An Investigation into the problems of Understanding and Using Collocations among Sudanese EFL University Students

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Abstract:

This study aims at investigating the problems of understanding and using Collocations that encounter Sudanese 3rd year EFL students majoring in English language at Sudan University of Science and Technology.

The study follows the descriptive analytical method and the data was collected via two instruments, a test for the students consisting of collocations and how to collocate, beside a questionnaire for EFL teachers, who work have been teaching English for years. The two data collection instruments have been verified, piloted, classified and analyzed thoroughly via SPSS.

The study concludes too many findings and provides some recommendations and suggestion.

The study has reached the following results: there are notably problems facing EFL Sudanese university students understanding and using collocations, collocations help improving EFL students' proficiency, collocations enhance students' ability of expression and give them alternatives of vocabulary choice and develop their receptive and productive skills. Finally, the study suggested some recommendations and further studies in the light of the findings.

Key words: collocations, EFL, FLL

INTRODUCTION

Learning collocations is an important part of learning the vocabulary of a language. Some collocations are fixed, or very strong, for example take a photo, where no word other than take collocates with photo to give the same meaning. Some collocations are more open, where several different words may be used to give a similar meaning, for example keep to/ stick to the rules. Here are some more examples of collocations.

You must make an effort and study for your exams (NOT de an effort) Did you watch TV last night? (NOT look at TV) This car has a very powerful engine. It can do 200 km an hour. (NOT strong engine) There are some ancient monuments nearby. (NOT antique monuments)

Sometimes, a pair of words may not be absolutely wrong, and people will understand what is meant, but it may not be the natural, normal collocation. If someone says / did a few mistakes they will be understood, but a fluent speaker of English would probably say I made a few mistakes.

Collocations have been recognized as one of the ways that differentiate native speakers and foreign language learners. If a non-native speaker wants to help someone, she/he will say, "Can I help you?" whereas a native speaker will say, "Can I give you a hand?"(Salkauskiene,2012).

English is full of collocations, recurrent combinations of words that co-occur more often than expected by chance. Why do we say 'last year' and not 'last hour'? And why do we go somewhere 'by car' or 'by train' but 'on foot'? The reason is 'collocation'. " Knowing the meaning of a word not only requires knowing its dictionary definition; one must also know the type of words with which it is often associated. Collocations, either fixed or more flexible, are the result of many years of habitual use by fluent speakers of the English" (Prodromou,2004). It is believed that automation of collocations helps native speakers

to express themselves fluently since it provides 'chunks' of English that are ready to use. Second and foreign language learners, however, because of lacking this automation, may make non-native errors when producing utterances. In order to achieve native-like competence and fluency, second and foreign language learners need to be aware that an important part of language acquisition is the ability to comprehend and produce collocations as unanalyzed chunks. Both learners and teachers of the English realize how complicated the area of collocation is. Lewis (2000) encourages teachers to raise students' awareness of collocations and to initiate their own action research to make sure the changes they make are of benefit to students. The purpose of this study is to investigate the different views regarding definition and classification of collocations, the importance of teaching collocation, the main sources of collocational errors and to suggest some methodologies and materials for teaching collocation in ESL/EFL classrooms.

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. However, it is not possible to discuss all of these perspectives in this essay. Therefore the researcher mentions some basic and general views regarding collocation in this section.

Collocation, originated from the field of lexicon studies, it is a term defined and understood in many different ways (Bahns, 1993). Generally, there were two different sides of assertions about this term. One of them argued that collocation was related to meaning; the other argued that collocation was not a semantic relation between words.

McIntosh (1961) took Firth's viewpoint into further discussion. He added the notion of ranges, which meant, as Palmer (1976) defined, that a word might be used with a whole set of words that had some semantic features in common. An

example of a range was the list of nouns, such as *metal, iron*, and *lava*, which might be qualified by the adjective *molten*. In McIntosh's opinion, words have only a certain tolerance of compatibility. Such knowledge of ranges helps to distinguish the acceptable collocations from unacceptable ones. (ibid). Similar to McIntosh (1961) and Palmer (1976), Bolinger and Sears (1981) also mentioned that the ranges and variety of collocations are enormous. They regarded collocation as "a kind of habitual association of words" and asserted that collocations resulted from native speakers' experiences of the expressions, repeated again and again in certain given circumstances. Therefore, depending on the context, the collocations, like *good chance*, *high probability*, and *strong likelihood*, might be considered acceptable, but the collocations like *strong chance*, *good probability*, and *high likelihood*, unacceptable. Based on Lewis' idea, "collocations are those combinations of words which occur naturally with greater than random frequency. Collocations co-occur, but not all words which co-occur, are collocations" (Lewis, 1997, p.44).Collocation also has been defined as a habitual association of words that co-occur with mutual expectancy. In other words, the collocations, like *rancid butter*, *great probability* and *drug addict* are words or phrases which are arbitrary (Nattinger & DeCarrico,1992,p.56).

Sinclair (1966), in a volume of papers in memory of Firth, showed an interest in generating lexical sets by the use of collocation. For Sinclair, grammar and lexis are two different aspects. Grammar can be described by structures (syntagms) and systems (paradigms), while the second one is lexical items collocating with one another-collocations and sets respectively. According to Sinclair, collocation refers to as the co-occurrence of two words, but this co-occurrence is not indicative of two words occurring as a small fixed grammatical set. Instead, it has two important features. First, there may be several or

many words between the two relevant items or the two relevant items may even occur over sentence boundaries.

Second, collocation is independent of grammatical types. In other words, collocation is not analyzed by grammatical structures. The examples "*he argued strongly*," "*the strength of his argument*," "*his argument was strengthened*" illustrate a constant relationship between the two words (Sinclair, 1966, p.42). On the other hand, however, some researchers held different views from the above scholars' opinions. For example, McCarthy considered the notion of collocation as a kind of cohesive device. He claimed that collocation refers to the probability that lexical items will co-occur, and is not a semantic relation between words. (McCarthy, 1991, p. 65).Such opinion suggests that collocation serves other function besides meaning in the sentences. Another instance was Aghbar's (1990) proclamation. He proposed that the notion of collocation is not raised creatively for the first time; in fact, people have a memory of having heard or seen these constructions before and use them as such. Moreover, Halliday and Hasan (1976 cited in AL-Zahrani, 1998) defined collocations from the aspect of discourse. They defined collocations as "cohesive effect of pairs of words", such as flame...candle, king...crown and hair...comb (AL-Zahrani, 1998, p.19). They proposed that these patterns would generate a cohesive force if they occur in an adjacent sentence (ibid).Regarding collocations, however, there is a general definition: "collocations are loosely fixed, arbitrary recurrent word combinations and the meaning of the whole do reflect the meaning of the parts. *Pure chance, to commit murder*, *close attention*, and *keen competition* share the features of this category" (Benson et al., 1986b, p.23). They have also categorized collocations into two categories: lexical and grammatical collocations which will be discussed in the following.

The Categorization of Collocations

Words can be combined in numerous ways to form meaningful groups if those words are not restricted. That is what makes it hard to clarify the notion of collocation. Among these possible combinations of words, some are fixed and others are more loose. In order to attain a clearer understanding of collocation, it is necessary to draw a distinction among collocations, idioms, and other kinds of word combinations (Bahns, 1993; Wang, 2001; Wu, 1996), though these combinations are quite similar to one another, even, in a sense, belonging to the category of collocations(ibid). Wood (1981) adopted both semantic and syntactic criteria for distinguishing collocations from idioms, colligations, and free combinations. In Wood's point of view, an idiom is fully non-compositional and non-productive, while a free combination is fully compositional and productive. "Collocation is the way one word co-occurs with another word, colligation is the way one word regularly co-occurs with a particular grammatical pattern; so for example some verbs typically occur with a particular tense, or a noun might typically appear preceded by a personal pronoun, rather than an article, such as "pass my/your driving test, It's my/your/our responsibility to..., but I'll take the responsibility for" and etc (Wood, 1981, p.87).

Based on Howarth's model, there are four categories of word combinations:

(a) Free combinations: The meaning of a free combination is interpreted from the literal meaning of individual elements, such as *drink tea*.

(b) Restricted collocations: A restricted collocation is more limited in the selection of compositional elements and usually has one component used in a specialized context, such as *perform a task*.

(c) Figurative idioms: A figurative idiom has a metaphorical meaning as a whole that can somehow tell it's literal interpretation, such as *do a U-turn*.

(d) Pure idioms: A pure idiom is a single unit whose meaning is totally unpredictable from the meaning of it's components, such as *blow the gaff*.

Besides, Benson et al. (1986b) distinguished collocations from other combinations of words such as compounds, idioms, transitional combinations (transitional collocations), and free combinations. The following is the summary of the five types of word combinations, listed from the most fixed combination to the freest one.

1. **Compounds**: The most fixed word combinations, are completely frozen, and no variations at all are possible. The instances of nominal compounds are: *floppy disk* and *aptitude test*, and an illustration of compound verb (or phrasal verb) is *break through*.

2. **Idioms**: Idioms refer to relatively frozen expressions whose meanings do not reflect the meanings of their component parts. The illustrations of idioms are: *to kill two birds with one stone*, *to kick the bucket*, *to spill the beans*, and so on.

3. **Transitional combinations:** The combinations whose meanings are close to their component parts, regarded as more frozen and less variable than collocations. Instances of such are: *for old time's sake*, *the facts of life*, *to be in a tight spot*, and the like.

4. **Collocations**: They are loosely fixed, arbitrary recurrent word combinations and the meaning of the whole do reflect the meaning of the parts. *Pure chance*, *to commit murder*, *close attention,* and *keen competition* share the features of this category.

5. **Free combinations:** Free combinations are taken as the least cohesive of all combinations. Their components are the freest in regard to being combined with other lexical items.

The typical combinations of this sort are: *to recall an adventure* (an event, an accident) and *to analyze* (report, investigate) *a murder.*

Echoing what Benson et al. (1986b) attested, Bahns (1993) also admitted that, different from idioms, the main characteristics of collocations are that their meanings reflect the meaning of their constituent parts, and that, in comparison with free combination, they are used frequently, spring to mind readily, and are psychologically salient. In other words, "there are transitional areas between free combinations and collocations, and between collocations and idioms". (Cruse, 1986, p. 41).

Sinclair (1991) divided collocation into two kinds-downward collocation and upward collocation. Different from Benson et al., Sinclair made use of two terms to classify collocations. One was the term "node," which was employed to stand for the word studied; the other was the term "collocate," used to represent any word occurring in the specified environment of a node. Based on Sinclair's claim, when A is" node" and B is "collocate"-collocation of A with a less frequent word B, it is called downward collocation, which contribute 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. The examples of this type are "*on purpose*", "*by accident*", "*with caution*", etc. In this kind of collocation, "the words tend to be the elements of grammatical frames, or superordinates"(Sinclair,1991,p.116).

Moreover, Lewis (1997) claims that generally, collocations can be classified into four groups: strong, weak,

frequent, and infrequent. The distinction between strong and weak collocations is based on their fixedness and restriction, where as the distinction between frequent and infrequent ones is on the basis of their frequency of co-occurrence in a corpus. The strong collocations such as *drink beer, drug addict*, are recognized as tightly linked phrases which function like single word. While weak ones like *a nice day* or a *good chance* are combined with two common words, and each of which may occur with other words? Collocations furthermore can be any combination of strong and frequent, strong and infrequent, weak and frequent or infrequent (ibid).

STATEMENTS OF THE PROBLEM

Vocabulary learning, especially collocations are now a matter of wide- ranging discussion among educators, teachers and researcher. Collocations usually put foreign language learners in a hot water in both oral and written context. On the other hand, syllable designers and language teachers find it difficult to develop effective materials and teach them effectively so that they relegate collocations to have a subsidiary place in syllabus. Also unconvincing research findings in this area of study and lack of clear answers as to how to teach and learn collocations (Collis, 1987). All in all, to resolve, at least partly, the above-cited problems, in the present study the researcher has developed a test consisting of collocations to have a deep insight into the problems investigated as well as a questionnaire for ELT teachers at different universities who have the enough experience about figuring out such problem.

QUESTIONS OF THE STUDY

This study raises many important questions to be answered, these questions are as follow:

1. To what extent are Sudanese EFL university students aware of understanding and using collocations?
2. To what extent are Sudanese EFL university students have problems dealing with collocations?
3. What is the notion behind the difficulties that encounter Sudanese EFL university students understanding and using collocations?

HYPOTHESES OF THE STUDY

H1 To some extent Sudanese EFL students are not aware of understanding and using collocations.
H2 To some extent Sudanese EFL students have problems dealing with collocations.
H3 there are many reasons behind the difficulties of understanding and using collocations.

METHODOLOGY

The study follows the descriptive analytical method. This section describes the methods used for data collection. It particularly presents the target subject, study instruments and procedures for data collection. Then it goes further to present tools, reliability and validity. It also illustrates the steps used in the study and concludes with a summary. In order to collect the data the study uses both a test for the students and questionnaire(for EFL teachers) to examine a random sample of the 3rd year students majoring in English at Sudan University of Science and Technology, faculty of Education and faculty of Languages.

Population of the study
The population of this study consists of students 3rd year in the department of English Language at faculty of Education and

faculty of Languages at Sudan University of Science and Technology as well as English language teachers from different Sudanese universities at Khartoum locality. Subject's data which this study used to analyze were collected from 200 students from both gender of English language Department at Sudan University of Science and Technology, faculty of Education and faculty of Languages.

The Sample of the study:

The total number of students included in the test was 100 students. The experiment sample amounts to 200 students in the first level who are randomly chosen to undergo a test investigating the problems of understanding and using collocations. students were classified as pre-intermediate EFL learners.

Instrument for Data Analysis

In this study, two types of tools are used to gather the required data and information from the subject of this study. These two tools are: a test for the students and a questionnaire for teachers to enhance the overall outcomes. Both the test and the questionnaire processed through the statistical package of Social Sciences (SPSS) to conclude to the findings.

What is meant by a collocation?

A collocation is a pair or group of words that are often used together. These combinations sound natural to native speakers, but students of English have to make a special effort to learn them because they are often difficult to guess. Some combinations just sound 'wrong to native speakers of English. For example, the adjective fast collocates with cars, but not with a glance. English Collocations in Use (Michael McCarthy Felicity O'Dell).

Reasons behind the difficulties of understanding and using collocations

There are several reasons behind the problems of understanding and using collocations, these problems have been pointed out through many studies and by many researchers. researchers discovered that the difficulties and errors resulted from analogy, overgeneralization, paraphrase, interlingual transfer, intralingual transfer, and shortage of collocational knowledge (Bahns & Eldaw, 1993; Channel, 1981; Ellis, 1985; Farghal & Obiedat, 1995; Liu, 1999a, 1999b, 2000b). For instance, Bahns and Eldaw (1993) proclaimed that many EFL students' collocation errors were caused by their L1 interference. Similar conclusion was made by Farghal and Obiedat (1995).They noted that the students who did not know a specific collocation tended to resort to the strategies such as synonym, paraphrasing, avoidance, and transfer. In addition, a series of studies conducted by Liu (1999a, 1999b, 2000b) revealed that the same strategies were used by EFL students in producing collocations, either acceptable or unacceptable, in their writings. To begin with, in the study of Chinese college freshmen's collocational competence, Liu (1999b) found that the EFL students had difficulties in producing acceptable collocation. He further concluded that the causes of producing unacceptable English collocations were mostly attributed to the lack of the concept of collocation and interlingual transfer. The results of the study have been summarized as follows:

1. Lack of collocational concept: Some students only understood the basic meaning of the word but did not know which word it would go with. Thus, they were not competent to produce any collocation.

2. Direct translation: Some students remembered only the Chinese translation of the word. Therefore, they relied on direct translation to produce collocations (e.g. *learn knowledge instead of gain knowledge or absorb knowledge).

3. Ignorance of rule restrictions: Some students did not know that some collocational restrictions were based wholly on the meaning of the word and range; others did not take grammar into consideration. As a result, they produced grammatically unacceptable collocations (e.g. *few knowledge instead of little knowledge).

4. Lack of knowledge of collocational properties: Many students did not understand the potential collocational properties of the words they knew. Take the word *good* for example. It could be assumed that most students knew the collocation *a good boy*, but few students generated the collocation *a good knowledge.*

Moreover, in Liu's (1999a) another analysis of collocational errors in EFL writings, with fourteen types of lexical and grammatical collocational errors studied in the students' compositions and examination papers, six sources of errors were found. Among them, a small number of errors resulted from word coinage and approximation belonged to communication strategies, while the majority of the errors were attributable to negative interlingual transfer. Four kinds of intralingual transfer-overgeneralization, ignorance of rule restrictions, false concepts hypothesized, and the use of synonyms belonged to cognitive strategies. The strategies concluded in Liu's (1999a) study were further accounted for as follows:

1. Negative interlingual transfer: Some collocational errors were caused by direct translation. Although phrases, like "*listen his advice" and "*wait your phone call," are understandable when they were translated back into Chinese, they were not acceptable English collocations. Being intransitive verbs, listen and wait could not be directly followed by a noun. The rule does not exist in Chinese, however.

2. Ignorance of rule restrictions: Analogy and failure to observe the restrictions of existing structures were at times the reasons why students produced unacceptable collocations. For example, "to *make Joyce surprise" was a false analogy of the construction verb + object + infinitive (e.g. "make Joyce surprised").

3. False concept hypothesized: Students had misconceptions about the verbs such as make, do, and take. Some students might think that these words were de-lexicalized verbs, thus they could be substituted for one another freely. For instance, students had used "*do plans" instead of "make plans."

4. Overgeneralization: Students used overgeneralization when the items did not carry any obvious contrast to them. It was the creation of one deviant structure in place of two regular structures on the basis of students' experience of the target language. For example, instead of using "am used to taking," students had used the collocation "*am used to take," which was a combination of "am used to something" and "used to take."

5. Use of synonyms: Students used "*receive other people's opinion" instead of "accept other people's opinions." It was taken as a straightforward application of the open choice principle.

6. Word coinage and approximation: Word coinage was a type of paraphrase employed to make up a new word in order to communicate the desired concept. The instance of the collocational errors resulted from word coinage was "to *see sun-up" (instead of "to see the sunrise"). On the other hand, approximation was another type of paraphrase. It was the use of an incorrect vocabulary item or structure, which shares enough semantic features in common with the desired item to satisfy the speakers. For example, the word middle in "*middle exam" was used to mean mid-term in "midterm exam."

Furthermore, in another study on students' strategy used in producing lexical collocations, Liu (2000) mentioned seven types of strategies that EFL students might use in their writing, inclusive of observable actions and unobservable mental process. The followings are the seven types of strategies.

1. Retrieval: It means the students' ability to recall collocations from their memory. Without understanding the notion that language does not consist of words but of chunks, many students have no intention to store collocations in their memory. Consequently, they often fail in searching for the proper collocations they need when they communicate in either speaking or writing.

2. Literal translation: Students tend to transfer the thought word-for-word from L1 to L2 when not succeeding in finding stored collocations. They take the strategy of literal translation to produce either acceptable or unacceptable collocations.

3. Approximate translation: Approximate translation is a process of paraphrasing the thought from L1 to L2. Sometimes students rely on their intuition to create collocations of their own and choose approximate translation as another strategy other than literal translation.

4. Use of de-lexicalized verbs: Students are inclined to use de-lexicalized words (e.g. do, take, make, and keep) carelessly and substitute one for another casually in their writing. Owing to linguistic deficiencies, intermediate EFL students often consider de-lexicalized verbs as words that have little or no meaning outside the context of particular use

5. Use of synonyms: It is the using of synonyms that students solve L2 lexical problems when they encounter the collocations that they are not able to bring out. Nevertheless, more often, they produce erroneous collocations as a result of the insufficient collocational information of the synonyms they use.

6. Appeal to authority: When students are unable to find the right collocation to use, they would like to ask a native speaker or consult a dictionary for the answer. However, if their problems would be solved depended on what kind of dictionary they usually used and whether they could find the answer in a dictionary.

7. Appeal for assistance: Learners have a tendency to depend on others for guidance and instruction. Chances are that most of the time the poor writers are the ones seek advice from.

Regarding the negative effect of L1, the results of the study conducted by Koosha and Jafarpour (2006) also confirmed the influence of L1 on acquiring collocation of prepositions by Iranian EFL adult learners. Furthermore, Namvar et al.'s research also analyzed the collocations in the Iranian postgraduate students' writings and found that negative transfer is a common phenomenon among Iranian language learners. In other words, first language influence appears to have a strong effect on the learners' production of collocational errors.

The Importance of Collocations in EFL Classrooms

According to Benson et al.(1985),collocations are arbitrary and unpredictable" and that makes it difficult for non-native speaker to cope with them. Despite the arbitrary nature of collocations, it is recommended by many other researchers that teachers should motivate their students to learn collocations.

According to Cowie (1992), English collocation is important in receptive as well as productive language competence. Similar assertion was made by Carter and McCarthy (1988). In their opinion, English collocations are useful not only for English comprehension but for English production. They claimed that by memorizing collocational

groups, students would have the idea about certain lexical restrictions. Most importantly, "collocations teach students expectations about which sorts of language can follow from what has preceded. Students will not have to go about reconstructing the language each time they want to say something but instead can use these collocations as pre-packaged building blocks" (Carter & McCarthy,1988, p. 75). Moreover, it can be said that "collocation has emerged as an important category of lexical patterning and it is fast becoming an established unit of description in language teaching courses and materials" (Woolard, 2000, p.28). Liu (2000a) also stated that the more often students are taught English collocations, the more correctly students can make use of collocations. Such declaration was supported by Lin (2002), while investigating the effects of collocation instruction on students' English vocabulary developments. Lin (2002) found that students made progress in producing collocations after receiving collocation instruction. Here a review of three of the most common arguments stressing the importance of developing collocational knowledge of language learners is presented.

1. Language Knowledge Requires Collocational Knowledge

Collocations are everywhere. "Collocations are found in up to 70% of everything we say, hear, read, or write" (Hill, 2000,p.53).Collocation highlights the strong patterning that exists in language and shows that a word-by-word approach cannot satisfactorily account for meaning in a text. Nation writes that the strongest position is that language knowledge is collocational knowledge because the stored sequences of words are the bases of learning, knowledge and use (Nation, 2001,p. 321).

2. Efficient Language Acquisition Requires Collocational Knowledge

It is generally accepted that language is acquired faster and more efficiently when learned in 'chunks', such as set phrases or routines (Ellis, 2001, p.67). There is a substantial psycholinguistic evidence which supports this. Based on Schmitt's belief, "lexical phrases in language reflect the way the mind tends to 'chunk' language in order to make it easier to process"(Schmitt,2000,p.78). Aitchison states there are powerful and long-lasting links between words in the mind (Aitchison, 1987, p.79). In first language acquisition young children acquire language in chunks even it is claimed for producing collocational constructions, they could not have learned from their parents (Pinker, 2007, p.55). Gleason states that 'working on the second language acquisition indicates that the second language learners begin not so much with generative systems as with chunks, prefabricated routines, or unopened packages'(Gleason, 1982, p.355). In a comparative study of L1 and L2 English speakers, Conklin and Schmitt (2008) found that what they term 'formulaic sequences' were read more quickly than non-formulaic sequences by both groups of participants, supporting the assertion that such chunks 'have a processing advantage over creatively generated language' (Conklin & Schmitt,2008, p.72).

All of the above evidences appear to support the view that collocations are organized in the mind in some way to enable more efficient language processing, for both language reception and language production.

3. Fluent Language Use Requires Collocational Knowledge

A third reason cited supporting the teaching of collocation is that fluent and appropriate language use requires collocational knowledge. According to Pawley and Syder:

"Memorized clauses and clause-sequences form a high proportion of the fluent stretches of speech heard in everyday conversation … Speakers show a high degree of fluency when describing familiar experiences or activities in familiar phrases …We believe that memorized sentences and phrases are the normal building blocks of fluent spoken discourse". (Pawley & Syder, 1983, p.208).

There have been several studies which support this position. Towell, Hawkins and Bazergui (1996) in a study of learners of French as a second language found that increased fluency resulted from learners storing memorized sequences. Sung (2003), in a study of international students in the USA, found a significant correlation between the knowledge of lexical collocations and the subjects' speaking proficiency as did Hsu and Chiu (2008) in a study of Taiwanese EFL learners. The three positions summarized stressing the importance of teaching collocation in ESL/EFL classrooms. Accepting that collocation should be taught to ESL/EFL learners, we need to consider how this might best be done.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Students' Test

The test of idioms and collocations was given more emphasis because the students were the major target of the study and the investigation of their knowledge, problems of understanding and using idiomatic expressions and collocations were the vocal objectives of the present study. The researcher adapted for this purpose, a 50 item test in which 25 items on idiomatic expressions and 25 items on collocations.

The test was widely selected to assess the student's knowledge of idiomatic expressions and collocation. The questions were meant to cover the different levels of English idioms and collocations such as lexical, semantic and syntactic

levels. Some of the tests' questions try to trace the impact of the students' native idiomatic expressions on their understanding of the English idiomatic expressions. Contextual clues were given with some idiomatic expressions while, some idiomatic expressions provided without contextual clues in order to test student's knowledge of idiomatic expressions.

Cranach's alpha method: -

Where reliability was calculated using Cranach's alpha equation shown below:

$$\text{Reliability coefficient} = \frac{n}{N-1} * \frac{1 - \text{Total variations questions}}{\text{variation college grades}}$$

Cranach alpha coefficient = (0.77), a reliability coefficient is high and it indicates the stability of the scale and the validity of the study.

Validity coefficient is the square of the islands so reliability coefficient is (0.88), and this shows that there is a high sincerity of the scale and that the benefit of the study.

The questionnaire:

The aim of the questionnaire used in this research was to find out about the teachers' views regarding teaching and learning of idiomatic expressions and collocations, and it is also relevant directly to the questions and hypothesis of the study. It was administered to a total sample of 40 ELT teachers at some Sudanese universities. It consisted of two parts the first part contained personal information about the participant. The second part contained 15 statements related to teachers' views about idiomatic expressions and collocations, problems of understanding and using them,

The scale used in the questionnaire was five-point Likert scale to show the expected responses from participants, five codes were given to the statement as follows:

1=Strongly Agree,

2=Agree,

3=Neutral,

4=Disagree

5=Strongly Disagree,

The table below illustrates chi-square test results for respondents' answers about the statements:

NO	Statements	Chi-square value	df	Sig	Median	Interpretation
1-	Idioms are important for EFL learners in communication context.	41.000	3	0.000	5.00	strongly agree
2-	Grammatical and syntactical restrictions of idioms may affect the degree of idiomaticity of lexical items.	31.400	3	0.000	4.00	agree
3-	Using idiomatic expressions helps EFL learners to achieve the expected level of proficiency in English language.	36.500	4	0.000	5.00	strongly agree
4-	EFL students are not aware of using contextual pragmatic clues to understand idioms whose meaning can't be inferred from the individual word meaning.	12.600	3	0.000	4.00	agree
5-	Idioms knowledge has crucial role in EFL students' level of proficiency in receptive and productive skills.	38.250	4	0.000	5.00	strongly agree
6-	Idioms are difficult to understand because of the lack of the cultural background behind the idiom.	45.200	3	0.000	5.00	strongly agree
7-	Using and understanding idioms are difficult for EFL learners at university level.	34.250	4	0.000	4.00	agree
8-	Idioms are difficult because they are not well taught in classes.	34.250	4	0.000	4.00	agree
9-	Collocations play an important role in the process of language learning and teaching.	10.400	2	0.000	4.50	agree
10-	Collocations help improving EFL learners' fluency.	23.800	3	0.000	4.00	agree
11-	Having knowledge about collocations is very important for EFL learners.	19.800	3	0.000	4.50	strongly agree
12-	EFL learners' L1 may affect students' use of appropriate collocation.	13.050	2	0.000	4.00	agree
13-	Only teachers who have a clear understanding of different kinds of collocation can help learners understand and use collocations.	15.600	2	0.000	4.00	agree
14-	EFL learners should be equipped with skills that enable them to develop their collocation knowledge independently.	23.000	3	0.000	4.00	agree
15-	Collocations are effective in improving EFL students' multi-cultural competence.	10.850	2	0.000	5.00	strongly agree

The results of table (4.67) above were interpreted as follows:

1. The value of chi – square calculated to signify the differences between the numbers of individuals of the study for the statement Idioms are important for EFL learners in communication context was (41.000) with P-value (0.000) which is lower than the level of significant value (5%) These refer to the existence of differences statistically.

2. The value of chi – square calculated to signify the differences between the numbers of individuals of the study for the statement Grammatical and syntactical restrictions of idioms may affect the degree of idiomaticity of lexical items was (31.400) with P-value (0.000) which is lower than the level of significant value (5%) These refer to the existence of differences statistically.

3. The value of chi – square calculated to signify the differences between the numbers of individuals of the study for the statement Using idiomatic expressions helps EFL learners to achieve the expected level of proficiency in English language was (36.500) with P-value (0.000) which is lower than the level of significant value (5%) These refer to the existence of differences statistically.

4. The value of chi – square calculated to signify the differences between the numbers of individuals of the study for the statement EFL students are not aware of using contextual pragmatic clues to understand idioms whose meaning can't be inferred from the individual word meaning was (12.600) with P-value (0.000) which is lower than the level of significant value (5%) These refer to the existence of differences statistically.

5. The value of chi – square calculated to signify the differences between the numbers of individuals of the study for the statement Idioms knowledge has crucial role in EFL students' level of proficiency in receptive and productive skills was (38.250) with P-value (0.000) which is lower than the level of significant value (5%) These refer to the existence of differences statistically.

6. The value of chi – square calculated to signify the differences between the numbers of individuals of the study for the statement Idioms are difficult to understand because of the lack of the cultural background behind the idiom was (45.200) with P-value (0.000) which is lower than the level of significant value (5%) These refer to the existence of differences statistically.

7. The value of chi – square calculated to signify the differences between the numbers of individuals of the study for the statement Using and understanding idioms are difficult for EFL learners at university level was (34.250) with P-value (0.000) which is lower than the level of significant value (5%) These refer to the existence of differences statistically.

8. The value of chi – square calculated to signify the differences between the numbers of individuals of the study for the statement Idioms are difficult because they are not well taught in classes was (34.250) with P-value (0.000) which is lower than the level of significant value (5%) These refer to the existence of differences statistically.

9. The value of chi – square calculated to signify the differences between the numbers of individuals of the study for the statement Collocations play an important role in the process of language learning and teaching was (10.400) with P-value (0.000) which is lower than

the level of significant value (5%) These refer to the existence of differences statistically.

10. The value of chi – square calculated to signify the differences between the numbers of individuals of the study for the statement Collocations help improving EFL learners' fluency was (23.800) with P-value (0.000) which is lower than the level of significant value (5%) These refer to the existence of differences statistically.

11. The value of chi – square calculated to signify the differences between the numbers of individuals of the study for the statement Having knowledge about collocations is very important for EFL learners was (19.800) with P-value (0.000) which is lower than the level of significant value (5%) These refer to the existence of differences statistically.

12. The value of chi – square calculated to signify the differences between the numbers of individuals of the study for the statement EFL learners' L1 may affect students' use of appropriate collocation was (13.050) with P-value (0.000) which is lower than the level of significant value (5%) These refer to the existence of differences statistically.

13. The value of chi – square calculated to signify the differences between the numbers of individuals of the study for the statement Only teachers who have a clear understanding of different kinds of collocation can help learners understand and use collocations was (15.600) with P-value (0.000) which is lower than the level of significant value (5%) These refer to the existence of differences statistically.

14. The value of chi – square calculated to signify the differences between the numbers of individuals of the study for the statement EFL learners should be equipped with skills that enable them to develop their

collocation knowledge independently was (23.000) with P-value (0.000) which is lower than the level of significant value (5%) These refer to the existence of differences statistically.

15. The value of chi – square calculated to signify the differences between the numbers of individuals of the study for the statement Collocations are effective in improving EFL students' multi-cultural competence was (10.850) with P-value (0.000) which is lower than the level of significant value (5%) These refer to the existence of differences statistically.

CONCLUSION

Findings:

From the primary and secondary sources of the study the researcher concludes to the following:

1. Many students are not aware of using collocations.
2. Students have serious problems regarding understanding and using collocations.
3. Collocations can play a vital role in improving students' communicative skills.

Recommendations

The researcher recommends the following:

1. Teachers should use different techniques for teaching collocations.
2. Language vocabulary specifically idiomatic expressions should be given good care when teaching English.
3. Necessity of concentrating on the importance of collocations and developing students' abilities to be able to collocate.

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