

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF AUTHENTIC MATERIALS IN PROMOTING EFL STUDENTS' GRAMMATICAL COLLOCATION COMPETENCE

Jonathan Tanihardjo
Bunda Mulia University
jtanihardjo@bundamulia.ac.id

ABSTRACT

*We all are well informed about vocabularies being the most important part in using a language, owing to the fact that messages cannot be passed on when people lack vocabulary knowledge. Nonetheless, correct grammaticality plays substantial role especially in writing, for it is to avoid puzzlement towards the intended meaning. Similarly, incorrect application of grammatical collocations may lead to misunderstanding. The grammatical collocation of interested in, for example, cannot be simply replaced by *interested with, since words occur together to make collocational patterns, as suggested by Hank (1987). To put it differently, the combinations of words are not random, but rather somewhat fixed. Collocations are quite troublesome mainly for EFL learners. According to Farghal & Obeidat (1995), the main source of collocational errors come from L1 interference, interlingual or intralingual transfer, lack of grammatical collocation knowledge, and overgeneralization. This study focuses on how significant authentic materials like news articles may develop EFL students' competence of grammatical collocations. The participants are students coming from English department in Bunda Mulia university. There were two tests to find out the students' competence: (1) pre-test, and (2) post-test. The test items were grammatical collocations used in the English news articles. As suggested by Benson, Benson, & Ilson (2009), grammatical collocations are categorized into 8 major combinations. However, this study is limited to only three-word combinations: (1) noun + preposition, (2) preposition + noun, and (3) adjective + preposition. The pre-test was administered before the treatment was given to see how well the students cope with the grammatical collocations, while the post-test was later administered after the students were given treatment, in which the students were given only 3 news articles. The pre-test was in the form of multiple choices, where they were expected to recognize the collocations. The post-test, however, was in the form of producing the collocations. The writer compared the pre- and post-tests of grammatical collocations and found out that the authentic materials did not contribute to the students' awareness of the use of grammatical collocations in the post-test, as this was shown in the mean of the post-test being lower than that of the pre-test. From this study, it can be concluded that authentic materials are not the proper tool to promote students' grammatical collocation competence, since authentic materials, like newspaper might work better to enhance vocabulary knowledge.*

Keywords: *Effectiveness, authentic materials, grammatical collocation*

INTRODUCTION

One of the most challenging tasks for language teachers when teaching students is how to capture the interest and to stimulate their students to get motivated to learn. As a result, the ongoing search for and the development of meaningful teaching materials, which often can be used to supplement the textbook for a course, is a critical planning activity to be done by teachers.

Whatever situation a teacher may have, it is very likely that at some point teachers will have to find a way to adapt a particular text or lesson to the classroom settings for promoting learning. To get beyond the limitations of lessons, many teachers often adapt or create activities involving authentic materials.

Nunan (1999) defines authentic materials as spoken or written language data that have been produced in genuine communication, and not specifically written for language teaching purposes. Brinton (1991) also states that authentic materials can reinforce the direct relationship between the language classroom and the outside world.

Despite the fact that the use of authentic materials has been rising for the teaching of reading comprehension as well as vocabulary, such materials are occasionally used for the teaching of grammatical collocations. In fact, authentic materials such as newspaper articles or magazine are beneficial for learners to learn natural and real use of the language. Cook (1981) supported that students can get more benefits from authentic materials, and by having them the students can get closer to the target language. To put it differently, students will learn the real language when authentic materials are utilized.

Mousavi (2012) did research on the effect of authentic versus non-authentic aural materials on EFL learners' listening comprehension. The question put forward in this study was to pinpoint the impact of the authentic versus non-authentic listening materials on the listening comprehension of Iranian EFL subjects. The participants participated in two experimental treatment groups. During one semester, they

were instructed to listen to authentic radio-tapes and non-authentic listening materials taken from the assorted sources. The results revealed that the participants who were instructed on the basis of authentic radio-tapes had gained a higher degree of listening comprehension and proficiency than non-authentic groups.

Many people are convinced that vocabulary plays a more significant role in languages, as it serves as a tool for communicative purposes. For this reason, people neglect the importance of correct grammaticality both in spoken and written language. In fact, grammar is of significance to keep away from confusion towards the intended meaning.

Knowing its form and meaning of a word may not be adequate. Hanks (1987) affirmed that words occur together to make collocational patterns. Simply put, the words do not co-occur freely and randomly. In fact, collocations are believed to have its importance for learners, as not only do they increase accuracy, but they also enhance fluency.

Realizing the importance of the knowledge of the English grammatical collocations, the writer conducted this research to see whether or not authentic materials as the tool for teaching grammatical collocations really worked out to improve students' English repertoire of lexical collocations

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Many definitions of the term *collocation* have been proposed. McCarthy (1990) defined collocation as “a marriage contract between words and some words are more firmly married to each other than others.” Moreover, Hill (2001) also added that collocation is somehow crucial as to some extent; the choice of words that come together in language is already anticipated. In other words, that only replacing one word with another is not enough, and the combination in which one word and another co-occur is already somewhat fixed

Benson, Benson, & Ilson (1997) divided collocations into 2 major groups, namely grammatical collocations and lexical collocations. They distinguished between lexical collocations such as *do research*, *pack of dogs*, *deeply absorbed* and grammatical collocations such as *interested in*, *look into*, *discussion about*, *suggest that*.

Benson, Benson, & Ilson (1997) further described grammatical collocation as a repeated combination of a dominant word that goes along with a grammatical word typically a preposition (abide by, admiration for, adjacent to, etc.). Grammatical collocations mix a lexical word (noun, verb or adjective) and a grammatical word, resulting in the combination of one open class-word and one closed class-word.

No.	Types of Grammatical Collocations	Examples
1.	<i>Noun + preposition</i>	The <i>blockade of enemy ports</i> by our navy
2.	<i>Noun + to-infinitive</i>	It was <i>a pleasure to do</i> it; they had <i>an obligation to do</i> it; he was <i>a fool to believe</i> it
3.	<i>Nouns + that clause</i>	He took an <i>oath that</i> he would do his duty
4.	<i>Preposition + noun</i>	<i>In advance</i> ; <i>by accident</i> ; <i>in agony</i>
5.	<i>Adjective + preposition</i>	They were <i>angry at</i> everyone; she is <i>afraid of</i> dogs
6.	<i>Adjective + to-infinitive</i>	It was <i>necessary to work</i> ; the girl is <i>ready to go</i> ; the machine was <i>designed to operate</i> at high altitudes
7.	<i>Adjective + that clause</i>	She was <i>afraid that</i> she would fail the examination; it was <i>nice that</i> she was able to come home for holidays
8.	19 English verb patterns	Please excuse <i>my waking</i> you so early; he sent him the book / he sent the book to him; etc

RESEARCH METHOD

The participants in this study were 24 students of the English department from Bunda Mulia University. Among 8 classes of grammatical collocations that are proposed by Benson, Benson, & Ilson (1997), only 3 combinations, such as *noun + preposition*, *preposition + noun*, and *adjective + preposition* become the focus in this study. In this research, the primary data were taken from the students' pre- and post-tests, each of which comprised of 20 questions of the word combinations taken from articles from *The Jakarta Post*. In the pre-test, the questions were in multiple choices, whereas in the post-test, they were open ended.

Before starting doing the analysis, the writer collected the students' errors of the three types of grammatical collocations both in the pre- and post-tests. The writer would like to compare and see if there

was any difference in score between the two tests. The pre-test was administered right before the treatment was given, and the post-test was administered afterwards.

The writer then would like to see if the authentic materials, specifically the news articles would aid them to understand the use of grammatical collocations. He would also list down the most errors taking place in both tests.

FINDINGS

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Pretest	65.21	24	12.378	2.527
	Posttest	57.29	24	19.504	3.981

With the number of participants (N) in this study was 24 students, the output of Paired Samples Statistics shows the means of both pre- and post-test are 65,21 and 57.29 respectively. The table shows that the mean of the post-test showed 7.92 points decrease compared to the pre-test.

		Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	Pretest - Posttest	7.917	16.213	3.309	1.071	14.763	2.392	23	.025

In order to examine the effect of the authentic materials in promoting students' grammatical competence, a t test has to be employed.

As shown in the Paired Samples Test, with df = 23, the t score of 5% significance from t table is 2.069 and that of 1% significance is 2.845. As shown in the previous table, the mean of the pre-test is higher than that of the post-test. With $t = 2.392 > 2.069$ in the 95% confidence interval, the result shows that the null hypothesis is rejected, and proves that authentic materials indeed have a disruptive influence to enhance students' grammatical collocations. In other words, the use of authentic materials to increase grammatical collocations was not appropriate.

From the results shown, it can be concluded that the use of authentic materials in promoting students' grammatical collocations did not work as expected. Even though authentic materials are expected to bring about the desired effect, that is to increase learners' grammatical collocations from newspaper, turned out they only focused on the content or what the content was all about, but not the grammatical collocations shown in those articles.

Table 1. Pre-test Results

No	Grammatical collocations	Correct answer (in percentage (%))	1st most wrong answer (in percentage (%))	2nd most wrong answer (in percentage (%))
1	in search of	in (75%)	for (25%)	
2	choice for	for (54.2%)	with (25%)	about (20.8%)
3	risk of	of (91.7%)	for (4.2%)	by (4.2%)
4	news on	on (58.3%)	of (41.7%)	
5	horror of	of (70.8%)	from (16.7%)	on (12.5%)
6	interaction with	with (54.2%)	between (45.8%)	
7	on the edge of	on (87.5%)	to (8.3%)	of (4.2%)
8	in specific intervals	in (33.3%)	at (41.7%)	by (25%)
9	on the internet	on (91.7%)	in (4.2%)	from (4.2%)

10	in numbers	in (62.5%)	by (25%)	with (12.5%)
11	in the eye of	in (41.7%)	to (54.2%)	with (4.2%)
12	in the business	in (29.2%)	within (58.3%)	on (12.5%)
13	in the spotlight	in (54.2%)	on (41.7%)	within (4.2%)
14	at a lower price	at (66.7%)	for (20.8%)	in (12.5%)
15	compulsory for	for (75%)	on (25%)	
16	thankful for	for (100%)		
17	responsible for	for (91.7%)	on (8.3%)	
18	concerned about	about (79.2%)	with (16.7%)	on (4.2%)
19	relevant to	to (95.8%)	with (4.2%)	
20	unique to	to (8.3%)	for (79.2%)	with (12.5%)

From the table of the pre-test results, the majority of the respondents appeared to successfully recognize the prepositions that collocate with the nouns or adjectives. It might be that it was easier for them to predict what possible prepositions to go with the nouns or adjectives since the questions were in the form of multiple choices.

The table also shows that more than half of the respondents managed to correctly opt for correct prepositions in many situations, except for 4 collocations, as in *in specific intervals*, *in the eye of*, *in the business*, and *unique to*. However, *unique to* proves to be the most problematic grammatical collocation, as the majority of students opted for the preposition *for* to go with the adjective *unique*.

Table 2. Post-test Results

No	Grammatical collocations	Correct answer (in percentage (%))	1st most wrong answer (in percentage (%))	2nd most wrong answer (in percentage (%))	3rd most wrong answer (in percentage (%))
1	in search of	in (70.8%)	to (12.5%)	for (12.5%)	others (4.2%)
2	choice for	for (75%)	of (12.5%)	others (12.6%)	
3	risk of	of (50%)	in (20.8%)	at (12.5%)	others (16.7%)
4	news on	on (8.3%)	about (29.2%)	in (29.2%)	others (33.3%)
5	horror of	of (75%)	others (25%)		
6	interaction with	with (37.5%)	of (25%)	between (12.5%)	other (25%)
7	on the edge of	on (66.7%)	others (33.3%)		
8	in intervals	in (29.2%)	of (25%)	at (16.7%)	others (29.1%)
9	on the internet	on (62.5%)	in (16.7%)	others (20.8%)	
10	in numbers	in (87.5%)	others (12.5%)		
11	in the eye of	in (50%)	for (12.5%)	on (12.5%)	others (25%)
12	in the business	in (62.5%)	others (37.5%)		
13	in the spotlight	in (66.7%)	on (20.8%)	others (12.5%)	
14	at a lower price	at (41.7%)	with (20.8%)	for (16.7%)	others (20.8%)
15	compulsory for	for (75%)	others (25%)		
16	thankful for	for (91.7%)	others (8.3%)		
17	responsible for	for (66.7%)	in (20.8%)	others (12.5%)	
18	concerned about	about (54.2%)	with (20.8%)	others (25%)	
19	relevant to	to (50%)	with (20.8%)	for (12.5%)	others (16.7%)
20	unique to	to (25%)	for (33.3%)	in (20.8%)	others (20.9%)

Since the questions in the post-test were in the form of open ended, the students may have had answers they believed true. The results of post-test in table 2 shows that there were quite a few of alternatives to every word combination. There were collocations that half of the students made mistakes,

such as *news on*, *interaction with*, *in intervals*, *at a lower price*, and *unique to*, which made 5 combinations in total.

From both tables of pre-test and post-test results, it can be concluded that students performed better in recognizing than in producing correct collocations. It also appears that the incorrect collocations made by the respondents in the pre-test were different from those in the post-test, except that 2 unacceptable collocations, such as *in specific intervals* and *unique to* that kept taking place in both tests. It might be true that some students managed to realize the use of the collocations in the news articles, which then made them aware which prepositions to go with for some questions in the post-test. However, there were also collocations that were previously correct in the pre-test, and incorrect in the post-test.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

For so many years, many lecturers have been trying to find out the efficient way to raise students' awareness of correct grammar use. They have been using both authentic and non-authentic materials to make students understand how languages are used. It is believed that authentic materials are a good way to learn natural and real language in contexts, which might be true when it comes to learning language expressions and vocabulary. However, this study shows that learning grammatical collocations from authentic materials, like newspaper does not really work as well as learning from grammar books. Despite the fact that authentic materials were not so effective in this study, it does not necessarily mean that it is true to everyone in different situations.

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CURRICULUM VITAE

Complete Name : Jonathan Tanihardjo
Institution : Bunda Mulia University
Education : Master Degree – English Applied Linguistics
Research Interests : Teaching, Linguistics. ESP