



A Study On Second Language Learners' Lexical Collocational Errors In Written Communication: Some Conceptual Implications

Larisha Jasmine. H ¹, Dr. D. Franklin Vaseekaran ²

¹Ph.D. Research Scholar, CSI Bishop Appasamy College of Arts and Science, Coimbatore.

²Assistant Professor, Department of English, CSI Bishop Appasamy College of Arts and Science, Coimbatore.

Abstract

Today, scientific writers must not only have a solid understanding of their subject area but also a strong command of English. To become proficient in a target language, foreign language teachers and students should concentrate on the sometimes-overlooked linguistic form of collocation. In order to suggest a categorization of the categories they include and identify a collocation mistake; this research identifies the lexical collocational errors made in comprehension texts written in English by second language learners. Through this research, second language learners will be able to write better and communicate with other writers from across the world more easily. The constant pattern and the essential directions for their rectification may also be determined by identifying the sources of these mistakes. These data could be able to provide light on the actions that Tamil speakers of English take while acquiring new words, making it easier to prevent collocational mistakes and identify the processes that allow for the accurate development of specialised lexical collocations.

Keywords: collocation; collocational errors; Factors; lexical collocations; grammatical collocations.

Introduction

Learning a second language involves using four basic skills: speaking, writing, listening, and reading. Learning a second language results in effective communication (Rahimi, 2011). How many vocabularies a person learns is a significant case in point in this respect (McCarthy, 1988). Vocabulary is the largest unit of meaning in any language. Learning vocabulary is now the subject of the most attention in second language instruction and research; also, how learners fully acquire vocabulary and how one might do so are significant topics in applied linguistics (Lewis, 2006). Collocations are a form of prefabricated chunk that should be taken seriously by instructors and students while learning a language (Lewis, 2000; Nation, 2001; Thornbury, 2002). A few examples of specific lexical items that co-occur with a mutual expectancy greater than chance include

rancid butter and curry favour (Nattinger & Decarrico, 1992), the tendency for two or more words to co-occur in discourse (Schmitt, 2000), the occurrence of two items in a text within a specific environment (Sinclair et al. 2004, and Lewis, 2000), and the way that words co-occur in natural text in statistically significant ways. Appropriately combining words in a second language is one of the most challenging challenges for foreign/second language learners. Native speakers, as opposed to speakers of second languages, are aware of the appropriate word pairings and how to employ a variety of terms. Being knowledgeable in this area is one of a native speaker's essential skills. "Collocations" are the name given to these word combinations. To sound like a native speaker, collocations must be used correctly (Ellis, 1996), but this is difficult for non-native speakers of a target language (Vasiljevic, 2008).

Collocations are challenging to learn because learners' knowledge of collocations does not increase at the same rate as their knowledge of general vocabulary. Collocations present minimal difficulties in terms of comprehension for second language learners due to their comparatively transparent meaning. In contrast to receptive skills like listening and reading, collocations provide more of a challenge when utilised in productive skills like speaking and writing. Even if students can estimate collocations' meanings during receptive processes, they might not be able to employ them correctly during language reproduction. Therefore, collocation production calls for pedagogical intervention.

According to Nattinger (1992), the meaning of a word is mostly influenced by the other words it collocates with; with the aid of these collocates, the learner is able to retain the words in memory and deduce the meaning from the context with ease. Additionally, he contends that although the concept of collocations is crucial for learning vocabulary, its potential has not been completely realised.

Similar to this, Chan and Liou (2005) indicate that students studying English as a foreign language struggle with collocation use because the teaching of collocations in English foreign language classrooms has not received enough attention. The need of teaching collocations to pupils must be emphasised rather than simply teaching vocabulary as isolated lexical items, which results in lexical incompetence on the side of learners.

Collocational knowledge may be a crucial component in improving the speaking skills of EFL learners, according to several researchers who have shown that collocational control might help language learners talk more fluently (Hsu & Chiu, 2008). Learners will be more effectively understood if they employ collocations. Using phrases, native speakers subconsciously anticipate what will be said. It will be simpler for native speakers to decipher what a non-native speaker is saying if they employ frequently used patterns (collocations), which may also assist to make up for other linguistic shortcomings like pronunciation.

Most researchers concur that various collocations should be positioned along a continuum. They show that it is difficult to distinguish between collocations that are either foreseeable or not solely by relying on the meanings of collocational constituent parts. Semantic transparency, degree of substitutability, and level of productivity are the main factors used to classify various forms of word pairings. The free combinations with the highest levels of productivity, semantic transparency, and substitutability of items for the component parts

are found at one end of the continuum. The idioms that are least useful, have the most ambiguous semantics, and have the least amount of element substitution are on the other end of the spectrum. Different kinds of constrained collocations fall in between these two extremes (Gabrielatos, 1994; Huang, 2001).

Second Language Learners' Difficulties with Collocations

English language experts have cited Harold E. Palmer (1949) who said that vocabulary-related errors make up the majority of errors made by overseas students while writing English essays as one of the most challenging areas of English use. There are about 1,000 frequently used vocabulary terms in English that are unproblematic for native English speakers. On the other hand, this essential vocabulary is the cause of the inability of international students to communicate effectively or correctly in English. Even though students are taught English grammar and vocabulary, Wattanapichet (1999) noted that because different language structures do not adhere to basic grammatical norms and must be studied independently, they are unable to speak or write English as fluently as native speakers. Several elements that might affect how well students produce collocations. The semantic domains, meaning confines, and collocational limits are some of these elements. A lexicon's conceptual field determines its semantic field. The conceptual realms of colour, kinship, and marital interactions are a few examples. A particular lexical item may cause more L1 interference mistakes the more broad its semantic scope. For the goal collocation "run a bookshop," some foreign English language learners sometimes substitute "lead a bookshop." In a same vein, learners have more difficulty constructing a confined collocation the more synonyms an object has. For foreign speakers learning English, frequent verbs like place, go, and take pose severe difficulties. The rich polysemy and intricate syntactic structure of these verbs are mostly to blame.

The impact of the learners' native language is the second component. Different languages contain parallel fixed phrases that are syntactically and semantically identical because certain human circumstances are similar. However, some of the components of these statements vary among languages owing to cultural differences. As a result, separate expressions could result in a poor transfer from the learner's L1.

The third element relates to the collocational proficiency of the students. Foreign students typically lack the necessary proficiency in English collocations. The ESL/EFL learners create a smaller percentage of typical collocations but a larger percentage of unusual combinations as compared to their native-speaker peers. Between their receptive and productive understanding of collocations, the international students experienced a significant gap.

The development of one's vocabulary is crucial to learning a second language, and it is important to take into an account how well one is aware of the various word combinations. In other words, a proper sentence must include agreement between words in addition to proper syntax and lexical meaning; otherwise, it would sound awkward or even make no sense (Phng, 2012).

The primary component of word knowledge concerns how a student uses a term and how they acquire a new word in order to appropriately utilise it in various settings. When using words appropriately, it's crucial to keep in mind that they should not be employed as pre-written sentences or phrases (Hong, 2011).

Additionally, he said that language learners memorise these linguistic chunks and use them while using the language. Language users utilise active chunks and rely on bigger linguistic units like collocations when they wish to communicate their ideas more effectively. It demonstrates how gaining vocabulary serves crucial purposes that are directly tied to using collocations correctly.

Therefore, the purpose of this work was to examine how lexical collocation mistakes affected second-language learners' written communication. By examining the students' written work and understanding, this study also looked at how often learners used collocations.

Literature Review

Numerous academics have examined the importance of collocations in second language acquisition and TEFL (Teaching English as a Foreign Language) (Namvar, 2012; McCarty, 2008; Sadoughvanini, 2012). However, every scholar has looked at collocations from a distinct perspective. When learners attempt to construct acceptable word combinations, they have difficulties because they lack sufficient collocational knowledge, according to empirical investigations on the knowledge of collocations among various groups of ESL or EFL learners (Howarth, 1998). As a result, a lot of scholars have looked at linguistic issues with translating collocations. Others have studied mistake analysis, while others have looked at collocation use and, in another instance, its connection to communication skills in speaking and/or writing.

In a group of EFL high school students, Lin (2002) examined the effects of collocation training on high achievers and poor achievers' receptive and productive collocation ability. The findings showed that all students improved more on receptive than on productive assessments, although poor achievers improved on productive tests following collocation instruction. Both groups had favourable opinions of the collocation teaching exercises.

Sung (2003) examined how well-versed overseas students who were attending a university in the Pittsburgh region used and knew English lexical collocations in connection to their speaking abilities. Her study included 24 native English speakers and a total of 72 non-native English speakers. Her findings revealed a substantial relationship between the respondents' speaking ability and their lexical collocation knowledge.

In their (2006) study, Koosh and Jafarpour looked at how concordance materials and Data-Driven Learning (DDL) affect the collocation of prepositions. Their research suggested a novel method for teaching collocations utilising concordance information, such as DDL. They also reach the conclusion that learners' problems with spoken and written output are not caused by a lack of grammatical or lexical knowledge, but rather by a lack of understanding of the words that go with it, or the collocation.

Koc (2006) looked into the extent to which students' collocational awareness was increased by explicit instruction of vocabulary in collocations using various strategies and if such instruction improved vocabulary retention. The quantitative data results demonstrated that collocation-based vocabulary education improved vocabulary memory. According to this study's findings, it is strongly advised to explicitly teach vocabulary in collocations using a variety of strategies in order to improve vocabulary retention and collocational competency.

In order to determine how vocabulary instruction and collocations might support students' writing skills, Seesink (2007) researched these topics. He understood that emphasising collocations improved the pupils' performance. Arab, Chinese, Japanese, and Korean participants were present. Collocation was taught to students via an online course. But in her study, she withheld information on the kind of collocations that learners employed and found challenging.

Mongkolchai (2008) also considered how well-versed in English collocations university students were. The Jesuits demonstrated that pupils were most proficient with the noun plus noun pattern, whereas they were least proficient with the adverb + adjective pattern. Inadequate grasp of English collocations, negative transfer from Thai, the students' use of synonyms as a technique, and other factors were all explained by the students' mistakes.

Rahimi and Momeni (2012) investigated the impact of vocabulary instruction on language competency using collocation and concordance methodologies. The findings indicated that vocabulary instruction has an impact on the development of language proficiency, and that vocabulary instruction, whether done through conventional methods like translation, explanation, and definition, or through the more recent trend of teaching words in collocations, can result in a significant improvement in language proficiency.

Collocational Error Analysis

Error Analysis has aided in the understanding of error as a source of information that may be exploited to enhance second language output, rather than just an unwelcome phenomenon in language. The faults that are discovered in writing can provide light on the writing process and help us comprehend the strategies used by non-native speakers. Therefore, by comprehending these error patterns, various ways to enhance writing in a second language may be devised, and many problems such as the cognitive processes of language creation may be considered when examining errors.

The first significant topic covered in this essay is mistake detection. By correctly identifying mistakes, one may determine their sources and the procedures used during language development. The nature of mistakes has been the topic of several research, but few have examined the capacity to recognise and understand errors in a second language (Rifkin & Roberts, 1995; Carrió Pastor, 2004; Hamid, 2007; Mestre, 2011). Second language mistakes have a variety of reasons, which is another important aspect of this study. Interlingual errors, which result from interference between the first and second languages, can typically be divided into two categories: intralingual errors, which can occur regardless of mother tongue and are the result of learning process deficiencies (James, 1998; Larsen-Freeman & Long, 1992). We add a third category to this well-known division: conceptual mistakes, which result from the speaker's failure to match an idea with the appropriate expression, or from a breakdown of the concept-term link. We believe that in addition to errors brought on by the mother tongue's interference or shortcomings in second language acquisition, which may pertain to linguistic and sociocommunicative features, a third reason for errors might be due to cognitive, or conceptual, components of language production. This third reason may provide an explanation for a number of mistakes brought on by a false understanding of the connection between a picture, a notion, and a phrase. In order to identify one concept

with many terms if they speak multiple languages, speakers of a second language need be aware that words are only representations of concepts. While we use synonyms in our native tongue, this truth is obvious enough, but while learning a second language, this relationship is not consistently used.

Lexical mistakes are the subject of the second problem. According to Webber (1993), lexical mistakes caused by influence from the mother tongue are the most frequent sources of errors in non-native English speakers. More recent research (Carrió, 2004; Carrió, 2009; Carrió & Mestre, 2010) reveal that lexical and grammatical structures are the most challenging elements to accurately replicate in a second language in the different phases of language learning, which further emphasises the significance of lexicon. These studies concur that errors should no longer be seen negatively but rather as a chance for progress, and they acknowledge the importance of the research of lexical errors in the understanding of second language acquisition (Carrió, 2004).

According to Krishnamurthy and Kosem (2007), the creation of a corpus of lexical mistakes might make it easier to comprehend the conceptual implications of second language acquisition, student growth and development, and course and material design. In order to understand why the notion being sought to be communicated is not universal and instead depends on cultural concepts, a corpus of lexical mistakes may be compiled. Multiple ideas of reality may be seen in language, and these concepts are expressed via the prism of beliefs, society, and linguistic traditions. When languages are present, this variety increases much more. The classification and causes of errors' third significant factor. Lexical mistakes are often categorised either on formal, vocabulary-related factors or from a semantic standpoint. The most well-known formal categorization of lexical mistakes is mis-selection (choosing the wrong term), misformation (using words that don't exist in the L2 but do in the L1 or vice versa), and distortion (using words that don't exist in the L2 and the L1 simultaneously). There are two primary categories of semantic mistakes in lexical constructions: collocational mistakes and misunderstanding of sense connections, which refer to the incorrect usage of one word with another. The desire to identify the reasons behind the errors made in an L2 by scientific researchers led to the interest in categorization for the current work. By doing this, the element that causes them may be identified, and we may be able to identify whether cognitive factors are involved.

In this sense, the goals of this study are to first develop a corpus of specialised lexical errors that occur in scientific texts written by non-native English speakers; second, identify lexical errors and their primary causes in order to produce guidelines that can help improve written production; and third, conduct a literature review on the subject; To propose a new categorization of lexical mistakes, taking into account the conceptual component in lexical production that occasionally results in the improper relations made by the second language writer when creating the error, as a result of the aforementioned goals.

Conclusion

The categorization of mistakes made by Spanish writers when using English as a lingua franca for the publication of research in international journals was the primary goal, which supplied the inspiration for this study. In the past, mistakes have been classified as either grammatical or semantic errors from a linguistic viewpoint, or as interlingual or intralingual errors from a pedagogic standpoint, taking into account the effect of the mother tongue or the language acquisition process. This study, however, has focused on conceptual mistakes, which are a new category of cognitive error. The researcher considered this to be a negative condition. On the exam of collocation creation, the pupils at this level did not do well. As a result, after graduating from any school, students who already have a limited understanding of collocation do not statistically improve on that understanding. They don't appear to learn collocations in writing, and it also appears that they have forgotten part of the language they knew in the beginning. So it makes sense that teaching pupils more lexical collocations will improve their writing skills. In order to boost the teaching of collocations and incorporate the concept into their classroom practise, language instructors might add collocation to their syllabuses. Without a question, having access to appropriate resources for learning about lexical collocations is crucial for both language teachers and students of English as a second language. The textbooks and collocational dictionaries were the researchers' top three recommendations for teaching and studying collocations. First, language instructors might utilise textbooks to help students learn about collocations and assist them in becoming aware of them in a classroom setting.

Additionally, dictionaries can help English language learners who are working on their collocational knowledge. Language instructors should expose students to various collocational dictionaries and educate them how to utilise them effectively, particularly in English writing classes. It will aid students in developing strong collocational competence and teaching them how to pick up new collocations on their own.

According to Richards and Rogers (2001), classroom instruction should "draw students' attention to lexical collocations and try to enhance their retention and use of collocations". Therefore, language teachers should expose their pupils to more collocations in order to teach them how to utilise them properly and eventually prepare them to learn collocations on their own in the future. Therefore, putting a focus on collocations in the classroom may be a workable and efficient method for instructors to enhance their students' language proficiency.

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