English Collocations: The Neglected Area in the EFL Classroom

Afaf Djiti, University of Batna 2, a.djiti@univ-batna2.dz

Hachemi Aboubou, University of Batna 2, hachabou@Hotmail.com

Abstract

One of the most important aspects of English language teaching and learning that is not receiving considerable attention in EFL classroom is English collocation. The aim of the current study is to investigate if EFL students are aware of the concept of English collocations. The aim is also to explore teachers' attitudes towards teaching collocations in the EFL classroom. Data were collected through two questionnaires administered to Algerian first-year EFL students and teachers at the department of English, Batna 2 University. The results revealed that students are completely unaware of the concept of collocation as it is kept out of view in the language classroom. Teachers, on the other hand, consider English collocations as an important element of foreign language teaching and learning, yet they do not yield collocations their due place in EFL classroom. This, in turn, negatively impacted students' overall language performance. On the basis of the findings of this study, some recommendations are proposed to raise students' collocational awareness and use.

Key Words: English collocations; aware; teachers' attitudes; teaching collocations; language performance.

Résumé

L'un des aspects les plus importants de l'enseignement et de l'apprentissage de la langue anglaise qui ne reçoit pas une attention considérable dans la classe EFL est la collocation de l'anglais. Le but de l'étude actuelle est de vérifier si les étudiants EFL connaissent le concept de collocations anglaises. L'objectif est également d'explorer les attitudes des enseignants envers l'enseignement des collocations dans la classe EFL. Les données ont été recueillies au moyen de deux questionnaires adressés aux étudiants algériens de première année d'EFL et aux professeurs de département d'anglais de l'Université Batna 2. Les résultats ont révélé que les étudiants sont complètement inconscients du concept de collocation qui est gardé hors de vue dans la classe de langue. Les enseignants, d'autre part, considèrent les collocations anglaises comme un élément important de l'enseignement et de l'apprentissage des langues étrangères, mais ils ne leur donnent pas la place qui leur revient dans la classe EFL. Ceci, à son tour, a eu un impact négatif sur la performance linguistique globale des étudiants. Sur la base des conclusions de cette étude, certaines recommandations sont proposées pour sensibiliser les étudiants aux collocations anglaises et a leur utilisation.

Mots clés : collocations anglaises ; conscient ; attitudes des enseignants ; l'enseignement des collocations ; performance linguistique.

الملخص

تعتبر المتلازمات اللفظية أحد أهم جوانب وتعليم اللغة الإنجليزية التي لا تحظ باهتمام كبير في قسم اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية.الهدف من الدراسة الحالية هو التحقيق فيما إذا كان طلاب اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية على دراية بالمتلازمات اللفظية. والهدف من ذلك أيضا هو استقصاء مواقف الاساتدة اتجاه تدريس المتلازمات اللفظية في قسم اللغة الإنجليزية. تم جمع البيانات من خلال استبيانين موجهين إلى كل من طلاب السنة الأولى لغة إنجليزية ومدرسين في قسم اللغة الإنجليزية ، جامعة باتنة 2. وكشفت النتائج أن الطلاب غافلون تماما عن مفهوم المتلازمات اللفظية لانها مغيبة في قسم اللغة. ومن ناحية أخرى ، يعتبر المدرسون المتلازمات اللفظية للغة الإنجليزية عنصرا هاما في تعليم وتعلم اللغة الأجنبية ، ولكنهم لا يولونها مكانها المناسب في قسم اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية. وهذا بدوره يؤثر سلبا على أداء طلاب اللغة عموما. واستنادا إلى نتائج هذه الدراسة ، تم اقتراح بعض التوصيات لزيادة وعي الطلاب بالمتلازمات اللفظية وطرق استخدامها.

الكلمات المفاتيح: المتلازمات اللفظية للغة الإنجليزية ، على دراية ، مواقف الاساتدة ، تدريس المتلازمات اللفظية ، الاداء اللغوي.

General Introduction

Acquiring good vocabulary and using it appropriately are one of the central elements of language learning and teaching. Following Milton (2009), vocabulary is not a facultative or an unessential component of language learning; rather, it is of great importance as "words are the building block of language and without them, there is no language" (Milton, 2009, p.3).

In fact, one would be surprised to know that this recognition of the pivotal role of vocabulary in second language learning comes to the front after long neglect in classroom teaching practices. According to Lewis (1993), "lexis is the core or heart of language but in language teaching has always been the Cinderella" (p.89). Throughout all the approaches of second/ foreign language teaching, vocabulary was completely disregarded or given a secondary position. In this respect, Decarrico (2001) stated that "vocabulary acquisition could take care of itself" (p.285). Hence, there is no need to teach vocabulary as it can be assimilated in a natural way, i.e., exposing learners to the language would cause vocabulary learning.

Nevertheless, with the advancement of computer-based studies of language (Corpus linguistics) in the late 1980s, language researchers began to shift their attention towards the ultimate significance of teaching vocabulary in the language classroom. In this regard, Schmitt (2000) pointed out "evidence from large corpora shows that there is more lexical patterning than ever imagined and that much of what was previously considered grammar is actually constrained by lexical choices" (p. 14).

As a result of research in corpus linguistics, the lexical approaches to language teaching came to the fore and accentuated the valuable role of vocabulary and lexis in language teaching (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). One of the pioneers of lexical approaches who put forward the lexical approach to language teaching and learning is Lewis (1993). He indicated that the lexical approach embraces many of the tenets of the communicative approach, yet with a greater consciousness of the crucial role of lexis in the teaching /learning process. Lewis (2008) further added that" language consists of grammaticalized lexis, not lexicalized grammar" (p.13). Putting it differently, grammar, compared to lexis, plays a secondary role in the creation of meaning. Nonetheless, this does not mean a complete rejection of grammar. Actually, it is misleading to think that grammar is not worthy of note in the lexical approach. Lewis fully clarified this idea by asserting that "grammatical knowledge permits the creative re-combination of lexis in novel and imaginative ways, but it cannot begin to be useful in that role until the learner has a sufficiently large mental lexicon to which grammatical knowledge can be applied" (Lewis, 2008, p.15).

Formulaic language or word combinations are, then, the core of language learning. A large part of language is composed of ready-made word combinations that are stocked for future retrieval and use (Wray, 2002). The use of these latter identifies the native from non-native speakers (Conklin & Schmitt, 2008).

A subsection of word combinations is collocation. Lewis (2000) opined, "The single most important kind of chunk is collocation" (p. 8). According to Sinclair (1991), collocations are "items that occur physically together or have stronger chances of being mentioned together" (p.170). Simply put, collocations refer to two or more words that tend to collocate together arbitrarily, i.e., they are not subjected to any kinds of semantic or syntactic principles.

For many linguists and vocabulary researchers, English collocations are of paramount importance in the process of language teaching and learning. According to Wray (2002) and Schmitt (2004), Collocations constitute a large part of native speakers' linguistic knowledge. This means that the use of English collocations is more frequent in native speakers' speech and writing. As a matter of fact, having collocational knowledge would enable EFL learners to comprehend and use the English language more effectively. Thus, conducting research on English collocations "will continue to be a central area of research for both curriculum design

and language learning theory and practice" (Nation & Webb, 2011, p.175).

Notwithstanding the undeniable significance of collocations in the teaching /learning process, still, these lexical bundles are overlooked in the EFL classroom. Actually, the roots of this problem stem from the neglect of vocabulary in the EFL classroom. As far as the department of English at Batna 2 University is concerned, vocabulary is not taught as an independent course. EFL students, for their part, lack word knowledge and more precisely collocational knowledge: the proper use of word chunks. The focus, then, according to Sinclair (1991) is on the "open-choice principle", relying on individual words, rather than the "idiom principle" which characterizes the native speakers who depend on ready-made word combinations (pp.109-110). Consequently, EFL students face difficulties in expressing their thoughts as they do not have enough prefabricated word combinations at their elbow. Moreover, they make serious grammatical and mis-collocational errors in their language production. In this respect, Hill (2000) maintained that students who lack "collocational competence" have a propensity to produce awkward, grammatically correct or incorrect sentences in the sort of wordy sentences. Teachers, on their side, focus on over-correcting those grammatical mistakes without knowing that they are attributed to their students' lack of collocational knowledge (p.49).

Therefore, the current study aims at investigating students' consciousness of the concept of collocations. Furthermore, it attempts to elicit EFL teachers' perceptions and attitudes towards teaching English collocations in the EFL classroom.

This study also seeks to provide answers to the following research questions:

➢ Are EFL students at Batna 2 University familiar with the concept of English collocations?

➢ What are EFL teachers' perceptions of collocational instruction in the language classroom?

➢ To what extent are EFL teachers and students aware of the great value of collocations in foreign language learning?

The results stemming from this study may be advantageous for language teachers and learners as it would increase their awareness of English collocations, and help them to recognize the great value of English collocations in language learning. In addition, this study will provide teachers with some interesting techniques to use in the classroom for the purpose of raising their students' familiarity with English collocations and their significance in the language classroom.

1. Literature Review
1.1. Definition of Collocations

The term collocation is derived from the Latin verb "collocare", which means to range or put together (Martynska, 2004, p.2). Many researchers in the field of lexicography proposed distinct interpretations of the term collocation (e.g., McCarthy, 1990; Stubbs, 2001; Nesselhauf, 2005; Laufer & Woldman, 2011, etc). However, all the definitions centererd around the same idea: the frequent syntagmatic association of a word with other particular words (Nesselhauf, 2005).

The first linguist who put forward this term is the British linguist Harold Palmer in 1933. In his study entitled *Second Interim Report on English Collocations*, Palmer emphasized the importance of learning collocations in a holistic manner, instead of assembling their constituent parts (as cited in Nation, 2001, p.317). Though Palmer was the very first linguist who brought up the label collocation, it is Firth (1957) who presented this latter to the arena of theoretical linguistics and became known as "Firthian" term (Nation, 2001, p.317). According to Firth (1975), "you shall know a word by the company it keeps" (p.11). This denotes that the meaning of the word depends not only on its semantic aspects but also on its connection with other items. Many other linguists elaborated more on the Firthian term. For the sake of example, McCarthy (1990) asserted that "the relationship of collocation is fundamental in the study of vocabulary; it is a marriage contract between words, and some words are more firmly married to each other than others" (p.12). In view of this, the

restricted or arbitrary aspect of collocations is highlighted in this definition. This means that not all words that are combined together are collocations (Lewis, 2008). Following McCarthy (2005), groups like *fast car*, *fast food*, *quick glance,* and *quick meal* are collocations; they sound natural and right to native speakers. However, *quick cars, quick food, fast glance, fast meal* are not, though *fast* and *quick* are near synonyms.

1.2. Types of English Collocations:

Specialists in lexical units have proposed a variety of categorizations of collocations. The easiest and well elaborated classification is given by Benson, Benson, and Ilson (2010) in the *BBI Combinatory Dictionary of English*. According to Benson et al. (2010), there are two types of collocations: lexical and grammatical collocations. The first category refers to the different association of nouns, adjectives, verbs, and adverbs. It encompasses seven types, as demonstrated below:

L1   Verb (implying action) + noun: *reach a verdict / make an impression*

L2 Verb (indicating eradication) + noun: *quench one's thirst*

L3 Adjective + noun*:   a sweeping generalization/ a crushing defeat*

L4   Noun   +   verb: *alarms go off /blood circulates*

L5   Noun + noun: *a pride of lions / a bit* (*piece, word*) *of advice*

L6   Adverb   +   adjective: *deeply absorbed / keenly aware*

L7   Verb   +   adverb*: apologize humbly, appreciate sincerely*

The   second   category,   grammatical collocations, incorporates a content word (noun, verb, or an adjective) plus a preposition, clause or an infinitive. It includes eight types, as presented beneath:

G1   Noun   +   Preposition: *Blockade against*

G2 Noun + to infinitive:

They felt a compulsion to do it.

G3 Noun + that clause:

He took an oath that he would do his duty

G4   Preposition + noun   :

In advance

G5   Adjective + Preposition:

they were fond of children

G6 Adjective + to infinitive:

it was necessary to supervise them closely

G7   Adjective + that clause:

she was afraid that she would fail the examination

G8   consists   of   nineteen   English   verb patterns: (e.g., verb + preposition: *we will adhere to the plan*).

All the provided examples were adapted from *BBI Combinatory Dictionary of English* (2010, pp.19-34).

1.3. The Difference between Free Word Combinations, Idioms, and Collocations

For achieving a better comprehension of the term collocation, lexicon scholars provided a distinction between collocations and other categories of multi-word units. Conzett (2000), for instance, placed collocations in the middle between idioms and free word combinations. Idioms are fixed expressions; you cannot deduce their meaning out of the meaning of their parts. To illustrate,   *throw in the towel* is an idiom which means to quit in defeat. Free word combinations, on the other hand, like *a friendly dog* or *old car* are more flexible. They combine freely with other words. Collocations, for Conzett (2000), are in the center and they are of two kinds: stronger collocations to the right such as *sibling rivalry*, *mitigating circumstances*, and weaker collocations to the left such as *strong coffee*, *heavy smoker* (p.74). This view of collocations between the two borderlines is also agreed upon by other lexicon scholars (Nattinger & DeCarrio, 1992;

McCarthy & O'Dell, 2005). From another point of view, Nation (2001) provided an extended definition of collocations and considered idiom like to *take someone in* as a collocation. Likewise, Hill (2000) viewed unique collocations (e.g., *shrug your shoulders*) as a sort of idioms (p.51). This implies that a very restricted choice of words is allowed.

1.4. The Significance of Teaching Collocations to EFL Learners

As a lot of linguists have called attention to the valuable importance of teaching and learning English collocations in the EFL classroom, having good knowledge and production of collocations are now regarded as increasingly fundamental areas in teaching and learning English as a foreign language. Students who know that it is correct to say *to load a gun* not *to charge the gun* and to *charge the battery* not *to load the battery* are showing what Hill (2000) referred to as "collocational competence": "we are familiar with the concept of communicative competence, but we need to add the concept of collocational competence to our thinking" (p.49). For Hill (2000), having collocational competence is indispensable for EFL students as collocations prevail the English language, i.e., 70% of spoken or written English is made up of collocations. Moreover, collocations expedite the students' thinking and improve their communicative competence. Contrary to non-native speakers, who deal with the foreign language word by word since they lack multi-word units like collocations at their disposal, native speakers process prefabricated language chunks with ease and speak fluently as "they are calling on a vast repertoire of ready-made language in their mental lexicons" (ibid., p.54).

Similarly, McCarthy and O'Dell (2005) put forward some reasons pertaining to the importance of collocations. Firstly, they help EFL students to produce natural English. For example, saying s*moking is strictly forbidden* rather than *smoking is strongly forbidden*. Secondly, collocations give the students new ways that are more vivid and precise for expressing their ideas like saying *it was bitterly cold and pitch dark* instead of *it was very cold and very dark*. *Thirdly*, they enable them to improve their spoken and written English style. Saying *poverty breeds crime* in place of *poverty causes crime* or *substantial meal* in place of *big meal*. Finally, using collocations enable EFL students to avoid making errors.

It should be noted that this significance of collocations triggered linguists and lexicographers to create collocation dictionaries like the *BBI Combinatory Dictionary of English, Oxford Collocations Dictionary, MacMillan Collocations Dictionary, Longman Collocations Dictionary and Thesaurus*, and the like. These dictionaries provide good instances of co-occurences of a given word with other words. Hence, the learner can learn a great deal of phrases in context. They also incorporate different types of collocations and many other useful activities to be used in the classroom so that to develop learners' knowledge and use of collocations.

1.5. Related Studies

Different studies discussing the benefits of learning and teaching collocations in the EFL classroom have been recently conducted although a great number of researchers and linguists highlighted their high prominence some time ago. Among these latest studies, a study carried out by Namvar (2012) who studied the Iranian EFL students' use of collocations in their writing. For this purpose, the researcher tested 15 postgraduate students through using a writing test and a multiple choice collocation test which encompassed 50 items, between lexical and grammatical collocations, chosen from the *Oxford Collocation Dictionary*. The results showed that the Iranian students' difficulties with grammatical and lexical collocations in their writing were attributed to the negative first language transfer. Besides, the findings revealed that there is a relationship between Participants' knowledge of collocations as assessed by their achievement in the collocational test and their language proficiency as assessed by the writing test marks.

Another study conducted by Gaballa and Al-Kayri (2014), investigated the productive and

receptive collocational knowledge of 68 Arab students learning English as a foreign language at Taif University. Three gap- filling tests: verb +noun, adjective +noun, verb+ preposition, were used to evaluate the participants' productive knowledge of collocations, plus the appropriate judgment test to assess their ability to determine the right collocations. The results indicated the students' poor knowledge of English collocations which, in their opinion, was related to the impact of subjects' learning environment on the acquirement of English collocations.

Teaching English collocations to develop learners' speaking fluency was another area of research that drew the researchers 'attention. Sarvari, Gukani, and Khomami (2016), conducted an experimental study to examine whether or not EFL learners' speaking fluency would be improved through teaching collocations. 38 students participated in the study; they were equally split into two groups: a control group and an experimental group. The former group was taught following the traditional method of teaching lexis, whereas the latter group was exposed to collocations. An IELTS speaking task was used to assess both groups' performance. Results of t-test showed that the experimental group did far better than the control group.

Cüneyt Demir (2018), on the other hand, analyzed a hundred English language teaching research articles composed by native speakers to raise awareness of the significance of collocations, and, more particularly, to find any relation between the proper use of collocations and native fluency in academic writing. The researcher found that the concerned native speakers used a great number of collocations in their writings, and this was the key to achieving fluency in academic writing.

To conclude, the above-mentioned studies demonstrated the students' poor knowledge and difficulties with collocations and how teaching collocations in the EFL classroom raised their awareness of the importance of collocations and helped them in improving their language proficiency. Thus, more attention should be paid to teaching and learning collocations for the benefit of language learners.

2. Methodology

2.1. Research Method

To provide responses to the posed research questions and reach the settled aims, the descriptive method was opted for in this study. The reason behind this choice is the reliance of this method on the in-depth investigation of a certain problem for getting knowledge about how to overcome and improve the current circumstance. Regarding this, Burns and Grove clearly stated that "Descriptive designs help to identify problems in current practice with a view to improve outcomes" (Burns and Grove, 2001, p. 248).

2.2. Data Collection Tool

Concerning data gathering tool, two questionnaires, one administered to students and the other to teachers, were used to obtain the needed information. This tool gives a good deal of data in a short span of time (Brown, 1998). The aim behind the students' questionnaire was to check their awareness of the collocation concept and their difficulties with word combinations. Teachers' questionnaires, on the the other hand, sought to determine their perceptions of teaching English collocations in the EFL classroom. The questionnaire Comprised multiple choice questions, close and open-ended questions. Data were therefore analyzed quantitatively and qualitatively.

2.3. Sample of the Study

The study was carried out at the level of the department of English language at Batna 2 University. The informants that participated were first-year EFL students and their teachers of oral and written expression. Regarding students, 60 first-year EFL students, between males and females, participated in the study. Their ages were between 18 and 27 years old. These students were randomly chosen out of 421 students so that to give every student the opportunity to be selected.

In regards to teachers, the study covered 10, between written and oral expression, teachers. All of them are full-time teachers. Their experience in teaching oral and written expression ranged from 8 to 20 years. 5 of them were teaching written expression, and the rest were teaching oral expression at the department of English. The concerned teachers were selected through purposive sampling on account of their different teaching experience and qualifications, and their readiness to voice their opinions regarding the subject matter.

2.4. Data Analysis and Discussion of Findings

2.4.1. Students' Questionnaire Analysis

Item 1: Do you think that having a good command of vocabulary is important in learning English as a foreign language?
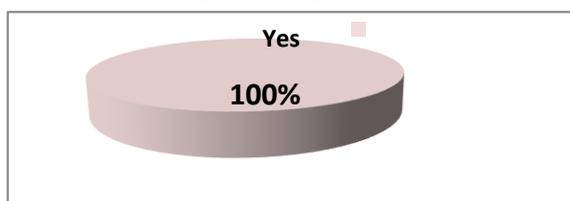
Figure N° 1: Students' Perceptions of Vocabulary

All participants (100%) considered vocabulary as an important aspect of language learning. This indicates their awareness of the significance of vocabulary. Having a good knowledge of vocabulary is very crucial in learning English as a foreign language.

Item 2: In your opinion, what does it mean to know a word?
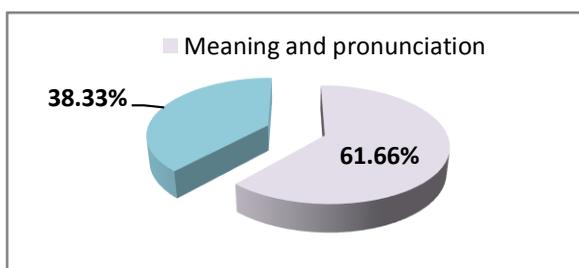
Figure N°2: Students' Word Knowledge

Regarding this question, the respondents provided the following suggestions: (61.66 %) of participants declared that to know a word is to know its meaning and pronunciation. The rest of them

(38.33%) viewed knowledge of word as knowledge of meaning only.

The students 'answers to this question were between meaning and pronunciation and meaning only. This highlights the participants' very restricted view of word knowledge.

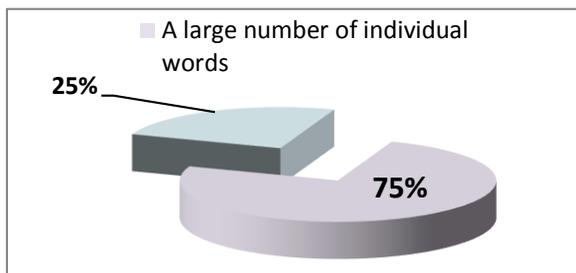**Item 3: A large vocabulary can be learned through learning and memorizing:**

Figure N°3: Students' Strategies of Learning and Memorizing Words

The vast majority of respondents (75%) stated that large vocabulary can be learned through learning and memorizing words in isolation. After memorizing these new words in their mental lexicon, they retrieve them for subsequent use. Only (25%) of participants declared that the adequate way of learning new words is via learning and memorizing words in combinations. Unlike the first category of students, these students have the right strategy of learning a new vocabulary.

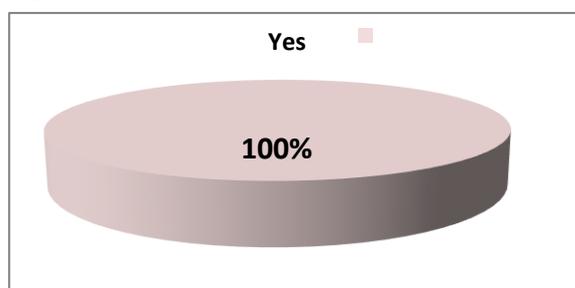**Item 4: Do you use a dictionary for looking up new words?**

Figure N°4: Students' Reliance on a Dictionary

All the participants (100 %) confirmed that they use a dictionary to check up on new words. This is very important in learning a foreign language for it would enable them to enrich their vocabulary.

Item 5: If yes, which one do you use to help you learn new vocabulary? (If you check more than one, put them in order of importance)
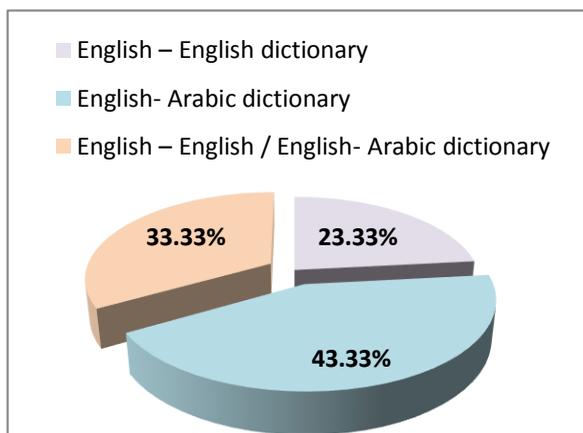

Figure N° 5: Different Dictionaries Used by Students

Reliance on monolingual or even bilingual dictionaries was students' proposals to this question. The great proportion of students (43.33 %) use English- Arabic dictionaries. This shows their total reliance on their first language to understand the target language. (33.33%) of students check, first, English – English dictionaries, and then English – Arabic dictionaries. This may indicate their misunderstanding of the target word, so they depend on English- Arabic dictionary, or they approximately get its meaning and just want to verify its equivalent in Arabic for further clarification. Only (23.33 %) of participants rely on English – English dictionaries. This denotes that they are unconsciously learning words in combinations as their meaning differs in different contexts.

Item 6: Have you ever used a collocation dictionary? (Hard copies or those available online)
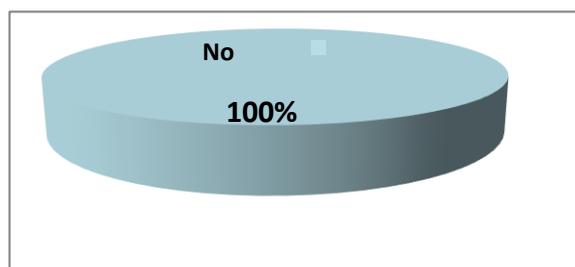

Figure N° 6: Students' use of Collocation Dictionary

All the participants (100%) reported that they have never used collocation dictionary. This shows

their unawareness of the valuable importance of checking such a dictionary.

Item 7: Regarding Collocations, do you know what is meant by the term collocation?
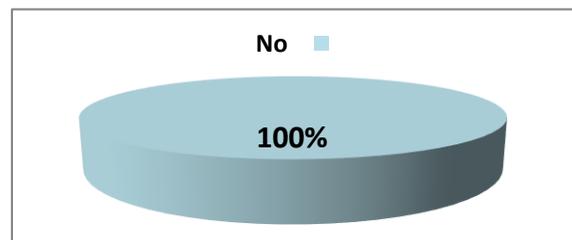

Figure N°7: Students' Familiarity with the Concept of Collocation

None of the respondents provided a yes answer to this question. All of them were not knowledgeable of what collocations are.

Item 8: When writing or speaking English, do you encounter difficulties in combining words correctly?
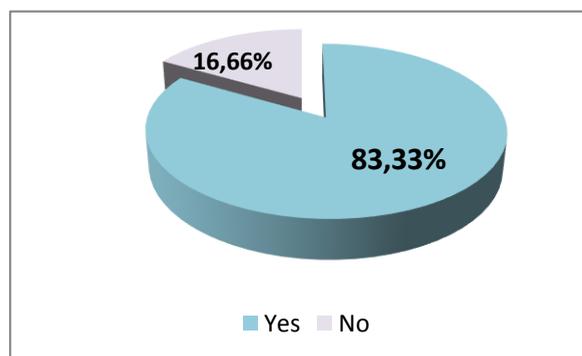

Figure N°8: Students' Difficulties with Word Combinations

The high majority of participants (83.33%) declared that they tend to miscombine words when trying to communicate their ideas while speaking or writing. This means that their vocabulary stock in terms of collocations is so scarce. Only (16.66 %) declared that they do not face such difficulties. What should be noted concerning this question is that students tend to, correctly or incorrectly, associate words together without knowing that this is labeled collocation.

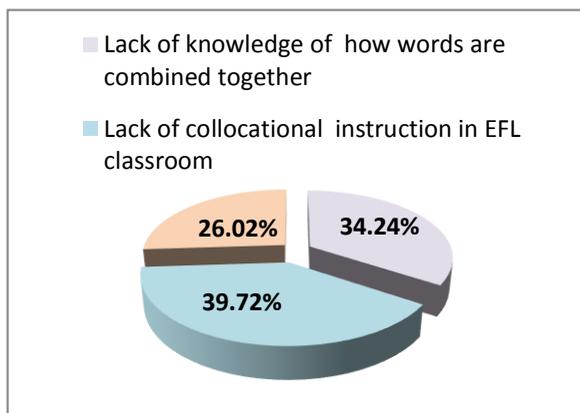**Item 9:** *If yes, is this because of:*

Figure N°9: Difficulties Faced when Combining Words

In answering this question, the students opted for more than one choice. (39.72%) of students declared that they have never been taught how words go hand in hand. This is because teaching English collocations in the EFL classroom is completely ignored, and this affected the way they speak and write in English. (34.24%) of respondents attributed their miscombination of words to their unawareness of how words co-occur together. This is assigned to their wrong habit of only noting individual words and not chunks of the target language. (26.02%) stated that they tend to rely on their first language when speaking or writing as they do not have ready-made word associations at their disposal, and this resulted in collocational errors. They combine English words the same way they combine Arabic words together.

2.4.2. Teachers' Questionnaire

Item 1: *Is teaching vocabulary through collocations a part of your teaching practices?*
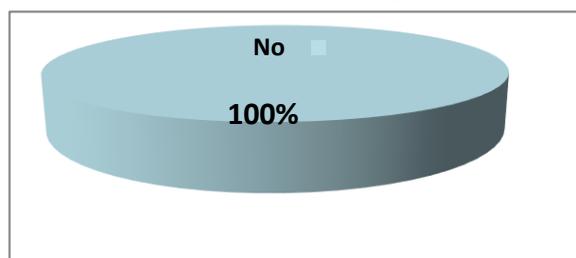

Figure N°10: Teachers' Perception of Teaching Vocabulary via Collocations

All the teachers gave no answer to this question. Teaching collocations is not receiving teachers' attention. They are completely overlooked in the EFL classroom.

Item 2: *Do you think that having a good knowledge of English collocations is important for learning English as a foreign language?*
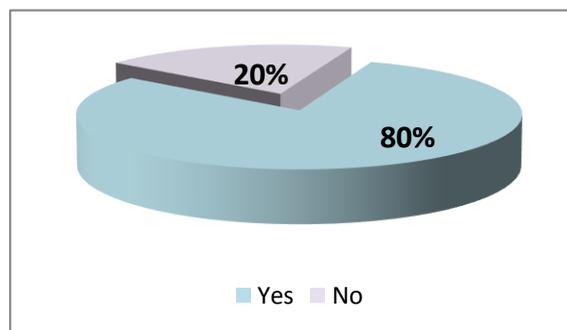

Figure N°11: Teachers'Views Regarding the Importance of English Collocations

Surprisingly, the overwhelming majority of the participant teachers (80%) considered the knowledge and correct use of English collocations as important in learning the English language though they do not raise their students' consciousness of collocations and their significance in the EFL classroom. This is confirmed through their answers to the first question. For the rest (20%) of teachers, collocations, as compared to grammar and communication skills, are less important in the language classroom. This pinpoints the concerned teachers' unawareness of the contribution of collocational knowledge to the development of students' accuracy, fluency, and collocational competence.

Item 3: *If yes, what prevents you from teaching English collocations?*

The common reason afforded by the respondents was time constraint. They do not have enough time to dedicate for teaching collocations as they are required to finish the syllabus in time. Other reasons provided by teachers include: not knowing how to introduce collocations in the classroom, never thinking of teaching collocations, the focus on individual words rather than collocations is more appropriate for first-year students. The findings demonstrate that teachers ignore teaching collocations despite acknowledging their importance in foreign language learning.

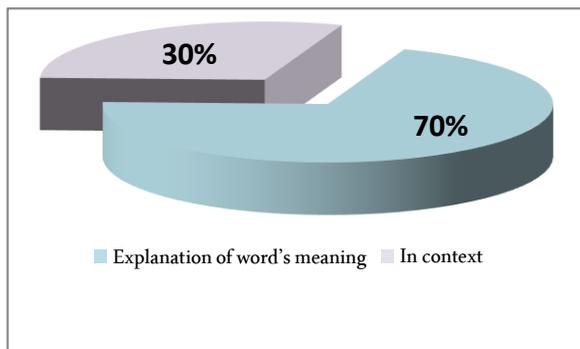## Item 4: How do you introduce new words to your students?

Figure N°12: Teachers' Ways of Introducing New Vocabulary

Figure 12 shows teachers' own way of introducing new vocabulary. The majority of teachers (70 %) indicated that they rely on explaining word meaning whenever their students got stuck on certain new words. This implies that teachers lack word knowledge. Knowing a word is not only limited to knowing its definition. The other (30%) of teachers reported that they present new words in context so as their students apprehend their meaning and use them appropriately. This category of teachers knows that the meaning of the word can be inferred through other words going together with it. The focus on context underlines the significance of collocations in foreign language acquisition, yet drawing attention to collocations is still absent from classroom practices.

Item 5: Do your students use collocations in their spoken or written productions?
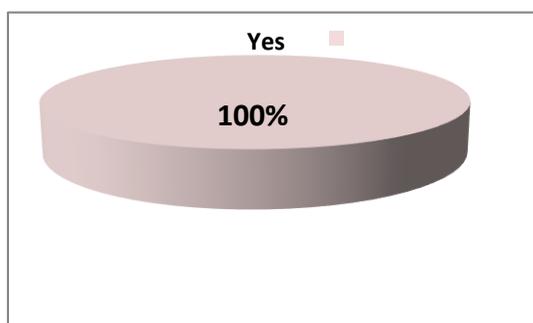

Figure N°13: Teachers' Views Of Their Students' Use Of Collocations

All the respondents asserted that their students use English collocations when speaking or writing. This, again, indicates the students'

unawareness of the concept of collocations although they use them, whether wrongly or rightly, in their speech and writing.

Item 6: Do your students make collocational errors while speaking or writing?
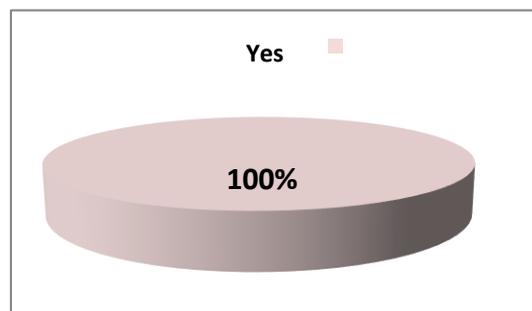

Figure N° 14: Students' Collocational Errors

As can be seen from figure 14, all the teachers confirmed that their students have a very limited productive knowledge concerning the use of collocations. The wrong combinations of words are highly manifested in their spoken and written English; they produce inaccurate and unusual language. This shows that teachers are mindful of their students' serious collocational errors. However, no time is allotted for helping their students to be conscious of English collocations, to notice their miscollocations, and to boost their vocabulary repertoire through collocations. The teachers' response to this question is in line with the students' answer to the eighth question.

Item 7: In your opinion, what are the causes of such errors?

The lack of collocational knowledge and instruction, the interlingual and intralingual transfer were the causes stated by teachers. However, the ignorance of teaching collocations in the EFL classroom seems to be the main reason behind students' creation of untypical collocations.

Item 8: Do you have the intention to raise your students' awareness of English collocations in your teaching courses?
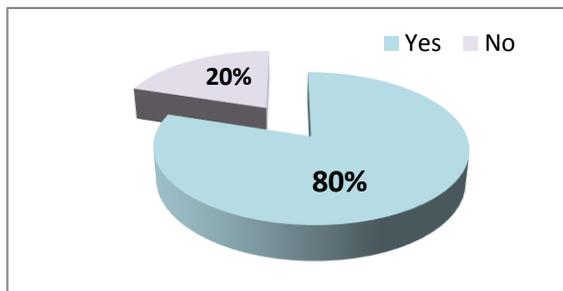

Figure N° 15: Teachers Attitudes Towards Raising Students' Awareness of English Collocations

The high proportion of teachers (80%) agreed that teaching vocabulary through collocations have been marginalized in the EFL classroom, and showed their interest in teaching collocations as this would raise their students' awareness of English collocations and improve their overall language proficiency. This denotes that the teachers knew that there is a missing link in the language classroom that should be covered and not left ignored. The other (20%) of teachers were not interested in making their students conscious of English collocations. This shows their negative attitude towards teaching collocations.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study has investigated the students' awareness of the concept of English collocations. It has, also, elicited teachers 'attitudes towards teaching English collocations in the EFL classroom. The analysis of both teachers' and students' questionnaires revealed that there is a lack of collocational knowledge and awareness of the crucial significance of English collocations in teaching and learning English as a foreign language. Neglecting this central element to language learning could negatively affect learners' language proficiency. EFL Students, as agreed by their teachers, produce deviant collocations that make the target language sounds awkward and unnatural and, hence, impede the students' efficient communication. This is largely due to the absence of collocation instruction in the language classroom, on one hand, and the students' unconsciousness of the

importance of collocations, on the other hand. According to Vasiljevic (2014), "the inability to recognize collocations means that learners cannot take advantage of the lexical priming in the natural discourse" (p.51). This means that nothing goes in their mind whenever they come across words in a given text, and this, in itself, is a serious problem.

The findings resulted from this study call for more attention to be paid to teaching and learning English collocations for their pivotal role in promoting the EFL students' language proficiency in general. Having said that, some recommendations are suggested :

1- It is high time, that EFL teachers consecrate time for explicit teaching of English collocations. This would raise their students'understanding of collocations and their significance in learning the foreign language. In this respect, Schmitt and Siyanova (2008) asserted that "the only way to develop good collocation intuitions in our learners is to institute a fundamental change in our teaching pedagogies, moving from a focus on individual words toward a focus on phrasal elements" (p.454). Drawing students'attention to collocations can be done by focusing on their miscollocations (Woolard, 2000). This would not only help students to enlarge their vocabulary but also make them recognize that "learning more vocabulary is not just learning new words, it is often learning familiar words in new combinations" (Ibid., p.31). Teachers can bring to class authentic materials such as authentic texts, and make their students notice, extract, and call to mind the tackled collocations. Regarding this, it is more appropriate to record collocation in a notebook. They should also give them the opportunity to practice collocation exercises in the classroom. These are very useful in promoting students' awareness of word combinations. Such kind of exercises is found in many textbooks. *''English Collocations in Use''*, written by McCarty and O'Dell (2017), is one of these books which include interesting topics with varried collocation exercises.

2- It is important to encourage students to consult collocation dictionaries: *Oxford Collocations*

Dictionary for Students of English, Macmillan Collocations Dictionary among others, that are available online or at the University library, and train students to use them effectively. This can be very helpful in raising students' awareness of English collocations, and also enhancing their collocational competence.

3- Another important technique for teaching collocations is to make students exploit online corpora resources which are rich of collocations

used by native speakers. Consequently, learners gain native-like competency of using collocations.

All the above-mentioned suggestions are of great importance to developing not only EFL students' collocational awareness, but also their collocational competency, language proficiency, reducing their miscollocations in spoken and written input, and above all, increasing their independence and autonomy in learning English Collocations.

References

Benson, M., Benson, E. & Ilson, R. (2010). *The BBI combinatory dictionary of English: A guide to word combinations* (3rd

   ed.). Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company.

Brown, J.D. (1998). *Understanding research in second language learning*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Burns, J., & Grove, N. (2001). *Understanding research*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Conklin, K., & Schmitt, N. (2008). Formulaic sequences: Are they processed more quickly than nonformulaic language by

   native and nonnative speakers? *Applied linguistics*, *29*(1), 72-89. doi:10.1093/applin/amm022.

Conzett, J. (2000). Integrating collocation into a reading and writing course. In M. Lewis (Ed.), *Teaching collocations: Further developments in the lexical approach* (pp.70-86). Hove, England: Language Teaching Publications.

Decarrico, J.S. (2001). Vocabulary learning and teaching. In M.Celce-Murcia (Ed.), *Teaching English as a second or foreign language* (pp. 285-299). Boston: Heinle & Heinle.

Demir, C. (2018). Word combinations in academic writing. *Journal of Language and Linguistic Studies, 14*(1), 293-327.

Firth, J.R. (1957). *Papers in linguistics*.Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Gaballa, H.E.B., Al-Khayri, M. (2014). Testing collocational knowledge of Taif University English seniors. *Journal of Humanities*, 19(11), 63-90.

Hill, J. (2000). Revising priorities: From grammatical failure to collocational success. In M.Lewis (Ed.), *Teaching collocation*: *Further developments in the lexical approach* (pp. 47-67). Hove, England: Language Teaching Publications.

Laufer, B. and Waldman, T. (2011) Verb-noun collocations in second language writing: A corpus analysis of learners' English. *Language Learning*, *61*(2), 647-672.

Lewis, M. (1993). *The lexical approach: The state of ELT and a way forward*. London, England: Language Teaching Publication.

Lewis, M. (2000). *Teaching collocation: Further developments in the lexical approach*. Heinle, Cengage Learning.

Lewis, M. (2008). *Implementing the lexical approach: Putting theory into practice*. Heinle: Cengage Learning.

Martyńska, M. (2004). Do English language learners know collocations? *Investigationes Linguisticae, 11* (1), 1-12.

McCarthy, M. (1990). *Vocabulary*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

McCarthy, M. J. and O'Dell, F. (2017). *English collacations in use* (2nd ed.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Milton, J. (2009). *Measuring second language vocabulary acquisition*. Bristol, England: Multilingual Matters.

Namvar, F. (2012). The relationship between language proficiency and use of collocation by Iranian Efl Students. *The Southeast Journal of English Language Studies, 18*(3), 41-52.

Nation, I.S.P. (2001). *Learning vocabulary in another language*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Nation, I.S.P., & Webb, S. (2011). *Researching vocabulary*. Boston, MA: Heinle.

Nattinger, J.R., & DeCarrico, J.S. (1992). *Lexical phrases and language teaching*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Nesselhauf, N. (2005). *Collocations in a learner corpus*. Amsterdam, Netherlands: John Benjamins Publishing Company.

Richards, J.c., & Rodgers, T.S. (2001). *Approaches and methods in language teaching* (2nd ed.). Cambridge: Cambridge

    University Press.

Sarvari, S., Gukani, A. H., & Khomami, H. Y. (2016). Teaching collocations: Further developments in L2 speaking fluency. *Journal of Applied Linguistics and Language Research*, *3*(3), 278-289.

Schmit, N. (2004). *Formulaic sequences: Acquisition, processing and use*. Amesterdam: Johnn Benjamins.

Schmitt, N. (2000). *Vocabulary in language teaching*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Schmitt, N., & Siyanova, A. (2008). L2 learner production and processing of collocation: A multi-study perspective. *The*

Canadian Modern Language Review, 64(3), 429–458.

Sinclair, J. (1991). *Corpus concordance collocation*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Stubbs, M. (2001). Words and phrases: *Corpus studies of lexical semantics*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.

Vasiljevic, Z. (2014). Teaching collocations in a second language: Why, what and how. *ELTA* journal, 2*(2), 48-73*.

Woolard, G. (2000). Collocation: Encouraging learner independence. In M. Lewis (Ed.), *Teaching collocation: Further*

developments in the lexical approach (pp. 28-46). Hove, England: Language Teaching Publications.

Wray, A. (2002). *Formulaic language and the lexicon*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.