LINGUA LITERA

Journal of English Linguistics and Literature

A Study on English Collocation at Sekolah Tinggi Ilmu Bahasa Asing (STIBA) Persada Bunda Pekanbaru

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Abstract

This research aimed to study about students' understanding of English Collocation at Sekolah Tinggi Ilmu Bahasa Asing (STIBA) Persada Bunda. It was done since there were many unnatural and unacceptable words used by the students both in their conversation and writing. There are two categories of English collocation. They are grammatical and lexical collocations. The research was conducted to find which category and sub-category that were more problematic for STIBA students. There were 40 STIBA students taken as the sample of this research. The students were asked to do a test consisting of grammatical and lexical colloction. The aim of the test was to find out their understanding about English Collocation. The result showed that grammatical collocation was more difficult than lexical. The mean score was 11.02 : 13.55 for grammatical and lexical collocations. Grammatical mean score was lower than the other one. Besides, the students cannot answer all the questions in grammatical because the persentage was only 90 % while in lexical, the student can answer all questions perfectly (100%). Moreover the most difficult sub-category was noun + preposition with 10.7 of score. By doing more practices the students were expected to be able to increase their understanding about English Collocation.

Key words: *Lexical collocation; Grammatical collocation; sub-category*

Introduction

English students have to practice their language skills written and orally. It is important for them to be able to write and speak English fluently so that they can communicate well. To practice their speaking skill, they need someone to talk to. They can speak with their friends inside or outside of class talking about their subjects or anything. They can also speak with their lecturers about their lectures or college. Beside orally, the students can communicate through their writing or notes by using any social medias like facebook, twitter, and black berry messenger.

Some students can communicate in English fluently. They speak clearly and what they say is understandable with enough vocabulary. They also use good grammar so that they can engage in tight and long conversation. Meanwhile some others have difficulty in speaking and writing English. They are afraid of making mistake and always thinking about grammar before talking. Moreover, they have less vocabulary and poor pronunciation.

Many studies are conducted to investigate learners' difficulties in foreign language learning (Ehrman, 1995) or their language strategies and perception of language learning (Bailey, 1991; Bailey & Nunan, 1996). Among problems faced by English Foreign learners, English collocation is one of interesting ones to study. Many researchers conducted research about some errors made by English Foreign Learners (EFL) in English collocation.

Talking about collocation is talking about words since it consists of two or more words put together, and they sound natural to native English speakers (McCarthy & O'Dell, 2005). Students of English have difficulties in using the collocation. They are quite difficult to use what words should come after which ones. Because of that the students always try to guess the words so that they miscollocate wrong words that sound unnatural to native speakers. For example, they say *make homework* instead of *do homework* and *drink medicine* instead of *take*

medicine. In fact, the students have studied vocabulary for years in two semesters. This fact encourages the researcher to find out the answer through this study.

The use of collocation is very important for both speaking and writing. It makes the language more easily understood and natural. It provides some alternatives and richer ways of expressing thought. For foreign language learners, English collocation is quite problematic since they have to use the natural way of language or try to imitate the native speaker as close as possible.

Collocation is divided into two categories; grammatical, and lexical collocation (Benson & Benson, 1997). The previous collocation is about combining words (noun, adjective, and verb) with preposition, to infinitive, or clause. It has eight sub-categories of grammatical collocation. While the last one refers to a type of construction which combines noun, verb, adjective, or adverb with verb, noun, adjective, or adverb. It is divided into six sub-categories of lexical collocation.

English collocation is studied in STIBA. The students learn it in different subject courses. They are vocabulary and translation. Eventhough they studied collocation for two semesters, they still cannot use it well. It is shown on their thesis. There are a lot of mistakes found in their writing, such as "*the researcher is interested with this topic*", it should be "*the researcher is interested in this topic*". There are many more mistakes found, and many of them missed from advisors' supervision. The students who are doing their thesis proposal are the sample of this research. It aims to remind them about collocation so that it can reduce the same mistakes that possibly happen again.

Students at college of foreign language (STIBA) of Persada Bunda in Pekanbaru have difficulty in collocation. They still confuse in combining words and collocate the wrong words. It is found in their writings when they submit their homework or task, and in their comunication or conversation when they talk in class or campus. This

study tried to avoid and anticipate mistakes that students probably make in their thesis. Based on the situation above, this study focused on students' problem about English collocations and formulated the problems into two questions.

1. Which category of collocation was more problematic for STIBA students?
2. Which subcategory of collocation was the most problematic for STIBA students?

Purpose of the Study

This study was conducted to get information about problems faced by STIBA students in using and understanding English Collocation. Between two categories of English collocation (lexical and grammatical collocations) which category was more problematic for them. Furthermore, it also explained which sub-category of collocation was most problematic for them. Based on the situations above, the problems were specifically described as follow.

1. To explain which category of English collocation is more problematic for STIBA students.
2. To explain which sub-category of English collocation is the most problematic for STIBA students.

This study can firstly be a research report about problematic in English collocation and the causes of the problem in learning it in STIBA Persada Bunda. Secondly, it can be a contribution to any English lecturers to be more focus on English collocation.

Review Related Literatures
Collocation

There are so many definitions of collocation can be quoted here. Carter (1992) defined, "Collocations are group of words which occur repeatedly in a language". This definition is supported by Diegnan (1998) who said, "Collocation is the way in which words regularly occur near each other." Aghbar (1990) also stated, "Collocation consists of two words which are linked together in the

memory of native speakers and occur together with some frequency in both written and oral discourse." Hill (2000) explained colloction as "a predictable combination of words".

To make it clear, the researcher gives some examples of English collocation. The word "*rain*" *(hujan)* goes with "*heavy*" (*hujan deras/lebat*). Someone can say "*hard rain*", but it sounds unnatural and perhaps it is confusing. As Indonesia students, when they want to say or write "*melakukan kejahatan*" they might translate directly into english and say or write "*do/make a crime*" instead of "*commit a crime*". This is because they are influenced by their mother tongue.

Another example can be described through collocation forks below (Felicity O'Dell & Michael McCarthy, 2008: 14).
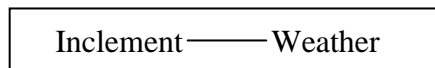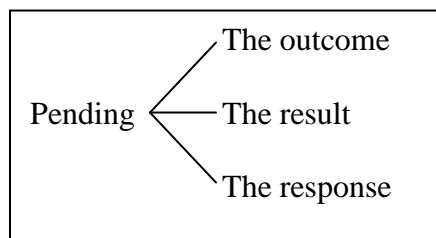
Inclement———Weather

Figure 1 Collocation Fork of 'Inclement'

Figure above tells that *inclement* only collocates exclusively with *weather*. Inclement means severe, cold, or stormy. If we want to say that the weather is not nice, we cannot say the *bad weather* because English native speakers always use inclement for weather, so we should say *inclement weather*. No other word can be put together with weather except inclement. This kind of collocation is known as strong collocation. (Felicity O'Dell & Michael McCarthy, 2008: 8)
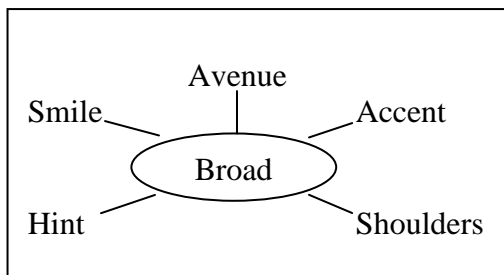
Do ⟨ Your Homework / Your best
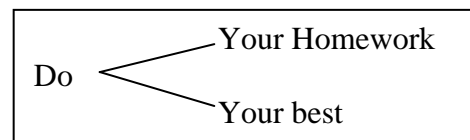
Figure 2 Collocation Fork of 'Do'

From the figure above, it shows that collocation fork of *Do* has two branches. It tells that *do* can collocate with more than one word, they are *your homework,* and *your best. Homework* collocates with *do (mengerjakan),* but most of Indonesia students often say *make homework (membuat PR)* instead of *do homework.*
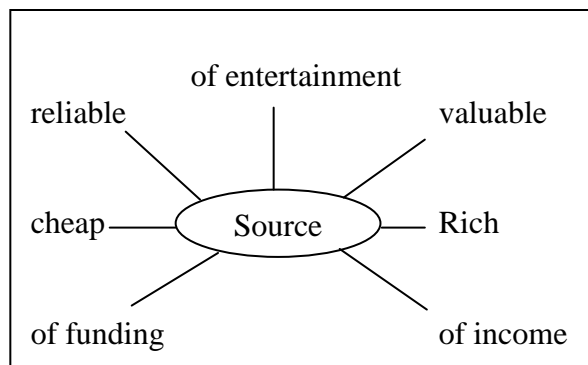
```
           The outcome
         /
Pending ──── The result
         \
           The response
```

Figure 3 Collocation Fork of 'Pending"

The word "inclement" has only one collocation, that is "weather" while the word "pending" has three collocations; "the outcome," "the result," and "the response." This kind of collocation where words collocate with three words or less is strong collocation. However, the next example is desrcibed through collocation bubles because one word can collocate with more than 3 words.

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        Avenue
Smile          Accent
      ( Broad )
Hint           Shoulders
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Figure 4 Collocation Bubles of 'Broad'

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           of entertainment
reliable                    valuable
cheap ──( Source )── Rich
of funding                  of income
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Figure 5   Collocation Buble of 'Source'

The word "broad" has five or more collocation words. On the figures above we can find "broad avenue", we can see "broad smile", someone can have "broad shoulders" or "broad accent" or even "broad hint".

Meanwhile the word "source" has seven collocation words. They are "reliable," "rich," "cheap," "of funding," "of income," "of entertainment," and "valuable." The word which has 4 or more collocation words is known as weak collocation (Felicity O'Dell & Michael McCarthy,2008:14).

Based on the definitions above, collocation can be concluded as tendency of words that occur together.

Lexical Collocation

Actually English collocation falls into two major groups (Benson, Benson, Ilson, 1986). They are lexical and grammatical collocations. These two groups are explained respectively.

Bahns described lexical collocation as words which occur together with nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs. Moreover, Benson, Benson, Ilson continued to classify it into six sub-categories.

1. Verb + Noun (Set + An Alarm)
   Shena *set his alarm* clock for 5 o'clock

2. Adjective + Noun (Strong + Tea)
   He drank *strong tea* when he was here

3. Noun + Verb (bomb + explode)
   Bomb exploded at Thamrin City last week

4. Noun + Noun (a bouquet of + flower)
   She received *a bouquet of flower*

5. Adverb + Adjective (deliriously happy)
   I felt *deliriously happy*

6. Verb + Adverb (drive + recklessly)
   I don't like to travel with my brother because he *drives recklessly*

From above explanation and example, it was concluded that lexical collocation as words of verb, adverb, noun, and adjective that collocate with them.

Grammatical Collocation

Unlike the former collocation, grammatical collocation does not co-occur with nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs. It occurs together with prepostions or clause. Benson et al. (1986) classified it into eight subcategories. Each sub-category is completed with examples in sentences.

1. Noun + Preposition (blockade + against)
   The elderly man used a mask as a *blockade against* the flu virus

2. Noun + to Infinitive (pleasure + to do)
   It was a *pleasure to do* it

3. Noun + that clause (agreement + that she would represent us in court)

   We reached an agreement that she would represent us in court

4. Preposition + Noun (by + accident)

   The 3rd part of the Summa is also divided into two parts, but *by accident* rather that by design

5. Adjective + Preposition (angry + at)

   They *angry at* the children

6. Adjective + to infinitive (easy + to answer)

   The question is *easy to answer*

7. Adjective + that clause (necessary + that he find the book)

   It is *necessary that he find the book*

8. Verb + Preposition (insist + on)

   If you *insist on going*, this is the route you must take

   If lexical collocation combines words of verb, adverb, adjective, and noun with words among themself, then grammatical collocation can be concuded based on above explanation

that it occurs together with preposition and clause.

Method of the Research

This research used descriptive qualitative method since it studied the actual problems about English collocation, then the gained data were arranged, explained, and analyzed. This research studied about using English Collocation by STIBA students. The students in this research were those who were doing thesis proposal. In conducting this research, there were some stages.

1. Collecting data from the test
2. Analyzing the data
3. Classifying the data
4. Conluding the research finding

   Population of this research was STIBA students who were doing their thesis proposal. The reason for choosing these students was to avoid mistakes they possibly make later in their writing since there were many mistakes the researcher found in previuous thesis. The other reason is that they have passed Translation and

intermediate vocabulary subject courses. In this semester there are 40 students who are writing proposal. Since the subject of this research is less than 100 it is better to use all of them as the sample of the research (Arikunto, 1998).

This research were conducted at STIBA Persada Bunda Pekanbaru located on Jalan Diponegoro No. 42. Meanwhile, the data was taken on November 2015.

There were two kinds of data used in this research. They were primary and secondary data.

1. Primary Data

   The main data were obtained from the test. The test was about English collocation. It was multipe choice consiting of 40 numbers of question. There were 20 questions of lexical category and 20 for grammatical one. Students' tests were scored and analyzed to find the mistakes which the students did most.

2. Secondary Data

   This kind of data can be said as supporting one. It was obtained from jurnals, books that are relevant to English Collocation.

Next explanation tells how to collect primary and secondary data.

1. Technique of collecting primary data

   a. Observation, here the researcher observed and took a note for every symptom related to English collocation at STIBA Persada Bunda

   b. Test, it aimed to find out which category and sub-category of English collocation that was more problematic for STIBA students.

2. Technique of collecting secondary data.

   This data supported the primary one. It was obtained by reading many sources related to English collocation.The students' answer sheets were analyzed by scoring them to find which category and sub-category was more prooblematic for STIBA students. The lower score was stated as the more

problematic category, while the lowest score was stated as the most problematic sub-category.

Students' correct answers were scored by summing them to find the mean of each cateory by using the following formula.

$$X = \frac{\sum X}{N}$$

X = Mean

$\sum$ = Summation

X = Score

N = Number of Score

Findings and Discussions

The result of the test showed that the highest score the students got in the test was 36. It means that from 40 questions, the student could answer 36 numbers correctly and missed 4 numbers. On the other hand, the lowest score the students got in the test is 15. It means that the student could answer 15 numbers correctly but missed 25 numbers. Beside answering the questions, the students left the questions empty. It meant that they had difficulty in choosing the correct answers. From the two categories, grammatical had more empty numbers than lexical.

Category of English Collocation that was more Problematic for STIBA Students

As previously explained, there are two categories of English collocations used in this research; they are lexical and gramatical collocations (Benson, Benson, Ilson, 1986). After scoring the test given to the students, the researcher got the result. The scoring was done to each category so that the researcher could find the mean score easily. The scoring was done by counting the correct answers from each category. Based on that, the researcher found which category of English collocation that is more problematic for STIBA students as shown in the table bellow.

Table 1 Mean Score of the Students Test

Mean Score	Lexical	Grammatical
	13,55	11,02

From the table above, it shows that the mean score of lexical

collocation is 13,55 while grammatical collocation is 11,02. It meant that the students could answer around 13 or 14 numbers of lexical collocation from 20 questions. Meanwhile, for grammatical collocation there were around 11 numbers of question the students could answer. In other words, the students could answer more numbers in lexical than in grammatical category. It explained that lexical collocation was easier than grammatical collocation. It can be concluded that grammatical collocation is more problematic for STIBA students.

Beside previous data, the following one also support the finding that grammatical category is more problematic for STIBA students. From two categories tested to STIBA students, all questions of lexical category could be answered completely without mistake. There was one student could answer all number of question correctly so that she got 20 score (100%) for lexical category. It explained that this category was not difficult for her so that she could do it well without mistake. While in

grammatical category, from 40 students there was one student who could answer 18 numbers of question correctly (90%) and 2 mistake numbers so that she got 18 score.

Futhermore, the test result also showed that students have difficulties in understanding grammatical collocation. The test which was given to students was a multiple choice test. They were asked to choose one best answer among three optional answers. After analyzing the test result, there were many numbers left empty or unanwered. The empty answers described that students cannot choose the best answer. There were 12 numbers or 60% that are left unanswered in lexical category while in grammatical there are 17 numbers or 85% that are left empty. It meant that grammatical was more problematic for the students than lexical.

In lexical category, there were seven students could not answer one or more numbers. Student one could not answer question number 5, student five could not answer question number 1,

student eleven could not answer questions number 6 and 11. Moreover twelve student could not answer question number 15, student fourteen could not answer questions number 5, 11, 12, and 16, while student seventeen could not answer question number 12, and student twenty four could not answer questions number 1 and 3. Totally there were 6 students leaving one or more questions unanswered and there were 12 questions uncircled.

In grammatical category, there were more unanswered numbers found or more questions left empty. Here, fourteen students could not answer 17 numbers of question. It means that students have difficulties in using and understanding English collocation especially in grammatical category. From fourty students, there were fourteen left the question/s empty. In other words, grammatical category has more empty numbers than lexical. This finding supports that grammatical category is more difficult for the STIBA students. This category is more problematic than lexical category.

Sub-category of English Collocation that was most problematic for STIBA Students

In lexical category, there are 6 sub-categories while in grammatical there are 8 sub-categories. From twenty questions in lexical, there were 3 questions of verb+noun, 3 questions of adjective+noun, 3 questions of noun+verb, 3 questions of noun+noun, 4 questions of adjective+adjective, and 4 questions of verb+adverb. Total questions was 20.

Furthermore, in grammatical category there are eight sub-categories used in this study. From twenty questions, there were 3 questions of noun + preposition, 2 questions of noun + to infinitive, 3 quetions of noun + that clause, 2 questions of preposition + noun, 2 questions of adjective + noun, 2 questions of adjective + to infinitive, 3 questions of adjective + that clause, and 3 questions of verb + preposition. To found the score of each sub-category, every correct answer was summed to get the mean score as the following table describes

Table 2 Mean Score of Lexical Sub-Category

No	Lexical Sub-Category	Mean Score
1	Verb + Noun	25
2	Adjective + Noun	22
3	Noun + Verb	35
4	Noun + Noun	27
5	Adverb + Adjective	24
6	Verb + Adverb	30

The table above describes the mean scores of lexical sub-categories. The first sub-category is Verb + Noun and the mean score is 25 while the second sub-category is Adjective + Noun scoring 22. The next sub-category is Noun + Verb, it has 35 mean score, but sub-category of Noun + Noun has 27. Futhermore, sub-category of Adverb + Adjective has 24 mean score, and the last sub-category is Verb + Adverb that has 30 means score. So, the lowest score among these sub-categories is Adjective + Noun (22). The question in the test asked the students to choose the collocation word of "smoker". The word collocates to "heavy", but most students chose "strong". The next question that the students made mistake was "heavy wind and strong rain" while the correct answer was "strong wind and heavy rain". And the last Adjective + Noun that confusing the students was "jam trafic" and "heavy trafic". The native speakers do not say those words in that way, they say "crowded trafic" naturally.

The next explanation describes the mean score of grammatical sub-category. Students' correct answers of each category were summed to get the mean score so that the lowest score could be decided easily. The following table displays the mean score of grammatical sub-category.

No	Grammatical Sub-Category	Score
1	Noun + Prep	10.7
2	Noun + to Inf	26
3	Noun + that Clause	24.3
4	Prep + Noun	24.5
5	Adjective + Noun	19
6	Adjective + to Inf	38
7	Adjective + that Clause	17
8	Verb + Preposition	23

Grammatical category has more sub-categories than the previous one. There are eight sub-categories here. To find which sub-category of grammatical collocation is more problematic for STIBA students, the

researcher needs to find the lowest score. In grammatical sub-category, Noun + Preposition got the lowest score that was 10,7. The students could not find the collocation of "Introduction". Almost all of them collocated "Introduction" with "about" instead of "to". Beside that, the students also miscollocated the word "allergy" with " with" instead of "to". Based on the explanation, Noun + Preposition was the more problematic sub-category for STIBA students.

In conlusion, the more problematic category for STIBA students was Grammatical category, and the most problematic sub-category for STIBA students was Noun + Preposition.

Conclusions and Suggestions

After conducting this study and analyzing the data, the researcher comes to the next conclusion.

1. The more problematic category of English collocation for STIBA students is grammatical category. It was supported from the mean scores of students' test.

Grammatical means score (11,02) is lower than lexical mean score (13,55). In addition, this category also has lower score of numbers of question that could be answered correctly by students. Student can answer all questions of lexical correctly, but cannot in grammatical category. The students only could answer 18 questions correctly. Furthermore, grammatical category has more empty or unanswered numbers than the other one. There were 17 questions left uncircled or empty in grammatical, but there were only 12 in lexical.

2. Sub-category that was most problematic for STIBA students was Noun + Preposition. It was approved from the numbers of question that students could answer the questions correctly. The mean score of Noun + Preposition was 10,7 which was the lowest score in both category.

Suggestion

From the conclusion above, there are some suggestions that can be stated here.

1. Since collocation correlates to how native speakers speak english naturally, so the students and lecture should be aware of using words or sentences. More practice is unavoidable and grammatical category is suggested to be the priority.

2. Since grammatical category is more problematic for STIBA students, it can be suggested that lecturers should give more exercises and practices on sub-categories especially on Noun + Preposition sub-category.

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