency (Hama 2010:114). As a result, a thorough understanding of English collocations appears to be required in order to employ words and phrases appropriately. Collocations are two or more words that form a single block or phrase (Laufer, 2011:37).

Boers (2014: 59) describes collocations as Limited lexeme combinations of a group of words, such as totally aware or make a decision, and recognizes their relevance in language processing and use in recent times.. Schmitt (2000) defines collocations as sequential links to stimulus words that include a variety of word types. For example,'make a mistake' and 'do homework' are examples of verb + noun collocations.

When learning English grammar for the first time, one of the most challenging things is understanding collocations. Fortunately, it will integrate naturally over time. The bad news is that, for now, it can lead to some really funny mistakes. When terms are regularly used together, standards emerge regarding their usage, not for grammatical reasons, but for simple association.   "Black and white" (black and white), for example, appears in that sequence by position; it is always used that way, therefore reversing it "white and black" (black and white) appears incorrect. For the same reason, "we make a mistake" (we make a mistake) or "do a test" (we make a test). In these cases, we use these verbs because we usually do it in the same way: this is known as collocation or "placement".

Types of Collocation in English Language

1. Adjectives and Nouns

Keep in mind which adjectives go best with which nouns.

.e.g.[1] Noor sometimes wears black or blue or some other cheerful color

e.g.[2] I had a chat about the examinations but didn't have time to debate them correctly (Hama, 2010: 115).

2. Nouns and verbs.

Consider how nouns and verbs frequently appear together .

e.g. [3] The **economy boomed** in the 1991s. [The state of the economy was excellent]

e.g. [4] **The company** has **grown** and at this time employs 60 more people than last years.

3. Noun + Noun

e.g.[5] Each **parent** feels a pride when their **kids** does well or wins something.

e.g.[6] felt a **pang of nostalgia** when I saw the old photographs of the town where I grew up (Wu, 2010: 77).

4. Verbs and expressions with Prepositions

Some verbs have specific prepositional expressions that they collocate with.

e.g.[7] As **Ahmed went on stage** to receive his award for the karate competition you could see his family swelling with pride. [Looking really proud]

e.g.[8] we were **filled with horror** when we read the daily report of the explosion. (Hsu & Chiu, 2008: 68).

5.Verbs and Adverbs

Some verbs have special adverbs that are frequently associated with them.

e.g.[9] He **pulled steadily** on the rope he assisted him in to safety. [Pull firmly and evenly.]

e.g.[10] He **placed the** gorgeous **vase gently** on the window ledge (Wray, 2000: 241).

6. Adverbs and Adjectives

Adjectives frequently collocate with certain adverbs.

e.g. [11] we were **happily married.**

e.g. [12] she was **fully aware** that there are Serious difficulties. [I know well] (Ilmini, 2021: 34).

Function of Collocation

Collocations highlight constraints on what words work well together and what doesn't. Collocations are based on chance rather than being absolute and fixed, like grammar rules. These serve as illustrations of how words are commonly or normally put together in languages. Collocation analysis is the process of evaluating words that commonly occur next to one another in a text or set of texts. (Wu, 2010: 483).

People use collocation to make their written ideas clear, attractive, short, and seamless. The students benefited more from using collocations since their lexical knowledge improved, resulting in greater writing exam scores (Laufer, 2011: 52).

There are many methods to resolving this common collocation problem. One way is for pupils to simply study new collocations as they come across them. To do this, vocabulary notebook techniques are required, and a good rule of thumb is to record not just the definition or translation of a new word, but also its common collocations (for example, have an accident, go for / take a stroll). Another way to tackle the problem of these ubiquitous, everyday collocations is to aggregate the collocations of specific verbs: make frequently collocates with something that has a consequence (make a cake, a mistake, a plan, or a list) (Hama, 2010:120).

Characteristics of Collocation

Collocations are expressions that become partially or completely fixed by frequent context-dependent use. Crystal clear, middle management, cosmetic surgery and , nuclear family are examples of collocated word pairs. Collocations can be syntactic (e.g., verb-object: make and decide), lexical (e.g., antonymy), or have no linguistically defined link at all. Collocational knowledge is required for competent language use; if collocational preferences are violated, a grammatically valid phrase will appear weird. This makes collocation a fascinating issue for language teachers (Boers, 2014:69).

According to Wu (2010: 235), collocation is a lexical link that words have with one another that determines when specific lexical components occur together. Collocation is a phenomenon that occurs in all languages, but its characteristics, patterns, and meanings vary. Idioms are seen as a component of collocations by some linguists but not by others. Idioms and collocations are different. When lexical elements appear together and their meanings may be inferred from the meanings of their constituents, this is known as a collocation. Conversely, an idiom is a word combination whose meaning cannot be inferred from the meaning of its constituent parts.

The Importance of Collocation

According to Boers (2014: 88), collocation plays a significant role in the process of learning vocabulary. Because free combinations arise from the structure of extra-linguistic reality, like the dark night and the blue sky, etc., they are simple to acquire. They "manifestly relate to the substantial and referential meaning of the words in question." On the other hand, most collocations have no apparent purpose. Different words might convey the same conceptual meaning, so people may speak about powerful cars but also strong coffee, rancid butter but also addled eggs.

Teachers and English language learners alike need to pay closer attention to collocation because it is so mysterious. Collocations should be an necessary component of vocabulary instruction for English teachers; students should be taught the idiomatic collocations of new words. As an English language learner, he must acknowledge the significance of collocation in word learning and focus more on using it correctly (Wray, 2000: 100).

According to Richards (1985: 183), mastery of a term entails: 1) being aware of the word's frequency in spoken and written languages; 2) being aware of its grammatical patterns; and 3) being aware of its network of related words. The last two of these three criteria are relevant to our conversation.

Collocation is also a useful strategy for word memorization. Studying words in context is important for the following reasons: vocabulary is best acquired in context; context by itself

is inadequate without intentional connection; Words are easier to learn when they are organically related in context. Context and intentional association, which includes collocations, offer linkages that support students in both fully comprehending the meaning of a word and expanding their vocabulary. The technique of learning words through collocations not only helps learners learn new words, but it also teaches them to utilize the appropriate words at the appropriate time and place (Robins, 2000: 79).

3. METHODOLOGY

Testing

The term "testing" refers to the vast array of techniques or instruments that teachers employ to assess, gauge, and record pupils' academic preparedness, learning progress, skill development, or educational requirements (Cohen, 2005: 59).

Characteristics of a Good Test

A good test should have the following characteristics

Validity

It refers to the degree to which a test measures what it is intended to. The educational and psychological standards. validity is the extent to which data and theory support the interpretations of test scores for proposed uses of tests (Cohen, 2010: 60).

The most important types of validity are:

Content Validity

According to Sinclair (1999:163), it's the degree to which a test is regarded as covering the idea it's supposed to assess.

Face Validity

It relates to how the tests appear to teachers or others involved in student education (Wray, 2000: 52).

Reliability

It is defined as the possibility that a product, system, or service will perform properly for a specific amount of time or operate without failure in a defined environment (Cohen, 2005: 37).

Test Design

There are two exam questions: the first rates the degree of recognition, and the second rates the degree of production. Every question has ten items in it. Thirty Iraqi students—fifteen male and fifteen female—are involved in the study. They are given scenarios to answer based on their prior knowledge of how to convey collocation in the English language.

Test Material

The majority of the test items are based on grammar books concerning collocation in the English language, which are discussed in chapter 2. The researcher used Yule (1989) types of collocation. The researcher has assumed the situations herself. The objects were picked with the goal of covering as much of the notion of collocation as possible.

Test Analysis

The Production Level

	F	P	F	P	F	P
1	10	33%	14	47%	6	20%
2	12	40%	8	27%	10	33%
3	17	57%	5	17%	8	27%
4	11	37%	3	10%	16	33%
5	10	33%	9	30%	11	37%
6	3	10%	14	47%	13	43%
7	5	17%	17	57%	8	27%
8	14	47%	3	10%	13	43%
9	15	50%	1	3%	14	47%
10	7	23%	5	17%	18	60%
Total:	104	35%	70	27%	117	37%

The findings of the previous table confirm that most of the students use adjectives and nouns, nouns and verbs, adverbs and adjectives collocations in expressing specific meanings concerning different situations. The percentage of adjective and noun collocation is (35)% while the nouns and verbs is (27)% and the other type of collocation which is adverbs and adjectives (37)%. Adverbs and adjectives collocation occur much more frequently than

adjectives and nouns, nouns and verbs collocations. The expressions: "What do you like to do after you …. back home after class? What time did you …… and ……… this mom? " are the most frequently correct collocation used. Few of them have stated the reasons for collocation. The column above in the previous table refers to three expressions of collocation; either adjectives and nouns, nouns and verbs and adverbs and adjectives of two expressions, using expressions that are responses to collocation or leaving the blank empty. The combinations are such as; "serial", "heavy", "chance, …et"

The Recognition Level

No	Incorrect	Percentage	Correct	Percentage
1	17	57%	13	43%
2	14	47%	16	53%
3	10	33%	20	67%
4	12	40%	18	60%
5	4	13%	26	87%
6	11	27%	19	63%
7	5	17%	25	83%
8	3	10%	27	90%
9	6	20%	24	80%
10	9	30%	21	60%
Total:	91	31%	209	69%

Based on the results of the previous table, the researcher can conclude that the majority of the students can identify between nouns, nouns and verbs, and adverbs and adjectives collocations in English. The percentage of accurate answers is (69)%, whereas the percentage of erroneous answers is (39)%.)%. The expression "I always avoid his company because he is a crashing" is the one that almost half of the students think would be Adjective and adverb. They might have expected it to be so since it is an elaborated expression and they might have the idea that every elaborated expression is adjectives and nouns collocation and every simple or short one is adverbs and adjectives collocation. The items 5, 7 and 8 are the ones that most of the students have answered correctly as they are clear expressions. The first one is

"She seemed quite interested in buying that house, but at the last moment, she changed her …………………..", the second is "Could you ………………... the oil?"   and the third is "I always avoid his company because he is crashing ………" is a noun and verb collocation.

4. CONCLUSIONS

This study achieved the following conclusions:

1. The expressive collocation has three levels; nouns, nouns and verbs and adverbs and adjectives, each level has its own detailed explanation.

2. It contributes to the development of social relationships between members of a community so that it occurs as openings and closings of conversations

3. As the findings indicate, it can be said that even if EFL students can identify various collocational expressions, they are unable to modify the way they express gratitude.

4. Most of the students prefer expressing their situation by using non adverbs and adjectives collocation, using overt collocation words, rather than new concepts or even stating the reason that requires collocation.

5. Finally, it is proposed that textbook writers include notes regarding English culture in their works, such as the use of collocations or others, as needed. In this approach, we not only learn English correctly, but also appropriately.

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