

Collocation Errors Made by Saudi Learners of English

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Abstract : Systematic and in-depth analysis of ESL learners' lexical errors, in general, and of collocation errors, in particular, are relatively rare. Analysis as such proves crucial in understanding how ESL learners construct and use these fixed expressions. Collocational competence of ESL learners is necessary for achieving a native-like proficiency level, which is one of the objectives of foundation programs. This study aims to examine the collocational competence of 50 Saudi foundation program students and identify the collocation errors that they often make. Furthermore, using a questionnaire, the challenges that students encounter in learning collocations and the ways in which their L1 affects their ability to recognize these expressions are identified. To identify the lexical errors and the collocational competence of the students a collocation test was administered. The 150-item lexical collocation test consists of verb-noun and adjective-noun structures. Results of the study reveal that there is a significant difference between the scores of students in the verb-noun and adjective-noun structures. The majority of errors were recorded in the adjective-noun structures due to the students' L1 influence on the English collocations and the inability to distinguish between synonyms. Moreover, some challenges that students encountered were problems in translation, non-exposure to certain collocations, and degree of L1-L2 difference. All in all, the findings of this study can be interpreted in relation to the student's proficiency level and L2 instruction. Other findings of the study provide insights into language pedagogy—specifically strategies to help students learn collocations more effectively.

Keywords : collocations, ESL, applied linguistics, lexical collocations

Conference Title : ICLCDLM 2023 : International Conference on Language Curriculum Development and Learning Methodologies

Conference Location : Jeddah, Saudi Arabia

Conference Dates : February 20-21, 2023