

EFL University Students' Performance Assessment in Written Discourse Lexical Collocation

A Case Study of EFL Students, Faculty of Education – Hantoub, University of Gezira, Sudan (2018)

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Abstract

One of the most important aspects of learning a language, is learning its vocabulary of that language and the appropriate usage. It is not possible to learn a language without its vocabulary. In other words, vocabulary learning lies at the essential in a language learning, and ,therefore, great attention should be paid to issues related to vocabulary learning/teaching. Mastering English Collocations enables EFL learners to be both fluent and accurate. Hence, the current study aimed to assess EFL students' performance regarding English lexical collocation. The study aimed at discovering which lexical collocations university students practice unsatisfactory and to suggest the most suitable strategies for improving the performance of the students in dealing with lexical collocations in written discourse. The descriptive analytical method was adopted for conducting the study. A diagnostic test and a questionnaire were chosen as tools for data collection. A diagnostic test was given to seventy two (72) EFL students at the Faculty of Education-Hantoub of batch 37, semester eight. The questionnaire was distributed to twenty five (25) expert lecturers at the faculties of education universities of Gezira, the Holly Quran and Al-Butana. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences(SPSS) programme was used for data analysis. The study reached the following findings: students' accurate is unsatisfactory in using English Lexical Collocations (42.3%), mother tongue has negative effect on EFL students (88.5%), generalization is quite clear in students' performance (61.5%). Some EFL students memorize words in isolation which makes the learning so difficult (69%).The study recommends that: it is essential to add more activities and practices regarding English Lexical Collocations, lecturers should make their students aware of English lexical collocations, lecturers need to select the most effective techniques such as contextualization to enhance the performance of students. Syllabus designers should include a considerable number of exercises in student's text books.

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INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Collocation refers to a group of two or more words that usually go together. A good way to think of collocation is to look at the word 'collocation'. Co - meaning together - location - meaning place. The importance of collocation in learning a foreign language and the problems that L2 learners face with using collocations have been underscored by researchers. One of the most important aspects of learning a language is learning vocabulary of that language and its appropriate use. Lexical collocations consist of nouns, adjectives, verbs and adverbs. Lexical collocations, in contrast to grammatical collocations, do not contain prepositions, infinitives, or clauses.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

It has been noticed that many EFL students at University level do not perform satisfactorily when they use lexical collocations in written discourse. The present study is an attempt to assess the performance of EFL students regarding their usage of English lexical collocations so as to suggest solutions for the problem.

1.3 Objectives of the study

1. to assess the performance of EFL university students in lexical collocations.
2. to discover which lexical collocations university students are weak in.
3. to suggest strategies for improving the performance of EFL University students in English lexical collocations in written discourse.

1.4 Questions of the Study

1. What is the performance of EFL students in using lexical collocations?
2. Which types of lexical collocation can be considered as a problematic area?
3. What are the strategies for improving the performance of EFL University students in English lexical collocations in written discourse?

1.5 Hypotheses of the Study

- H₁. The majority of the students are unable to use the most common patterns of English lexical collocations.
- H₂. Students are not exposed to a large number of lexical collocations to be practiced which can improve their performance in this field.
- H₃. Some suggested strategies help in improving students' performance in lexical collocations such as extensive practice, intensive reading and assignments.

1.6 Significance of the Study

The study will benefit EFL lecturers and students since it includes analysis of the performance of EFL University students in English lexical collocation. Furthermore, the study is intended to be of a great benefit to translators,

researchers, interpreters and syllabus designers in the field of English language teaching and learning.

1.7 Methodology of the Study

The descriptive analytical method will be used for conducting this study. Two tools of data collection will be used: a questionnaire will be distributed to (30) EFL lecturers at Faculties of Education, while the test will be administered to (72) students of the third year at the Faculty of Education - Hantoub.

1.8 Limits of the Study

This study will be limited to assess EFL University Students' Performance in Written Discourse Lexical Collocation at the Faculty of Education - Hantoub 2015. The sample of the study will be limited to university students at the Faculty of Education-Hantoub. University of Gezira.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Collocation and Lexical Collocations:

The word collocation is a relatively new addition to the lexicon of English but defining collocation is a challenge since the term collocation has been a common concern among linguists, lexicographers and language pedagogues recently, so there are many definitions concerning this term. According to Advance dictionary collocation can be defined as the relationship between two words or group of words that often go together and form a common expression. Most linguists have similar views on the concept of collocation, including a focus on co-occurrence of words. According to Firth, collocations is "the company words keeps" or "the ways words combine in predictable way"(c.f Hill,2000:.48). Baker (1992), defines collocation as a tendency of certain words to regularly occur in a given language. Hill, (2001) also states that collocation is a predictable combination of the content words. On the other hand, Woolard (2001:28-46) defines collocation as "the co-occurrence of words which are statistically much more likely to appear together than random chance suggests. In addition, Nation (2001:.317) describes collocation as a group of words that come together like 'take a photo ' because the whole meaning of the group is not obvious from the meaning of its parts. Some scholars draw their attention to grammatical factors when explaining collocation. Kjellmer's (1991: 133) definition of collocation is "a sequence of words that occurs more than once in an identical form in a corpus which is grammatically well structured ." This definition indicates that collocations are lexically defined and grammatically restricted sequences of words. To Kjellmer's stance, only sequences of two or more lexical words (some of them also incorporating function words) or sequences of one lexical word and one or more function words that recur in identical forms can be said to be collocations. In short, the seemingly various definitions of collocations

have the same concept. That is, collocation is a pair or group of words that are often used together through common usage. Barlow (2000 :5),(1998:61 says that the generative school has ignored the fact that words have their collocations; rather, it has concentrated on the explanation of “free association of lexical items” on the basis of grammar. Attempts to design a lexical syllabus have started with Willis in 1990, Later, Michael Lewis(1993) who coined the lexical approach, suggests the following.... The key principle of lexical approach is that "language consists of grammatical lexis, not lexicalized grammar."

Richards and Rodgers, (2001: 138) indicate a theory in which lexis and vocabulary play a major role in language learning. The lexical approach has emerged as a reaction to the behaviorists view which is based on PPP (Presentation, Practice, and Production). Contrary to it, the lexical approach is based on exposing the learner to large amounts of input combined with consciousness-raising. Scott. (2002: 109). George (2009: 46) c.f (Lewis, Michael: 2000: 31) points out that within the lexical approach, vocabulary is learnt by learning word combinations not just individual words. Besides, word combinations have to be treated as a whole not as separated individual words. They are “prefabricated chunks” that are stored in the mind as “individual wholes”. Whenever learners want to speak or write, they recall these ready chunks instead of brainstorming their minds searching for which word goes with which. This view is also shared by Morgan(1998:21) c.f (Michael: 2000: 15) who claims that “so much of the language of the effective language user is already in prefabricated chunks, stored in their mental lexicons just waiting to be recalled for use.” Consequently, collocations represent an important part of lexical chunks. Thus, the learner thinks that if learners are exposed to these chunks, they may well internalize the rules of writing and speaking. This is due to the fact that lexical competence is the result of frequent exposure, consciousness-raising and memorizing.

Cowie, (1998b: 1) reports that "what is characterized as being “by no means purely descriptive” and as having contributed to linguistic theory the notion that “native like proficiency in a language depends crucially on a stock of prefabricated units – or ‘prefabs’ – varying in complexity and internal stability”.

Palmer, is considered as a pioneer in the field of collocations; Kennedy. (2003: 468) defines “collocation” as “a succession of two or more words that must be learned as an integral whole and not pieced together from its component parts”. However, it is widely accepted that the word “collocation” was coined by Firth in 1957 when he said ‘You shall know a word by the company it keeps’ Firth (1968:113) Cf (Palmer, 1981: 75-76). Firth uses the word collocation to refer to the association of words in the same context so that when someone sees a word he expects the presence of another. He asserts that “Collocations of a given word are statements of the habitual or customary places of that word order but not in other

contextual order and emphatically not in any grammatical order. The collocation of a word or a 'piece' is not to be regarded as mere juxtaposition, it is an order of mutual expectancy", Firth, (1957: 181). He further believes that collocates of a word help people to understand its meaning.

Firth gives the example of dark that collocates with night "one of the meanings of night in its collectability with dark" (1957: 196). Here, the meaning of the word night is clarified through its collocate dark. Also, the word that needs clarification—here night, is called the Node word, whereas the words that could be combined with it are called Collocates. The work of Firth had an impact on many linguists who studied collocations. Some of them but not exhaustively, are: Bolinger (1972), Peters (1977, 1983), Hakuta (1974), Wong-Fillmore (1976), Nattinger (1980), Syder (1983), Allerton (1987), Sinclair, (1987), Quirk, Greenbaum, Leech and Svartvik (1985), Sinclair, (1991), Francis, Hunston, and Manning (1996), and Paradis (1997). Among these studies, Sinclair has introduced new concepts "the idiom principle" (1991), Cf (Andreou, and Galantomos, 2008: 1) and "the open-choice principle" which are the two principles that govern the choice of words by speakers and writers. The first principle results in collocations or other degrees of idiomatically like, for instance idioms or fixed phrases in contrast to the second principle which is more general and includes "a wide range of possible and acceptable words" c.f (Andreou, and Galantomos, 2008: 1).

Furthermore, Hoey, (1991:19) c.f (Lewis, 2000: 232) explains that what constitutes a collocation is the "meanings" rather than the words, following Sinclair (1991) who says that "Many uses of words and phrases show a tendency to occur in a certain semantic environment" Hoey(1991:19) c.f (Michael, 2000: 232). In this scope, Hoey points up that what he calls "a world beyond collocations" referring to "semantic prosody". The latter is—as defined by Hoey, is the association of a word with "a particular set of meanings". Sinclair (1991) says that is what makes a word collocate with specific meanings rather than others. He illustrates his view with the example of the word chilly. Within the prosody of "time", chilly collocates with morning, night, evening, day; whereas it does not collocate with minutes or decades. (Sinclair, 1991: 233).

Categorization of Collocations:

Hsueh, (2000) sees that when it comes to the classification of collocations, Benson et al. (1986:9) c.f (1986) have been second to none so far (Liu, 1999a, Tsai, 1996). Many collocation researches (Bahns, 1993; Chang, 1997; Liu, 1999a, 1999b, 2000a; Wang, 2001) were conducted by using what Benson et al. advocated about collocations. On the other hand, a grammatical collocation is made up of a dominant word, such as a noun, an adjective, or a verb, and a preposition or grammatical structure like an infinitive or a clause. Sinclair (1991) divides collocation into two

kinds-downward collocation and upward collocation. Based on Sinclair's claim, when A is "node" and B is "collocate"-collocation of A with a less frequent word B, is called downward collocation, which contributes to a semantic analysis of a word. The examples of this type are "advantage over", "afraid of", "attitude toward", and etc. In contrast, when B is "node" and A is "collocate," it is called upward collocation.

Lexical Collocation:

This section is assigned for the definition, types, the essence of lexical approach besides other subtitles.

A- Structure of Lexical Collocation

According to typical lexical collocations, lexical collocations consist of nouns, adjectives, verbs, and adverbs.

B- Types of Lexical Collocation

Benson (1986:9), and Elson classify lexical collocations by structural types:

- (1) verb + noun wind a watch, quench one's thirst).
- (2) adjective + noun torrential rain.
- (3) noun + verb volcanoes erupt.
- (4) noun1 + of + noun2 a school of whales.
- (5) adverb + adjective closely acquainted.
- (6) verb + adverb apologize humbly).

The premise of LA, in contrast, is that language learning is achieved largely by the brute ability of the human mind to learn, store and process individual lexical items (=words and recurrent word combinations).

Types of Lexical Collocation:

Benson, Benson, and Ilson (1986:9) categorized English collocations into two classes: lexical collocations and grammatical collocations (with (7) and (8) types respectively); lexical collocations are made up only of verbs, adjectives, nouns and adverbs in different possible combinations while grammatical collocations contain words such as verbs, adjectives or nouns combined with a preposition or a grammatical structure.

Grammatical Collocation:

A grammatical collocation is a phrase consisting of a dominant word (noun, adjective, verb) and a preposition or grammatical structure such as an infinitive or a clause. E.g. decide on - not "decide at", accuse (somebody) of – not "accuse on". Typical grammatical collocations are verb patterns with infinitive, bare infinitive or – ing form, Lexical collocations normally do not contain prepositions, infinitives, or

clauses. They consist of nouns, adjectives, verbs and adverbs. E.g. warmest regards not "hot regards" or "hearty regards".

V + N/P (or prepositional phrase)	compose music; set an alarm
V + Adv	walk heavily; argue heatedly
V + N	make a decision; take place/part
Adj + N	strong/weak tea
N + V	bombs explode; alarms go off
N1 + of + N2	a pride of lions; a bunch of keys
Adv + Adj	quite safe; deeply absorbed
N + Prep	ability in/at; kind of; changes in
N + to + Inf	an attempt to do it; years to come
N + that-clause	He took an oath that he would do his duty. We reach an agreement that ...; fact that
Prep + N	on purpose; in fact
Adj + Prep	tired of; bored with; angry with/at
Adj + to + Inf	ready to go; easy to learn; likely to be
Adj + that-clause	She was afraid that she would fail the exam; he was delighted that ...
V + Prep	I believe in ...
V + direct O + to + indirect O =V + indirect O + direct O	She sent the book to him. =She sent him the book.
V + direct O + to + indirect O(no movement for dative)	They mentioned the book to her.
V + direct O + for + indirect O =V + indirect O + direct O	She bought a shirt for her husband. =She bought her husband a shirt.
V + Prep + O	They came by train;
V + O + Prep + O	We invited them to the meeting.
V + to Inf	She continued to write.
V + bare Inf	Mary had better go.
V + V-ing	They enjoy watching TV.
V + O + to Inf	We forced them to leave.
V + O + bare Inf	She heard them leave.
V + O + V-ing	He felt his heart beating.
V + a possessive and V-ing	I cannot imagine their stealing apples.
V + that clause(rather uncommen)	The doctor suggests me that I take vitamins.
V + O + to be + C	We consider her to be well-trained.
V + O + C	She dyed her hair red.
V (+ O1) + O2	The teachers asked (the students) questions. It

	took/cost (us) ten minutes/cents.
V + O + Adverbial	You carry yourself well [/like a soldier].
V (+O) + wh-clause/wh-phrase	She asked (us) why we had come.
It + V + O + to Inf	It surprised me to learn of her decision.
It + V + O + that-clause	It surprised me that our offer was rejected.
V + C (Adj or N)	He was a teacher.
V + C (Adj)	The food tastes good.

Source: Benson, Benson, and Ilson (1986).

Classifications of Lexical Collocations:

In the following two tables, the constituents of each type are classified with examples:

Verb + prepositions Walk up

Noun + prepositions Anger at

Adjective + prepositions Proud of

Table 1.4 Examples of Grammatical Collocations

Verb + noun set the table

Adjective + noun Fresh breathe

Adverb + adjective bitterly hurt

Table 1.5 Examples of Lexical Collocations

As it has been discussed above, it is clear that in the first table the dominating part is “prepositions” which represent grammatical words whereas in the second table there are no prepositions; only lexical words are included. Thus, it is the preposition that makes a collocation grammatical.

Strong vs. Weak Collocations:

Classifying collocations according to strength refers to the degree of words' association. Some words co-occur so often that when a word appears, its collocate follows it most of the time. Here, it is qualified as a “strong collocation”. But when two words collocate rarely, the strength reduces and the collocation is not strong enough for the collocate to be predicted since the words are not always together. Jimmie, c.f/ (Michael Lewis, 2000: 63) classifies collocations according to strength into four categories: unique, strong, weak and Medium -strength collocations. First, there are unique collocations . As examples, Hill (2000:48) gives the two collocations “foot the bill” and “shrug your shoulders”. The two collocations are unique because the verbs “foot” and “shrug” are not used with any other nouns. Secondly, there are strong collocations like “ trenchant criticism” and "*rancid butter*” red car . These combinations are “more predictable” and easy to the majority of students. Finally, the fourth type is medium-strength collocations; for example “holds a conversation” and "a major operation". Hill (c.f/ Michael Lewis, 2000: 63) thinks that students are concerned with this type which is neither strong nor weak.

Open vs. Restricted Collocations:

Cowie and Howarth (1996: 81) distinguish two types of collocations: 'open' and 'restricted'. According to them, a collocation is restricted if its parts 'keep their literal meaning', for instance "vested *interest*", whereas a collocation is considered as open when one or both parts has/have a 'figurative meaning' such as "white man" referring to "skin colour". Open collocations are as described by Carter c.f (Partington, 1998: 26). "open to partnership with a wide range of items". Most lexical items are included in this type for instance: white, short, long, red...etc. In between the two extremes there are "semi-restricted" collocations. Here a specific word has a limited number of collocations. Carter (c.f Partington, A. 1998: 26.) gives the example of the verb harbour that collocates with doubts, uncertainty, grudge and suspicion.

Cowie and Howarth (1996: 83) further illustrates that restricted collocations are "idiosyncratic and arbitrary" in contrast to "perfectly open collocations...formed by general principles of co-occurrence".

Functions of Collocation:

The specific area of collocation within lexis is of particular importance and forms a particular problem for language learners. The claim that the major problems the learner frequently encounters are predominantly lexical rather than grammatical is probably nowhere apparent and valid than in the area of collocation; the generation of collocation ally compatible strings in a foreign language has always plagued even advanced learners. One peculiarity of English as second language learners is the failure of these learners to produce collocations in the proper order. These forms are not prescribed patterns or rules, and while native speakers learn them throughout the normal acquisition process, foreign language learners have to train themselves in order to produce these collocations in the proper context. Fluency in the foreign language is determined by automation of collocation. The more the learner is capable of producing the correct collocations, the less hesitation pauses he makes in long sequences of words and consequently the more competent in the language he becomes. Collocation is of much higher importance, however, in terms of use, acquisition and ultimate success in language learning and translation purposes. In a vocabulary presentation, one-tenth of our time should be spent on establishing a definition, and the rest of the time should be spent on collocation and use.

To gain a clear picture of what (lexical) collocations are, it is helpful to distinguish them from idioms on the one hand and from free combinations on the other.

Teaching Lexical Collocation:

Teaching collocations has long been neglected as an influential way to increase foreign language learners' fluency. However, it is expected by Lewis, that collocations will become the centre of teaching: "Collocation will become so central to everyday teaching that we will wonder whatever took up so much of our time before" (2000: 27). If this can be realized, learners' written productions would meet the qualities that could make them native-like. Teaching collocations as claimed by Cowie, and Howarth(1996:), cf, (George and Mitchell, (1996: 90) is the step towards fluent writing: George and Mitchell, (1996: 92)As collocations would influence students' learning of any language, the aims of teaching collocations can be summarized in the following sequence written by Forquera (2006: 2):

1. "to maximise the value of language.
2. to identify the powerful partnerships in a text.
3. to expand their mental lexicons.
4. to make better use of language they already partly know.
5. to process and produce language at a much faster rate.
6. to improve their stress and intonation in larger phrases (pronunciation). "

The necessity of teaching collocations:

Murcia and Diane Larsen-Freeman (1983:55) point out that "it would be useful for ESL/EFL learners to have access to the significant collocates of all the lexical items they are expected to acquire and use". Another EFL researcher, Channell (2014), has not only stressed the importance of collocation properties but also put the semantic theory of vocabulary learning into practice. Together with three researchers, she integrated semantic field theory, componential analysis, and the collocation approach into her unique workbooks for advanced EFL learners (Rudzka et al., 1981a, 1985).

The lack of collocation competence is noticeable when non-native speakers of English need productive language knowledge. Students either use only the limited number of lexical collocations they know or under the influence of their first language "create" unnatural and farfetched collocations. Most intermediate and advanced students know such common collocations as have a quarrel, make a decision, and take the responsibility, but few know the similar collocations like pick/provoke/start a quarrel, arrive at/reach/take (Br. E) a decision, and assume/bear/ shoulder/ undertake the responsibility. Collocation familiarity of English learners lags far behind their passive language knowledge. One reason for this is that a large number of 'verb + noun' collocations are "arbitrary and non-predictable". In fact, Benson who based his observation on citations from various newspapers and magazines even concluded that "many native speakers of English need help with collocations" (Benson, 1990:27). Thus, from the test results as well as other

researchers one can reasonably infer that, since collocation capacity cannot be spontaneously acquired, the teaching of (lexical) collocations is absolutely integral to the encoding of a language by non-native speakers.

Collocation and Language Learning:

Collocation is observed between lexical items used in texts. It is the relation between individual lexical items and the ones that habitually co-occur with them in the language. For instance, one might expect bank (where money is kept) to have a high probability of co-occurrence with cheque, cashier, account, transfer, ledger, etc., but a low probability of co-occurrence with bed, saucepan, apple, etc. Lexical items involved in collocations are always, to some degree, mutually predictable (Crystal, 1995). The relationship of collocation according to McCarthy (1995:38) is fundamental in the study of vocabulary. Firth is often quoted having said "you know a word by the company it keeps" (Firth, 1957).

Modern Strategies for teaching collocation:

Due to the important role collocations play in the process of vocabulary building, which is an important part of the learners' overall language competence, special attention should be paid to the treatment of this linguistic phenomenon, so the following strategies can be followed for teaching collocation.

Teaching Collocations through Context:

It is widely thought that a correlation exists between vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension (Davis, 1944, 1968; Cunningham and Stanovich, 1997; Singer, 1965; Spearitt, 1972; Thurstone, 1946). Thus, vocabulary knowledge could be expanded through reading. Other direct effective procedures to teach vocabulary are keyword lessons Levin, McCormick, Miller, Berry, and Pressley, (1982), synonym drills Jenkins, and Schreck, (1982) and classification, defining and sentence production tasks Beck, Perfetti and McKeown, (1982). However, these methods proved insufficient because if the learners' attention is not directed towards collocations, teaching will not be effective. This task becomes much easier if the most common collocates of a word are taught in context. It is remarked by Hoey, Cf (Lewis, 2000: 230) that "learning items in context may be easier than learning them out of context". Here, it is the 61st teacher who would direct the learners' attention towards the meaning of word combinations in context because it is not an easy task to guess the meaning. As presented up to Laufer, (1997), (C/Coady, and Huckin, (1997:2) "Guessing word meanings by use of contextual clues is far more difficult". Coady and Huckin think that this problem is due to the fact that students do not have a wealthy vocabulary to use in guessing the words of the text. A student, according to them, must know "98 % of the words in a text". (Coady, and Huckin, 1997: 2).

Teaching Collocations through Exercises:

The teacher could introduce a variety of exercises in the classroom to develop students' collocation knowledge. The following exercises are chosen from Michael Lewis book *Teaching Collocation* (2000). They are introduced by Lewis, Morgan Lewis and Jimmie Hill as an effective way to teach collocations.

The first exercise is 'correcting common mistakes' in which the learner is asked to correct a collocation mistake in each sentence using a dictionary. For instance, in the sentence: "When I did badly in the exam it was a strong disappointment" Students have to find a word that goes with disappointment. Lewis et al (2000: 106-107)

The second exercise below is to match the adverbs with the adjectives using a dictionary to check the adjectives, Hill (2000: 110).

List 1	List 2
Bitterly	anticipated
Strictly	available
Lavishly	damaged
Eagerly	disappointed
Generously	illustrated
Widely	influenced by
Heavily	limited
Extensively	rewarded

The Role of the Teacher

The teacher acts as a feedback provider especially when (s)he corrects students' essays and reviews their use of collocations. Paying attention to miss-collocation is a focal point in teaching collocations. He/she is responsible for directing learners' attention towards collocations and urging them to build autonomy in learning so that they can notice collocations themselves and build awareness of these "pre-fabricated chunks". As stated by Willis, (1990: 130-131) "it is heard more and more frequently nowadays that the role of the teacher is not so much to teach as to manage learning - to create an environment in which learners can operate effectively collocations by raising their awareness of the importance of collocations in increasing second language writing proficiency and evaluating their writing by directing it towards achieving native-like fluency.

The Role of the Student:

As an effective element in the teaching / learning process, the English learners have to direct their learning strategies towards promoting self-autonomy in and outside the classroom. As seen by Benson "we are born self-directed learners" Benson,(1985:189) C.f Mishan, (2005: 36). In the classroom, the learner has to do many things to insure that output becomes intake by, for instance, taking notes,

paying attention to the teacher, collaborating with the teacher and the classmates...etc. Outside the classroom, each learner is responsible for his/ her progress by organizing data driven from the course, memorizing the courses, revising for the exam, surfing the web for more information about a specific point that needs more clarification...etc.

Previous Studies:

Mohamed Uonis (2009) in a Ph.D. thesis Elneelan, Faculty of Arts entitled "Investigating the Difficulties in *Dealing with Lexical Collocations that Face Sudanese University Learners of English at Tertiary Level*". The study aimed to investigate the aspects of collocation teaching, the role they play in foreign language learning and how Sudanese EFL learners deal with them, it also aimed at finding out to what extent Sudanese EFL learners experienced collocation difficulties.

The second study was conducted by Mona Elsayed (2007) an MA Thesis University of Gezira " *English Collocations as Problematic Area for the Student at Secondary Level*". The study aimed to measure the students ability in producing English collocation formed according to the most common patterns. The most important findings are that the majority of the students memorize words in isolation. This learning strategy hinders learning collocations and also most of the students collocation errors are due to the overgeneralization of the use of words.

A third M.A study was conducted by Mansour Madani (2016) University of Gezira, Faculty of Education (Hantoub) entitled " *Errors Made by EFL learners in using Lexical collocations in Oral Communications*" The study aimed at: Investigating difficulties arising when dealing with English Lexical collocations in Oral Communication, to find out English Lexical Collocations Errors in Secondary School Written Essays, effective techniques for presenting English lexical collocations at Secondary level.

An M A dissertation, was conducted by Yusra Al-Saghir under the title of *The Translation by Lexical Collocations in Literary Text in Translation and Interpreting* at Faculty of the American University of Sharjah College of Arts and Sciences (June 2011). The research aimed to investigate how translators dealt with collocations when transferring them to the target language, and whether the target text (TT) had fulfilled the linguistic and the stylistic characteristics of the collocations.

Another Ph.D thesis was conducted by Abdallah Abu Naba'h under the *title Lexical Errors Made by In- Service English language Teachers in Jordan* (2011) at Faculty of Educational Sciences Hashemite University . It aimed to identify the types of lexical errors made by in- service English language teachers in Jordan then to investigate the possible causes of these errors , so as to suggest strategies

and techniques for teaching English . The findings reveal that the lexis constitutes a problem to in-service English language teachers and it will be negatively reflected on English language teaching in the classroom.

Differences between the Previous Studies and the present study:

The mentioned previous studies focused on the use of *Lexical Collocations in communication speech or English written discourse*. The mentioned studies were carried on a very restricted area of language skills like grammar, phonology, and morphology . This study is carried out in Sudan and it differs from the others as shown in the following : This study is in lexical collocations in written discourse hence, it covers all the features of lexical collocation from their original, types , teaching , excepted errors to results and recommendations . Abu Naba'h's study recommends that teachers must be properly qualified academically and professionally and it neglects the role of the learner and the syllabus , while this study emphasizes the acquiring of collocations which need all those aspects to be under consideration .

Finally, all the above studies agree that learning chunks of words helps learners develop their communicative competencies better than learning words in isolation but do not express how those chunks are acquired but this study suggests memorizing as a way of requiring chunks.

RESEACH METHODOLGOY

Introduction:

This chapter is concerned with the procedures followed in carrying out the study. The chapter includes the description of the sample involved in the study, tools for data collecting and the procedures implemented for data analysis. The chapter also provides validity and reliability of both the test and questionnaire.

The Sample:

The sample of the study was composed of two groups: a random sample of (72) EFL students were chosen from (100) population of EFL students Batch(37) at the department of English-Faculty of Education – Hantoub. The second group consisted of (25) experienced EFL teachers at university of Gezira, Faculties of Education-Hantoub, Elhassaheisa and Alkamleen, in addition to Albutana University and University of Holy Quran.

Tools for Data Collection:

The data for the present study were collected by using two tools; a diagnostic test for EFL students and a questionnaire for EFL lecturers.

Test for the Students:

The diagnostic test was designed to assess EFL university student's performance in English lexical collocation in written discourse. It aimed to collect the reliable data that serves the purpose of the study. The test was divided into three parts – in part one, students were instructed to choose the most appropriate answer- part two students were directed to complete the sentences by using a given list of words and part three to match A with B in C.

Validity of the Test:

Face validity was chosen to check the items by three experienced EFL lecturers at University of Gezira who judged the test, and after that the researcher made the necessary modifications according to their comments.

Reliability of the Test:

The split half method was used to measure the reliability of the test, in which the items of the test were divided into two halves to calculate the correlation between the two sets of scores of the two halves.

The (SPSS) program was used to calculate this correlation. The reliability obtained was 0.84. This indicated that the test was so reliable.

The Questionnaire:

The questionnaire was designed to find out the lecturers own point of view towards EFL students' performance in English lexical collocation in written discourse. It contained (10) statements and (3) open - ended questions. The aim was to elicit lecturers' points of view.

Validity of the Questionnaire:

Face validity was chosen. Five experienced professors at university of Gezira- Faculties of Education judged the questionnaire, and after that the researcher made the necessary modifications according to their comments.

Instruments for Data Analysis:

The researcher used Statistical Packages for Social Sciences program (SPSS)for data analysis using percentage and frequency. The collected data were summarized and displayed in tables.

DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Introduction:

This chapter is concerned with the presentation, analysis and interpretation of the obtained data. The results of the test for students and the Questionnaire for EFL professor were displayed in tables in addition to, testing research hypotheses.

Results of the Test

The following tables displayed the results obtained from EFL students' answering the test questions.

Part One: Choice of Correct Lexical Collocation

Items	Correct		Incorrect		Total
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	
1	48	67%	24	33%	100%
2	22	31%	50	69%	100%
3	19	26%	53	74%	100%
4	10	14%	62	86%	100%
5	24	33%	48	67%	100%
6	19	26%	53	74%	100%
7	13	18%	59	82%	100%
8	35	49%	65	51%	100%
9	38	52%	34	48%	100%
10	13	18%	59	82%	100%

The table indicates that EFL students encounter difficulties in choosing the appropriate answer. In the first item, (67%) of the participants were able to answer question (1) correctly, while (33%) failed to give the correct answer for this question. In the second item, (69%) of the students answered incorrectly in question (2), whereas (31%) answered correctly. In the third item, (19%) of the students answered the question (4) correctly, while (81%) of them were unable to answer correctly. In the fourth item, (14%) of the participants were able to answer the question (5) correctly, while the majority (86%) failed to give the correct answer for this questions. In the fifth item, (33%) of the students answered correctly in question (5), whereas (67%) responded incorrectly. In the sixth item, (26%) of the students answered the question (6) correctly, while (74%) of them were unable to answer correctly. In item 7, (18%) of the participants were able to answer the question correctly, while the majority (82%) failed to give the correct answer for this question. In item 8, (49%) of the students answered correctly in question (8), whereas (51%) responded incorrectly. In item 9, (52%) of the students answered the question (9) correctly, while (48%) of them were unable to answer

correctly. In item 10, (18%) of the participants were able to answer question (10) correctly, while the majority (82%) failed to give the correct answer for this question.

According to the above answerers, it is clear that from the above table, EFL students perform unsatisfactorily some of the questions in section one. The average of their incorrect answers were, (71%).

Part Two: Completion of Sentences Using suitable collocation

Items	Correct		incorrect		Total
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	
1	33	46%	39	54%	100%
2	51	71%	21	29%	100%
3	31	43%	41	57%	100%
4	53	74%	19	26%	100%
5	12	17%	60	83%	100%
6	25	35%	47	65%	100%
7	13	18%	59	82%	100%
8	41	57%	31	43%	100%
9	9	12%	63	88%	100%
10	23	32%	49	68%	100%

The table shows that (46%) of the students in the first item from section two were able to complete the answers in sentence (1), while the majority (54%) of them were unable to give the correct answer. The results of the second item are that (71%) of the respondents gave the correct answers to this question (2), whereas (29%) failed to give the correct answer. (43%) of the students in the third item from section two were able to complete the answers in sentence (3), while the majority (57%) of them were unable to give the correct answer. The results of the fourth item are that (74%) of the respondents gave the correct answers to this question (4), whereas (26%) failed to give the correct answer. (17%) of the students in the 5th item from section two were able to complete the answers in sentence (5), while the majority (83%) of them were unable to give the correct answer. The results of the sixth item were that (35%) of the respondents gave the correct answers to this question (6), whereas (65%) failed to give the correct answer. (18%) of the students in the seventh item from section two were able to complete the answers in sentence (7), while the majority (82%) of them were unable to give the correct answer. The results of the eighth item are that (57%) of the respondents gave the correct answers to this question (8),

whereas (43%) failed to give the correct answer (12%) of the students in the ninth item from section two were able to complete the answers in sentence (9), while the majority (88%) of them were unable to give the correct answer. The results of the tenth item are that (32%) of the respondents gave the correct answers to this question (10), whereas (68%) failed to give the correct answer. The average of incorrect answer is (59.2%) which means that they perform unsatisfactorily in question (2).

Part Three: Matching A with B in C.

Items	Correct		incorrect		Total
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	
1	2	3%	70	97%	100%
2	19	26%	43	74%	100%
3	21	29%	51	71%	100%
4	7	10%	65	90%	100%
5	35	49%	37	51%	100%

The table above illustrates that in the first item, (3%) of the respondents answered (1) correctly, while the majority (97%) of the respondents were unable to choose the correct answer. (26%) of the students in the second item from section three were able to complete the answers in sentence (2), while the majority (74%) of them were unable to give the correct answer. The results of the third item are that (26%) of the students answered the question (3) correctly, while the majority (74%) of the respondents failed in giving the correct answers. The results of the fourth item demonstrate that (10%) of them answered the question in this item (21) correctly, whereas (49%) of them did not succeed in responding correctly. (10%) of the students in the fifth item from section three were able to complete the answers in question (5), while the majority (90%) of them were unable to give the correct answer. The demonstrate of the sixth item results that (49%) of them answer the question in this item (6) correctly, whereas (51%) of them did not succeed in responding correctly. It is clearly seen from the above results that the majority of EFL students encounter difficulty of matching collocation sentences. The average of incorrect answers is (76.6%) indicating the poor performance of the subjects.

Results of the Questionnaire:

The subjects who participated in the questionnaire were (25) experienced lecturers. The tables in the following pages presents frequency and percentages distribution according to the statements of the questionnaire. Each table will be dealt with separately.

The following tables show that EFL Students perform unsatisfactorily in using the most common patterns of English lexical collocations in written discourse.

Table (4.1)

Option	Frequency	Percent
Disagree	3	15.4
To some extent	5	19.2
Agree	17	65.4
Total	25	100.0

The above table shows that (15.4 %) of the respondents have chosen the option *disagree* while (19.2%) have chosen the second option *to some extent* and (65.4 %) responded to *agree* with the statement

Table (4.2)

Option	Frequency	Percent
Disagree	1	3.8
To some extent	1	7.7
Agree	23	88.5
Total	25	100.0

The above table (4.2) shows that (3.8%) of the respondents have chosen the option *disagree* while (7.7%) *to some extent* and (88.5%) *agree* that mother tongue influencing EFL students' performance on lexical collocations.

Table (4.3)

Option	Frequency	Percent
Disagree	9	38.5
To some extent	0	0
Agree	16	61.5
Total	25	100.0

The above table shows that (38.5 %) of the respondents have chosen the option *disagree* while (none) have chosen the second option *to some extent* and (61.5%) have *agreed* to this statement. overgeneralization is being noticeable in EFL undergraduate performance regarding English collocations

Table (4.4)

Option	Frequency	Percent
Disagree	7	31
To some extent	0	0
Agree	18	69
Total	25	100.0

The above table shows that (31%) of the respondents have chosen the option *disagree* while (none) have chosen the second option *to some extent* and (69 %) responded to *agree* with the statement that Some students memorizing words in isolation making learning of English lexical collocations difficult.

Table (4.5)

Option	Frequency	Percent
Disagree	5	23.1
To some extent	5	19.2
Agree	15	57.7
Total	25	100.0

The above table shows that (23.1%) of the respondents have chosen the option *disagree* while (19.2 %) have chosen the second option *to some extent* and (57.7 %) *agree* with the statement that text books lacking activities on English collocation.

Table (4.6)

Option	Frequency	Percent
Disagree	1	3.8
To some extent	4	19.2
Agree	20	76.9
Total	25	100.0

The above table (4.6) shows that (3.8%) of the respondents have chosen the option *disagree* while (19.2%) have chosen the second option *to some extent* and (76.9 %) responded to *agree* with the statement. contextualization is one of the most effective techniques for teaching lexical collocations

Table (4.7)

Option	Frequency	Percent
Disagree	6	23.1
To some extent	10	42.3
Agree	9	34.6
Total	25	100.0

The above table shows that (23.1%) of the respondents have chosen the option *disagree* while (42.3%) have chosen the second option to some extent and (34.6 %) *agreed* with the statement that EFL Students being always encouraged in reading different varied English texts.

Table (4.8)

Option	Frequency	Percent
Disagree	2	7.7
To some extent	15	61.5
Agree	8	30.8
Total	25	100.0

The above table shows that (30.8%) of the respondents have chosen the option *agree* while (61.5 %) to some extent and (7.7 %) *disagree* with the statement. Above two thirds (61.5%) agree to some extent that the prescribed syllabus for EFL students focusing on lexical collocations.

Table (4.9)

Option	Frequency	Percent
Disagree	4	15.4
To some extent	11	46.2
Agree	10	38.5
Total	25	100.0

The above table (4.9) shows that (15.4 %) of the respondents have chosen the option *disagree* while (46.2 %) *to some extent* and (38.5%) *agree* with the statement that lecturers providing EFL students with extensive exercise on English lexical collocations.

Table (4.10)

Option	Frequency	Percent
Disagree	4	15.4
To some extent	12	50.0
Agree	9	34.6
Total	25	100.0

The above table shows that (15.4%) of the respondents have chosen the option *disagree* while (50.0 %) have chosen the second option *to some extent* and (34.6%) responded to *agree* with the statement that lecturers usually give students intensive practice in English lexical collocations.

Results of the Open-ended Questions

The first statement :

From your own point of view, to what extent do EFL students use lexical collocations in written discourse.

Concerning the above statement, all respondents agree that EFL students use lexical collocations to some extent, they say that collocations are difficult to understand so EFL students memorize lexical collocations but fail to apply them effectively.

The second statement:

What effective techniques would you suggest for teaching lexical collocation. All teachers agree that lexical collocations should be taught in contextualization in real situations.

The third statement:

In your own point of view, to what extent do the English courses at university level provide sufficient material on English lexical collocations .All respondents agree on the above statement that English courses lack the material on English lexical collocation. So, there is no sufficient practical exercises. This is the main reason for poor performance in lexical collocations in written discourse.

Testing Research Hypotheses:

In this section, the results of the test and questionnaires are discussed in relation to the hypotheses of the study.

The first hypothesis:

The majority of the students are unable to use the most common patterns of English lexical collocations. The analysis of the questionnaire in table, (4.1), (65.4%) shows that EFL student's perform unsatisfactorily in using the most common patterns of English lexical collocation in written discourses. Thus, it indicates that EFL students are

unable to use the common patterns of English lexical collocation. In addition to that, the results in table (4.2) and (4.3) also assure this because (88.5%), (61.5%) respectively were unable to use the most common patterns of English lexical collocation. In addition to, that, the open-ended questions number (11) and number (13) which show that all respondents agree that EFL students sometimes use lexical extension and fail to apply them effectively. So the hypothesis is proved.

The second hypothesis:

Exposing students to a large number of lexical collocations to be practiced improves students' performance. The lecturers' responses in tables, (4.7) (34.6%), (4.8) (30.8%) , (4.9) (38.5%), (4.10) (34.6%) indicate that many respondents agree that exposing students to a large number of lexical collocations to be practiced improves students' performance.

The third hypothesis:

Some suggested strategies help in improving students' performance in lexical collocations such as extensive practice. The teachers responses in tables (4.6) (76.9%), (4.7) (34.6%), and (4.10) (34.6%) strongly confirm that all the above strategies could help in improving student's performance in lexical collocation. Moreover in the responses concerning the open-ended question (12), all respondents agree that lexical collocations should be taught in context and in real situations to some extent. In the next chapter the conclusion, findings and recommendations will be covered.

CONCLUSION FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction:

This chapter presented conclusion, findings, recommendations and suggestions for further studies based on the discussion of the results.

Conclusion:

The study aimed at assessing student's performance in English Lexical Collocation in order to find out the extent of weakness of some of the students so as to suggest suitable ways to overcome their problems. The researcher followed the descriptive analytical method. Two tools were employed for data collection; a diagnostic test, which administered to (72) EFL university students and a questionnaire was distributed to (25) EFL expert lectures.

Findings:

The study has reached many findings, the most important ones are:

1. A great number of EFL student's performance is unsatisfactory in using English Lexical Collocations. Table (4.7) - (42.3%).
2. Mother tongue influence affects EFL students' performance negatively. Table (4.2) (88.5%)
3. Generalization is quite clear in student's performance regarding English Lexical Collocations. Table (4.3) (61.5%)
4. Some EFL students memorize words in isolation which makes the learning of English Lexical Collocations so difficult. Table (4.4) (69%).
5. Exposure to a large number of Lexical Collocations improves EFL student's performance. Table (4.10) (50%)
6. Contextualization is considered one of the most effective techniques for teaching lexical collocation. Table (4.6) (76.9%)
7. Teaching collocations within context is the most effective technique. Table (4.6) (76.9%).
8. Students need to do more practice and activities on Lexical Collocations. Table (4.10) (50%).

Recommendations:

Based on the findings, the researcher recommends:

1. It is essential to add more activities and practices regarding English Lexical Collocations.
2. Contextualization is the most effective technique to increase student's awareness and enhance their performance in lexical collocations.
3. EFL students need to do more exercises in dealing with Lexical Collocations.
4. Students need to do more practice and activities on Lexical Collocations. Table (4.10) (50%).

Suggestions for Further Studies:

During the study, the researcher has come through different topics related to this issue. The following topics are suggested for further research in the area:

1. Mother tongue interference in EFL students' performance in English lexical collocations.
2. Contextualization as one of the most effective techniques for teaching English Lexical Collocation.

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