

# *The Effect of Teaching Consciousness-Raising Strategy on Iraqi EFL Learners' Achievements in Using Collocations*

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## *Abstract*

Learning collocation is regarded as one of the beneficial ways in mastering second language vocabularies. The current study tries to show the effect of teaching consciousness –raising strategy on Iraqi EFL learners' achievements in using collocations. It specifically tries to provide an answer to the following question: Will teaching consciousness-raising strategy improve Iraqi EFL students' learning? To answer this question the study hypothesizes that consciousness -raising strategy has favourable consequences on Iraqi EFL learners achievements in using collocations and first – year Iraqi EFL learners are relatively weak in using collocations. To confirm the suggested hypotheses, an experiment was conducted. The subjects were thirty first- year university students at the Translation Department, College of Arts, university of Mosul and they were divided into a control and an experimental group. Both groups did pre- and post- tests. The results proved that the experimental group showed a great improvement in the results of the post-test due to the experimental lesson series they had. Whereas the control group showed very little difference in the post-test due to their own collocational knowledge.

## **1- Introduction**

There are different ways to memories new vocabularies and one of these ways is learning collocations. Collocations refer to the co-occurrence of words to form a suitable usage and meaning. This term was first introduced by Firth (1957:181) when he argues that “collocations of a given word are statements of the habitual or customary places of that word”. It has been viewed differently

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according to different scholars. According to McCarthy and O'Dell (2005:6) collocations are "a pair of groups of words that are often used together". Sinclair (1991:170) states that collocations are "items that occur physically together or have stronger chances of being mentioned together". Robins (2000:64) argues that collocations are "the habitual association of a word in a language with other particular words in sentences". Similarly, Lewis (2000:8) regards collocations as "the readily observable phenomenon whereby certain words co-occur in natural texts with greater than random frequency". It is clear from the mentioned definitions that collocations refer to words that go together to shape natural discourse.

### **1.1 Aims of the study**

The current study aims at the following:

- Identifying the effect of consciousness-raising strategy on learning collocation.

### **1.2 The research question:**

This research tries to answer the following question: Will teaching consciousness-raising strategy improve Iraqi EFL students' learning?

### **1.3 Hypotheses**

The present paper hypothesizes the following:

Consciousness -raising strategy has favourable consequences on Iraqi EFL learners' achievements in using collocations

- First -year Iraqi EFL learners are relatively weak in using collocations.

### **1.4 Collocation Types**

According to Lewis (2000:134), there are two major types of collocations: grammatical and lexical. The former type refers to the combination of a verb, noun or adjective with preposition, while the latter refers to the co-occurrence of nouns, adjectives, verbs or adverbs. Benson et al (1986:56) classify each type of collocation as shown in the following table:

*Table (1) Types of Collocation*

Types of Lexical Collocations	Examples	Types of Grammatical Collocations	Examples
Verb+ noun	Compose music	Noun+ preposition	A pathy towards
Noun+ verb	Storms rage	Preposition+ noun	In reality
Adjective+ noun	Brief chat	Verb+ preposition	Filled with horror
Adverb+ verb	Slowly drive	Adjective+ preposition	Keen on
Verb+ adverb	Smiled proudly		
Adverb+ adjective	Happily married		

### 1.5 The Importance of Learning Collocations

Learning collocations is very important because it enables learners to produce chunks at faster rate and convey ideas easily. The importance of collocations can be drawn in the following points:

1. Collocations make the word more vivid. Take for instance if we combine “catch” with “a ball” learners can understand the literal meaning of each word, so they do not find problems. But if we join “catch” with “ your name” , here students will have obstacles in comprehending the real diversity of the verb meaning. ( Lackman 2011:6)

2. Learning collocations leads to enhancing writing and speaking skills of the language. Nation (2001:318) mentions that to produce fluent language, students need to have good collocational knowledge.

3. A good way to memorize new vocabularies is to learn collocations. Thus, learning collocations is regarded to be an effective way in memorizing words through the use of collocations in texts.

In brief, it seems essential for language learners to learn collocations to become familiar with these combinations and use them as powerful cards while communicating.

### 1.6 Collocation Strategies

Ellis (1993:108) argues that “consciousness-raising refers to a deliberate attempt on the part of the teacher to make the learners aware of specific features of L2”. To help EFL learners learn collocations effectively, second language teachers have to use collocation strategies in their classrooms. Before explaining classroom strategies for collocations, we need to know what is

meant by strategies. According to Richards and Rogers (2001:19) strategies refer to “the actual activities and practices used by second language teachers in the classroom to facilitate learning”.

In this section, three strategies are going to be mentioned: Consciousness-raising strategy, Context strategy and Exercising strategy.

### **1.6.1 Consciousness-Raising Strategy**

Consciousness-raising strategy is powerfully reinforced by Lewis (2000:163) who believes that “raising learners awareness is very essential in language learning”. Similarly, Krashen (1983 cited in Mclaughlin 1987:25) in his monitor theory emphasizes consciousness as an impact factor in learning. For him, consciousness is related to “learning” whereas unconsciousness is related to “acquisition” . To apply this strategy in the second language classroom, it is necessary to follow up the seven activities that are mentioned by Lewis(2000) to raise learners' consciousness, these activities are:

1-“identify and consolidate patterns or usages”. This activity focuses on word usage.

2-“classify items according to their semantic or structural features”. By applying this activity, learners will be able to distinguish between the semantic and structural characteristics of a word.

3-“ hypothesis building”. This is the most important activity that helps learners form hypotheses about the acquired information.

4-“ cross-language exploration”. This activity involves language interpretation.

5-“ reconstruction and deconstruction”. According to this activity, language is going to be decoded to its items and then when learners understand these items they will be able to re-build them.

6-“ recall”. It is an important activity since it helps students to make a revision concerning the memorized knowledge.

7-“ reference”. It helps learners know what the word refers to.

To sum up, awareness is a vital technique which helps students to acquire collocations efficiently. It is required by EFL teachers to apply these activities to develop learners' consciousness towards collocations.

## **1.7 Literature Review**

Most EFL learners do not have enough knowledge about collocation use, so several studies were conducted. To start with, Fraghal and Obiedat (1995:321) conducted a study to compare the collocational knowledge between Jordanian students and English teachers. The researchers used two kinds of tests: fill in the blank was for students and translation test was for the teachers. The results showed that both students and teachers' collocational knowledge was inadequate. Barfield (2002: 233) conducted a study to investigate Japanese EFL learners' collocational knowledge. The result concluded that Japanese EFL learners had insufficient knowledge in using verb-noun collocation. Zarei and Koosha investigated Iranian students' difficulties in the outputting of lexical collocations. They concluded that Iranian learners were unable to produce lexical collocations. (2003:164). Also, Hsu and Chiu (2008:199) examined the effect of Taiwanese collocational knowledge on L2 speaking. The researchers came to the conclusion that there is an essential relation between Taiwanese collocational knowledge and their speaking proficiency.

From the studies mentioned above, it is clear that most studies have been done to investigate the effect of learners' collocational knowledge on second language learning. Thus the current paper is a completion for the previous studies and it tries to investigate the effect of consciousness-raising strategy on Iraqi EFL learners' achievement in collocations. The results of this study concluded that teaching awareness-raising strategy plays a very significant role in developing Iraqi EFL learners' knowledge concerning using collocations.

## **2- Methodology**

### **2.1 The Experimental Procedure**

The aims of applying the experiment were to investigate the effect of using collocation strategies and explore their role on learners' knowledge of the second language. The experimental procedure consists of the following: subjects, lesson series and test.

#### **2.1.1 The Subjects**

The participants of this study were 30 first- year students at the Department of Translation, College of Arts, University of Mosul. The students were divided into two groups and each group was comprised of 15 students. Group (A) was randomly selected to be the experimental group while group (B) was the control one.

### **2.1.2 Experimental Lesson Series**

The experimental lesson series of this study includes the main activities of the adopted strategy (consciousness-raising strategy). The experiment lasted for four weeks during the academic year 2017-2018. It consisted of four lessons. The first lesson concentrated on defining collocations and states the types of collocations. The second lesson focused on making assumptions about the knowledge that was previously acquired through doing exercises. The third lesson involved interpreting language meaning, decoding and then reconstructing language items. The last lesson gave learners a chance to recall and check the given information concerning collocations by doing exercises.

### **2.1.3 The Test**

Before conducting the experiment, the control and experimental groups were subjected to a pre-test. After four weeks, both groups were also subjected to a post-test. It is worth mentioning that the aim of conducting the pre- and post-tests is to check whether the experiment comes with an advantage and benefit to learners or not. It is also worth pointing that the materials of both tests (were adopted from McCarthy and O'Dell 2005) are the same in order to calculate how the experiment works.

The test was designed contain 20 items. These items are divided into two questions. The first question is in the form of multiple choice and the second question is to 'fill the blanks'. Items of the first question are chosen collocation types and their sub-types. While items of the second question are chosen to help learners form hypotheses and recall the information they have received in order to re-build the words and then use them according to the meaning of the sentence (see appendix 1).

## **2.2 Data Analysis and Discussions of Results**

From the obtained results, it is clear that awareness strategy had a great effect on the experimental group in the post-test. While in the pre-test, the scores of both groups implied that they had the same collocational knowledge. Here, Wenden (1985, cited in Griffiths 2004:1) reminded us of an old proverb "Give a man a fish and he eats for a day. Teach him how to fish and he eats for a life time".

This proverb asks second language teachers to teach their students how to use collocations appropriately.

**Table (1) Results of the T-test of the Control and Experimental Groups in the pre-test scores**

Group	No.	Mean	SD	SE Mean	DF	T-Value	
						Tabulated	Calculated
Cont. Pre	15	32.00	17	4.3	28	1.83	0.43
Exp. Pre	15	36.2	14.2	3.6			

$\alpha = 0.05$

Table (1) illustrates the mean scores of both experimental and control groups in the pre-test. The mean scores were 32 and 36.2 for both groups respectively. It also illustrates that no significant differences were found between both groups in the T-Value. The tabulated t-value reads 1.83 and the calculated reads 0.43. This indicates that before conducting the experiment, both groups have roughly the same background concerning collocations. Here, the second hypothesis which reads “ first year Iraqi EFL learners are relatively weak in using collocations” has been confirmed and tested.

**Table (2) Results of the T-test of the Control and Experimental Groups in the post -test scores**

Group	No.	Mean	SD	SE Mean	DF	T-Value	
						Tabulated	Calculated
Cont. Post	15	37.5	15.8	4.1	28	1.83	9.81
Exp. Post	15	62.6	7.9	2.0			

$\alpha = 0.05$

In table (2) the mean scores were changed. They were 37.5 and 62.6 for both groups respectively. These results prove that the collocational knowledge has changed. This difference is also clearly shown in the calculated result which reads (9.81). This highly significance is surly due to the fact that the experimental group used consciousness-raising strategy effectively to arrive at the correct responses and it goes back to the benefit of the experiment and the exercises that the experimental group was exposed to.

**Table (3) Results of the T-test of the Control Group in the pre- and post-test scores**

Group	No.	Mean	SD	SE Mean	DF	T-Value	
Cont. Pre	15	32.0	17.0	4.3	28	Tabulated	Calculated
Cont.post	15	37.5	15.8	4.1		1.83	0.61

$\alpha = 0.05$

The mean scores in table (3) were 32.0 and 37.5 for the control group in the pre- and post- tests. This is due to the fact that the achievement of the control group was low in both tests. This refers to the fact that the collocational background for the control group students does not change since this group was taking traditional lectures.

**Table (4) Results of the T-test of the experimental group in the pre- and post-test scores**

Group	No.	Mean	SD	SE Mean	DF	T-Value	
Exp. Pre	15	36.2	14.2	3.6	28	Tabulated	Calculated
Exp. post	15	62.6	7.9	2.0		1.83	6.73

$\alpha = 0.05$

The mean scores in the above table indicate that the experiment succeeded. It also indicates that the experimental group students improved their information and knowledge of collocation. This noticeable change in the mean scores in both tests implies that the experimental lesson series prones to give great advantages for the experimental group. At this point, the first hypothesis which reads “consciousness-raising strategy has favourable consequences on Iraqi EFL learners achievements in using collocations” has been confirmed and the research question has been answered.

### 3- Conclusions

To conclude, some points can be mentioned:

- 1- Consciousness-raising strategy has a positive influence on Iraqi EFL learners' progress in using collocations.
- 2- Low achievements in the pre-tests of both groups are related to students' inability of choosing the right collocations.

3- The difference in the mean scores of both groups occur in different ranges. This means that some positive changes had occurred related to the experimental procedure of the experiment.

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### **Appendix (1)**

#### **The Pre- and Post- Tests of The Experimental and Control Groups**

**Q1// Choose the correct collocations then decide whether the collocations you choose are lexical or grammatical:**

- 1- Our company sets a high \_\_\_\_\_ on after sales service.  
a- Value    b- price    c- cost
- 2- Competition to \_\_\_\_\_ the contract was \_\_\_\_\_.  
a- Earn    b- win    c- achieve
- a- Strong    b- stiff    c- hard
- 3- You need a wide range of skills to \_\_\_\_\_ a successful business.  
a- Work    b- run    c- go
- 4- How long have you been \_\_\_\_\_ business with China?  
a- Doing    b- making    c- getting
- 5- The annual \_\_\_\_\_ of our company is growing rapidly.  
a- Take over    b- over take    c- turn over
- 6- It is my job to \_\_\_\_\_ the budget.  
a- Weigh    b- balance    c- add
- 7- We have been doing \_\_\_\_\_ business all morning.  
a- Rapid    b- stiff    c- brisk
- 8- I \_\_\_\_\_ remember that we agreed to meet at the gym.  
a- Distinctly    b- strongly    c- rightly
- 9- The writer \_\_\_\_\_ some interesting parallels between life now and life in the middle ages.  
a- Does    b- draws    c- creates
- 10- The writer of the article \_\_\_\_\_ his opinion very clearly.  
a- Explains    b- states    c- declares
- 11- The standard of living has \_\_\_\_\_ in the last ten years.  
a- Grown    b- risen    c- increased

12- The firm \_\_\_\_\_ very successful, but then the problems

a- Got      b- made      c- became

a- Appeared      b- arrival      c- arose

13- The new model of this computer will \_\_\_\_\_ available in september.

a- Become      b- get      c- make

**Q2// Match the words on the left with their collocations on the right , then complete the sentences below using the collocations you made.**

- |       |           |
|-------|-----------|
| Set   | additives |
| Food  | food      |
| Junk  | produce   |
| Ready | menu      |
| Fresh | meals     |

1- \_\_\_\_\_ such as artificial flavours and colouring can cause allergies.

2- \_\_\_\_\_ may be unhealthy , but it's quick and easy and fills you up.

3- People who donot have much time to cook often buy \_\_\_\_\_ from the supermarket.

4- It is always better to buy \_\_\_\_\_ instesd of canned or frozen foods.

5- The \_\_\_\_\_ is usually cheaper than ordering dishes separately in a resturant.

أثر استراتيجية استخدام التجميع في زيادة الوعي التربوي على إنجازات متعلمي اللغة

الإنجليزية بوصفها لغة أجنبية

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مستخلص

يعد تعلم المتلازمات اللفظية من احدى الطرائق الاكثر فائدة للطلبة في تعلم مفردات اللغة الانكليزية. تهدف الدراسة الحالية الى تقصي مدى تأثير تدريس اسلوب زيادة الوعي في استخدام المتلازمات اللفظية بالنسبة للطلبة العراقيين الدارسين للغة الانكليزية كلغة ثانية. تسعى الدراسة و الى ايجاد جواب للسؤال التالي: هل تدريس اسلوب زيادة الوعي سيحسن من اداء الطلبة العراقيين الدارسين للغة الانكليزية كلغة ثانية؟ لغرض الاجابة على هذا السؤال تم افتراض ما يلي: ان استراتيجية زيادة الوعي لها الاثر في تطوير اداء الطلبة في استعمال المتلازمات اللفظية و ان طلبة المرحلة الاولى ضعفاء نسبيا في استخدام المتلازمات اللفظية. لإثبات الفرضيات فقد تم تطبيق التجربة. حيث تم اختيار ثلاثون طالبا من طلبة المرحلة الاولى في قسم الترجمة / كلية الآداب جامعة الموصل تم تقسيم الطلبة الى مجموعتين: المجموعة الضابطة والمجموعة التجريبية. قامت كلتا المجموعتين بإجراء اختبار قبلي و بعدي . اثبتت النتائج ان لتدريس استراتيجية زيادة الوعي الاثر الرئيس على تقدم اداء طلبة المجموعة التجريبية في استخدام المتلازمات اللفظية وذلك يعود الى سلسلة الدروس التي تلقاها الطلبة. كما اثبتت النتائج ان طلبة المجموعة الضابطة اظهروا تقدما بسيطا في الاداء حيث اعتمد الطلبة على ما لديهم من معلومات حول المتلازمات اللفظية.