Sudan University of Science and Technology
College of Graduate Studies
College of Languages

كلية الدراسات العليا

Investigating Problems Facing EFL Learners in Utilizing Collocations in Oral Communication

A case study of First year Students, College of languages

تقصي المشكلات التي تواجه متعلمو اللغة الأنجليزية كلغة اجنبية في استخدام المتلازمات في التواصل الشفوي (دراسة حالة طلاب السنة الاولي ــ كلية اللغات)

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment for the Requirements of M A Degree in English Language (Applied Linguistics)

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Dedication

To my beloved parents

Acknowledgements

Abstract

This study aims at investigating problems that facing EFL learners in utilizing collocations in oral communication. It tries to help in improving the process of learning English as a foreign language. The sample size of the study is twenty five males and females students. They were selected randomly from first year students of English language at Sudan University of Science and Technology. The study was carried out during the final semester of the academic year of 2021 – 2022. The study followed the descriptive analytical method, and an oral test designed of twenty questions was used as a tool to collect the data for the study. The result of the test has revealed that, the majority of EFL learners face serious difficulties in using lexical collocations in oral communication. It has also revealed that, the majority of them are unaware of using collocations in oral communication. Finally, to help in solving the problems the researcher recommends the following: Teachers should raise students' awareness of the importance of collocations, they must follow and imply modern methods to help students use collocations in various ways, they should help students pay more attention to the correct use of collocations, they should direct students to practice collocations orally inside and outside the classroom, and they should offer supportive feedback throughout the task cycle, not only to help students identify their weakness in oral communication and ways of overcoming them but also to encourage strengths and consequently motivation and involvement in oral communication. In conclusion, the researcher suggested the following for further studies: Other studies are needed in investigating the effect of using social media on developing spoken language, in investigating the problems facing EFL learners in utilizing phrasal verbs in oral communication, and in investigating the problems facing EFL learners in utilizing idiomatic expressions in oral communication.

Abstract in Arabic

المستخلص

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى تقصى المشكلات التي تواجه متعلمو اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية في استخدام المتلازمات في التواصل الشفوي. تحاول الدراسة المساعدة في تحسين عملية تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة اجنبية. بلغ حجم عينة الدراسة خمسة وعشرين طالباً وطالبة. تم اختيارهم عشوائياً من طلاب السنة الأولى للغة الإنجليزية بجامعة السودان للعلوم والتكنولوجيا. أجريت الدراسة في الفصل الدراسي الأخير من العام الدراسي 2021 - 2022. اتبعت الدراسة المنهج الوصفي التحليلي، واستخدم الاختبار الشفوي المصمم من عشرين سؤالاً كأداة لجمع بيانات الدراسة. وأظهرت نتيجة الاختبار أن غالبية متعلمواللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية يواجهون صعوبات في استخدام المتلازمات في التواصل الشفوي. كما كشفت أيضاً أنّ الغالبية منهم غير مدركين لاستخدام المتلازمات في التواصل الشفوي. للمساعدة في حل هذه المشكلات، أوصى الباحث بما يلي: ينبغي على المعلمين رفع وعي "الطلاب / الطالبات" بأهمية المتلازمات، كما ينبغي عليهم اتباع الأساليب الحديثة وتوضيحها لمساعدة الطلاب على استخدام المتلازمات بطرق مختلفة، على أن يساعدوا الطلاب في إيلاء المزيد من الاهتمام للأستخدام الصحيح للمتلازمات، ينبغي عليهم توجيه الطلاب إلى ممارسة المتلازمات شفهيا داخل الفصل وخارجه، وينبغي عليهم أن يقدموا ملاحظات داعمة طوال دورة المهمة، ليس فقط لمساعدة الطلاب على تحديد نقاط ضعفهم في التواصل الشفوي وطرق التغلب عليها ولكن أيضاً تشجيع نقاط قوتهم وبالتالي تحفيزهم ومشاركتهم في التواصل الشفوي. وفي الختام اقترح الباحث ما يلي لمزيد من الدراسات: هنالك حاجة لدراسات أخرى لبحث تأثير استخدام وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي على تطوير اللغة المنطوقة، وفي تقصي المشاكل التي تواجه متعلمو اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية في استخدام أشباه الجمل الفعلية في التواصل الشفوي، وفي تقصي المشاكل التي تواجه متعلمو اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية في استخدام التعبيرات الاصطلاحية في التواصل الشفوي.

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Chapter one

Introduction

1.0 Overview.

Oral communication is the most active form of any language. Learning to speak English orally often involves listening, learning and practicing of collocations.

The use of collocations in oral communication has been a major problem among many Sudanese university students as EFL learners. Although it's possible for them to communicate successfully with incorrect collocations, using collocations correctly can help them speak more fluently. An enhanced knowledge of collocation not only allows learners to improve levels of accuracy, but also aids fluency (Bazzaz and Samad, 2011; Namvar, 2012).

Collocations have recently received increased attention in applied linguistic studies; however, still relatively little is known about the way in which collocations are used by EFL learners. They are a natural combination of words and they refer to the way English words are closely associated with each other. For instance, pay and attention go together, as do commit and crime, blond goes with hair and heavy with rain (Webb and Kagimoto, 2011)

Learning and practicing collocation will increase the range of EFL learner's English vocabulary. It also gives learners alternative ways of saying something, which they may be more colorful, expressive or more precise. Instead of repeating it was very cold and very dark. We can say it was bitterly cold and pitch dark.

In conclusion, collocations refer to the words that go together. They sound natural to native speakers, but EFL learners have to make special effort to learn them because they are often difficult to guess and use.

1.1 Statement of the Problem.

Collocations are essential part of learning English language; therefore they need great effort to be learned and mastered by EFL learners. The researcher has observed that many of first year EFL learners at Sudan University of Science and Technology – College of Languages face serious difficulties in using collocations in oral communication. Not only do they misused collocations in oral communication but also unaware of them. Thus, this study is an attempt to validate this observation by investigating collocational difficulties faced by EFL learners.

1.2 Objectives of the Study.

This study aims to reveal the factors behind the problems that face EFL learners in using collocations in oral communication.

1- To discover the most difficult types of collocation that face EFL learners in oral communication.

2- To enrich the use of collocations in oral communication inside and outside the classroom

3- To raise EFL learners' awareness of the importance of using collocations in oral communication.

1.3 Questions of the Study.

1- To what extend do EFL learners face difficulties in using lexical collocations in Oral communication?

2- To what extend are EFL learners aware of using collocations in oral communication?

1.4 Hypotheses of the Study.

To test the above questions this study based on the following hypotheses.

1- The majority of EFL learners face difficulties in using lexical collocations in oral communication.

2 - EFL learners are not aware of using collocations in oral communication.

1.5 Significance of the Study.

This study is of great importance to EFL learners as it encourages them to use collocations to improve their oral communication. It sheds light on the most difficult types of collocations, the poor use of collocations inside and outside the classroom and it raises the awareness of the importance of using collocations. It also tends to suggest some solution for these problems.

1.6 Methodology of the Study.

The researcher will adopt the descriptive analytical method to test the hypotheses of this study, to achieve its objectives and answer its questions. An oral test will be used as a tool to collect the data for this study. It will be collected from first year EFL learners at Sudan University of Science and Technology – College of Languages. The sample of the study consists of twenty five subjects' males and females.

1.7 Delimits of the Study.

Due to time constrains, the scope of the study is limited to the first year EFL learners at Sudan University of Science and Technology – College of

Languages. It's a sample of twenty five subjects male and female, which will randomly be selected. The data will be collected from the oral test of the participants.

Chapter Two: Literature Review and Previous Studies

2.0. Introduction

This chapter is divided into two main parts. The first part presents a brief historical background, definition of collocation, the importance of collocations, types of collocations, the differences between collocations and other formulaic sequences, approaches to studying collocations, characteristics of collocations and the notion of collocation and colligation. The second part presents some previous studies.

2.1. A brief Historical Background

The idea of collocation was first put forward by J. R. Firth in 1957. Although the word is used widely, people's opinions are divided when it comes to the meaning of collocation. Robins (2000, p.64) argues that collocation is "the habitual association of a word in a language with other particular words in sentences." Robins' understanding of collocation agrees with Firth's and Halliday and Hasan's. In Cohesion in English, Halliday and Hasan (2001, p.317) argue that collocation, a means of cohesion, is "the co-occurrence of lexical items that are in some way or other typically associated with one another, because they tend to occur in similar environments." For example, the word doctor implies such words as nurse, medicine, symptom, hospital, etc. The night is closely related with darkness. Collocation, in this sense, is overlapped with the so-called semantic field. Words occurring in collocation or in the same semantic field exist as a group fit in a given situation. But the presence of one word does not necessarily lead to the occurrence of others in the group.

Moreover, Marco (1999) distinguishes between two types of collocation: lexical and grammatical. For lexical combinations of words, he uses the term collocation, and the term colligation for the grammatical combinations of words.

According to his categorization, colligation is the same as grammatical collocations.

Hoey (2001: 234) refers to the term „colligation" and defines it as "the grammatical company a word keeps and the position it prefers". More specifically and accurately, a word's colligation is what it typically does grammatically. Thus, colligation is concerned with the relationship between a word and its grammatical environment or company, i.e. the context in which it prefers to occur (with a preposition, to-infinitive, an article, that-clause, etc.) Dr. Mohammed S. Mansoor (2013: 7).

2.2. Definition of collocations

McIntosh et al. define collocation as "the way words combine in a language to produce natural sounding speech and writing" (2009: v). However, there are various ways to define it and it seems that linguists and teachers haven't yet agreed upon a common description. In line with Fontenelle, there doesn't seem to be any clear cut controversial definition of the term collocation (1998:191).

According to F. O'Dell and M. McCarthy (2008: 3) collocation means a natural combination of words; it refers to the way English words are closely associated with each other. They are also defined as a common combination of words. If you want to speak and write English well, you need to know them. They are a major key to fluency. G. Woodard (2004: 4)

According to R. Mitchell (P: 7) collocation is a pair or group of two or more words that are often used together by native speakers. It's also defined by Sinclair as "the occurrence of two or more words within a short space of each other in a text" (1991: 170). A short space or span is usually defined as a distance

of around four words to the right and left of the word under investigation, which is called node. (e.g 1991:170; Jones & Sinclair 1974: 2f). If for example, in a given amount of text, the word house is analyzed, and the word occurs in an environment such as; He went back to the house. When he opened the door, the dog barked, the words went, back, to, the, when, he and opened, they are all considered to form collocations with the node house; these words are then called collocates.

Nattinger (in Carter and McCarthy, 1988; 76) suggests that language is basically a "compositional" process in which many of its words co-occur together forming single units of meanings. He calls these as lexical phrases or word combinations; and collocations are among other terms of lexical phrases. However, collocation themselves range from "lexico-grammatical unit" to free combination.

According to Laufer and Waldman (2011: 648) collocations are habitually occurring lexical combinations that are characterized by restricted co-occurrence of elements and relative transparency in meaning. Van Roey (1990: 46) states that the linguistic phenomenon whereby a given vocabulary item prefers the company of another item rather than its synonyms become of constrains which are not on the level of syntax or conceptual meaning but on that of usage.

2.3. Importance of Collocations

Learners of English language need to learn collocations and master them. They help them to speak and write English in a natural and accurate way. They give them the most natural way to say something. For example, smoking is strictly forbidden is more natural than smoking is strongly forbidden. Moreover, they give alternative ways of saying thing, which may be more colorful,

expressive or more precise. E.g. instead of repeating it was very cold and very dark, one can say it was bitterly cold and pitch dark. They can also improve writing style. E.g. instead of saying poverty causes crime; one can say poverty breeds crime (M. McCarthy and F. O'Dell. 2017: 6).

According to F. O'Dell and M. McCarthy (2008: 6), an appreciation of collocation will help EFL learners to use the words they know more accurately; in other words, you will make (not do) fewer mistakes to sound more natural when they speak and write by saying for example, of great importance, rather than of big or high importance. They won't just be understood; they will quite rightly sound like fluent users of English language to vary their speech and probably more importantly writing style. Instead of repeating every word like very good or nice, they will be able to exploit a wider range of language. For instance, for writing we had a blissfully happy holiday in a picturesque a little village surrounded by spectacular mountains than for we had a very happy holiday in a nice little village surrounded by beautiful mountains even though both sentence are perfectly correct, and to understand when a skillful writer departs from normal patterns of collocation A journalist, a poet, an advertiser or other inconventive user of language often creates an effect by not choosing the expected collocation. For instance, a travel article about the Italian capital might be entitled "No place like Rome" a reference to the popular expression there's no place like home.

2.4. The Importance of Collocations in EFL Classrooms

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

other researchers that teachers should motivate their students to learn collocations.

According to Cowie (1992), English collocation is important in receptive as well as productive language competence. Similar assertion was made by Carter and McCarthy (1988). In their opinion, English collocations are useful not only for English comprehension but for English production. They claimed that by memorizing collocational groups, students would have the idea about certain lexical restrictions. Most importantly, "collocations teach students expectations about which sorts of language can follow from what has preceded. Students will not have to go about reconstructing the language each time they want to say something but instead can use these collocations as pre-packaged building blocks" (Carter & McCarthy,1988, p. 75).

Moreover, it can be said that "collocation has emerged as an important category of lexical patterning and it is fast becoming an established unit of description in language teaching courses and materials" (Woolard, 2000, p.28). Liu (2000a) also stated that the more often students are taught English collocations, the more correctly students can make use of collocations. Such declaration was supported by Lin (2002), while investigating the effects of collocation instruction on students' English vocabulary developments. Lin (2002) found that students made progress in producing collocations after receiving collocation instruction. Here a review of three of the most common arguments stressing the importance of developing collocational knowledge of language learners is presented. El. R. Badawi (2021: 15)

2.5. Types of collocations

There are many different types of collocations in English language. If we define collocation as the way words occur together, it is easy to see that the definition is very wide, and will cover many different kinds of item. Certainly, all of the following are collocations in the sense that we readily recognize that these groups of words are regularly found together. They can be classified into two categories **lexical collocations** and **grammatical collocations**. Here are examples of **lexical collocations** which are highlighted by M. McCarthy and F. O'Dell (2017: 12).

2.5.0. Lexical Collocations

Lexical collocations are items where two lexical words regularly and naturally occur together.

2.5.1. Types of Lexical Collocations

0. Adjectives and Nouns

Notice adjectives that are typically used with particular nouns.

- Jean always wears red or yellow or some other **bright colour**.
- We had **a brief chart** about the exams but didn't have time to discuss them properly.
- Unemployment is a **major problem** for the government at the moment.
- Improving the health service is another **key issue** for government.

1. Nouns and Verbs

Notice how nouns and verbs often go together. The examples below are all to do with economics and business.

- The **economy boomed** in the 199s. *"The economy was very strong"*
- **The company** has **grown** and now employs 50 more people than last year.

- **The company** has **expanded** and now has branches in most major cities.
- The two **companies merged** in 2003 and now form one very large corporation.
- The company **launched the product** in 2002. *"Introduced the product"*
- The price increase **poses a problem** for us. "Is a problem"
- The internet has created opportunities for our business. *"Brought new opportunities"*

2. Noun + Noun

There are a lot of collocations with the *a… of ….*

- As Sam read the lies about him, he felt **a surge of anger**. *"Literary: a sudden angry feeling"*
- Every parent feels **a sense of bride** when their child does well or wins something.
- I felt **a pang of nostalgia** when I saw the old photos of the village where I grow up.

3. Verbs and Expressions with Prepositions

Some verbs collocate with particular prepositional expressions.

- As Jack went on stage to receive his gold medal for the judo completion you could see his parents **swelling with pride**. *"Looking extremely proud"*
- I was **filled with honor** when I read the newspaper report of the explosion.
- When she split juice on her new skirt the little girl burst into tears. "*Suddenly started crying*"

4. Verbs and Adverbs

Some verbs have particular adverbs which regularly collocate with them.

- She **pulled steadily** on the rope and helped him to safety. *"Pulled firmly and evenly"*
- He **placed** the beautiful vase **gently** on the window ledge.
- "I love you and I want to marry you". Derek **whispered softly** to Marsha.
- She **smiled proudly** as she looked adverbs at the photos of her new grandson.

5. Adverbs and Adjectives

Adverbs often have particular adverbs which regularly collocate with them.

- They are **happily married**.
- I am **fully aware** that there are serious problems. "I know well"
- Harry was **blissfully unaware** that he was in danger. *"Harry had no idea at all, often used about something unpleasant"*

2.5.2. Grammatical collocations

Grammatical collocation is a phrase, which is composed of a preposition and a main word noun, adjective, and verb or a structural pattern such as a clause or two-word verbs. R D Moehkardi et al (2002: 54) believe that there are eight major types of grammatical collocations in English.

2.5.3. Types of Grammatical Collocations

According to Benson, Benson and Ilson (1986) in their introduction to their The 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.

0. Noun + preposition combinations

Not all noun + preposition combinations can be considered as collocations due the highly predictable meaning of some prepositions, such as **of**

and **by**. So, noun + **of** / **by** combinations are considered free combinations. The following phrases are examples of noun + preposition collocations: blockade against, apathy towards.

1. Noun + to + infinitive

There are five syntactic patterns in which noun + to + infinitive construction is most frequently encountered:

a. It was a pleasure (a problem, a struggle) to do it

b. They had the foresight (instructions, an obligation, permission) to do it

c. They felt a compulsion (an impulse, a need) to do it

d. They made an attempt (an effort, a promise, a vow) to do it.

e. He was a fool (a genius, an idiot) to do

2. Noun + that-clause

The noun + that-clause combinations that are considered collocational are those using subject pronouns. **For example:**

- We reached an agreement that she would represent us in court

- He took an oath that he would do his duty

However, when the 'that-clause' can be replaced by 'which-clause' as that in relative clauses, such a **noun** + **that-clause** construction is not considered as collocational. For example: We reached into an agreement **that/ which** would go into effect in a month.

3. Preposition + noun combinations

Any combinations of preposition and noun can fall into this category; however the choice of preposition with certain noun is not at random. For example: by accident, in advance, in agony, etc..

4. Adjective + preposition combinations

Some adjectives are followed by a prepositional phrase. The adjective+ preposition combination that is considered collocational is the one that occurs in

the predicate (verbless clause). However past participial adjective followed by preposition by is not considered collocational because this construction is regular and predictable.

For example:

- They are angry at the children,
- They are hungry for news,

*The ship was abandoned (by its crew) is not considered collocational.

5. **Predicate adjective + to + infinitive**

These adjectives occur in two basic constructions with infinitives

a- Adjectives with dummy subject "It" **such as** it was necessary to work; also possible it was necessary for him to work (the insertion of prepositional phrase).

b- Adjectives with real and animate subject, **such as** she is ready to go; or with inanimate subject, such as: It (the bomb) is designed to explode at certain temperatures; or with either animate or inanimate subject: She was bound to find out or it (the accident) was bound to happen.

6. Adjective + that clause

Some adjectives can be followed by that clause.

For example:

- She was afraid that she would fail her examination

Several adjectives followed by present subjunctive in formal English are collocational, **such as**: It was imperative that we be there.

7. Collocational verb patterns

English verb patterns have 19 types; each is designated here by capital letters A to S.

a- Shift of an indirect object to a position before the direct object of transitive verbs is allowed. **For example**

- He sent the book to his brother

- He sent his brother the book

- He sent the book to him

- He sent him the book

If both objects are pronouns the common pattern is: He sent it to him.

b- Shift of an indirect object to a position before the direct object by deleting to is not allowed. **For example:**

They described the book to her; but not * they described her the book.

Other common verbs that fit this category are: mention, return, scream, etc.

c- Transitive verb with preposition for allows the deletion of for and the shift of the indirect object to a position before the direct object. **For example:**

- She bought a shirt for her husband; also possible: She bought her husband a shirt or she bought a shirt for him or she bought him a shirt.

d- The verb forms a collocation with a specific preposition and an object**. For example:**

- They based their conclusions on the available facts

- We adhered to the plan

However, the following similar constructions are not collocations, but free combinations of verb + preposition denoting 'location' or 'means' or 'instrument'

- We walked in the park

- They came by train

e- Verbs are followed by to + infinitive. **For example:**

- They began to speak;

- She continued to write

However, verbs + to infinitive meaning "purpose" are not included as collocational combination. **For example:**

- He was running (in order) to catch the bus.
- She stopped (in order) to chat.

f- Verbs are followed by infinitive without to:

These verbs, except dare, help, and need, are called modals. The verbal phrases had better and would rather also fit this pattern. **For example**:

- They must work
- We had better go now.

g- Verbs are followed by second verb in – ing. **For examples:**

- They kept talking.
- We enjoyed watching television.

Some verbs in this category may have synonymous construction: He began reading or He began to read are similar in meaning. And some other verbs of this category may have different construction and meaning, **for example:** "He remembered telling him the story and He remembered to tell him the story" are different in meaning.

h- Transitive verbs are followed by an object and to + infinitive. **For example**:

- They asked the students to participate in discussion
- They permitted the children to watch television

Many of the verbs in this pattern can be followed by infinitive to be. **For example**, she asked me to be punctual. Furthermore, most of the verbs in this construction can be passivized.

i- Transitive verbs are followed by a direct object and an infinitive without to. Most I-pattern verbs cannot be passivized. **For example**:

- We let them use the car

- We saw them leave the house

j- Verbs are followed by an object and a verb in – ing. **For example:**

- I caught him smoking in his bedroom.

- We found the children sleeping on the floor.

Some verbs in this category (especially verbs of perception, like see, hear, feel) may have similar constructions with that of construction in I-pattern. We saw him smoke the cigarette beside We saw him smoking. J-pattern verbs usually can be passivized.

k- Verbs can be followed by a noun or pronoun and gerund. **For example:**

- This fact justifies Bill's coming late.

- They love his clowning.

- I cannot imagine their stealing apples.

- Please excuse my waking you so early.

However possessive constructions are often considered awkward, more common expressions for the same meaning will use the following alternative:

- I cannot imagine them stealing apples.

- This fact justifies Bill for coming late.

- Please excuse me for waking you so early.

l- Verbs are followed by a noun clause beginning with conjunction "that". **For example:**

- They admitted that they were wrong.

- We hoped that the weather would be nice.

Some verbs always take an object noun or pronoun before the that-clause, such as **For example:**

- She assured me that she would arrive on time.

- They convinced us that we should invest our money.

Some verbs in this category allow the insertion of the fact. **For example**:

He acknowledged (admitted/confirmed/ etc) the fact that he was guilty.

m- Transitive verb can be followed by a direct object, an infinitive to be an adjective / past participle/ noun/pronoun. For example:

- We considered her to be very capable / well-trained / a competent engineer.

n- Transitive verbs are followed by a direct object and adjective/ past participle or noun/pronoun. **For example:**

- She dyed her hair red.
- He found them interesting.

Some verbs in this category may also be used with M-verb pattern, **For example:**

- We considered her very capable.

o- Transitive verbs are followed by two objects. **For example**:

- The teacher asked the students questions.
- The police fined them fifty pounds.

p- Intransitive /reflexive / transitive verbs must be followed by an adverbial (an adverb/a prepositional phrase/a noun phrase/a clause). **For example:**

- He carried himself with dignity; but not * He carried himself
- The meeting will last two hours; but not *The meeting will last

Other verbs in this category are: come, sneak, weigh, etc. However some of these verbs may have senses that do not require an adverbial, for example: They are coming; in addition to they are coming home.

q- Verb can be followed by an interrogative word, such as how, what, when, etc. **For example:**

- He always wants what I want.
- She knows when to keep quiet.

However, some verbs in this construction need an object, such as

- They told us what to do.

- She asked me why she had come.

r- Dummy 'it' is followed by transitive verbs (often expressing emotions) and by to + infinitive or by that + clause or by either. **For example:**

- It puzzled me that he never answered the telephones.

- It surprised me to learn of her decision.

A small number of intransitive verbs are followed by a predicate noun / predicate adjective. Including the verb make, used intransitively, belongs to this group. **For Example:**

- She will make a good teacher.

- She was enthusiastic.

However larger group of intransitive verbs can be followed only by a predicate adjective, **for example:**

- The flowers smell fragrant or the food tastes awful.

2.6. The differences between collocations and other formulaic sequences.

Olga Makinina (2018: 24) explained that the researchers who support a phraseological approach to formulaic sequences have different opinions on the relationship between collocations and other formulaic units. Some researchers perceive collocations as sub-classes of idioms (Conklin & Schmitt, 2008; Tran, 2011) or "routine formulas" (Krishnamurthy, 2006), while others consider idioms and phrasal verbs as sub-types of collocations (Gitsaki, 1996; Hill et al., 2000; Poulsen, 2005).

0. Collocations and idioms

Researchers (Cowan, 1989; Fellbaum, 2007) determine the following similarities between collocations and idioms: (1) a multi-word combination; (2) non-compositionality of its components; and (3) morphosyntactic relations and restrictions between words in a phrase. However, they state that both collocations

and idioms might have different degrees of these characteristics, with collocations being less morphosyntactically restricted and having some varied lexical components, for example, hit the deck/sack/hay (Fellbaum, 2007, p. 12). Cowan (1989), Fellbaum (2007), and Mounya (2010) also name semantic opacity as the main differentiating feature, with collocations being more semantically transparent.

1. Collocations and phrasal verbs

Though some linguists (Gitsaki, 1996; Lewis, 2000; Mounya, 2010) identify phrasal verbs as grammatical collocations, others (Hausmann, 1989; Hill et al., 2000) note that collocations need to have at least two meaningful lexical components in their structure. Therefore, Verb + Preposition + Noun structures might be considered collocations (e.g., come down with the flu), but Verb +Preposition or Particle structures are phrasal verbs (e.g., [the flag] came down).

2. Collocations and routine formulas (clichés)

Barnbrook et al. (2013) state that collocation has a metaphorical meaning and is used in common situations, and can therefore be considered a cliché. However, Cowie (1998), Melc'uk (1998), and Nattinger and DeCarrico (1992) discuss one basic pragmatic function and semantic "hollowness" of clichés such as Good luck! and How are you? as contrasted with collocations that primarily carry out a certain semantic function, yet can often take on various pragmatic functions depending on the communicative context.

2.7. Approaches to studying collocations

Haddi Abderahmane (2016: 4) explained that linguistic studies have investigated different aspects of the phenomenon of collocations. These studies can be classified into three main approaches to identifying collocations: The

frequency-based approach, the significance oriented approach and the lexical approach.

To define the concept of collocation, many researchers have come out with different definitions, and studies have been insufficient to provide one approach to study collocations. Thus, many linguists who work on collocations cover variant views or approaches.

0. Frequency-based Approach

It is adopted by researchers who are involved in using analysis of syntagmatic relations. In this approach, a collocation is considered the co-occurrence of words at a certain distance, and a distinction is usually made between co-occurrences that are frequent and those that are not (Nesslhouf 2005: 11-18). This view has been called the frequency –based approach. It goes back to J-Firth and has been developed further by Halliday and Sinclair. Some researchers, adopting a frequency- based approach to collocations consider co-occurrence of all frequencies to be collocations (Halliday 1966, Moon 1998), while others like Stubb (1995) reserves the term for frequent co-occurrences. Kjllmer (1987) and Kenedy (1990) use recurrence i.e. co-occurrence more than once in a given corpus. This approach demonstrates co-occurrence through a corpus- based data in an inductive approach. It also generates a wide range of collocations.

1. Significance Oriented Approach

In this approach, "collocations are seen as a type of word combination most commonly as one that is fixed to some degree but not completely" (Cowie, 1996). This approach has been referred to as the significance oriented approach

or phraseology approach. It has its roots in the Russian phraseology. The main adherents of it are Cowie, I. Mel'cuk and Housman (ibid, 1996).

The most important variation in Cowie's use (1996) of the term concerns the distinction between collocations and other types of word combinations. However, Mel'cuk and Housman have stressed that there is a difference in the nature of the elements in a collocation. Unlike the frequency-based approach, the phraseology approach constantly requires that the elements of collocations should syntactically be related to (adj+ noun, noun+ verb, noun+ noun).

The frequency –based approach and the phraseology approach are two outstanding and significant approaches that shed light on collocations and provide linguists with basic analysis elements to classify collocations into various categorizations and distinguish the term collocation from other phraseological types.

From the above definitions given under each approach, it is noticed that there is no single definition of the word collocation between linguists. Therefore, there is an agreement among them that collocations are two or more words combined together. For example, the expression 'fast food' is called collocation because the word 'fast' collocates or co-occurs frequently with the word 'food'. In this context, the word 'fast' cannot be replaced by the word 'quick' or 'rapid' because this replacement will not be natural.

2. The Lexical Approach

According to Barlow (as cited in Partington, 1998: 22), "purely syntactic description of language especially those of the generative schools could not really explain how language works". He argues that the generative school has neglected the words that have their collocations; rather, it has focused on the explanation of free association of lexical items on the basis of grammar. The starting attempts to design a lexical syllabus started with Willis in 1990. Later,

Lewis created the term "lexical approach" to indicate a theory in which lexis and vocabulary play an important role in language learning.

The lexical approach has emerged as a reaction to the behaviorist view that is based on PPP (presentation, practice, and production). (Thornbury-Scott, 2002:109) Woolard and George (as cited in Lewis: 2000: 31) pointed out that within the lexical approach, vocabulary is learnt by learning words combinations not as individual words but also word combinations have to be discussed as whole not as separated individual words. They are prefabricated chunks: group of words that can be learnt as a unit by somebody who is learning a language .For example, chunks are: "Can I have the bill please?" and "Pleased to meet you?" These prefabricated chunks are stored in the mind as individual wholes (ibid, 31). Whenever learners want to speak or write, they recall these ready-made chunks instead of brainstorming their mind looking for which word goes with which. This view is also shared by Lewis, Morgan (as cited in Lewis: 2000: 15) who claims that "so much of the language of the effective language use is already in prefabricated chunks stored in their mental lexicons just waiting to be recalled for use".

2.8. Characteristics of Collocations

Haddi Abdeleahmane (2016: 8) explained that collocations are distinguished into three main characteristics: Noncompositionality, Non substitutability and Non modifiability (Schwaz, 1993: 181).First, a collocation is non-compositional in the sense that it is difficult for us to understand the idiomatic meaning of the words, but, from the other side, we understand the meaning of the individual words. A good example of non –compositionality is an idiom. For instance, "to have an itching palm" meaning to be greedy for money (Kirkpatrick, E-M-and Schwarz, CM, 1993: 180).

Moreover, non-compositionality states that the meaning of the collocation is not entirely understood from the meaning of constituents. Collocations are characterized by limited compositionality which means that there is usually an element of meaning added to the combination. In the case of strong tea here, the word strong has acquired in some active agent which is closely related but slightly different from the basic sense having great physical strength. This characteristic, (non-compositionality) can be illustrated most clearly with idioms such as "to kick the bucket", where the idiomatic meaning of the whole (i.e. to die) seems unrelated to the constituents kick or bucket.

The second characteristic, non-substitutionability means that we cannot substitute the words that constitute a collocation for their synonyms. For example, "close the meeting", it is wrong to say "shut the meeting" because" shut" and" meeting" do not go together, whereas one could say" shut the door".

Also, we say" hot dog". Here the meaning cannot be predicted from the meaning of the parts. Other examples: "powerful computer / strong computer". Even in the context, the components of the collocation have the same meaning. That's why; we cannot say yellow wine instead of white wine.

The third characteristic, non-modifiability means that many collocations cannot be freely modified without changing their meaning. For example," to kick a plastic bucket" has only the literal meaning not the idiomatic one. However, many other collocations are modifiable without a change in meaning such as:" powerful new computer", white wine not whiter wine, mother in law not mother in laws,…etc.

Collocations and multi-word units are assumed to follow semantic noncompositionality, syntactic non-modifiability, and non-substitutability of components by semantically similar word (Schwarz, 1993: 182).

To sum up, the collocation for example, "in broad day light" which means no attempt to hide one's actions, the meaning differs from the literal meaning which is "wide day light". The constituents of it cannot be modified. So, we cannot say "broad lights". Also, we cannot substitute any element of this collocation by its synonym such as: "wide day light". Although most collocations share these characteristics which are mentioned before, they widely vary of different degrees.

2.9. The Notion of Collocation and colligation

Collocation is mentioned in the same field as colligation, but the two are distinguishable. Colligation is the tendency not of a few particular words, but of any items from an entire grammatical sub-class to co-occur with a specific item.

Collocation is the way one word co-occurs with another, colligation is the way one word regularly co-occurs with a particular (grammar) pattern. So, for example some verbs typically occur with a particular tense or a noun might typically appear preceded by a personal pronoun, rather than an article. For example, "pass my/your driving test" or "it's my / your / our responsibility to… ", but I will take responsibility for…" (Lewis, 2000: 168).

In general we commit crime has changed, so the collocation commit suicide has become an exception to the colligation commit crime. At first sight, a set of countable nouns share a lot of meaning. So, we might expect them to take definite and indefinite articles such as: "the Finnish architect", a "church architect" and possessive cases like: "the academy's architect (ibid, 168).

It can be noticed that, the view of Lewis about collocation and colligation is slightly different from Firth's understanding of lexical co-occurrence tendencies. Each linguist is aware of the phenomenon of lexical co-

occurrence in his own way. Although collocation and colligation do not work together, the relationship between the two can be seen on a scale of generality. The notion of colligation operates at the grammatical level of meaning; however it has been extended to cover the syntactic constraints or even just preference of particular words (Firth, 1957).

Firth (1957) tries to clarify the difference between the concepts. He argues that collocations are actual words in habitual company. A word in a usual collocation stares you in the face as it is, while colligation cannot be of words as such. Hence, colligations of grammatical categories related in a grammatical structure do not follow word divisions or even sub-divisions of words.

It obvious from what we have seen above that, collocation and colligation are totally different. A collocation is a set of words combined together, whereas a colligation refers to a chunk of words related to grammatical structures. H. Abderrahmane (2016: 11).

2.10. Part two Previous Studies

0. Introduction

In this part of the research the researcher presents some previous studies and they are divided them into local and regional previous studies.

1. A local research study was conducted by **El. H. Badawi** entitled "An Investigation into the Issues of Understanding and Using Collocations among Sudanese EFL English Cultural Center Students during the academic (**2020 – 2021**)" Alzaiem Alazhari University, Sudan. The aim of the study is to examine the collocational errors that EFL students commit while writing. The research questions for the study are to what degree are Sudanese EFL English Cultural Center Students mindful of comprehension and utilizing collocations? To what degree are Sudanese EFL English Cultural Center Students have issues managing collocations? And what is the thought behind the troubles that they experience?

The research hypotheses for this study are "H1 somewhat Sudanese EFL English Cultural Center Students don't know about comprehension and utilizing collocations. H2 somewhat Sudanese EFL English Cultural Center Students have issues managing collocations. H3 there are numerous purposes for the challenges of comprehension and utilizing collocations". The researcher used the descriptive analytical method for the data collection. A test for the students and a questioner for the (EFL learners) were used as tools to collect the data for this study. The researcher found out that many students are not aware of using collocation. They have various problems regarding understanding and using collocation. Collocations can play a vital role in improving their communicative skills.

2. Another local research was also conducted by **Anas Kabbashi** in (**2015**) about Investigating Collocations Problems Encountered by EFL Learners – Sudan University of Science and Technology. The objectives of this research were to investigate the most difficult areas that face Sudanese students in understanding English collocation, to investigate to what extent Sudanese university students find difficulties when using strong collocation of English, and to find out to what extent idioms and free combinations create difficulties to Sudanese EFL learners. The questions of the study were which types of collocations cause problems to university students of English language in Sudan? To what extent do Sudanese university students make mistakes when using strong collocates? And to what extent do idioms and free combination create problems to Sudanese EFL learners when using collocations? The hypotheses of the study were as follow many Sudanese university students who study English as a foreign language have problems in lexical collocations, Sudanese university students make more mistakes when dealing with word combination, particularly strong collocations, and idioms and free combination are the main factors that cause collocation problems. The researcher used the descriptive analytical

method to conduct the study. And a test was used as a tool to collect the data for the study from the students. After the analysis of the data the researcher has come out with these conclusions. Students apply the strategy of transferring their first language to the second language in using collocation. They have limited knowledge of cultural-specific about English collocations. And they have a lack of knowledge about the types of collocations.

3. Regionally, in (2018) – University of Darussalam – Band Aceh conducted a research on An Analysis of Collocation used in written Assignment. The aims of the study were to find out the types of mistakes students make in using collocation in writing assignment and to discover the students' strategies in solving the problem in understanding collocation. The questions of the study were what types of mistakes do students make in using collocation in writing assignment? And what are the students' strategies in solving the problem in understanding collocation? The researcher used qualitative approach – an interview and assignment sheets were used as tools to collect the data for this study.

Based on the finding of students' writing assignment in using collocation, discovered some results of collocation types that students made mistakes in using collocation. It showed that students made a total of 42 mistakes, adjectives + noun 8 mistakes, and verb + adverb 5 mistakes. Thus, the verb + noun were the most dominant students' mistakes in using collocation. Whereas the interview showed that the students' strategies in solving the problem in understanding collocation by reading book / dictionary, asking the lecturer, and exploring much information about collocation itself.

2.11. Summary

      The first part of this chapter presents a brief historical background of collocations, definition of collocations, the importance of collocations, types of collocations, the differences between collocations and other formulaic sequences, approaches to studying collocations, characteristics of collocations and the notion of collocation and colligation. Moreover, the second part presents some previous studies and divides them into local and regional ones.

Chapter Three: Methodology.

3.0. Introduction

This chapter discusses the following: Method of the study, tool of the study, sample of the study, reliability and validity, procedures of data collection, and methods of data analysis.

3.1. Method of the study

The descriptive analytical method is used to test the research hypotheses as they are stated in chapter one.

3.2. Tool of the study

An oral test is used as a tool to collect the data from the students for this study

3.3. Sample of the study

The population of this study is the first year English students of Sudan University of Science and Technology, college of Languages, Department of English language. Furthermore, twenty five participants male and female are selected randomly as a sample for this study.

3.4. Validity and Reliability

The test for this study is validated by experts who omit, add and correct it. Also, their notes and suggestion are considered, and the necessary modification is made by the researcher before administering the test. For the reliability, the researcher use the Statistical Package for Social Studies (SPSS) to conduct the research and the result is shown in a table and a figure in chapter four (P, 33-34).

3.5. Procedures of data collection

The required information, validity of the study tool is shown by testing twenty five of first year students of English language at Sudan University of Science and Technology orally. The oral test is administered by the researcher

after getting permission from the lecturer to conduct the oral test. Moreover, the oral test takes about twenty minutes to be answered and directions are provided by the researcher to help the students answering the oral test questions. Then the oral test is analyzed by the researcher.

3.6. Method of Data Analysis

To achieve the objectives of the study and to verify the research's hypotheses the statistical methods of data analysis which are used are charts, frequency distribution of the answers, and percentages. Moreover, to get results as accurate as possible "SPSS" is used to fulfill the research which stands for Statistical Package for Social Sciences.

3.7. Summary

In this chapter the researcher highlights the method of the study, tool of the study, sample of the study, reliability and validity, procedures of data collection, and methods of data analysis.

Chapter Four

Data analysis and Discussion

4.0. Introduction

In this chapter the researcher presents the result of statistical analysis of the data that were gathered as a result of conducting an oral test on Investigating Problems Faced by EFL learners in Utilizing collocations on Oral communication to find answers to the research questions, and to verify its hypotheses.

The researcher uses both a table and a figure to present the analysis. Moreover, they are followed by a comment about the meaning of the result.

The result is discussed to explain its value and relevance to the conceptual framework of the study.

4.1. Analysis of the oral test

The researcher uses an oral test to test the research hypotheses. First year students of English Language at Sudan University of Science and Technology are tested orally on lexical collocations (adjective + noun, noun + verb, noun + noun, verb + adverb and adverb + adjective).

The test is twenty out of twenty. It is taken by twenty five students. They are selected randomly. They are classified as poor, below average, average and above average. Students who obtain above ten are classified as average and above average, and those who obtain below ten are classified as poor and below average. Furthermore, the result obtained by them is displayed on the table and the figure below.

4.2. Results

In this chapter the researcher explains the result in a table and a figure.

4.2.0 Table:

This table highlights the result of oral evaluation. The columns show the frequency, percent, valid percent and the cumulative percent whereas the rows show the level of the participants and classify them as poor, below average, average and above average.
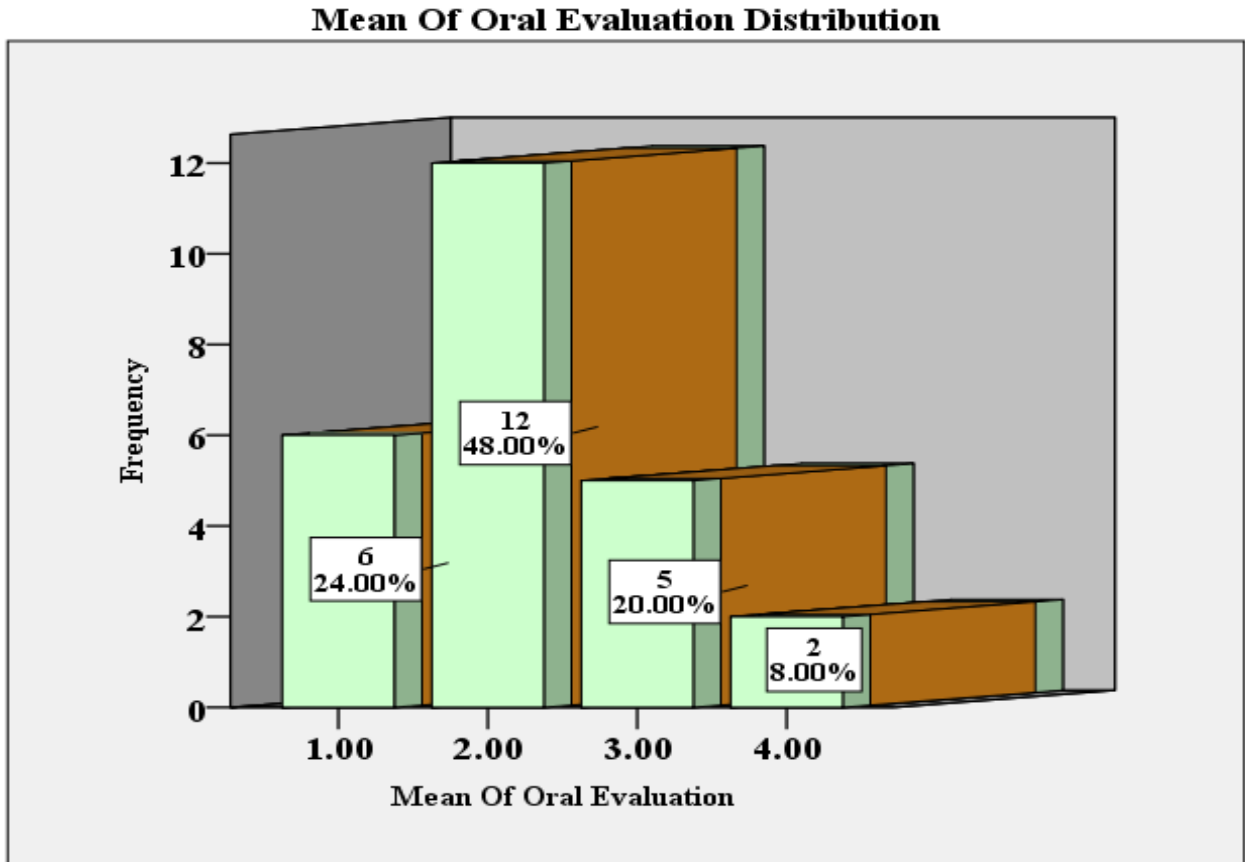
A table Mean Of Oral Evaluation Frequency Distribution

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Poor	6	24.0	24.0	24.0
Below Average	12	48.0	48.0	72.0
Average	5	20.0	20.0	92.0
Above Average	2	8.0	8.0	100.0
Total	25	100.0	100.0	

4.2.1. Figure

In this figure the researcher explains the result as it appears in the shape below.

Mean Of Oral Evaluation Distribution

4.3. Discussion

It's clear from the above table and the figure that there are six participants with twenty four percentages is poor, and there are twelve participants with forty eight percentages are below average. The Cumulative Percent of those who are poor and below average seventy two percentages. There are five participants with twenty percentages are average. And there are only two participants with eight percentages are above average. The Cumulative Percent of those who are average and those who are above average is only twenty eight percentages.

To sum up, only seven of the participants pass the oral test whereas the others fail. The percentages of the participants with average and above average is twenty eight percentages less than the percentages of participants with blew average and poor which is seventy two percentages.

4.4. Verification of the hypotheses:

Hypothesis one: Which says EFL learns face serious difficulties in using lexical collocation in oral communication.

The first hypothesis which states that, EFL learns face difficulties in using lexical collocation in oral communication, the result in the table and the figure shows that, twenty eight percentages of the participants are classified to be average and above average on the oral test. Thus, the researcher can say that, the majority of EFL learners face difficulties in using collocations on oral communication

Hypothesis two: Which says EFL learners are unaware of using collocation in oral communication.

The second hypothesis which states that, EFL learners are unaware of using collocation in oral communication, the result in the table and the figure shows that seventy two percentages of the participants are classified to be below average and poor on the oral test. Thus, the researcher can say that, the majority of EFL learners are unaware of using collocations in oral communication.

4.5. Summary

In this chapter the researcher explains the result of the oral test which is taken by twenty five of first year students of English Language at Sudan University of Science and Technology. The result of the test is highlighted in a table and a figure. Moreover, the result shows that seventy two of the participants

are classified to be below average and poor, while twenty eight of them are classified to be average and above average.

Chapter Five

Summary of Findings, Conclusions, Recommendations and Suggestion for Further studies

5.0. Introduction

In this chapter the researcher presents summary of findings, conclusion recommendations, suggestion for further studies, the references, websites and the appendix.

5.1. Summary of Findings

The result of the study in this chapter is based on what is discussed in chapter four; in the light of the research hypotheses as they are stated in chapter one. The study is focused on Investigating Problems that face EFL Learners in Utilizing Collocations in Oral Communication. In the general point of view all the result is in focus of the research hypotheses.

According to what is discussed in chapter four, the researcher proves that, the first hypothesis in chapter one which says that, the majority of EFL learners face difficulties in using collocations in oral communication, is true. And the result confirms that twenty eight percent of the participants are average and above average whereas the others are less than that.

As it's stated in chapter four's discussion, the researcher proves that, the second hypothesis in chapter one, which says that EFL learners are unaware of using collocations in oral communication, is true. And the result confirms that, seventy two percent of the participants are less than above average and average.

5.2. Conclusion

In conclusion, the present study proves that the hypotheses are true. Therefore, the researcher offers some recommendations for solving these problems, and provides some suggestions for further studies.

5.3. Recommendations

In attempt to solve the problems, that are faced by first year students of English Language at Sudan University of Science and Technology. The researcher recommends the following.

- Teachers should raise students' awareness of the importance of collocations and make maximum use of them to develop spoken language.
- Teachers must follow and imply modern methods to help students use collocations in various ways to improve spoken language.
- Collocations are important part of mastering oral communication so students should pay more attention to the correct use of collocations.
- Collocations should be practiced orally inside and outside the classroom.
- Knowledge of understanding and using collocations are of great importance to EFL Learners, so teachers should help students to understand and use collocations.
- Supportive feedback should be offered throughout the task cycle, not only to help students identify their weakness in oral communication and ways of overcoming them but also to encourage their strengths and consequently their motivation and involvement in oral communication.

5.4. Suggestion for further studies

- Other studies are needed to investigate the effect of using social media on developing spoken language.

- Other studies are needed to investigate the problems faced by EFL learners in utilizing phrasal verbs in oral communication.

- Other studies are needed to investigate the problems faced by EFL learners in utilizing idiomatic expressions in oral communication.

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Appendix

**Sudan University of Science and
Technology
College of Graduate Studies
College of Languages – Department of
English**

Name: ……………....... **level** ..………… **Gender** male ( ) female ( )

The Subject: Oral test.

As a process of developing spoken English, students are kindly asked to answer this test orally about "the Problems that Face EFL Learners in Utilizing Collocations in Oral Communication".` Besides, multi-Options are also given below each of the following sentences to assist students to answer correctly.

The Test:

1- She died of a …………………… heart attack last year.
   a. bad   **b**. massive   **c.** broken
2- Her son seems to be a ………………….. child at the school.
   a. bright   **b.** learning   **c.** working
3- It's simply a family party, so wearing ……….. clothes is fine.
   a. cotton   **b**. casual   **c.** wool
4- Illegal immigration seems to be a ………… problem in America.
   a. normal   **b.** heavy   **c.** major
5- The ideas ………….. freely from least to the important.

   a. flow   **b.** organize   **c**. arrange

6- The company …………..…. the product for us last week.

   a. showed   **b.** launched   **c.** exposed

7- The internet has …………… opportunities for our business.

   a. opened   **b.** given   **c.** created

8- The ……………….. boomed in the 1990s.
   a. economy   **b.** house   **c.** work
9- Lucy felt a ………… of anger as she watched her ex-husband enter the room with his new girlfriend.

a. deep   **b.** surge   **c.** great

10-   He was charged with ………. of power to keep prices artificially high.

a . the use   **b.** abuse   **c.** making

11-   He arrived the office late due to …………. congestion.

a. heavy   **b.** transport   **c.** traffic

12-   Every parent feels a ……. of pride when their child does well or wins.

a. sense   **b.** state   **c.** matter

13-   This situation has ………………… increasingly difficult.

a. become   **b.** gone   **c.** grown.

14-   She smilled ….. as she looked at the photos of her new grandson.
a. hungrily   **b**. carefully   **c.** proudly
15-   He is ………….. better at speaking and writing.

a. growing   **b.** getting   **c.** becoming

16-   John has …………… heavily in the bond market.

a. invested   **b.** worked   **c.** run.

17-   She looks …………… ridiculous in that yellow hat.

a. totally   **b .**absolutely   **c.** perfectly

18-   I'm fully ………..that there are serious problems.

a. aware   **b.** awake   **c.** concern

19-   Tom was ……………….. happy to see Mary again.
a. slightly   **b.** double   **c.** blissfully
20-   David was…..... concerned that Jane might tell his girlfriend about his bad
      story.
a. deeply   **b**. completely   **c:** getting

Some oral evaluations:

Valid	Poor	Below average	Average	Above average	Excellent