A corpus-based investigation of collocational errors in EFL Taiwanese high school students' compositions

Yi-Chin Chen

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A CORPUS-BASED INVESTIGATION OF COLLOCATIONAL ERRORS IN EFL TAIWANESE HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS' COMPOSITIONS

A Thesis
Presented to the
Faculty of
California State University,
San Bernardino

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts
in
English Composition:
Teaching English as a Second Language

by
Yi-Chin Chen

June 2004
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Approved by:

Dr. Ron Chen, Chair, Department of English
Dr. Sunny Hyon, Coordinator, TESL
Dr. Wendy Smith, Professor

6-4-04 Date
ABSTRACT

While I was teaching English in high school in Taiwan, I found that collocations were routinely ignored by most of the language instructors. Most of the classroom instruction emphasizes the meaning of individual words, at the expense of an awareness of the collocational restrictions, thus resulting in non-native-like utterances. Since error analysis has been recognized to be an effective way to identify learners' strategies in L2 communication, to detect the causes of the learner's errors, and to obtain information on general difficulties in language learning, I decided to devote this thesis to a study of EFL students' collocational errors in order to detect students' difficulties with collocations.

This study is based on a corpus of compositions by National Tainan Second Senior High School students in Taiwan. After the data was collected, errors of collocations were identified and categorized according to Benson, Benson and Ilson's Collocation Classification System. As a next step, I computed the frequencies of each type of errors and correlated those errors with students' general English proficiency. My major findings were the following. First, the most frequent errors of
collocations were L3 (Adj + N) and L1 (V + N) types, which suggested that these two types may have posed the greatest problems. Second, L1 transfer seemed to be the most significant strategy by students in their dealing with English collocations. Third, there appeared a clear correlation between students' proficiency and their knowledge of collocations, i.e., the lower the proficiency, the more errors they would make when it comes to collocations.

The thesis began by a general introduction of stating the importance of collocations in EFL context, giving definition of collocations, and describing the purpose as well as the methodology of the thesis. Then in Chapter Two, research was reviewed on error analysis, on factors to influence learners' collocational performance, on strategies that learners' used to deal with collocations, and on pedagogical implications. In Chapter Three, I first described the subjects, how the data was collected, and what the methodology was used for treatment. Then it was followed by discussing the major findings of my research, such as which type of collocational errors was the most or least frequent one, how collocational competence correlates with the subjects' linguistic proficiency,
what kind of strategy learners have used to deal with collocational problems. Finally, in Chapter Four, I briefly summarized the results of the study, explored some pedagogical implications of this thesis, and made suggestions for future research in this area.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Grateful acknowledgements are made to all the professors of my thesis committee: Dr. Ron Chen, the chair of my thesis committee as well as Chair of English Department, who has always been my source of inspiration --- his enthusiastic support, guidance, and help through all phases of this thesis are highly appreciated; Professor Sunny Hyon, who has contributed insightful comments to shape my ideas, leading to significant revisions and clarifications; professor Wendy Smith, who has provided me with loving care to support me. All of them contributed many hours of thoughtful advice, resulting in valuable suggestions that have been woven into this thesis. My special gratitude extends to my colleague, Pei-Wen, who helped me immeasurably in collecting the required data; to the reviewer, Ben Graham, who has generously assisted me in the final phase of this thesis --- format proofreading. Because of their dedication, time, effort and expertise, this thesis has become a much better one than I could have produced on my own.

To all am I deeply indebted.
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CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

In recent years, research in the field of TESL/TEFL (teaching English as a second/foreign language) has recognized vocabulary instruction as a crucial part in developing ESL/EFL students’ academic writing skills (Leki & Carson, 1994; Meara, 1984). When receiving vocabulary instruction, students develop receptive as well as productive knowledge; the former enables students to comprehend word meanings appropriately and the latter involves the ability to use words fluently and with accuracy. To move from receptive to productive vocabulary knowledge, students need to acquire a multitude of features in addition to knowing single word meanings. The features include how words occur together. In this sense, collocation has become one of the most important aspects of productive vocabulary knowledge that L2 learners should know in order to achieve language proficiency.

Definition of Collocations

Collocations refer to how words typically occur together. For example, in English, *promise goes with make, keep or break, but not with do or take. One should say weak tea instead of *feeble tea, in spite of the fact that
weak and feeble are synonymous. In other words, collocation is "the readily observable phenomenon whereby certain words co-occur in natural text with greater than random frequency" (Lewis, 1997, p.8). In addition, collocation has an arbitrary nature, which is not decided by logic or frequency, but decided only by linguistic convention. In defining collocations, Smadja (1989) stated collocations as "many wording choices in English sentences cannot be accounted for on semantic or syntactic grounds; they can only be expressed in terms of relations between words that usually occur together" (p.163). When one word forms one part of a collocation, it cannot be replaced with another word, even if the other word is syntactically and semantically correct. For instance, one may say *Tom is an available bachelor.* There is no logical explanation as to why bachelor occurs with eligible but not with available.

Collocations and Foreign Language Competence

An important part of language acquisition is the ability to comprehend and produce lexical phrases as chunks, among other things, collocations. Since collocations have been conventionalized as fixed chunks, EFL learners can not rely on "creative construction" in
either grammar or lexis to produce native-like utterances. In other words, they are not able to create any collocation or infer from the literal meaning of words within the expression based upon their imagination or first language knowledge. Therefore, the acquisition of appropriate collocation knowledge apparently would become an essential part of foreign language competence. Verstraten (1992) proposed the importance of learning a great quantity of lexical elements and fixed phrases. He demonstrated that the ability to use such fixed phrases, collocations and lexical constituents is an indicator of language proficiency.

However, while native language speakers acquire collocation knowledge throughout the natural acquisition process, foreign language learners need to be trained and instructed so that they are able to produce them in the proper contexts. William (2000) stated that “automation of collocations” helps native speakers spontaneously combine some certain words with other words to form a meaningful semantic unit. Similarly, Aston (1995) noted that the use of a large amount of “prefabricated items” speeds up language processing in comprehension and production, and thus creates native-like fluency. However, lacking in this automation, EFL learners may make non-native-like errors
when producing utterances. Some of the research reported the deficient collocation knowledge of EFL learners. For example, Bahns & Eldaw (1993) found that their subjects’ knowledge of collocations lags far behind their knowledge of vocabulary in general. Farghal & Obiedat (1995) found that not only English majors, but also English teachers, are seriously deficient in collocation knowledge. Gitsaki (1996) also reported that the collocation knowledge of her junior high school subjects is quite inadequate. The reason why most EFL students generally lack collocation knowledge might be due to the fact that “collocations have been largely neglected in EFL instruction and that learners are not aware of collocations as a potential problem in language learning” (Bahns & Eldaw, 1993, p.108). Therefore, raising FL learners’ awareness of collocations will motivate them to observe collocations in their readings, to pay attention to them when they consult the dictionaries, and to learn collocations in their communication with native speakers. All of this could contribute to their language production and development.

Due to the fact that EFL learners lack the “automation of collocations” and that this may result in difficulty in their learning English, the analysis of mis-collocations has become an effective way to help EFL
learners to overcome their difficulties in this area. As Richards (1974) has stated, error analysis can be carried out in order to identify strategies which learners use in their language learning, to find out the causes of the learner errors, and to obtain information on general difficulties in language learning as an aid to language teaching. Farghal & Obiedat (1995) maintained that one effective way to raise awareness of collocation is to focus on a selection of the target EFL learners' mis-collocations in their production of language.

Purposes of the Thesis

The purposes of this current thesis are to analyze the collocational errors in EFL high school students' compositions in order to identify different types of collocational errors, to determine the frequency of collocational errors, and to illustrate the correlation between the English proficiency and collocation knowledge. According to the classification and the frequency of each type of error in this study, a hierarchy of difficulty of collocations will be established, with the type of errors with the highest frequencies proposed as the most difficult for EFL students to learn. Information about learners' difficulties with collocations, the frequency of
collocational errors and the relationship between language proficiency and collocation knowledge can help language instructors to understand EFL students’ challenges with collocations and thus can shed light on approaches for teaching collocations.

More specifically, the current study will address the following research questions:

1. What are the most common collocational errors made by high school EFL learners in Taiwan? What is the frequency of each type of collocational error?

2. What is the most difficult type of collocation for EFL high school students to learn?

3. Is there any correlation between proficiency in producing and recognizing collocations and general English proficiency?

4. What are the possible causes of these collocational errors?

5. What are the strategies that EFL students will employ when they encounter difficulties?

The Subjects and Methodology

My data included 150 compositions, coming from thirty third-grade senior high school students, who were divided into two groups, each with fifteen students, according to
their academic performance in the previous year. I classified the collocational errors in the students' compositions based upon Benson, Benson and Ilson's collocation classification system (The BBI Dictionary of English Word Combinations). The results will be presented by means of descriptive statistics with the display of frequency tables.

Organization of the Paper

This current thesis will be divided into four chapters. In chapter two of my thesis, I review some of the research on collocations, in terms of error analysis, the factors that influence the performance in collocations, the strategies that learners will use in dealing with collocations, and teaching implications. Chapter three will discuss the subjects, the procedures, and the major findings as well as statistical analysis relevant to the research questions addressed in this study. Chapter four, the final chapter, will look at teaching implications of my findings and give suggestions for future research to work on.
CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Collocations in Error Analysis and Interlanguage Studies

Error analysis, the study and analysis of the errors made by second or foreign language learners, developed as a branch of applied linguistics in 1960s. Error analysis helps language instructors to identify foreign language learners' errors and the strategies in their language learning that may be leading to these errors, thus can detect the difficulties and problems they have. Prior to error analysis, most linguists of Behaviorism in the 1950s and 1960s considered the errors made by foreign language learners to result from native language transfer. Learners tend to apply their native language rules in their foreign language learning. Thus positive transfer occurs where these rules are applied correctly; negative transfer occurs when learners produce incorrect utterances.

While traditional views of Behaviorism considers the native language to be the major cause for lack of success in second language learning, contrastive analysis hypothesis emerges as an aid to account for Behaviorist theory. Contrastive analysis aims at "comparing languages in order to determine potential errors for the ultimate
purpose of isolating what needs to be learned and what
does not need to be learned in a second language learning
situation” (Gass & Seilinker, 1994, p.59). Since language
learners have the tendency to make errors where their
native language rules are different from those of the
target language, the contrastive analysis theory has
become a great value in shedding light on learners’
acquiring the second language. Lado (1957) among other
things, pointed out that those elements in the target
language that are similar to the learners’ native
languages would appear to be simple, and those that are
different will appear to be more difficult. This statement
helps to arouse learners’ awareness to pay attention to
those different constituents between their native language
and the target language.

After contrastive analysis hypothesis emerged error
analysis, which argued against contrastive analysis theory
by stating that errors not only resulted from learners’
native language, but also from other psychological and
linguistic factors (Gass & Seilinker, 1994). Thus error
analysis had been considered as one of the approaches to
the study of learners’ interlanguage. Corder (1967), for
example, maintained that learners’ errors are invaluable
to the study of language learning process. Errors should
be viewed as indications of a learner’s attempt to figure out the underlying rule-governed system of the target language instead of being considered as a product of imperfect learning. Some researchers also attempted to classify different types of errors based on interlingual errors (errors caused by negative L1 transfer) and intra-lingual errors (errors resulted from L2 complexity). Larsen-Freeman and Long (1991), for example, identified several causes of the errors as the followings:

Table 1. Causes of Errors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Causes of Errors</th>
<th>Example</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Interlingual Interference</td>
<td>* Please open your computer. (Please turn on your computer).</td>
<td>The use of the verb &quot;open&quot; instead of &quot;turn on&quot; appears to be due to L1 (Chinese) interference.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Intralingual Overgeneralization (Richards 1974)</td>
<td>* I wonder where you are going.</td>
<td>The speaker has perhaps overgeneralized the rule of subject-auxiliary inversion and applied it incorrectly here to an embedded WH-noun-clause.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Communication-based Errors</td>
<td>The learner uses &quot;air ball&quot; for &quot;balloon.&quot;</td>
<td>The learner incorrectly labels an object but successfully communicates a desired concept.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4. Induced Errors

* She cries as if the baby cries. ("She cries like a baby.")

The teacher had given the student a definition of "as if" meaning "like" without explaining the necessary structural change.

5. Developmental Errors

Many L1 and L2 English learners use "comed" and "goed" for "came" and "went" and these errors later disappear.

This is thought to be because they have learned the rule for regular past tense formation and then apply it to all forms.

By identifying the errors that learners have made and inferring the strategies they were adopting, researchers could learn a great deal about the second language acquisition process and interlanguage.

Factors that Influence the Performance in Collocations

Recent empirical studies have identified several factors that may influence learners' performance in producing collocations. Huang (2000), for example, found out three factors to influence collocational performance, listed as the followings: (1) L1 interference (e.g. *"lead a bookshop" instead of "run a bookshop"); (2) deficiency of collocation knowledge (e.g. *"at the meantime" instead of "in the meantime"); (3) lack of cultural competence...
Gitsaki (1996) also identified some factors which could influence the development of collocational ability during language acquisition: (1) native language transfer (e.g. *"heavy tea" instead of "strong tea"); (2) synonymy (e.g. *"stable color" instead of "fast color"); (3) complexity of the collocations; (4) degree of L1 and L2 difference; (5) the order of collocational parts (e.g. Prep-Noun was found to be more difficult than Noun-Prep collocations).

Similarly, Liu (1999) found that the errors in her Taiwanese subjects’ blank-filling tests were attributed to four major causes: (1) overgeneralization (e.g. *"will coming" instead of "will come"); (2) interference of the first language (e.g. *"build history" instead of "make history"); (3) lack of knowledge of collocational restrictions (e.g. *"accomplish my dream" instead of "fulfill my dream"); (4) ineffective use of grammar (e.g. *"a few knowledge"); (5) word coinage (e.g. *"fell the exam" instead of "failed the exam"); (6) approximation (e.g. *"attend my goal" instead of "attain my goal"); (7) false concept hypothesized (e.g. *"do plans" instead of "make plans").

Based upon the analysis of these studies, "lack of knowledge of collocational restrictions" and "the
interference of the first language" are considered to be the most prevalent factors to influence EFL students’ collocational performance. This implies that EFL students may have a general unawareness of collocational restrictions and that they are likely to be affected by their first language when they are learning English. Students' problems with collocations are due to both interlingual and intralingual factors.

Strategies that Learners Use to Deal with Collocations

Due to the insufficient knowledge of collocations, EFL learners may adopt certain strategies to produce collocations and thus create certain types of errors. The strategy used most commonly is language transfer, in which EFL learners rely on L1 equivalents when they fail to find the desired lexical items in the foreign language. For example, they may use "*big rain" instead of "heavy rain", "*get the goal" instead of "achieve the goal". Farghal & Obiedat (1995) conducted a study, testing Jordanian subjects' collocation knowledge in cloze and translation exercises. They pointed out that positive transfer occurred when the target collocations matched those in the first language, whereas negative transfer
appeared when there were no corresponding patterns found in the first language.

Another commonly used strategy is avoidance, in which EFL learners attempt to avoid the target lexical items when they fail to retrieve the appropriate items. Dagut & Laufe (1985), for example, found that Hebrew-speaking learners of English in general preferred the one-word equivalent of the phrasal verbs, such as using "disappoint" instead of "let down", "save" instead of "lay aside". Lacking phrasal verbs in Hebrew makes them avoid using the phrasal verbs when they are learning English.

The third strategy often used is paraphrasing, or using synonyms. EFL learners may substitute the target items with synonymous items or use paragraphing to express the target collocations that they are not familiar with. For example, they may use "food little fat" instead of "light food", "drinks too much" instead of "heavy drinker". Farghal & Obiedat (1995) investigated the use of synonyms by Arabic EFL learners. The results showed that the more collocation knowledge the learners acquired, the fewer paraphrases they used in their L2 production.

Still other strategy EFL learners used is analogies and repetition: the former involves creating collocations
based on familiar L2 collocations; the latter involves the use of a limited number of collocations repeatedly, such as the combination of "very" with a variety of adjectives. This strategy is particularly favored when EFL learners did not possess sufficient knowledge of collocations.

Collocations in Language Teaching

There has been a growing awareness of the importance of collocations for vocabulary learning. The lexical approach has been received attention as an alternative to grammar-based approach. It maintains that an important part of language acquisition is the ability to comprehend and produce lexical phrases or "formulaic expressions" as unanalyzed wholes, or "chunks" (Lewis, 1993). Therefore, as Nattinger (1980) has suggested, teaching should be based on the idea that "language production is the piecing-together of ready-made units" (p. 223) which are appropriate for a particular situation. Instruction should focus on these patterns and the ways they can be pieced together, along with the ways they vary and the situations in which they occur. Another finding, conducted by Liu (1999), showed that explicit collocational instruction could help Taiwanese university students to produce acceptable lexical collocations after they had received a
special input of lexical collocations for one semester. Bahns & Eldaw (1993) also stated that the teaching of collocations should focus on those items that "have no corresponding equivalence between L2 and L1" (p.35).

Some of the researchers provided guidelines and activities for teaching collocations in English. For example, Rudzka et al. (1985) suggested "componential analysis" to help students learn synonymous words. The componential analysis is a technique in semantics, which offers a systematic way of describing similarities and differences in meanings. When the word is broken down into different pieces known as semantic components, it helps learners to recognize the semantic relations between words. For instance, an analysis of the word walk might be: move + by feet + place down one foot after another, etc. McCarthy (1990) extended Rudzka’s concept of componential analysis, and developed the "grid method" in teaching collocations, which is considered to be a helpful visual aid for EFL students.
Example of collocational grids are as follows (p.51):

Table 2. Collocational Grid for the Meanings of tend, look after, take care of and attend to

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>take action about (sth)</th>
<th>do something for (sb)</th>
<th>be responsible for</th>
<th>cultivate</th>
<th>care for</th>
<th>for living things</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tend</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>look after</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>+</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>take care of</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>attend to</td>
<td>+</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Table 3. Collocational Grid for the Headwords of tend, look after, take care of and attend to

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>flock of sheep</th>
<th>a fire</th>
<th>a garden</th>
<th>animals</th>
<th>children</th>
<th>an ill person</th>
<th>the elderly</th>
<th>oneself</th>
<th>a part of a business</th>
<th>one's house</th>
<th>a client</th>
<th>a problem</th>
<th>a customer</th>
<th>some business</th>
<th>a complaint</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>tend</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>look after</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
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<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>take care of</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
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<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>attend to</td>
<td></td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td></td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Gairns & Redman (1986) also suggested some guidelines for teaching collocations:

a. Teach synonyms with collocational restrictions.
b. Teach collocations which are due to L1 interference.
c. Design communicative activities to help EFL students learn collocations.

Harmer and Rossner (1992) provided systematic topic-related exercises to help students develop an awareness of collocations. The following tables include some of the examples:
1. Which physical features do the following adjectives usually describe? (p.58)

Table 4. Adjectives that Usually Describe Physical Features

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>weak</th>
<th>dark</th>
<th>thinning</th>
<th>pointed</th>
<th>curly</th>
<th>shiny</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>wide</td>
<td>mean</td>
<td>receding</td>
<td>large</td>
<td>bright</td>
<td>protruding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>strong</td>
<td>generous</td>
<td>square</td>
<td>straight</td>
<td>wiry</td>
<td>appealing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5. Physical Features to be Described

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>hair</th>
<th>eyes</th>
<th>nose</th>
<th>mouth</th>
<th>chin</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

2. Match the adjectives in column A with the nouns in column B (p.80).

Table 6. Adjectives and Nouns to be Combined

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>vicious</td>
<td>Murder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>brutal</td>
<td>criminal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cold-blooded</td>
<td>offender</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>common</td>
<td>crime</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>habitual</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>petty</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3. Complete the table: (p.118)

Table 7. The Format for a Noun Headword Followed by its Verb Collocates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Animals</th>
<th>Noise</th>
<th>Animals</th>
<th>Ways of Moving</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>pig</td>
<td>grunt</td>
<td>horse</td>
<td>gallop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>whinny</td>
<td></td>
<td>crawl</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>roar</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>slither</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>purr</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>bound</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bark</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>pounce</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>crow</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>dart</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>hover</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>howl</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>strut</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Lewis (1997) proposed a lexical approach toward language teaching and learning. He maintained that language consists of meaningful common chunks which, when properly combined, can produce a continuous coherent text. Therefore, he emphasized the importance of learning collocations: "instead of words, we consciously try to think of collocations, and to present these in expression. Rather than trying to break things into smaller pieces, there is a conscious effort to see things in larger, more holistic ways" (p. 223). The followings are some guidelines that Lewis has provided for teaching collocations:

1. Present new words together with their part of words.
2. Introduce collocation dictionaries to help EFL students raise their awareness of collocations and develop their communicative competence.

3. Encourage EFL students to record lexical collocations in their notebooks by using different formats. Normally, five collocates would be the best number to avoid resulting in confusion. Also, it would be better to:
   (1) Record only words that collocate strongly or frequently.
   (2) Record words that are new as partners of the headword.
   (3) Record those that are most useful to the individual learner's specific need or interests.
   (4) Record those collocations that pose problems for them.
   (5) Record adjective + noun (or verb + noun) collocations with their contextual opposites.

4. Design activities to familiarize students with collocations. For example, asking students to identify collocations, to match parts of collocations, to find hidden collocations by identifying the antecedent noun for each pronoun in the text.

   Some of the suggested formats (as mentioned in guideline 3) include the following:
Table 8. The Format for a Noun Headword and its Verb Collocates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Noun</th>
<th>Verb</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>dismiss</td>
<td>objection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>express</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>meet</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>raise</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>withdraw</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 9. The Format for a Verb Headword and its Adverb Collocates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Change</th>
<th>Adverb</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>abruptly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>drastically</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>subtly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>significantly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>visibly</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 10. The Format for Headword Nouns and their Adjective Collocates and the Contextual Opposites of the Adjectives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Opposite</th>
<th>Adjective</th>
<th>Noun</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>silly</td>
<td>bright</td>
<td>idea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cushy</td>
<td>challenging</td>
<td>job</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>slight</td>
<td>serious</td>
<td>hindrance</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This chapter begins by discussing how contrastive analysis hypothesis and error analysis viewed errors in the ESL learners' writings, drawing on Lado (1957) and Corder's (1967) theories to support my reasons for analyzing collocational errors. Then, some research was reviewed to discover the factors that may cause learners' collocational errors and explore the strategies that they may employ in dealing with collocations. Understanding the factors and strategies may shed light on teaching implications, which were discussed at the end of this chapter by providing guidelines from research. In the next chapter, I will describe the way I analyzed the data concerning collocations in EFL high school students' compositions and also discuss the major findings.
CHAPTER THREE
EXPERIMENTAL DESIGN AND RESULTS

The Subjects

The subjects for this study are 30 senior high school students at National Tainan Second Senior High School, who had taken English as a mandatory course for five years. These students, coming from similar educational background, learned how to write English compositions in order to prepare for the Joint College Entrance Examination, which has set up English composition as a requirement. In order to discover the relationship between their proficiency and knowledge in collocations, they were divided into two groups of 15, based upon their academic performance in the previous academic year. One of the groups were the students with an English grade higher than the average score of 73 (out of 100) for the past one year; the other group consisted of the students with a grade lower than the average of 73.

The Data

The data, including 150 English compositions with five different topics, was collected during ten days in December, 2003. Written as one part of the test within 30 minutes, these compositions may reflect the subjects'
interlanguage knowledge in their spontaneous production of the collocations, when there is no way for them to turn to help from dictionaries, teachers or reference books, etc.

Identifying Collocational Errors

The British National Corpus was first used to identify and check the subjects' collocational errors and then these errors were classified into lexical collocations and grammatical collocations according to Benson, Benson, and Ilson's Collocation Classification System (1986).

The following examples from the writings of the subjects illustrated how the British National Corpus was used as a tool for the identification and checking of the collocational errors.

1. A suspicious collocational error was found in one of the subjects' compositions: "We don't have to wear big jacket" in which the adjective "big" collocates with the noun "jacket" in an unusual way.

2. Next, the British National Corpus was used to search for the phrase but the phrase "big jacket" was not found in it.

3. However, several examples popped out with the word "jacket" in the corpus, for example:
1. The phone call finished, Jack Stone buttoned up his *heavy jacket* and stood in the darkened box, peering through the windows at the desolate streets around him.

2. For Diana, *a heavy tweed jacket* for draughty Balmoral would be a snip.

3. He is tired of competing with my friends and their *heavy leather jackets*.

4. Then, the appropriate adjective to collocate with "jacket" was found: it should be "heavy" instead of "big".

   After the collocational errors were identified according to British National Corpus, these errors were classified into either grammatical or lexical categories, according to Benson, Benson, and Ilson's Collocation Classification System (1986). Lexical collocations consist of nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs while a grammatical collocation is a phrase consisting of a dominant word (noun, adjective or verb) that requires a proposition or grammatical structure such as an infinitive or a clause. In other words, a lexical collocational error usually has something to do with the word choice (such as "commit suicide", "pay the bill"), while a grammatical collocational error has something to
do with grammatical structures such as infinitive, clause or preposition (e.g. "enjoy reading", "be aware of the thief"). The following table shows how Benson, Benson, and Ilson’s Collocation Classification System classifies the collocational errors:

Table 11. Benson, Benson, and Ilson’s Classification System and Collocation Patterns

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>L1</td>
<td>V+N (creation)</td>
<td>Compose music</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L2</td>
<td>V+N (nullification)</td>
<td>Reject an appeal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L3</td>
<td>Adj+N (or) N+N</td>
<td>Strong tea; aptitude test</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L4</td>
<td>N+V</td>
<td>Bees buzz</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L5</td>
<td>N of N (unit)</td>
<td>A bouquet of flowers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L6</td>
<td>Adv+Adj</td>
<td>Keenly aware</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L7</td>
<td>V+Adj</td>
<td>Appreciate sincerely</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L8</td>
<td>-conj-</td>
<td>Last but not least</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G1</td>
<td>N+Prep</td>
<td>An argument about</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G2</td>
<td>N+To infinitive</td>
<td>A fool to do it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G3</td>
<td>N+That clause</td>
<td>An agreement that she would represent us</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G4</td>
<td>Prep+N</td>
<td>In advance; on (the) alert</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G5</td>
<td>Adj+Prep</td>
<td>Be angry at</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G6</td>
<td>Adj+To infinitive</td>
<td>He is likely to be late.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G7</td>
<td>Adj+That clause</td>
<td>She is afraid that she would fail the exam.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

G8 (1)  
Verbs with two objects (an indirect object and a direct object)  
A. V+ direct object+to+indirect object=V+indirect object +direct object  
B. V+ direct object  
A. sent it to him=sent him a book  
B. describe it to him  
C. bought a shirt for him=bought him a shirt  
O. forgive them
<p>| | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>object+to+indirect object (do not allow the dative movement transformation)</td>
<td>their sin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C. V+ direct object+for+indirect object=V+indirect object +direct object</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>O. V+Object One +Object Two</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G8 (2)</td>
<td>Verbs which form a collocation with a specific preposition</td>
<td>D. reflect on the past year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1. V+ prep++object</td>
<td>D. based their conclusions on the facts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. V+object+prep+ object</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G8 (3)</td>
<td>Verbs which are followed by “to infinitive”</td>
<td>E. He decided to come.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>E. V+to infinitive</td>
<td>H. She asked me to come.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>H. V+object+to infinitive</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G8 (4)</td>
<td>Verbs that are followed by an “infinitive without to”</td>
<td>F. We must go.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F. V+infinitive w/o “to”</td>
<td>I. We let the children go to the park.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I. V+object+infinitive w/o “to”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G8 (5)</td>
<td>Verbs that are followed by a second verb in “ing”.</td>
<td>G. They enjoy watching TV.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>G. V+V-ing</td>
<td>J. I caught them stealing apples.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>J. V+object+v-ing</td>
<td>K. This fact justifies Bob’s coming late.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>K. V+a possessive and V-ing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| G8 (6) | Verbs which can be followed by a noun clause (wh-phrase)  
L. V+that clause  
Q. V+(object)+wh-clause  
Q. V+(object)+wh-Phrase | L. They admitted that they were wrong.  
Q. She knew when it were best to keep quite.  
Q. She asked me how to do it. |
|---|---|---|
| G8 (7) | Verbs which are followed by a compliment (an adjective or a noun).  
H. V+Object+to be+complement  
I. V+object+complement  
S. V+Complement | M. We consider her to be very capable.  
N. The soldier found the village destroyed.  
S. She became an engineer. |
| G8 (8) | Verbs which must be followed by an adverbial.  
P. V+(object)+Adverbial | P. He put the book on the desk.  
P. The boy sneaked into the auditorium. |
| G8 (9) | Transitive verbs (often expressing emotion) which are preceded by the dummy "it" and are followed by "to+infinitive" or by "that +clause".  
R. It+V+Object+to infinitive  
R. It+V+Object+that-clause | R. It surprised me to learn of her decision  
R. It surprised me that our offer was rejected. |

Source (p.114-117)
Data Analysis and Discussion of the Findings

(1) The Number of Lexical and Grammatical Collocational Errors

After the classification and analysis of the data, it was found that there was a noticeable difference between the number of grammatical and the number of lexical collocational errors. The subjects made 267 lexical errors and 201 grammatical errors.

The fact that more lexical collocational errors were produced than grammatical collocational errors indicated that lexical collocations created more difficulties than the grammatical collocations, which may shed light on their knowledge of collocations: the subjects' knowledge of lexical collocations seems to be more deficient than their knowledge of grammatical collocations.

The result matches some of the findings from the previous research. For example, Liu (1999) conducted a study on collocational competence of Taiwanese EFL students. 128 subjects (freshmen in college) were given a test, based on cloze tests, to find out their knowledge of collocations. The findings demonstrated that the subjects had more difficulties in providing the appropriate word combinations for lexical collocations than grammatical collocations. Thus, many researchers have stressed the
importance of teaching lexical collocations on EFL students (Lewis, 1997; Bahns & Eldaw, 1993; Liu, 1999). Bahns & Eldaw (1993), for instance, conducted an empirical study on the teaching of V+N lexical collocations to advanced German EFL learners in a translation task and a cloze task, arguing that EFL teaching should focus on those lexical collocations that can’t readily be paraphrased. Similarly, Liu (1999) conducted a study on the effects of the teaching of lexical collocations. The results demonstrated that, after the subjects’ receiving the instruction, the lexical collocational errors made from intralingual transfer were fewer than those before the instruction.

(2) Collocational Errors and General English Proficiency

Of the 468 collocational errors, 127 errors were made by the high academic performance group and 341 errors were made by the low performance group. The result indicated that the subjects’ collocational competence is related to their general English proficiency. Students with higher English proficiency achieved higher collocational competence. The finding conforms to the results of Bonk’s study (2000) and Zhang’s study (1993). Bonk tested the development, administration and analysis of collocation knowledge for ESL learners of a wide range of proficiency
levels. The findings showed that collocation knowledge "correlates strongly with a measure of general ESL proficiency" (p. 23). Zhang conducted a series of experiments to explore the relationship between the subjects' knowledge of collocation and their proficiency in writing. The results showed that "more proficient second language writers use significantly more collocations, more accurately and in more variety than less proficient learners" (p. 57).

However, the result in this current study is different from that of Wang's (2001) study, which examined the collocational competence of English majors who learned English as a foreign language in Taiwan. The results of Wang's study demonstrated that there is no statistically significant difference in the knowledge of lexical collocations among the subjects of four different academic levels. One reason for the discrepancy in the results of the two studies might be due to the nature of the different instruments employed in the studies: Wang examined the subjects' lexical collocational competence by way of a collocation test, while the current study examined both the grammatical and lexical collocational competence by analyzing the errors in their compositions.
(3) The Number of Each Type of Collocational Errors

An analysis of subjects' collocational errors in each category showed that some types of errors were more frequent and may have created the highest degree of difficulty for the subjects. The following table demonstrated the number of each type of collocational error found in this study.

Table 12. Number of Each Type of Collocational Errors Found in this Study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Error Type</th>
<th>Error Pattern</th>
<th>Number of collocational errors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>L3</td>
<td>ADJ + N</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L1</td>
<td>V + N</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G4</td>
<td>Prep + N</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G8(7)</td>
<td>SVO to be C</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>S V O C</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>S V C (adj or N)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G8(4)</td>
<td>S V bare inf.</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>S V O bare inf.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G8(2)</td>
<td>S V prep. O (or) S V O prep. O</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G8(3)</td>
<td>S V to inf.</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>S V O to inf.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L7</td>
<td>V + adv</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L4</td>
<td>N + V</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L6</td>
<td>Adv + adj</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G8(6)</td>
<td>S V that clause S V wh-clause</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
L3 type of collocation (adj+N), in which the subjects chose an inappropriate adjective to collocate with a noun, is the most common lexical collocational error. For example, subjects wrote:

(a) The street is *busy traffic, and the air pollution is bad.

(b) Because of its cold, I have *a sweet sleep.
(c) Everybody is *powerful shopper, looking around everywhere.

These errors showed how learners used literal, word-for-word translation of Chinese to communicate in English. With regard to (a), for example, the Chinese phrase for "heavy traffic" is "fanmang de jiantong" (busy traffic). These examples demonstrated strong evidence of language transfer or interlingual interference from their first language.

L1(V+ N) collocational error ranked as the second most frequent lexical errors that subjects have made in their writings. Examples include the following:

(d) When I *get a mistake, I will not *say a lie even if the teacher would angry.

(e) I *open the computer whenever I go home.

These errors also resulted from language transfer from their native language. In Chinese, the word "computer" co-occurs with the verb "kai", which means "open" in English. The noun "lie" co-occurs with the verb "sho", which is translated as "say" in English. The transfer strategy "reflects the learners’ assumption that there is a one-to-one correspondence between their L1 and L2" (Farghl & Obiedat, 1995, p.34). Because of lacking collocation
knowledge, EFL learners tend to rely on L1 in L2 communication.

Other examples show how subjects may use synonyms to substitute for appropriate collocations, such as "* the river shore" instead of "the river bank," "*an easy reason" instead of "a simple reason." The strategy to use synonyms, or paraphrasing, is considered as an "escape-hatch that helps communication proceed" (Huang, 2000, p.117). When learners acquired more collocation knowledge, they would use fewer paraphrases in their L2 production.

According to the classification and the frequency of each type of errors produced by the subjects, a hierarchy of difficulty thus can be established (see figure 1 & 2). The type of errors with the highest frequency is the most difficult type for the learners.
Figure 1. Hierarchy of Difficulty in Collocations
The result showed that adjective-noun (L3) and verb-noun (L1) lexical collocations ranked the highest in the hierarchy of difficulty. This finding is similar to Gitsaki's (1996) study, which also found that the verb-object type of collocation is the most difficult for second language learners. G2 (N+ to infinitive) and L5 (N of N) are ranked as the least frequent collocational error types, which could either be due to "avoidance" strategy or because subjects have mastered these patterns. Evidence showed that L5 collocations, such as "a swarm of bees" or "a bouquet of flowers", were substituted by the subjects.
for "bees" and "flowers" only. While the subjects were not familiar with the usage of "a swarm of", "a bouquet of", they simply try to avoid it. Of the 150 compositions, G2 pattern was the least frequently made pattern (1 only). The subject wrote:

(f) Going to school is the best way *to learning knowledge.

Being unfamiliar with the sentence pattern, EFL learners may have attempted to avoid using the collocations that are different from those of the target language. For example, Schachter (1974) found that Chinese and Japanese EFL learners made fewer errors in the use of relative clauses than did Persian or Arabic learners, which might be due to the fact that Chinese and Japanese learners have the tendency to use them less frequently. Persian and Arabic relative clauses are structured in a similar way to those of English, whereas Chinese and Japanese languages have no corresponding sentence structures as relative clauses. Similarly, Taiwanese EFL learners may overuse simple sentences to avoid the use of relative or noun clauses in complex sentences. This helps to explain why G2(N+ to infinitive), G3(N+ that clause) and G7(adj + that clause) were found as the least frequent grammatical collocational errors in this study.
(4) Other Sample Collocational Errors Found in this Study

Some other examples of each type of collocational errors are presented here in order to illustrate the typical errors that Taiwanese EFL learners made in their writings. The following table showed some of the lexical collocational errors that have been found in this study.

Table 13. Typical Lexical Collocation Errors Found in this Study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Error Type</th>
<th>Error Pattern</th>
<th>Ill-formed Sentence</th>
<th>Suggestions for Improvement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>L1</td>
<td>V+N</td>
<td>If you meet any trouble and you don’t know how to do, just smile.</td>
<td>If you have any trouble and you don’t know what to do, just smile.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L2</td>
<td>V+N</td>
<td>We will lose many interesting things happening in school.</td>
<td>We will miss many interesting things happening in school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L3</td>
<td>Adj+N</td>
<td>We don’t have to wear big jacket.</td>
<td>We don’t have to wear heavy jacket.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L4</td>
<td>N+V</td>
<td>In summer, many flowers open and grow.</td>
<td>In summer, many flowers bloom and grow.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L5</td>
<td>N of N</td>
<td>When we work in a company, there maybe</td>
<td>When we work in a company, there may be a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>have a great number of trouble.</td>
<td>lot of troubles.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. L6</td>
<td>Adv + adj</td>
<td>I would rather feel little cold than feel hot.</td>
<td>I would rather feel a bit cold than feel hot.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. L7</td>
<td>V + adv</td>
<td>As a result, I very like summer.</td>
<td>As a result, I like summer very much.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. L8</td>
<td>~ conj~</td>
<td>The season I like best is fall. Because the weather in fall is not too hot and not too cold.</td>
<td>The season I like best is fall, because the weather in fall is neither too hot nor too cold.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

L2 collocations, such as "reject an appeal", "withdraw an offer", or "break a code", which consist of a verb meaning *eradication* or *nullification* and a noun, were one of the least frequent produced lexical collocational errors. L4 lexical errors, such as "*the flowers open" instead of "the flowers bloom", shows how simple collocations may be difficult to EFL learners. In Chinese, the noun "flower" co-occurs with the verb "kai", which means "open"; however, in English, the word "flower" collocates with the verb "bloom". Such errors were attributed to negative transfer from their native language.

41
In addition to this, the strategy of avoidance was also adopted by the subjects, in which they avoided unfamiliar patterns, such as "a flock of sheep," "a herd of buffalo," etc. Being unaware of collocational restrictions made the subjects employ various strategies to deal with collocations.

The following table presents some of the grammatical collocational errors found in this study.

Table 14. Typical Grammatical Collocation Errors Found in this Study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Error Type</th>
<th>Error Pattern</th>
<th>Ill-formed Sentence</th>
<th>Suggestions for Improvement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. G1</td>
<td>N + prep</td>
<td>We should not take the internet as a substitute of going to school.</td>
<td>We should not take the internet as a substitute for going to school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. G2</td>
<td>N + to V</td>
<td>Going to school is the best way to learning knowledge.</td>
<td>Going to school is the best way to acquire knowledge.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. G3</td>
<td>N + that clause</td>
<td>I like the feeling which everything full of power.</td>
<td>I like the feeling that everything is full of power.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. G4</td>
<td>Prep + N</td>
<td>In four seasons, I like summer most.</td>
<td>Of the four seasons, I like summer most.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. G5</td>
<td>Adj + prep</td>
<td>You should be responsible what you have done.</td>
<td>You should be responsible for what you have done.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. G6</td>
<td>It is + adj +</td>
<td>The test is not fair; it is more</td>
<td>The test is not fair; it is easier</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The difficulty in grammatical collocations for the subjects seems to be mostly seen in their lack of knowledge of how different words are combined into lexical chunks. Mastering G3 (N+ that clause) and G7 (adj+ that clause) collocations, for example, is essentially the mastering of very complex sentences with noun clauses. When there is no direct translation equivalent in the subjects' first language, learners will find it difficult to produce these collocational patterns.

(5) Subjects' Deficient Knowledge of Collocations

The current study suggests a significant lack of knowledge of English collocations in these Taiwanese EFL subjects, which is much in line with previous research. For example, Bahns & Eldaw (1993) found that their subjects' knowledge of collocations lags behind their knowledge of vocabulary in general. Similarly, Shei & Pain (2000) conducted an experiment, showing that the Chinese speakers' English collocation knowledge is
significantly inferior to that of European language learners of English, which is in turn significantly inferior to that of native speakers of English. The conclusion suggested that the Chinese learners of English need extra help in mastering English collocations. The reason why EFL learners generally lack collocation knowledge may be due to the fact that "collocations have been largely neglected in EFL instruction and that learners are therefore not aware of collocations as a potential problem in language learning" (Bahns & Eldaw, 1993, p.108).

Due to the lack of collocation knowledge, EFL learners may resort to the strategy of using longer expressions with a lot of grammatical devices to convey the message that a native speaker would rather express with a precise lexical phrase or a collocation. For example, an EFL learner, being unfamiliar with the expression "heavy smoker", might construct a sentence like "Mr. Wang is a man who smokes a lot of cigarettes" instead of the shorter and more natural one: "Mr. Wang is a heavy smoker". The discrepancy shows how collocation knowledge contributes to the difference between native speakers and second/foreign language learners.
My analysis of the collocational errors has revealed the subjects' difficulties in acquiring the knowledge of collocations, thus uncovering the strategies that they have used to deal with problems. It also provides an understanding of the processes they went through to attain English collocations. Such an understanding would shed light on approaches for teaching collocations. Therefore, in the next chapter, the final chapter, I will make brief conclusions of my studies and provide some suggestions of collocation-teaching for language instructors.
CHAPTER FOUR
CONCLUSIONS AND PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

After analyzing the subjects' collocational errors in their writings, it was found that more lexical collocational errors were made than grammatical collocational errors, which indicated that lexical collocations posed more difficulties for the subjects. Additionally, more collocational errors were made by the low performance group than the high performance group, which suggested that these subjects' collocational competence correlated with their general English proficiency. L3 (Adj + N) and L1 (V + N) were the most common collocational errors that the subjects have made, which suggested that these two types may have posed the greatest problems for them. The results of this current study suggest that language transfer may rank as a main strategy that EFL learners have used to deal with their difficulties with the collocations. Lacking collocational knowledge, these learners relied a number of times on their first language resources and thus do better in those collocations that have L1 equivalents than those that do not. Therefore, positive language transfer occurred when there is a one-to-one correspondence between L1 and L2,
whereas negative transfer occurred when L1 does not correspond to the target collocations in L2.

Suggestions for Language Instructors

The analysis of collocational errors reveals the difficulty that EFL learners have encountered in acquiring English collocations, which would prove valuable and would enable language instructors to identify effective ways of promoting collocational competence in their learners. Since EFL learners rely on various strategies to deal with collocations, the language instructors may consider encouraging positive transfer and at the same time warn the learners against negative transfer by way of "their awareness of the transfer phenomena and their abilities to dwell on the collocational similarities and differences between L1 and L2" (Farghal & Obiedat, 1995, p.321). For example, instructors may introduce the adjectives "strong" and "weak" by pointing to the similarities between L1 and L2, and then relate the English usage of these two words in physical strength (like "strong man" and "weak man") to the strength of drinks (like "strong tea" and "weak tea"). Thus the frequent literal use of "heavy tea" and "light tea" from Taiwanese EFL learners
can be avoided. EFL learners will then realize that they should be aware of the collocational restrictions when they are learning English.

When learners acquire a new lexicon, they are actually learning its cultural connotations, semantic fields and collocational restrictions. Thus when it comes to learning the target language, EFL learners need to "explore the meaning-range and collocational restrictions of high-frequency lexical items" (Huang, 2000, p.125). In this sense, EFL learners can most effectively acquire lexical items by giving full attention to collocations or chunks of words, rather than predominantly to single, isolated words. Additionally, learners' understanding of collocations does not necessarily imply satisfactory productive knowledge of collocations. Their collocational competence will not progress with the development of their vocabulary knowledge (Biskup, 1992; Bahns & Eldaw, 1993). Therefore, collocations should be explicitly taught with emphasis on the restricted type and on learners' productive knowledge.

While the importance of teaching collocations has been recognized, not all of the tens of thousands of collocations should be learned. Focus needs to be placed on building learners' consciousness of how certain words
combine with each other, so that they are able to continue developing their collocational competence after they leave the EFL class. For instance, according to the hierarchy of difficulty that has been established in the previous chapter, L3 type (Adj+N) and L1 type (V+N) were identified as the most frequent collocational errors and thus these EFL students seem to have most difficulties with these two types. Special attention should be focused on L3 and L1 types in EFL classes.

When teaching collocations, language instructors need to compare and contrast similar collocations in the L1 and L2, which may allow EFL learners to “associate their mental images of the L1 collocations with the L2 counterparts” (Huang, 2000, p.126). It also would be useful to point out the different lexical items used in the parallel collocations in English and learners’ L1 by presenting a variety of examples. EFL learners then can attend to the lexicon-semantic distinctions between the two languages and reduce errors caused by L1 interference.

Since collocation knowledge can not be acquired heuristically, explicit collocation instruction becomes necessary in EFL classes. To implement the collocation instruction, language instructors might want some tips in their language teaching:
1. Present the new word in its collocational form by giving a meaningful context for the word instead of teaching it in isolation. Also, draw students' attention to adjacent words of that new word in a sentence.

2. Raise students' awareness of the different types of collocations, especially for L1 and L3 types, which are the most frequent collocational error types in the writings.

3. Explain to the students the collocational restrictions of synonymous words. This could give a more complete picture of how collocational meaning is presented in entries.

4. Design some activities and exercises to familiarize students with the concept of collocations. For example, language instructors could design an interview as one part of curriculum, encouraging students to discuss collocations with native English speakers.

5. Introduce useful tools to students, such as collocation dictionaries or online corpora. Examples are British National Corpus and the Michigan Corpus of Academic Spoken English, both of which are freely available on the internet. The training of learners in dictionary and online use will move them away from dependence on teachers towards autonomy and self-instruction.
More specifically, the following activities are suggested:

(A). Sentence making activity:

Encourage students to:

(1) Read the collocations and examples of the words that you select.

(2) Raise questions about collocational meaning that baffles them.

(3) Make one sentence with each collocation without looking at the examples.

(4) Write down their sentences on the board so that both the teacher and students can comment on them.

Also, the instructor could encourage students to use the same approach to make sentences at home. Additionally, students could be encouraged to keep a vocabulary notebook to log new collocations. Once or twice a week, the language instructor might want to ask some of the students to write on the board the sentences they have made at home. Alternatively, students could take turns introducing words which are taken from their notebooks to discuss in the classroom. This activity is helpful in that students will verbalize, hear and comment on what they have written, reinforcing their learning and sharpening their critical thinking skills.
(B) Role play activity:

Alternatively, language instructors may incorporate role-play as part of the curriculum, creating a communicative setting in order to enhance EFL students' communicative competence as well as familiarize students with collocational usages. For instance, the teacher could first introduce topics pertaining to collocational meaning, and then divide students into several groups, in which members are encouraged to brainstorm their own scripts, bringing in at least five collocations in their dialogues. Additionally, the teacher could facilitate discussion of associations of these collocations by way of video-taping, making this form of meaning available to students.

Limitations of the Current Study

The current study has the following limitations:

1. All the subjects are the third-year senior high school students from National Tainan Second Senior High School. They are not randomly sampled from all the senior high schools in Taiwan. Therefore, the results of this study may not be generalized to all of the senior high school students in Taiwan.

2. The data collected was limited in a short period of time; thus, it can only reflect the subjects' linguistic
performance at that period of time. Also, the subjects’ learning factors while they are writing compositions are not taken into consideration, such as being fatigue, nervous, and distracted, etc.

Suggestions for Future Research

Future researchers investigating collocations may consider the following ideas:

1. This study aimed at examining collocational errors to explore the subjects’ collocation knowledge. Future research may investigate the effects of explicit collocational instruction on students’ writing, listening, speaking and reading proficiency. So doing will give us a clearer understanding of how the collocational instruction affects EFL students’ linguistic performance in their language learning.

2. Further research may consider collecting larger data samples, such as the composition test from the Joint College Entrance Examination, or the composition from the TOEFL test. The subjects’ linguistic performance in the particular situation will reflect their collocation knowledge in a more truly way.

3. The issue of contrastive performance of learners from different L1 background is worth discussing. It would be
useful to explore the degrees of L1 interference for EFL learners from diverse L1 backgrounds. More data should be collected pertaining to learners' use of collocations in their L1 and English in order to determine how cultural and linguistic background or individual characteristics influence learners' performance.
REFERENCES


