



بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

**Sudan University of Science & Technology**

**College of Graduate Studies**

**College of languages**



**Investigating the Sudanese EFL**

**Undergraduates Knowledge and Use of  
Collection**

تقصي معرفة واستخدام الجامعيين السودانيين دارسي اللغة الانجليزية لغة  
أجنبية للمتلازمات

(A case Study of Sudan University of Science and Technology)

A thesis Submitted for the Degree of ph. D. In Applied  
Linguistics

By

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# **Dedication**

**To my parents**

**To my family.**

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## **Abstract**

This study discussed the effect of knowledge and use of collocations at the undergraduate level, namely Sudan University of Science and Technology.

The study adopted the descriptive analytic method as a research methodology. Two data collection tools were used, these were a completion test for the students and a questionnaire for English language teachers at Sudan University of Science and Technology.

### **The study comes out with the following results:**

- Limited knowledge and awareness of collocations by the students.
- The deviant answers collected from the test illustrate the learners' confusion over the use of lexical and grammatical collocations.
- The students' mistakes provided evidence in favor of introducing the teaching of collocations.

### **The study recommended that:**

- EFL teachers should raise awareness of the significance of collocations and foster collocational competence among their students.
- EFL teachers should provide examples of collocational differences between L1 and L2, particularly collocations without an equivalent in L1.
- EFL teachers should encourage their students to use a dictionary which provides good coverage of collocations.
- Students' errors indicate that EFL students depend on interlingual and intralingual strategies to facilitate learning.

## المستخلص

### Abstract (Arabic version)

هدفت هذه الدراسة إلى معرفة أثر الإلمام بالمتلازمات واستخدامها على المستوى الجامعي، وهي جامعة السودان للعلوم و التكنولوجيا.

استخدمت الدراسة المنهج الوصفي التحليلي. حيث استخدمت اختبار يعتمد على إكمال الطلاب للعبارات بما يناسب من المتلازمات، بالإضافة إلى استبيان لأعضاء هيئة تدريس اللغة الانجليزية بالجامعة فيما يخص تدريس المتلازمات في اللغة الانجليزية.

#### توصلت الدراسة للنتائج التالية:

\*محدودية إلمام الطلاب بالمتلازمات في اللغة الانجليزية.

\*عدم قدرة الطلاب على التمييز فيما بين المتلازمات اللفظية و النحوية.

\* أخطاء الطلاب في استخدام المتلازمات المناسبة يدعم أهمية تدريس المتلازمات.

#### أوصت الدراسة بالاتي:

\*رفع مستوى إدراك الطلاب لأهمية المتلازمات في اللغة،

\* تضمين المناهج بالأمثلة الكافية من المتلازمات بما يوضح الفرق بين اللغة الأجنبية و اللغة الأم. .

\* أخطاء الطلاب في استخدام المتلازمات المناسبة يدعم أهمية تدريس المتلازمات.

\* أخطاء الطلاب تشير اعتمادهم طريقة المداخلة بين اللغتين في التعلم.

# **Chapter One**

## **Introduction**

## CHAPTER ONE

### Introduction

#### **1.1. Context of the Study**

With the increasing need for English as an international language, studying all issues that relate to English language learning becomes in itself a need.

In the field of EFL learning, the issue of vocabulary knowledge is considered as the focus of much recent research. It has been equated with success in second language (SL) or foreign language (FL) learning. It has been emphasized as one of the most essential components of language learning, “an essential part of mastering a second language” (Schmitt, 2008; p.329). “While without grammar very little can be conveyed, without vocabulary nothing can be conveyed” (Wilkins, 1972, p.1111).

With the advent of learner and learning-centered approaches to language learning and teaching, language practitioners and researchers began to highlight the role of EFL vocabulary acquisition and recommended vocabulary treatment in classroom practices (Channel, 1981; Lewis, 1993; McCarthy, 1984; Nation, 1990; Nattinger, 1980, etc). This Change of direction from grammar to vocabulary is right. Still, knowledge of collocation which is regarded fundamental to vocabulary acquisition seems to be a neglected area in EFL syllabus design. (cited in Zohreh G. Shoostari : *Lexical Collocation Instruction and Its Impact on Iranian Non-academic EFL Learners’ Speaking Ability*).

Nation (2001) acknowledges the significance of collocations by stating that "language knowledge is collocational knowledge" (p. 318).

In EFL learning settings, EFL learners lack exposure to the target language. As a consequence, they lack collocational competence in

English which leads to misuse of collocations. This is true for not only intermediate-level EFL learners but also for advanced-level learners.

collocations are more problematic when they are used in productive skills, such as speaking and writing, than in receptive skills, such as listening and reading. Even if learners can manage to guess the meanings of collocations in receptive processes, they might not be able to use them properly in reproducing the language. Thus, producing collocations requires pedagogical treatment (Allami& Attar,2013)

In the fields of EFL teaching and learning, collocation has become one of the primary concerns for decades. Several researchers have perceived the significance of collocations and the requisite of collocation teaching in EFL courses (Brown, 1974; Nattinger, 1980, 1988; Channell, 1981; Bahns&Eldaw, 1993; Howarth, 1998). They also pointed out the benefits of learning collocations such as increasing learners' language competence, enhancing learners' communicative competence, and being toward native-like fluency. Hence, collocational knowledge is essential for EFL learners and collocation instruction in EFL courses is required(Darvishi,2011).

In our situation in Sudan, and in spite of the fact that English is studied in universities either as a requirement subject or as specialization, students lack exposure to the target language. However, until now not much scientific research has been done to assess the knowledge and use of collocations by Sudanese EFL students.

The study also attempts to direct EFL teachers towards the importance ofboth making more emphasis on collocation while teaching and incorporating collocation treatment in classroom practices.

## **1.2. Statement of the Study problem**

An obvious problem in relation to collocations is acquiring English collocations by EFL learners.

An additional problem is choosing the correct combination of two (or more) lexical items by EFL learners.

The present study seeks to explore the knowledge and use of lexical collocations and their potential effect upon EFL learners, hence their impact of the learners' language efficiency at university level.

The potential problem arises from the fact that reference to collocations though early made in the syllabus students have exposed to at the secondary and university level, the clarity of the concept still remains far and behind. Students had a go at the term in question at their secondary school studies without being told explicitly about the nature and possible application of it. So the image of the concept still blurred for them.

As it was already pointed out that learner's knowledge and use of collocations is equally well a decisive step in learning a foreign language. Recently, knowledge and use of collocations has been well acknowledged by applied linguists and course designers mainly as an undeniably crucial element in the area of EFL learning but its close association with, and effect on learning proficiency still requires to be investigated at length. The role of collocations in second language acquisition is not yet being fully understood. Much still needs to be done, particularly on the possible relationship between the acquisition of lexical collocations and EFL learners' language skills (Jeng-yih Tim Hsu 2008). Lewis (2000) encourages teachers to raise students' awareness of collocations and to initiate their own action research to make sure the changes they make are of benefit to students.

The purpose of this study is to investigate the knowledge and use of English collocations by Sudanese EFL undergraduates, with the purpose of identifying their relationship to EFL learning.

### **1.3. Research questions**

1. To what extent are university learners aware of English collocations?
2. To what extent can the teaching of collocations, in general, be considered significant as to improve the students' standard of English language?
3. To what extent can the introduction of collocations as early as basic school help students have a better grasp of language learning?

### **1.4. Research Hypotheses**

For the purposes of investigating the study questions the following hypotheses are formulated:

1. University learners are not aware of English collocations.
2. Teaching collocations, in general, can be considered significant as to improve the university students' standard of English language.
3. Introducing collocations as early as primary school setting can help students have a better grasp over the issue of collocations.

### **1.5. Research Objectives**

1. To investigate to what extent university learners are aware of English collocations.



2. To find out to what extent the teaching of collocations can, in general, be considered significant as to improve the students' standard of English language.
3. To find out to what extent the introduction of collocations as early as basic school can help students have a better grasp of language leaning.

### **1.6. Significance of the Study**

The study is significant to the university learners who are concerned with learning EFL. The study will hopefully provide suggestions for improving EFL learning.

### **1.7. Methodology of the Research and data collection tools**

In this study, descriptive analytic method will be adopted. A collocational simple completion test was constructed to elicit the subjects' knowledge of lexical collocations, namely verb- noun collocations. A multiple choice cloze test was administered to collect natural data of the subjects' use of collocations. A questionnaire will be administered to teachers.

The researcher will also confirm the validity and the reliability of the research tools before their application.

### **1.8. Limits of the study**

Initially, the scope of this study is confined to the knowledge and use of lexical collocations by Sudanese students in the university level, mainly students majoring in English at Sudan University of science and technology in Sudan. Therefore, the findings may not be easily generalized beyond the subjects of the study; does not represent the subjects' overall collocational knowledge, neither generalized to all EFL learning skills.

## **Summary of the chapter**

In this chapter a detailed description of the theoretical framework has been provided with some focus on the definition of the research problem and the research methodology. In the next chapter some relevant literature will be critically reviewed.

# **Chapter Two**

Literature Review

## Chapter Two

### Literature Review

This chapter reviews relevant literature on the issue of lexical collocations with some emphasis on the concepts of the research problem.

#### *2.1. Definition of Collocations*

According to Otani (2005, p. 2), Saussure's claim that a word is defined by what surrounds it echoes the well-known Firthian phrase: "you shall know a word by the company it keeps"; it is here that the concept of collocation is manifested.

Many years ago, J.R. Firth defined collocation as 'the company words keep'- their relationships with other words. Another definition might be 'the way words combine in predictable ways'. When we think of the number of words in English the number of potential combinations runs into many millions.

"At this point in my argument, I propose to bring forward as a technical term, meaning by 'collocation', and to apply the test of 'collocability'"

These words of J.R. Firth, have established the foundations for most scholars who have worked and are still working on collocation.

Yule (1997: 122-123) understands that we recurrently give the meaning of words in terms of their relationships. He concludes his argument on lexical relations by illuminating the specific kind of lexical relations known as collocation. "One way we seem to organize our

knowledge of words", Yule (ibid) observes, "is simply in terms of collocation or frequently occurring together".

While still considering the essence of Firthian definition, Ullmann (1977: 238) believes that "every word is surrounded by a network of associations which connect it with other terms". Elsewhere (ibid: 198) he asserts that "habitual collocations may permanently affect the meaning of the terms involved ... the sense of one word may be transferred to another simply because they occur together in many contexts".

Stubbs (1996: 173) reconfigures the Firthian definition of collocation as 'the company a word keeps', thus collocations are "actual words in habitual company". This re-echoes his (1995: 245) own definition of collocation by stating, "by collocation I mean the habitual co-occurrence of words". This has also been recollected by Palmer (1995: 75-76) who has reiterated the Firthian definition "you shall know a word by the company it keeps".

## ***2.2. Classification of Collocations***

In English, as in other languages, there are many fixed, identifiable, non-idiomatic phrases and constructions. Such groups of words are called *recurrent combinations*, *fixed combinations*, or *collocations*. Collocations fall into two major groups: *grammatical collocations* and *lexical collocations*. (Benson et al., 1986b:ix)

Definition and examples of *idioms*, *transitional combinations*, *lexical collocations*, and *free combinations* are provided in Table (2.1.) below

TABLE (2.1)

Definition and examples of idioms, transitional combinations, lexical collocations, and free combinations

<b>Classifications</b>	<b>Examples</b>
<b>idioms</b> (= relatively frozen expressions whose meanings do not reflect the meanings of their component parts) (Benson et al., 1986a: 252-53)	to kick the bucket ('to die') to spill the beans ('to tell a secret too soon or to the wrong person')
<b>'transitional combinations'</b> (= 'frozen' than ordinary collocations and have a meaning close to their component parts) (Benson, 1986a: 254); <b>'transitional collocations'</b> (Benson, 1989:5)	to foot the bill ('pay the bill') to catch one's breath ('to return to normal after being busy or very active') to carry weight ('be convincing'), to see action ('participate in combat') to take one's time ('act slowly')
<b>(lexical) collocations</b> (= arbitrary recurrent word combinations) (Benson, 1986a: 253-54 ; 1986b:xxiv ; 1989: 3)	to reach a verdict, to commit (a) murder, to launch a missile, to withdraw an offer, to make an impression, best/kind/ warm/warmest, etc. regards
<b>free combinations</b> (=the least cohesive type of word combinations) (Benson, 1986a: 252-53; 1986b:ix,xxiv)	to condemn/decry/denounce/acclaim/forget/investigate/report/study/recall, etc. to destroy bridge/document/factory/harbor/ road / village, etc.

Benson, Benson, and Ilson (1986) categorized English collocations into two classes: lexical collocations and grammatical collocations (with 7 and 8 types respectively); lexical collocations are made up only of verbs, adjectives, nouns and adverbs in different possible combinations while grammatical collocations contain words such as verbs, adjectives or nouns combined with a preposition or a grammatical structure. A table of collocations (alongside 37 patterns) categorized based on their study follows:

Table (2.2) Categorization of collocations

<b>Pattern</b>	<b>Example(s)</b>
V + N/P (or prepositional phrase)	compose music; set an alarm
V + Adv	walk heavily; argue heatedly
V + N	make a decision; take place/part
Adj + N	strong/weak tea
N + V	bombs explode; alarms go off
N1 + of + N2	a pride of lions; a bunch of keys
Adv + Adj	quite safe; deeply absorbed
N + Prep	ability in/at; kind of; changes in
N + to + Inf	an attempt to do it; years to come
N + that-clause	He took an oath that he would do his duty. We reach an agreement that ...; fact that
Prep + N	on purpose; in fact
Adj + Prep	tired of; bored with; angry with/at
Adj + to + Inf	ready to go; easy to learn; likely to be
Adj + that-clause	She was afraid that she would fail the exam; he was delighted that ...
V + Prep	I believe in ...
V + direct O + to + indirect O =V + indirect O + direct O	She sent the book to him. =She sent him the book.
V + direct O + to + indirect O (no movement for dative)	They mentioned the book to her.
V + direct O + for + indirect O =V + indirect O + direct O	She bought a shirt for her husband. =She bought her husband a shirt.
V + Prep + O	They came by train;
V + O + Prep + O	We invited them to the meeting.
V + to Inf	She continued to write.
V + bare Inf	Mary had better go.
V + V-ing	They enjoy watching TV.
V + O + to Inf	We forced them to leave.
V + O + bare Inf	She heard them leave.
V + O + V-ing	He felt his heart beating.
V + a possessive and V-ing	I cannot imagine their stealing apples.
V + that clause (rather uncommen)	The doctor suggests me that I take vitamins.
V + O + to be + C	We consider her to be well-trained.
V + O + C	She dyed her hair red.
V (+ O1) + O2	The teachers asked (the students) questions. It took/cost (us) ten minutes/cents.

V + O + Adverbial	You carry yourself well [/like a soldier].
V (+O) + wh-clause/wh-phrase	She asked (us) why we had come.
It + V + O + to Inf	It surprised me to learn of her decision.
It + V + O + that-clause	It surprised me that our offer was rejected.
V + C (Adj or N)	He was a teacher.
V + C (Adj)	The food tastes good.

(based on the categorization provided by Benson, Benson, and Ilson (1986))

The table illustrates different collocations across patterns. Examples are given for each combination.

### 2.2.1. Lexical Collocations

According to BBI, typical lexical collocations consist of nouns, adjectives, verbs, and adverbs. Benson, Benson, and Ilson classify lexical collocations by structural types:

(1) verb + noun (*wind a watch, quench one's thirst*)

(2) adjective + noun (*torrential rain*)

(3) noun + verb (*volcanoes erupt*)

(4) noun1 + of + noun2 (*a school of whales*)

(5) adverb + adjective (*closely acquainted*)

(6) verb + adverb (*apologize humbly*)

In sum, the main characteristics of lexical collocations are that their meanings mostly reflect the meaning of their lexical constituents and that the sequences of lexical items frequently co-occur, even though most native speakers of English are not aware of collocations. Thus, it is not surprising that to most native speakers of English the word *commit* ('collocator') will spring to mind readily when they use *murder* ('base') in a certain context. (Wu 1996).

### 2.2.2. Grammatical Collocations



A grammatical collocation is a phrase consisting of a dominant word (noun, adjective, verb) and a preposition or grammatical structure such as an infinitive or a clause. E.g. decide on - not “decide at”, accuse (somebody) of – not “accuse on”. Typical grammatical collocations are verb patterns with infinitive, bare infinitive or – ing form. According to Benson, Benson, and Ilson (1986) in their introduction to their BBI Combinatory Dictionary of English, grammatical collocations fall into the following combinations: noun+ preposition, noun+to-infinitive, noun+that-clause, preposition+noun, adjective + preposition, predicate adjective+ to- infinitive, adjective+ that-clause, and the English 19 verb patterns.

### 2.2.2.1. Collocations and Grammar

It is always an oversimplification to divide language up into categories when all the elements of natural language use are interdependent. So, idioms have a grammar and can be minimally variable to fit the speaker's purpose:

Don't	Let the cat out of the bag
He	
She is just	
If only you hadn't	
Why did you	

Collocations, too, cannot be divorced from the grammatical context in which they occur. There are two important pedagogical considerations here.

Firstly, it is important that teachers are aware of this. The simple collocation *brush your teeth* is for native speakers predominantly used in

the dentist's surgery and in the home when speaking to children or other family members.

One of the most common structures in which it will occur is *Have you brushed your teeth yet?* - a parent teaching a child habits of personal hygiene usually at bedtime. One can imagine a husband saying to his wife: *I'll be with you in a minute. I'm just going to brush my teeth. I imagine few husbands would ask their wives the question that they would ask their young children. We can speculate that sentences such as the following will be rarer than the present perfect and going to uses above:*

---

---

*I brushed my teeth. . .*

---

*I'm brushing my teeth . . .*

---

*I'd brushed my teeth. . .*

---

---

Secondly, when the child hears the parent asking *Have you brushed your teeth?* Something else is going on. The child is hearing the present perfect in a natural context. For perhaps ten years of childhood a parent may ask the question. Children may never use the question themselves until they are parents themselves. What the children have been exposed to is an archetypical example of the present perfect without knowing anything explicit about English tense names. It is clear that the acquisition of generalisable grammar rules must be partly related to the acquisition of lexical chunks containing the grammar in question. Perhaps the inability of our students to acquire some important grammatical areas is based on the implausibility of many of the examples to which we expose them in

current EFL grammar books and textbooks. When we know that native speakers learn language in lexical chunks, it is not unreasonable to assume that learning certain chunks containing these structures will help learners in their acquisition of English grammar patterns as well. [This is another plea to teachers to encourage learners to notice and record language in a linguistic environment in which it naturally occurs.

### **2.3. Importance of Collocational Knowledge**

Research in the field of TESL/TEFL (teaching English as a second/foreign language) has recognized collocational knowledge as a crucial part of phraseological competence in English (Fontenelle,1994; Herbst,1996;Lennon,1996; Moon, 1992). The syntagmatic relations of a lexical item help define its semantic range and the context where it appears.

Awareness of the restrictions of lexical co-occurrence can facilitate ESL/EFL

learners' ability to encode language(Nattinger,1989; Seal, 1991). It also enables them to produce sentences that are grammatically and semantically

acceptable. They thus can conform to the expectations of academic writing or

speech communication (Bahns,1993;BahnsEldaw, 1993;Farghal &Obiedat,

1995; Granger, 1998). ( in Huang, Li – Szu 2001)

#### **2.3.1. Making students aware of collocations**

As mentioned above, the most significant feature of collocation is the sheer number of individual collocations needed for a mature adult lexicon. With limited class time teachers can only teach some of the most

common. If, as methodologists tell us, we should teach no more than 10 new words per lesson, given that half might be learned, a normal school year of lessons will only add 500 words to a student's vocabulary. This strongly suggests vocabulary learning techniques are more important than the teaching of individual words. The same is true for idioms, fixed expressions and collocations.

What teachers must do is make students aware of collocation as a vital key to language learning. On the simplest level, teachers could encourage students to think bigger than the word - always to look for the two- or three-word expression. Noticing is an important stage in learning. Asking students to underline all verb + noun collocations in a text will be a typical exercise.

Taking a common word and asking students to find as many collocates as they can be another typical activity in awareness-raising. As we saw above, with a common verb like 'speak' we cannot say that students really know the word unless they know at least the following possibilities:

Speak a foreign language	Speak French	Speak fluently
Speak your mind	Speak clearly	Speak with a(Welch) accent
Speak in public	Speak openly	Speak volumes

Such a verb would have received scant attention in the past and such attention as it did receive would be likely to concentrate on 'explaining' the difference between speak, talk and tell. As we saw in the task above' however, exploring the collocational field is far more helpful than any explanation of the supposed differences.

## **2.4. Collocational Competence.**

As far as the term competence is concerned, students are familiar with communicative competence, however, the term Collocational competence is considered to be completely novice. So, the term collocational competence needs to be added to our thinking. Any analysis of students' speech or writing shows a-lack of this collocational. Lack of competence in this area forces students into grammatical mistakes because they create longer utterances ignoring the right type of collocation which expresses precisely what they want to say. Teachers often then focus on correcting the grammar mistakes, not knowing that it makes no difference – the mistakes are not made because of faulty grammar, but a lack of collocations. For example a student could easily invent the cumbersome:

*His disability will continue until he dies.* The student lacks the formula *Verb+adj+noun* collocation: *He has a permanent disability.*. Even if learners successfully navigate the grammar, what they produce often sounds awkward and very 'intermediate'. Analysis of students' essay writing often shows a serious lack of collocational competence with 'de-lexicalized' verbs such as get, put, make, do, bring, take. Students with good ideas often lose marks because they do not know the four or five most important collocates of a key word that is central to what they are writing about. In this respect, collocation is an old problem. Only now, however, are we beginning to see it might be a new solution to many of the learners' problems.

### **2.4.1. Storing Collocations**

It is generally known that memorizing first-language definitions of given target-language vocabulary does not develop proficiency in second language acquisition. In a study discussing how to make passive

vocabulary active, Wu stated that ,Ironically, most Chinese students learn the English words by spelling them and remembering their Chinese counterparts. Wu (1996). A great number of students are told to “read as much as possible” to enlarge their vocabulary (Channell, 1981:115).While exposure to large numbers of words probably leads to the expansion of passive vocabulary, this passive vocabulary will remain inactive unless learners can consciously and systematically know a word, namely, to be able to use it in speech and writing, “to recall it, to relate it to appropriate object/concept, to use it in appropriate form, to pronounce it recognizably, to spell it correctly, to use correct collocations, to be aware of connotations, to use at appropriate level of formality” (Cortazzi, M. and Jin, L. 1993).

An organized lexical notebook is essential for all students. Deciding where to put an item, writing it down, and looking at it again along with other similar items is all part of the constant revisiting of language which is part of the learning process. Students' lexical notebooks do not need to be glossy professionally-produced products. The simplest loose leaf binder with blank pages can be turned into an organized lexicon very easily. We need to manage students' notebooks in the same way we manage other areas of their learning' It is easy to imagine a collocation section arranged in the following ways:

1. Grammatically: sections such as noun + noun, adjective + noun, verb + noun, adverb + adjective
2. By common key word: collocations with do make, get, up, speak, etc.'
3. By topic: collocations to talk about holidays, travel, work, etc.'

We do not know how we store language in our mental lexicons. We do know that we store it in patterns of different kinds which allow us to retrieve it instantly. Storing lexis in an organized way in a notebook so

that it can be revised and retrieved quickly must be better than not storing it, or simply listing new items without organizing them. One of the advantages of this is that this makes learning less 'materials-dependent'. In resource-poor countries most students often have access to a simple notebook when glossy UK-produced course-books are financially beyond them.

### **2.4.2. Choosing the collocation to teach**

Just as important as choosing which collocations to teach is deciding what not to teach. Avoid the temptation to teach every collocation which comes up in class. If collocation is an idea you may not have been very conscious of in your past teaching it is very easy to go overboard. They are everywhere. Texts of all kinds are packed with them. Draw students' attention to important ones and let them find and record others for themselves. Do not, however, confuse rare and obscure collocations with important ones. Choosing which collocations to teach and which ones to ignore, given limited classroom time, involves understanding collocational strength. As we shall see, the most important for the classroom are what we may call medium-strength collocations.

#### **2.4.2.1. Unique collocations**

It is useful to think of collocations on a cline or spectrum from those which are probably unique fixed/strong to those which are flexible/weak. Several commentators have pointed out the uniqueness of foot used as a verb in the collocation/foot the bill. We cannot imagine footing the invoice, or footing the coffee. Similarly, we shrug our shoulders, but no other part of our anatomy.

#### **2.4.2.2. Strong collocations**

A large number of collocations, although not unique, are strong or very strong. Predictably, we may talk of trenchant criticism or rancid butter although this does not mean that other things cannot be trenchant or rancid. We often have ulterior motives or harbor grudges while being reduced or even moved to tears. Such strong collocations are not unique, but it is clear that any knowledge of the words trenchant, rancid, motive, grudge, or tears would be seriously incomplete without some knowledge of these strong collocates.

#### **2.4.2.3. Weak collocations**

Many things can be long or short, cheap or expensive, good or bad. Students can make combinations such as blue shirt, red car etc; they can apply the colors in English in a similar way to their own language. In fact, the picture is not as simple as that, but for most teaching purposes we pretend that it is.

However, there is something 'more predictable', and so more collocational, about these examples: a white shirt, white wine, red wine, red hair a black mood, a blue film.

Similarly, most teachers would agree that the adjective good is not very interesting from a teaching point of view. It can be applied to anything – a meal, a journey, a government. But notice what happens with some slightly larger multi -word expressions containing good:

It'll take you a good hour

Oh, he's a good age.

He'll do it in his own good time. We need to recognize that easy words have many uses; they are part of many weak collocations, but may also be a component of many fixed or semi-fixed expressions. Students need to be made aware of their more predictable collocations.



#### 2.4.2.4. Medium strength Collocations

Medium-strength collocations: Hold a conversation, a minor operation. Hill argued that medium-strength collocations are most important for the ESL classroom. (Lewis, M., 2000: 63)

The main learning load for all language users is not at the strong or weak ends of the collocational spectrum, but in the middle - those many thousands of collocations which make up a large part of what we say and write. Most intermediate students will know the words hold and conversation, but may not know that you can hold a conversation. They know the words make and mistake, but have not stored make a mistake in their mental lexicons as a **single item**. [Remember the key point about lexical items is precisely that they represent single choices of meaning, and are recognized and stored as single items.

This, then, explains why learners with even 'good vocabularies' still have problems. They may know a lot of words, but their collocational competence with those words is very limited. I have come to the view that the main thrust of classroom vocabulary teaching at intermediate level and above should be to increase students' collocational competence with their basic vocabulary, while stressing to them the need to acquire more new words on their own through independent reading.

A nomadic tribe is a strong collocation because nomadic collocates with a very limited number of nouns; "*a big flat*" is a weak collocation and of little interest to teachers, but "*He's recovering from a major operation*" is a complex medium-strength collocation. Each individual word may be known to students, but they probably do not know the whole collocation. They are more likely to build the idea phrase by phrase: My father - he's getting better – he had a big operation. Full marks for communicating meaning, but more of an effort for both speaker and listener. It is this area

of **medium-strength** collocations which is of prime importance in expanding learners' mental lexicons.

### **2.4.3. The Causes of Errors in Collocation**

Recent experimental studies made by Bahns&Eldaw, (1993); Ellis, (1985); Farogh&Obiedat, (1995); Liu, (1999a, 1999b, 2000b), have pointed out several factors that may influence ESL/EFL learners' performance in making correct collocations. The researchers discovered that the collocational errors resulted from analogy, overgeneralization, paraphrase,, interlingual transfer, intralingual transfer, and shortage of collocational knowledge. For instance, Bahns and Eldaw, (1993), proclaimed that many EFL students' collocation errors were caused by their L1 interference.

Similar conclusion was made by Farghal and Obiedat,(1995). They noted that the students who did not know a specific collocation tended to resort to the strategies such as synonym, paraphrasing, avoidance, and transfer. In addition, a series of studies conducted by Liu (1999a, 1999b, 2000b) revealed that the same strategies were used by EFL students in producing collocations, either acceptable or unacceptable, in their writings. To begin with, in the study of Chinese college freshmen's collocational competence.

Liu, (1999), found that the EFL students had difficulties in producing acceptable collocation. He further concluded that the causes of producing unacceptable English collocations were mostly attributed to the lack of the concept of collocation and interlingual transfer. The results of the study have been summarized as follows:

- Lack of collocational concept: Some students only understood the basic meaning of the word but did not know which word it would

go with. Thus, they were not competent to produce any collocation.

- Direct translation: Some students remembered only the Chinese translation of the word. Therefore, they relied on direct translation to produce collocations (e.g. \*learn knowledge instead of gain knowledge or absorb knowledge).
- Ignorance of rule restrictions: Some students did not know that some collocational restrictions were based wholly on the meaning of the word and range; others did not take grammar into consideration. As a result, they produced grammatically unacceptable collocations (e.g. \*few knowledge instead of little knowledge).
- Lack of knowledge of collocational properties: Many students did not understand the potential collocational properties of the words they knew. Take the word *good* for example. It could be assumed that most students knew the collocation *a good boy*, but few students generated the collocation *a good knowledge*.

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

- Negative transfer: Some errors of collocation were caused by direct translation. Although phrases, like "\*listen his advice" and "\*wait your phone call," are understandable when they were translated back into Chinese, they were not acceptable English collocations. Being intransitive verbs, listen and wait could not be directly followed by a noun. However the rule does not exist in Chinese.
- Ignorance of rule restrictions: Analogy and failure to observe the restrictions of existing structures were at times the reasons why students produced unacceptable collocations. For example, "to \*make Joyce surprise" was a false analogy of the construction verb + object + infinitive (e.g. "make Joyce surprised").
- False concept hypothesized: Students had misconceptions about the verbs such as *make*, *do*, and *take*. Some students might think that these words were de-lexicalized verbs, thus they could be substituted for one another freely. For instance, students had used "\*do plans" instead of "make plans."
- Overgeneralization: Students used overgeneralization when the items did not carry any obvious contrast to them. It was the creation of one deviant structure in place of two regular structures on the basis of students' experience of the target language. For example, instead of using "am used to taking," students had used the collocation "\*am used to take," which was a combination of "am used to something" and "used to take."
- Use of synonyms: Students used "\*receive other people's opinion" instead of "accept other people's opinions." It was taken as a straightforward application of the open choice principle.

- Word coinage and approximation: Word coinage was a type of paraphrase employed to make up a new word in order to communicate the desired concept. The instance of the collocational errors resulted from word coinage was "to \*see sun-up" (instead of "to see the sunrise"). On the other hand, approximation was another type of paraphrase. It was the use of an incorrect vocabulary item or structure, which shares enough semantic features in common with the desired item to satisfy the speakers. For example, the word middle in "\*middle exam" was used to mean mid-term in "midterm exam." Furthermore, in another study on students' strategy used in producing lexical collocations, Liu (2000) mentioned seven types of strategies that EFL students might use in their writing, inclusive of observable actions and unobservable mental process. The followings are the seven types of strategies:

1. **Retrieval:** It means the students' ability to recall collocations from their memory. Without understanding the notion that language does not consist of words but of chunks, many students have no intention to store collocations in their memory. Consequently, they often fail in searching for the proper collocations they need when they communicate in either speaking or writing.
2. **Literal translation:** Students tend to transfer the thought word-for-word from L1 to L2 when not succeeding in finding stored collocations. They take the strategy of literal translation to produce either acceptable or unacceptable collocations.
3. **Approximate translation:** Approximate translation is a process of paraphrasing the thought from L1 to L2. Sometimes students

rely on their intuition to create collocations of their own and choose approximate translation as another strategy other than literal translation.

- 4. Use of de-lexicalized verbs:** Students are inclined to use de-lexicalized words (e.g. do, take, make, and keep) carelessly and substitute one for another casually in their writing. Owing to linguistic deficiencies, intermediate EFL students often consider de-lexicalized verbs as words that have little or no meaning outside the context of particular use.
- 5. Use of synonyms:** It is the using of synonyms that students solve L2 lexical problems when they encounter the collocations that they are not able to bring out. Nevertheless, more often, they produce erroneous collocations as a result of the insufficient collocational information of the synonyms they use.
- 6. Appeal to authority:** When students are unable to find the right collocation to use, they would like to ask a native speaker or consult a dictionary for the answer. However, if their problems would be solved depended on what kind of dictionary they usually used and whether they could find the answer in a dictionary.
- 7. Appeal for assistance:** Learners have a tendency to depend on others for guidance and instruction.

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

influence appears to have a strong effect on the learners' production of collocational errors.

## **2.5. Some Reasons that account for the Importance of Collocations**

Collocation is important from a pedagogical point of view for many reasons. The following reasons are suggested to account for the importance of collocation:

### **2.5.1. The Lexicon is not arbitrary**

The first and most obvious reason why collocation is important is because the way words combine in collocations is fundamental to all language use. The lexicon is not arbitrary. We do not speak or write as if language were one huge substitution table with vocabulary items merely filling slots in grammatical structures. To an important extent vocabulary choice is predictable. When a speaker thinks of drinking, he may use a common verb such as *have*. The listener's expectations predict a large number of possibilities: *tea, coffee, milk, mineral water, orange juice*, even *tequila sunrise*, but there would be no expectations of *engine oil, shampoo, sulphuric acid*. The latter liquids are drunk by accident, but linguistically they aren't 'probable' in the way that the former are. Looking at a rarer verb - *enhance* - the choice of objects is limited to a relatively small number of nouns or noun patterns, e.g. *his reputation, the standing of the company*. If the verb is *do*, the choice is far greater, but still limited, e.g. *his best, the honorable thing*, but not a mistake. So, the very definition of collocation - the way words combine - gives it a status which we cannot deny.

### **2.5.2 Predictability**

The very predictability of the collocation examples in the previous paragraph gives us another clue as to why collocation is an important pedagogical issue. The present simple is important in classrooms because we can predict its use to an extent which helps learners. In a similar way, there are patterns to collocations which can make learning easier. There are parts of the lexicon which are organized and patterned, and classrooms are, by definition, places where learning is encouraged by using the most efficient means known to teachers and where learners need to be encouraged to notice predictable patterning.

### **2.5.3. The size of the phrasal mental lexicon**

Collocation is important because this area of predictability is, as we have seen, enormous. Two, three, four and even five-word collocations make up a huge percentage of all naturally-occurring text, spoken or written. Estimates vary, but it is possible that up to 70% of everything we say hear, read, or write is to be found in some form of fixed expression.

### **2.5.4. The role of memory**

The fact of the matter (Itself a good example of a fixed phrase) is that every native speaker has a vast store of the fixed expressions, a much **bigger** store of collocations, ready for use when required. As language teachers, it is obvious that we have underestimated the role of memory in language learning. Not enough research is available to us at present to make useful statements about how memory can be influenced. We do know, however, that the most crucial element in a learner's acquisition of a lexical item is the number of times it is heard or read in a context where it is at least partially understood. What the language learners are exposed to



from the earliest stages is crucial. Good quality input should lead to good quality retrieval. Impoverished input will lead to impoverished retrieval.

### **2.5.5. Fluency**

Collocation allows us to think more quickly and communicate more efficiently. Native speakers can only speak at the speed they do because they are calling on a vast repertoire of ready-made language, immediately available from their mental lexicons. Similarly, they can listen at the speed of speech and read quickly because they are constantly recognizing multi-word units rather than processing everything word-by-word' One of the main reasons the learner finds listening or reading difficult is not because of the density of new words, but the **density of unrecognized collocations**. The main difference between native and non-native speakers is that the former have met far more English and so can recognize and produce these 'readymade chunks', which enable them to **process** and **produce** language at a much faster rate.

### **2.5.6. Complex ideas are often expressed lexically**

Typical intermediate student speech, for example, is labored, one word at a time, and uses simple vocabulary to express both simple and complicated ideas. This inevitably causes problems. Simple language is ideal for the expression of simple ideas. Complex ideas are difficult to express in complex language; they are even more difficult to express in simple language. But the complexity needed here is not convoluted grammar; it is usually lexical - complex noun phrases, frequently made of supposedly 'easy' words. The more exposure students have to good quality input and the more awareness they develop of the lexical nature of language, the more they will recognize and eventually produce longer chunks themselves.

### **2.5.7. Collocation makes thinking easier**

Collocation allows us to name complex ideas quickly so that we can continue to manipulate the ideas without using all our brain- space to focus on the form of words. It is an important key to fluency. Advanced students do not become more fluent by being given lots of opportunities to be fluent. They become more fluent when they acquire more chunks of language for instant retrieval. As Stephen Krashen(1982) has pointed out, acquisition crucially depends on the quantity and quality of input.

### **2.5.8. Pronunciation is integral**

Because learners create much of what they say from **individual** words, their pronunciation, stress, and intonation, can be difficult for the listener. The great added bonus to knowing a large number of collocations and other longer expressions is that if learners learn the stress pattern of a phrase **as a whole**, their stress and intonation will be better.

### **2.5.9. Recognizing chunks is essential for acquisition**

Correctly understood and stored, lexical items should be available for immediate use. Students cannot store items correctly in their mental lexicon if they have not identified them correctly; incorrectly chunked, the input will either not be stored at all or will be wrongly stored. In either case it cannot be available for retrieval and use - put simply, students cannot learn from input which they mis-chunk.

## **2.6. Collocations and Translation**

As has been previously mentioned, collocation is a lexical relationship between words, it is a language-specific phenomenon which has certain characteristics that differ from language to another. Moreover, this phenomenon is also affected by the cultural

differences between languages. All this eventually casts its shadow over the process of translating collocations; making them a problematic area in translation. The following sections would thus examine the process of translating collocations from English into Arabic in the light of New mark's classification of English collocations on both the linguistic and the cultural levels.

## **2.6.1. Translating English Collocations**

### **2.6.1.1. The Linguistic Level**

Al-Rawi, (1994) reasoned that due to the discrepancies in the linguistic and cultural structures between the SL and the TL involving their different systems, convention and life style, collocation imposes certain problems when rendered from language to another.

Translating collocation is centered on the idea of finding the exact TL equivalence. As Catford, (1965), pointed out that translation equivalence occurs when an SL and TL text or item are relatable or at least some of the same features of substance. In other words, the problems of translating collocations result from the translator's failure to select the equivalent TL lexical item which is supposed to co-occur with other lexical items, resulting ultimately in producing unnatural expression. That is why, the translator's knowledge of collocations is an important requirement for 'the overall mastery of the target language.

To illustrate this point, Al-Brash gave an example from Bronte's (1847) novel *Jane Eyre* of translating an English adjective + noun collocation into Arabic:

There was a **large public** eager to read good novels.

The English underlined collocation was translated into Arabic by Abdulkhaliq (1994) as follows:

جمهور واسع

Although جمهور واسع is not completely rejected in Arabic, it is better to choose an exact Arabic equivalence that collocates with public.

As Brashi (Ibid) suggests, the Arabic noun جمهور (public) usually collocates with the adjective عريض (wide).

From the above example, we can see that the biggest problem for translators is to be aware of the proper equivalent in the target language, which is sometimes not available in general-purpose bilingual dictionaries. As Newmark (1988: p. 213) mentioned that:

*Translation is sometimes a continual struggle to find appropriate collocations, a process of connecting up appropriate nouns with verbs and verbs with nouns, and, in the second instance, collocating appropriate adjectives to the nouns, and adverbs or adverbial groups to the verbs; in the third instance, collocating appropriate connectives or conjunctions.*

Newmark went on stressing the significance of collocations by describing them as nerves" of a text: "if grammar is the bones of a text, collocations are the nerves, more subtle and multiple and specific in denoting meaning; and lexis is the flesh.

Al-Rawi (1994) argued, to establish collocational equivalence across two different languages is often 'far-fetched and not feasible'. However, he suggests that one of the plausible ways to approach collocations in translation is to examine the collocational ranges of

any lexical item in the TL that are acceptable and potential since "each item in a language has its peculiar ranges and its sets of collocates which usually limit its meaningful usages.

For more explanation consider the following examples illustrated by Husamaddin, (1985) as follows:

To cut hair - قص الشعر

To cut one's nose - جدع انفه

To cut one's ear - حلم أذنه

To cut one's lip - شرم شفته

To cut one's eyelid - شتر جفنه

To cut one's hand - جذم يده

In these examples, the English verb that collocates with the process of cutting different parts of the body is simply the verb 'cut'. However, the case is completely different in Arabic where there is a range of different verbs that collocate with each part of the body : حلم + أذن , etc.

The following paragraph will further investigate the methods for translating English collocations into Arabic. As previously mentioned, this would be done according to Newark's classifications of English collocations. However, the study will concentrate on Newark's second and third categories, i.e., verb+object and adjective+noun categories. The first category, i.e., noun +noun ,shall be excluded due to the fact that this category has its equivalent in Arabic; all that differs is the grammatical structure. Ghazala, (1995) as cited in Brashi, (2005). Consider the following examples:

State university : جامعة حكومية

n. n. adj. n.

gas cylinder : اسطوانة غاز

### **2.6.1.1.1. Translating English verb plus object collocations into Arabic**

The English -Arabic translation of verb plus object collocations would be an easy and less problematic task when they have identical equivalents in Arabic Ghazala (1995), cited in Brashi, (2005) that these collocations have an equivalent Arabic structure, i.e., verb plus object. The following examples are less problematic in translation because they have identical translation equivalents in Arabic:

To solve an equation: يحل معادلة

To write a message: يكتب رسالة

To attend a lecture: يحضر محاضرة

However, to translate English verb plus object collocations can be problematic when identical equivalents do not exist in both languages. Consider the following examples mentioned by Ghazala:

To tell the truth: يقول الحقيقة (lit. to say the truth)

To teach a lesson: لقفن درسا (lit. to dictate a lesson)

The same can be said to be true of the following examples:

To break the law: يخترق القانون (lit. to penetrate law)

To work miracles: يجترح المعجزات (lit. to achieve miracles)

As can be found out from these examples, the translator should strive to find the correct Arabic equivalent for each English collocation since any literal translation would result in unusual false collocation that would eventually undermine the cohesion of the translated text and "strike the reader as unnatural.

Brashi, (2005), asserted that it's worth noting here that it is not necessarily a rule that a collocation in the source language must be translated into a collocation in the target language. The SL collocation can be translated into either verb plus object collocation or merely into a single verb:

To tell a lie: كذب

To pay a visit: مار أو قام بزيارة

To take an initiative: بادر

#### **2.6.1.1.2. Translating English adjective plus noun Collocations into Arabic**

According to Al-Rajihi, (1988), cited in Brashi, (2005), that an adjective that follows a noun in Arabic is called *نعت حقيقي* ( a real adjective). Although its grammatical structure differs from that of the English adjective+noun collocation. Some of English collocations of this type may be translated into identical Arabic collocations Ghazala, as cited in Brashi, (2005). The following examples given by Ghazala illustrated this point:

A smashing victory: انتصار ساحق (lit. a smashing victory)

Straying sheep : قاصية غنم (lit. straying sheep)

Black market : سوداء سوق (lit. black market)

All these examples contain English adjective+noun collocations that have identical Arabic equivalents. That's why , they do not cause problems in translation. However, those which do not have identical Arabic equivalents are said to be problematic. Consider the following examples:

Bad need: ماسة حاجة (lit. necessary need)

Busy day: حافل يوم (lit. celebrating day)

In the above examples, the English adjective+noun collocations do not have identical Arabic equivalents and thus, cannot be translated literally.

In the above examples, the English adjective+noun collocations do not have identical Arabic equivalents and thus, cannot be translated literally.

Brashi, (2005) suggested that there is another way to translate English adjective+noun collocations into Arabic by using "an equivalent collocation with a quite similar grammatical structure, i.e., an adjective +noun structure in Arabic". He further argues that Arabic adjectives usually follow the nouns they modify.

As Al-Rajih cited in Brashi, (2005) pointed out that, the adjective that comes before the noun it modifies is called "نعت سببي" "a causative adjective". Brashi, gave the example of the English collocation **rich imagination** (adjective+noun.) which can be translated into Arabic by either: خيال واسع (noun+adjective.) or by الخيال واسع (adjective+noun). English adjective plus noun collocations that have identical Arabic equivalents are not problematic in translation.



### 2.6.1.2. The Cultural Level

Culture is defined by Fargal and Shunnaq, (1999), as a complex whole which includes knowledge, beliefs, arts, morals , laws, customs, ecology and habits, among other things acquired by a member of a society.

They further argue that word collocations in any language of the world usually associate with its culture. The collocational ranges of many Arabic words may not have English equivalents due to the discrepancies in the cultural system of both languages. Fargal and Shunnaq cited some examples of collocations that are translated into one Arabic lexical item due to the cultural discrepancies in the two languages. Two examples are cited here:

قضاء وقدر : fate

قسمة ونصيب : destiny

Al-Rawi (1994), on the other hand, argued that some difficulties could arise from the socio-cultural differences between the two languages under translation. According to Al-Rawi both source Arabic and source English have collocations that may be used to make the cultural, social political or economic life peculiar to a speech community. He considers the religious field and mentions that in Arabic ,we have the collocations صلاة الجمعة (lit. Friday prayer), while in English there is the collocation of *Sunday Mass Service*. He argues that these collocations are completely different and this difference is " due to the differences in the beliefs and religious background of both Muslims and Christians.

Baker, (1992) gave an interesting English example of verb plus object collocation and its equivalent in Arabic collocation:

To deliver a baby: امرأة يولد (lit. to deliver a woman)

Baker mentions that English prefers to focus on the baby in the process of childbirth; whereas Arabic focuses on the woman. She goes on to explain that to speak of delivering a woman would be unacceptable in modern English. Baker argues that this example suggests that differences in collocational patterns among languages are not just a matter of using a different verb that collocates with a given noun. The differences are rather involved in the different ways of describing an event.

This proves how culture affects the way a certain lexical item collocates with another across languages.

As Heliel, (1990) argued that, translating collocational patterns can really be problematic and further suggests that the biggest problem for any translator is to know the proper equivalent in the target language, which may not always be available in general-purpose bilingual dictionaries.

## **2.6. 2. Difficulties in Translating Collocations**

The process of collocational translation has been widely investigated by linguists, (Newmark, 1988;Lorscher,1991;Baker,1992; Vinay&Darbelnet, 1995).Their studies concentrated on the correlation between the strategies employed by translators and the difficulties encountered in translation Newmark, (1988) has acknowledged the problems translators have to face at different levels, and thus formulated certain strategies that would help the

translator overcome these problems, "when the translator is involved in the process of translation, he is always trying to solve a thousand small problems in the context of a large one" (p.8). Finding the appropriate collocations in translation is a "continual struggle"(p.213). Lorsch (1991) has referred to translation problems encountered by translators even by the professional ones, as "transfer problems". Such problems are attributed to the difficulties in the interpretation of meaning conveyed by the source language text and not by the semantic or lexical differences between languages. Fakhouri (1995: 47-48) conducted a research to measure the difficulty of translating collocations. The findings were as follows: First, complexity relates to the interpretation process itself and its complications as it incessantly presents the source text without enough time to process the target message. Second, intricacy relates to the interpreter himself/ herself and how he/she utilizes the linguistic and extra-linguistic elements to render the natural message in the target message. Al-Rawi (1994:3) argues, some difficulties could arise from the socio-cultural differences between the two languages. According to (Faris&Sahu, 2013: 64), there are three main problems that appear upon translating English collocations: The first one is the difficulty of generalization, the second problem lies in the variability of collocations, Finally, cultural idiomatic collocations pose another problem (Faris&Sahu, 2013:64).

## **2.7. Previous Studies**

### **Study Number One:**

- **Study Title:** Assessing English Collocational Knowledge among Sudanese EFL University Students. A Case Study of Khartoum University.

- **Author:** Mustafa, Omyma Nasr El-Hadi
- **Publisher:**
- **Date:** 2011-01-01
- **Abstract:**

The present study attempts to investigate the knowledge of collocation because it is a problematic area for second/ foreign language learners and the aim of the study is to come out with constructive recommendations for both teachers and learners in order to improve the processes of teaching and learning the language. The subjects of the study are one hundred and fifty students drawn from second, third, and fourth years majoring in English from Khartoum University, Faculty of Arts. A collocation test of 50 items, was used to collect data. The data have been statistically analyzed using the SPSS package. The findings of the study indicated that the subjects' knowledge of collocation is poor. Results of the statistical analysis indicated that there is a significant difference in students' knowledge of collocation between the three levels. It revealed that the adjective–noun is the easiest, while verb-noun is found to be the most difficult one. Based on the research findings, the study recommends that teachers should enable students to be aware of collocations through making more emphasis on collocation while teaching.

URI: <http://repository.sustech.edu/handle/123456789/5723>

## **Study Number Two:**

- **Study Title:** Investigating Sudanese English As A Foreign Language University Students Collocational Knowledge
- **Author:** Mohamed Younis, Mohamed
- **Date:** 2015- 06 - 15
- **Abstract:**

This research aims to investigate Sudanese EFL learners collocational knowledge. Mainly, it seeks to find out how far Sudanese EFL learners can deal with the amount of collocation knowledge they have. The research also attempts to elicit and assess the major causes of learners' collocational problems, with a view to propose some practical solutions. The research's sample consisted of 312 students in their final B. A. year at six Sudanese universities. Only one instrument was used to collect the data, a collocation test of 42 items. The data has been statistically analysed by the SPSS programme. The conclusion was reached that there was deficiency in the subject's collocation knowledge, and remarkable significant differences in the subjects' performance in the four collocation patterns. The results can be attributed to the following reasons: 1- The subjects have been exposed to insufficient quality and quantity of English input. 2- Reliance of the subjects on lexical overgeneralization. 3- Negative interlingual transfer, as the most influential factor. 4- Synonyms, confusion of lexical expressions, and synonymic similarity. On the basis of the findings, the research recommends that sufficient dosage of lexis should be incorporated into learning materials, collocation must have

top priority in English course, language courses should be integrated, and finally teachers should adopt effective ways to raise their learners' awareness of collocation.

**URI:** <http://repository.sustech.edu/handle/123456789/5723>

### **Study Number Three:**

- **Study Title:** Difficulties and Problems that face Sudanese EFL learners Students in learning English Collocations
- **Authors :** Mohamed Eltayeb Abdalla Mohamed, Gamal El-din Hussein Mohamed
- **Date:** 2016
- **Abstract:** The aim of this study is to investigate, identify and analyze difficulties facing Sudanese students in learning English collocations. The sample of the study involved eighty secondary school students. The researcher adapted a multiple choice test for students. The test was meant to evaluate the performance of Sudanese EFL Learners on both lexical and grammatical collocations which proposed by Benson, Benson, & Ilson (1997). The findings confirmed that Sudanese Learners face difficulties with English collocations. With regard to the poor result of lexical and grammatical collocations as well as various strategies, negative transfer ,synonymy and overgeneralization that students resorted to. The study provides some recommendations to tackle these problems and enhance the processes of teaching and learning English collocations in Sudan.

## **Summary of the Chapter**

This chapter has consisted of literature review. It provided definition, and classification of English collections. The chapter also contained some previous studies conducted in the area of the study.

# **Chapter Three**

## **Research Methodology**



## **Chapter Three**

### **Research Methodology**

This chapter will provide a description of the research methodology adopted as well as the research instruments employed. The descriptive analytical method of investigation has been adopted in the present research. The well-known package of (SPSS) was employed for the data analysis to produce the wanted statistical end.

#### **3.1. Research Tools**

##### **3.1.1. Teachers Questionnaire**

A questionnaire, which was distributed to a randomly selected group of Sudanese English Language teachers at Sudan University of Science and Technology, was adopted to collect the desired information to inform the recent study.

A 15-item questionnaire with four components moderately touching on issues connected with teacher training, methods of teaching English as a foreign language as adopted by Sudanese teachers in handling their classes, students' abilities and the type of English language curriculum taught at our teaching institutions.

The teachers' questionnaire (Ts. Q.), consist of 15 multiple statements and two open-ended questions. It was divided into three parts (see appendix III):

- i) Use of dictionaries to understand the meaning of collocations
- ii) The syllabus at university (whether it caters for the issue of collocations)
- iii) Tutors' training ( to handle all the different parts of the contents adequately)

Part one included five statements surveying students' use of dictionaries particularly bilingual ones, with Likert 4 points scale (strongly agree, Agree, disagree and strongly disagree).

Part two included also five statements surveying the tutors' attitude towards the syllabus, also with Likert 4 points scale.

Part three surveyed different issues ranging from tutors' training to teaching at the general education, with Likert 5 points scale.

The questionnaire papers were distributed to as many as a 100 tutors who spend a considerable time responding to the different items. The papers were, and then collected after two days for conducting the desired analysis and evaluation.

### **3.1.2. Students Questionnaires**

Two students' questionnaires are the second tool used in this research. The first consisted of 20 English collocations to be translated into Arabic. The second had 9 English collocations with four choices for each along with their Arabic translation equivalents, and the respondents were requested to choose the best collocater for each base. The respondents had no access to any references.

The questionnaires were administered to third year undergraduate students/ college of languages and translation. Students were, amounting to as many as a forty- five, asked to complete these sentences without using dictionaries.

### **3.2. The Population**

The study population was teaching staff members, and university students of English language. This study was conducted at the College of Languages. It goes without saying, that undergraduate

students enter university after spending eight years studying English at the basic and secondary levels of general education. All the students speak Arabic as their first language, and all of them have studied English for 8 years at school.

### **3.3. Validity and Reliability**

#### **3.3.1. Validity and Reliability of the questionnaires**

The questionnaire of this study, was validated by a jury consisting of five assistant professors specialized in English language. They based their comments on the following criteria:

- (1) The clarity of the items and instruction.
- (ii) The simplicity of items, and how far they related to the subject.
- (iii) The language used.

The jury made some remarks concerning some items and suggested modification for these items. Two items from Ts. Q. were omitted, and the researcher responded to their suggestions, and made the required modifications.

In statistics, reliability is the consistency of a set of measurements often used to describe a test. For the reliability of the questionnaire, the study used the split – half method: A measure of consistency where a questionnaire is split in two and the score for each half of the questionnaire was compared with one another. The coefficient correlation formula was used to calculate the correlation:

The analysis shows that there was strong positive correlation between the answers given to the items asked: = 084%

### 3.3.1.1. Procedure

The teachers' questionnaire was administered to teachers by hand, and was given up to 20 days to respond to the questions, some were given to other teachers to distribute them. Two forms were returned unfilled, and some were lost. The students' questionnaire was administered by the researcher herself.

### 3.3.1.2. Scoring

The set data of the four tests were scored as correct or incorrect because all items allowed for only one possible answer. The total score for each instrument was 48 for the productive test and 48 for the receptive test. Items unanswered were counted as incorrect.

## 3.4. Pilot Study

The pilot study (P.S) was conducted to check out the instruments used before their final administration. A group of randomly selected ten teachers, they were requested to fill in the questionnaire and feel free to write or comment orally on any observation they think necessary with a view to check the following:

- 1- The appropriate length of time needed to fill in the questionnaire.
- 2- Clarity of the questions.

The researcher received no comments regarding the above points from the teachers.

**Table (3-1) summary of teacher's questionnaire**

<b>Variable measured</b>	<b>Measured by</b>
Use of dictionaries	Item 1,2,,4,5 and 6
Syllabus at university	Item 1,2,3, 4, 5 and 7

Tutors training	Item 1,2,4,5 and 5
-----------------	--------------------

**Table No.(3.2.) Academic status:**

Valid	Frequency	Percent
Teacher	35	70.0%
Doctor	5	10.0%
Professor	10	20.0%
Total	50	100.0%

**Table No.(3.3) Sex**

Valid	Frequency	Percent
Male	33	66.0%
Female	17	34.0%
Total	50	100.0%

**Table No.(3.4.) Years of experience**

Valid	Frequency	Percent
1-5 years	27	54.0%
5-10 years	8	16.0%
10-15 years	15	30.0%
Total	50	100.0%

### 3.5. Statistical Instruments

To satisfy the study objectives and to test its hypotheses, the following statistical instruments were used:

1- Graphical Figures

2- Frequency Distribution

3- Non-Parametric Chi-square test.

4- Cranach's alpha method for calculating Reliability coefficient.

In order to obtain accurate results for this research, Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) program version 17 was used for data analysis. Additionally, the computer program(Excel) was used to design the graphical figures.

Validity coefficient is the square of the islands so reliability coefficient is (0.84), and this shows that there is a high sincerity of the scale and that the benefit of the study.

**Table No.(3.5.)**

No		Mean	Std. Deviation	Chi-Square	df	Sig	Scale
1	Poor linguistic knowledge in English language syllabuses affect the improvement of student writing skill	4.56	0.611	25.720	2	0.00	Strongly agree ,
2	An adequately structured written sentence should aid the reader to understand the text	4.24	0.847	26.000	3	0.00	agree
3	The methods and purposes of teaching the writing skill allow the students to	4.24	0.981	44.000	4	0.00	agree

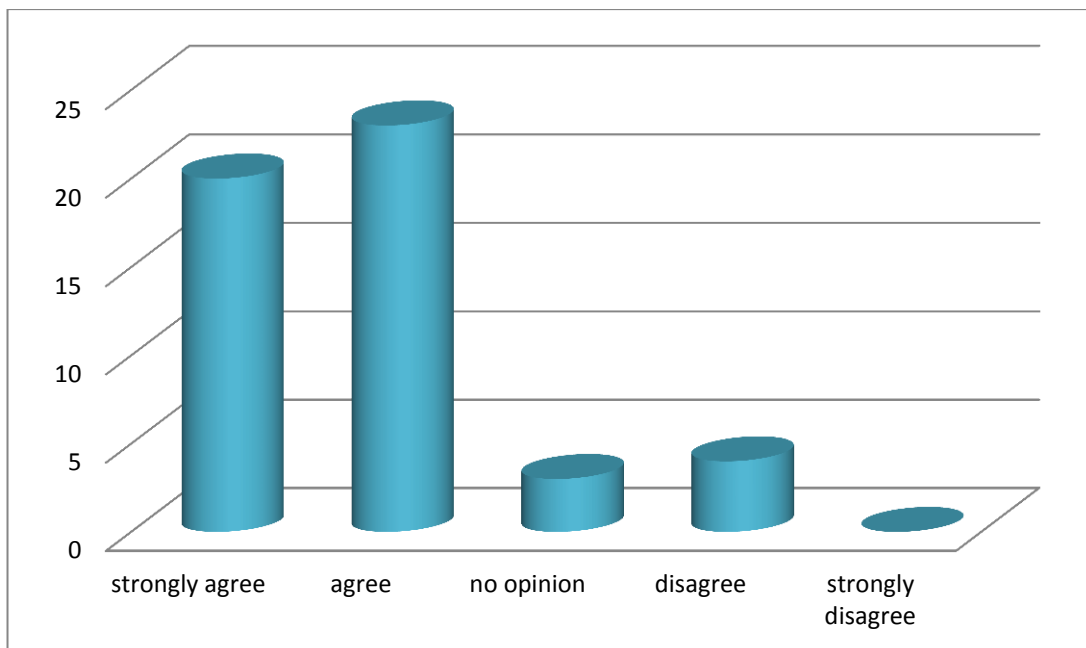
	communicative competence						
4	Activities inside the class help the students to improve their communicative competence	4.52	0.580	21.280	2	0.00	Strongly agree
5	Structures of good sentences help students to improve their writing skill	4.44	0.644	15.520	2	0.00	agree
6	Vocabulary should have an essential focus inside the class	4.36	0.722	32.720	3	0.00	agree

**Table (3.6) t-test**

Pair	No	Mean	Std. deviation	T test	Df	Sig.(2-tailed)
Before	50	10.9	4.38	-5.713	49	0.00
After	50	12.01	2.38			

Note from the table above is that the t-test (-5.713) significant value (0.00) which is less than the probability value (0.05) this means that there are statistically significant differences in the degrees of students before and after the test.

**Figure No (3.1) frequency of responses to the questionnaire**



From the table and figure above that the distribution of the sample by the statement as follows strongly agree by (44%) agree by (28%) no opinion by (12%) disagree by (8%) Strongly Disagree by (8%)

### **3.5.1. Cranach's alpha method:**

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

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

Cranach alpha coefficient = (0.70), a reliability coefficient is high and it indicates the stability of the scale and the validity of the study.

### **3.6. Summary of the chapter**

This chapter has described the research methodology and the research tools employed for gathering the data. The study has adopted the analytic descriptive method. Two data collection methods were used. They were a questionnaire and a test. Steps,



procedures including population sample and validity and reliability were described in details

The next chapter presents data analysis, results and discussion.

# **Chapter Four**

## **Data Analysis, Results and Discussion**

## Chapter Four

### Data Analysis, Results and Discussion

This chapter presents the analysis of data obtained from teachers' questionnaire, and students completion test.

#### 4.1. Analysis of the students' Questionnaire

After checking questionnaire reliability and validity, the researcher administered the questionnaires and constructed the required tables for collected data.

##### 4.1.1. The First Hypothesis

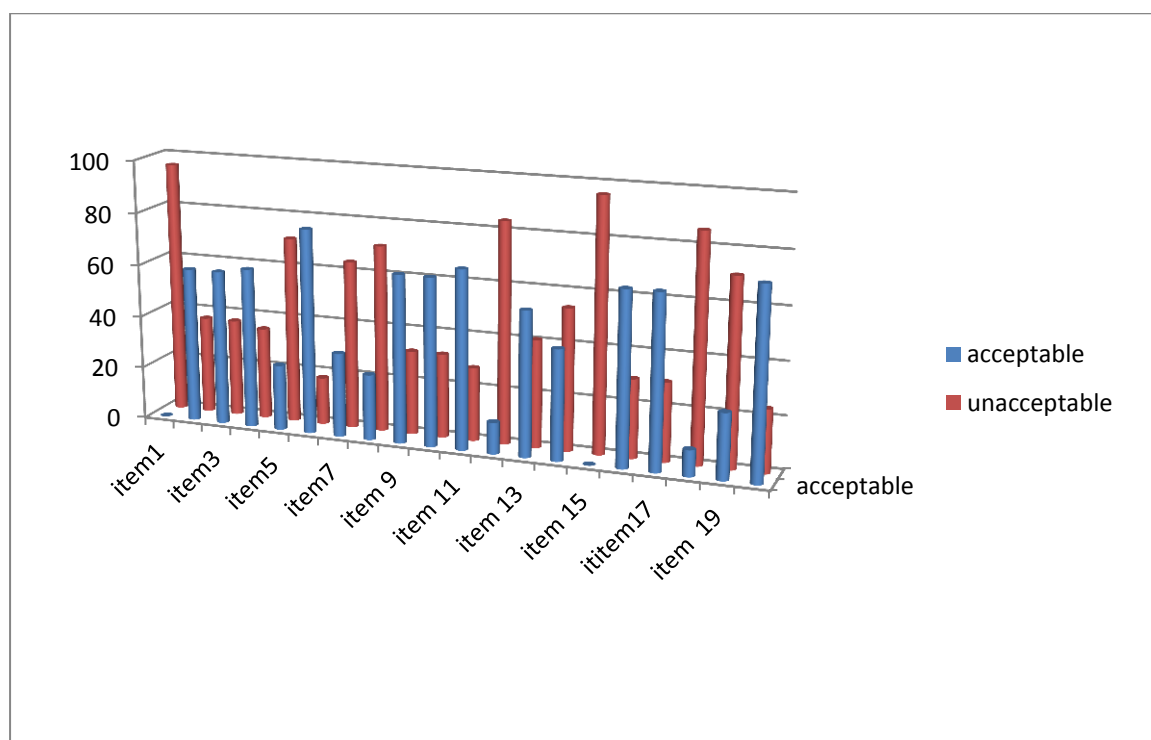
University learners are not aware of English collocations.

**Table (4-1): A summary of the results of the first students questionnaire.**

Item no.	Acceptable collocation	Unacceptable collocation
1	0/45 (0%)	96/96 (100%)
2	59/96 (61%)	37/96 (39%)
3	59/96 (61%)	37/96 (39 %)
4	61/96 (64 %)	35/96 (36 %)
5	25/96 (26%)	71/96 (74%)
6	78/96 (81%)	18/96 (19 %)
7	32/96 (33%)	64/96 (67. %)
8	25/96 (26%)	71/96 (74%)
9	64/96 (67 %)	32/96 (33%)
10	64/96 (67%)	32/96 (33%)
11	68/96 (71 %)	28/96 (29 %)
12	12/96 (12.5 %)	84/96 (87.5%)
13	55/96 (57 %)	41/96 (43%)

14	42/96 (44 %)	54/96 (56%)
15	0/96 (0 %)	96/96 (100%)
16	66/96 (69 %)	30/96 (31%)
17	66/96 (69 %)	30/96 (31%)
18	10/96 (10 %)	86/96 (90 %)
19	25/96 (26%)	71/96 (74%)
20	72/96 (75 %)	24/96 (25%)
total	883/1920 (45.99 %)	1037/ 1920( 54.01%)

Figure (4-1): A summary of the results of the first students questionnaire.



It is clear from table No. (4-1) and figure No. (4-1) that there are 883 out of 1920 acceptable equivalent Arabic collocations with percentage (45.99 %), while 1037 out of 1920 with percentage (54.01%) were unacceptable equivalent Arabic collocations. The first item "Verbal communication" received 100% unacceptable Arabic equivalents , as all the respondents translated it as "اتصال لفظي" instead of "تواصل شفوي". Item 15 "Utter chaos" received 100% unacceptable Arabic equivalents ,

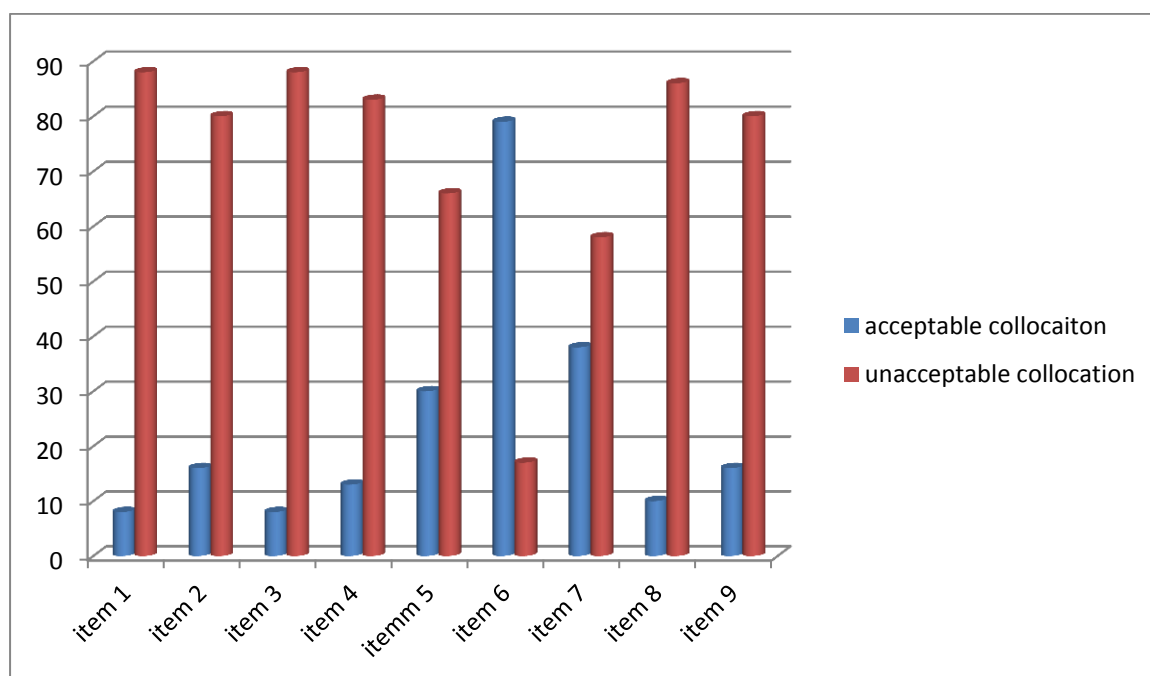
as all the respondents translated "utter" as "مطلقة" instead of "عارمة". Item 18 "Stuffy apartment" received 90 % unacceptable Arabic equivalents. Most respondents translated "stuffy" as "الزجة الهواء، خانقة، فاسدة، ضيقة، غير جديدة". For item 12 "A stale joke" 87.5 % of the answers were unacceptable Arabic equivalents. Most of the respondents translated 'stale' as "مبتذلة، مزعجة، قديمة". For each of the items No. 5, 8, 19 74 % of the answers were unacceptable Arabic equivalents. In item 5 "Drastic war" "drastic" was translated as "متطرفة، أهلية، جذرية، عنيفة، حربٌ ضروس". In item 8 "wild imagination" "خيال واسع" the word "wild" was translated as "وحشي، بري، وهمي، حسي، خفي، لا يمكن تخيله، جرى، شخصي". In item 19 "Ignominious defeat" "هزيمة مخزية" most respondents translated "ignominious" as "مذلة"، "بغيضة"، "فادحة". In item 7 "Ground offensive" the word "ground" was translated as "أرضي"، "عدواني". In "Congenital defect" "عيب وراثي"، the word "congenital" was mistranslated by 56%. Most respondents translated "congenital" as "خلل". Unacceptable Arabic equivalents are also found in the rest of the items e.g., in "Official statement" "بيان رسمي" where "statement" was translated as "بلاغ" by most of the respondents.(item 2). In "Official permission" "تصريح إجازة"، "الإذن"، "إذن"، "رسمي"، most respondents translated "permission" as "إذن" (item3).

**Table(4-2):A summary of the results of the second students questionnaire.**

Item no.	Acceptable collocation	Unacceptable collocation
1	8/96 ( 8 %)	88/96 (92%)
2	16/96 (17%)	80/96 (83%)
3	8/96 ( 8 % )	88/96 (92%)
4	13/96 ( 14 %)	83/96(86%)

5	30/96 ( 31 %)	66/96 (69%)
6	79/96 ( 82 %)	17/96 (18%)
7	38/96 (34 %)	58/96 (60%)
8	10/96 ( 10 %)	86/96 (90 %)
9	16/96 ( 17 %)	80/96 (83%)
total	218/ 864(25%)	646/864 ( 75% )

Figure (4-2):A summary of the results of the second students questionnaire.



It is obvious from table No. (4-2) and figure No. (4-2) that there are 218 out of 864 acceptable choices of the right collocator with percentage (25%), while 646 out of 864 with percentage (75 %) were unacceptable choices of the right collocation.

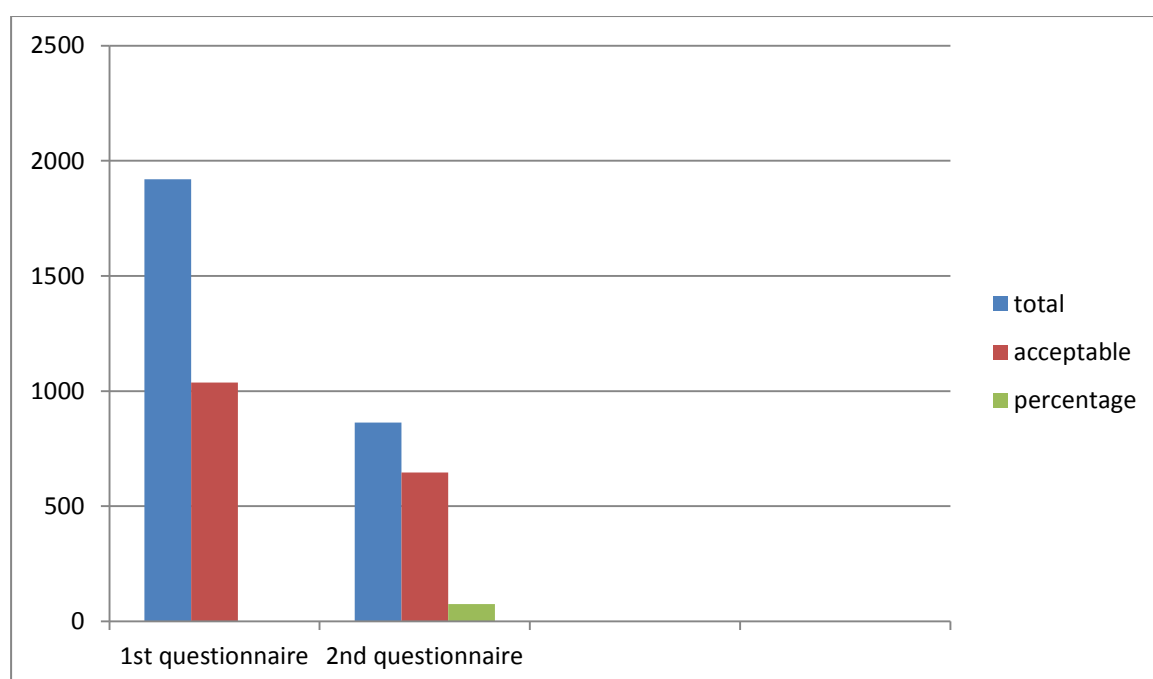
#### 4.1.2. Results of the First Hypothesis

The findings showed that the total number of errors was 1037 out of 1920 translations in Questionnaire 1, a percentage of 54 %; 646 out of 864 translations in Questionnaire 2, a percentage of 75 %; (see Table 4-3 below).

**Table(4-3):A summary of the results of the second students questionnaire.**

Errors in English-Arabic Collocations (questionnaire 1)	Errors in Associating English Collocate with Base (Questionnaire 2)
1037 out of 1920 (54 %)	646 out of 864 (75 %)

**Figure (4-3): A summary of the results of the second students questionnaire.**



It is obvious that the respondents did badly in questionnaire 1, i.e. translating collocations from English to Arabic. Many errors were unexpected. They showed that the respondents generally relied on literal transfer from their mother tongue; e.g., "classified information" was translated by some respondents as "معلومات مصنفة" instead of "معلومات سرية". Moreover, many questions were left unanswered; most likely because the respondent has no clue about the translation equivalent of the

collocation in question. Below are some examples of the respondents' answers:

Verbal communication	تواصل لفظي / اتصال لفظي
Official statement	مقولة رسمية
Official permission	سماح رسمي
Arbitrary government	حكومة عشوائية
Drastic war	حرب مخيفة
Heinous crime	جريمة بشعة
Ground offensive	هجوم ارضي
Wild imagination	خيال وحشي/ حسي / بري / وهمي
Fundamental rights	منطقة أساسية / حقوق رئيسية
Demilitarized zone	المنطقة العسكرية
Impulsive behavior	سلوك مندفع / اندفاعي / عدواني
A stale joke	نكتة قديمة
Classified information	معلومات مصنفة
Congenital defect	خلل مشترك / خلل وراثي
Utter chaos	الفوضى المطلقة
Controversial issues	مواضيع مثيرة للجدل
Blind obedience	الخضوع الكامل
Stuffy apartment	شقة فاسدة / خانقة / لزجة / غير جديدة
Ignominious defeat	هزيمة مذلة / هزيمة بغيضة - خسارة فادحة
Candid camera	كاميرا فورية / كاميرا صغيرة

In Questionnaire 2, where the respondents had to choose the right collocater out of four possibilities for the right base in English, the percentage of errors was worse, a ratio of 75 %, although the equivalent Arabic collocations, i.e. the collocater and the base, were provided. This



reveals the general weakness of the students in understanding and translating English collocations. An explanation for this might be the fact that respondents rely on conjecture rather than reliable knowledge. In addition to this, they rely on literal transfer from their mother tongue. They may not even observe the syntactic rules of the target language. An example of this is "excellent reason" instead of "good reason". Other unlucky examples of collocations presented by the respondents for the Arabic collocations are shown below (see appendix II):

- 1- Robust beating for "ضربٌ مبرح"
- 2- Persuaded argument for "حجة مقنعة"
- 3- Sacred book for "كتاب مقدس"
- 4- Straight behavior for "سلوك مستقيم"
- 5- Gorgeous reason for "سبب معقول"

## **4.2. Analysis of the Teachers' Questionnaire**

Teachers' questionnaire consisted of four interrelated parts related to surveying teachers' teaching of collocations and the learners' response to the teaching of collocations in classroom setting. There are of course some other items in line with the overall concept of collocations.

### **4.2.1. The Second and Third Hypotheses**

*Teaching collocations, in general, can be considered significant as to improve the university students' standard of English language.*

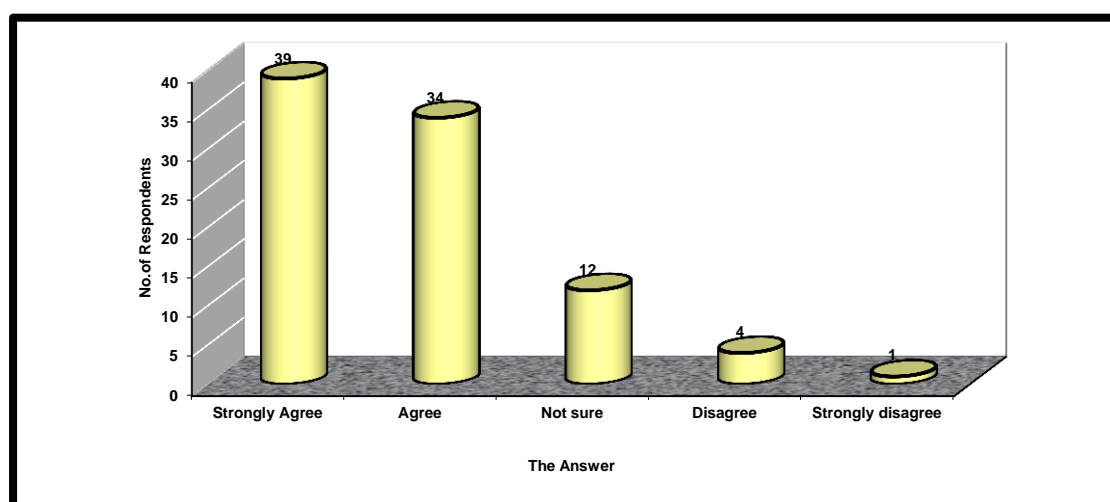
*Introducing collocations as early as primary school setting can help students have a better grasp over the issue of collocations.*

*Statement: Explicit teaching of collocation is totally ignored at undergraduate level at Sudanese universities.*

**Table (4-4) frequency of respondents' answers to the statement about teaching of collocations**

Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	Total
70 (70%)	8 (8%)	7(7%)	7 (7%)	5 (5%)	100 (100%)

**Figure (4.4) frequency of respondents' answers to the statement about teaching collocations**



As regards the issue of explicit teaching of collocation that is totally ignored at Sudanese undergraduate levels the majority of the respondents (70%) explained that the teaching of collocations is completely ignored at undergraduate level which is badly reflected on the overall standards of the students that they are always incapable of communicating fluently either in writing or oral delivery. On the other hand, (8%) of the tutors stated that students rarely use their language fluently in real-life communication, and that this situation could be reversed for better if they were exposed to teaching of collocations. This suggests that the teaching of collocations is to a great extent essential for the improvement of undergraduates both communicative and linguistic competence. This result in itself accounts for the validity of the first hypothesis which calls

for the teaching of the collocations to help students communicate effectively, both in writing and orally.

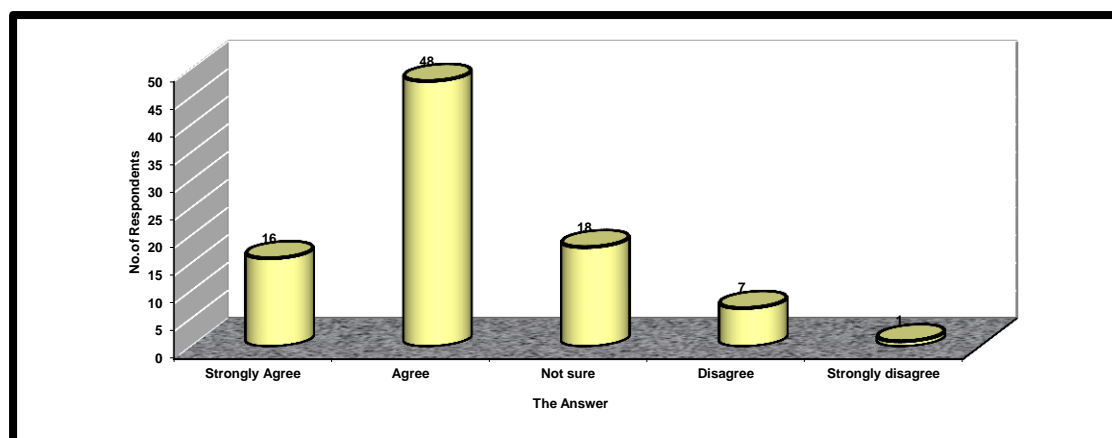
Yule (1997: 122-123) understands that we recurrently give the meaning of words in terms of their relationships. He concludes his argument on lexical relations by illuminating the specific kind of lexical relations known as collocation. "One way we seem to organize our knowledge of words". So at the English Departments of Sudanese university this issue of teaching collocations as part of the English program should be given the care it deserves.

*Statement: Collocations presence in the syllabus is scanty reflecting a very poor view point to their importance.*

**Table (4-5) presence of collocations in the syllabus**

Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	Total
18 (18%)	43(43%)	16 (6%)	15(15%)	6(6%)	100 (100%)

**Figure (4.5 ) presence of collocations in the syllabus**



More than two thirds (43%) agreed that the representation of collocations across the undergraduate English Language syllabus is not big enough compared to the other components in order to bring about the desired requirement. Respondents too were well aware of the effect of the

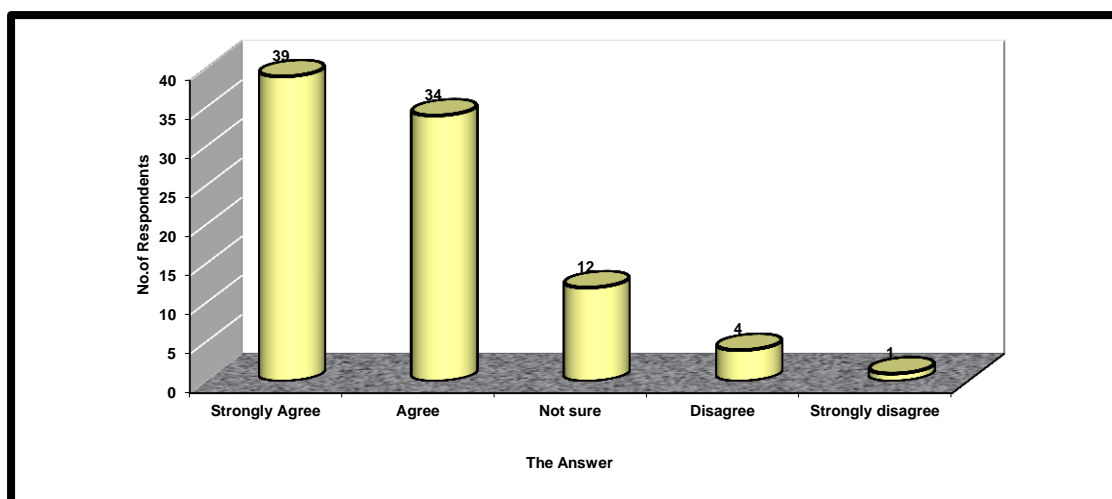
absence of collocation on the students' standard. Students make horrible mistakes both orally and in writing due to their little use of collocations. There are of course other responses however they are in favor of teaching collocations to students.

It is important for the teacher to select a suitable teaching material to develop the students' oral proficiency. The teaching material should be student-oriented, which is based on their level difference. Collocation proficiency has been seen as one of the ways that differentiates native and non-native speakers (Ellis, 2001; Koya, 2006; McCarthy, 2004a; Nation, 2001; Wooden, 1997). If someone says I did a few mistakes they will be understood, whereas a fluent speaker of English will say I made a few mistakes. Why do we say fast food instead of quick food? The reason is collocation. Learning collocations is a good idea because they can give the learners the most natural way to say something; for example, we would say that smoking is strictly forbidden rather than smoking is strongly forbidden. This again verifies both hypotheses one and two.

***Table (4-6) frequency of respondents to the statement "Collocations are not such a desirable element in language learning to deserve such importance"***

Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	Total
55 (55%)	10 (10%)	5 (5%)	15(15%)	15(16%)	100 (100%)

***Figure(4.6) frequency of respondents to the statement "Collocations are not such a desirable element in language learning to deserve such importance"***



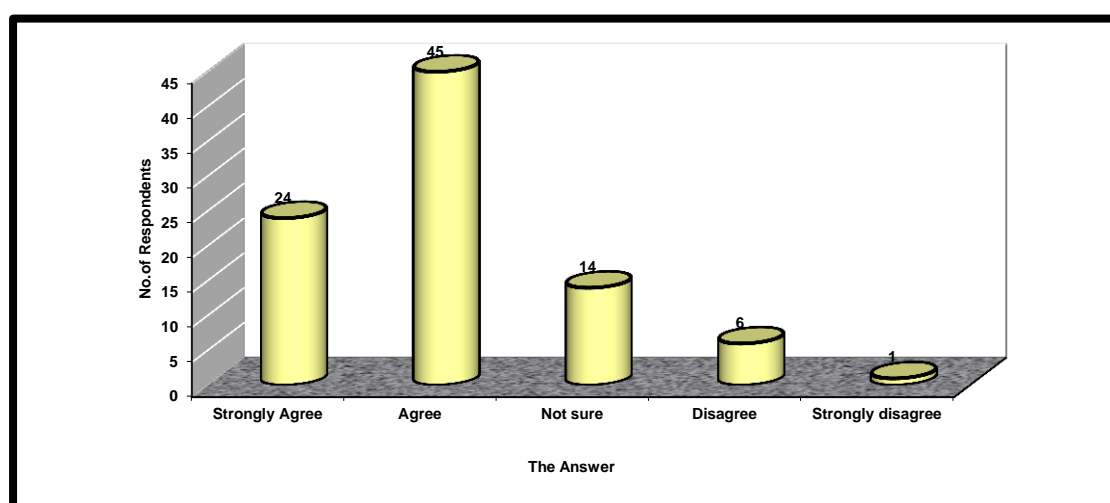
The majority of the respondents do strongly agree that they are desirable and they deserve every attention due to them. It is very important for the learners, when learning a new word, to pay attention to its dictionary definition as well as the type of words with which it is often associated. In addition, learning collocations will offer the learners alternative ways of saying something, which may be more colorful or more precise. For instance, we may say that it was bitterly cold and pitch dark, instead of repeating it was very cold and very dark. Also, learning collocations could improve the writing style. Instead of saying a big meal, we can say a substantial meal.

Cowie (1992) asserts that collocation is important in receptive as well as productive language competence. Carter and McCarthy (1988) point out that the students would have the idea about certain lexical restrictions by memorizing collocation groups. Liu (2000a) also claims that the more often students are taught English collocations, the more correctly students can make use of collocations. To facilitate the students' learning, Carter and McCarthy(1988) state that students will not have to go about reconstructing the language each time they want to say something but instead can use these collocations as pre-packed building blocks.

**Table (4-7) Collocations are important in language learning and much more attention should be given to them**

Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	Total
40 (40%)	50 (50%)	5 (5%)	3 (3%)	2(2%)	100 (100%)

**Figure (4.7) Collocations are important in language learning and much more attention should be given to them**



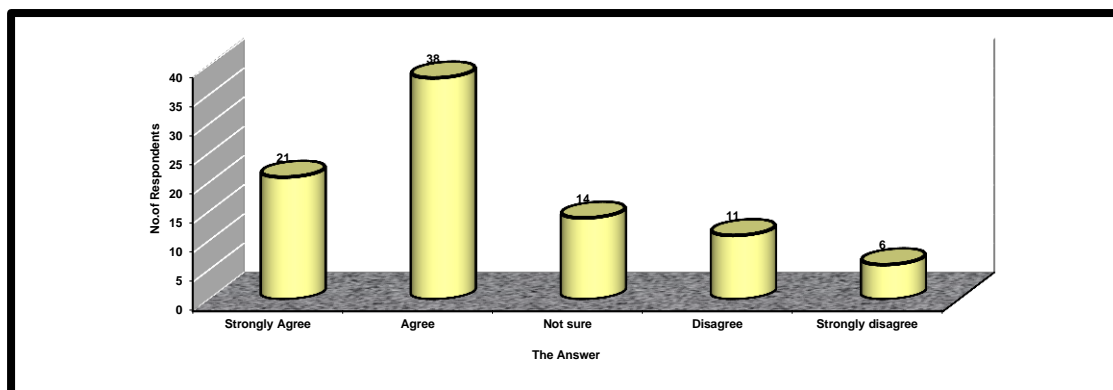
It is quite apparent from the table above that the majority of the respondents side the above statement in every respect. They are extremely in favor of the idea that collocations are important in language learning and they deserve to be given much attention than that shown in Sudanese undergraduate syllabus. This comes in harmony with the results of the research in the area in question. Collocations serve the students the trouble of learning many different words as it is commonly asserted that knowing a word includes knowing what words can occur with it or “the company it keeps” in order to use it both receptively and productively. Using collocations accurately is important in order to produce language with native-like accuracy or near-native competence. Teaching of collocations can reinforce other language aspects. Based on the notion

about collocation, subsequent researches related to collocation have appeared. Collocations include what have traditionally been considered lexical items, as well as structural patterns which may seem closer to grammar and combinations of words that simply go together. According to Benson et al. (1986a), collocation can be sorted systematically into two major groups—lexical collocations and grammatical collocations. A lexical collocation could be made up of nouns, adjectives, verbs, or adverbs. A grammatical collocation is made up of a dominant word and a preposition or grammatical structure like an infinitive or a clause. This verifies the third hypothesis *introducing collocations as early as primary school setting can help students have a better grasp over the issue of collocations.*

**Table (4-8) Collocations are difficult to learn because they are so strongly culture- bound**

Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	Total
25 (25%)	40 (40%)	10 (5%)	10(10%)	15(15%)	100 (100%)

**Figure(4.8) Collocations are difficult to learn because they are so strongly culture- bound**



It is clear that the respondents are somewhat doubtful about the difficulty involved in learning collocations due to the fact they are culture-bound.

Linguists have shown (e.g. Hill, 2000), collocations are very frequent in the English language. Second, they are probably the most common and most representatives of English multi-word expressions (Lewis, 2000). Third, collocations fall between lexis and syntax, which is in line with the current view that language competence is to be described as an interactional process between lexis and syntax. Fourth, collocations occur in languages with varying degrees of restrictedness. And fifth, they are evident in most text types.

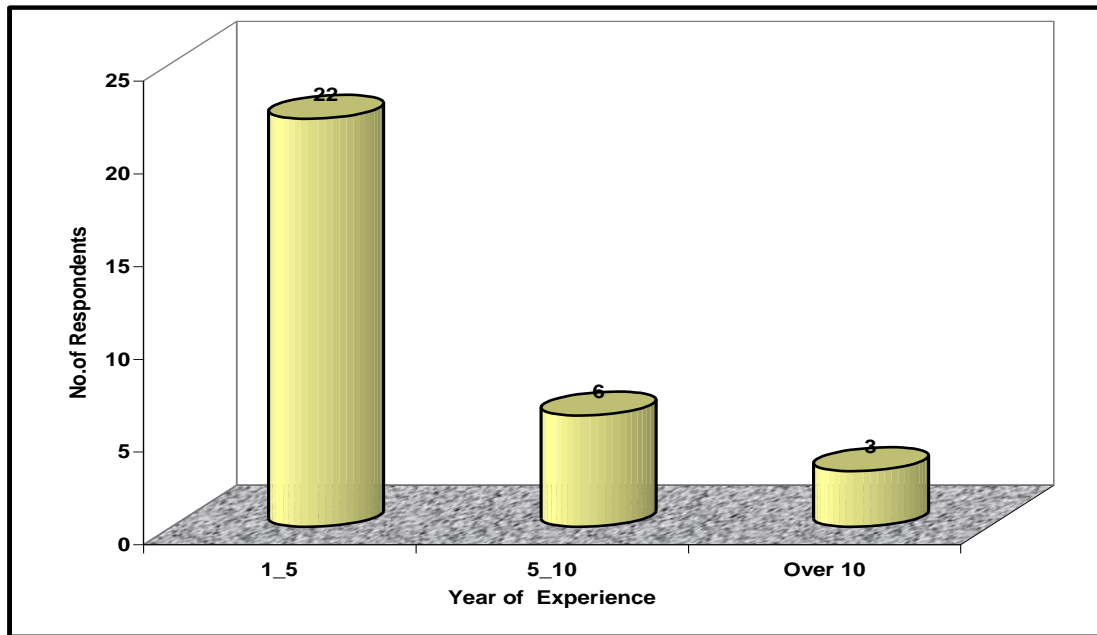
There are a number of respondents (40%) who still believe that the cultural barriers are not too sharp to prevent the learning of collocations. They conceive of collocations as a phenomenon that is universal and hence can exist across the languages of the world. It is this preconception which can render the teaching and learning of collocations as possible.

***Table (4-9) Students are hardly aware of the importance of collocations spend very little time learning them***

Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	Total
45 (45%)	20 (20%)	10 (5%)	15(10%)	15(15%)	100 (100%)

***Figure (4.9) Students are hardly aware of the importance of collocations spend very little time learning them***





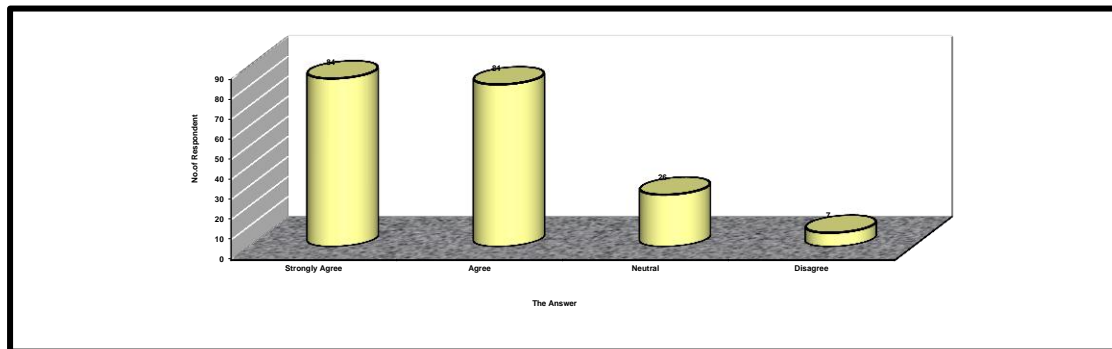
As regards table (4-8) quite a good number of respondents do strongly agree that undergraduate students are unaware of the value of collocations, and hence never allocate substantial time to study them to become adequately informed of their worth and apply them when writing and speaking.

In order to convince Students with the validity of studying collocations an excessive dose of them should be included in the syllabus and be given enough attention in teaching. Students having learnt a substantial some of them, they are sure to realize their validity and hence they will study them quite independently and even from external sources. The notion of collocation has achieved importance because many linguists have surmised that there are fixed forms of expression in every language that are stored in the minds or memories of native speakers as whole chunks of language forms and not as single words. These fixed expressions are used in speech and writing as such. Among these fixed expressions are collocations.

**Table (4-10) At secondary and basic levels students were not exposed to collocations sufficiently**

Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	Total
50 (50%)	20 (20%)	10 (5%)	10(10%)	10(15%)	100 (100%)

**Figure (4.10))** *At secondary and basic levels students were not exposed to collocations sufficiently*



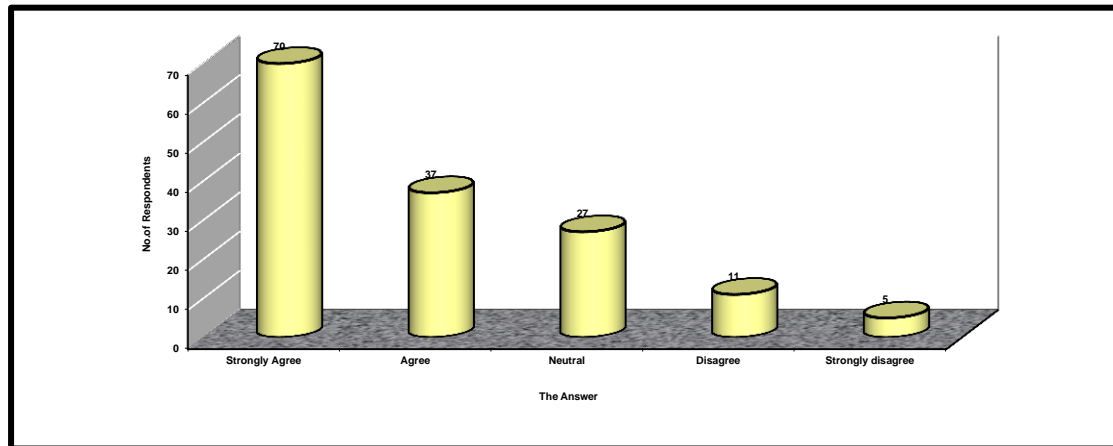
It is apparent as guided by the above table that a substantial number (50%) of the respondents do strongly admit that very little is done if ever about collocation. This poor situation has its unconstructive bearings on the students as they go up the scales of learning. At the undergraduate level, the prescribed amount of language is comparatively greater than that of the secondary school. Collocation, again are not adequately introduced and handled as other language components as orthography, grammar and phonology. Lexical relations are hardly considered.

Generally speaking, in the area of applied linguistics, not only in the Sudan, a great deal of research efforts has been devoted to the grammatical, phonological and orthographic aspects of language, while the lexical aspect has not claimed the same degree of interest. The effect of this is the shortage of knowledge on the part of the teachers to deal with L2 lexical problems. Teachers have therefore made little efforts to help students in their lexical problems. Where the lexical aspect is taught at all, teachers concentrate more on the paradigmatic relations of lexical items (relations of sets of lexical items that belong to the same class and can be substituted for one another in specific grammatical and lexical contexts). Very little attention is paid to the syntagmatic aspect of lexis (ability of items to co-occur, otherwise known as collocation).

**Table (4-11)** *Collocations properly taught save the students the trouble of making grammatical mistakes.*

Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	Total
45 (45%)	25 (20%)	5 (5%)	10(10%)	15(15%)	100 (100%)

**Figure (4.11)** *Collocations properly taught save the students the trouble of making grammatical mistakes*



Guided by table (4-11) that (45%) of the respondents are in favor of the fact that teaching and adequate grasp of collocation can help students avoid making glaring grammatical mistakes. This can be illustrated by, for example the noun *dream*. An important verb for dream is "have". Two frequently appearing modifiers for dream are bad and recurrent, and two prepositions that often occur with dream are *about* and *in*: 'I had a dream about... and *In* my dream, I was ...' In addition, dream can be used as a modifier in words like dream catcher and dream diary. When we put a child to bed at night, we often say, 'Sweet dreams!'"

Another good example the synonyms "world" and "earth". In definite contexts *earth* and *world* might be approximately synonymous, but when we use those words for expression we say, "the biggest mountain in the world," or "the biggest mountain *on* earth," not "the biggest mountain *on* world," or "the biggest mountain *in* the earth." Gairns and Redman (1986) point out that while *break out* may have the meaning of *start* in a

sentence like, "A fire broke out," it would be quite wrong to say, "Class breaks out at 7:30 every morning," even if it seems like it.

***Table (4-12) Tutors are not properly trained to handle such issues as the collocation they themselves ignore their importance***

Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	Total
60 (60%)	25 (20%)	7 (7%)	3(3%)	5(5%)	100 (100%)

As seen from the above table (4-12), that even tutors harbor some negative thoughts and feelings about collocation. They are not trained in that respect to pass knowledge to their students. Teaching and learning English lexis should not be left to the subject matter found in the course books. A course book has a specific function is that it can only serve as a guide to learning. It is not prepared adequately enough in order to handle the complex nature of acquiring lexical collocations. Teachers should encourage learners' creativity through the use of some aids to vocabulary learning such as, lexical matching and networks. Such aids to learning should not be presented as unchallengeable, but rather as tentative tools which learners can model their own production. The technique can thus be seen to promote creative and dynamic ends (see Meara, 1997; Carter, 1987). There is also the likelihood that the associations generated by and across items in these kinds of exercises aid both retention and recall of items by learners.

Teachers should encourage pupils to do a good amount of light reading in literature written in English. This will not only expose them to a massive amount of vocabulary, but will also help them to discover and acquire new collocations, and become acquainted with different cultural settings. According to Taiwo (2001: 323), the chances that ESL learners cannot

combine words correctly without having previously read them are very high.

Adequate attention should be drawn to collocations in the teaching of register. There is a tendency for ESL learners to see two items that belong to the same register as collocates. This is evident in some of the errors of such learners, *e.g.*:

- *Government should allow the farmers to borrow loans.*
- *I learnt from the headmistress of the school how to type the keyboard.*
- *If possible, post me a mail.*

**Table (4-13)Some undergraduate students are well aware of the importance of collocations and use them in their writing tasks**

Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	Total
20 (20%)	40 (40%)	10 (10%)	15(15%)	10(10%)	100 (100%)

Apparently, from table (4-13) the majority of the respondents believe that the undergraduate students are not well versed in collocations and hence a great segment of them ignore the use of collocations and how useful they are. This reflects a sad fact that such an important component of language to remain unknown by our students.

**Table (4-14)*Tutors know the value of collocations but because of time factor they rush their handling***

Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	Total
30 (30%)	40 (40%)	10 (10%)	15(15%)	5(5 %)	100 (100%)

Judging by the table above that teachers are well aware of the value of collocations but there are factors that interfere hence prevent them from

giving enough time to explain them adequately. Time is such one critical factor. However, this is not an excuse having learnt the cruciality of this element of language.

**Table (4-15) *some tutors do know the importance of collocations, hence they do teach them as properly as they ought to be.***

Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	Total
50 (50%)	40 (40%)	5 (5%)	5(15%)	0(0 %)	100 (100%)

Certainly, university tutors are well aware of the value of collocations consequently they exercise the desired efforts to teach them adequately. Glancing the table above most respondents do agree that tutors are well aware of the value of collocations and they give them the require treatment they deserve.

**Table (4-16)*All tutors believe that English syllabuses at undergraduate levels are somewhat dry of collocations***

Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	Total
30 (30%)	20 (20%)	25 (25%)	15(15%)	10(10 %)	100 (100%)

The above table states an alarming fact that undergraduate English language syllabuses are totally dried of collocations. This is an urgent situation which calls for quick intervention if those concerned are earnest in improving the standard of English at undergraduate level.

### **Summary of the Chapter**

In this chapter the study provided a comprehensive analysis of the results of the data collection methods used which were two students' questionnaire and teachers questionnaire. They were treated statistically in order to reach objective results. The results were discussed in relation

to the hypothesis stated in chapter one. The results were: the general weakness of the students in understanding and translating English collocations,

# **Chapter Five**

## **Summary, Conclusion, and Recommendations**



## Chapter Five

### Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations

This chapter provides a summary of the study, conclusions, recommendations and suggestions for further studies.

#### 5.1. Summary and Conclusions

This study is an attempt to investigate Sudanese EFL Learners' Knowledge and Use of Collocations. It aimed at exploring the possibility of earnest and serious study and inclusion of collocation as from undergraduate level. It also investigates the possible reasons behind the inadequacy of introducing and teaching collocation properly at university level. The study also sets out to explore the following questions:

1. To what extent are university learners aware of English collocations?
2. To what extent can the teaching of collocations, in general, be considered significant as to improve the students' standard of English language?
3. To what extent can the introduction of collocations as early as basic school help students have a better grasp of language learning?

For the purposes of investigating the study questions the following hypotheses are formulated:

1. University learners are not aware of English collocations.
2. Teaching collocations, in general, can be considered significant as to improve the university students' standard of English language.
3. Introducing collocations as early as primary school setting can help students have a better grasp over the issue of collocations.

To realize its intended aims and objectives, the study adopted a mixed-methods approach: the descriptive analytical methods. Teachers' questionnaire and students' questionnaires were used to address the research questions and objectives. The (SPSS) program version 20 was used for data analysis.

The study found out that the knowledge and use of collocation can improve the standards of the students and minimize their mistakes which provided evidence in favor of introducing the teaching of collocation as early as the secondary schools. This goes in tandem with the hypotheses: University learners are not aware of English collocations; teaching collocations, in general, can be considered significant as to improve the university students' standard of English language. More than two thirds (43%) agreed that the representation of collocations across the undergraduate English Language syllabus is not big enough compared to the other components in order to bring about the desired requirement. Respondents too were well aware of the effect of the absence of collocation on the students' standard. Students make horrible mistakes due to their little knowledge and use of collocations. There are of course other responses however they are in favor of teaching collocations to students.

It is important for the teacher to select a suitable teaching material to develop the students' EFL learning proficiency. The teaching material should be student-oriented, which is based on their level difference. Collocation proficiency has been seen as one of the ways that differentiates native and non-native speakers (Ellis, 2001; Koya, 2006; McCarthy, 2004a; Nation, 2001; Wooden, 1997). If someone says I did a few mistakes they will be understood, whereas a fluent speaker of English will say I made a few mistakes. Why do we say fast food instead of quick food? The reason is collocation. Learning collocations is a good idea

because they can give the learners the most natural way to say something; for example, we would say that smoking is strictly forbidden rather than smoking is strongly forbidden. This again verifies both hypotheses one and two.

Hypothesis three was also confirmed as was already pointed to by means of the questionnaire: The hypothesis states that **Introducing collocations as early as primary school setting can help students have a better grasp over the issue of collocations.** Teaching of collocations can reinforce other language aspects. Based on the notion about collocation, subsequent researches related to collocation have appeared. Collocations include what have traditionally been considered lexical items, as well as structural patterns which may seem closer to grammar and combinations of words that simply go together. According to Benson et al. (1986a), collocation can be sorted systematically into two major groups—lexical collocations and grammatical collocations. A lexical collocation could be made up of nouns, adjectives, verbs, or adverbs. A grammatical collocation is made up of a dominant word and a preposition or grammatical structure like an infinitive or a clause. This verifies the third hypothesis *Introducing collocations as early as primary school setting can help students have a better grasp over the issue of collocations.*

## **5.2. Findings**

- Limited knowledge and awareness of collocations by the students.
- The deviant answers collected from the questionnaires illustrate the learners' confusion over the use of lexical collocations.
- The use of collocation can improve the standards of the students and minimize their writing and oral mistakes which provided evidence in favor of introducing the teaching of collocation.

### **5.3. Recommendations**

Based on the finding of this study the following recommendations are suggested:

- EFL teachers should raise awareness of the significance of collocations and foster collocational competence among their students.
- EFL teachers should provide examples of collocational differences between L1 and L2, particularly collocations without an equivalent in L1.
- EFL teachers should encourage their students to use a dictionary which provides good coverage of collocations.
- Students' errors indicate that EFL students depend on interlingual and intralingual strategies to facilitate learning.
  
- According to the present research and many other ones, good knowledge of collocation is much essential to overall knowledge of English language. Therefore, for the students to have a good grasp of collocation, they should be taught quite explicitly and contrastively as early as the secondary schools.
  
- Teachers at the secondary schools should be particularly to handle figurative language in general with special emphasis on collocation.
  
- At, undergraduate level collocation should be given the due importance that makes their understanding easy and interesting.

- Tutor attention should be drawn to the importance of collocation and that more research is needed in the area.
- At undergraduate level collocation in English should be taught in tandem with Arabic and theological collocation. Students should be encouraged to conduct research on the area of collocation to further improve their understanding.

#### **5.4. Suggestions for further studies**

This study puts forward the following suggestion:

A study can be conducted on **teaching collocations to university students.**

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# Appendices



**Appendix I : Students' Questionnaire 1**

Dear Respondent,

This is a questionnaire meant to serve part of my research on ‘*Investigating Sudanese EFL Undergraduates' Knowledge and Use of Collocations*’. Your cooperation in translating the English collocations into Arabic equivalent collocations would be highly appreciated. You are kindly requested to rely *only on your own knowledge* without consulting any translator, linguist, dictionary, or the internet. If you happen not to understand a certain collocation in the source language, or not to know the equivalent or the translation of a collocation in the target language, please *skip* or *ignore* it. All information provided will remain *confidential*.

1. Verbal communication -----
2. Official statement -----
3. Official permission -----
4. Arbitrary government -----
5. Drastic war -----
6. Heinous crime -----
7. Ground offensive -----
8. Wild imagination -----
9. Fundamental rights -----
10. Demilitarized zone -----
11. Impulsive behavior -----
12. A stale joke -----
13. Classified information -----
14. Congenital defect -----
15. Utter chaos -----

16. Controversial issues -----
17. Blind obedience -----
18. Stuffy apartment -----
19. Ignominious defeat -----
20. Candid camera -----

*Suggested Arabic Equivalents:*

- 1- تواصل شفوي  
2- بيان رسمي  
3- تصريح رسمي  
4- حكومة استبدادية  
5- حرب ضروس  
6- جريمة نكراء  
7- هجوم بري  
8- خيال واسع  
9- حقوق أساسية  
10- منطقة منزوعة السلاح  
11- سلوك متهور  
12- نكتة بايخة  
13- معلومات سرية  
14- عيب وراثي  
15- فوضى عارمة  
16- قضايا خلافية  
17- طاعة عمياء  
18- شقة فاسدة الهواء  
19- هزيمة مخزية  
20- الكاميرا الخفية

## Appendix II: Students' Questionnaire 2

Dear Respondent,

This is a questionnaire meant to serve part of my research on 'Investigating Sudanese EFL Undergraduates' Knowledge and Use of Collocations'. Your cooperation in choosing the best collocate (a, b, c, OR d) for the base (a **noun** in **bold**) in each of the nine rows in the table below would be highly appreciated. You are kindly requested to rely *just on your own knowledge* without consulting any translator, linguist, dictionary, or the internet. If you

happen not to understand a certain collocation in the source language, or not to know the translation equivalent of a collocation in the target language, please *skip* or *ignore* it. All information provided will remain *confidential*.

ضربٌ مبرح	a) Vehement <b>Beating</b>	b) Fit <b>Beating</b>	c) Robust <b>Beating</b>	d) Good <b>Beating</b>
حجة مقنعة	a) Excellent <b>Argument</b>	b) Persuaded <b>Argument</b>	c) Convinced <b>Argument</b>	d) Good <b>Argument</b>
كتاب مقدس	a) Excellent <b>Book</b>	b) Fantastic <b>Book</b>	c) Sacred <b>Book</b>	d) Good <b>Book</b>
سلوك مستقيم	a) Gorgeous <b>Behavior</b>	b) Excellent <b>Behavior</b>	c) Straight <b>Behavior</b>	d) Good <b>Behavior</b>
سبب معقول	a) Excellent <b>Reason</b>	b) Gorgeous <b>Reason</b>	c) Fantastic <b>Reason</b>	d) Good <b>Reason</b>
صفقة موفقة	a) Rich <b>Buy</b>	b) Lucky <b>Buy</b>	c) Chance <b>Buy</b>	d) Good <b>Buy</b>
تصرف لائق	a) Harmless <b>Conduct</b>	b) Gorgeous <b>Conduct</b>	c) Lucky <b>Conduct</b>	d) Good <b>Conduct</b>
فرصة سانحة	a) Happy <b>Chance</b>	b) Lucky <b>Chance</b>	c) Excellent <b>Chance</b>	d) Good <b>Chance</b>
صرخة مدوية	a) Vehement <b>Cry</b>	b) Sonorous <b>Cry</b>	c) Booming <b>Cry</b>	d) Good <b>Cry</b>

*Choice of Collocate & Base*  
*NB: 'd' is the right answer in each of the choices above.*

=====

*Appendix III: Teachers' Questionnaire*



SUDAN UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY  
COLLEGE OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH  
COLLEGE OF LANGUAGES-ENGLISH DEPARTMENT

A QUESTIONNAIRE FOR UNIVERSITY TUTORS AT SUDANESE  
UNIVERSITIES

Dear Colleague,

This questionnaire will gather data about the situation of collocations as regards their teaching, learning, translation and their presence in the syllabus at university and how they are handled above all. The analyzed data will help form a better insight about the nature, causes and how the problem can be addressed.

**Part 1: Personal data:**

1. Name: (optional) \_\_\_\_\_

2. Highest degree earned:

Bachelor's Degree

Master's Degree

PhD

3 How many years have you been teaching English

1. year

2-5 years

2. 6-10 years

more than 10 year





**Part 2: General statements:**

- Please choose only one answer for every question or statement.

Use the following scales:

*Strongly agree:* (If you strongly agree with the idea stated in the item).

*Agree:* (If you agree with the idea stated in the item).

*Disagree:* (If you disagree with the idea stated in the item).

*Strongly disagree:* (If you strongly disagree with the idea stated in the item).

No.	STATEMENT	RESONSE			
		STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE
1.	Explicit teaching of collocation is totally ignored at undergraduate level at Sudanese universities.				
2.	Collocations presence in the syllabus is scanty reflecting a very poor view point to their importance.				
	Collocations are not such a desirable element in language learning to deserve such importance				
3.	Collocations are important in language learning and much more attention should be given to them				
4.	Collocations are difficult to learn because they are strongly culture-bound				
5.	Universality of communications and the fact they are part of any culture makes their learning relatively easy.				
6.	Students are hardly aware of the importance of collocations				
7.	At secondary and basic levels students were not exposed to collocations sufficiently				

8.	Collocations properly taught save the students the trouble of making grammatical mistakes				
9	Some undergraduate students are well aware of the importance of collocations and use them in their writing tasks				
10	Students attention should be drawn to the importance of collocations				
11	Tutors are not properly trained to such issues their desired importance				
12	Tutors think collocations are not important enough to be given extra time in handling at the expense of other elements in the syllabus				
13	Tutors know the value of collocations but because of time factor they rush their handling				
14	Some tutors, recognizing the importance of collocations, do teach them as properly as they ought to be.				
15	All tutors believe that English syllabuses at undergraduate levels are somewhat dry of collocations				