



Colligational Problems Faced by English Majors

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ABSTRACT

The main concern of this paper is to explore and diagnose first year English Majors' use of colligations (grammatical collocations), and the problems they face in this respect. The research aims at making a clear-cut distinction between two distinctive types that characterize the combinatory nature of English language; collocation and colligation. The focus of this research paper is on the types of colligations and the contexts in which they occur, and the suggested method of treatment which depends mainly on awareness-raising strategies. The students' actual knowledge and performance of certain colligations were checked via a test designed for that purpose. The process of test analysis revealed the size and nature of the problems the first year English majors faced, and suitable solutions had been suggested to cope with those problems.

1. Introduction

This paper is expository and diagnostic in nature in that it attempts to explore and diagnose first year English Majors' use of colligations (grammatical collocations), and the problems they face in this respect. At the outset, a distinction is to be made between two types of word combinations in English language; lexical (collocation) and grammatical (colligation). Both types constitute a real problem for most of the English Majors', especially for freshmen, but the main concern of this study is the colligational problems encountered in the written performances of first year students. To check the problems and difficulties faced by students in these contexts, a test was designed and distributed as a dependable source of data collection. The process of test analysis and the findings of the study revealed the nature of problems the English majors

faced, and the suggested method of treatment to cope with this type of word combinations, i.e., the grammatical chunking of words (colligations).

2. The Problem

Experience and research have shown that foreign learners of English face many problems in the combinatory nature of linguistic items; lexical (collocations) and grammatical (colligations). Regarding colligations, university students, and English majors in particular, make a variety of mistakes as revealed by their conversations, written tasks and examination papers. Below are some examples which shed light on the nature of mistakes committed in this respect:

1. Don't worry of it. I'll help you.
2. She is afraid from dogs.
3. Pay attention for what your teacher says.
4. My brother enjoys to go out alone.

The problem, and mistakes committed as a result, could be attributed to two basic reasons. First, the method of teaching and the teaching-learning strategies, in most cases, depend on single word meaning solely by means of synonyms or even by native symbols equivalents (translation). Adopting such strategies often neglects the combinatory nature of lexical items which constitute the most effective mechanisms for efficient vocabulary building. Being in a situation like this, learners tend to use short-cuts by resorting to translation, the outcome of which is erroneous colligations. Second, the method of instruction does not allocate sufficient exposure and teaching load to the colligational combinations of words. Students instructed by such method will, undoubtedly, suffer from lack of colligational awareness which is thought to be the main reason of the problem. This lack of awareness will lead to faulty colligational combinations of words, such as, *worry of, *afraid from, *pay attention for, *enjoys to go (instead of the correct combinations: about, of, to, going, respectively). Learners without adequate knowledge or awareness of the combinatory nature of words will violate the colligational restrictions and commit a series of mistakes. The first step that arouses and develops awareness on the part of students lies in acquainting them with the different types of colligations.

3. Aims of the Study

This study mainly aims at exploring and diagnosing first year English Majors' use of colligations, and the problems they face in this respect. It also aims at making a distinction between the two types of word combinations in English language; lexical (collocation) and grammatical (colligation). But the main focus is on assessing the real achievement and performance of freshmen English majors in the use of colligations, the problems and difficulties they face in using colligational combinations of words and the suggested method of treatment which depends mainly on awareness-raising strategies. Another aim is to acquaint English majors with the different types of colligations and the contexts in which they occur.

4. Background: Collocation and Colligation

A very common phenomenon in English language is the combinatory nature or the habitual co-occurrence of words; collocation. By collocation, we mean the “combination of words in a language that happens very often and more frequently than would happen by chance” (OALD, 2006: 281). When dealing with the combinatory nature of English language, a distinction should be made between lexical combination of words (collocations) and grammatical combination (colligations). The two words *collocation* and *colligation*, as technical terms, were coined by Firth (1957, 194-195), a forerunner in this field, who was the first to introduce them. He used the term *collocation* to refer to the syntagmatic attraction between lexical items, while *colligation* was used to refer to the syntagmatic attraction between grammatical categories (ibid, 1968: 181-183). Since then, the term *colligation* has been commonly used to indicate the connection between a lexical item and a grammatical category, while *collocation* indicates the connection between lexical items (Sinclair 1998: 15; Stubbs 2001a: 449).

Collocation is defined as words that occur together in a text, in a way which is frequent enough to make a pair of words as a collocational phrase (Hardi, 2008). According to Lewis (2002, 93), collocation is “the way individual words co-occur with others”. It is the manner in which words combine or occur together in predictable natural texts. As for McCarthy and O'Dell (2005, 6), collocation is defined as “a pair or group of



words that are often used together” which sound natural to native speakers. In his ARCS dictionary, Bogats (1997) defines the term as the co-occurrence possibilities of linguistic units or words that occur together and form one single semantic unit. It is evident that these words are spontaneously and naturally associated, with each other, in the minds of native speakers, like *great honour* not *big honour*, *made efforts*, not *did efforts*, *fast food* not *quick food*, *afraid of* not *afraid from*, etc. The predictable nature of collocation is looked upon as pairs of words that occur together so that when one word is seen, the other is strongly expected (Hill and Lewis, 2001: 6).

The interdependent relation between collocation and colligation is emphasized by introducing lexical and grammatical analyses: “Collocations are to be studied within grammatical matrices [which] in turn depend for their recognition on the observation of collocational similarities” (McIntosh, 1961 and Mitchell, 1971: 65). A clear distinction between the two types of collocation is made by Marco (1999) whereby he uses the term *collocation* to refer to the lexical combinations of words, while the grammatical combinations of words are termed as *colligation*.

Bahns and Eldaw (1993, 57) elaborate on the differences between the two types by citing examples of grammatical collocations such as, *account for*, *advantage over*, *adjacent to*, etc. It is to be noted that all these constructions consist of a verb, a noun or an adjective with a preposition. Conversely, lexical collocations contain a verb, a noun, an adjective or an adverb without a preposition, such as *make a mistake*, *life expectancy*, *strong tea*, *vitaly important*, etc. Hoey (2001, 234) defines colligation as “the grammatical company a word keeps and the position it prefers”. To him, a word colligation is what it typically does grammatically. It is the relationship between a word and its grammatical environment, i.e., the context in which it occurs (with a preposition, to-infinitive, that-clause or an ing-form).

Elaborating on the issue, Benson et al (1997, xv-xxxiii) make a clear-cut distinction between grammatical and lexical collocations. A “grammatical collocation is a phrase consisting of a dominant headword word (noun, adjective, verb) and a preposition or grammatical structure such as an infinitive or clause”. Accordingly, grammatical collocations (as explained below) are divided into eight types. As for lexical collocations, they are divided into seven major types. The commonest types are: verb



+ noun (*make a mistake, take an action*), adjective + noun (*deadly mistake, strong coffee*), noun + noun (*life expectancy, graduation ceremony*), adverb + adjective (*vitaly important, strictly accurate*), verb + adverb (*apologize humbly, supervise properly*), etc.

5. Types of Colligations

A practical strategy of explicit treatment of colligations is awareness raising. This can be achieved by drawing the students' attention to the different types of colligations. The criterion of this categorization is basically syntactic depending on the word class of the basic colligational component, which is chiefly determined by a grammatical word or a structure (a preposition, to-infinitive or that-clause) which collocates with the headword. For ease and practicality, colligations can be divided into different categories or groups (Mansoor, 2016: 46-52). This is shown in the following subsections.

5.1 Noun + Preposition

A particular noun always goes with a particular preposition that follows it. Here, the head noun is followed by a preposition which only and always colligates with it. This group refers to more uniquely fixed and closed combinations which allow almost no substitution at all. These represent very strong and fixed collocations (Hill, 2001: 63 and Lewis, 2002: 93). It is noted here that the combinations are so tightly linked that they act as single words. Examples of this category include: *pride in, fulfillment of, claim for, addiction to, need for, lack of, protest against, ignorance of, wave of, fulfillment of, protection against, support for, scarcity of, absence from, respect for, trouble with, complaint about*, etc.

5.2 Preposition + Noun

This subcategory includes a list of fixed prepositional phrases with a fixed meaning and very strong collocability. The prepositional phrase mainly consists of 'preposition + noun' but sometimes another preposition may follow the noun. Notice the following examples: *by accident, in demand, in advance, in touch, at one's service, in vogue, to one's benefit, at one's service, in connection with, in return of, out of/within*

the reach of, under the patronage of, in compliance with, in/with reference to, at the expense of, etc.

5.3 Adjective + Preposition

This subcategory includes strong and restricted colligations which allow no modification or intervention. Since they are restricted and fossilized in nature, they are highly predictable (ibid). The colligations are represented by an adjective as a headword and a following preposition. The following are representatives of this sub-category: *confident about, contrary to, afraid of, different from/than, good at, worried about, fond of, famous for, responsible for, interested in, full of, relevant to, aware of, jealous of, sad about, proud of, satisfied with, etc.*

5.4 Verb + Preposition

Certain verbs strongly collocate with certain prepositions forming verbal prepositional colligations of a higher degree of predictability. This is shown in these examples: *classify/divide into, charge with, accuse of, object to, compete with, dream of/about, rely on/upon, agree with, compete with, refer to, blame for, spend on, object to, deal with, mock at, focus on, involve in, differ from, worry/care about, look at, suffer from, submit to, recover from, think about, pay for, etc.*

5.5 Verb + ing-form

This subcategory includes some verbs that are followed by the ing-form of the verb (gerund) (Benson, et al. 1997: xvii-xxiv cited in Mansoor, 2016). Notice the underlined colligations:

1. They enjoy reading detective stories.
2. We'll miss going to the theatre this evening.
3. Our house needs painting.
4. She continued speaking after a pause.

5.6 To-infinitive

This type of colligation is represented by:

(a) Certain nouns followed by a to-infinitive form:

a pleasure/problem/ need/promise/vow/an impulse/effort to do it, etc.

(b) Certain adjectives followed by a to-infinitive form:

necessary to work, ready to go, easy to pass, nice to deal with, difficult to translate, great to see, etc.

5.7 That-Clause

This subcategory consists of colligations that occur in three different contexts. The first after certain nouns, the second after certain verbs, and the third after certain adjectives, all of which colligate with a that-clause that follows. Notice the underlined colligations (ibid):

(a) Noun + that-clause:

1. He took an oath that he would do it earnestly.
2. It was our hope that they would settle near us.
3. I had no idea that she would attend the party.
4. He denied the accusation that he accepted bribes.

(b) Verb + that-clause:

1. The accused admitted that he was guilty.
2. She promised that she would offer assistance.
3. They claimed that he accepted bribes.
4. We regret that we can't accept your offer.

(c) Adjective + that-clause:

1. She was afraid that he would fail the exam.
2. It was nice that he attended the party.
3. It was clear that they would not come.
4. We are hopeful that they will agree.

6. Method of Treatment

Foreign learners of English, in general and English majors in particular, face many problems with the combinatory use of linguistic items; lexical (collocations) and grammatical (colligations). The suggested method of treatment, which applies to both types, lies in adopting certain strategies and techniques that cope with the problems faced by first year students. The adoption of such strategies has proved to be effective and productive as revealed by the test results of the two groups. The basic strategy is centred on awareness-raising which can be achieved by various sub-strategies, such as, conscious/explicit treatment, students' training and independent learning.

6.1 Awareness-Raising

Awareness or conscious-raising, as a basic strategy, depends on deductive treatment and explicit presentation of the language material. "It is built on the assertion that students have the ability (with little instruction) to observe accurately and perceive similarities and differences within target language data which is most likely to aid the acquisition of that language" (Mansoor, 2016: 177). It refers to those "activities which concentrate on receptive skills, ensuring learners notice features of the input in ways which are most likely to help them turn it into intake"¹ (Lewis, 2002: 215).

Thornbury (2002, 25) has used *arousal* or *conscious attention* to refer to the same term, while Harmer (2003, 73) refers to it as *consciousness-raising*. According to him, it is not expected from the students to produce new language at once. It is the teacher's role to make them aware of certain features of it, instead. It is this awareness that helps them acquire language.

Adopting such a strategy of awareness-raising involves and aims at directing the learners' attention to collocations and colligations, the recognition of which is an important aid to speeding the process of language acquisition (Lewis, 2002: 186).

¹ Here a distinction is to be made between the three terms; input, intake and output. **Intake** refers to the language internalized by the learner in a way that it becomes and remains available for productive use (stored in his/her mental lexicon). **Input** refers to the language the learner meets, receives and from which he/she can learn. **Output** refers to the produced language; linguistic behaviour which results from input and intake.

Awareness-raising as a basic strategy can be achieved through the following sub-strategies or activities:

6.1.1 Conscious/Explicit Treatment

Unlike Krashen's Natural Approach which argues that conscious learning has no impact on learning, the Lexical Approach sees that it has a role, and a vital one (ibid, 21-22). Diane Freeman, 2000 (cited in Lewis, 2001:161-2) maintains that ".....explicit instruction does have a value, namely, facilitating input". It is helpful in that it can develop in the learners "a feel for collocation". The communicative approach which was in vogue in the 1970s and 1980s had overshadowed the role of explicit vocabulary teaching on the belief that students could learn implicitly by processes of guessing and induction (Wilkins, 1974; Roberts, 1982; Richards and Rodgers, 1986). But recent research has recognized the importance of explicit study of lexis in which collocation (lexical chunking) and colligation (grammatical chunking) play a central part. Empirical studies had offered clear evidences that EFL learners lacked collocational/colligational knowledge and made suggestions for explicit treatment of collocations.

Referring to her experience with explicit vocabulary study, Conzett (2001, 72). pointed out that students were very enthusiastic about it. To her, conscious and explicit presentation of vocabulary and collocation, as an essential component, has been a necessity. Awareness necessitates explicit instruction of word-combinations, whether lexical (collocations) or grammatical (colligations) in oral and written discourse. Learning by deduction proves to be very effective because "some items appear to be taught more effectively if we utilize the students' power of reasoning rather than depend exclusively on pattern practice and memorization" (Allen, 1974: 84).

The statement made by Firth (1957) that "a word is known by the company it keeps", entails that using words effectively and efficiently can be realized by knowing how they are combined with other words. This calls for devoting more time and effort to increase students' awareness and command of collocations and colligations. Chan and Liou (2005) argue that explicit teaching of collocations (lexical and grammatical)

is not given a considerable attention in language classes possibly due to the difficulty of teaching them in a way that facilitates their storage and retrieval or the shortage of useful and relevant materials for teaching them.

It has been noted that, in traditional language classes, raising students' awareness of collocations and colligations is rarely taken into consideration, and consequently these lexical and grammatical combinations are not explicitly presented to the students by their teachers. Full attention is mostly paid to the learning of grammatical structures, with their rules, and the memorization of long lists of words to be used in writing assignments and/or for exam purposes (Al Ghazali, 2015).

According to Woolard (2001, 3), it is a priority for the teacher to know that "learning more vocabulary is not just learning new words, it is often learning familiar words in new combinations". Here, the teacher's role is limited to directing the class activities, providing positive feedback to students, correcting mistakes and modelling the correct expressions. The fixation stage, which normally follows students' awareness of colligational expressions, aims at reinforcing the acquisition of new colligational expressions. Students, for example, will know the colligation *arrive at + place* (*arrive at the airport*). When this colligation appears in the input the students are dealing with, the colligational field of *arrive at* can be extended by its figurative senses as in *arrive at a conclusion* (Hill, 2001).

Putting explicit-conscious treatment into action, teachers have to draw the students' attention to different types of colligations. It is a practical strategy to divide colligations into categories depending on structural criteria, e.g., adjective + preposition (*full of, interested in, afraid of*), verb + preposition (*agree with, think about, accuse of*), noun + preposition (*pride in, space for, lack of*), preposition + noun (*for privacy, in advance, in demand*), verb + ing form (*go shopping, stop doing, enjoy playing*), noun + that clause (*....an oath that he would_....*), verb + that clause (*she claimed that he accepted*) and adjective + to-infinitive (*it was difficult to translate*). This strategy will, undoubtedly, highlight awareness and widen the students' horizons of the notion of colligation.



6.1.2 Students’ Training

Students will not take care of colligations without being deliberately guided and trained by their teachers to carefully observe them in their daily encounter with language, and use them in their writing and speaking. Woolard (2001, 43) contends that students should be trained to record and reactivate the significant vocabulary they meet. They need to keep their own notebooks, use them effectively, and have access to rich sources of input providing colligations, such as good English-English dictionaries, collocational dictionaries, teaching websites and concordances.

A very important function of awareness-raising is to train and help learners notice the language features as chunks. “Noticing language in chunks, aids storage as chunks” (Lewis, 2000: 181). This helps them notice the gap between their own production and the correct version as produced by native speakers. Learners will keep on facing difficulties, and consequently making a variety of mistakes in their spoken and written performances if they are not aware of the combinatory nature of lexical items. Noticing the different types of collocations and colligations in context will raise students’ awareness of them, and this will undoubtedly accelerate their learning and get them focused in their minds.

Noticing can be considered as a part of awareness or consciousness-raising strategies or techniques. The significant role noticing plays as a basic starting point for teaching collocation and colligation (ibid). Following this sub-strategy, the teacher does not always expect the learners to produce the new language material immediately and appropriately, but tries to make them aware of it by depending on their knowledge gained from the process of noticing and note-taking (record what they notice in their own notebooks). Schmidt, 1990 (cited in Harmer, 2003: 73) highlights the role of noticing, and considers it as a part of language intake. According to Thornbury (1997, 327) noticing is “a conscious cognitive process”; therefore, it is the teachers’ task to motivate their students to develop noticing strategies. Effective guidance and training on the part of the teacher are vitally important since without being guided and trained students seldom notice collocations (lexical and grammatical) in the texts they are using.



Scholars such as Schmidt 1990, Long 1985 and McLaughlin 1978 consider noticing as an important tool in learning foreign languages. They believe that no acquisition takes place without awareness of noticing. Schmidt (1990) considers it as “observational activities conducted by learners driven by conscious attention”. He maintains that L2 students notice a language form when they come across it (through instruction) with the help of their teacher when he/she draws their attention to it. But the teacher is not always with the students, so they have to be trained to notice by themselves the language features they come across.

Bielak and Pawlak (2013) assert that the concern of the Noticing Hypothesis is that language instruction needs to be complemented by conscious attention to form, since meaning-focused instruction alone seems to be unable to bring about the acquisition of language form. Research on the noticing hypothesis reports various degrees of awareness with higher quantity of intake (Smith 2012). Consequently, active exercises of various forms should be constructed to draw the learners’ attention to the noticing of collocations and colligations. “Exercises and Activities which help the learner observe or notice the L2 more accurately ensure quicker and more carefully-formulated hypotheses about L2”(Lewis, 2002: 52). Such activities and exercises highlight the learners’ awareness of L2 lexical and grammatical features, and help their internalization and their conversion from input into intake. Accurate noticing of lexical chunks, in which collocations and colligations play a vital and basic role, help convert input (linguistic items in focus) into intake (linguistic items stored in the mind), and ultimately into output (produced linguistic items, or language put in actual use).

Batstone (1994, 40-43) states that noticing alone cannot give the desired effect unless it is complemented by structuring and restructuring of the noticed language material. This means that noticing should be an active process rather than being a passive one. The activation takes place when students write down what they notice (for later revision, or revisiting) in their notebooks, try (practice) it in the classroom situation and outside (at home). A notebook is an important and powerful tool in the process of language acquisition (Lewis, 2002: 173).



According to Thornbury (2002, 26-27), to put the process of noticing into action, several reinforcing activities are suggested such as homework assignments, cooperation with other learners, involvement in class activities, and recycling of newly-learned colligations. It is recycling that helps new linguistic items to be fully acquired. Recycling can be used as a remedy against forgetting. “Research shows that spaced review of learned material can dramatically reduce the rate of forgetting” (ibid). This can be a part of a revision process whereby language forms are recycled to help students remember them better (Harmer, 2003:164). In addition, repetition and meaningful contexts are also suggested as techniques to foster noticing (Kennedy, 2003).

Revisiting should be adopted as a complementary technique. Students should be trained, by their instructors, how to conduct it as a reinforcement activity. They should also be informed of the importance of revisiting by directing their attention to the idea of keeping special notebooks, in which all the noticed colligations are written down, and categorized according to their types; noun + preposition, preposition + noun, adjective + preposition, verb + preposition, noun + that clause, verb + that clause, noun + to-infinitive, and verb + ing-form. This revisiting is recommended since learners tend to forget with the passage of time; therefore, this frequent recycling, recalling or revisiting, by the learners themselves or under their teacher’s supervision, will give the desired effect by fixing colligations in their minds, and reduce the rate of forgetting (Thornbury, 2002).

6.1.3 Independent Learning

An important part of raising learners’ awareness involves the development of independent learning skills. Learners need to be encouraged, guided and trained to develop their own skills of learning and knowledge of collocation/colligation independently of their teachers or a specific textbook. Students may raise questions like: Why do we say *afraid of* but not *afraid from*, or *do research* but not *make research*? The only acceptable and logical answer to these and similar questions reveals the arbitrary nature of language in general and collocation/colligation in particular: This is the way we say things in English, and no further explanation should



be given (Woolard, 2001). The inadequacy of the teacher's explanation encourages students to depend on themselves to make their own explorations in this area of language learning, and it is the teacher's role to develop such skills in his/her students. Students are to be encouraged to discover useful collocations and colligations in their daily encounter with language.

Advocating independent learning skills, does not mean that the teacher's role is completely eliminated. It simply means shifting his/her role from a strictly monitoring one to an advisory one. The teacher's role has to be shifted from the traditional one of being knowledge provider, a controller, and authority to a facilitator; a consultant and a source for the students to rely on. Harmer, (2003, 56-63) summarizes the role of the teacher as an organizer, observer, assessor, a prompter and participant, in addition to being a tutor who offers support and guidance when needed. Being in a situation like this, the teacher is freed from much of the teaching burden, which characterizes traditional teaching, by sharing this burden with his/her students.

Language is so complex and varied that its learning cannot be achieved solely through classroom teaching (ibid, 335). Therefore, a variety of sources and techniques can be used as independent learning strategies to contribute to the process of foreign language learning. To activate such strategies, students are advised and encouraged to have access to CD ROMs, the internet and collocation dictionaries. Due to recent developments in computer and internet technologies, electronic English (via teaching websites) has become possible, a case which has facilitated self-study to a great extent (Woolard, 2001). These tools are useful sources since they put a huge amount of information at the learners' disposal, and this of course, helps to widen their horizons of collocation/colligation through exploration, recording and reintroducing into the classroom some useful collocates and colligates that they have discovered. All this leads to the maximization of self-study outside the traditional classroom environment.

According to Thornbury (2002, 117-118), there are other sources which can provide useful language data. These include course books, authentic texts, literary readers, pop songs, ESP (legal, technical, business, etc.) which are all used to raise awareness about collocation; lexical and grammatical. If learners are deliberately directed by



their teachers to have access to these sources, which facilitate independent learning skills, their collocational-colligational competence will undoubtedly be elevated to its highest level.

7. Subjects and Procedures

The subjects of the study were first year students (academic year 2020-2021, Dept. of English, College of Education, Knowledge University, Erbil, Kurdistan, Iraq). The sample represented a homogenous group in that all of them were nearly similar in terms of linguistic background, age, specialization (majoring in English), type of instruction (same teacher, syllabus and teaching method), and subject taught “Reading and Writing”.

The samples of the study were divided into two groups: experimental and control. The rationale behind such division (experimental and control groups) was to check the effectiveness and role of awareness-raising strategies as an independent variable (via explicit-deductive treatment and instruction) in comparison to the alternative method (via implicit-inductive treatment and instruction). To check the effectiveness of this variable, the students’ scores were analysed by independent samples *t*-test using SPSS² as a statistical tool (MacKenzie, 2012). The purpose behind that was to determine whether there is statistical evidence that the associated means of the two groups are significantly different. Since the total number of freshmen was 52, each group contained 26 students.

Generally, the two groups were taught by the same instructor and same method of teaching which is communicatively oriented, but with different strategies when it comes to colligations. The experimental group received conscious/explicit/deductive treatment and instruction, depending on awareness-raising in which categorization of colligations, students’ training (noticing, visiting and revisiting) and independent learning were highlighted. On the contrary, the control group received unconscious/implicit/inductive instruction and treatment when it comes to colligations. The reason

² SPSS is an abbreviation for Statistical Package for the Social Sciences. It is a software package used for the analysis of statistical data.



behind such a division (experimental and control groups) was to check the effectiveness and role of awareness-raising strategies via explicit (deductive) treatment and instruction (employed with the experimental group) in comparison to the alternative method via implicit (inductive) treatment and instruction (employed with the control group).

8. The Test

8.1 Pilot Test

For a test to be reliable and valid, it has to be “tried out on a fairly large number of subjects of the same kind reliable as those for whom the test is being designed” (Harris, 1969: 103). The test, which comprised of 40 items, was piloted, at the beginning of the course, on a group of 20 first-year students who were randomly chosen. The test items were distributed on different types of colligations, similar to those in the subsequent versions of the test. The purpose behind the pilot test was to check the timing factor and the effectiveness of the direction. No problem was faced with the direction since it was a multiple choice question. Concerning timing, most of the testees finished in 30 minutes, while only 5 test takers stayed five minutes later to get it finished. Depending on the pilot test results, the timing for the subsequent tests was decided to be 40 minutes.

8.2 Test Description

To check the students’ knowledge and command of English colligations, the same test was given to the two groups (experimental and control). The test included 40 objective multiple-choice items distributed on different types of colligations: verb + preposition (12 items), adjective + preposition (10 items), noun + preposition (8 items), verb + ing-form (4 items), miscellaneous (6 items) (See Appendix). It is to be noted that the number of test items allocated to each type was related to its weight as indicated by its frequency of occurrence in the students’ textbook, and the students’ degree of familiarity with it. Concerning the content of the test items, it was analogous to the colligational constructions presented in the eight units of the textbook assigned for first year “Reading and Writing”. This was decided after



conducting a careful content analysis of the different colligations introduced in the students' textbook and their frequency of occurrence.

Concerning its characteristics, the test is reliable since it is of an objective type (multiple-choice) where "scorer fluctuation is practically nil" (Lado, 1961: 14), i.e., different scorers are bound to give the same marks when scoring it. This means that the test scores were stable. The reliability coefficient has been calculated by using the Kuder-Richardson Formula (1937)³. It is also valid as regards content in that it was designed to measure what it was intended to measure; to test specific language materials and skills which students had been exposed to (Heaton, 1995: 159). Regarding practicality, the test is practical in terms of time, scoring and administration. 40 minutes were given as a maximum time to answer the 40 items, and that was quite sufficient time even for slow learners. As for administration, the test was given at the end of the course when students were supposed to have finished their 'Reading and Writing' course. With regard to scoring, marks were distributed evenly; one mark per item (total marks: 40).

Being a power test (Valette, 1977: 49), the test takers were informed to answer all test items. In order to avoid tension and confusion, the test takers were told about the purpose behind taking the test. They were also told not to worry about marks. For the purpose of anonymity and confidentiality, the testees were informed not to write their names since their answers would be used only for research purposes.

8.3 Test Analysis

Many facts have been revealed through the process of test analysis; facts that highlight the role of awareness-raising strategies in language teaching. This is shown

$$\begin{aligned} {}^3 R &= 1 - \frac{M(n-M)}{nSD^2} \\ &= 1 - \frac{31.5(40-31.5)}{40 \times 6.85^2} \\ &= 1 - 0.14 \\ &= 0.86 \end{aligned}$$

This coefficient shows that the test conducted in the study is reliable.

by the test marks scored by the members of the experimental group who were superior to their counterparts in the control group. Looking at Table 1 below, we see the scores obtained by the test takers in the experimental group, together with the mean (M) and standard deviation (SD)⁴.

Table1: Scores in the Experimental Group

Testee No.	Score	Testee No.	Score
1	33	14	27
2	32	15	29
3	35	16	18
4	28	17	40
5	40	18	30
6	16	19	33
7	37	20	35
8	28	21	34
9	33	22	19
10	35	23	34
11	37	24	33
12	35	25	28
13	34	26	36
Total Scores: 807		Mean: 31.04	SD: 6.69

The following table (Table 2) gives us an idea about the scores obtained by the testees in the control group.

⁴ SD is calculated by summing the total scores of the high sixth minus the total scores of the high sixth divided by half the number of testees.

Table 2: Scores in the Control Group

Testee No.	Score	Testee No.	Score
1	10	14	23
2	24	15	14
3	15	16	13
4	28	17	21
5	30	18	18
6	16	19	17
7	27	20	19
8	12	21	32
9	23	22	21
10	30	23	30
11	10	24	11
12	21	25	16
13	16	26	18
Total Scores: 515		Mean: 19.80 SD: 8.23	

Significant findings were revealed by the scores of the two groups. First, the testees in the experimental group were generally superior, in terms of their marks, to those in the other group (control). This is shown by the higher marks they got in the test, the number of those who passed (23 out of 26 vs.12 out of 26) and the mean score (31.5 vs. 19.80 respectively)⁵. To compare the two means for a significant difference, an independent sample *t*-test was used to analyse the data given in Tables 1 and 2. It is concluded that the difference was statistically significant ($p < .00001$)⁶ (MacKenzie, 2012). Therefore, the improved performance (as shown by the mark scores) of the participants in the experimental group was due to the role of awareness-raising strategies as an independent variable.

Obviously, the testees in the first group were superior to those in the second group in terms of their language achievement and proficiency as regards colligational structures. Second, the superiority gained in tests is totally authentic due to the fact

⁵ The mean score is calculated by summing the total scores in the test divided by the number of testees.

⁶ It is a convention in experimental research that significance, in a statistical sense, requires a value of *p* that is less than .05.



that test results reflect the learners' achievement in language learning which gives a representative picture of their language proficiency (Harmer, 2003 cited in Mansoor, 2016: 103). Seemingly, this superiority is exclusively attributed to the effect and role of awareness-raising strategies which were adopted with the experimental group, but not with the control group. Third, students who were familiar with awareness-raising strategies and trained in their application surpassed those who were not, despite the fact that the two groups were nearly similar in terms of their age, gender, motivation and linguistic background.

Although the main objective of this paper was to investigate the role of awareness-raising strategies as a basic factor that determines the students' performance and achievement, it is pertinent to make a final remark about the most problematic test items for both groups. It has been noticed that items 4, 7, 10, 16, 17, 19, 29 and 35 recorded more errors than the rest of items in the experimental group. As for the control group, the majority of items were problematic, but items 1, 4, 5, 7, 10, 11, 12, 16, 17, 19, 21, 22, 26, 29, 31, 35, 36 and 39 recorded the largest numbers of mistakes.

9. Conclusion

The ultimate objective of learning a foreign language has always been to help learners gain competence that enables them to use language accurately, fluently and naturally. It has been found that linguistic competence cannot be only decided by the learner's ability to produce grammatical and meaningful sentences, but also whether the sentences are natural, spontaneous and native-like. Definitely, this cannot be realized without building the learner's mental lexicon in which collocations and colligations represent the core.

In this paper, the researcher emphasizes the role of awareness-raising as a basic strategy, and the various sub-strategies (conscious/explicit treatment, students' training and independent learning) which were adopted. The main objective behind the adoption of such strategies was to assess and check their effect on the students' performance and achievement of colligations.

Although, in general, the two groups were taught by following the same teaching method, which is communicatively-oriented, they were taught by adopting different



strategies when dealing with colligations. The experimental group received conscious/explicit/deductive treatment and instruction, depending on awareness-raising which also highlighted the role of categorization of colligations, students' training (noticing, visiting and revisiting) and independent learning. On the contrary, the control group received unconscious/implicit/inductive instruction and treatment. The division into experimental and control groups was a means to check the effectiveness and role of awareness-raising strategies via explicit (deductive) treatment and instruction in comparison to the alternative method via implicit (inductive) treatment and instruction. It revealed the impact of the strategies in which students were trained by their teachers to take the initiative and be independent learners, through their active engagement in strategies that raised their awareness of colligations. It is this engagement that made the experimental group achieve clear superiority over the control group who were not given the chance to practice such strategies. This was shown by the mean score: 31.5 (recorded by the experimental group) vs. 19.80 (recorded by the control group), the number of testees who passed in each group (23 vs. 12 respectively), and the *t*-test value of ($p < .00001$) which was statistically significant⁷.

Since the main objective of this paper was to investigate the role of awareness-raising strategies as a basic factor that determines the students' performance and achievement, the types of errors and the most problematic distractors are considered out of the scope of this study. This remains to be a task for future research.

To end up with, it can be metaphorically said that colligational/collocational competence is the window through which the learners look at the wide world of language with much confidence and native-like fluency and accuracy. It is a prerequisite for a fluent, natural and successful language use which is a distinctive feature of proficiency and achievement.

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⁷ The independent sample *t*-test using SPSS was depended as a statistical tool.



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Appendix: The test

Direction: Underline the correct option in the following sentences.

1. You can share the bedroom.....your classmate. (by, of, with, to)
2. They were talkinglast night party. (on, of, with, about)
3. Don't worry.....it. I'll help you. (of, at, about, with)
4. Sara is looking.....a new job. (about, at, for, to)
5. Try to replace video games a different activity. (by, with, of, into)
6. My brother graduated.....Stratford University. (from, at, by, in)
7. The first lecture starts..... eight a.m. (on, from, at, in)



8. The summer holiday begins..... July. (on, at, by, in)
9. Laura is majoring Sociology. (in, at, with, by)
10. The meeting will last..... 2:30 p.m. (to, at, on, until)
11. Liza is good French and English. (in, at, to, on)
12. Claire is interested..... short stories. (at, in, with, by)
13. Lauren is friendly..... new students. (to, for, with, by)
14. My younger sister is shy.....other people. (from, of, to, with)
15. Most children are afraid.....dogs. (with, from, of, by)
16. Their life was full.....joy and adventure. (with, by, in, of)
17. This university is famous.....its academic programs. (of, for, with, by)
18. His car is similar.....mine. (with, from, of, to)
19. She is worried.....her daughter’s illness. (of, for, about, from)
20. You should careful.....your health. (by, for, of, about)
21. I like a room privacy. (to, for, with, in)
22. There is no enough space..... my clothes. (to, for, of, about)
23. Please pay attention..... what your teacher says. (for, of, about, to)
24. People have many complaints.....this restaurant. (on, of, about, with)
25. My son has a big trouble..... physics. (of, at, with, in)
26. You have to create a plan.....healthier meals. (for, of, about, to)
27. It’s good to spend more time..... friends. (of, by, with, about)
28. That girl has a degreeaccounting. (of, at, with, in)
29. He needs to stop.....many computer games. (play, to play, plays, playing)
30. My mother is good at.....cakes for us. (bakes, bake, baking, to bake)
31. Sophie enjoys.....out alone. (go, to go, goes, going)
32. We like to go..... once a week. (shop, to shop, shops, shopping)
33. Look! It’s in frontyou. (with, at, of, by)
34. Linda moved California last year. (to, for, at, in)
35. My mother made a special cake.....my birthday. (to, for, at, on)
36. To lose weight, you need to cut downfast food. (with, on, of, by)
37. Break the habit oftoo much coffee. (drink, to drink, drinking, drank)
38. Givesmoking. It’s harmful. (up, of, for, at, in)
39. She is happy.....going to the beach. (of, by, with, about)
40. Look.....this picture. It’s very nice and expensive. (up, on, for, at, in)

كيشه كانی پیکه وه لکاندنی وشهیی له لایهن قوتابییانی به شی زمانی ئینگلیزی

پوخته:

بیرۆکهی سه رهکی ئەم توێژینه وه به بریتیه له خستنه روو و دیاریکردنی به کارهینانی ریزمانه وانی له لایهن قوتابییانی قوئای یه کهم و له گه ل ئەم کیشانهی که روو به روویان ده بیته وه له م بواره دا. ئەم توێژینه وه به هه ولی ئەوه ده دات که جیاوازیکی روون بکات له نیوان دوو جوړه خاسیه تی دیاری پیکه وه لکاندنی سروشتی زمانی ئینگلیزی که ئەوانیش بریتیین له ده رپرین و ریزمانه وانی. ئەم توێژینه وه به چه خت ده کاته سه ر جوړی ده رپرین و ئەم پیکهاته ی که تیایدا ده رده که وئ، و له که ل ئەم مێتۆده جاره سه ر کراوه ی که پێشنیار کراوه له م بواره دا. زانیاری قوتابیان و ئەنجامدانی ئەم ده رپرینانه له ریگه ی تاقیکردنه وه به ک که بۆ ئەم مه به سه ته دیزاین کراوه جیک کراوه. پرۆسه ی شیکردنه وه ی تاقیکردنه وه که قه باره و سروشتی ئەم کیشه یه دیاری ده کات که قوتابییانی قوئای یه کهم به ره نگاری ده بنه وه ، له که ل ئەمه شدا جاره سه ریکی کونجاو بۆ ره خساندنی له گه ل ئەم کیشه یه پێشنیار کراوه .

مشاكل التلازمات النحوية لدى طلبة اللغة الانكليزية

الملخص:

تهتم هذه الورقة البحثية في استكشاف وتشخيص استخدام التلازمات النحوية (colligations) ، والمشكلات التي يواجهها طلبة السنة الأولى- قسم اللغة الانكليزية في هذا الصدد. يحاول البحث التمييز بشكل واضح بين نوعين من التلازمات : اللفظية (collocations) والنحوية (colligations). تركز هذه الورقة البحثية على أنواع التلازمات النحوية والسياقات التي تحدث فيها ، وطريقة العلاج المقترحة في هذا الصدد. تم التحقق من معرفة الطلاب الفعلية وأدائهم لبعض من انواع التلازمات النحوية من خلال اختبار صمم لهذا الغرض. كشفت عملية تحليل الاختبار عن حجم وطبيعة المشكلات التي تواجه طلبة السنة الأولى- تخصص لغة انجليزية ، وتم اقتراح حلول مناسبة للتعامل مع تلك المشكلات.