

AN ERROR ANALYSIS OF LEXICAL COLLOCATION ERRORS IN THE JAKARTA POST NEWS ARTICLES

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ABSTRAK

When speaking or using a language, one has to have acquired vocabularies, for they are vital for communicative purposes. Wilkins, as quoted in Farghal & Obeidat (1995), seconded the notion and stated that vocabularies play a more important role than grammar, as without lexis nothing can be conveyed, and grammar only conveys something little. When using a language, it is so often that non-native speakers combine words that should not co-occur together. Farghal & Obeidat (1995) affirms that collocations are quite troublesome for EFL learners, and the main sources of errors are related to paraphrasing, overgeneralization, L1 interference, interlingual transfer, intralingual transfer, and lack of collocational knowledge in English. In the process of mastering a language, however, collocation plays quite an important role (Thornbury, 2002). Hanks (1987) stated that words appear together to form collocational patterns, and yet, nonnative speakers often have word combinations in a nonnative-like manner, making the combinations sound unnatural to native speakers. According to Benson, Benson and Ilson (2009) collocations are divided into 2 categories: grammatical and lexical. However, the spotlight of this study is on the lexical collocations. Out of 7 types of lexical collocations, the writer only opted for “verb+noun” word combinations, since such combinations always appear in sentences. The source of the data were taken from news articles from The Jakarta Post, a daily English language newspaper in Indonesia. There are two objectives of this study. First, the writer would like to see if the news articles that have gone through editing processes may still have any errors of lexical collocations. Furthermore, he would also like to analyze how the lexical collocations may possibly have contributed to the production of the English collocations in the articles. To seek the collocational errors, the writer consulted the Cambridge Dictionary, Oxford Collocation Dictionary as well as COCA (Corpus of Contemporary American English). Next, after the errors were identified, the writer made a list and analyzed how the errors of the English lexical collocations might take place. The results showed that there are only around 13 lexical collocation errors found within about 20 news articles from the business category. The errors came from paraphrasing, lack of English lexical collocations, as well as L1 interference. This study showed that even advanced learners of English still produced uncommon lexical collocations. From these findings, it is highly recommended that its teaching should be a top priority in every language course.

Kata kunci: *analysis, lexical collocation, errors*

INTRODUCTION

When learning a language, vocabulary is the most important thing to pay attention to, since without it there is no way communication can be established. Collocations, which are a part of vocabulary, are chunks that are important to learn (Thornbury, 2002). Hanks (1987) claims that words appear together to form collocational patterns. As a result, appropriate use of collocations is of great importance to make speech more fluent and native-like. However, nonnative speakers tend to use a language in a non-native like manner.

According to Farghal & Obiedat (1995), collocations are quite burdensome for EFL learners, and thus several studies on the use of collocations by EFL learners to seek area of difficulty and potential source of errors. It appeared that the main reasons for errors are related to paraphrasing, overgeneralization, L1 interference, interlingual transfer, intralingual transfer, and lack of collocational knowledge in English.

Tanihardjo (2017) in his study found that EFL learners of a language often use lexical collocations that result from their mother tongue. In his study, he perceived that L1 interference greatly contributed to the production of lexical collocation in the learners' writing; for example **use clothes, *do sacrifices, *use time, *give impact*.

Playing an important role in a language to avoid non-native-like combinations, lexical collocations become the focus in this study. There have been a lot of studies on the English collocations. However, a study on the production of collocations in the newspapers is still limited. It is understandable when non-native speakers of a language use a language in a non-native-like manner. However, *The Jakarta Post*, a professional daily English language newspaper in Indonesia, is expected to show a formal and natural language use in its articles. For that reason, this study is conducted to seek the answers to the problems formulated. First, the writer would like to see if the news articles that have gone through editing

processes may still have any errors of lexical collocations. Furthermore, he would also like to analyze how such errors may probably appear in the articles.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Collocation

Having knowledge of a word is not only knowing its form and meaning. Words occur together to make collocational patterns, or they do not co-occur freely and randomly (Hanks, 1987). According to Hornby (1997), collocation is like when learning a language, we learn how words combine together in phrases and sentences. Based on these definitions, we can draw a conclusion that collocation is a combination of words which do not co-occur freely and randomly to make phrases and sentences.

Collocations are classified into 2 major groups, namely grammatical collocations and lexical collocations (Benson, Benson, & Ilson, 2009). They differentiated 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*. They further grouped the lexical collocation into more combinations: verb and noun (e.g. *fly a kite*), adjective and noun (e.g. *strong coffee*), noun and verb (a.g. *bees buzz*), noun and the preposition “of” and noun (e.g. *an act of violence*), adverb and adjective (e.g. *strictly accurate*), as well as verb and adverb (e.g. *appreciate sincerely*).

Source of Data

The online news articles from The Jakarta Post are the source of data in this study. Among so many categories, business is believed to be one of the categories that many people are interested in. This study aims to explore the use of lexical collocations, specifically verb + noun combinations.

To get the errors of lexical collocations, the writer picked around 20 random news articles from business category. With the aid of online Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA), along with the Oxford Collocations Dictionary, he selected uncommon uses of lexical combination and listed down all the English collocational errors and attempted to explain how such errors may have occurred.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Despite having been through editing processes before publishing the news articles, a few inappropriate uses of lexical collocations were still spotted. From around 20 news articles, 13 uncommon uses of verb + noun were identified. The results found show that the uncommon use of the lexical collocations not only came from the interference of L1, but they also came from lacking collocational knowledge in English, and paraphrasing as well.

First of all, most of the uncommon production of the lexical collocations came from lacking collocational knowledge in English. The errors of lexical collocations produced seemed to have similar meaning to the acceptable ones, but they are in fact unacceptable. Next, the uncommon use of the lexical collocation came from paraphrasing. The journalist seemed to use their own words to describe the situation to make it clearer to the reader, and thus, ended up creating their own collocations. Finally, the least lexical collocation errors to appear in the news articles were from L1 interference. The journalist used Indonesian collocations, which were then transferred to the English collocations.

1. Collocation : upgrade a forecast.

Oxford : update a forecast.

Context : Nissan has upgraded its full-year forecast, projecting a net loss of 530 billion yen (\$4.8 billion).

In both the Oxford dictionary and online English corpus, the collocation of *upgrade a forecast* does not seem to collocate. The synonym of *upgrade* does not even come close to the collocations suggested by both. Similarly, such collocate does not appear in Indonesian. The journalist appears to describe it with his own words, making it uncommon to use in English. In this situation, the suggested verb *update* is a collocation of *forecast*.

2. Collocation : remand the suspect.

Oxford : arrest the suspect.

Context : All suspects have been remanded until Oct 28.

Both the dictionary and corpus display that the noun *suspect* collocates with the verb *arrest*, but not *remand*. In the corpus, it shows that *remand* does not collocate at all with such noun. Despite their similar meaning, they are not interchangeable.

3. Collocation : drive the inflation.

Oxford : cause the inflation.

Context : November inflation was driven primarily by price hikes in food commodities.

The noun *inflation* is shown to co-exist with the verb *cause* in this situation, but not the verb *drive*. It is clear that *drive* is not similar in meaning with *cause*. However, the journalist probably used such verb to show some force. However, he turned out to make up his own collocation.

4. Collocation : buoy the economy.

Oxford : support/sustain the economy.

Context : It also expects Bank Indonesia (BI) to maintain the benchmark interest rate at around 3.75 percent this year after making five rate cuts in 2020 to buoy the economy amid the COVID-19 health emergency.

The noun *economy* can probably go with the verb *sustain* in this context, as suggested in the Oxford dictionary. The verb *buoy* is in fact synonymous with *sustain*, but they do not collocate. The verb *support* is still rarely used to go with the verb *economy*. *Stimulate*, however, is what collocates the most. Here the journalist attempted to replace the verb with the synonymous word.

5. Collocation : project the demand.

Oxford : forecast the demand.

Context : The demand for electric motorcycles is projected to pave the way for electric vehicle (EV) adoption in Indonesia.

The noun *demand* does not collocate with the verb *project*, but *forecast* as suggested in the Oxford dictionary. Despite the fact that the collocation *project demand* is not suggested in the Oxford dictionary, its occurrence can still be found in the corpus, although only very few. It appears that the journalist used his own words.

6. Collocation : signal confidence.

Oxford : express confidence.

Context : Tesla Motors reported its first annual profit Wednesday following a big jump in auto deliveries despite the upheaval of the coronavirus pandemic as it signaled confidence for more growth in 2021.

Online corpus displays that the noun *confidence* has quite many frequencies in usage to go with the verb *to express*. However, no frequencies of the collocation *signal confidence* at all. Despite the verb *signal* being similar in meaning to the verb *express*, it does not collocate with *confidence*. The journalist used synonym to replace the word.

7. Collocation : reach an output.

Oxford : produce an output.

Context : Ives interpreted the statement on 2021 volumes as implying deliveries of between 750,000 and 800,000, enabling Tesla to reach one million vehicle output in 2022.

It is clear the verb *reach* is not synonymous with *produce*. However, such verb may contextually fit the situation. The Oxford dictionary shows no collocation of *reach an output*. Nevertheless, the corpus surprisingly shows frequencies on such collocation, with *produce an output* to be the most collocate. However, the collocation produced is quite similar to the Indonesian collocation. It may appear that the collocation came from the Indonesian collocation.

8. Collocation : ensure convenience

Oxford : provide / offer convenience

Context : Bank Mandiri vice president director Hery Gunardi said on Monday that the bank was opening its services, such as payments, transactions, e-money top-ups and lending, for digital partners to ensure better convenience.

The noun *convenience* does not collocate with the verb *ensure* in both the dictionary and corpus. Both the dictionary and corpus show that the noun *convenience* should collocate with the verb *to provide* or *to offer*. Such collocation may not be common, however, the journalist seemed to try to describe the situation with his own way.

9. Collocation : increase potential

Oxford : develop potential

Context : In this era of tech disruption, we have to open ourselves up and collaborate with other parties to provide convenience for our customers, as well as increase our business potential,” he said during a virtual press briefing.

It is clear that the verb *increase* is synonymous with *increase*. Being similar in meaning does not mean they are interchangeable, as the noun *potential* collocates with *develop*, but not *increase*. Surprisingly, although the dictionary suggests that *potential* collocates with *develop*, the corpus does not show any occurrence of *develop potential*. The journalist seems to use a synonymous word that carries a similar sense.

10. Collocation : booked a record

Oxford : kept a record

Context : In March, Renault also announced the sale of its entire 1.54 percent stake in Daimler after the French automaker booked a record loss in 2020, its performance hit by the pandemic.

In Oxford dictionary, the noun *record* co-exists with the verb *keep*, but not the verb *book*. Although both verbs may look synonymous, they are actually not. Online corpus shows that *keep* is also one of the verbs that collocate the most. The use of *to book* does not even collocate at all with *a record*. Here the journalist made his own collocation that he might have regarded as similar in meaning.

11. Collocation : develop a car

Oxford : build a car

Context : Musk’s interest in developing cars in China is part of a broader push by Tesla to boost the company’s global sales volume well past the 500,000-vehicle-a-year mark, which it came just 450 short of hitting in 2020.

It is so surprising that both the dictionary and corpus do not show any collocation of *develop a car*. Instead, corpus shows the noun *car* collocates with the verb *build*. The journalist perhaps attempted to describe something beyond building a car, that is making a car that is even more sophisticated. However, it turns out that the collocation produced does not collocate.

12. Collocation : conceptualize a design.

Oxford : create a design.

Context : All the sources said the planned center aimed to be a comprehensive design outfit, with one describing it as a “full-function studio”, which would not only help conceptualize the design of a car but also come up with the final shape – digital three-dimensional data – of a model.

The collocation of *conceptualize a design* was suggested neither in the corpus nor in the dictionary. The journalist seemed to describe the process from the beginning to the end – conceptualization to creation. However, it turns out that such collocation was made up on his own. In fact, the common collocation is *a design concept*.

13. Collocation : open the service

Oxford : launch the service

Context : Bank Mandiri vice president director Hery Gunardi said on Monday that the bank was opening its services, such as payments, transactions, e-money top-ups and lending, for digital partners to ensure better convenience.

In fact, there is a collocation, like *open service*, but its meaning is different from what the journalist would like to say. Both the dictionary and corpus display that the noun *service* goes with the

verb *launch* to show the beginning or introduction of new services offered by Bank Mandiri. Apparently, the journalist got influenced by the Indonesian collocation.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

From this study, the writer concludes that lexical collocation errors may not only come from L1 interference, but they may also come from other possible factors, such as lacking collocational knowledge in English, and paraphrasing. Tanihardjo (2017) found out that Indonesian students most likely transferred their knowledge of Indonesian collocations to the English collocations. In other words, they translated word for word from Indonesian to English. However, in this study, the writer found out that there could be other factors that can contribute to the collocational errors.

As Hill (1999) stated, "One of the best ways to build your vocabulary is to remember collocations rather than single words." McCarthy (1990) believes that knowledge of collocational appropriacy is part of the native speakers' competence, and can be problematic even for the advanced learner. Due to the important role which the notion of collocation plays in language learning, its teaching should be a top priority in every language course. The method of treatment and techniques that follow vary in relation to the level of the learners whether it is elementary, intermediate or advanced.

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