



The Contribution of the Student's Collocation Mastery to Vocabulary Mastery

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Abstract

Collocation is one of the aspects affecting vocabulary mastery. However, the knowledge which the students had in collocation was not in line with the understanding and use of the single words. Therefore, they had difficulties in using and choosing the appropriate words in different contexts of communication. In order to know the contribution of collocation to the students' vocabulary mastery, a test of collocation and a test of vocabulary mastery which included collocation as part of it were applied as the instruments of the research. The sample of the research was selected by applying cluster random sampling. This study proved that the collocation contributes significantly to the student's vocabulary mastery. Therefore, collocation and vocabulary mastery could not be treated separately in vocabulary learning and teaching.

Keywords: Collocation; Vocabulary Mastery

Abstrak

Collocation adalah salah satu aspek yang mempengaruhi penguasaan vocabulary. Akan tetapi pengetahuan siswa akan collocation tidak berimbang dengan pengetahuan dan penggunaan kata per kata. Oleh karena itu, para siswa merasa kesulitan dalam memilih dan menggunakan kata yang tepat dalam konteks komunikasi yang beragam. Untuk mengetahui berapa kontribusi collocation terhadap penguasaan vocabulary siswa, test collocation dan test penguasaan vocabulary dilakukan sebagai instrument penelitian. Sampel penelitian dipilih dengan teknik random sampling. Penelitian ini membuktikan bahwa collocation berkontribusi signifikan terhadap penguasaan vocabulary siswa. Oleh karena itu, Collocation dan penguasaan vocabulary tidak seharusnya menjadi komponen terpisah dalam proses pembelajaran vocabulary.

Kata Kunci: Collocation; Penguasaan Vocabulary

Introduction

In learning a foreign language, vocabulary has a very crucial role because it is basic to receptive and productive communication. Without vocabulary, nothing can be shared and communication will not take place. Therefore, lack of vocabulary will affect communication.

Vocabulary is related to and supports the four language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Reading a text or listening to somebody can be understandable and meaningful if there is sufficient vocabulary to support these activities. In the same way, speaking and writing also need adequate vocabulary. This idea is supported by Richard (2002) who states that vocabulary is the core component of language proficiency and provides much of basis for listening, speaking, reading, and writing. However, it is usually more difficult to use vocabulary in productive knowledge rather than the receptive knowledge because the productive knowledge necessitates the students to choose appropriate words to use in some different contexts of communication. It is not an easy task for some EFL learners to do.

Nofrita (1995) found that no matter how well the vocabulary course was arranged, the students still had difficulties, especially in using the vocabulary they have learnt. Occasionally, the vocabulary that had been learnt before was soon forgotten by the students. Moreover, based on the researcher's experience in teaching other subjects, there were some indications that the students did not have sufficient knowledge on vocabulary. She found that the students could hardly apply the vocabulary appropriately when they wanted to give response to the lecturer's question. For example, the students told her that they **had made* their homework instead of they *had done* their homework. Ironically, if the students scored well in their vocabulary test, they should have had the ability to recognize and use the words correctly and this matter should not come up.

Therefore, the researcher is interested to investigate the contribution of the collocation to the students' vocabulary mastery because the collocation is one of the elements in

vocabulary mastery. Higher grade in vocabulary should induce higher comprehension in collocations.

Review of the Related Literature

Vocabulary Mastery

In learning a foreign language, vocabulary is very important. It is basic to communication either receptively or productively. As Wilkins (1978) states: "Without grammar, very little can be conveyed, without vocabulary nothing can be conveyed." This statement implies that it is very difficult to be competent in a foreign language if the vocabulary is limited. Therefore, Ellen (1997) suggests that vocabulary should be learned continuously by the students. This idea is supported by Richards (2002:255) who also emphasizes the significance of vocabulary in language teaching. He says: "Vocabulary is a core component of language proficiency and provides much of the basis for how well learners speak, listen, read, and write." It is obvious that vocabulary plays a significant role in language teaching and learning. Knowing the morphology and syntax does not guarantee that one can actively engage in communication if the vocabulary is limited.

Some experts have defined the vocabulary mastery. Firstly, Marksheffel (1966:236) defines: "Vocabulary mastery is the ability to give meaning to words. Secondly, Khatib (1987:10) states: "Vocabulary mastery refers to the ability to recognize the sound and meaning of words as they appear in the written or printed symbols."

What Kind of Mistakes do Learners Make?

Nation (1995) found that some of the mistakes the second language learners make may be caused by the influence of their first language vocabulary. It is easier for the Chinese learners to pronounce words like *pen*, *see*, and *sun* than the words like *regular*, *eighth*, and *rice*. Moreover, the effect of the first language vocabulary may result in keeping a first language meaning for a second language word, for instance *komunikasi* often collocates with *antara* translated as *between*, so many Indonesians often use the word *communication* collocated with *between*.

Thornbury (2002) classifies two major types of errors the learners often make, namely:

- a. *Form-related errors* include mis-selection, misformation, and spelling and pronunciation errors. A mis-selection is when an existing word form is selected that is similar in sound or spelling to the correct form. For example:

1. *My friend was very *hungry with me (for **angry**).*

2. *He persuaded me to have a *noise operation (for **nose**).*

- b. *Meaning-related errors* typically occur when words that have similar or related meanings are confusing and the wrong choice is made. For example:

I like watching flowers and inhaling their lovely smell.

In this case, the word *watching* belong to the set of verbs related to seeing. It is inappropriate for a static object. Moreover, the word *inhaling* does not **collocate** with *smell*. Many „wrong words“ are in fact wrong collocation.

Teaching Vocabulary

Moras (2001) explains that teaching vocabulary should sustain the productive use of the wide range of vocabulary. It is one of the areas that needs greater attention. At this stage, we are concerned not only with students' understanding about the meaning of words, but also their ability to use them appropriately. It is obvious that learning vocabulary means not only to know the meaning of the words, but also to be able to use the words in different contexts in communication. Therefore, teaching and learning vocabulary should go beyond definition and memorization.

The concept of teaching vocabulary mastery results in some considerable points regarding it. Hence, Stockdale (2004) suggests that teaching vocabulary should be more than teaching definition of word because there are many factors involved in vocabulary learning besides the meaning, such as the grammatical pattern, the function, the appropriateness, and

the like. If teaching vocabulary is emphasized on definition, the teacher cannot assure that their students can communicate by using the vocabulary they have learnt. Moreover, teaching definition will isolate words from the productive use because definition deals with many single words. It is in line with what have been said by Moras. It is supported by Hunt and Beglar (2004) who say: "Vocabulary learning is more than the study of individual words." It is obvious that understanding many individual words is not sufficient for vocabulary learning because we do not use single words to communicate. Instead, we use chain of words to express our ideas.

Consequently, teaching vocabulary should be associated with the use in real communication as the real communication in which vocabulary mastery is of primary importance depends on different contexts. This idea is best noted by Deveci (2006) who argues: "It is accepted that choosing our words carefully in certain situations is important." From this statement, being able to recognize a word meaning should be followed by the ability of choosing the appropriate words to use. Knowing how to use the vocabulary in certain situation can affect communication because choice of words is very important. To be able to choose the words correctly, one needs sufficient knowledge in vocabulary.

Collocations

Definition of Collocation

There are some definitions provided by some experts. First, Matthews (1997) defines: "Collocation is a relation within a syntactic unit between individual lexical elements. It is used where words specifically or habitually go together," Second, Lewis (1997) states: Collocation is the readily observable phenomena whereby certain words co-occur in natural texts with greater than random frequency. Collocations is not determined by logic or frequency, but is arbitrary, decided only by linguistics convention. (Moudraia, 2001)

Based on these definitions, we know that collocation determines the relationship between words which go together. Not all words can go together. Accordingly, Lewis

explained that collocation cannot be created by oneself because it is arbitrary and part of linguistic convention.

Some examples provided by Palmer (1981) and Martynska (2004) can clarify the idea of collocation. Palmer presented the words *rancid*, *addled*, and *rotten*. This is not the matter of their meanings, but the company they keep. These words occur in different environment. *Rancid* usually occurs with *bacon* or *butter*, whereas *addled* occurs with *eggs* or *brains*. Meanwhile *rotten* usually occurs with *fruit*. So, the learners are needed to use it correctly with its correct collocation, for example: *my mother threw the _____ eggs in the refrigerator into the dustbin*. Although all of the words (*rancid*, *addled*, and *rotten*) mean the same, only the word *addled* that associates with *eggs*.

The Significance of Collocation in Language Teaching

There is much significance relying on the integration of collocation in language teaching. First, collocation is fundamental in the study of vocabulary. Firth (1957) states: "you know a word by the company it keeps." (Taiwo, 2004). This statement implies that the word meaning indirectly depends on its occurrence with other words.

Second, Lewis (2000) explains: There are many more collocations than words since many words occur in several different collocations. Consequently, the task of achieving proficiency in a second language is even greater than was thought when vocabulary acquisition was thought in terms of learning words."

It is apparent that teaching collocations is more important than teaching single words. Some words can share some co-occurrence. In any case, one word can have more than one collocation.

This idea can best be explained by an example by Crystals (1980). Crystals presented a set of words: *range*, *selection*, and *choice*.

- What a _____ of flowers: *range*, *selection*, *choice*
- His _____ of knowledge: *range*

When we are talking about flowers, the three words (*range*, *selection*, *choice*) can fill in the blank space. When we are discussing about knowledge, on the other hand, only the word *range* that can best fit the context. It is obvious that the three words (*range*, *selection*, and *choice*) share the same co-occurrence when we are talking about flowers. Besides, the word *range* has more than one co-occurrence (*flower and knowledge*). From this explanation, it is clear that even if some words are synonymous to each other, they are not interchangeable. They are collocationally restricted. In other words, their occurrence is determined by their collocations.

Third, Hill suggests that "Most learners with „good vocabulary“ have problems with fluency because their knowledge on collocation is very limited, and that we should aim at increasing their collocational ability with the vocabulary they have already got" (Moras, 2001). It can be concluded that one"s knowledge on collocation can affect one"s fluency. Good vocabulary does not necessarily contribute to one"s fluency.

Finally, Martynska (2004) points out that students can build up communicative ability by mastering collocational ability because they can produce something that are both grammatically correct and authentic because collocation represents language use.

Consequently, Hunt and Beglar (2004) suggest that EFL teachers should create opportunities to learn those words in new context and provide collocations and associations. By doing so, students" vocabulary can be enhanced.

Review of the Related Studies

Concerning the significance of collocations, some researchers have investigated the collocational ability of some ESL students in some countries. Martynska (2004) investigated collocational ability of intermediate English learners. This research was done using the structural approach of the collocations. In this case, Martynska tested the vocabulary of the EFL students and the collocational ability of the students. He tested the students based on the level of the students.

He chose the intermediate students as his samples.

Moreover, he did not involve the context, but single words in the first section of test. He asked the students to find the equivalence of the English word in their native language. In the next section of the test he asked the students to choose one of the set of words that are appropriate with the context. He found that the students knowing the meaning of 71% English words were able to identify only 52% of collocations made up of these words.

Taiwo (2004) asked the students to write a composition and then corrected the diction of the students. He found that pupils who lack collocational ability sometimes make longer sentences because they do not know the collocations, which express precisely their thoughts. For instance, such expressions as listed below have been found in ESL pupil's composition in Nigeria:

1. They have sex the wrong way (sex abuse)
2. People have the ability to say what they need (freedom of expression)
3. The situation whereby people vote for their rulers to rule them (democratic rule)

In a different way, the writer did the research using the lexical approach because it is close to the goal vocabulary course. The lexical approach emphasizes the correct meaning and the appropriate match of the words.

Methods of the Research

The research uses quantitative research, exactly correlational approach. Correlational research is chosen to be applied because this research attempts to correlate two variables, collocation and vocabulary mastery. This is significant to know how much the variable X contributes to variable Y. In this case, the researcher found out the contribution of collocation to the students' vocabulary mastery.

The population of this research was all of STBA students. There were four groups of students at STBA Prayoga ranging from the first year students to the fourth year students. There were at least two classes of students for each level. The writer applied cluster random

sampling. One class was chosen randomly to be the sample of the research. The other classes became the try out respondent to be set the reliability of the test.

Instrumentation used in this research is test. Because this research is concerned with the collocations and the vocabulary mastery of the students, the test was divided into two parts. The first part dealt with the collocations. The second part of the test dealt with the vocabulary mastery in which some aspects of it were included. There were two types of tests in the first part of the test. The first part of the tests dealt with the collocations.

The researcher used content validity to check the validity of the test. Hughes (2002) states that the test can be said considered being valid if it measures what is intended to measure. Moreover, the content should represent the language skills which are meant to be concerned. In this case, the test should represent the collocational ability which was tested.

In this case, the researcher applied content validity because the content validity is of particular importance for a test. The result can hardly be representative if the test does not measure to what are meant to be tested (Gay, 2000).

In order to test the reliability of the test, the researcher applied test-retest reliability. It was the degree to which scores on the same tests were consistent over time. The scores obtained on a test at one time (test) should be the same or close when the test was readministered some other times (retest). Arikunto (2006:179) defines this technique as single test double trial which means the same test is administered twice to the same group of try out respondents. Moreover, the results of the two tests are correlated by using correlation. The correlation coefficient is used to determine the level of the reliability of the tests.

Quantitative analysis was used in analyzing the data. As the data had been collected they were analyzed by using some analyses - normality testing, hypothesis testing, correlation, regression, contribution, and prediction test. They were sequenced series of steps to determine the strength and direction of relationship and to determine the

contribution of the independent variable to dependent variable.

Findings and Discussions

After validity and reliability of the test was analyzed, they were administered to the samples of the research to collect the data. In the test of the collocation, X^2 observed (4.33) was smaller than X^2 table (7.81). Moreover, this interpretation remained the same for the test of vocabulary mastery. X^2 observed (5.30) in this test was also smaller than the X^2 table (5.99). To sum up, the data in both tests, test of collocation and test of vocabulary mastery were distributed normally.

After finding that the data distributed normally, the correlation coefficient was taken into account by using *Pearson r* formula to determine the strength and direction of relationship. It resulted in coefficient correlation $r = 0.77$. The result was compared to the table of interpretation; it meant a very strong positive association. As a result, the two variables were strongly correlated to each other. In other words, collocation was closely related to vocabulary mastery.

The research hypothesis was tested by applying t-test. It resulted in $t = 10.62$. With the level of significance $\alpha = 0.05$ and the degree of freedom (df) = $n - 2$ (78), from the table, the result of t_{table} was 1.67. If the result of $t_{observed}$ was compared with t_{table} , it is obvious that $t_{observed}$ (10.62) was greater than t_{table} . In conclusion, there was a significant relationship between collocation and vocabulary mastery.

In the research in which the purpose is to find the contribution, the analysis should be continued to the test of regression. There are two main tests of regression, test of linearity to ensure that the regression is linear and test of significance to ensure that the regression is significant. After these two tests are carried out, then the contribution and prediction test can be carried out.

First, the significance of regression was checked by using probability test, that is F distribution. From the calculation, the result of $F_{observed}$ was 84.75. With the level of significance $\alpha = 0.05$ and the degree of freedom (df) were 1 and 78, F_{table} was 3.98. If the $F_{observed}$ was compared with F_{table} ,

$F_{observed}$ was greater than F_{table} which meant the null hypothesis was rejected. As a result, the regression is significant.

Finally, the linearity of regression was analyzed by using probability test, that is F distribution. From the calculation $F_{observed}$ was 1.42. With the level of significance $\alpha = 0.05$ and the degree of freedom (df) were 23 and 55, F_{table} was 1.74. If the $F_{observed}$ was compared with F_{table} , $F_{observed}$ is smaller than F_{table} . Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected. Consequently, the regression was linear.

The contribution could be analyzed after the analysis of significance and linearity of regression had been carried out. In summary, the contribution of the independent variable to the dependent variable was 59.29%. In other words, the contribution of collocation to the vocabulary mastery was 59.29%.

Conclusions

The research findings indicated that the collocation has strongly positive association to the vocabulary mastery. The result of the tests signified this idea. When the students got low score on test of collocation, they tended to get low score on the test of vocabulary mastery. Otherwise, when they score better on the test of collocation, they possibly score better on the test of vocabulary mastery.

Moreover, the students' collocational ability which contributes about 59.29% to the students' vocabulary mastery means half of the vocabulary mastery of the students would be determined by their collocational ability. It proved that collocation significantly contributes to the vocabulary mastery. In regard to the result and the aspects of vocabulary mastery listed by Nation (1995), collocations would be in the first rank due to the high percentage of contribution.

After the test was analyzed, it was found that the students seemed not to have problems with the literal meaning of the words. Most of the errors done in the test dealt with the questions associated with collocations. When they were asked to choose or explain the meaning of the words literally, they tended to finish it faster than when they were asked to find the possible collocations of certain words

or to explain the meaning of certain words after those words are used together with its collocations.

It was also found that the problem rose when the students were faced to the words which have the same meaning in their mother tongue. The students tended to change the possible collocations of those words. It simply indicated that the students are more familiar with the meaning of those words rather than the collocations. This finding was in accordance with the idea stated by Nation (1995). The students tended to observe the use of some words in the second or foreign language from the point of view of their first language.

Moreover, before the research ended, the students became more aware of collocations. They began asking how to use certain words. Furthermore, they also began trying to differentiate the use of some words that have the same meaning in their mother tongue based on the possible collocations of those words.

The research finding suggests that the teachers who are teaching vocabulary should integrate the collocation into the process of teaching and learning vocabulary. The collocation should be introduced to the students at the same time as the teacher introduces the word to the students. it is suggested that the teachers should have the students become aware of the collocations.

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