Towards the importance of English collocations for L2 Learners, A Corpus-Based study

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Abstract

The significance of collocations is undeniable for non-native learners of English language. As a unit of lexis, its importance in learning and teaching language is well-established fact. Now-a days, a significant change has been observed in the learning and teaching of English language and the change is that major stress is given to multi word units rather than individual words. Person's listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills are improved with the help of collocations. Anyhow, handling of collocations for the learners of a foreign language is very challenging. By learning and using collocations effectively, the EFL/ESL learners become able to achieve native like fluency in English. To achieve the basic knowledge of EFL/ESL vocabulary is not an easy task. Collocations perform a core role in vocabulary learning. For non-native learners, the successful learning and handling collocations is problematic. The conducted research endeavors to reveal the importance of learning English collocations for non-native learners. The researcher utilizes corpus for this purpose because corpora are proving fruitful in the present era.

Key words: English collocations, Lexis, non-native speaker, Corpus, handling of collocations

1. Introduction

In learning English language, Collocations occupy a prominent place. Collocation is a combination of two or more words which frequently co-occur as pay attention and make an effort. Different researchers and authors have explained collocations in different way according to their research activities. Attya, Qoura, & Mostafa (2019) describes that collocation shows a state where specific words have tendency to come together frequently. As the word fast is often used with food and strong with wind etc. It is said that the meaning delivered by combining two or words is called collocation as commit suicide, make a deal, have a game, and hold on etc.

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Usually, collocations are the habitual co-occurrence of lexical collaborations with comparative clarity of meaning which assist in getting accuracy in foreign language(Keshavarz and Salimi (2007), Laufer and Waldman 2011, Henriksen 2013). It is maintained that combination of two or more words which comes together usually in a language is called collocation. Their learning and handling are problematic for learners in non-native context. They encounter many problems in getting the knowledge L2 and collocation is also one of them. For EFL Learners, to gain the knowledge of L2 is the destination and collocation can be regarded as a road leads to that destination.

Collocation has link to formulaic sequences that reflect the basic features of language (Sinclair 1991, Wray 2002, Schmitt 2010) . Conklin and Schmitt (2008) are of the opinion that up to dated studies highlight that formulaic sequences provide handling gains and support the learners to accomplish several pragmatic purposes (Bardovi-Harlig 2009) . Therefore, it becomes crucial for the speakers of foreign language to understand

collocations for the successful application of the language. Bahns and Eldaw (1993) opine that speakers of EFL have insufficient understanding of collocations and focus on the knowledge of words in isolation. Even when they try to make chunks , they have tendency to utilize excessively the specific kinds of readymade expressions to which they are familiar. (Granger 1998, Foster 2001). And at times their excessive use looks unacceptable (Nesselhauf 2003). It is argued by (Serrano, Stengers et al. 2015) that by studying previous research woks related to collocations, it can be said that native people generate more collocation in verbal activities whereas non-native speakers create a small number of collocations.

Laufer (2011) opines that not only the oral communication, but also even the written tasks of the learners of advanced levels show the lack of competency. It means that the students find problems in getting the understanding which word takes with it which words frequently along with they face issues how to utilize the already learnt chunks(Schmitt 2010). The EFL speakers reflect impediments in the construction of collocations along with the handling. Not only the learners at initial stage face problems but students of higher levels also possess weak perceptions of collocations and their frequencies (Siyanova and Schmitt 2008, Siyanova-Chanturia and Spina 2015) . It means that these multi words items or collocations are challenging task for EFL Learners, and it is harder to acquire the knowledge of collocations. (Siyanova & Schmitt, 2008).

Construction of collocations creates problems in written skill of EFL speakers. For improving their writing skill, the EFL instructors endeavor hard and give much attention to this area. They guide the students by making corrections in their written tasks and by making them aware of the problematic parts that are needed in the arrangement of English sentences. But teachers 'efforts seem to be fruitless because the students keep on committing the mistakes. So, Bahn and Eldaw (1993) explain that several EFL students encounter with divergent issues while producing verbal and written tasks. It is argued that learners who have creative minds with sound creative knowledge, but these students often fail to get good grades because they do not have the understanding of the significant collocations. They lack the knowledge which word takes with it other words frequently. In other words, they do not know the possible 6 0r 7 collocations of a key word that is the Centre of their writing (Hill, 2000). Resultantly,

they make long sentences to express their ideas about the assigned task. The use of long sentences enhances the risk of committing errors. The basic factor behind these difficulties is that they possess insufficient interpretation about the company a word keeps.

No doubt, Lexical and grammatical phrases are equally various and usefully essential while doing written tasks. But EFL Learners face challenges despite their importance. Usually, they repeat the chunks which they know and reflect their incompetency about the usage of different combination of words like native learners. Furthermore, the understanding of collocation enables the students to compose texts like the native people (Nation, 2001). In broader sense, it can be explained that to improve the overall skills of L2, it is a dire need of the day that learners should get the knowledge of collocations and to know how to utilize them effectively.

1.1 Problem statement

EFL speakers face impediments in handling collocations. Even for the students of advanced levels, the handling of collocations is problematic (Howarth 1998; Altenberg and Granger 2001; Laufer and Waldman 2011). If non-native students are compared with native people regarding the usage of collocations, they exploit a small number of collocations and they are inclined to commit mistakes in collocations as instead of saying 'commit suicide', they may say 'do suicide and this mistake is the cause of crosslinguistic phraseological variances (Nesselhauf 2003). But the realization of linguistic execution of EFL speakers is badly influenced by these types of errors (Boers, Eyckmans et al. 2006). According to Jamsaid (2018), the earlier research studies reveal that understanding of L2 people about collocations is insufficient and due to insufficient knowledge, several mistakes are done by them. In the vocabulary of Chinese language, the word 'soup' takes with it the verb 'eat' instead of 'drink' or 'take'. The Chinese say, 'eat soup' instead of 'drink soup'.

So, all researchers and authors do agree that it is the need of the day to improve the collocational understanding of EFL speakers and they should make acquainted with the noteworthiness of collocations in acquisition of L2(Jamsaid, 2018). Woodland (2000) opines that to acquire the knowledge of L2, speakers need to pay heed to the application of collocations. In other words, it can be

said that people of L2 should possess sound interpretation of multi-words items and be aware that to acquire vocabulary does not mean to memorize new words. But the acquisition of vocabulary means to have knowledge about the contextual use of words. This is only possible due to collocations. To get the sound knowledge of collocations is crucial for EFL speakers because they constitute the core vocabulary of the language. Learners compose long sentences because of the shortage of the sufficient knowledge of collocations. With the help of collocations, their ideas are conveyed effectively (Lewis, 2001). So, the core trouble of EFL people during the acquisition of L2 is the handling of collocations.

Shah, Singh, and Amreet (2020) opine that the lack of Collocational knowledge has become a prevalent trend in the acquisition of L2. Hsue (2000) argues that the speakers of L2 face difficulties in the selection of appropriate arrangement of words because they are unfamiliar to the vocabulary items. They rely on using the synonyms but it is established fact that the synonym of the particular word does not present the exact meaning as hot and sunny are used as synonym but these are not acceptable for native speakers having different context. . But recently, there has emerged a revival of approaches to handle EFL vocabulary issues, though a significant amount of research has been done on EFL vocabulary learning as compared with EFL vocabulary teaching. According to Qureshi and Akhter (2019), in the present era, trends are being introduced to solve the challenges regarding EFL vocabulary and now more attention is given to the acquisition of vocabulary instead of the pedagogy of vocabulary. So, the learning of collocations are difficult assignment for EFL pupils. The conducted research employs corpus for learning collocations. The utilization of corpora in the EFL context has eased the learning process.

1.2 Research Objectives
1. To explore the significance of English collocations for L2 learners
2. To elaborate the role of corpus in learning L2

1.3 Research Questions
1. Why are the understanding of English collocations necessary for L2 learners?
2. What is the role performed by corpus in the attainment of L2?

1.4 The importance of collocations
collocations constitute the essential component of any lexicon. They prove fruitful in handling the difficulties of EFL vocabulary. Several authors have revealed the significance and importance of collocations in improving the vocabulary and the skill of communication of EFL learners(Benson, 1985; Brown, 1974; Channel, 1981; Cowie, 1981(Robins 1967); Lewis, 1997). Brown (1974) argues that the EFL Learner's overall language skills can be enhanced with the sound knowledge of collocation. They make better the listening skill, upgrade the communication competency, polish the ability of reading and writing. So, the knowledge of collocation helps the speakers to update themselves with the combinations of words that are used by L1 speakers.

Channell (1981) does agree with the opinion of Brown (1974) by explaining that to raise the understanding of learners about collocations means to upgrade their ability of communication. It is argued by Cowie (1988) that established items of vocabulary like phrases and collocation fulfill the requirements of communication and persons become capable of reprocessing and making the items with their assistance

Aghbar (1990) opines that EFL Learners do not possess sound vocabulary because they are unaware about the chunks of language. He keeps on arguing that formulaic language has idioms, multi word items and proverbs etc. And these items are vital components of L2 and are used to express ideas efficiently. Ellis (2001) states that the understanding of collocations occupies a core place regarding the acquisition of language

Howarth (1998) argues that L1 speakers possess appropriate constituents of phraseology whereas the L2 learners face the issue how to attain native like fluency that can be acquired by using suitable combination of words. Thus, collocations perform a core part in the acquisition of EFL and assist the speakers to be fluent as native. For getting and improving fluency, the system of collocations is crucial and to be fluent, the understanding of collocation is needed (Nation ,2001). Consequently, the interpretation of collocation is valuable and exclusive, and not only it enhances pupils' language ability but also leads them to achieve native-like accuracy.

1.5 Literature Review

The problem of idioms and collocations has been discussed by authors and researchers. They are the inextricable element of phraseology. In the past, no attention was paid to the learning of collocations but in present era, the term Collocations has gained popularity due to the arrival of corpora. Szudarski and Carter (2016) narrate that to acquire the knowledge of L2, the learners should pay heed for the acquisition of collocations. Ucar and Yukselir (2015) opine that EFL vocabulary occupies a significant place in acquiring the knowledge of L2. The learning of vocabulary does not mean to memorize new words, but it means getting the understanding of the use, shape and meaning of words. And in other words, it means to get the knowledge of words which frequently use with the specific word. These forms are called collocations (Murcia,2001). Rogers (2018) is of the opinion that collocations enable the EFL /ESL speakers in attaining fluency like the natural speakers.

Robins (1967), asserts that almost 2000 years earlier, the research works began on collocations in Greece. According to the primitive authors, individually, words have no existence and they can vary regarding the collocation where they are utilized (Robins, 1967, p.21). Firth is the person who introduced the term of collocation. Collocation is the frequent occurrences of words and according to Firth (1934) , a word is known by the company it keeps. Mitchell (1971), and Palmer did their works on collocations in the beginning, but Firth is still considered the first person who initiated the concept of collocation.

The expansion of corpora and Sinclair's research explored the quick spreading of the application of collocations. Pawley and Syder (1983) argue that collocations play the central to be fluent in L2. Smith (2005) investigates that collocations should be the part of syllabus due to many causes. EFL students encounter challenges while using the correct collocations according to the situation. The students who have the knowledge of single words, even for them, collocation is a challenging task. Collocational education is mainly inspiring for the learners of upper levels (Williams, 2002). Understanding learning of collocations improves the knowledge of vocabulary and enhance the accuracy of language. It is argued that errors in collocations are responsible to create hurdles in communication rather than errors in grammar. It causes the strange looking statements or unusual language.

Different researchers have described the term collocation differently but they all have the same opinion that collocations refer the repeated co-occurrence of words (Bahns, 1993; Hsu, 2007; Nation, 2001). Palmer (1933) maintains his attention that the phrases as 'tomorrow morning' and 'make difference' should be taught as an individual linguistic unit. Palmer (1933) explains that that the useful view point for the pupils is the learning of collocation as a whole instead of fixing together their constituent pieces (Palmer, 1933). Collocations are categorized into two categories; one is called lexical and other is grammatical (Benson, Benson, and Ilson (1997), Lewis (2001), and Ellis, (2006a). A Grammatical collocation is a type of formation in which a verb or adjective takes with it preposition, or noun takes with it a form of verb as 'depend on', 'afraid of', 'strength to lift it' etc. Whereas a Lexical collocation is made up from combinations as adjectives and noun, verbs and adverbs, adverb and adjective, noun and noun, noun and verb etc. as 'fast food', 'bars of soap', 'dog barking' and 'commit suicide' etc.

Dechert and Lennon (1989) are of the opinion that speakers of L2 make mistakes in lexical collocations rather than grammatical collocations. And some claim that learners do mistakes in grammatical collocations but there are some researchers who have the opinion that lexical and grammatical collocations are equally challenging task for EFL Learners. So, learners should learn both categories of collocations to get native like fluency.

2. Materials and Methods

Unquestionably, the invention of computers and software is the gift of modern age and they have revolutionized every sphere of life(Qureshi and Akhter 2019) . In this global world , nobody can deny the importance of English language because it has attained the status of international language (Akhter, Qureshi, Hassan and Tanveer, 2020) .Owing to the importance of English, every nation is trying to learn the knowledge of English to keep pace with the world . That is why the strength of English-speaking people is increasing day by day. But still non-native of English face problems in learning English. As computers altered the whole picture of the world, similarly, they have made great changes in the discipline of studying and teaching English.

Corpora are product of the computer age and they ease the learning and teaching process of English for non-native. Corpus helps the learners to tackle the problems faced during learning. Corpus is

the large collection of texts collected in an electronic form and is utilized to fulfill the requirements of the operators. Corpora gather information from actual situation of life, that is why, it is reliable and constructive (Sinclair, 1991). Several types of corpora are using to help the learners as antconc, wordsmith etc. With their tools, they do different tasks. They help in learning

collocations. Collocations are problematic for L2 learners. That is why, they cannot get competency over English language. So, the invention of corpora has minimized the problems of EFL Learners and teachers.

The conducted research utilizes corpus -based research and for this task, wordsmith 4 will be

employed. The corpus of well-known English newspapers will be made for this purpose. The reason behind selecting Newspaper is that they have current language of society and are living form of language. They provide variety of knowledge about education, sports, technology, showbiz, entertainment, business, trade, and politics etc. Even information about every field of society can be found in newspapers. After establishing the corpus, the corpus documents will be examined by employing wordsmith4, a software by retrieving concordance for the assessment of collocations. It can be understood by looking at the following table

N	Concordance	Set	Tag	Word #	t. #	os.	. #	os.	. #	os.	t. #	os.	File	%
1	hero from the Under-19 World Cup, finally got the breakthrough as			4,368	173	9%	0	4%			0	4%	er 9\9 sports.txt	84%
2	victories to qualify for the Asia Cup field final here on Saturday. South			4,085	160	4%	0	9%			0	9%	er 9\9 sports.txt	78%
3	the chief guest. India, S Korea in Asia Cup final Agence France Presse			4,065	160	2%	0	9%			0	9%	er 9\9 sports.txt	78%
4	bouts in the 5th White Ribbon Gold Cup National Cadet and Boxing			3,887	152	1%	0	5%			0	5%	er 9\9 sports.txt	74%
5	sent home from the Twenty20 World Cup in South Africa on Friday after a			3,737	147	2%	0	2%			0	2%	er 9\9 sports.txt	71%
6	to South Africa for the Twenty20 World Cup which starts next week, came			2,513	101	1%	0	9%			0	9%	er 9\9 sports.txt	48%
7	Pakistani team after missing the World Cup in March due to injury, was ordered			2,042	85	9%	0	9%			0	9%	er 9\9 sports.txt	38%
8	left me out of the ICC Twenty20 World Cup. To a question, Shoaib said that he			319	10	0%	0	6%			0	6%	er 9\9 sports.txt	6%
9	suffered a setback during the World Cup 2007 in terms of poor performance			986	42	0%	0	1%			0	1%	9\9 editorial.txt	11%
10	contains 60 calories, compared to a cup of raisins, which carries a whopping			5,205	209	4%	0	8%			0	8%	\8 islamabad.txt	58%
11	makes fruit so filling. For instance, one cup of grapes contains 60 calories,			5,196	209	3%	0	8%			0	8%	\8 islamabad.txt	58%
12	cereal with lower-fat milk, choosing one cup of one-percent milk instead of whole			5,010	197	3%	0	6%			0	6%	\8 islamabad.txt	56%
13	many irritants between the lip and the cup and shrewd investors knew it very			551	17	9%	0	7%			0	7%	8\8 business.txt	7%
14	as were in the squad for the World Cup in the West Indies. A likely casualty			5,407	250	0%	0	2%			0	2%	er 8\7 sports.txt	92%
15	over the Proteas in the 50-overs World Cup in the West Indies earlier this year.			5,238	242	5%	0	9%			0	9%	er 8\7 sports.txt	89%
16	the first game of the 2003 World Cup at Newlands in Cape Town. It was			5,098	236	6%	0	7%			0	7%	er 8\7 sports.txt	87%
17	of the 5th White Ribbon Gold Cup National Cadet and Junior Boxing			4,105	193	4%	0	0%			0	0%	er 8\7 sports.txt	69%
18	he added. "Zidane did it in a World Cup final and I am also a human being.			856	39	0%	0	5%			0	5%	er 8\7 sports.txt	14%
19	Materazzi in the final of the 2006 World Cup in Germany last year. "I am sorry for			775	34	9%	0	3%			0	3%	er 8\7 sports.txt	13%
20	are due to open the Twenty20 World Cup against Scotland at Durban on			628	30	6%	0	1%			0	1%	er 8\7 sports.txt	11%
21	fine striking ability in PFF Youth Cup 2007, Adnan managed eight goals			6,890	265	2%	0	7%			0	7%	er 7\7 sports.txt	97%
22	second in Karachi's PFF Youth Cup," said Yellow's manager Iqbal			6,761	259	4%	0	5%			0	5%	er 7\7 sports.txt	95%
23	opening night of the White Ribbon Gold Cup Cadet and Junior National Boxing			4,903	190	2%	0	9%			0	9%	er 7\7 sports.txt	68%
24	the format for the PGA's new FedEx Cup playoff series. The top players are			4,551	174	2%	0	4%			0	4%	er 7\7 sports.txt	63%
25	team is presently busy in playing Asia Cup in India and the team's coach has			3,670	145	5%	0	2%			0	2%	er 7\7 sports.txt	51%
26	affair. "Now we're playing a World Cup, players will be worried about stats			1,708	64	0%	0	4%			0	4%	er 7\7 sports.txt	24%
27	Lee, who missed the one-day World Cup with an ankle injury, is ready to			1,404	52	3%	0	0%			0	0%	er 7\7 sports.txt	20%
28	deficit to hold three-time former Asia Cup winners Pakistan to 3-3 draw in their			1,287	47	0%	0	8%			0	8%	er 7\7 sports.txt	18%
29	the semi-final stage from Asia Hockey Cup. "Our boys feel to come with terms			1,247	45	0%	0	8%			0	8%	er 7\7 sports.txt	18%
30	of the men's field hockey Asia Cup on Thursday with a runaway 8-0			980	33	4%	0	4%			0	4%	er 7\7 sports.txt	14%
31	(Eng) Japan in as Pakistan out of Asia Cup semi-final Associated Press			964	33	3%	0	4%			0	4%	er 7\7 sports.txt	14%

concordance | collocates | plot | patterns | clusters | filenames | source text | notes

The table reveals that which words are frequently used with the word 'cup'. 'cup' is the central word called node. Collocations containing left collocates and right collocates are words coexisted with nodes and typically occur at a distance of 4 to 5 tokens from the node.

2.1 Place of Corpus in EFL Learning

In this modern era, the application of corpora has captured the attentions of researchers, instructors as well learners. Its role in the area of applied linguistics is well -recognized fact. Hunston (2002) pinpoints that corpora provide assistance for EFL

learners by retrieving wordlist and collocations. He is of the opinion that EFL speakers acquire the knowledge of L2 successfully and tackle all the issues regarding vocabulary if they are uncovered with the contextual use of words in the way of concordance. For L2 learners and instructors, Corpora and their software are lucrative approaches (Leech ,1991). He further states that L2 learners and instructors should establish the corpora regarding the nature of their own needs to tackle the several impediments regarding vocabulary. So, the utilization of corpus make easier the learning of collocations. By learning collocations with the help of corpus, the L2 students will be able to communicate effectively. Kennedy (1998) is of the opinion that in resolving the issues of

L2 vocabulary, the role of corpus cannot be ignored. Its role has largely been acknowledged.

No doubt, every sphere of linguistics is affected by the strong impacts of corpora. In the past, the students were forced to memorize the lengthy lists of difficult vocabulary but now it eased the learning procedure of English vocabulary for the EFL learners because corpus provides them the core list of the vocables with their contextual which are most common (Hoey, 2000). Owing to the significance of corpora in learning and teaching L2, the conducted research adopts a corpus-based approach by retrieving the core list of collocations which are mostly occurred for EFL speakers. So, it can be argued that the acquisition of vocabulary does a valuable part to be proficient in overall skills of language(Qureshi, Akhter et al. 2019). And the use of corpus tackles the issue of vocabulary skillfully.

3. Results and Discussion

Descriptive study of a language proves valuable from several viewpoints. According to (Gleason, 1961), in addition to assist the EFL Learners , it facilitates the interpreters in explaining manuscripts for the non- native people, for the syntacticians aiming to print documents on the lexical units for non- native and even for native learners too. Pawly & Syder (1983) reveal that without having the understanding of collocations, the L2 speakers find it harder to produce native like fluency. Their language seems odd, unusual, and devoid of accuracy and Lewis (2004) also advocates Pawly & Syder's (1983) statement that the speakers of L2 are unable to produce accurate language without the understanding of collocations. He says that their language seems to be strange and unaccepted even having the accurate knowledge of grammar. The L2 speakers give importance to the single vocables and ignore the other important aspects of the vocables like form, meaning and use of the words. They do not learn which particular word takes with it which words frequently. They have tendency to memorize the vocables in isolation. Resultantly, they disregard the acquisition of collocations. Mostly, they make collocations with the interference of native language and it takes them to the erroneous understanding of the meaning. To understand the meaning of the texts, understanding of collocations is essential.

4. Conclusion

Getting the knowledge of collocations for L2 learners becomes imperative because they establish the vocabulary of language and vocabulary is considered the heart of the language. Without heart, no language can survive. The overall skills of L2 learners can be improved with the help of collocations because collocations make the listening, communicating, writing, and reading abilities of the L2 speakers better. By getting the awareness of collocations, they will be in a position to express their thoughts in a better way, to interpret the texts and to create quality written works. The procedure of learning collocations has become comfortable with the arrival of corpora. Understanding of English collocation improves the overall language ability of the L2 speakers.

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