

Investigating the Performance of Iraqi EFL University Students in Using Collocations

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ABSTRACT

This study deals with collocations in English as well as in Arabic. There are several types of collocations, such as open, restricted and bound, some times idioms have the same aspects of collocations but there should be no confusion between them. The aims of the study are: 1. Identifying the aspects of collocations in both English and Arabic language as well; 2. Discussing the general usage of collocation in English and Arabic; 3. Investigating the Iraqi EFL university students' performance in using collocations. The study consists of five sections. Section one is devoted to the aims, hypotheses, procedures and limits, of the study. Section two is definitions and types of collocations. Section three is dedicated to the description of meanings, section four the results and finally section five is the conclusions .

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الخلاصة

تتناول هذه الدراسة موضوع المتلازمات اللفظية في كلتا اللغتين الانكليزية والعربية وهناك عدة أنواع من هذه المتلازمات منها المقيدة والمحدودة وفي بعض الأحيان تكون لهذه المتلازمات خصائص معينة ولكن تختلف هذه الخصائص عن غيرها من المصطلحات التعبيرية إذ يجب تمييزها عنها وعدم الدمج بين خصائص المتلازمات اللفظية والمصطلحات من خلال الاختلاف في المعاني المستخدمة . تعتبر معاني المصطلحات غير إنشائية ولكن تعد المتلازمات اللفظية ذات معنى في تركيب الإنشاء لذا تكون شمولية في استعمال الكلمات مع بعضها البعض .

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى : ١- تحديد خصائص المتلازمات اللفظية في اللغتين الانكليزية والعربية ، ٢- مناقشة الاستخدامات العامة لهذه المتلازمات في اللغة الانكليزية والعربية ، ٣- تحليل أداء طلبة الجامعة العراقيين في استخدام المتلازمات اللفظية .

تحتوي هذه الدراسة على خمسة فصول. يشمل الفصل الأول الأهداف والفرضيات و الإجراءات وحدود الدراسة . الفصل الثاني عبارة عن تعاريف المتلازمات اللفظية وخصائصها . الفصل الثالث يحتوي على وصف المعاني . الفصل الرابع النتائج . وأخيرا الفصل الخامس الاستنتاجات .

Section One

Introduction

This study is about collocations. This study deals with collocations in English as well as in Arabic. There are several types of collocations, such as open, restricted and bound, some times idioms have the same aspects of collocations but there should be no confusion between them. **1.1 The Problem**

This study was designed to diagnose the use of collocations in English and Arabic languages. Since we have collocations in both languages but the students face more difficulties in using Arabic collocations than English.

1.2 Aims

1. Identifying the aspects of collocations in both English and Arabic language as well.
2. Discussing the general usage of collocation in English and Arabic.
3. Investigating the Iraqi EFL university students' performance in using collocations .

1.3 Hypotheses

1. It is hypothesized that collocations are more complicated in Arabic and wider than collocations in English according to their meanings.

1.4 Procedures

1. Presenting theoretical details of English and Arabic collocations.
2. Identifying the results of the test.

1.5 Limits

This study limited itself to evaluation the use of collocations in both English and Arabic languages. The researcher chooses third grade / English department / College of Education. The study practically conducted as a test for Iraqi EFL 3rd grade learners, specially for this grade, because they have studied implicature.

Section Two

2.1 Definitions

The term collocation is used by different linguists as follows:

According to Gramley & Patzold. (1992: 61) collocation refers to combinations of two lexical items in order to organize an isolable semantic which belong to different word classes and show a restricted range.

Collocations are words which lexicalized as subsequent shortening as (holiday= holy day). (Gorlach,1997: 79).

Swan (2003 :257) defines collocations as idioms that express the idea correctly, e.g. "a heavy smoker" English speakers

have chosen to use "heavy" instead of (big, strong, hard, fierce, mad, devoted) in order to express it in a right way, in sum a learner who uses the wrong words for an idea like this may be understood, but he will not sound natural. These conventional combinations are called collocations.

All languages have numbers of collocations. Some more English examples :

burning desire

blazing row

crashing bore

golden opportunity

change one's mind

thanks a lot (not thank you a lot)

slightly annoyed (not slightly interesting)

(ibid)

Yule (2003: 122-123) states that collocations are terms used to organize our knowledge of words which are occurring frequently and together. Such as (fresh air or husband and wife).

Collocation is a type of lexical cohesion, it includes all those items in a text that are semantically related, therefore it can cause major problems for discourse analysis (Nunan, 2001: 123).

They are a "form of lexical cohesion in which two or more words are related by virtue of their belonging to particular semantic field." e.g.

1. The bulbs should be planted in winter.

2. The flowers will appear in spring. (ibid: 303)

Collocation refers to the act of putting items together , in this case combination of words obtain Collocation= note+ collocate (Katrin Jänecke & Christian Lindner, 2006: 3).

2.2 Types of Collocations are as follows

2.2.1 Grammatical collocations

frequently occurring combination of a dominant word (noun, adjective or verb) and a function word (often a preposition)
typical verb collocations: abstain from, approve of (phrasal verbs)
noun collocations: admiration for, amazement at
adjective collocations: absent from, afraid
of, angry with this type of collocation often an alternative to other constructions.

2.2.2 Semantical & lexical Collocations

also consist of a groups of words with a certain meaning which occur together but they consist of words which have an approximately equal status set of collocates for a given word can form nearly unlimited classes e.g. Run with object: a business, a company, also a gym, a pizza parlour but if you look at other verbs with similar meanings the group of collocates is more restricted e.g. Manage. (Katrin Jänecke & Christian Lindner, 2006: 4)

Section Three

3.1 Analysis

Collocations reflect a semantic relation between words which includes the factors of others items meaning. A close analysis should be started of all the collocations in order to find out less obvious contrasts in meaning. (Gorhach, 1997:121- 126).

Collocational words can also influence each other semantically for example: To turn fast= quickly. (ibid: 132)

All in all, many collocations consist of two words that stand in a more flexible relationship to one another. Consider the verb

knock and one of its most frequent arguments, *door*. Here are some examples of knocking on or at a door :

- a. she knocked on his door
- b. they knocked at the door
- c. 100 women knocked on Donaldson's door
- d. a man knocked on the metal front door

The words that appear between *knocked* and *door* vary and the distance between the two words is not constant so a fixed phrase approach would not work here. But there is enough regularity in the patterns to allow us to determine that *knock* is the right verb to use in English for this situation, not *hit*, *beat* or *rap*.

([wikipedia.2011](#). 3)

3.2 Meanings

(Gramley & Patzold p.61-62) states that collocational meaning refers to each word makes an independent contribution to the meaning of the whole collocation, just like (river- rise, agree- entirely or fine- heavy), these are indeed collocations from the semantic point of view because each one of them has independent meaning.

3.3 Usage

Mostly, collocation is determined by meaning but sometimes it cannot be predicated in terms of the meaning of associated words for example blond with hair we should not talk about *a blond door or *blond dress, even if the colour were exactly to the blond hair. Another relevant example that we should not normally say *pretty boy or *buxom man, though pretty girl and buxom woman are quite normal. This characteristic of language is found in an extreme form in the collective words :

flock of sheep

herd of cows

school of whales

pride of lions

dog / bark

cat / mew

sheep / bleat

horse / neigh

(Palmer, 1971: 76-77).

Sometimes the user is misleading the correct use of collocations to produce a correct linguists term such as the word (gap) tends to occur close to (teeth, mountain, narrow, widen, fill, close, and reduce) (Mitton, 1996: 169).

Collocations are some times different in pronunciation and similar in meanings such as:

لو عانيك لقالا بهجة جذلا أبرحت أيسر ما في العراق أن يشيخا
Law aynak lekala behjete jathela Abreht aysar ma fy Al Iraq an yeshja

(Aby Tamam) (أبي تمام)

behjete and jathela (بهجة جذلا) are close in the meaning in which both refer to (happiness) so they are used together because the pronunciation is different. (Al Asafy, 2009:277)

Again when Al Mutanaby said

نبداك يوسى كل خرج يعتلى راب الأساة بدردييس قنطر

Bendak yuasa kul kerge yuatala Raab al asat bederdaebes kantar

Thus here we have bederdaebes and kantar (بدردييس قنطر) which mean (الداهية) (aldahia) both are related to the same meaning. (ibid)

The necessary usage of collocations in Arabic

According to (Al-Maatuk, 2008:42) collocations mean a various ways to express what the one want to say.

أما لهذا الأعمى الملحد المشنف من يقتله لو لا أن الغيلة سجية من سجايا الغالية، لبعثت إليه من يبعج بطنه على مضجعه.

Ama lehathe al aama almulhad almushanaf men yaktulah lawla an algeeletah min sajaya algaliah , lebeathtu ilayh men yabaaj batnah ala madjaah.

This speech said by Wasel bin Ataa Algazaly against Basher bin Bard in which Wasel has a defect of pronoun the letter ® so he used a talent collocations to substituted the words that cry the letter ® with other words in order to express his ideas and the words are as follows;

المشرف بدل من بشار almulhad instead of alkafer
الملحد بدل من الكافر almushanaf instead of Basher
الغيلة سجية من سجايا الغالية بدل من المنصورية والمغيرية
algeeletah min sajaya algaliah instead of almansuria and
almagiria
لبعثت بدل من لأرسلت lebeathtu instead of lerseltu
مضجعه بدل من فراشه madjaah instead of firasheh
(المعتوق، ٢٠٠٨، ٤٢-٤٣) (Al-Maatuk, 2008:42- 43)

There are a lot of words can give meanings in a suitable place and use than others because these words are more accurate, for instance:

خطف أفضل من سرق katafa better than seraq
جمال أفضل من بهاء jemal better than bahaa
توفي أفضل من مات tuwufy better than mat
شاهق أفضل من مشمخر shahiq better than mushmeker
(ibid:44)

Collocation means also two words give the same meaning and both can use in the same situation as the words below:

المليح والحسن almelih and alhesin
القبيح والسمج alkabih and alsemij
المتشدد والمتفهيق almutashadiq and almutafaihiq
الثرثار والمكثار altharthar and almekthar
(ibid: 53)

Some words are close in meaning with other words to make a collocation in unconscious way in which we used them together as a habit because they are fit to be together for example:

محاكاة النماذج Muhakat alnemathej
تقليد المثل Tqleed almethal
يقوم عليه الفن Ykum alyah alfen
ينهض به فنان Yanhad bih alfanan
طبيعة القلم Tyat alkalam
ليننة اللسان Lyanat allisan
(ibid:55).

Kamal Bisher translated the book of Stephen Ullmann which is called 'Words and Their Use' into Arabic to focus on some useful collocations such as the collaboration and double use of words called 'homonymy' or the words which have more than one meaning with the same pronunciation called 'polysemy'. For instance:

بحر و يرى sea and see
طحين و زهرة flour and flower

Therefore the word (see) in this phrase 'the bishop's see' which means 'عرش الأسقف' not like the separate word (see) and the word (page) in the phrase 'page boy' which means 'الساعي أو البواب' not similar to the normal separate word (page), to sum up we can notice when the words come together they can give different meaning from those that come separately. (Kamal Bishr ,1965: 94-95)

More Arabic examples of collocations

"عبر النهر و السهل" Abara alnahaar wa alsahal
"القوات المسلحة" Alquwat almusalaha
"تهبط الطريق" Tahbit altareek
"نشوب القتال" Nashaba alqeetal
"حقق انتصارا" Haqaqa intasara

(١) (مجالس الفصحى لعلوم اللغة العربية ٢٠١١)

Collocations noun and verb (أقام الصلاة), (أدى الزكاة) و (خاض المعركة)
noun and noun (حقن الدماء) و (أداء الدين)
verb and verb (أقبل ينادي), (طفق يخصف)
adjective and noun (الين العريكة), (طويل الباع), (عابس الوجه)
noun or verb with letter and noun (الوفاء بالعهد), (تخرج جامعة)
(2) (مجالس الفصحى لعلوم اللغة العربية ٢٠١١)

3.4 Aspects of Collocations

Here there is a mention of some different collocations. One might say there is a core word (the word that comes to the mind first) and a collocator that combines with that core-word. One has for example in mind the noun 'crime' in English, and looks for the verb which combines with it, and which denotes the action of 'doing it' (the crime). This has to be either the verb 'commit' or 'perpetrate'. This applies for Arabic as well. When having the noun جريمة in mind, only the verbs ارتكب or اقترف can be used. While still having the same noun in mind and seeking for an adjective that expresses the bad, violent and harmful nature of the crime one can in English choose from a limited number of adjectives like 'atrocious', 'vicious' and some others. The same in Arabic; with جريمة one can combine a limited number of adjectives like نكراء.

Collocations (also called recurrent combinations or fixed combinations) are specific combinations of for example a noun and an adjective, or a noun and a verb. (Peter Emery, 1991: 1)

Section Four

4.1 The Sample

The researcher chooses third grade / English department / College of Education. They have been chosen because they have a background Knowledge about collocations in English.

4.2 The Population

A sample of students from the third grade in department of English, College of Education, University of Kufa, during the academic year (2017). It consisted of thirty students they are native speakers of Iraqi Arabic who have similar EFL background.

4.3 Test Design

It consisted of two questions. The first question was designed to asses students responses in English collocations. This question included six items, the students were required to match the right answer.

The second question was designed to measure the students responses in Arabic collocations . This question also included six items, the students were required to match the right answer.

4.4 The Results of the Test

The tables below show the results of the test

Table (1)
Students Responses in English Collocations

No. of Items	No. of Correct Responses	%	No. of Wrong Responses	%
1	23	77	7	23
2	7	23	23	77
3	11	37	19	63
4	15	50	15	50
5	28	93	2	7
6	19	63	11	37
Total	103	343	77	257

As shown in the results of table (1) which were the responses of the first question that the students faced less difficulties in using English collocations than in using Arabic collocations according to the results of the correct and wrong responses in which the correct responses were more than the wrong responses.

Table (2)
Students Responses in Arabic Collocations

No. of Items	No. of Correct Responses	%	No. of Wrong Responses	%
1	8	27	22	73
2	8	27	22	73
3	6	20	24	80
4	14	47	16	53
5	6	20	24	80
6	28	93	2	7
Total	70	234	110	366

In table (2) above the results shown the responses of the second question that the students faced more difficulties in using Arabic collocations than in using English collocations according to the results of the correct and wrong responses in which the wrong responses were more than the correct responses.

Section Five

Conclusions

5.1 Theoretical Conclusion

What was concluded in this study that there were certain words which more specific in usage and limit in use with other words whether in English and Arabic languages but some times Arabic collocations are more confused to choose a specific word to each other because Arabic language has very large dictionaries of words in which some the writers consider it misleading vocabularies to use.

Collocation is considered one of the major 'trouble spots' for translators. This may be ascribed to the relative difficulty in predicting the constituent elements of a collocation, the considerable variation in collocability across languages and the lack of adequate resources on collocation. In sum we cannot easily translate collocation from one language into other.

5.2 Practical Conclusion

It has been demonstrated that Arabic learners have very little material to consult in order to find collocations in Arabic. Ar-FL(Arabic foreign learners) dictionaries, even though not the first category to consult when the learners want to produce Arabic, they do not have an enough amount of collocations.

As shown in the results of table (1) which were the responses of the first question that the students faced less difficulties in using English collocations than in using Arabic collocations according to the results of the correct and wrong responses in which the correct responses were more than the wrong responses.

In table (2) the results shown the responses of the second question that the students faced more difficulties in using Arabic collocations than in using English collocations according to the results of the correct and wrong responses in which the wrong responses were more than the correct responses.

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Appendix (1)

The Test

Q1. Match the words (1-6) and (a-f).

- | | |
|-------------------------|----------------|
| 1. blond | a. opportunity |
| 2. repeal | b. with hair |
| 3. appreciate | c. annoyed |
| 4. reverse | d. sincerely |
| 5. golden | e. a law |
| 6. slightly
decision | f. a |

Q2. Match the words (1-6) and (a-f).

- | | |
|-----------------|-----------|
| النماذج
a | ١. بدرديس |
| بهجة
قنطر b. | ٢. |
| ٣. طيبة
c. | نكراء |
| يخصف
d. | ٤. محاكاة |
| القلم
e. | ٥. طفق |
| جدلا
f. | ٦. جريمة |

Appendix (2) The Answers

Q1.

blond with hair
repeal a law
appreciate sincerely
reverse a decision
golden opportunity
slightly annoyed

Q2.

بدر ديبس قنطر
بهجة جذلا
طبيعة القلم
محاكاة النماذج
طفق يخصف
جريمة نكراء