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**Optimizing the Lexical Approach to Develop EFL Learners'
Collocational
Accuracy and the Acquisition of the Idiom Principle in Writing : The
Case of First Year University Students**

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Abstract

The habitual co-occurrence of two or more items in language is technically termed as collocation. The pervasiveness of collocations in native speakers' use of language has highlighted their vital importance in achieving native-like fluency. Any underuse, overuse or misuse of collocations is viewed as a common source of inaccuracy and foreign sounding chiefly in one's writing. To say the least, knowledge of how words combine appropriately has often been a missing part in many EFL classes in Algeria. To this end, the present study aims to assess the extent to which the use of the Lexical Approach can help Algerian EFL intermediate learners improve their collocational accuracy and, in turn, operate on the Idiom Principle in their writing. To carry out this research, we recruited a sample of 62 first year university students at the Department of English in Chedli Benjdid University of El Tarf, Algeria. Those EFL majors were assigned to an experimental group and a control group. The former was taught collocations explicitly through the Observe Hypothesis Experiment (OHE) practices of the Lexical Approach, while the latter was taught with no focus on collocations. To gather the required data, three tools were used: a questionnaire was administered in order to identify the participants' pre-existing awareness of collocations, pre and post-tests were given to measure the participants' receptive and productive collocational knowledge and, lastly, an interview was conducted to explore the skills that the subjects have acquired to process collocations. Analysis of the findings indicates that there is a correlation between training the participants to chunk language successfully and the increase of collocational strength with high mutual information (MI) scores in those participants' writing. Besides, the results of the current study confirmed that a period of five months of adopting the OHE practices inside the classroom has proven to be effective in developing EFL intermediate learners' collocational competence. The latter reflects a considerable increase in collocational accuracy which, in turn, proved to correlate with learners' acquisition of the ability to operate on the Idiom Principle. In the light of those findings, the present study presents a number of pedagogical implications as it also highlights certain issues for related future research.

Key words: collocational accuracy, high-strength collocations, Idiom Principle, Lexical Approach, OHE practices

Dedication

This work is in memory of the late Prof. Naddar Abbas.

*To my beloved mother and tender father, to my dear sisters and brother,
to my sweet little nieces and nephew I dedicate this work and pray for
God's blessing to them all.*

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List of Abbreviations

BNC: British National Corpus.

COCA: Corpus of Contemporary American English.

EFL: English as a Foreign Language.

FLA: Formulaic Language Acquisition.

GTM: Grammar Translation Method.

L1: First Language (Mother Tongue).

L2: Second Language.

M: Mean

MCQ: Multiple Choice question.

MI: Mutual Information.

N: Numbering.

PPP: Present Practice Produce.

OHE: Observe Hypothesis Experiment.

SLA: Second Language Acquisition.

SPSS : Statistical Package for Social Sciences.

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Résumé

La cooccurrence habituelle de deux ou plusieurs éléments dans la langue est techniquement appelée collocation. L'utilisation fréquente des collocations par des locuteurs natifs a mis en évidence leur importance vitale pour atteindre une maîtrise de type natif. la connaissance de la manière dont les mots se combinent de manière appropriée a souvent fait défaut dans de nombreux cours d'EFL en Algérie. Pour cette raison , la présente étude vise à évaluer l'effet de l'approche lexicale en aidant les apprenants intermédiaires de langue étrangère algérienne à améliorer leur précision collocationnelle pour fonctionner selon le principe de l'idiome dans leur écriture. Nous avons choisi un échantillon de 62 étudiants universitaires de première année au département d'anglais de l'université Chedli Benjdid à El Tarf, en Algérie. Ces étudiants ont été affectés à un groupe expérimental et à un groupe témoin. Le premier a appris les collocations explicitement par le biais des pratiques (OHE) de l'approche lexicale, tandis que le second a été enseigné sans se concentrer sur les collocations. Pour recueillir les données requises, trois outils ont été utilisés: un questionnaire, des pré et post-tests et un entretien. L'analyse des résultats indique qu'il existe une corrélation entre la formation des participants à l'utilisation réussie des combinaisons lexicales et l'augmentation des collocations (MI) dans l'écriture de ces étudiants

universitaires. De plus, les résultats de la présente étude ont confirmé qu'une période de cinq mois d'utilisation de l'approche lexicale s'est avérée efficace pour développer la compétence collocationnelle des étudiants EFL. Cela confirme également l'acquisition de la capacité d'utiliser la langue sur la base du principe de l'idiome . Selon ces résultats, la présente étude présente des implications pédagogiques et met également en évidence certaines questions pour les recherches futures.

Mots clés: précision de la collocation , collocations idiomatique, Principe de l'idiome, Approche lexicale

ملخص

يشير مصطلح المتلازمات اللفظية في اللغة الى الاستعمال المتكرر لكلمة معينة مع كلمة اخرى لابرار المعنى اكثر. هذه الحالة اللغوية هي سمة من سمات الفصاحة ، و لهذا اية نقص او خلل في استعمال المتلازمات اللفظية يجعل اسلوب الكتابة ركيك . تدريس المتلازمات اللفظية لم يعطى حقه الكافي في مناهج تعليم اللغة الانجليزية في الجزائر ، لذلك تهدف هذه الدراسة الى تقييم مدى فعالية منهج تعليم المصطلحات ودوره في تحسين الدقة في استعمال المتلازمات اللفظية . هذه الدراسة مبنية على عينة تتكون من 62 طالب في السنة الاولى بقسم اللغة الانجليزية بجامعة الطارف.و ضعنا هولاء الطلبة في مجموعتين , مجموعة بحثية و التي درسناها المتلازمات اللفظية عن طريق منهج تعليم المصطلحات و مجموعة محايدة و التي درسناها نفس محتوى البرنامج التعليمي ولكن دون التركيز على تدريس المتلازمات اللفظية. بعد جمع المعلومات الازمة عن طريق ثلاثة وسائل (الاستبيان ,الاختبار الكتابي , و المقابلة) قمنا بتحليل نتائج البحث . هذه الاخيرة كشفت عن فعالية منهج تدريس المصطلحات وجود علاقة قوية بين التركيز على استعمال المصطلحات اللفظية و زيادة الفصاحة اللغوية في اسلوب كتابة هولاء الطلبة. تؤكد نتائج هذا البحث ايضا على ان خمسة اشهر هي فطرة كافية للتدريس الفعال للمتلازمات اللفظية من خلال منهج تعليم المصطلحات بناء على هذا يبرز هذا البحث في الاخير عدة نقاط بيداغوجية و بعض المسائل المتعلقة بالبحاث مستقبلية اخرى .

كلمات مفتاحية: المتلازمات اللفظية , الفصاحة اللغوية , منهج تعليم المصطلحات , طلاب اللغة الانجليزية

General Introduction

Over the past three decades there has been a growing interest in the field of second language acquisition mainly in what could best ensure the successful acquisition of communicative and native-like use of language. Basing teaching on improving the mastery of grammar rules solely has been flatly rejected. Instead, formulaic language became the focal point for many theorists and pedagogues. Many researchers, the likes of Granger (1998); Howarth (1998); Schmitt(2008); Wray (2002); Nesselhauf (2004); Siyanova and Schmitt (2007); Durrant and Schmitt (2009), have all agreed that language is stored in native speakers' minds as chunks and ready to be recalled for use as wholes. Thus, language produced by native speakers will then encompass elements and forms which distinguish it from language produced by non-natives mainly EFL learners. Such unique components are in nature phraseological elements and prefabricated patterns that constitute what Sinclair (1991) terms as the Idiomatic Principle.

Before Sinclair brought this issue to the fore, Bolinger (1996) argued that “our language does not expect us to build everything starting from lumber , nails or blue print , but expects us to use an incredible large number of prefabs” (p.23). This claim has been empirically proved by a study conducted in 2000 by Erman and Warren. Accordingly, they found that formulaic language makes up 52.3% of the written English discourse they analysed¹. That is, language users draw on a large stock of chunks and ready-made expressions that constitute single choices though such multi-word units might seem to be analysable into segments. Furthermore, in pedagogical terms, a number of studies conducted by Bannard and Matthews (2008); Arnon and Snider (2010); Siyanova, Conklin and Schmitt (2011) showed that language learners notice, learn and store information that is encoded in chunks and phrasal units. In a similar vein, many researchers and lexicologists (e.g. Lewis 1993 & Howarth, 1998) view collocational knowledge of the target language as a major ingredient of fluency.

While traditional teaching methods have heavily focused on the acquisition of grammar and championed its exaggerated role in language production, vocabulary was regrettably something of a Cinderella. The acquisition of vocabulary has long been acknowledged as a key

¹ Many studies report the use of a substantial amount of formulaic sequences in native speakers' language. Details on these studies are discussed within chapter three.

element, if not, the most important element in successful language learning. As Wilkins puts “without grammar very little can be conveyed, without vocabulary nothing can be conveyed”(as cited in Lewis, 2000,p.16). Learning vocabulary as single separate items is counterproductive and at the same time pedagogically unsound since it is easier to use and remember language in chunks than a combination of separate words (Wray, 2002). However, the topic of multi-word units, abbreviated to MWU and commonly referred to as formulaic language, has been the major concern of many linguists and lexicographers. Collocation, mainly lexical, is considered the most pervasive type of formulaic sequences in language. This is due to the great deal of lexical density that naturally occurring language is characterized with, in addition to the lexical and arbitrary nature of many of the aforementioned types of prefabs. For McCarthy (1995), collocation is the organising principle in the chaos of lexicon and vocabulary leaning in any language. Given that lexical chunks such as collocations, phrasal verbs and idioms are considered as a fluency recipe for L2 learners, such a fluency major ingredient allows L2 and, in particular, EFL learners to compensate for their non-nativeness in language use mainly in their writing (Pawley & Syder, 1983).

In language teaching, the pendulum seems to have swung back to the old teaching methods. Though behaviourism has long been discredited for its fruitless approach and primitive dictum, the PPP method (present-practice-produce) seems to have been favoured and predominant in nowadays’ foreign language classes. Worst of all, within vocabulary teaching/learning ² the behaviourists ‘slogan “ you master what you meet” is what has brought second language acquisition (SLA) to the demise of English users who are syntactically competent but communicatively incompetent. To this end, the Lexical Approach was developed and updated by Lewis in 2000, as a follow up to his first edition in 1992, where lexis and ,chiefly, collocation is put at the centre of the teaching/ learning activities . In this approach, successful communication of meaning is the end. Lexis is, since it is the main carrier of meaning especially collocation, a means to an end and not an end in itself as was the case with grammar-based teaching methods. Above all and given these considerations, it is the focus of the present study to optimise the Lexical Approach with the aim of instilling in Algerian intermediate

² The concepts of teaching and learning are used simultaneously throughout this thesis. Both of the two processes have the acquisition of lexical collocations as the common end.

English majors the tendency to perceive and produce language holistically. Thus, as to provide a general background to the current study, this chapter highlights the major previous research related to the aim of this study as it also provides a statement of the problem which is addressed through this study. Within the first chapter, the aims of the study are discussed and the behind-rationale is laid out. The end of this chapter is a discussion of the scope of the study and a brief description of the general structure of the thesis and the main content of its comprising chapters.

Statement of the problem:

Native speakers' use of language consists of a wide range of prefabs and collocational frames. Therefore, any underuse or overuse of formulaic sequences in EFL learners will be the number one source of oddity, infelicities and foreign sounding especially in writing. Native speakers have that luxury of being familiar with most collocational choices according to which a particular word can co-occur with another. However, when it comes to non-native speakers, mostly intermediate EFL learners, it is a daunting task to produce all possible collocates for a given word. As claimed by Hill: "Students with good ideas often lose marks because they don't know the four or five most important collocations of a key word that is central to what they are writing about" (as cited in Lewis, 2000, p. 50). The ability to use collocations productively seems to be a huge challenge for so many intermediate Algerian EFL majors. Besides, while reading a text or listening to a passage, EFL learners can use context to decipher the meaning of lexical collocations, however producing an appropriate collocation while writing is far different from understanding a collocation while listening and reading. In many cases, such undergraduate learners resort to their L1(Arabic) knowledge of collocation as they write in English. As a result, their written production will be full of miscollocations, if any, odd forms of language (i.e. flouting of the Idiom Principle).

The pendulum of existing teaching practices in Algeria seems to have swung back to adopting practices intrinsic to that of the Grammar Translation Method (GTM). In other words, many current instructional programs in Algeria have always proved to produce English users, chiefly writers, who are grammatically competent but lexically and collocationally impaired. This means that proficient writing does not require one to master a set of grammar rules and memorize long lists of separate words, but rather it necessitates having access to a stock of lexical collocations. Knowledge of and ability to use collocational patterns properly are, hence, necessary for foreign language learners. Regrettably, however, the process of acquiring such

linguistic knowledge also poses a real bar to even advanced EFL learners. Literature in this context abounds with statements that report collocational deficiency and EFL unidiomatic output. For instance, Smadja (1989) observes that “Language learners often stumble across co-occurrence relations” (p. 164). Likewise, Hill (1999) maintains “any analysis of students’ writing shows a lack of [...] collocational competence” (P.49). For this reason, the present study attempts to develop such EFL learners’ collocational competence and idiomaticity in writing by raising their awareness of the importance of using accurate collocations in their writing and by also providing them with more classroom opportunities to notice, store and practice the use of strongly associated collocations.

Purpose of the study:

Teaching of lexical collocations to learners is important for a number of reasons. It contributes to accuracy and native-like word choice in writing, allows learners to encode and decode meaning effectively and develops their fluency (Mccarthy & O’dell, 2005). Although some L2 writers use the combinations *step over the law*, *bring examples*, and *stand in front of a problem* which sound awkward in English, native speakers prefer writing the collocations *break the law*, *give examples*, and *face a problem* (Laufer & Waldman, 2011). Since collocations are formulaic in nature and the hallmark of native-like production of language, this study aims to develop students’ proficiency and efficiency in their writing skills in relation to the use of lexical collocations. It also attempts to improve learners’ collocational accuracy by enriching their mental lexicon.

Through putting the major instructional principles of the Lexical Approach to the test and instilling the habit of noticing collocations during exposure in and outside classroom, this research also seeks to unveil any correlation between the acquisition of collocational competence and operating on the Idiom Principle in EFL writing. For this reason, participants in this study will be trained to develop their intuition towards the right collocates in language. However, the current research is not meant to assess the overall quality of EFL learners’ writing, but rather it attempts to investigate the extent to which the subjects of the study are able to manifest their collocational competence in writing by displaying the use of strongly associated lexical items, e.g. collocations with high MI scores.

Significance of the study:

The pervasiveness of collocations in native speakers' use of language has highlighted their major role of accurate word co-occurrence in the process of second or foreign language acquisition. Collocations are the default expressions by which one can compensate for his/her non-nativeness, produce language naturally, cope with the demands of on-the-spot processing of input and gain access to the target language community. However, much focusing on teaching grammar has downplayed the major contributions of teaching of collocations in many instructional programs and school curricula. There is no denying that poor knowledge of grammar can affect the encoding or decoding of messages in the target language. However, poor knowledge of collocations is very likely to cause communication break downs. Though there have been attempts to help learners develop their collocational knowledge, most of the focus is usually related to increasing the frequency of collocations in learners' output. Little attention has been paid to the level of collocational accuracy learners need to display as to sound native-like in their use of language. Thus, with the aim of investigating the correlation between the use of the Lexical Approach and the ability to operate on the Idiom Principle in EFL writing, the present study optimizes the main instructional principles of the Lexical Approach to improve EFL learners' production of collocations with high MI scores. The contribution of the current study is that it accounts for the process of acquiring all lexical collocational patterns and discusses low frequency collocations with high strength of association (high MI scores) and certain degrees of arbitrariness that would affect the expected idiomaticity in EFL writing. Research on error analysis and contrastive analysis may find it of prime importance to consider a number of issues that the current study highlights in terms of the interlingual factors affecting the perception and production of collocations with high MI scores. It is also worthy stating that current study is part of an on-going contribution into the area of corpus linguistics which always tries to provide clearer understanding of how language can naturally be produced.

EFL teachers referring to the findings of this study will be informed about issues related to the acquisition of foreign language vocabulary in general and collocations in particular. The significance of the current inquiry can also be seen in the fact that it lays the groundwork for language planners and syllabus designers to revisit their framework of selecting course content that caters for learners' needs and guarantees an effective acquisition of the target language.

Definition of key terms :

1. Collocation: a behaviour of two or more words to co-occur frequently and regularly in a particular context (Durrant, 2009).
2. Collocational accuracy: the degree of association between the constituent elements of a particular collocation (Biber, 2009).
3. Collocational Competence: the ability to use the most appropriate collocations that sum up what one wishes to convey (Hill, 1999).
4. Mutual Information (MI): a statistical measure for calculating the strength of association (collocability) in a particular word combination. A high MI score implies that a given combination of words is a strong (restricted) collocation whose constituent elements are not paired due to a random chance (Biber, 2009).
5. The Idiom Principle: a tendency of language user (mainly native) to perceive and produce language in the form of prefabricated and semi-prefabricated phrases/lexical chunks (Sinclair, 1991).
6. The Lexical Approach: a way of teaching language devised by Micheal Lewis in 1993. According to him, successful learning of language is based on the ability to perceive and produce lexical chunks rather than grammatical structures.
7. The Open Choice Principle: a tendency of language user (mainly non-native with limited proficiency) to use language by relying on their grammatical knowledge to perceive and produce language as a series of individual words used in different grammatical structures.

Research Questions and hypotheses

The main purpose of this doctoral research is to assess the extent to which the use of the Lexical Approach can contribute to develop EFL learners' ability to use the Idiom Principle in their writing. Hence, the motive behind undertaking this research is to seek answers to the following three main questions:

1. Is the deficiency in collocational accuracy in Algerian intermediate EFL learners' writing related to their tendency to operate on the Open Choice Principle?
2. Does raising these learners' awareness of the generative power of collocations help them become less independent on grammar to produce meaning in English?
3. What are the cognitive strategies that such EFL learners employ to produce accurate lexical collocations in their writing?

Correspondingly, our line of researching is guided by the following three assumptions:

1. Raising intermediate EFL learners' awareness of the varying degrees of lexical arbitrariness, which dictates collocational restrictions, in English helps them become less independent on their mother tongue (Arabic) to produce collocations . In other words, explicit teaching of collocations with high MI scores is very likely to instil a linguistic tendency in EFL intermediate learners to operate on the Idiom Principle.
2. Downplaying grammatical mistakes and, instead, emphasizing collocational accuracy in the course of self-expression may lead to a considerable use of strongly collocated words in intermediate EFL learners 'writing.
3. Helping intermediate EFL learners acquire the habit of perceiving the input holistically reinforces their tendency to exhibit native-like output.

Limitations of the study:

Undertaking the present experimental research required meticulous attention in terms of determining the variables that contribute to the better understanding of the issue in question. At the same time, the choice of the research method and tools for eliciting the required data was made in accordance with the objectives of the present study. However, a number of limitations seems to be likely to affect the findings of this study.

Firstly, the purpose of testing learners before the start and after the end of the experimental course is to determine the effect of the pedagogical intervention. However, administering the same test twice may familiarize the same participants with a particular linguistic form that is under study. Learners may then realize their weaknesses and thus develop certain interest to improve their deficient knowledge .Consequently, testing as such may not reflect the learners actual performance and this can affect the validity of the results. Secondly, though collocations in this study were extracted from learners' corpus using a widely used dictionary of collocations and the measurements of the MI scores in the BNC, the latter seems to provide inconsistent MI scores compared to other standard online concordance- based corpus such the Corpus of Contemporary American English³ (COCA). That is, what can be identified as a strongly associated word pattern (strong collocation) in one standard corpus can be considered as poorly associated one (weak collocation) in another standard corpus. As Biber (2009), Durrant and Schmitt (2009) explain, such variation can be attributed to the fact that MI is affected by the

³ COCA is the largest freely available corpus of the time. It includes more than 560 million words gathered from millions of texts of a wide range of genres. The corpus was created in 1990 at [Brigham Young University](http://www.byu.edu) and it was last updated recently in 2017.

frequency of a particular word and, more importantly, the size of the adopted corpus. As a result, this inconsistency may affect the process of identifying collocations properly in this study. Thirdly, the density and lexical diversity of collocations in learners writing may also be affected by the genre and the type of writing the participants are tasked to do. For example, in descriptive writing, learners are expected to feature dominate use of adjectives and nouns. Therefore, the accuracy of collocations may be limited to certain types of lexical collocations than others. Fourthly, this study is limited to analysis of revealed data obtained from EFL students only (students questionnaire) due to the fact that the teaching of collocations is not amply introduced in any syllabus of teaching English in Algeria even at higher education! This leads us to say that investigating the issue of collocation acquisition from the perspective of EFL learners only would not be as thorough and insightful as when EFL teachers' perspectives are taken into account too.

Lastly, interviewing all of the participants would provide richer information, however for time constraints the subjects of this study were further assigned into sub-groups. Interviewing learners in this way may affect the process of eliciting accurate information due to the fact that learners were randomly put into mixed -ability sub- groups in which certain members may be reluctant and less able to interact. As a result, such participants may not be given due attention to disclose during the course of collective interviewing.

Delimitations of the study

As stated earlier, this study aims to develop students' idiomaticity and collocational competence in writing through implementing a training program based on the practices of the Lexical Approach. In this respect, the scope of the present study is bound to all of the six types of lexical collocations that are defined by Benson 1997. The main reason behind the selection of Benson's six types of lexical collocations is threefold:

First, a great deal of studies conducted on collocations, the likes of Bahns and Eldaw(1993), pointed out that lexical collocations pose a real bar to L2 learners than do the grammatical ones .Furthermore, compared to grammar, lexis in general is more problematic in terms of encoding and decoding messages in L2. In this respect, Sinclair states "A lexical mistake often causes misunderstanding, while a grammar mistake rarely does" (as cited in Lewis, 1997, p.16). Second, previous inquiries into collocations were limited to only few kinds and patterns of collocations. For instance, Fan (1991), examined de-lexical verbs, Howarth (1996)

analysed verb+noun collocations and Granger (1998) investigated adverb +adjective collocations. Thus, these studies have not given a full account and ample analysis of the acquisition of all collocational patterns among English majors especially intermediate ones. Third, most of previous research conducted on collocation, as discussed earlier in this chapter, has approached collocations from error analysis, corpus analysis and unspecified unprincipled methodology of explicit teaching of collocations. In addition, till the time of writing, no study has related the acquisition of these kinds of lexical patterns to the acquisition of the Idiom Principle mainly in writing. That is, available research on formulaic language acquisition and lexical collocations in particular has failed to reveal the effect of adopting the Lexical Approach on improving EFL learners' ability to use native-like formulaic patterns (collocations with high MI scores).

The present study, therefore, gives an in-depth analysis of the effectiveness of using the major instructional principles of the Lexical Approach on the acquisition of collocational competence and, in turn, the acquisition of the Idiom Principle. By exploring the use of Benson's (1997) collocational patterns⁴ in the writing of Algerian intermediate EFL majors, it is hoped that the findings of this thesis research pave the way for future inquiries to advance our understanding of the area of SLA in general and formulaic language acquisition (FLA) in particular. It is also the objective of the researcher to highlight for EFL teachers, material writers and syllabus designers' attention certain pedagogical issues related to the process of improving EFL learners' collocational accuracy and developing their idiomaticity in writing.

Organization of the thesis

This doctoral thesis consists of six chapters. A chapter reviewing issues related to the concept of collocation, a chapter covering issues related to the concept of the Lexical Approach, a chapter dealing with formulaic sequences and the acquisition of collocations, a chapter presenting the analysis of the questionnaire, a chapter presenting the analysis of the classroom experiment and a concluding chapter discussing the main findings and the related pedagogical implications.

The thesis starts with a general introduction. The latter provides background information to the study regarding previous correlation studies conducted on the acquisition of collocations, statement of the problem, purpose of the current study and reformulation of the hypotheses. In

⁴ Full discussion of the taxonomy of collocations and the six kinds of lexical patterns is presented in chapter one.

this introductory part also the scope of the study is discussed and an overview of the shape of the thesis is presented.

Chapter one presents general review of the concept of collocation. It starts with the definition of this concept and its main defining approaches. It traces the development of this concept and accounts for the nature of restriction in collocational patterns and the different types of collocations. This chapter concludes with a discussion on certain phraseological units similar to the concept of collocation.

Chapter two gives insights into the Lexical Approach and the effective way of acquiring language according to its principles. It starts by shedding light of the nature of language and lexis. Correspondingly, it presents definition of the Lexical Approach and its main principles. In this chapter a number of issues related to the source of errors in language use and considerations regarding teachers' attitude to error making are also dealt with. Finally, a discussion of the main criticism addressed to the Lexical Approach is provided at the end of this chapter.

Chapter three sheds light on the definition of formulaic sequences, the processing of formulaic sequences and the acquisition of collocations. Thus, through reviewing evidence of the holistic perception and production of formulaic sequences, this chapter accounts for the nature of the Idiom Principle and explores the different functions of formulaic sequences. In the end, different resources of collocations and a number of considerations related to material selection for teaching collocations are all discussed in this fourth chapter.

Chapter four is devoted to report on the results and analysis of the administered questionnaire which attempts to assess EFL learners' pre-existing knowledge and awareness of collocations. It starts with defining the aims of the questionnaire and the selected sample of the study. In addition; it covers issues related to the administration of the questionnaire and outlines the main content of this questionnaire. In this chapter also, the results obtained from the questionnaire are thoroughly analyzed and tabulated using the co-called Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). The chapter concludes with discussion and summary of the major findings with reference to the current research questions.

Chapter five reports on the experiment that we conducted inside the classroom and presents the analysis and discussion of its results. Thus, it describes the procedures followed in each stage of the experiment. It also provides analysis of the results of the stages of the experiment such as the results of the collocational knowledge tests and the writing tests.

Furthermore, this chapter sheds light on the learners' interview that we conducted in this study. A detailed discussion of those findings is also presented in this chapter. The latter concludes with a summary of the main findings.

Chapter six includes a sum up of the main findings of the study and draws certain pedagogical implications for EFL teachers, syllabus designers and dictionary makers as well. Also in this chapter certain issues related to the limitations of the study are discussed. Accordingly, the chapter concludes with a number of suggestions for related future inquiries.

Chapter One

Making Sense of Collocations: Is the Company Words Keep a Tendency Beyond a Semantic Account?

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1.1 Introduction

This chapter sets out to introduce the linguistic phenomenon of word co-occurring, technically known as collocation. It starts with highlighting the very origin of the concept of collocation and defines collocation etymologically. It presents a variety of definitions of collocations by different linguists and scholars as well as the different approaches to define collocations. Moving to the historical rise of collocation, this second chapter reviews the study of collocation through history and traces the development of this concept in a chronological way.

As to elucidate the notion of collocation, this chapter provides insightful discussion on the constituent elements of collocations and the main classification of collocational patterns. The arbitrary nature of lexis and collocation within the theory of phraseology is discussed in this chapter as well. In the end, some concepts, similar to that of collocation, such as idioms and phrasal verbs will be highlighted. As to draw a strict line between the notion of collocation and the accountability of other forms of word co-occurring in semantic terms, issues on the idea of native-like word selection will also be discussed.

1.2 Definition of collocation

Etymologically, the term collocation comes from the Latin verb “*collocare*” which is the equivalent of the English verb *to arrange* and *set in order* (Martynska, 2004). Similarly, Singleton confirms that the word collocation comes from the Latin words: *cum* and *locus* which means placing within each other, i.e. the frequent pairing of words in speech and writing within a short distance. In literature on phraseology, the collocability of words remains a phenomenon that requires conclusive explanation. As Gordon Tucker states, “collocation is a phenomenon in search of a theory ..., in search of a unifying theory to connect all the different approaches (as cited in Anderson, 2003, p.55). The term collocation is widely used in different but vague senses in language teaching and linguistics. The most common definition is that the word collocation refers to a certain kind of syntagmatic relation of words (Nesselhauf, 2004).

Over the last few decades, many researchers have attempted to define collocation. The most classic and starting definition of word associations is credited to J.R. Firth. With his famous slogan “you shall know a word by a company it keeps” (1957, p.179), Firth used the word collocation as a technical term to describe word accompaniment. He argues, in the following example, that any given word can be defined by considering its collocability with another word. For instance, the word *dark* collocates with the word *night*, i.e. one meaning of the word *night* is

its habitual co-occurrence with the preceding word *dark*. The Subsequent definitions seem to have been inspired by such an account in the sense that Firth's diligent student Halliday (1961) defines collocation as "the syntagmatic association of lexical items, quantifiable, textually, as the probability that will occur" (p.276). In this definition Halliday implies that collocation is a combination of lexical items that are found in a linear co-occurrence within a syntagmatic relation.

Not much different from Halliday's view of collocation, in his article "co-occurrence and transformation in linguistic structure", Harris (1957) ,though rarely uses the term collocation, raises many issues that relate to the habitual association of words .Harris points out that the co-occurrence of words in all language sentences have to be checked by comparing the textual environment of the transformations of a particular sentence .This means that collocates whether in active or passive construction retain their interconnected dependency. On the other hand, Sinclair (1991) describes collocation as "the occurrence of two or more words within a short space of each other in a text" (p.170). Though this definition might be perceived as superficial and generic, it is in fact a precondition to recognize collocations simply because syntagmatic relation would never exist without text. Sinclair goes further and defines collocation as follows: "the occurrence of two items in a context within a specified environment. Significant collocation is a regular collocation between two items, such that they co-occur more often than their respective frequencies" (as cited in Hori, 2004, p.05).

According to Greenbaum (1974), Halliday's item-oriented approach should not be the only framework that the study of collocation ought to be based on. For him collocation includes an approach which integrates sentence patterns and local syntactic structure .Some years later, Ullmann (1978) follows Firth's line of defining collocation and asserts, "every word is surrounded by a network of associations which connects it with other terms" (p.238). Kjellmer (1984) defines collocation as a sequence of words that are grammatically restricted and lexically determined .Thus, for Kejelmer only significant co-occurrence and well-formed grammar that can qualify a particular sequence of words as collocation. Firthian definition of collocation, "the word a company keeps", was reviewed by Stubbs (1995) who believes that the frequent co-occurrence of certain words as habitual company is the essence of the term collocation. Matthews (1997) ,on the other hand, introduces an aberrant and odd definition of collocation .He argues that collocation is regarded as "a relation within a syntactic unit

between individual lexical elements; e.g. *computer* collocates with *hate* in the sentence "my computer hates me".(p.60) .The peculiarity here lies in the fact that in this example the relation between the words *computer* and *hate* has to be regarded as free combination and not collocation. In so doing, such relation is syntactic and referred to as subject-verb concord which is different from verb+noun collocation such as in the combinations *repair the defect* and *escalate the conflict* (Ibrahim,2003). In stressing the frequent and recurrent use of collocation Gitsaki (1999) defines collocation as a ready-made expression consisting of two or more words that are underlined by a conventional way of expressing something in language. Similarly and to emphasize the frequency words couple up within text, Thornbury (2002) states "two words are collocates if they occur together with more than chance frequency, such that, when we see, we can make a fairly safe bet that the other is in the neighborhood ... collocation is not as a frozen relationship as that of compounds or multi-word units" (p.07). In his investigation of collocation, Mahmoud (2005) excluded the definition of binomials, in which two syntactically similar words are joined by a conjunction such as *dead and boring*, from his view of the concept collocation. Hence, for him collocation refers to two words belonging to different grammatical classes. With respect to encyclopedia and dictionary definition of collocation, Firth's (1957, p.197) famous adage "You shall know a word by a company it keeps" has been reiterated by Crystal (2005) in his famous encyclopedia. Hornby and Crowther (1995) plainly defines the term collocation as "the way in which words belong together, as *weather* and *permitting* do, is known as collocation"(p.310).According to Oxford Collocations Dictionary, "Collocation is the way words combine in a language to produce natural-sounding speech and writing" (McIntosh, Francis, & Poole,2009,p.V).

To sum up, the aforementioned various definitions are not unbridgeable. There are some collocation defining criteria that are unanimously agreed upon by all linguists and phraseologists: First, a sequence of two or more words is said to be a collocation if those words co-occur habitually .Second, for an expression to be qualified as collocation it must have restricted semantic relation ,that is why the expression *strong tea* is considered collocation instead of the wrong phrase *powerful tea** . Last but not least, unlike idioms a collocation does not have meaning transfer in its combination. Thus, for the purpose of the present study, we adopt Kenny's (2001) Firth-related definition of collocation. That is, the concept of collocation refers

the habitual co-occurrence of lexical items within a determined distance of each other in naturally-occurring text.

1.3 The nature of collocations in different approaches

Being a concept defined from different perspectives, word habitual co-occurrence is a complicated area in phraseology. Its lexical, semantic and structural nature triggered a number of approaches to define it accordingly. In what follows we are going to shed light on the different approaches that account for how collocations are defined.

1.3.1 Collocations in a lexis- based approach

In most lexical studies, the co-occurrence of words together determines their meaning. Correspondingly, Firth 1957's famous claim, which later on became a motto in lexical studies, "you shall know a word by the company it keeps" (p.179), emphasizes the role of the lexical nature of a stretch of language in determining meaning. Firth's account for collocations is then based on considering them as a linguistic entity separated from grammar. He goes on to cite the example of the word *night* whose one of its meanings co-occurs with that of the word *dark* to establish a combination that can be accounted for lexically rather than grammatically. In his view, Firth points out that collocation together with other properties of language constitute an integral part in the analysis of meaning. For this reason, any investigation of the lexical properties of items in language has to be done at phonological, orthographic, grammatical and collocational levels.

In line with Firth's "Mode of Meaning" (p.192), many linguists took his theory a further step forward. For instance, Halliday (1966) views collocations as a famous example of word combinations which are related to certain properties typical of grammar. In this respect, Halliday based his claims on a lexico-grammatical system. For him collocations can be defined at a syntagmatic level in which words are sequenced very often together in a linear way. Furthermore, the collocational properties then cut across structural ones and this highlights the inability of grammar to always give an adequate account of the relation between near synonyms, e.g. *powerful* and *strong*. In a similar vein, Sinclair (1991) describes collocations as an aspect of language that is different and, in most cases, independent of grammar. He points out that the nature of language at the grammatical level is an alternation between different structures and choices such as the choices of the active and passive voices while at the collocational level language is in nature a series of words habitually put together in combinations.

One of the virtues of the lexical composition approach is that its main focus on lexis can reveal many limitations of the grammatical analysis that is concerned with the explanation of the patterning of words in language (Gitsaki, 1999). Nevertheless, there are still some problems that lie within such an approach. The restriction of defining an item only in terms of the environment in which it occurs derives its meaning from that context. If we look at the previous example of Firth (1957), the tendency of the word *night* to collocate with the word *dark* is conditioned by the semantic environment itself that defines the whole meaning of the collocation. Hence, this major flaw highlights the necessity to account for the company words keep from a wider approach.

1.3.2 Collocations in a semantics-based approach

The major inadequacy of Firth and his proponents' theory to explain the behavior of lexical items that collocate with a certain number of other items has motivated many linguists to look at collocations from a semantic lens. The semantic approach is based on the possibility of accounting for the co-occurrence of words by drawing on the semantic properties of lexical items. For Decarrico (2001), the semantic load of lexical items can determine which word can collocate with other. He illustrates that in the word *rancid* which collocates with *butter*, *oil*, and *lard* since they all share the same semantic property, i.e. something oily.

There are instances of language in which items collocate without having any semantic properties in common. For example, the word *roaring* collocates with the word *success* without having any shared semantic feature that can explain such pairing. For this reason, Cruse (1986) proposes a better model to define collocations. In his view, collocations can be defined in terms of three interrelated strands: the frequency of items, the degree of the collocational restrictions and the semantic opacity of the items. Cruse emphasizes that a collocation is a string of lexical items which co-occur very frequently and whose components are contextually restricted, but meaningfully transparent. Such definition results in three degrees of collocational restriction that Cruse distinguishes. First, the systematic restrictions that regularly characterize collocations and are fully specified. This kind of restriction can be noticed in the meaning of the verb *to grill* and *to toast* which imply the same action, but in terms of the method they are different in the sense that the food which is raw is meant to be *grilled* whereas the food which is already cooked is meant to be *toasted*. Second, the semi-systematic restriction in which a certain number of collocations can be characterized by certain exceptions, i.e. if we consider the word *customer* and the word *client*, they might seem interchangeably used. However, each one has a number of

lexical items within which it collocates . For example, butchers and bakers have *customers* while solicitors and architects have *clients* (p.281). The last kind Cruse describes is that of idiosyncratic restriction. In this regard, such a kind of collocational restrictions occurs if the collocational ranges can only be defined by acceptably describing all their collocates. To exemplify this, Cruse explains that the combination *spotless kitchen* is possible whereas *flawless kitchens** is not. Similarly, *flawless performance* is acceptable while *unblemished performance** is not.

Cruse divisions of collocational restrictions received much criticism especially from Gitsaki (1999) who reports that there is a large number of idiosyncratic collocations which are characterized by arbitrary restrictions. In this case the semantic approach fails to give an adequate account since the use of language in different contexts plays a key role in the creation of meaning. By the advent of technology, mainly the use of certain computer software in linguistic studies, new views of the nature of language and the nature of its use came to light. Semantic prosody as a new trend in semantic studies was introduced by Sinclair in 1991 .Sinclair also revolutionized corpus linguistics and widened its scope which allowed many linguists to give a thorough account of the nature of language on the basis of its use by its native speakers.

To investigate collocations, Sinclair adopts the term prosody to explain the semantic features of collocations whose constituent parts have a tendency to occur together in a certain linguistic environment. He draws on concrete examples to lend support to his claim that considering the different ways in which language is carefully patterned can be achieved by selecting text that takes into account all the instances of that item use. A good illustration is the phrasal verb *set in* that appears in 114 examples in the Collins Corpus⁵. According to the notion of semantic prosody, the verb *set in* collocates most of the time with words in which they together convey a negative or unpleasant meaning. For example, the items *bad weather*, *paranoia*, and *disappointment* can all be said “*to set in*”. As a pedagogical implication, Sinclair strongly recommends teachers to base their exemplification of proper use of language on information from corpus, since the latter serves as an ideal native speaker who provides instances of natural use of language to its non-native learners. In a similar vein, Louw (1993) conducted a study on the semantic prosodies of some words. His examination of Larkin's poems revealed

⁵ Collins Corpus is a database of written and spoken materials that are produced in English around the world. The corpus includes more than 4.5 billion words and it is updated every month. This huge bank of English provides Collins dictionary editors with information about emerging words and their meanings.

that the word *utterly*, for example, appears 99 times in an 18 million word corpus (COBUILD) with a meaning that has a negative connotation (it suggests a negative thing) such as in the combinations *utterly ridiculous* and *utterly confused*. Correspondingly he asserts, "The prosody on *utterly* is as consistent as it is that it admits the possibility for irony" (p.164).Stubbs (1995) also lends support to the analysis of the semantic prosodies of words to determine lexical collocations and recommends the use of large corpora of words that occur in naturalistic setting. His analysis of the word *cause* in a verb+ noun combination reports that more than 90 % of its co-occurring nouns imply an unpleasant meaning, e.g. *delay, trouble, death, cancer...etc*.

One of the major flaws of the semantic approach has been pointed out in literature, namely, by Gitsaki (1991) who speculates that the habitual tendency of words to combine in distinguished patterns is due to their semantic prosodies. He then acknowledges that there are many instances of co-occurring words that are arbitrarily restricted. Such idiosyncratic combinations pose a real bar to determine their collocational properties under the banner of the semantic approach. Therefore, the inadequacy to determine all instances of collocations semantically highlights the need to look at the linguistic phenomenon of word co-occurrence from another aspect of language in use.

1.3.3 Collocations in a structure-based approach

The lexical and semantic frameworks of the analysis of collocations overlooked the grammatical properties of word patterns that can account for the nature of collocations. Many studies conducted by a number of scholars and linguists have, in different procedures, demonstrated how defining collocations lies more within a grammatical framework. As one of the distinguished figures in this approach, Mitchell (1971) stresses the complementary nature of lexis and grammar and criticizes the Neo-Firthians' approach to collocations that is based on separating lexis from grammar. He then views the nature of collocations as a unit of language which includes lexico-grammatical properties together. Mitchell puts forward the concept of *root* to examine collocations. For him the term *root* means the abstraction of the form of a word, whereas the word is the inflectional properties of the *root*. He contends that the nature of collocations is more of roots than words and thus should be "studied within grammatical matrices"(p.65). Mitchell gives the example of the collocations *heavy drinker* or *drink heavily* in which *drink* is the root of the word *drinker* and *heavy* is the root of the word *heavily*. A similar argument was made by Greenbaum (1970) who stresses the importance of analyzing collocations

in conjunction with the syntactic relationships of words. In this respect, he considers that the similar limited grammatical categories can guarantee, to a great extent, very useful analytical results. Greenbaum also adds that the main pitfall of an item-based approach in collocation studies lies in the fact that overlooking syntactic restrictions in collocations results in a certain level of inaccuracy. To further explain his claim, Greenbaum gives the example of the word *much* whose co-occurrence with the word *like* can be seen in negative sentences but never in affirmative ones. Therefore it is, for instance, possible to say *I do not like him much*, but not *I like him much**. Surprisingly, Crater (1987) subscribes to Firtian's theory of collocation and tries to graft it onto that of Greenbaum (1970) and Mitchell (1971), in the sense that any study of collocations has to acknowledge the inseparability of grammar and lexis as clues for meaning. Crater's (1987) explanation of collocations is based on examining the ranges and, more importantly, the frequency of co-occurrence. To exemplify, Crater explains the differences of ranges between words such as *putrid*, *rotten*, and *rancid* and *addled* whose nature of ranges is restrictive and bears the connotation of something that has decayed. Hence, the word *putrid* couples up with the word *fish*, *rancid* with *butter*, however the word *addled* can only be used with the word *eggs*. At the same time, the word *rotten* can co-occur with words of different nature such as *fish*, *eggs* and *fruits* as well. Simply put, the relation between words in terms of their synonyms can be identified within multiple collocational ranges of such synonyms. Such premise by Carter highlights the usefulness of such nature of collocations in the context of vocabulary teaching.

To qualify a group of words as a collocation, Kjellmer (1984) stresses the importance of taking into account a number of defining criteria. He describes collocations as "lexically determined and grammatically restricted sequences of words"(p.163). In other words, what is meant by "lexically determined" is that a combination of words can be labeled as a collocation if it appears within a particular frequency in a reference corpus. As for what is meant by "grammatically restricted", it is required that the string of words need to be structurally well-formed. For instance, a search in the Brown Corpus, done by Kjellmer, revealed a number of sequences such as *green ideas*, *try to* and *hall to* where only the combination *try to* meet both criteria: appearing in the aforementioned corpus a certain number of times and being grammatically well-formed. Thus *try to* is considered a collocation according to Kjellmer.

Another view on the grammatical nature of collocations is that of Benson, Benson and Ilson (1997). They emphasize the importance of the inseparability of lexis from grammar and describe collocation as a frequent tendency in which a lexical item collocates with another word or grammatical structure regularly. Following this definition, collocations have been broken down into two sets. Lexical collocations whose constituent elements do not include grammatical items, namely prepositions, infinitives or clauses, instead they include the four lexical items: nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs. In contrast, grammatical collocations include a lexical item used together with a grammatical item (preposition) or structure (that-clause). The acquisition of collocations, according to those scholars, is of prime importance to EFL learners whose main objective is to use language fluently.

A further insight into the notion of collocation within the lexico-grammatical framework has been provided by Sinclair (1991). He argues that meaning arises from any text according to two principles: the Open-Choice Principle and the Idiom Principle⁶, respectively representing each of the two aspects of language, i.e. grammar and lexis. The Open-Choice Principle suggests that there is a number of choices that a speaker accordingly produces utterances or sentences just by applying the basic rules of grammar. On the other hand, the Idiom Principle refers to the large number of pre-fabricated units that serve as ready-made expressions and building blocks in which language users opt for to produce language effortlessly and without being worried about the structural system of that language. Sinclair reiterates that the Idiom Principle means " that a language user has available to him or her a large number of semi- pre constructed phrases that constitute single choices, even though they might appear to be analysable into segments" (p.110).

Another view that accounts for collocation in grammatical terms is that of Stubbs (1995) who considers any habitual co-occurrence of words or even lemmas as a collocation. Such explanation of the behavior of co-occurring words can be considered frequency-based. However, Stubbs sums up the interplay between lexis and grammar in the following two points:

1-Lexis can be restricted by any grammatical structure in which it occurs and correspondingly such structure in which lexis occurs can determine the class of any lexical item.

2-A word is meaningful within its own grammar. Every meaning is related to a specific formal structure, i.e. meaning cannot be accounted for regardless of the form (p.40)

⁶ See chapter four for full discussion on the Open-Choice Principle and the Idiom Principle.

Similarly, Hunston et al. (1997) confirms that there grammatical structures that can correlate with lexical meaning and that specific patterns can represent all words. However, there can also be a lot of things in common when it comes to the meaning of words which occurs in similar patterns. Likewise, Hoey (2000) supports Hunston's claim and uses the term colligation to label certain meanings of the same word which have their own grammatical frames.

In the light of the structural examination of collocations, it is obvious that lexis and grammar together play a major role in exploring the nature of language itself. The structural approach is then more pedagogical and can be of great use to teachers to demonstrate to their learners the working of language (Fan, 2009). Such a trend, therefore, highlights certain pedagogical concerns that will be detailed in chapter four.

1.4 Historical glimpse of the study of collocations

Although Firth is considered to be a widely acknowledged linguist who brought the term collocation to the fore in the fifties, the notion of word co-occurrence was actually referred to by Palmer in 1933 (as cited in Hori, 2004, p.38). Further earlier, related literature reports that the term was used by Otto Jespersen in 1924. Jespersen is reported to be probably the first to coin the term collocation (as cited in Poulsen, 2005, p.249). More than a decade later, Palmer (1938) in his book, "A Grammar of English Words", used the word collocation in its subtitles. Palmer revolutionized the study of English as a foreign language (EFL) whereby he emphasized the significant presence of what he technically called *polylogs* : famous chunks in language. To this end, he compiled a list of more than 6000 frequent collocations to be integrated in his EFL teaching practices. This, to a great extent, resembles the core principle of explicit focusing on the teaching of chunks in the Lexical Approach devised by Lewis in 1993. Hornby was inspired by Palmer's (1938) focus on collocations in the sense that he included collocational information in a series of dictionaries he published: Idiomatic and Syntactic English Dictionary (1942), A Learner's Dictionary of Current English, (1951) and Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English (1963).

Coming back to the linguist who laid the foundation stone of studies on collocation, J.R. Firth in his book 'Modes of Meaning' (1957) views the study of collocation in descriptive linguistics as an approach to investigate semantic statements. As a result, the study of collocation took a direction that is chronologically marked by three stages: the theoretical investigation of collocation in 1960s, the suggested approaches and methodology for probing into collocation in

1790s and last but not least, the 1980s onwards constant emergence of the results and achievements of the study of collocation.

In the 1960s the study of collocation came to light in a staff seminar held in the department of Applied Linguistics in Edinburgh University. Halliday, John Sinclair, Angus McIntosh, Catford and Ronald Mackin were among the participants while Firth was a visiting professor in the department of General Linguistics. One of the topics discussed at that seminar was collocation. Later in 1966 and on that base, Halliday and Sinclair published a series of articles on collocation. For example, Halliday (1966) furthered the theoretical study of collocation and argued for the need to devise methods appropriate to describe recurrent patterns (collocation) within the framework of a lexical but not grammatical theory. Halliday shifted his attention on collocational cohesion as a lexico-grammatical view of collocations of an item. In this respect, Halliday and Hasan (1976) maintain “this is simply a cover term for the cohesion that results from the co-occurrence of lexical items that are in some way or other typically associated with one another, because they tend to occur in similar environments” (p.287). In his paper “Beginning the Study of Lexis”, Sinclair (1991) laid the theoretical and practical groundwork for the study of collocations. Presenting problems related to computer-assisted study of collocation, Sinclair devised certain technical terms which are used nowadays in the treatment of collocations. Such terms are node, span, collocates, cluster, formal meaning, casual collocation, significant collocation, range and lexical sets.

As for the second phase in the study of collocation in 1970s, investigations in the area of collocation were practical. Hori, (2004) points out that the core experimental study, the first computer-assisted study of collocation, was carried out by Sinclair and a group of researchers in 1970. Following Sinclair’s paper that he published in 1970 “English Lexical Studies”, he envisioned the limitation of the study of collocation using computer aid due to some problems posed by the text size and computer performance. Sinclair argued “in order to describe fully the collocational behavior of even the 3000 most common words in the language a text of several million words would be required” (p.23). However, the 135,000 word-corpus of British spoken English, 50,000 word-corpus of British written English and one million words of American written English, though they were small scale-corpus based studies, laid a practical ground for future inquiries in collocation (Hori, 2004).

The unique corpus-based study of collocation by Sinclair and Daley (1970) received a great deal of criticism by an experimental approach ascribed to Greenbaum (1970). Being a mere approach based on item analysis, Greenbaum holds “Unfortunately, the study, as envisaged in his [Sinclair’s] article, would be based exclusively on linear co-occurrence of items, and would not include the syntactic and semantic statements that are often essential in a treatment of collocations ”(p,10) . This means that Sinclair (1987), as he looked at how words co-occur in language, has just based his investigation of collocation on the sequencing of separate items regardless of how longer stretches of language like statements co-occur syntactically and semantically. Instead, Greenbaum (1970) suggested a method for the study of collocation based on native informant test .To illustrate, he contends that the word *much* collocates with the preceding verb *like* only in negative sentences. Thus one can say *I do not like him much* but not *I like him much**, save when the word *much* is premodified by adverbs like *so*, *too* and *very* (p, 11–12). Though what Greenbaum demonstrated is worthwhile and interesting, his approach is only limited to the study of collocation of present-day English since it is impossible to find a native informant to refer to in the historical study of collocation.

The third phase of studies on collocation started around 1980s by the development of computer-related corpus linguistics .In that era, Sinclair’s COBUILD Project⁷, later known as the Bank of English, contributed greatly to the study of collocation. Based on 200 million words, 10000 headwords and 2,600,000 authentic examples, Sinclair’s great achievement laid the methodological and practical underpinnings for the in-depth study of collocation in its actual use. In 1994 Kjellmer published, in three volumes and based on Brown Corpus⁸, a Dictionary of English Collocations. However, small corpus size, text size, user-friendliness and methodology were the major disadvantages that characterized Kjellmer’s attempt to delve into the study of collocation (Hori, 2004).

1.5 The chronological development of the concept collocation

As a recent term in the study of collocation, the term “semantic prosody” was first, though referred to by Sinclair in a personal communication in 1988, used by Bill Louw in 1993. Sinclair

⁷ The COUBILD is an acronym that stands for Collins Birmingham University International Language Database. As a project led by the linguist John Sinclair in 1980, the main purpose was to compile an electronic corpus of modern text. The outcome of the project is the creation of Collins Corpus and the publication of English dictionaries, namely the Collins Dictionary.

⁸ Brown Corpus is a collection of 500 samples of texts of American English. It includes almost one million words. The corpus was compiled in 1961 at Brown University in USA .It is the first electronic corpus that is representative of modern day American English.

stated “applying the term prosody in the same sense that Firth . . . used the word to refer to phonological coloring which was capable of transcending segmental boundaries” (as cited in Hori,2004,p.14). In another investigation into collocation, Sinclair (as cited in Weigand,1998,p.23)went further to point out that what is called “bad, unpleasant or negative semantic prosodies” can be demonstrated by the phrasal verb *set in* which so often co-occurs with negative state of affairs like *bad weather sets in and despair sets in*. In this respect, Stubbs (1995) describes semantic prosody as a particular behavior of words in which they acquire negative connotations by means of pairing. He gives a number of examples such as the verb *break out* which bears the negative connotation of disagreement when paired with words such as *riots, war* and *violence*. Besides, the word *commit*, which is allusive of something negative, pairs with words such as *adultery, crime, sin* and so forth. In a similar vein , the word *utterly* has been found in an 18 million- word corpus to collocate very often with words that have unpleasant implications such as *confused , demolished* and *meaningless* (Louw,1993).

The chronological change in the concept of collocation has not only given rise to semantic prosody but also to grammatical collocation , technically called colligation .Carter (1998) points out that the term colligation has been used to describe the relations along the syntagm that is specifically grammatical. Similarly, Hoey (as cited in Lewis, 2000, p .234) contends that aside from collocation and semantic prosody, the word colligation exists. That is, the grammatical position and company that a word keeps and refers to .In other words, according to Lewis (1993) colligations of a word refer to a group of words (of different parts of speech) which are related to each other in syntactic structures.

1.6 Previous research on collocations

Ever since Firth (1957) work on word co-occurrence brought the issue of collocation to the fore, the teaching/ learning of collocations has attracted the attention of many researchers in the field of second and foreign language acquisition. However, most of correlation studies on collocation are sparse and have appeared by the beginning of the 21 century. The available literature on collocation instruction (quasi and classroom experiments) falls into two main categories: some experiments that employ different instructional procedures to develop the acquisition of collocations and others that use collocations to develop certain areas of language proficiency.

As far as the first category is concerned, a number of experiments were designed to improve the acquisition of collocations using different classroom techniques and tasks such as awareness-raising activities and corpus-based instruction. To start with, Fan (2005) is among the first researchers who experimentally investigated the effectiveness of rule-oriented teaching of collocations. Fan conducted his doctoral research to investigate the effect of attention on the acquisition of verb-noun collocations. Fan assigned 94 Mandarin EFL learners to four groups where each one received one of the following four levels of attention-based teaching of collocation: *semantic processing* (embedded collocations), *memorization for recall* (memorization of the target collocations), *rule given* (application of rules of collocations) and *rule given plus negative evidence* (application of rules and study of miscollocations). The four groups were tested on the use of collocations through different activities. Their performance showed that learners who received the rule-oriented instruction (group 3 and 4) outclassed their counterparts. In a similar vein, Webb and Kagimoto (2009) examined the effectiveness of receptive and productive vocabulary tasks on the acquisition of collocation by Japanese EFL learners of mixed abilities. The learners were put into two experimental groups and one control group. While the first experimental group received instruction based on receptive tasks such as reading passages including collocations, the second experimental group received instruction based on productive tasks such as close tests. The control group, on the other hand, did not receive any instruction on collocations. The results of the study indicated that productive tasks proved to be more effective for the learners with higher level. Along the same lines of Webb and Kagimoto's research, Balcı and Çakır (2012) conducted a study in which they used collocations as a tool to improve beginner EFL learners' vocabulary knowledge. Thus, a sample of 59 participants was divided into an experimental group and a control group. While the former was taught vocabulary within the collocational fields of given words, the latter was taught words conventionally through techniques as such definition and translation. Comparison between results of pre/post-tests administered to the participants showed that teaching vocabulary through collocations aided learners' retention of the intake.

In another instructional technique, Fahim and Vaezi (2011) investigated the effect of textually enhanced input on the acquisition of verb-noun collocations. Accordingly, a total of 96 Iranian intermediate EFL learners served as a sample of such a study. The participants took a pre-test (multiple choice items) in which they were required to select the appropriate collocates.

Following the results of the pre-test, the subjects were assigned to three groups. An experimental group in which learners were provided with bolded and capitalized collocations in ten reading passages, another experimental group in which collocations were taught to learners in a traditional way (e.g. fill-in the blanks and matching parts of collocations) and ,finally, a control group in which learners received no specific instruction on collocations. After a series of sessions all groups took a post-test. The results of the test demonstrated that the typographically-enhanced input and the traditional teaching method have statistical significant effect of the acquisition of collocations.

A number of classroom experiments investigated the effect of corpus-based tasks on EFL learners' collocational competence. For instance, Pirmoradian and Tabatabaei (2012) conducted an experiment to study the effect of using concordancing, namely Collins Dictionary of Collocations, on EFL learners' acquisition of collocations. The participants were 30 Iranian students who were assigned to two groups: an experimental group and a control group. While in the experimental group the participants were taught a certain number of collocations using the concordancing tool, in the control group the participants were provided with the same amount of collocations and asked to notice them while they read given texts. After five weeks, both groups took a multiple choice question -based test. The results of the test indicated that learners in the experimental group outperformed their counterparts in the control group. Similarly, Ashouri, Arjmandi and Rahimi (2014) assessed the effect of corpus-based teaching of collocations on developing the collocational awareness of EFL learners. The researchers devised an instructional course of 15 sessions. They assigned 60 participants to an experimental group and a control group. While a series of corpus-based activities on collocation was provided to the experimental group, the control group received individual vocabulary item-based instruction. At the end of the experiment both groups took the same test of collocations. The results of the test showed that the corpus-based instruction helped raise learners' awareness of the use of collocations in naturally occurring language as it also encouraged them to notice and identify collocational patterns in any input and use them in their output, mainly in their writing.

In the related literature, only two, till the time of writing, major experiments used the Lexical Approach to improve EFL learners' collocational competence. In 2015, Addellah conducted an experimental study in order to determine the extent to which the use of the Lexical Approach affects EFL learners production of collocations. He developed pre/post-tests based on

multiple choice questions and recruited 96 Egyptian EFL intermediate students. The latter was assigned to an experiment group which received an intensive instruction on lexical collocations using practices of the Lexical Approach and a control group which received the same content of the intensive program but taught in a traditional method of teaching grammar and vocabulary. After six weeks of instruction, both groups took the post-test of multiple choice questions. The test results revealed that explicit teaching of collocations is very effective in the sense that corpus-based activities enriched learners' knowledge of collocations and developed their intuition towards the right choice of collocates. A year later, Ördem and Paker (2016) conducted a similar study in which they investigated the correlation between teaching vocabulary through collocations and the retention and use of the target language. The researchers recruited 60 EFL intermediate learners. The latter was assigned to two groups. An experimental group where the participants received, in a reading course, instruction on the use of verb+noun and adjective+noun collocations through practices of the Lexical Approach. On the other hand, the control group received the same content of the reading course, however they were taught vocabulary conventionally through activities based on synonyms, antonyms and translation of single vocabulary items. A retention judgment test was given to both groups at the end of the experiment. The results of the test revealed that learners in the treatment group outperformed their counterparts in the control group. The study confirmed that teaching collocations in a systematic way aids the retention of these linguistic forms as it can also contribute to improve learners reading comprehension.

Concerning the second category of correlation studies that use collocations to enhance certain language skill and use, the development of different aspects of language proficiency has been related to the acquisition of lexical collocations. The earliest reported experiment is that of Hsu (2002). He examined the effect of teaching lexical collocations on EFL learners' proficiency. To this end, he designed a series of workshops for teaching business English and recruited two groups to measure the effect of the course. An experimental group received extensive classroom practice which meant to raise the participants' awareness of collocations and a control group which was taught the same course on business English in a traditional method (e.g. translation of single vocabulary items, looking for synonyms and antonyms...etc.). The findings of Hsu's study pointed out that explicit teaching of collocation, through awareness-raising activities, correlates with the improvement of EFL learners' proficiency. However,

(2003) Lien was more focused on a specific aspect of language proficiency that the development of learners' collocational knowledge seems to affect. Hence, Lien undertook quasi-experiment-based doctoral research whose aim was to assess the impact of explicit teaching of collocations on reading comprehension in EFL classes. The researcher recruited 85 Taiwanese college students of different academic levels (sophomores, juniors, and seniors). The participants received two types of instruction: vocabulary instruction and collocation instruction. The subjects' corresponding performance was assessed using different reading comprehension-based tests. The findings of the experiment revealed a positive correlation between knowledge of collocation and reading comprehension. In a similar long quasi-experiment but with broader focus, Rahimi and Momeni (2012) investigated the effect of teaching collocations on English language proficiency in general. Accordingly, 60 students were put in two groups. An experimental group, in which the participants were taught vocabulary in different collocational patterns through a battery of corpus-based activities, and a control group in which the participants were taught decontextualized words using techniques such as definition and cross-linguistic comparison. As the five-month experiment ended, both groups took a language proficiency test. The results of the test indicated that the experimental group gained much language proficiency compared to the control one.

As far as the correlation between collocations' use and writing proficiency is concerned, only a handful of quasi experiments, to the time of writing, are reported in the literature. Seesink, (2007) seems to be the first to delve into this area of research. In this respect, her doctoral research examined the effect of explicit teaching of collocations and vocabulary, through online program, on the improvement of EFL learners' writing. The performance of the participants was assessed through a writing test. Results of the test revealed that helping learners develop an increased attention to collocations contributes to improve learners writing proficiency which is characterized by rich use of collocations. In a similar vein, Heidarneshadian, Aliakbari, and Mashhadi (2005) conducted a correlation study in which they recruited a sample of 30 EFL Iranian intermediate students. The participants were pretested on their writing proficiency and, accordingly, they were assigned to two homogeneous groups. The treatment group received activities that helped them notice and store collocations in a number of given different reading passages prior to the writing tasks that the group was given every session. The control group, on the other hand, dealt with the same reading passages without being awareness-raised as to the use

of collocations prior to the same writing tasks that the experimental group did. After twenty sessions of instruction both groups took a posttest of writing. Results of the test revealed that the experimental group's compositions featured an increase in the frequency and variety of collocations as an indicator of proficiency while the compositions of the control group lacked many collocational patterns. The researchers concluded that the use of collocations (in terms of frequency and variety) correlates with proficiency in writing. Recently, Zaabalawi and Gould (2017) assessed the effect of incidental learning of collocations on the frequency of collocational patterns in EFL writing. For this reason, the researchers assigned a total of 70 university students to an experimental and a control group with 35 in each. Prior to the introduction of an intensive instructional course, both groups took a pre-test of writing. They were given two texts to read and asked to reproduce them as accurately as they can. Afterwards, the participants were assigned to an experimental group, in which they received an intensive instruction and practice of collocations over 16 weeks (i.e. 3 hours per week), and a control group in which they received the same content of the intervention but with no focus on collocations at all. At the end of the instructional course both groups re-took the pre-test (as a post-test). The results showed that, compared to the control group, the experimental group developed a skill of retrieving collocations which, in turn, helped them rewrite most of the two texts.

It is noteworthy that the aforementioned results of correlations studies on collocation use are limited to judging learners' collocational competence only on the basis of the extent to which a particular number of acceptable word combinations is used. With the exception of Siyanova (2015), who conducted a longitudinal study (though it is just limited to the use of adjective-noun collocations) to assess the effect of explicit teaching of collocations on the frequency of collocations with high mutual information (MI) scores in the writing output of EFL intermediate learners, little research on how to improve EFL learners collocational accuracy is undertaken. In addition, studies on the collocational accuracy in EFL learners writing, such as those of Biber, 2009; Durrant and Schmitt, 2009; Granger and Bestgen, 2014, are just limited to the examination of certain kinds of lexical collocations, mainly adjective-noun or verb-noun collocations. Thus, no in-depth analysis of the combinatory strength of all of the major lexical collocational patterns is available so far. Furthermore, studies that examine the correlation between explicit teaching of collocations and proficiency in EFL writing only test the effectiveness of an unspecified eclectic instructional course. Though Addallah (2015) adopted the Lexical Approach, his experimental

study is limited to the examination of the relationship between EFL learners' collocational receptive knowledge and the use of the Lexical Approach. That is, no reference is made as to how the use of the Lexical Approach can affect EFL learners' ability to produce accurate collocations with high MI scores. To this end, with the aim of investigating the correlation between the use of the Lexical Approach and the ability to operate on the Idiom Principle in EFL writing, the present study optimizes the main instructional principles of the Lexical Approach to improve EFL learners' production of collocations with high MI scores. Another uniqueness of the current study is that it accounts for the process of acquiring all lexical collocational patterns and discusses low frequency collocations with high strength of association(high MI scores) and certain degrees of arbitrariness would affect the expected idiomaticity in EFL writing.

1.7 The rudiments of collocations

As we have seen earlier in the definition of collocation, what makes two words pair is their frequent co-occurrence within a particular context. However, a mere labeling of a recurrent combination of two words as collocation is inadequate to establish a fair and firm definition of collocation. Notions such as node, collocate, lexical item, cluster, scatter and collocational range are the basic terminology through which the concept of collocation becomes more lucid and is better defined.

To start with, the term **node** refers to the item which is being investigated (Sinclair, 1966; Stubbs, 2001). Similarly, Phillips (1985) defines a node as a lemma whose behavior is under study. Phillips goes further to illustrate that the words *section* and *records* are nodes in utterances such as *Caesarean section* and *break the record*.

As for the term **collocate**, Sinclair (1987) defines a collocate as a term appearing with a node and having the same status of the node since whatever item or lemma considered as a node can be considered as a collocate if it is just put under investigation. In a similar vein, Stubbs (1995) also gives the following similar definition "A collocate is a word form or lemma which co-occurs with a node in a corpus". He goes on and emphasizes "What is node and what is collocate depends on the focus of study" (p.29). To better explain the term collocate, Phillips (1985) exemplifies with the collocations "soaring prices" and "solitary confinement" as having each of the collocates *soaring* and *solitary* respectively with their corresponding nodes *prices* and *confinement*. This means that the terms node and collocate are not exclusively mutual.

The other related term is the **span** , which refers to the total number of the words which occur on the left and right sides of the node .In this respect, Jones and Sinclair (1987) maintains “ the vast majority of a word’s collocational influence is found within a span of four words to its left and right”(pp. 21-22) .This means that if one wants to study the collocational patterns of a particular word s/he has to look at the span of four lexical items occurring before and after the word in question.

In view of the lexical item, Jones and Sinclair demonstrate that for a unit of language to be qualified as a lexical item, it has to be uniquely co-occurring with other lexical patters which altogether present a particular area of meaning. Likewise, kenny (2001) asserts” lexical items are seen first and foremost as subject to collocational patterning, that is, they are characterized by tendency to co-occur with certain items"(73).

Regarding the **cluster**, Sinclair (1991) proposes two ways to measure it. The way in which an item predicts the habitual accompaniment of other items and the way in which others predict it. Thus, we conclude that the term cluster is broader than the term span since the latter refers to the surrounding number of words whereas the former refers to the overall environment of the text.

Concerning the **scatter**, Halliday (1966), as to define the term, gave the following examples: *a strong argument, argued strongly, the strength of his argument* and *his argument was strengthened*. A shown in the examples, what is noticeable here is the lemma *strong* having the scatter *strong, strongly, strength* and *strengthened* which all collocate with the items *argue* and *argument*. Hence, scatter refers to the different parts of speech that a word has as a collocate or, conversely, node of another word.

Last-but not least, the collocational range. According to Spence (1969), the main objective of a longitudinal study of collocation is to try to establish collocational range for words. In this sense, changes of general patterns of word use from one period to another can be revealed through a comparison of collocational ranges in different texts. The collocational range of a particular lexical item, thus, refers to the set of different contexts or situations in which it can occur. To exemplify, the words *big* and *large*, which are not always used interchangeably, can be used as synonyms whenever the collocational range allows in contexts such as describing a house (*big/large house*). However, in contexts where we talk of mistakes it is possible to say *big mistake* but not *large mistake*. (Lyons, 1981). In order to highlight the relation between

collocational range and context, Plamer (2001) seems to have reinforced what Spence (1969) and Lynons (1981) stated earlier. In this respect, Palmer (2001) says “we do not reject specific collocations simply because we have never heard them before - we rely on our knowledge of the range”(79).

To conclude, the terminology discussed above adds more to the precise definition of collocation. Knowing such terms helps to draw a strict line between what is meant by word partnership, such as collocation, and other forms of word-combinations such as idioms, phrasal verbs and free combinations that will all be discussed in details later in this chapter. In addition, thanks to this collocation defining-terminology, studies such as collocational textual analysis and collocational –oriented inquiries came into being.

1.8 The arbitrary nature of restrictions in collocations

We have already asserted that collocation is a group of usually two words that are very likely to habitually co-occur. Such a tendency of frequent association of words can, on the one hand, lead to combinatorial predictability and, on the other hand, establish collocational restrictions on the constituent elements of a collocation. Therefore, understanding the nature of collocational restrictions requires us to look carefully at other kinds of restrictions highlighted in some linguistic theories.

In the work of generative grammar by Chomsky (1965), categorical restrictions and sectional or semantic restrictions have been identified as two types of conventions that govern the relationship between heads (predicates) and complements .In their nature, the former restriction is syntactic whereas the latter is semantic. For instance , the verb *convince* with its semantic properties has an object that is presupposed to be human ,but accepting sentence where the verb *convince* is used with an object other than human being depends on pragmatic factors which means the individual ‘s belief (Mahmoud,2005). However, Woudens (1997) rejects the idea of two types of restrictions, as long as they are sharply distinguishable, and instead argues that the collocation restrictions between heads and complements are dealt with at the individual level. Woudens demonstrates that a native speaker would reject a combination such as *quick food** for collocational reasons and prefer the combination *fast food*, though *quick* and *fast* are synonyms.

The essence of collocational restrictions is the semantic tailoring. That is, the semantic dependency between the predicates and the complements (Allerton, 1984) .The best illustration

is the coupling up of an adjective with a noun as a collocation. Consider the following collocations:

- a. *heavy rain* which means a lot of.
- b. *heavy schedule* which means busy.
- c. *heavy furniture* which means large and solid.
- d. *heavy sigh* which means loud and deep.
- e. *heavy soil* which means wet and sticky.

The adjective *heavy* has different meanings in all of the aforementioned examples due to its co-occurrence with the different nouns it precedes. For this reason, it is the presence of those nouns that determines the semantic properties of the adjective *heavy* (Maurer-Stroh 2004, p.26). Making general statements as rules that conclusively explain the collocational behavior seems to be unworkable. Furthermore, basing the nature of word co-occurrence on only certain syntactic, semantic or pragmatic properties alone will be inappropriate to make generalizations. In this respect, the word “idiosyncratic” is the best term to describe the irregularity and unsystematicity of the nature of the collocational restrictions. As Wouden(1997) states “collocation turned out to refer to that part of the junkyard of linguistics where all relationships between lexical items that do not fit elsewhere in the theory are thrown, never to be looked at by most linguists” (p.54).

In brief, it can be said that the relation that governs the co-occurs of a particular word with another seems to be arbitrary⁹ since it remains, in many instances, beyond each of the semantic, syntactic or pragmatic properties of language to predict or explain the collocational behavior of many words. Therefore, the acceptability of a given word combination as a collocation can only be subject to native speakers’ judgment and the only available and valid reference is the native speakers’ mental lexicon.

1.9 Taxonomy of collocations

Since many of the definitions of collocation range from phraseological and frequency-based approach to narrow and broad explanations of the nature of the habitual co-occurrence of words, various classifications of collocations have been made through investigating the degree of its restriction, the syntactic categories of its constituent elements as well as the different

⁹ The arbitrary nature of the restricted co-occurrence of words as collocation comes from the conventionally and socially sanctioned nature of lexis itself, i.e. the holistic storage of language by its native speakers leads to the holistic retrieval of language in chunks. (see chapter three)

register in which collocations occur . The following is the most common classifications of collocation:

1.9.1 Lexical Vs grammatical collocations (syntactically-based classification)

Based on his definition of collocation, Benson (1989) classifies collocation into different categories: grammatical collocation and lexical collocation .While the former includes a main word (noun, verb, adjective) combined with a grammatical item usually a preposition or particle (e.g. of, with ...etc.), the latter is comprised of only lexical items (content words) and does not encompass any grammatical element (linkers).Lexical collocations according to Benson (1989) are more difficult to learn than grammatical ones. Benson et al., (1997)¹⁰ further divided lexical collocation into six subcategories.

1.9.1.1 Lexical collocations:

The following is a table that illustrates the six two-word lexical collocation types put forwards by Benson et al., (1997).

Table 1.1
Types of lexical collocations

| Type | Example |
|---|---|
| 1. Verb + noun (implying the creation of something) or Verb + noun (implying eradication) | -make an impression -lift a blockade |
| 2. Adjective + noun | -strong tea |
| 3. Noun+ verb | - war broke out |
| 4. Noun +of + noun (explaining quantities or degrees) | - a pride of lions |
| 5. Adverb + adjective | - acutely aware |
| 6. Adverb verb / Verb +adverb | - deeply regret |

¹⁰ Bensons et al.'s (1997) classification of collocations is the most widely used categorization in many studies on collocations such as those by Ali aboulgasem (2012); Shamsudin, Sadoughvanini and Zaid (2013); Alsulayyi (2015).

As table (1.1) demonstrates, lexical collocations consist mainly of the four main content words: nouns, adjectives, verbs and adverbs. Along the same lines, Lewis (1997) in a dictionary he published “the LTP dictionary of selected collocations” categorized lexical collocations similarly. However, he narrowed them down into five types: adjective + noun (golden opportunity) , verb+ noun (to undermine confidence) , noun +verb (a fight broke out) ,adverb +adjective (highly desirable) and verb + adverb (deny categorically) .Thus , Lewis excludes noun +of + noun collocations and maintained the rest of the Benson s’ (1997) categorizations of lexical collocations .

Likewise, O'Dell and McCarthy (2008) suggest the same six types of collocations put forwards by Benson (1997). Discussion of the combinatory nature of some of lexical collocations appears in different publications. According to the BBI Combinatory Dictionary of English: A guide to word Combination (1996), most of lexical collocations in English are in nature repeatedly co-occurring combinations of the form verb + noun. For example, the verb *to commit* can only be used with a limited number of nouns that denote crimes or wrongdoings such as *suicide, murder, adultery*, etc. As argued by Benson (1997), verbs (mainly transitive) that are used in such lexical collocations are of two kinds: ones that suggest the creation of something (e.g. *come to an agreement, make an impression, compose music...etc.*) and others which convey the meaning of the activation of something (e.g. *set an alarm, fly a kite, launch a miss...etc.*).As for lexical collocations which consist of noun and verb combinations, the verb usually describes an action that is typically performed by the noun, e.g. *sheep bleat, blizzards rage*. Lexical collocations which include a combination of two nouns joined by the preposition *of* can suggest either a single member from a group such as *a swarm of bees , a pride of lions , a herd of sheep ...etc. ,* or (with uncountable nouns) “the specific, concrete, small unit of something larger, more general: *a bit (piece) of advice, an article of clothing, an act of violence*, etc. “ (Benson, Benson, & Ison, 1996, p .XXI). According to Oxford Collocations Dictionary for Students of English (2002), this kind of lexical collocations (adjective+ noun) is labeled as “quantifier +noun : *beam / ray of light*” (p, ix).

Another explanation of lexical collocations’ types is related to combinations which usually consist of either adverb + adjective collocations or adverb +verb. On intensifying adverbs that collocate with specific words, McCarthy and O'Dell (2005) maintain “In English

there are lots of other ways of saying *very* or *very much*. For example, we can use words such as *highly, utterly, bitterly, deeply*. These alternatives collocate strongly with specific words, and other combinations often sound unnatural “(p, 16). In 2008, O'Dell and McCarthy expended their definition of this type of collocations by giving further account of intensifying adverbs. In this respect they state “Adverbs are often used before adjectives or verbs either to strengthen their meaning (intensifying adverbs) or to weaken it (softening adverbs)¹¹, e.g. her comment were *deeply offensive* (intensifier-*very/extremely*). Her comments were *slightly offensive*. (softener-*a little bit*) ”(p.20).

1.9.1.2 Grammatical collocations:

As for the grammatical collocations which are usually of the form main words (noun, adjective or verb)+ grammatical structure such as “to-infinitive” or “that-clause”, Bahns (1993) argues that grammatical collocations are in nature a combination of a noun or verb or an adjective and a particle. In a similar vein, Benson (et al., 1997) suggests eight major subcategories. The following table demonstrates them:

Table 1.2
Types of grammatical collocations

| Type | Example |
|------------------------------|--|
| 1. Noun + preposition | - Apathy towards him. |
| 2. Noun + to-infinitive | - They felt a compulsion to do it. |
| 3. Noun + that-clause | - We reached an agreement that she would represent us. |
| 4. Preposition +Noun | - Beforehand. |
| 5. Adjective + to-infinitive | - Glad to hear. |
| 6. Adjective + that-clause | - We are aware that the prices will soar. |
| 7. Adjective + Preposition | - They are fond of gymnastics . |

¹¹ Adverb-comprised collocations that are investigated in this study include intensifying adverbs. In turn, this study excludes the ones which Granger (1993) terms as “all-round amplifier par excellence”, namely, the word *very* which is, according to him, overused by EFL learners.

1.9.2 Open Vs restricted collocations

According to Cowie and Howarth (1996) collocations are of two types: open collocations and restricted collocations. The open collocations refer to a combination of words in which its constituent elements are freely paired. In other words, the comprising parts of the collocation are used literally. For example, the collocation *fill the sink* is an open collocation since we can use the verb *fill* with a variety of words to mean the same thing: to make something full of something else. Such a kind of collocations is described as “open” because according to Carter and McCarthy (1988) “they are open to partnership with a wide range of items ” (p. 26). Thus, open collocations can be structurally modified in the sense that the constituent elements can be syntactically related to each other in various ways. That is, grammatical collocations allow structural variation (Bartsch, 2004). According to Carter (1987), a collocation is unrestricted if one of its constituent elements can collocate freely with a wide range of lexical items. For example the verb *to take* can be used with a long list of words to form combinations such as *take a look / holiday/ rest/ letter / walk...etc.*(as cited in Martynska,2004). In contrast, restricted or fixed collocations are those combinations whose one of their components is used in a no-literal meaning, e.g. the collocation *vested interest*. This kind of collocations resembles, to a great extent, idioms since both of them have a sense of figurativeness in common. Restricted collocations, as opposed to open ones, are arbitrary, stored and retrieved as wholes (Howarth, 1996). For Carter (1987), restricted collocations have different degrees of fixedness as they are also rare in English, for instance the combinations *stinking rich* and *blithering idiot*. Therefore, in this type of collocations the occurrence of one item requires the presence of another.

As a medium- restriction type of collocation, semi -restricted collocations include an item which collocates with a limited number of other lexical items. To demonstrate this, Carter gives the example of the verb *harbor* which can only collocate with a certain number of words such as *uncertainty, doubt, suspicion* and *grudge*.

1.9.3 Strong Vs weak collocations

Under this subheading, a continuum of collocational strength is used to classify collocations. Strong collocations hence are those when the frequency of the co-occurrence of the constituent elements is high, i.e. the use of one word necessitates the presences of another. For instance, the word *mitigating* virtually co-occurs with the words *factors* or *circumstances*.

However, weak collocations are formed by those words which co-occur with a large number of other words .e.g. *broad agreement, broad avenue, broad view, broad smile, broad accent*, etc.

Most collocations in English fall into the category of mid position on the continuum of strong collocations on one extreme and weak collocation on the other. The adjective *picturesque*, for instance, is expected to be in company with words such as *town, location* and *village* (O'Dell & McCarthy, 2008). It is noteworthy that this type of collocations, to a great extent, resembles unrestricted collocations (open collocations) since they are closely related to free combinations, whereas restricted collocations on the other hand can be said to be strong collocations since they are closely related to idioms. In other words, the similarity between those types of collocations lies in the fact that the meaning each type conveys can be literal, semi-literal or idiomatic.

In a similar vein, Lewis (2000) classified collocations along the same continuum of strength, but this time such a categorization of collocations is pedagogically based. Lewis suggests the following four types of collocations: unique collocations, strong collocations, medium-strength collocations and weak collocations. Unique collocations refers to a combination of words in which one of its item cannot be used with any other word, for example, the collocation *shrugging the shoulders*. The uniqueness here lies in the fact that we shrug only our shoulders and not any other parts of the body. The second type of collocation, strong collocation, is not unique in its nature since one part of the collocation can collocate with certain words. For example, we can say *trenchant criticism, trenchant remark* and *trenchant view*. Medium-strength collocations are the third type of Lewis's classification of collocation which he strongly recommends its teaching/learning in order to enrich learners' mental lexicon. Examples of this kind of collocations are *to hold a conversation, to make a mistake* and *a major operation*. However, collocations such as *white shirt* and *red wine* are instances of the fourth type known as weak collocations. According to Lewis, weak collocations are easy to learn since their collocates are very predictable, i.e. unrestricted.

1.9.4 Technical Vs academic collocations

Since each of the English for Specific Purposes (ESP) and General English (GP) register has its own special collocations. The latter is classified according to the register they are commonly used in. Technical collocations are not the same as lexical and grammatical collocations in the sense that the former are used in ESP-related fields through which learners acquire specific language use, whereas the later refers to the collocations that are expected to be

used by all learners of English and in both registers, i.e. ESP and GE. Thus, technical collocations are a good index of how General English differs from English for specific purposes.

Fuentes (2001), on the degree of technicality in collocations, argues “the level of technicality in word behavior is closely related to subject domain...The salient condition is that elements function uniquely in their corresponding field, describing the restricted setting”(p.118). Supporting his view, Fuentes gives examples from the field of computer science: The word *network*, for instance, appears in combinations like *U-network*, *access network* and *local area network* in the aforementioned field of science only. He goes further to use the term semi-technical word combinations to describe free collocations that are used in different registers as in the combinations: *information system*, *information technology* and *digital information*.

In short, technical collocations, as opposed to academic ones, are formed by words that co-occur in a particular subject domain and whose meaning is exclusive to the specialized knowledge of that particular subject area.

1.10 Collocations and the theory of phraseology

The realm of phraseology has its origin in the Russian Traditional School for studying language in combinations. According to Ginzburg (as cited in Cowie, 1998, p. 214), in the Soviet tradition phraseological units are defined as non-motivated word groups that are reproduced as ready-made expressions but cannot be freely or randomly made up in speech. Therefore, multi-word units can be classified according to two criteria based on the semantic opacity of such combinations: The degree of the literal meaning of words and the degree of fixedness of the constituent elements of the combination.

According to Cowie (1998), there are three distinctions between multi-word combinations: Phraseological-fusions, phraseological unities, and phraseological combinations (or collocations). Phraseological-fusions are semantically opaque and unmotivated combinations that are almost always structurally fixed. This definition is identical to that of idioms. Phraseological unities refer to phrases that are partially motivated and semantically considered as wholes. The meaning in such combinations is transparent and can be related to its original meaning that is extended by metaphor. A good example of this kind can be the expression *to blow off steam*. Phraseological combinations as we mentioned earlier mean collocations. They refer to two open-class words in which one word retains its literal meaning whereas the other expresses a figurative sense, e.g. *meet the demand*, where the word *demand* maintains its literal

meaning but the word *meet* here is figuratively used. In this context, modern phraseologists seem to have upheld the same categorization but in different terminology. Mel’cuk (1998) updates his view on collocation as pairs of words that have a dictionary meaning. However, he goes further and argues that the meaning in this case cannot be replaced by any synonym of the paired word. For instance, the word *strong* cannot be replaced by *powerful* in the combination *strong coffee*. In addition, such meaning is bound by the paired word and, as a result, specific to it.

Howarth (1998), in analysing verb-noun sequences, suggests five degrees of restricted collocations. At the first level there is a freedom of substituting the noun, but there is some restrictions on the choice of the verb .e.g. *adopt a suggestion* or *recommendation*. In contrast and at the second level, the verb can be substituted but the choice of the noun is committed to some restrictions (e.g. *take/pay heed*). At the third level, both elements (noun and verb) can allow for some substitution with a particular number of synonyms (e.g. *introduce/table/bring forward a bill/an amendment*). At the fourth level, the choice of the verb is subject to a full restriction, but some substitution of the noun is permitted (e.g. *give the appearance/impression*). At the fifth level, the choice of both elements is fully restricted .In other words, neither the noun nor the verb can be replaced by any synonyms (e.g. *to curry favour*).

In brief, the essence of this phraseological approach is the interface between the criteria of semantic opacity and fixedness that both underline the definition and phraseological behavior of collocations.

1.11 Collocations and similar concepts

Multi-word units are a large area to investigate .Collocation, as a basic definition, is the habitual co-occurrence of two or more words in a particular context. However, not any frequent combination is termed as collocation. The coupling up of words in a specific combination seems to have different terminology, different nature and different uses .Therefore to understand the uniqueness of the term collocation, we are going to look closely at the relationship between collocation and similar combinations such as idioms, phrasal verbs, compounds and colligations.

1.11.1 Collocations, idioms and phrasal verbs

Lewis (2000) in his book “Teaching Collocation: Further Developments in the Lexical Approach” defines the nature of relation among collocation ,idiomatic expressions and phrasal verbs as follows “In one sense all collocation is idiomatic and all idioms and phrasal verbs are

collocations -predictable combinations of different kinds”(p.50). Following Lewis’ claim, these terms seem to be used interchangeably .Hence, it is worthwhile to shed light on how they relate.

Given that idioms and phrasal verbs include words that are combined together like collocations, an idiom is a group of words whose meaning is not literal. Similarly , a phrasal verb is a combination that includes a verb plus a particle whose meaning, most of the time, cannot be guessed from neither the verb nor the particle itself .It is rare that the meaning of idioms and phrasal verbs can be understood depending on the literal meaning of their constituent elements .i.e. combinations as such have metaphoric meaning .The same thing goes for collocations whose meaning is often idiomatic and figurative(Gledhill, 2000).Notwithstanding the fact that in restricted collocations only one element is used in a non-literal sense , in idioms all the component elements are used in a non-literal meaning (Nesselhauf,2003) . Along the same lines , Aisenstadt (1979) exemplifies that difference by showing that the verb *to face* can form a number of combinations of different labels: “*face the problem , face the truth , face the facts , face the circumstance and face the music*”(p.71) . She explains that what differs restricted collocations from idioms is the possibility of deducing the meaning of the whole from the meaning of the parts .In other words , collocations ,semantics-wise, are composed from the transparent meaning of their constituent elements which can be drawn on to predict the meaning of the whole combination . In contrast, idioms have their constituent parts unique in meaning. Thus, it is very unlikely to guess the meaning of the whole combination on the basis of the individual meaning of its components. Accordingly, the combination *face the music* is an idiom since it is unique in meaning. In *Oxford Advanced Learners’ Dictionary* 8th edition, this idiom (*face the music*) means to accept and deal with criticism or punishment for something you have done, whereas the rest of the aforementioned combinations are restricted collocations.

In short, collocations are "sequences of lexical items which habitually co-occur, but which are nonetheless fully transparent in the sense that each lexical constituent is also a semantic constituent “(Cruse, 1986, p.40), while idioms refer to "an expression whose meaning cannot be inferred from the meaning of its parts" (p.37).

1.11.2 Collocations and free combinations

In theory, both of the above terms resemble each other but in reality they are not. According to Benson (as cited in Ilson, 1985), the most reliable discriminating criteria between collocations and free combinations are restricted commutability and the frequency of co-

occurrence. Differently put, free combinations are the most frequently used multi-word units and their constituents can be paired freely with a tremendous range of words. To illustrate this, Benson gives the following items: the noun *murder* can be used with a lot of verbs such as *describe*, *condemn*, *report*, *analyze* and *film*. Likewise, these verbs can in return occur with many nouns such as *accident*, *experience* and *adventure*. To reiterate Benson's words, collocations are:

... loosely fixed pairings between free combinations and idioms. For example, *commit murder* is not an idiom, because the meaning of the whole reflects the meaning of the constituents. Moreover, the word combination is also different from free combinations in two ways. Firstly, *perpetrate* seems to be only verbal synonym which can replace *commit*. Secondly, and most importantly, the combination *commit murder* is used more frequently (p.254).

In sum, the elements forming free combinations are not specifically bound to each other since they can be freely replaced with other lexical items. As a result, free combinations are a sequence of words unified and grouped together only and only by the general rules of syntax which is not the case for collocations. As a distinguished definition, collocations fall somewhere in the middle between the two extremes, i.e. they are, on the one hand, characterized by the syntagmatic restrictions of idioms in which substitutionality is not possible and, on the other hand, they are semantically transparent which is typical of free combinations. Therefore, it can be said that the degree of the semantic opacity of the constituent parts of collocations is a yardstick by which we measure how closely collocation is to other kinds of word combinations.

1.12 Collocations and semantic prosody

We have earlier seen that Firth's original notion of collocation, as the habitual co-occurring of words together, has been confirmed in different scholars' publications. The concept of semantic prosody seems to compete against that of collocation in view of the nature of meaning that is made as one word (node) couples with another (collocate) in a particular field of meaning.

The notion discourse or semantic prosody came to light by Sinclair (1991) and later developed and reintroduced by Louw (1993). This concept is seen as the concern of connotation studies which is part of traditional approach to semantics (Mcenery & Hardie, 2012). Sinclair (1991) argues that there is a tendency for words and phrases to occur in certain semantic

environment which determines their nature of meaning. To illustrate his point, Sinclair gives the example of the verbs *cause* and *set in* which are used in association with unpleasant negative things such as in the collocations the *setting in of rot*, and the *causing of accident*. Louw (1993) poetically defines semantic prosody as the following “a consistent aura of meaning with which a form is imbued by its collocates” (p.157). He goes on to argue that the habitual collocates of a particular word can add more to its meaning so that it can no more be seen isolated from its semantic environment . Louw also maintains that the semantic prosodies of a particular expression are responsible for explaining certain stylistic effect such as irony.

Not much different from what Sinclair (1991) and Louw(1993) have pointed out, Partington (1998) contends that semantic prosody is synonymous with the way we express pleasant or unpleasant connotation as we pair a word with its corresponding collocates .In this respect, he states “Often a favorable or unfavorable connotation is not contained in a single item, but is expressed by that item in association with others, with its collocates (p. 66). In other words, the concept of semantic prosody explains the occurrence of a word in association with a certain set of meaning either negative or positive. Such collocational phenomenon which acquires certain guilt by word association is described by Stubbs (1995) as follows “some word (e.g. *to cause*) have a predominantly negative prosody, a few (e.g.*to provide*) have a positive prosody, many words are neutral in this respect, but all words are restricted in the collocates with which they occur (p.176) .

The equation between positive/negative connotations and semantic prosody seems to have been accounted for differently by Hoey (2000). In this scope, he takes the concept of semantic prosody a step forward and suggests “if *cause* and *happen* have semantic prosody with negative events, it follows that we should talk of *train* as having a semantic prosody with *occupations* rather than collocating with them .Of course, this semantic prosody will include many items that are also collocations, but what makes the notion so useful and important is that it cannot be subsumed by its collocations “(p. 5).

Following the line of Hoey’s arguments, it is necessary to account for the relationship between nodes and collocates linguistically by reviewing the semantic field associated with the node rather than particular collocates merely reported by corpus. Notwithstanding, semantic prosody has been an object of criticism at some levels. For instance, Hunston (2007) asserts that semantic prosody may be restricted to particular registers where the semantic prosodies of a

particular item are associated with a particular phraseology. Thus, any change of the phraseology around the item may result in a change in the semantic prosody too. Furthermore, some other grammatical and semantic features alongside the node may require the presence of a semantic prosody. To back up his point Huston gives the following example. The word *persistent* has a negative prosody only as an attributive adjective and the word *cause* tends to lose its usual negative prosody in contexts that do not refer to human beings.

In brief, semantic prosody can be a more general concept. Hence, Louw (2000) updates his definition of semantic prosody to refer to a meaning that is established through a set of consistent collocates that bear a particular negative/positive connotations and whose primary function is to express its user's attitude pragmatically. In a similar vein, Lewis (2000) acknowledges that the notion of semantic prosody is broader than the notion of collocation since there are many collocations in each prosody. For instance, the word *chilly* is meant to be used in association with words such as *day, night, evening* and *morning* but not with the words *minute* and *decade* as to express a prosody of time. Moreover, pedagogically put, semantic prosodies facilitate the learning of vocabulary since they are powerful generalizations for language learners. Therefore, he emphasizes:

The arbitrary gaps in what we might expect by generalization can cause problems for learners. Mc Carthy and O'Dell may not reflect the semantic prosodies of the words they seek to teach, but at least they are encouraging the learners to ask the right questions. You would scan the pages of most of my language course-books in vain for the slightest hint that words have semantic prosodies (p.232).

1.13 Conclusion

In the light of what we have discussed earlier, it is obvious that the controversial account of what constitutes a conclusive definition of collocation is prompted by the nature of language itself. Given that language is not a combination of words merely joined together by grammar rules, it is instead a combination of chunks. Crudely put, the holistic and arbitrary nature of language seems to position itself as the only explanation of having no rules that account for which word should pair with which. Such major shift in our view of the nature of language raises important questions as to how a foreign language should be taught preserving the arbitrary lexical nature of language. This, in turn, will be the main theme of the next chapter.

Chapter Two

The Lexical Approach towards Effective Language Acquisition

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2.1 Introduction

Traditional approaches to second language acquisition called for much focus on the syntactic area of language and overlooked the role of lexis. In rebuttal, advocates of the phraseological view of language confirmed that the long-unnoticed role of lexis has proven to have a generative power of language. Michael Lewis, the founding father of the lexical approach, revolutionized the world of EFL by qualifying lexis as the main tool for effective language acquisition. Correspondingly, his approach encourages an increased attention to lexis as central to the nature of language and the process of learning itself. To this end, this chapter sets out to give insights into the theoretical and methodological underpinnings of this approach. To better understand the principles of this approach, this chapter starts by shedding light on the nature of language and the holistic process of acquisition. It also gives an account of the role of lexis according to the main linguistic theories. Contextualizing the role of lexis in SLA, we will be also defining the lexical approach and giving a detailed account of its main principles. The pedagogical value of responding to errors according to this approach is also discussed. Additionally, the main strategies for teaching collocations are also presented in conjunction with a set of considerations that are related to the selection of classroom materials. A critical appraisal of the lexical approach is also presented. This chapter concludes with an overview of the significance of collocations as an organizing principle in the lexical approach syllabus.

2.2 Lexicon and the holistic nature of language

For many decades, L2 teaching /learning has slavishly put the mastery of grammar rules and the perfect memorisation of decontextualized vocabulary (word lists) at the centre of the process. Lexis, fixed and semi-fixed chunks, have all been something of a Cinderella. The salience of vocabulary in language perception and production is unquestionable. As Wilkins puts “without grammar little can be conveyed, without vocabulary nothing can be conveyed (as cited in Lewis, 1997, p.16). Along the same lines, Krashen maintains “when students travel they do not carry grammar books, they carry dictionaries” (as cited in Lewis,1993,p.ii). Therefore, to understand the formulaic nature of language it is worthwhile to, first, cast light on the role of lexis as a defining and organising principle of language.

It has long been held that language is governed by grammar rules. As results, it makes what we say or write as a sequence of individual words combined together in different structures.

Accordingly, grammar was considered the main focus in any attempt to learn or teach L2 since it contains elements of the generative system of language. Hill (as cited in Lewis, 1997) tells his first experience in teaching English where grammar was so much prioritised. He describes “we were encouraged to think of grammar as the bones of the language, and vocabulary as the flesh to be added” (p.47). The over emphasis that grammar received, and regrettably still receives in many foreign language classes, has led the ability of having good command of L2 to be equated with the mastery of grammar rules. As Hill, on the dominance of grammar in curricula, clearly puts “grammar is what always made English as school subject”(as cited in Lewis,1993,p.ii).

We have to bear in mind, therefore, those earlier claims that the over emphasised breaking down of language into grammatically governed constituents to prove that grammar is the generative system of language overlooked the existence of the sheer numbers of ready-made chunks and expressions in any language. On the grounds that they seem to be unanalyzable into constituent elements, lexical chunks were seen as peripheral. Strands that prioritise grammar over lexis are hair-splitting and have proved to be theoretically defective and practically unsound. By the advent of corpus linguistics and Sinclair’s COBUILD project in 1987 a major shift marked theories that describe the nature of language and called for effective ways for acquiring the L2. To this end, many linguists dismissed claims from traditional approaches, mainly that of Chomsky in 1950s; and instead advocated more finely tuned views. In 1993 and with the emergence of the book “The Lexical Approach: The State of EFL and a Way Forward”, new description of language was pedagogically suggested. As Lewis (1993) holds “Many grammar mistakes are caused by lexical deficiency. Take lexis seriously ...it is a much richer concept which we have not exploited in the past. The Lexical Approach is a radical change of emphasis “(p.193).

Lewis the founding father of the Lexical Approach has been clear and firm in his claims. He puts lexis, as a wider concept than vocabulary¹², at the centre of any account of the nature of language. Therefore, he states “language consists of grammaticalized lexis not lexicalised grammar” (p.89). This means that, lexis is the most defining element and the organizational principle in language and not what has traditionally been credited to grammar. Besides, the pervasiveness of lexical items in naturally occurring language proved wrong the labelled view of

¹²Lexis and vocabulary are different terms in the sense that the former refers to a combination of words while the latter refers to individual items.

lexis as “filler-to the slots” which are provided by different grammatical frames. It is rather the grammatical information which is encoded in the different kinds of lexical chunks and the role this information plays is to combine and coordinate different prefabs in longer stretches of language. Hill (as cited in Lewis,1997) again is in favour of how Lewis views grammar. In this respect, he reveals “the more we have become aware of language as a predominantly lexical phenomenon, the more we know that many of our previously cherished structuralist ideas are false” (p.48-49).

Lexis is the core of language and understanding the nature of the lexicon is a matter of investigating the nature of language itself (Lewis,1993). On the pervasiveness of formulaic utterances as an intrinsic feature of native-speaker language, McCarthy (1991) shows that a native speaker has at his disposal a larger repository of pre-fabricated chunks that he recalls for use in different ways and situations. This claim has been extended by what Nattinger and Decarrico (1992) report to be at the very centre of language acquisition and the focus of more related recent research. According to them, when native speakers produce language they rely heavily on retrieving the already stored multi-word units more than generating language from scratch. In other words, chunks in language serve as a shortcut and an economising factor to language production. To elucidate the holistic nature of language, Cowie (1998) points out that though the items which are produced and processed by native speakers can be broken down into constituent elements, native speakers have an increased tendency and preference to retain those elements in their unanalyzable form. Hence, formulaic language is very pervasive on every occasion and in many aspects of interaction. In line with Cowie claim, Wray (2002) acknowledges that most of everyday speech or writing is in nature formulaic language that is stored in our memory as fixed and semi-fixed chunks ready for retrieval and use. It means that this formulaicity of language serves as a viable option a native speaker heavily relies on to communicate properly. In this scope, Wray sets herself to prove that modern linguistic theories have failed to notice or, if any, account for the undoubted latency of chunks in language. She then reiterates “their wide existence is an embarrassment for certain modern theories of linguistics, which have unashamedly pushed them aside and denied their undoubted significance” (p.4). Wray goes on to say:

It is proposed that formulaic language is more than a static corpus of words and phrases which we have to learn in order to be fully linguistically competent. Rather, it is a dynamic response to the demands of language in use (p.5)

Given that a great deal of everything we hear, speak or write has been found to be comprising of lexical chunks: 52% of spoken (Erman & Warren, 2000) and 40% of written discourse (Howarth,1998), for Hill such production and processing of language is not achieved by using our brain space to focus on the forms of words, but instead by recalling chunks stored in our mental lexicon just like the way we effortlessly extract an address or a phone number from our memory (as cited in Lewis,1997). As living proof of the large lexical repertoire of chunks that we use daily, if we look back on the same story that we told or a lecture that we delivered more than once we will without a doubt come to know that the whole ideas and content are expressed using the same chunks of language (Peters, 1983).

As we have discussed in the previous chapter, the arbitrary nature of lexis, namely, collocation is what makes most of the nature of language as a compilation of different word-combinations of various lengths. Lexical collocation, if we consider it as an example of the major components of the native speakers' mental lexicon, comprises the lion's share of all kinds of chunks, simply because the constituent elements of collocation are arbitrary in nature. In other words, language is the outcome of speech community conventions and it is for this reason institutionalised and agreed upon in terms of word choice. Therefore for Lewis (1993), lexical chunks make language actual, very likely and standard, in natural occurrence, as opposed to what has traditionally been championed by structuralists as theoretically possible language.

Since language is a social phenomenon more than individually defined, Coulmas (as cited in Wray, 2002) admits that in many daily social situations and with many friends there are recurrent words and phrases that we are very likely to use. Thus, as pointed out earlier, if we follow the line of structuralism arguments and try to generate possible sentences in parallel with the supposed rules of native speaker competence then the outcome is downright odd language (Lewis, 1997). It is worthwhile to consider native-like selection as to highlight the difference between what we could say and what we do really say. On the conventional and arbitrary nature of the lexicon Lewis explains "lexical items are socially sanctioned independent units. Many are words, but many consist of multi-word units" (p.90). Lewis (1993) also highlights the

pedagogical value of his approach whose focal point is intrinsic to the lexical nature of language itself. He states:

The Lexical Approach invites readers to dismiss, or at least radically de-emphasise materials and procedures which violate either the nature of language or the nature of learning. It is positive suggestions to make about the nature and role of lexis, different attitudes to text (p.i×)

Beside the arbitrariness of lexis which results in instinctively memorized chunks of language, in 2009 Kapatsinki and Radickers found that the more sequences of language are frequently encountered the more they are likely to become chunked or fused over time. That is, the degree to which a particular group of words is commonly used is responsible for forming chunks in language. It is, however, wise to suggest that what Kapatsinki and Radickers concluded does not mean that the constituent elements are no longer meaningfully present within the chunk (the whole) , but instead they are simply becoming less salient as we perceive or produce language in a holistic way. Arnon and Cohen (as cited in Siyanova, 2015) take the analysis of the holistic storage of language a step further. Their investigation does not only confirm the effect of formulaic sequences frequency in language production, but also contributes to further our understanding of how the parts link to the whole and how the former gains prominence within larger chunks. Arnon and Cohens' study tested the hypothesis that the effect of individual words disappears if three-word units are stored holistically. If otherwise, their hypothesis holds, we should then acknowledge the reduced but significant effect of individual word frequency and a higher phrasal frequency effect. The conclusion, those researchers arrived at, implies that recurrent usages can ensure a rising prominence of information carrying multi-word units. Thus, it is noteworthy to point out the fact that although some studies, such as that of Sprenger, Levelt and Kempen (2006), argued against the holistic storage and processing of language, the productivity of chunking in language has also been overlooked. Some of the recent approaches to ready-made expressions view idioms (as an example of formulaic language) as fragmented lexical entries (Durrant, 2008). In this respect, Wray (2008) challenges such approaches and lends further support to the existing evidence for the holistic processing of idiomatic expressions. She proposed a model of idiom processing: if the participants are to listen or read idioms contextlessly, it should not be surprising that those participants tend to use idioms in a way different from how they would attend to them in naturalistic settings. The implication of

Wray's model has is that language labs of testing experiments and psycholinguistic and clinical procedures may prompt, by chance, the participants' analytical strategies. In turn, it becomes unclear, if not, a failure to accurately measure the effects of holistic processing.

While we assume that the aforementioned effect of those factors is true, investigating language as it naturally occurs is, by all accounts, the most reliable methodology to build upon our understanding. Differently put, a recent confirming experiment by Foster (2001) examined the processing of lexical bundles (e.g. *at the disposal of, in the light of ...etc.*). It was reported that four lexical units and individual words occurrence can significantly affect the participants' responses. Based on such findings, the researchers concluded that frequent lexical bundles are restricted compositionally. Likewise, more recently, Siyanova et al (2011) stresses that in on-line processing of formulaic sequences, language users notice, learn and store frequency and probability information that phrasal units contain. This, as results, sends us back to the idea that we discussed earlier about the prominence of chunks as more information-carrying linguistic elements. In sum, it should be noted that most of the aforementioned studies, whose aim is to provide practical evidence for the holistic nature of language in both storage and retrieval, have focused on the central role that frequency plays in natural language processing. Because language users are highly sensitive to the frequencies of linguistic features packed in their experiences, language processing as such is, therefore, according to Ellis (2002) a prompt to display frequency based language forms.

In the light of what Ellis maintains, we come to the conclusion that as Forster (1976) asserts, frequencies of occurrence is the driving force behind the organisation of the lexicon. Furthermore, if we consider that whenever we recall a particular linguistic element (word or phrase) from our memory, it is believed that as result of such retrieving nodes are activated in the lexicon and thus the representation of this linguistic element in the mental lexicon is affected by the frequencies of activation (Croft & Cruse, 2004).

2.3 Lexis in linguistic theories

The role of lexical chunks in simplifying the process of language learning/teaching has been widely discussed in some second language acquisition (SLA) theories. Noticeably, in generative linguistics, there are some premises that highlighted the prominent role of the phraseological behaviour of certain items in the linguistic system we use.

Cook and Newson (1997) state that many structuralists, namely Chomsky (1980), confirmed that the lexical properties of language help in deciphering meanings of words, their morphological form and their structural behavior. The contextual and cultural load of chunks inspired Chomsky later to adopt a lexis-based position to rethink his transformational generative assumptions. Another language theorist who acknowledges the role of lexical bundles in language acquisition is a prominent advocate of the constructive theory of language: Ellis (2003) explains that the frequent occurring of items can effectively and independently represent regularly constructing patterns. Ellis goes further and argues that this usage based-stance suggests that acquiring the grammatical system is a bit-by bit process of learning a huge number of constructs within their frequency -based abstract regularities. This implies that identifying regularities can, perhaps be via the habit of testing hypothesis, ensure the acquisition of grammar in a high frequency constructs. Therefore, lexis provides useful information that can help demystifying the learning process as it can also contribute enormously to discovering syntax. The latter then became an integral part of the lexical nature of language in general more than in what was traditionally held as a rule-governed language. As Ellis (2003) puts:

Since the late 1960s, theories of grammar have increasingly put more syntax into the lexicon, and correspondingly less into rules. The result is that lexical specifications now include not only a listing of the particular constructions that the word can appear in, but also the relative likelihood of their occurrence (p. 84).

Less than a decade ago, a number of scholars (e.g. Conklin & Schmitt, 2008; N. C. Ellis, Simpson-Vlach & Maynard, 2008; Millar, 2010) pointed out the significance of a lexis –based linguistic theory and strongly recommended an increased attention to lexis whose crucial role in increasing L2 proficiency has been empirically proved. Hence, emphasizing the major contribution of the lexical views to the major detailed accounts by linguistic theories highlights the urgent need for a well-defined systematic approach to guide the teaching/learning process. The Lexical Approach, as a result, was developed to meet such a need.

2.4 Making sense of the Lexical Approach

In the light of the holistic lexical nature of language and the prominence of lexical chunks in natural language use at the expense of individual words and grammatical frames, it becomes a must for pedagogical reasons to bring into the L2 teachers and learners' focus the idea that lexical chunks lie at the centre of the process of L2 acquisition. Such trend gave rise to a tailor-

made teaching practice commonly known as the Lexical Approach. But, before we define this approach, it is wise to hint at the difference between the term approach and the interchangeably, but falsely, used concept of method.

2.4.1 The difference between approach and method

Antony (as cited in Richards and Rodgers, 2001) is the first to draw a borderline between what a philosophy of foreign language teaching holds and what a set of related procedures and practices for teaching language necessitates. He then states “an approach is a set of correlative assumptions dealing with the nature of language teaching and learning. He goes on to say “an approach is axiomatic. It describes the nature of the subject matter to be taught” (p.21). This means that an approach is a defining theory of how language can be best learnt and taught, whereas a method is a decision and a practical plan that puts theory into practice. In this respect, Antony adds “a method is an overall plan for the orderly presentation of language material, no part of which contradicts, all of which is based upon, the selected approach” (p.19).

In brief, an approach has to psychologically and cognitively account for the nature of language and the conditions involved in the successful process of its learning and teaching. Thus, it is “not arbitrary but... philosophical principles-to do with the nature of language, psychological principles -to do with the nature of learning...and socio-political educational principles-to do with the purpose of education” (Lewis, 1993, p.02). Additionally, given that an approach has to do with theory and a method has to do with practice, there are many methods within the same approach, since implementing the latter involves many actions and steps. Hence, as the main component of the language stored in its native speakers mental lexicon, lexis lies at the core of the Lexical Approach tents and is intrinsic to any activity involved in the process of L2 acquisition.

2.4.2 Defining the Lexical Approach

In 1720, the Irish satirist Jonathan Swift, on the significance of word choice in successful communication, maintains “proper words in proper places make the true definition of a style” (as cited in Bareggi, 2006, p.02). The Lexical Approach then provides the proper understanding and methodology that guides the learning/teaching of putting proper words in proper places. Michael Lewis is considered to be the founding father of this approach in 1992 but before he brought his premise to the fore, the salience of lexis in language learning and teaching has been asserted in many publications mainly in the *lexical syllabus* by Willis (1990) and *corpus linguistics* by

Sinclair (1991) and *lexical phrases in language teaching* by Natingger and Decarrico (1992) (Richards & Rodgers,2001; Ramirez ,2012).

The Lexical Approach is based on the idea that fluency centers on the acquisition of a repository of fixed and semi-fixed phrases known as chunks, i.e. it focuses learners' attention on the ability to process and produce lexical phrases as unanalyzable chunks in language. These chunks are of prime importance since they serve as "raw data" in which the structural patterns of language (grammar) are encoded. (Lewis, 1993, p.95). Willis (1990) with his lexical syllabus which latter served as one of the underpinnings of the Lexical Approach, admits that learners have a tendency to have an accumulation of forms of language that are in nature phrases. Correspondingly, he advocates that his devised syllabus should be used in within a methodological framework that focuses on language use .The Lexical Approach was developed by Shmitt (2000) whose contribution served as a hosting learning theory, which confirmed that collocations and lexical bundles are stored and processed in mind as individual blocks. Scrivener (2011) points out that the Lexical Approach recommends an extensive exposure to language and the use of authentic materials rather than slavishly sticking to the orthodox methodology of present-practice –produce (PPP).

The Lexical Approach thus came as a reaction against grammar- based approach. Lexis is the core of language and not grammar. Lexis was overlooked in language teaching as grammar was traditionally considered to be the jewel in the crown of language. Moreover, having effective communicative skills was seen as a matter of mastering the grammatical system of a given language. However, by the publications of Lewis' new views (1993, 1997, 2000) on language, the latter become defined by the Lexical Approach key principle as "consisting of grammaticalized lexis, not lexicalized grammar" (Lewis,1993,p.36). Lewis approach then argues against the exaggerated prominent role of grammar in assessing language proficiency and advocates that any adequate assessment of language in a communicative context should not be made on a right/wrong scale, but rather on successful/unsuccessful one. Hence, he points out the counter -productiveness of the behaviorists labeling of accuracy as the number one objective in any language learning program. However, together with three ingredients of effective communication (fluency, confidence, and imagination) accuracy is considered as a means to an end. Thus he maintains "a student can improve their language performance, and pragmatic effectiveness, by improving any or all of the features just mentioned" (p.45). Lewis goes on to

support his claim by emphasizing the importance of varying classroom activities to meet learners' needs of developed communicative skills "a student who needs to give a presentation in English may benefit more from classroom work which increases confidence and fluency rather than accuracy, another person, who feels embarrassed by mistakes, may base their confidence on accuracy, in which case different classroom strategy will be appropriate" (p.45). Therefore, it is worth acknowledging that the Lexical Approach is a follow up to the communicative approach since "it embraces all the communicative approach suggested ... a recognition of lexis as well as, or sometimes instead of, structure as an organizing principle affecting both methodology and content" (Lewis 1993,p.32).

2.5 The main principles of the Lexical Approach

As we discussed earlier in this chapter, the nature of language centres on the behaviour of lexis. The Lexical Approach is the only available methodology so far that exclusively stresses the pedagogical value of lexis and specifies how an increased attention to lexical chunks helps learners produce native-like output. Such methodology is underpinned by a number of principles that define the nature and aims of this approach as they also form its theoretical and methodological basis.

❖ Language consists of grammaticalized lexis, not lexicalized grammar

This principle, in which language is viewed as strings of lexical chunks, is what distinguished the Lexical Approach from the traditional approaches. Lewis (1993) argues that lexical chunks (e.g. collocations, phrasal verbs, idioms, pre-fabricated structures, sentence frames) are the building blocks and should receive an increased attention than grammatical structures. It is lexis, according to this principle, that encodes grammatical information since the nature of language is holistically lexical. Grammar serves just as cement that links together those building blocks to form a coherent text. Thornbury (2000) joins Lewis in arguing for his theory and states:

Lewis challenges the traditional view that language competence consists of having a foundation of grammatical structures into which we slot individual words. Instead, we store a huge assortment of memorized words, phrases and collocations, along with their associated 'grammar'. The approach concentrates on developing learner's proficiency with lexis, or words and word combinations (p.114).

This means that it is no longer a valid premise that we produce language by using individual words to fill in certain structures provided by grammar, but rather it is a habit that we re-produce ready-made language already stored in our minds.

❖ **The grammar/vocabulary dichotomy is invalid: much language consists of multi-word ‘chunks’**

Lewis (1993) maintains that vocabulary and grammar are one thing. As opposed to the traditional views that separated both areas and consider lexis to be subservient to grammar. Nattinger and De Carrico (1992) on multi-word units describe “they exist somewhere between traditional poles of lexicon and syntax” (p.36). The main carrier of meaning is vocabulary. Every word has its own grammar (collocates) and language as a result is a combination of lexical chunks of varying length. Thus, the acquisition of a new language takes a short time if learners focus his/her attention in learning those chunks rather than focusing on isolated contextless words and this is what the main practice of traditional methods was. (Lewis 1993). In other words, learners cannot take part in a communicative context effectively by having to master the syntactic and morphological system of language alone. To this end, in terms of teaching grammar, the methodological implications of the Lexical Approach mostly call for spending less time and energy on traditional classroom practices based on sentence grammar.

❖ **A central element of language teaching is raising students’ awareness of, and developing their ability to ‘chunk’¹³ language successfully**

For Lewis (1993) language can be learned at best if we instruct students to notice lexical chunks in language. Since traditional approaches focused learners attention to search for morpho- syntactic regularities in language and forming assumptions about language from those regularities, then it is, for the proponents of the Lexical Approach, a must that such a practice has to be encouraged in terms of searching for lexical chunks in language and learning them. Lewis maintains that “accurate noticing of lexical chunks helps convert input to intake, and provides the central strategy of the Lexical Approach” (p.53). On the importance of noticing, in his Noticing Hypothesis, Schmidt (1990) argues that attention is an aid to increased retention. Chunking of language involves the ability to recognize and learn short groups of words that are habitually put together. In this context Lewis (1997) states:

¹³ Developing learners’ ability to chunk language in this study is limited to lexical collocations only. Other lexical chunks such as idioms and set phrases are beyond the scope of this research.

The central idea to efficient acquisition and effective communication is chunking. Unless you chunk a text correctly, it is almost impossible to read with understanding, and unless you speak appropriate chunks, you place a serious barrier to understanding between yourself and your listeners (p.58).

It is a necessity, following Lewis claims, that attending to multi-word units enhances language learner receptive skills mainly reading as it also contributes to easing the pressure of processing language on the part of the listener, i.e. it improves the productive skills of language learners.

❖ **Collocation is integrated as an organizing principle within syllabi**

The acquisition of collocations is the core element of the Lexical Approach. Its central role is the creation of meaning. Lewis (1993) explains that we cannot, for example, decode the verb *bark* without referring to the noun *dog*. Since lexis carries meaning more than grammar, collocations have a generative power of meaning and this qualifies such habitual word combinations to be the fulcrum of any syllabus. Because the acquisition of the second language is conditioned by the acquisition of collocations in the sight of the Lexical Approach proponents, Lewis in 1997 published a book *Teaching Collocations: Further Developments of the Lexical Approach*, where he strongly advocates the incorporation of collocations as the main part of syllabus. He, accordingly, says:

Although, I meet teachers who are trying to incorporate lexical ideas into their teaching, it seems that what we now know about the nature of lexis, and collocations in particular raises important issues for everyone involved in language teaching. In this environment recognizing and adopting collocations as a major element in teaching have several important implications (p.65)

❖ **Evidence from computational linguistics and discourse analysis influences syllabus content and sequence**

Studies based on computer software for analyzing data from language have revolutionized many areas of language studies and linguistics. The emergence of corpus linguistics mainly the groundbreaking studies of John Sinclair in 1990 and his COBUILD Project paved the way for many developments in the area of language teaching, mainly lexis-based programs.

Sinclair breakthroughs on corpus, concordance and collocation served as tools for language teachers to select and organize teaching materials. Examination of corpus exemplifies

language use in its most authentic way. The larger the corpus is the more information about words behavior can be obtained (Lewis 2000). An examination of a large corpus helps identify word patterns that reveal important pedagogical implications. Lewis on word –based syllabus holds “a preoccupation with the word as a unit , meant infrequent meanings of highly frequent words were given preference over highly frequent meanings of rather less frequent words within the corpus”(1993,p.109).

❖ **Language is recognized as a personal resource, not an abstract idealization**

While it is important to draw on information about word behavior from a large corpus, sometimes getting access to such kind of, mainly on-line concordance, data is beyond the means of many teachers. In this case, teachers should not underestimate their lexical knowledge and experience with language to demonstrate to their learners some facts about certain language items inside the classroom. A foreign language according to this principle, Lewis reiterates “can be a valuable personal asset, liberating financially, culturally and emotionally helping people acquire such an asset is a worthwhile occupation “(1993,p.IV).

❖ **Successful language is a wiser concept than accurate language**

Mastery of the grammatical system is not a prerequisite for effective communication. Students’ preoccupation with producing language free of any violation of grammatical rules sets the bar high for them to be able to use a particular language successfully during communication. Unarguably, a language learner can be fairly knowledgeable about how to safeguard in terms of, for example, tense or word-order mistakes, yet the language he/she produces, though accurate, is still unnatural and communicatively unsuccessful .Lewis (1993) illustrates that in teaching language “fluency arose as people understood that accuracy alone was not enough “(p.18).In most accuracy exercises students are intended to feel that they are using language correctly as long as they can form correct sentences .However , inaccurate language can still be successful as long as it is intended by its user to convey a pragmatic meaning. Therefore, Lewis argues that such tendency to successfully use language communicatively should be recognized and prioritized over the tendency to use it in what can only be qualified as “correct”.

❖ **The primacy of speech over writing is recognized; writing is acknowledged as a second-ary encasement, with a radically different grammar form that of spoken language**

Learning to speak is very important as long as listening, the overarching skill, is the very first data-receptive means that is dependent on mere short exposure especially at the early stage of the learning process. Lewis (1997) seems to be in line with Krushen(1984) who stresses the importance of developing receptive skills mainly listening before brushing up learners productive skills. Inside the classroom, learners interact more with the spoken input than the written one. Such process provides students with the ideal opportunity to develop their listening skills which in turn prepare them for the productive skills namely writing. Halliday (as cited in Lewis 1993, p.7) argues that “written language is not spoken language written down”. It is then hardly possible to equate writing with speaking as long as each skill is used for different contexts and situations, determined by a particular reason and intended for particular audience. Most people are unaware of many facts about spontaneous conversations and the underlining determinants of its nature. Halliday believes that because most of spoken language is spontaneous, there is a tendency to take it for granted. Written language on the other hand has been the driving force behind prioritizing teaching language that is taken from textbooks over that which is contained in tape or video recorders.

The prestige of written language created a sentence-based teaching of language. It reinforced a tendency amongst second language teachers to present language inside the classroom in a form of sentences taken from formal texts. Thus, grammar was always a top priority in any language teaching program as Lewis (1993) contends “no grammar of spoken English yet exists, although many language teaching programs claim to emphasize spoken language. Many of the dialogues in textbooks are much closer stylistically to written, rather than spoken English “(p.8).

❖ **It is the co-textual rather than situational elements of context which are of primary importance for language teaching**

Most modern methods of language teaching tend to discredit word-list based teaching of vocabulary for the simple reason that lists of words are devoid of their defining contextual elements. Lewis (1997) agrees on this view mainly with that of Cross and Ellis (1985) whose definition of context is summed up in two elements: situational context and linguistic context. While the former refers to the settings in which an utterance is produced, the latter refers to the language (linguistic environment) that surrounds a particular word. It is the linguistic context that Lewis (1993) terms as “co-text” and prioritizes over the situational context. Lewis asserts that

co-textual properties help in selecting course-content and designing classroom activities for natural language use.

A word cannot occur in isolation. Co-text tells us a lot about the company a word shall keep. In other words, the creation of meaning is based upon the choice of words, thus it is the co-textual environment which is responsible for reinforcing and limiting that choice. Following Lewis claims, it is true that word choice is partly based on our perception of the world around us. It is also purely a linguistic matter since, by intuition; we know the words that frequently couple up. On the other hand, the grammatical system that is traditionally known to govern language use is, as we discussed earlier in this chapter, sentence-based, i.e. most rules are derived from the nature and behavior of sentence structures in language. However, the Lexical Approach advocates emphasize the teaching of what Lewis (1993) calls “word grammar” at the expense of sentence grammar. On the pedagogical value of word grammar (cotext), Lewis points out that attending to the linguistic environment is pedagogically paramount. He endorses his view in the following words:

Contextualization means noting the situation in which a word may occur, but most importantly noting the cotext with which it can regularly occur. If context is seen as situation + cotext, it is the latter –co-occurring language –which is more important for language learning (p.103).

❖ **Socio-linguistic competence-communicative power-precedes and is the basis, not the product, of grammatical competence**

Successful language learning occurs effectively when language is produced naturally to achieve pragmatic ends .The Lexical Approach acknowledges the prime importance of the ability to convey knowledge of the real world as a major ingredient to have a good command of language, i.e. learners’ socio -cultural and linguistic knowledge allows them to negotiate meaning in L2. Such ability to possess communicative force of language cannot be acquired with knowledge of the grammatical system alone. Being able to appropriately encode and decode meaning in a communicative situation is what provides the basis for being able to use the linguistic system correctly and not the other way round. In other words, accuracy of language cannot compensate for the generative power of communicative skills.

❖ **Grammar as a structure is subordinate to lexis**

According to the Lexical Approach, as the name suggests, lexis is the core of language. Though its role in language acquisition was overlooked in traditional approaches and downplayed in favor of generalizable grammatical structures, the arbitrary nature of lexis and its non-ruled governed behavior (lexical items do not fall into the category of grammar) has brought itself to the fore. The generative power of lexis reveals a lot about the non-communicative role of grammar. The traditionally overprized grammatical rules can generate sentences that can unarguably be considered improbable or idiosyncratic. Therefore, the problem here is, to a great extent, related to the lexical choices learners make to express their ideas and interact naturally in the target language. This highlights the key role played by lexis in generating meaning that is far more natural than would be the case if the grammatical rules are used as the basis (Lewis, 1993).

In line with Lewis, Cowie (1991) shows that native speakers with their rich mental lexicon and collocational competence tend to produce language as unanalyzable lexical blocks than trying to use the supposed generative grammatical system to construct strings of language from scratch. Grammar is subordinate and subservient to lexis according to the advocates of the Lexical Approach in the sense that most of grammatical properties are encoded in lexis. In this respect, focusing learners' attention on perceiving lexical items is of prime importance, since the latter "becomes the raw data by which learners begin to perceive patterns, morphology and those features of language traditionally thought of as grammar" (Lewis, 1993, p.95). Such a model of holistic acquisition of language provides the blueprint within which the grammatical system is mastered. Lewis then acknowledges that there is no one single grammar in language, but there is a grammar for every word, i.e. the collocational field within which a particular word occurs defines that word grammar. Furthermore, Lewis explains that nouns are the predominant part of speech in language due to a number of factors such as, on top, the visual name-based nature of thoughts (we give names of whatever we can see) and the tangible nature of nouns (nouns are more concrete than any other part of speech). Likewise, O'Dell and McCarthy (2008) explain that a thought in our mind starts with a noun then the nouns combines with an adjective, then with a verb and lastly an adverb. To this end, in pedagogical terms, those scholars recommend the use of the following questions to accustom learners to generate language naturally by raising their awareness of how words are collocated properly in accordance with the aforementioned order.

Thus, questions such as: what I am talking about refers to a noun, what kind of it refers to an adjective, what happened to it refers to a verb and how did that happen refers to an adverb.

❖ **Grammatical error is recognized as intrinsic to the learning process**

Traditionally, methods of language teaching put grammar at the center of the language acquisition process. The ideal way of mastering the grammatical system was inspired by the motto “what you meet you master “(Lewis, 1993, p.167). Therefore, most of classroom time was spent on habit formation- based practices. The Present –Practice –Produce paradigm that the Lexical Approach argues against aimed at getting learners to repeat a selected set of grammatical points in different sample sentences. The main motive behind such a practice is that frequent encounters of a target grammatical point can ensure effective mastery of language. More importantly, rote-learning was believed to enable learners to develop a habit of avoiding grammatical mistakes that were traditionally thought of as a stumbling block to language acquisition. Within the Lexical Approach, errors constitute an integral part of the learning process in general. All time instructing learners to avoid grammatical mistakes as an effective way of mastering language has proved to be a counter- productive strategy. In a wider context, teachers who emphasize accuracy (grammatical mistake-free output) as the best index of a mastered language in one way or another signal to their learners that what matters most is the use of language that is free of grammatical mistakes. If otherwise, their learners will have the impression that it is better to remain silent than saying something that might be grammatically incorrect. As an illustration of this Lexical Approach’s principle, Lewis shows that though accuracy is important , grammatical knowledge is not like that of mathematics where a mere lapse in processing can yield an entirely erroneous output. Therefore he holds:

Grammar as fact-spelling, irregular form, concord- largely corresponds to this kind of knowledge. But this is always a small part of “knowing” a language; the ability to use language is essential procedural knowledge, where simple right/wrong dichotomy do not apply (1993, p.166).

❖ **Grammar as a receptive skill, involving the perception of similarity and difference, is prioritized**

As opposed to the behavioristic orthodoxy that advocated the production of language from the early stages of the learning process, the Lexical Approach rejects this idea and strongly argues against the view that grammar always falls into the category of the productive skills.

Grammar drills cannot guarantee that learners can produce language from the early start by merely practicing and learning the syntactic system of language. In crude terms, focusing learners' attention on grasping the grammar of language by pure mimicry is useless and counter-productive. A teacher who encourages this habit is very likely to run the risk of getting his learners to produce highly flawed speech as this strategy is de-motivating as well. Undoubtedly, the ability to identify the similarities and differences related to the grammatical items aids language production, since many contrastive pairs of structures suggest different meanings. Hence, it is wise to recognize grammar as "a receptive skill and exercise need to be devised which encourage the perception of difference of meaning" (Lewis, 1993.p 9).

❖ **Sub-sentential and supra-sentential grammatical ideas are given greater emphasis, at the expense of earlier concentration on sentence grammar and the verb phrase**

The idea that language is in nature holistic highlights the need to look at language beyond the level of a slot and filler structure. As we discussed earlier in this chapter, the Lexical Approach recognizes the role of grammar in language acquisition, but rejects the traditional structural syllabus. The concept of grammar in the structural syllabus was traditionally thought of as a synonym of sentence grammar. The latter, in turn, was based on the wide range of forms a verb can take in English, i.e. the ability to use the verb tense correctly to produce a sentence is what was practiced most. Lewis (1993), in this regard, discards such a view and, in turn, recommends two kinds of grammar: word grammar and sentence grammar. Word grammar is concerned with language that operates below the level of a sentence. This includes collocations and the different collocates of a particular word which all enable learners to combine words naturally. Sentence grammar refers to a larger grammar, i.e. text grammar. As the name suggests, this type of grammar includes formulaic sequences which are longer than collocations such as idiomatic expressions. Lewis points out that the analysis of large corpora of daily life used English reveals that there is a large number of patterns of either a sub-sentential or supra-sentential nature. Such testimony highlights the pedagogical values of the generative power of such unique patterns since they, to a great extent, "allow the learner to produce novel language, to estimate that a particular piece of language will be possible, without having met it before" (1993, p.3).

❖ **Task and process, rather than exercise and product, are emphasized**

The Lexical Approach came as a reaction against the behaviouristic teaching of language, and in turn, it champions the communicative teaching of language. Since the main objective of any communicative language teaching program is to enable learners to effectively communicate in L2, tasks whose main focus is the instrumental function of language (e.g. problem solving – based activities) have a generative power (Widdowson, 1990), simply because the predominant functional nature of our daily life situations is instrumental, thus, learners should be immersed in doing classroom tasks that echo that functional nature of language.

The described attempt to help learners use language naturally is the result of interrelated processes. To exemplify, Lewis (1993) demonstrates that any essay written by a learner is the outcome of a number of steps (processes) such as (planning, drafting and editing). This does not only apply to the productive skills but also to the receptive ones. When a learner interacts with a text, she/he employs a number of cognitive processes to encode the meaning of that text.

Lewis distinction between process (as something dynamic) and product (as something static) reveals a big gap between teaching, which was traditionally thought of as product-oriented (teacher's role such as correcting and marking students output) and learning, which is in reality process-oriented (the role of learner as an employer of any cognitive strategy). Therefore Lewis emphasizes that "teachers should almost always be process, rather than product –oriented ... a change of the teacher's mind set from product to process is not only helpful, it is essential"(p.18).

❖ **Receptive skills, particularly listening, are given enhanced status**

Receptive skills in language teaching have been given high importance since the ability to effectively communicate in the target language is based on successful decoding of messages and, accordingly, encoding of others. This is seen as the major objective in any instructional program. The fact that most of the human daily communication is done in a form of casual listening comprehension has shifted the focus of language teaching from being response-oriented paradigm to input-oriented one. Practice is then delayed and, instead, learners are encouraged to listen to the target language before they are engaged in any output- based language practice (Feyten,1991).

The Lexical Approach encourages early exposure to language, since it serves as the major means by which learners can be effectively introduced to, mainly through authentic input, the nature of language (arbitrariness) and its different functions. This can to a great extent reinforce

learners' intake. The holistic production of language as pointed out by Granger (1998) and Siyanova (2015) reflects the different patterns of language that we previously encountered. Being more basic, pervasive and easily accessible than written language, spoken language then qualifies listening as a prerequisite for language production that needs to be prioritized over the reading (Lewis, 1993). This in fact was encouraged by some early teaching practices such as those of the Natural Approach which emphasizes the role of exposing learners to comprehensible input that is perceived through receptive skills, especially listening for beginners (Krashen & Terrel, 1995).

Evidently, despite the fact that most of the received orthodoxies recognized the role of receptive skills in language acquisition, they, namely behavioristic approaches, strongly encouraged the production of sentences from the early start. This was done in the belief that forming the habit of producing correct sentences from the early stages of the learning process is going to yield further production of language. The Lexical Approach, in rebuttal, discredits this view due to the fact that such faulty strategy is a de-motivating factor in language teaching as it can also result in "defective speech" as long as learner are still ignorant of the workings of language, in particular, the arbitrary nature of language that is beyond any linguistic regularities that account for the use of a particular linguistic item. Thus, learners can only realize the arbitrary nature of language which aids language production if they are immersed in listening-oriented activities. To this end, listening cannot be qualified as a passive skill, which was traditionally thought of by behaviorism, since many cognitive processes (e.g. comparing, contrasting, guessing ...etc.) are involved in learners' interaction with the aural received input (Lewis, 1993).

❖ **The Present-Practice-Produce paradigm is rejected in favor of a paradigm based on the Observe-Hypothesize-Experiment cycle**

The deductive approach in language teaching holds that learners master a particular aspect of language by frequent encounters of it. By frequently repeating what has been presented, learners will grasp the input and internalization occurs safely as the selected input is, under the supervision of the teacher, ideally becoming intake! Such orthodoxy is a true definition of behaviorism which we can easily recognize in the so called Present-Produce-Practice (PPP) (Lewis, 1993).

The PPP method, as the name suggests, comprises three interrelated and respectively sequenced stages. In the presentation stage a particular aspect of language is selected contextually and presented with an explicit account of form and meaning. During this stage learners carefully attend to the teacher unpacking the course content and focus on the items that their teacher is repeatedly emphasizing. The role of a learner in this stage is a recipient of data. The next step is the practice stage. Learners are heavily involved in doing controlled activities, mostly grammar drills, through which they amply and repeatedly practice what has been presented by the teacher earlier. In this stage, learners follow the teacher's given instructions while they are practicing the explained aspect of language. Thus, the role of the learners is to accustom themselves with the given form of language through repeated encounters (Ellis, 2003). As Lewis puts, the PPP is based on the assumption that "what you meet, you master" (1993, p.167). The role of the teacher is to make sure that learners are doing the optimum practice that is free of mistakes and which in turn leads to safe and complete internalization of the linguistic system. The final step is the production stage. As the name suggests, the teacher after presenting the input and overseeing its practice now comes the time for learners to produce the newly learned aspect of language freely. Learners are then encouraged, without much involvement of the teacher, to externalize what has been internalized in the earlier stage. Usually this product-oriented stage focuses on writing or role-playing-based classroom activities (Ellis, 2003). It seems that the role of the learner in this stage is to display the intake freely while the teacher responsibility is limited to probably formal assessment (e.g. administration and correction of exams) and the extent to which the input is converted in to intake. As opposed to the earlier stage (the practice stage), this stage focuses on meaning. Therefore, learners are expected to use the grasped form to produce meaning in different communicative situations.

Lewis (1993) rejects the PPP paradigm on the grounds that it is in conflict with the non-linear nature of language acquisition. The latter cannot be sequenced bit by bit in the sense that teachers can only decide on what to be taught, but cannot control what learners has learnt. Different learners process the same input differently and likewise they produce language differently. Another reason Lewis discredits the PPP method is that error according to this behavioristic approach is seen as a failure and should be avoided. Thus, the ability to perform in L2 successfully is valued as long as rote -learning of a given language point, as the advocates of

this method believe, can ensure the elimination of errors. In rebuttal, Lewis holds that errors represent a natural aspect of the learning process as it can also indicate the level of progress: “a symptom of partial mastery” (p.167). Reformulation is, therefore, a very effective strategy to turn that error to the advantage of learners. Lewis also rejects the PPP because it does not encourage learners to look at language holistically and notice the major components used in it and, instead, it encourages mechanical repetition which is very unlikely to move learning forward.

Though some scholars such as Thornbury (1999) and Skehan (2003) recognize the virtues of the PPP method, many have dismissed it for many reasons. For instance, Richards and Rodgers (2001) hold that such an approach lacks practical reality in the sense that in the practice stage, it is not always easy to require learners to use the target form in the designed classroom activities. Wong and Van Patten (2003) points out that such method lacks authenticity in language production since it is heavily focused on presenting de-contextualized structures as models to copy via imitation.

Together with the principle that “language consists of grammaticalized lexis and not lexicalized grammar, Lewis (1993) puts forward what represents the essence of the Lexical Approach: Observe -Hypothesize -Experiment (H.O.E) cycle. Such a model of language teaching was developed by Lewis as a reaction against the PPP method. Lewis (1997) based his approach on the nature of learning that is commonly believed to be non-linear, but instead it proved to be a result of the discovery learners make through the three stages. According to Lewis (2000), in the first stage of Observe, learners observe the new language patterns in use by means of listening which is recommended for low levels and then reading for high levels. Observing occurring language requires learners to pay attention to ready-made expressions and multi-word units (Lewis, 1993). The essence of this stage is noticing which, according to many scholars namely Schmidt (1990), aids the retention of input. In his terms he asserts, “attention aids retention” (p.23). Though both of the Lexical Approach and the Natural Approach agree that comprehensible input contributes greatly to the language acquisition process, the latter approach undervalues the role of noticing as an aid for converting the input to intake. But nevertheless, Lewis (2000) and Schmidt (1990) confirm that for the input to be comprehensible, learners need to notice chunks in language. In this respect, Wilkins contends that successful perception of chunks can, to a great extent, guarantee successful and effective communication since chunks

carry more meaning of more communicative force than individual grammatical items do (as cited in Lewis, 1997,p.16).

The Lexical Approach recommends some activities that help learners to better observe and notice new language patterns. Such activities include identifying by means of highlighting, underlining, or in some cases teachers are recommended to typographically enhance the input for effective noticing. This strategy of textually enhanced input has yielded good results in terms of converting input to intake (Reinders, 2009). It is in this highly important stage that learners are also encouraged to chunk language, i.e. dividing the text into its constituent prefabricated patterns. In other words, items in language are mostly arbitrarily patterned (Wray,2002) and the only way to help learners grasp given input is to encourage them to perceive it holistically, not in terms of different kinds of sentences of varying length but ,instead, in terms of different kinds of multi-word units (e.g. collocations, phrasal verbs and idioms).

The second stage of the H-O-E cycle is that of hypothesis. When learners process a new particular aspect of language, they tend to relate it to similar known one to simplify the process of learning. Thus, hypothesizing in this stage requires learners to make predictions about language and correspondingly process input in terms of form and meaning. The Lexical Approach in this stage encourages learners to arrange the input on the basis of the noticed similarities and differences .In such cognitive processing of perceived input, learners are then expected to look for regularities, form hypothesis and draw conclusions without the need of explicit sorting process. (Lewis,1999 ; 2000).In a similar vein ,cognitive psychology confirms that successful processing of language can be achieved as learners employ a number of learning strategies such implicit forming of hypothesis and guessing the use of a particular item in language (O'malley & Chamot,1990).

Lust but not least, the experiment stage involves learners to put to the test the hypothesis they formed in the previous stage about the use of a particular language aspect. Lewis (2000) endorses his assumption in the following words “the communicative situations a learner experiences in or outside the classroom provide the ideal opportunity to use language on the basis of his or her current best hypothesis whereby stimulating new input at the appropriate level to provide examples which confirm or contradict some part of the learners’ current hypothesis” (p.178). Hence, learners can dismiss their incomplete knowledge which might violate the nature of language (arbitrariness) and in turn focus more on the confirmed patterns. To this end, the

Lexical Approach views mistakes as intrinsic to the learning process since they signify failure in assumptions and not performance. Conceptualizing mistakes as such encourages learners to go back and revise his line of theorizing about language (Yarkoni & Westfall, 2017).

The model of learning (O-H-E) that Lewis (1993,1997,2000) puts forward seems to be inspired by our natural way of acquiring knowledge of the world around us. The events that we live on a daily basis manifest some issues that we pay increased attention to in order to make assumptions in the light of what we are experimenting and come up with confirmed principles. This method, accordingly, suggests the teaching of language that is of more exploratory nature than explanatory as long as language itself is, in nature, arbitrary lexis wise, i.e. beyond explanation. As we have seen earlier regarding the definition of the Lexical Approach, in fact it is not a revolution but a “set of principles based on a new understanding of language” (Lewis, 1997, p.204). Those principles that we have laid out suggest certain theoretical and, correspondingly, methodological changes. Thus, the new understanding regarding content, methodology and , more importantly, teachers’ mind set towards the nature of language and learning, can be adopted while individual teachers’ stability and experience in managing general situations in their classes are maintained and intact. The common theme that runs through the aforementioned principles is that valuing noticing the holistic nature of language and adopting effective ways to direct learners attention to lexical chunks , namely collocations , which many researchers(e.g. Ganger ,1998 ; synovia ,2015 & wary ,2002) recommend is the essence of effective language learning.

2.6 The Lexical Approach view of errors

Undoubtedly, we cannot imagine any attempt to learn something to be error free. Learning language is no exception. It is necessary to bear in mind that errors are intrinsic to the process of language learning at the same time, it would be unwise and, more seriously, counter-productive to think of a classroom strategy that reinforces a tendency among learners to avoid making mistakes. Contrary to what traditional approaches to language learning insist, i.e. response to errors that is based on repetition of the correct form (behaviourism), the Lexical Approach acknowledges the possibility of turning the sources of errors into the advantage of the process of acquiring language. Additionally, it views the role of correction as a principled procedure and, correspondingly, calls on teachers to respond to learner errors in a certain productive manner.

2.6.1 Source of errors

There are many factors that explain the occurrence of incorrect language learning. Before spelling out those sources, it is necessary to be clear in our terminology and draw a strict line between what each of an error and a mistake mean in language learning.

It is widely noticed that even well-educated native speakers can produce incorrect language forms under some circumstances such as tiredness, pressure or sometimes because of a lapse of concentration or memory. However, in many cases related to language production learners prove to be repeatedly unable to correctly use a particular aspect of language. In other words, errors indicate a gap in learner's knowledge or incomplete understanding of a particular language pattern. A mistake, on the other hand, reflects learners' inability to sometimes perform and use what they already know. This means that there is no consistency in producing a particular erroneous aspect of language, which is something non-problematic in language use (Ellis, 1997).

In the language philosophy of the Lexical Approach, Lewis (1993; 1997) acknowledges theorists' distinction between errors and mistakes in productive skills; however, he chooses to use the two terms interchangeably. Notwithstanding, Lewis' description of incorrect language as being an area that deserves certain treatment, Ellis (1997) asserts that distinguishing between an error and a mistake in learners' production of language can be made in two ways: checking if the deviant utterances produced by learners occur systematically and consistently in a way that learners cannot recognise it, or testing learners whether they are able to self-correct their incorrect use of a particular element in language.

The Lexical Approach acknowledges three main sources of errors mainly collocational ones: L1 interference, lexical deficiency and incomplete mastery of language. Not much different from advocates of the Lexical Approach, Corder (1967) and Ellis (1994) also report interlingual and intralingual factors behind errors making. Being the most reported factor in learners' erroneous collocations, L1 is used because learners are not able to correctly express the same idea they wish in L2 (Lewis, 1993). Similarly, in 1994 Chi, Wong and Wong conducted a study in which they concluded that L2 learners, mainly in the early stages of language learning, rely heavily on their collocational knowledge of L1 to perform in the target language. In 1992, a similar study conducted by Biskup reported that the erroneous use of lexical collocations by L2 learners bears features of the collocational properties of L1. She goes further to report that

miscollocations are likely to occur when the collocates of a certain word in L1 do not have direct equivalents in L2. This is in fact what Lado (1968) views as “culturally determined” use of language. In his words, he maintains “meanings vary from culture to culture...different languages classify their meanings differently, that is, what is habitually a lexical meaning in one language may be a morphological meaning in another” (p, 78).

Since learners’ mother tongue is the only linguistic resource they resort to so that they facilitate their process of learning L2, such learners mistakenly think that the arbitrary nature of both languages is the same. As a result, their choice of words in L2 will be based on the proper word combination in their L1 (Mahmoud, 2005). Adding to this, the prevailing of L1 features in the production of L2 is, in most cases, ascribed to the lack of L2 exposure. L2 learners whose experience (mainly that of the receptive skills) is limited to formal instruction, will be unaware of the different contextual or situational uses of language as well as the collocational behaviour of words in L2. Consequently, such lack of knowledge in the pragmatic use of language is very likely to lead learners to perform in L2 within their contextual knowledge of L1. Consequently, most errors occur at the phraseological level of language due to the absence of the required context of word use (Mahmoud, 2005). Along the same lines, a study conducted on the use of collocations by Chinese speakers of English revealed that most of miscollocations occur due to learners’ unawareness of the incompatibility between the formulaicity of L1 and that of the L2 (Dongjin, 2011).

Notwithstanding, the fact that L1 can negatively affect the process of learning L2 in general and collocations in particular, Lewis (1993) insists that errors resulting from L1 transfer should not be always considered negative, but in most cases they serve as an index of a learner’s opportunity to experience what he hypothesizes in terms of his/her L2 obtained knowledge. Ellis (1997) also acknowledges the pedagogical values of interlingual errors. He demonstrates that a linguistic examination of learners’ erroneous production reveals important facts about how language can be effectively learnt in a way that may be compared to L1. Moreover, learners of a foreign language are likely to discover rules about the target language system and conventions about its use just by acting upon the feedback given to them following their errors. In fact, this is the reason behind Lewis (1997) suggestion of certain classroom activities that are based on L1 and L2 collocational comparison. With the aim of helping learners realise the unique and distinctive features of the collocational properties of the L2, Lewis advocates miscollocation

correction-based activity in which the attention of learners is drawn to tracing back the given deviant forms to the L1 effect.

It is important to point out that there are a lot of errors in language production mainly those whose source is not interlingual. Such errors result from students' attempt to say something while their lexical knowledge is poor. That is, lexical deficiency poses a real bar to most learners when they try to express something in the target language. Since successful communication of meaning is the fulcrum of language learning in the Lexical Approach, vocabulary is the main carrier of meaning (Lewis, 1997). In other words, limited knowledge of vocabulary is going to be the main stumbling block for learners who may have good ideas but cannot put those ideas in proper words, mainly proper word combinations such as collocations (Lewis, 1993). In this respect, Hill (1999) puts "students with good ideas often lose marks because they do not know the four or five most important collocations of a key word that is central to what they are writing about" (p.5). No matter how well a learner may know the grammatical system of language, their production of language can be lexically flawed if they have lack of vocabulary namely the collocational fields of the words they know in the target language. Lewis (1993) argues that relating all learner's errors in producing language to poor knowledge of grammar overshadows the fact that many idiosyncrasies in the target language can be attributed to EFLQ learners' poor lexical knowledge. To exemplify his views, Lewis states the example "*the wife to my brother* *" which a student may write or say because he lacks vocabulary. A tempted teacher may respond traditionally and look at this attempt to produce language as an output needing some polishing at the grammatical level. As a result, he treats it grammatically and many suggest his corrected form "*my brothers' wife*" instead of suggesting a lexically based correction "*my sister-in law*". It is obvious that a rich mental lexicon serves as a generator of language and any mistake at the level of word choice counts much more than grammar does (p,171). In this respect and in Sinclair's words (1996) it has been found that "a lexical mistake often causes misunderstanding while grammar mistake rarely does" (as cited in Lewis, 1997, p.16). This reality underscores the importance of prioritising teachers' response to collocational errors over grammatical ones.

It is necessary also to acknowledge the fact that many errors can be attributed to incomplete mastery of language. The term interlingual errors represent the kind of deviant forms that can result from learners' confusion within the target language itself. Learners are likely to

produce erroneous utterances not only when they rely on the linguistic resources of their L1 but also when they rely on faulty knowledge of the L2 (Richards, 1992). Usually, L2 beginner learners are reported to have their L2 use adversely affected by their mother tongue. However, as those learners start to be more acquainted with the L2 patterns and try to use the new learned system, they tend to struggle with acquiring the area of language that is different from that of the L1. Such contrast results in negative transferring within the target language itself (Brown, 1980). Errors attributed to intralingual effect can be divided into four main categories: unawareness of the rules of restrictions, incomplete application of the full rule, false hypothesis and conceptualization and, lastly, overgeneralization (Richards, 1992).

Unawareness of the rules of restrictions occurs when a learner uses a form that violates the system of language (Sari, 2016). An example of this kind of errors, namely in terms of collocations, is that learners' ignorance of the fact that adverbs of degree precede adjectives may result in such learners' use of the incorrect expression *the weather is hot unbearably today*.

Incomplete application of the rules and false hypothesizing about a particular aspect of language may occur simultaneously. Learners are likely to falsely hypothesize forms and come up with their own conceptualization before being sufficiently exposed to the target language in which they pick up language and fully master the new system (Odlin, 1989). Ellis (1997) attributes this kind of errors to certain failure or potential shortcomings in the quality of the formal instruction learners receive, if not, the unnoticed inadequacies of the teaching materials that fall short of meeting the learners' needs.

The last and most widely noticed kind of intralingual errors is that of overgeneralization. Typically, a learner may base his current production of the target language on what he/she previously experienced and knew about that language. In other words, a learner previous knowledge about the target language is going to serve as a framework within which he/she produces new but, in some cases, deviant forms of language. A commonly reported instance of overgeneralization is some learners' attempt to form plurals by adding 's' to all nouns including irregular ones (Littlewood, 1984). In terms of miscollocations whose source is interlingual, overgeneralization may take the form of using near synonyms interchangeably and generalizing the use of such synonyms to all contexts of use. Simply put, a learners may, in the belief that near synonyms have an exact and absolute meaning, substitute a collocate in a particular collocation with its near synonym. The resulting combination then sounds unnatural. In this

context, Hoey (2000) shows that where two sense of a word are approximately as common as each other they will both avoid each other's collocations. We cannot then imagine each of the near synonyms *broad* and *wide* to be a possible substitute for the collocate *vast* in the collocation *vast majority*.

In the light of the factors that contribute to the prevalence of miscollocations in learners' production of the target language, it is evident that the poor knowledge of the L2 unique and generative lexical patterns is the common denominator. In addition, any error in language use should not be seen as a sin but a sign of the beginning of L2 users to make sense of the new language system. Any source of errors can serve as a potential source of a classroom activity focus that requires teachers to adopt a particular mind-set in perceiving learners' errors and positive attitude to respond to those errors.

2.6.2 Responding to errors

Unsurprisingly, teachers' particular perception of erroneous production of L2 is the number one index which reflects the nature of language valued inside the classroom. No sane person denies the fact that any kind of learning involves making mistakes and false assumptions about the target object. Then, any foreign language learner will unquestionably make countless mistakes. However, dealing with every single incorrect use of language that rises inside the classroom is beyond any teacher's reach. At the same time, any attempt to defy all the odds by focusing learners' attention on error avoidance is, at best, pedagogically unsound and, at worst, communicatively counter-productive. Hence, in what follows, we will explain how correcting errors is self-evidently pointless and pedagogically unrewarding; at the same time adopting certain attitude can ensure safe response to learners' errors.

Responding to errors has been controversial in SLA since the emergence of the behaviouristic approaches to language teaching. Correction of errors was highly stressed and erroneous utterances were intolerable to the point that they were seen as a sin that would be avoided. For fear of fossilization and as to prevent getting learners to backfire by internalising their false assumptions about the target language, advocates of the audiolingualism strongly and constantly recommend the repetition of the correct form. Thus, explicit and immediate correction of mistakes was the main error-oriented approach. The traditional principled strategy of getting learners to achieve accuracy in L2 use is that each incorrect response by learners needs to be followed up by the teacher "represented correct model". That is, delaying correction of errors is

seen as an encouragement of more errors and, worse, a faulty process of learning (James, 2005, p.56). However, since the emergence of the Lexical Approach as well as the widespread of the communicative classroom activities, the behaviouristic approach to language errors has been dismissed. According to Lewis(1993), the founding father of the Lexical Approach, correcting errors does not aid second language learning and, worst of all, it is against the non-linear nature of the learning process itself, since errors are intrinsic to that nature and impossible to avoid. Lewis also argues that explicit correction of errors is counter-productive as it can also cost a considerable amount of the class time. He also maintains that teachers correct learners' errors just because they feel the need to follow what their professional conscience dictates. In turn, learners also expect their teachers to correct any perceived errors and try to copy their teachers' way of using language. Thus, Lewis states " teachers often correct because they and their students see it as the teachers' role, and they wish to give students value for money"(p, 173).In a similar vein, Krashen (1981) comments that correction of errors is a useless procedure in second language teaching as it can also be harmful in terms of the affective factors needed for successful conversion of the input into intake. For this reason, Krashen advocates that learners need to receive motivational feedback than explicit corrective one which is perceived negatively by learners as teachers interrupt a learner every time he/she makes an error. Truscott (1996) takes a similar view and argues that research findings confirmed the ineffectiveness of correcting the erroneous linguistic forms produced by L2 learners, namely in writing. He agrees with Lewis (1993) on the fact that focusing on correcting L2 errors especially the written ones is time consuming and fruitless. Adding to this, teachers are likely to be inconsistent in giving the corrective feedback which may even be incomplete or inaccurate one and that is why correction of errors is ineffective and pointless (Truscott,1996). Laboratories studies also emphasize that interaction between L2 learners and an ordinary native interlocutor tend to be stronger due to the fact that native speakers are generally inclined to focus more on the content than the form in language perception and even production. Thus, they are unlikely to disrupt the communicative act by pausing a learner for a while to correct what she/he says (James,2005). Moneyhun (as cited in Lewis,1993,p.174) explains that errors are part of learner behaviour and any attempt to correct them is a frontal assault on the personality of that learner. Correspondingly, Lewis asserts that when a learner produces incorrect language , a teacher main concern is never seen as an

attempt “to correct a mistake”, but always an attempt “to correct a person” which is, psychologically, a negative attitude and very likely to put a learner off the learning process.

Being professionally pressured to adopt a particular attitude has become a dictum that turning a blind eye to errors (though theoretically preferred) would be practically discouraged, unacceptable and even unprofessional! In rebuttal, the Lexical Approach suggests an alternative procedure that is based on responding without correcting errors. To this end, strategies as such reformulation of what learners incorrectly say and write as well as providing them with feedback are a highly acknowledged form of that encouraged response.

2.6.2.1 Reformulation

According to Allwright, (1998) reformulation is defined as a strategy that an instructor adopts to tactfully and usefully deal with learners’ errors. It requires teachers to revise and reshape learners’ output that include lexical, grammatical and stylistic peculiarities or inadequacies. Johnson (1988) elaborates on that and distinguishes between reformulation and a similar strategy termed as reconstruction. He explains that the latter is a very commonly used approach among EFL teachers who still stick to the traditional practices of foreign language teaching, namely the so called Grammar Translation Method. Thus, teachers subscribing to the belief that grammar has a generative power reconstruct learners’ output by simply and directly correcting any perceived grammatical deviance. In so doing, the result of reconstruction is sentences that are grammatically well-polished but communicatively and native-wise unnatural. In turn, Johnson maintains that a teacher adopting the strategy of reformulation enables his/her learners to express their ideas in a way that is similar to what a native speaker would have done to express the same content.

The strategy of reformulation is widely used in the teaching of writing that adopts the process approach. To this end, the Lexical Approach highly recommends that by getting learners to gather ideas, make a draft, act upon the feedback (either peer or teacher-given) and correspondingly edit the product before the final submission. When teacher reformulates learners’ output, learners are in fact getting trained to acquire language in a naturalistic way. Therefore, learners feel more secured and encouraged to produce a text that is communicatively appropriate. Lewis (1993) points out that even in L1, writing as a reflective process (more cognitively demanding than speaking) requires the process of drafting, revising and editing. If such a process is adopted, Lewis explains “the question is no longer one of correction but input

intermediate in the production process which permits and encourages reformulation” (p.176). Thornbury (1997) takes a similar view and emphasizes that reformulation provides learners with the input that is in nature a remodelled version of the learners’ original text. As a result, learners’ reformulated content is made to look native-like at the same time the theme of the original text is kept intact and this boosts the learners’ confidence to interact and generate more language. Despite the fact that the term reformulation is used to refer to teachers’ ways of polishing certain grammatical points in learners’ output , if a particular text is reformulated then any error regardless of its kind and seriousness is transformed into properly expressed content (Thornbury, 1997).

The Lexical Approach does not encourage teachers to get their learners to repeat a given correct form as a result of correction. However, it encourages teachers to use language skilfully and react tactfully to the content rather than the form so that learners perceive what they wish to say properly and learn from their mistakes effectively (Lewis,1993;1997). Bitchener and Ferris (2012) agree with that and add that by reformulation learners will learn to self-correct. Similarly, Krashen (1983) takes the concept of reformulation a further step forward and explains that when errors occur, it is the ideal opportunity for teachers to expose their learners to more natural language, i.e. teachers are expected to provide more comprehensible input as to ensure the continuity of learners’ interaction and negotiation of meaning.

On how cognitively important the strategy of reformulation to SLA is, Ferris (2002) claims that by reformulating the erroneous product of L2 learners, you are in a way or another putting them in a problem-solving task. In other words, the information that is presented by the teacher following up the occurrence of an error serves as a contradictory fact (a conscious - raising and learning experience) about what a learner assumes in terms of a particular way of using language. Thus, his/her cognition triggers some kind of conflict and, correspondingly, a certain pursuit of better assumption. As a result, learners’ needs increase and the acquisition of L2 develops as well.

Studies on the effect of the provision of reformulated content on the development of L2 writing revealed many facts. One of those studies was conducted by Yang and Zhang in 2010. They investigated the difference between the effect of a reformulated and model text on the improvement of Chinese EFL learners writing. The study was based on different stages of writing tasks that aimed at getting learners to notice the difference between their composed text

and the reformulated one. The findings revealed that as students get a reformulation of their original text they become acutely aware of their writing inadequacies and realise the native-like way of expressing their ideas. Similarly, Shi (2012) researched the importance of paraphrasing as a simple technique of reformulation that learners make themselves. Her major findings confirmed that the strategy of reformulation in general develops thinking and understanding as it can also contribute to the enhancement of learners' abilities to negotiate meaning in the target language. Additionally and on the role of reformulation in developing EFL writing accuracy, Farsia and Barjeste, (2016) conducted a study whose participants were assigned to an experimental group and a control group. With the experimental group receiving reformulation - based tasks and the control group taught in a traditional way, the result those researchers obtained confirms that reformulation tasks, namely comparison, contribute greatly to the writing accuracy of EFL learners.

In the light of what the Lexical Approach strives to reflect: the nature of language and the nature of learning, teachers' intention to respond to their learners by reformulating the content of the message rather than the form is, at the cognitive level, a *sine qua non*. In so doing, as Lewis (1993) puts "the pedagogical value of the strategy of reformulation can be highlighted in terms of four main facts: the natural use of language requires negotiation of meaning, effective acquisition of language is based on the receptive skills, writing as a skill is a process rather than a product and positive response to content outweighs any formal pedagogical correction" (p.197).

2.6.2.2 Providing corrective written feedback

In formal education in general any written or spoken performance of learners is expected to be followed up with the teacher's reflection. The latter is usually information commonly termed as feedback. Teachers give feedback for two reasons: either to help learners correct a particular error or to motivate them and boost their self-confidence so that the input successfully converts into intake (Sárosdy, Bencze, Poór, & Vadnay, 2006)

According to Nassaji (2016), the issue of informational feedback is concerned with the teacher's way of signaling to his/her learners that there is something wrong in this learners' production of language. Teachers' feedback may be explicit triggering a reaction from the error-making learner to correct his/her output or implicit in the sense that the error is to be corrected without the learner feeling that he/she is formally required to give the correct version. As the

name suggests, corrective feedback is meant to guide learners' performance and ensure that their use of language is proper by attempting to elicit a correct version whenever learners interact in the target language. Therefore, learners can receive feedback both in a spoken form or written one and in relation to both the form and the content. The main argument behind the importance of corrective feedback is closely related to the concept of negative evidence and its pedagogical value in the language acquisition process.

Negative evidence refers to a given instruction that is meant to inform learners about a particular impossibility of language use. For instance, a teacher can demonstrate to his/her learners the application of grammatical rules. The motive behind the provision of such corrective feedback is to give evidence that contrasts what learners think of as a correct version. As opposed to this technique, positive evidence on the other hand refers to a given instruction that is meant to inform learners about a particular possibility of using language. For instance, this kind of corrective evidence can be obtained naturalistically by exposure where simplification and modification of the input are done for the sake of comprehension (Larsen-Freeman & Long, 1999).

The importance of corrective feedback abounds in literature. Many researchers describe a number of techniques of correcting learners' errors. For instance, Bartram and Walton (as cited in Lewis, 1993) suggest a system of marking learners' written output by pointing out certain language errors. This marking technique includes ascribing certain initials to learners' errors in the text such as using SP to indicate the occurrence of a spelling mistake or GR to indicate the occurrence of a grammatical one. Charles (as cited in Lewis, 1993) describes another classroom technique whose main objectives are closely related to livening up the writing process and making it less daunting. To this end, she encourages her learners to leave their queries on the draft version of the essays they write. In turn, Charles reviews the learners' compositions and accordingly provides feedback in the form of editorial notice, comments and notes which she attaches to these drafts. Charles stresses that the value of this technique ensures that the feedback a teacher provides can tremendously contribute to meeting the learners' needs.

What forms the basis of Charles' arguments about providing feedback as such seems to lie in the fact that although students can correctly decide upon a particular possible use of language, they seem to be still doubtful and consequently miss the opportunity of the learning experiences. Ergo, by giving learners the opportunity to reflect on their output and ask related

questions teachers would be able to consolidate his learners' knowledge of language as he can also cover the learners' lacks and meet their demands. The importance of editorial help, in the first place comments, was emphasised as research on the role of motivation in SLA highlighted the need for the provision of feedback. However, research differs in their assumptions about how learners perceive the feedback, i.e. whether the comments are seen as an expansion of learners' acquired knowledge or as an ideal opportunity to judge their performance. One of the most reported study in this context is that of Butler and Nisan (1986). Accordingly, to examine the impact of the kinds of feedback (comments and marks) on the learning process and the accompanying level of motivation, Butler and Nisan assigned some of their research participants to perform a particular quantitative task while the others were assigned a cognitive-based processing task. It was reported that the feedback following the performance of each task revealed different results. First, the comment-based feedback had a drastic effect of learners in the sense that their performance improved remarkably in both tasks. Additionally, these learners proved to be self-confident and highly motivated regarding their learning process. Second, the mark-based feedback on the other hand was observed to have positive effect on the learners who performed the quantitative task. However, these learners unfortunately were unable to perform well in the cognitive processing-based task which resulted in undermined-self-confidence. Furthermore, the findings of this study also alluded to the fact that, for comparison reasons, the participants who did not receive feedback of any kind at all displayed poor performance as they also proved to be less self-confident and motivated. The findings of Butler and Nisan's study seem to echo what has commonly been noticed by teachers and pedagogues inside the classroom. In other words, in either formal formative or summative evaluation of learners' written output, the vast majority of learners show a tendency to be interested more in grades. At first glance, learners turn a blind eye to the comments that accompany the grades they receive on their returned papers. However, as the effect of the mark brings about different interpretations and, psychologically, triggers certain mood within learners, only then that learners get back to read the comments to explain the given mark and see what their teachers think of their level of attainment and advise them to do. It is wise to acknowledge that descriptive feedback (comments) works on learners' best if they are not related with a particular mark.

A caveat is needed here regarding the amount of feedback that is attached to learners' compositions. Despite the vital importance of corrective feedback in the learning process, it can

be counterproductive to some extent especially when learners receive their corrected compositions replete with red ink! Recently, according to Brookhart (2017), heavily corrected papers result from teachers' tendency to nitpick to the point that they expect certain perfection of achievement on the part of their learners. In fact, effective learning proves that it is the size and quality of the information related to something learners already know which adds more to their effective acquisition and make them progress and move on to the next stage of their learning process. For this reason, Brookhart puts forwards some advice about the amount of feedback to be given to learners. She recommends "judging the right amount of feedback to give- how much, or how many points-requires deep knowledge and consideration" (p.16). Brookhart highlights three main factors and describes them in the following words "first, the topic in general and your learning targets in particular. Second, the typical developmental progressions for those topics or targets and lastly your individual students" (p.16). It is the learning targets that Lewis (1993) emphasises and relates to the importance of lexis and the nature of language learning itself. Therefore, he contends that for effective application of his Lexical Approach practitioners have to take into account the fact that minor grammatical errors are mostly the result of poor lexical knowledge and more precisely deficiency in the use of collocations. What teachers should concern themselves with more is to resist the temptation of restricting their feedback to the regularities of language.

As we have discussed earlier in this chapter the perpetuity of learners making errors is a good testimony to the fruitless attempts to rely solely on rule-based production of language. Thus, it becomes evident that it is both pointless and counterproductive to spend classroom time (in case of immediate response to errors) labouring to correct papers and lecture learners on the margin, simply because errors are integral part of the real nature of learning and, to say the least, they are also part of the holistic (e.g. fossilization) storage and retrieval process. It is worth arguing that the Lexical Approach primarily encourages the negotiation of meaning and the interactive use of language at all levels of education and through all linguistic devices. At the same time, it calls for an increased attention to the importance of lexis to the desired long-term acquisition where effective techniques of reformulation and tactful provision of corrective feedback contribute substantially to turning these errors to the advantage of the process of language acquisition.

2.7. Critical appraisal of the Lexical Approach

No wonder that in the world of applied linguistics in general and teaching methodology in particular the ebb and flow of teaching methods and approaches is credited to methodologists' appreciation of pros, unveiling of the pitfalls and consequently calling for better alternatives. From early traditional practices of the Grammar Translation Method (GTM) and the behaviouristic theory of learning /teaching to the communicative approaches and post method era, foreign language teaching thrives as one method emerges as a reaction to a preceding one. Lewis with his Lexical Approach in 1993 is no exception. Though this approach brought the long overlooked role of lexis to the fore and gave new insights into the nature of language and the nature of language learning, it has received a great deal of criticism on different occasions and regarding a number of aspects. In what follows we will account for the major claims that critical reviewers made about the Lexical Approach.

The first critique was addressed to Lewis two years after his first publication about the Lexical Approach in 1993. Accordingly, Bartfield (as cited in Lewis, 1993) claims that accessing complete conceptualization of lexis and bringing it to the classroom remains to be a business beyond what the Lexical Approach preaches. Bartfield explains that the Lexical Approach sets the bar high for teachers who cannot come to terms with adjusting their current attitude towards a new view of language and language learning on the one hand and resisting the possible resultant radical change on the other. Along the same lines, Ribisch (as cited in Lewis, 1993) sees that the Lexical Approach calls for a language learning, in the first place, teaching practice that already exists in standard terms! This is, for Ribisch, a dismissal of the effective role of teachers and their day-to day growing understanding of the learning process and professional development.

Thornbury (1998) presents a harder review of the claims put forwards by advocates of the Lexical Approach especially that where Lewis (1997) based his explanatory principles primarily on Krashen's (1985) account of language acquisition. In his article "The Lexical Approach: A Journey without Maps" Thornbury (1998) argues against Lewis (1997) who plainly dismisses the idea that language acquisition is based on grammar. A claim that Thornbury (1998) considers to be heavily dependent on what Krashen (1985) highlights as a reduced need for large amount of fine-grained input. Simply put, the Lexical Approach has proved to be heavily derivative of Krashen's work which is still inconclusive to some extent. On the Lexical Approach principle of "language consists of not traditional grammar and vocabulary but often of multi-word prefabricated chunks" (Lewis, 1993, p.3), Thornbury (1998) acknowledges the role of ready-

made chunks however he points out that the Lexical Approach fell short of being evident and ,practically, productive in terms of the role that these lexical chunks play in the rebuilding of the L2 grammatical system that learners acquire through the process of analysis. In this respect, Thornbury puts “Lewis seems more concerned about improving fluency of the learners’ output than increasing the complexity of the learners’ developing language system” (1998,p.4). Thornbury goes on and delves into what the Lexical Approach reassures teachers in terms of the need for no radical change. In other words, as discussed earlier in this chapter, the recommended changes for yielding better results in relation to the implementation of the Lexical Approach were perceived by many teachers as strenuous and at the same time of a large scale. Moreover, Lewis (1993) might have also proven to be unclear and inconsistent in his terminology when he labelled his dictum as an approach with an uppercase initial letter and then, surprisingly, stressed that what he proposed is a totally new view of methodology. In so doing, faulty and unjustified terming brings Lewis’work into question as it holds him accountable for being assessed on that basis! Correspondingly, Thornbury suggests that the classroom practices Lewis devised in 1993 would better be termed as “techniques for teaching chunking” (1998, p.4). One thing reinforces the reason why Thornbury argued against Lewis (1993) work as an approach is that the latter outlines a number of principles that are observed to be inadequate in terms of the implications they carry for classroom practice. Thornbury draws on Richards and Rodgers (1986) explanation of the term approach and admits that Lewis’Lexical Approach seems to have unclear and scant theory about the nature of language. Though Lewis (1997) refers to daily life evidence to confirm the pervasiveness of lexical chunks in the natural use of language: “recognizing the lexical nature of language and the centrality of lexis to the creation of meaning, and, correspondingly, the communicative power, demotes grammar of standard EFL-to subsidiary role”(p.16), Thornbury (1998) disagrees in the sense that such a view has no implications for deciding how to specify a syllabus in lexical terms. One thing that deserves our closer attention is that while Lewis (1993) suggests that the learning/teaching material (the course content) should be based on texts , he failed to demonstrate clearly how these texts should be selected and arranged .As a result, it becomes hard to imagine the proper applicability of the Lexical Approach in the long term. It is for this particular reason that Thornbury (1998) discontentedly thinks of the Lexical Approach as “the prospect of a journey, even an exciting one, but it is a journey without maps”(1998,p.5) .

Apparently , the seemingly incoherent theory that forms the basis of the Lexical Approach is credited to Krashen's comprehensive input hypothesis ,where the centrality of the recommended natural exposure to language lies primarily in the listening skill as the first skill that L1 and,comparatively,L2 acquisition seem to start off with. At the same time Lewis' Lexical Approach contradicts Krashen (1985) view where he relates the effective acquisition of chunks to the significance of classroom techniques that encourage much noticing and underling of chunks in a given input. In crude terms, Lewis (1993) advocates awareness raising which is something that Krashen (1985) input hypothesis does not encourage. In the light of Thornbury (1998) critical views of the Lexical Approach, it is worth saying that what fuelled Thornbury disagreement and disapproval of the Lexical Approach lies with technical terms. Whether the published work of Lewis (1993) was perceived as an approach or recommended to be labelled as a set of classroom techniques, it is wise of Thornbury (1998) to appreciate the substantial contribution of the Lexical Approach to the effectiveness of classroom practices. Besides, the highlighted holistic view of language that shifted the pedagogical lens away from the traditional atomistic account has largely contributed to the lively on-going debate in other areas of language studies such as discourse analysis. More importantly, in response to the fact that Lewis (1993) did not mention any specifications regarding an alternative syllabus to the grammar-based one, Thornbury (1998) indeed recognises the Lexical Approach's justified challenge to the long-standing conventional structural syllabus and its underlying philosophy. In his terms he acknowledges" Lewis, like Willis, deserves our gratitude .That he has done all this by riding on the shoulders of his more academic predecessors should not be held against him...Lewis can meditate between the ivory tower and the chalk face" (1998, p.7).

Another critical evaluation of the Lexical Approach covered issues related to its applicability from the perspective of both of its weak and strong versions. One of the most quoted critics in this respect is Seth Lindstromberg. In his article "My good -bye to the Lexical Approach" that was published in 2003, he revealed many of his disagreeing views on a number of issues. Following Lewis (1993) theorization about the lexical nature of language acquisition, Lindstromberg (2003) strongly argues that the Lexical Approach -based new views of language that are intended for classroom practice remain to lie in the grey area and far beyond the reach of any teacher who wishes to put them into practice or incorporate them in a given instructional program. Thus, Lindstromberg illustrates his claim with the fact that making proper practical

decision about the selection of the kind of vocabulary to be taught in accordance with different levels is still somewhat of wishful thinking. This is simply because there are certain failed attempts to come up with an exhaustive list of vocabulary with which we can specify the most recurrent meaning of a word and therefore the one that merits most focus inside the classroom. In fact, polysemy seems to be the main culprit that poses a real bar to many attempts to prioritise the principled incorporation of vocabulary exercises in classroom practices. It is for this reason that Lindstrongberg strongly reacts against the embracing of the Lexical Approach. He thus warns “any immediate, detailed application of the Lexical Approach in syllabus creation would be premature” (p.04). However, Lindstrongberg admits that what seems to be possible in relation to the applicability of the Lexical Approach lies in the fact that the strong version of this approach can allow foreign language learners with limited classroom time to learn vocabulary and lexical items regularly and strongly in conjunction with different measurements per hour. However, Lindstrongberg reminds us that within the context of the Suggestopedia premise, such procedure is unavailable!

Unarguably, on the use of some techniques that the Lexical Approach insistently calls for regarding enriching one’s mental lexicon, Lindstrongberg disagrees with the concordance analysis-based activities for a number of reasons. The main one is that such classroom exercises are demanding especially for children who are still unable to actively engage in a large-scale discovery of how items are patterned. At the same time, setting an objective as such remains to be somewhat unrealistic. Therefore, what using concordance can promise in the sight of Lindstrongberg is richer knowledge of the co-text (collocates) of a given word. Notwithstanding, the incorporation of concordance-based activities inside the classroom does not amply contribute to the effective learning of items in substantial amounts as it also places more burden on learners.

The strongest argument that Lindstrongberg presents against the Lexical Approach falls within the context of the importance of individual word meanings. For him all the publications of Lewis during 1993, 1997 and the year 2000 downplayed the semantic meaning of single words while they over exaggerated their figurativeness. In particular, what fuelled Lindstrongberg objection to the premises of the Lexical Approach is that Lewis (1993) advocates the learning of delexicalized words only in conjunction with the highly frequent chunks where these contextless meaningless words appear in. In rebuttal, Lindstrongberg (2003) shows that reasoning as such is faulty in the sense that the way of learning that the Lexical Approach describes in terms of

delexicalization of words needs doing another tiring job, i.e. the learning of phrases of irregular nature. To clarify, Lindstrongberg demonstrates that prepositions do really have meaning when they behave as linkers. He gives the example “*to do something on your own time*” in which the expression on + possessive adjective+ time would be recognized as formulaic frame requiring the attention of learners. However, this account is far beyond what the polysemous nature of words show. In other words, it is possible to use phrases with different prepositions to express different things. What changes the meaning here is the substitution of the preposition “*in*” with “*on*” in each of the phrases “*in your own time*” and “*on your own time*” Lindstrongberg (2003). Particularly, evidence as such highlights the dismissed single word meanings (delexicalized words) which Lewis (1993, 1997) describes as items requiring special attention, simply because as Lindstrongberg (2003) illustrates the preposition “*in*” in the aforementioned phrase has a connotation of time (e.g. when it is synonymous with the word *during*) while the proposition “*on*” in the other phrase has a connotation of something of a burden.

Lindstrongberg clarifies and emphasizes that in more illustrations. For example, the prepositions “*on*” and “*in*” imply different meanings in many phrases of the same frame. Therefore, we can understand from the phrase “*in your mind*” and, comparatively, “*on your mind*” that the former suggests that there is something inside going on, while the latter implies a problem (figurative meaning). To this end, Lindstrongberg in response to the less effective way of learning these prepositions as chunks and wholes, he advises a more effective way. He instructs to learn some of them one by one at the same time one has to bear in mind certain operative metaphors in which the meaning of individual words such as *under*, *on*, and *in* can be prominent (2003,p.8) .

All in all, what Lindstromberg have argued against lies within the strong version of the Lexical Approach. The faulty reasoning through which Lewis (1993) belittles the important role of grammatical items that function at the word level begs the question of whether the Lexical Approach is a promising roadmap. Lindstromberg seems to have stepped in Thornbury’s (1998) shoes through arguing for a departure from the Lexical Approach. In his terms Lindstromberg (2003) explains “...discard it. Pedagogy based on the strong version of the Lexical Approach hypothesis should be avoided ...It suggests that learners have an astronomical amount of vocabulary to learn but offers no promising tips on how they can speed up enough to do it. Fortunately then, a strong version of the Lexical Approach hypothesis is inaccurate ‘’(2003, p.8).

What these points of disagreement suggest can be summed up in the fact that the strong version of the Lexical Approach hypothesis is of an unsound methodology regarding only its applicability. However, if we look at the Lexical Approach in general, it offers some hope through its applicable weak version since the main generator of the disapproving of Lewis 'Lexical Approach is concerned with the pedagogical risk of departing from the atomistic view of language, Lindstromberg (2003) takes a similar view of his preceding critics of the Lexical Approach and acknowledges that an approach as such can, if only viewed from the weak version of such a hypothesis, form the underling basis of some classroom practices. In this respect Lindstromberg admits "I say but at the same time incorporate a weak version from the Lexical Approach hypothesis into the rest of belief underling whatever pedagogical approach you have already been operating with" (p.8). Hence, given that in Lewis '(1993,p.142) terms "the word grammar" forms part of the important grammar that Lindstromberg (2003) stresses then dealing with that issue of confusing polysemy from a pedagogical point of view would largely contribute to help foreign language learners enrich their mental lexicon. A desired achievement as such is one of the main objectives of most of foreign language teaching methods.

Another critical reading of the claims related to the Lexical Approach is, this time, addressed to all language teaching methods and approaches that disregard the centrality of grammar and the outcome of its explicit presentation inside the classroom. Recently, a major breakthrough in literature on grammar in the context of language teaching was made by [Catherine Walter](#). In 2012 Walter published an article on the popular website of the Guardian Magazine where she extensively argued for the pedagogical value of the explicit teaching of grammar that has long been undervalued. Walter reveals a number of reasons behind the fact that the concept of explicitness in the teaching of grammar was not a principled account and a welcome procedure in the theory and practice of the target language teaching. In turn, she presents evidence for the need to reconsider the effectiveness of focusing learners 'attention on the mastery of grammar rules.

Walter gave a detailed account of the evidence that forms the basis of the argument she lays out to underscore the productive role of a focused approach to teach grammar. The alternatives that the proponents of grammar -based teaching have come up with are all strongly supportive of the effectiveness of teaching grammar implicitly. However, in their course of action inside the classroom they demonstrate different procedures to achieve that aim. Ranging

from emphasizing the significance of communicative activities and extensive exposure to the target language to basing the teaching process on the emerging needs and lacks of learners, every approach reflects a certain claimed and principled account. Walter (2012) confirms that a lot of research conducted on language teaching methodologies reports that focused attention on grammar rules inside the classroom together with the communicative teaching of the target language have proved to be a productive procedure. Learners are widely observed to acquire tacit knowledge about language use which guides their language acquisition. Such fact reflects the reason why despite all the promises of the fashionable approaches, a staggering number of teachers still stick to the long-standing tradition. Walter maintains that the emphasized demonstration of the workings of grammar rules inside the classroom have always been resisted on a number of exaggerated accounts. To start with, the varying degrees of the complication of the morphological properties of language seem to have led many teachers to avoid explaining the mechanics of such linguistic knowledge in formal instruction. Most of the published literature about second language acquisition has English as their main language in question. Needless to say, English is the world's most taught/ learned language. It has simple morphological properties (e.g. manageable inflection, absence of the concept of duality in most grammatical items, and no gender-based word forms) which led so many researchers and pedagogues to neglect the importance of explicitness in teaching the grammar rules. In other words, due to the simple nature of the transformational rules of English grammar the latter is believed to be best acquired indirectly as a result of engagement in the complicated nature of the demands of effective learning tasks such as using the target language to communicate with the native speakers, negotiate meaning, doing problem –solving based activities and so forth. However, if we compare English with other languages that are more complicated in terms of their morphological nature (for instance Polish whose the grammatical category of nouns has three- gender based forms), then the demands for a focused approach to teach its grammar is very likely to be overshadowed by the strenuous requirements of other learning tasks. This highlights the need for not considering other alternatives to demystify the nature of the language governing system but to resort to the virtue of the grammatical analysis to help learners internalize the workings of the target language which forms the basis of their subsequent learning process.

Walter also reports that among the reasons that lead many scholars and pedagogues to discredit the explicitly taught grammar is the clear failure of these authors and practitioners to

realize the factors that govern the difference between what is seen as the ultimate objective of teaching the target language (native-like production) and what the target language learner are actually doing to achieve that goal in formal settings. To illustrate, Walter admits that prefabs of all kinds constitute a large proportion of the language used by native speakers and this is what has led many classroom practices to be exclusively centered on the mastery of these chunks. At the same time, dealing with such a myriad of ready-made word combinations is a tiring and time consuming task for learners. Therefore, with an effortless and quick practice the mastery of grammar can effectively enable these learners to acquire the skill of combining word patterns and sentences properly over the course of reaching the ultimate goal: native-like proficiency. Crudely put, basing the attainment of the teaching /learning goals on the components of native speaker language exclusively is fruitless and counterproductive. By contrast, teaching the dismissed generative power of the grammatical system offers a more feasible and safer alternative for reaching the same goal.

If we follow another line of argument that is presented against the explicit introduction of grammatical rules inside the classroom, we realize that there is certain misunderstanding and confusion regarding the demands of the quality of exposure that a target language learner needs to receive. In other words, the settings where the learning of the target language takes place determines the amount of the needed grammar and the way to present it. According to Walter, the learning of English is widespread most in countries whose second language is a language other than English .That is, English is only used as a foreign third language (e.g. the status of English in Algeria and most African countries). However, Walter insists that most of the trends and pedagogies to resist the explicit teaching of grammar occur in countries whose second language is English (e.g. most European and Asian countries).Therefore, the amount of exposure in a foreign language learning context tends to be very poor and only limited to classroom time. This requires more attention to teach the grammatical system of language in a direct, clear and focused way as to help learners fill that linguistic gap and acquire a good understanding of language use. By contrast, in the settings where English is used as a second language after the mother tongue the exposure is richer since it occurs beyond the classroom time (in daily life routines). Thus, learning language in a context as such is similar to the acquisition of the mother tongue where the latter is acquired unconsciously and without the need to demonstrate the different applications of its grammatical rules.

Another argument regarding Walter 's evidence for the pedagogical value of explicitly taught grammar lies in her disapproval of researchers and , in the first place, teachers' negative attitude towards the grammar-based learning outcome. Walter explains that the role of grammar in achieving the desired learning outcome (high proficiency) has for many years been denied on the grounds that there are reported attempts to help as much learners as possible achieve high proficiency. Regrettably, focusing on the explicit introduction of grammar to all learners did not help learners achieve their underlined goals. For this reason Walter argues:

An alternative conclusion is that, learning a language, especially in a low exposure situation, is very difficult, and it may be the case that whatever teachers do, few learners will achieve high proficiency. The only way to find out whatever improvement is made can be to look for evidence, like the evidence in the recent analyses (2012, p.4)

Following what we implied earlier in terms of the quality and quantity of exposure, the reasonable judgment of the potential of explicit grammar for developing learners' proficiency should be based on a combination of the demands on the learning situation on the one hand and the complexity of the target language (morpho-syntactic properties) on the other. Last but not least, Walter attributes the avoidance of the focused teaching of grammar to the tendency of teachers to restrict their explanations of grammatical forms only to the need that rises during a particular task. Put another way, teachers are expected to bring into their learners sharp focus the grammatical structure whose acquisition is only required for the sake of a particular performance in the target language inside the classroom. However, Walter points out that such procedure is useless in the sense that it is beyond the teachers' means to clearly and effectively explain every and each single grammar point that crops up while learners are preoccupied with performing a more important task. Besides, it is not possible to ensure that the rising needs for exemplifying a particular structure matches the learners' expected needs for that structure in the next stage of language use.

In the light of the discussion about the reviewed critique we come to the conclusion that decisions about how the teaching grammar should be made before hand as to ensure providing learners with the grammatical points they will need. Crudely put, it is not possible for any teacher to extract most of grammar in question by awaiting the ideal classroom opportunity to emerge from a wide range of given texts of a particular communicative situation. However, raising learners' awareness of a particular needed grammatical rule through a structural syllabus

does not suggest that grammar is the core element in language teaching process. It is wise to add that the power of a rich mental lexicon together with good knowledge of grammar (mainly obtained from proper practice) serve learners best when they are viewed inseparably like the two sides of a coin.

2.8 Collocations as the core of the Lexical Approach principles

As we have seen earlier in this chapter, the Lexical Approach is based on the idea that having good knowledge of pre-fabricated and semi-prefabricated item can guarantee the acquisition of fluency. Lexical chunks or ready-made expressions that Lewis (1993; 1997; 2000) strongly recommends are of different kinds. Collocation is the highly frequent one therefore such pervasiveness is credited to the fact that the components of collocations are inclusive of all parts of speech (e.g. verb+ noun, Adverb+ adjective ...etc.).

Collocations stand out from all the words that exist in a particular language (the lexicon) and their function and behaviour in relation to single word use outweigh any grammar-based creation of meaning. Any attempt to substitute their components (especially strong and unique collocations) has proved to result in certain linguistic idiosyncrasies. Such uniqueness of the nature of collocations dictates a principled thinking when it comes to unpacking course content inside the classroom. Among the aforementioned principles that form the basis of the Lexical Approach, the strand that highlights the centrality of collocations to the recommended ingredients of fluency is that “collocations should be integrated as an organising principle within syllabuses (Lewis, 1993.p.vi). It is worth mentioning that having good collocational knowledge lies at the centre of what the Lexical Approach advocates. Given that lexis is loaded with meaning more than grammar, it is unquestionable that collocations, as synonymous with lexis, offer a creative power of meaning quickly and effectively and this particularly bears a testimony to the fact that the generative power of collocations underpins any decision about designing a syllabus within the Lexical Approach.

Optimum application of the Lexical Approach is aimed at developing learners’ fluency. The concept of noticing collocations while exposure is what best defines the optimum method to attain that goal since noticing has always proven to be the most effective means by which the input is quickly and effectively converted into intake. Thus, the importance of training learners to notice collocations over the course of language acquisition is highlighted by many scholars who refer to this as awareness raising process. The latter requires a number of principled

procedures that usually reflect the motive that lie behind. For instance, Batstone (1996) states that training learners to notice the target form leads them to realise their lacks and, more importantly, informs them about what makes the difference between their current mastery of the target language and that of a native speaker. Furthermore, instilling a tendency to notice collocations in the input can tremendously help build learners' autonomy in the sense that learners would be more self-responsible for the process of converting the input and making the most of their exposure to collocations beyond the classroom practices (Lewis, 2000).

Effective noticing is reinforced by the teaching/learning cycle of Observe-Hypothesise - Experiment that Lewis (1993) devised. According to him successful acquisition of language is ensured by engaging in classroom activities that are guided by this paradigm. However, we should not lose sight of the fact that noticing in the course of acquiring collocations through the practices of the Lexical Approach primarily requires much focus on the receptive skills especially at the beginning stages of the learning process. This does not mean that learners are expected to be passive audience standing by while the teacher is orchestrating everything; however, the expected production on their part is tactfully delayed until much noticing (observing) occurs. In so doing, learners will be able to have certain conception (hypothesising) and consequently translate that into practice(experimenting)via different classroom opportunities .i.e. the productive skills.

2.9 Conclusion

As we discussed earlier in this chapter, the role of the arbitrary nature of language, the non-linear nature of language learning and the prevalent holistic storage of lexical items in native speakers' mental lexicon are what form the theoretical and methodological underpinnings of the Lexical Approach. Given that this approach advocates much noticing to acquire a repository of fixed and semi-fixed phrases and in order to process and produce lexical phrases as unanalyzable chunks, it should be pointed out that although some studies argued against the holistic storage and processing of language, the productivity of chunking in language should not be overlooked. We should not also lose sight of the fact that raising learners awareness of a particular needed grammatical rule through a structural syllabus does not suggest that grammar is the core element in language teaching process .It is wise to add that the power of a rich mental lexicon together with good knowledge of grammar (mainly obtained from proper practice) can serve learners best

when both competencies are seen as complementary. It can be concluded that though the Lexical Approach seems to be not explained by one single complete theory of learning, such an approach seems to be an extension of different concepts drawn from communicative approaches to language acquisition. Moreover, since the Lexical Approach calls for a change in teachers' mindset towards language teaching, this is very likely to involve changes in the materials and methods as well.

Chapter Three

Formulaic Sequences and the Acquisition of Collocations

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3.1 Introduction

Unarguably, lexical items in language do not behave as individual words joined together according to certain syntactic rules but, rather, they have certain degrees of tendency to be used in different phraseological patterns known as formulaic sequences. The phenomenon of word formulaicity is very common in naturally occurring language. Many researchers, the likes of Erman and Warren (2000) and Wray (2002), point out that formulaic sequences make up around 58% of both written and spoken discourse of native speakers. On the other hand, Howarth (1998) confirms that collocational patterns, namely verb-noun restricted collocations form 40 % of formulaic sequences. Such ubiquity qualifies collocations as a major ingredient of achieving native-like use of language.

3.2 Evidence of the holistic storage of formulaic sequences

In the last few decades many studies appeared to document the fact that formulaic sequences are stored in ones' mind and retrieved for later use as a particular situational context triggers them. Such studies have always drawn on a variety of procedures as to elicit the necessary data. Accordingly, two major techniques are widely reported in the literature: eye-tracking technique and self-paced reading technique. The former was first used by Underwood in 2004 who reported that the constituent elements of a particular idiomatic expression are read faster than these same items in a different, mainly, literal context. The latter (self-paced reading) is usually associated with Jiang and Nekrasova (2007) who investigated the differences in the rapidity between recognizing and reading pre-fabricated chunks on the one hand and novel constructs on the other. Their findings confirmed that formulaic sequences are processed as wholes and inseparable combination of words with no sign or attempt to consider the semantic or syntactic properties of the comprising parts, i.e. the form and the meaning of the whole is more prominent than that of the parts. Similarly, in 2012 Kim and Kim used the technique of self-paced reading which allowed them to reveal that frequent formulaic sequences are decoded and read faster than infrequent ones. This means that they are recalled from one's memory where they are stored as blocks and single units. It can be argued that the amount of the linguistic experiences one accumulates in relation to a particular string of language can lead such a stretch of discourse to be more prominent and thus handled with a certain degree of sensitivity (Bod, 2006).

Recent studies mainly that of Millar (2010) used mal-formed chunks in self-paced reading that was made by native speakers. Accordingly, it was reported that formulaic sequences are stored as units and, likewise, retrieved for use whenever the contextual need arises. A more recent argument in favor of the holistic nature of internalizing formulaic sequences came from Siyanova (2015) who endorses her views of the issue in the following words “ due to their frequency and predictability formulaic sequences are processed quantitatively faster than matched control phrases” (p.296) .Corpus linguistics seems to lend most support to the holistic storage of formulaic sequences. In 1989,Gluckberg (as cited in Siyanova, 2015) examined recurrent utterances in naturally occurring conversations of native speakers. He reported that a mature native speaker uses, on average, four formulaic sequences of different kinds every one minute of speech. Moreover, one of the most cited evidence is that of Erman and Warren 2000 according to whom a variety of formulaic sequences constitute roughly between 20 to 50 percent of native speaker’s writing or speech. Again, Sivanova (2015) backs up this claim by arguing that native speakers use a lot of formulaic sequences which gain them a processing advantage as opposed to non-native speakers, mainly beginners and intermediate, who most of the time show a tendency to use novel constructs. One explanation for this could be that frequent encounters of particular information makes it easier and more effortless to recall and use language (chunks) that is associated with that (Wray,2002).

3.3 The Idiom Principle and formulaic sequences

It has widely been accepted that, apart from phonological accuracy, what makes language produced by native speakers different from that of the non-native ones lies beyond the mastery of the grammatical system. Although the latter is perfectly acquired by native speakers, their linguistic performance seems to mostly echo their lexical competence, more precisely, phraseological knowledge. In contrast, non-native speakers demonstrate, most of the time, a manipulation of the grammatical system not only to produce meaning in the L2 but also to make sense of given input. At best, Sinclair (1991) explains the uniqueness of native speakers’ language by pointing out that natural discourse (spoken or written) is mostly comprised of a huge number of prefabricated and semi-prefabricated multiword units. Such chunks of language are observed to be processed (produced and perceived) as single choices. Sinclair(1991) refers to this tendency as the Idiom Principle according to which “ a language user has available to him or her a large number of semi-pre constructed phrases that constitute single choices even though they

might appear to be analyzable into segments” (p.110) .In other words, the idea of “single choices” suggests that language is, as has been argued earlier, mentally represented in the form of lexical chunks and blocks which is why its processing becomes more at the level of wholes than parts. Erman and Warren (2000) explain that Sinclair’s (1991) idiomatic account of language is contrasted with the conventional structural account of language processing which he refers to as the Open Choice Principle. According to this strand, language user has at his disposal the freedom of choosing words to fill in slots provided by an infinite number of syntactic constructs (Wray, 2002).

Unarguably, the result of operating on the Idiom Principle is the perception and, more importantly, the production of strings of arbitrarily governed expressions of varying lengths, which many researchers term as formulaic sequences. In the literature, there almost fifty terms used to describe the formulaicity of language. The most common ones are multi word units, lexical chunks, lexicalized phrases, read-made expressions, conventionalized forms, routine formulas, pre-fabricated patterns and lexical bundles. Recently, Han (2015) admitted that the concept of formulaic sequences is the umbrella term that appears in most studies on the acquisition of formulaic language. With Wray (2002) most quoted definition, formulaic sequences refer to:

A sequence, continuous or discontinuous, of words or other elements, which is, or appears to be prefabricated: that is, stored and retrieved whole from memory at the time of use, rather than being subject to generation or analysis by the language grammar (p. 9).

From this definition it can be suggested that formulaic sequences are characterized by varying degrees of length (continuous or discontinuous), varying degrees of fixedness and ,thus, semantic transparency(appears to be prefabricated)which would allow certain level of substitution in terms of the constituent elements. It can also be said that they are pre-existent (not subject to generation or analysis) because they are the product of one’s rich mental lexicon. These features seem to define, in Sinclair’s terms, “the single choices” as they provide a possible explanation as to the reason why the Idiom Principle is the driving force behind the ease of language production that native speakers and highly proficient L2 speakers enjoy.

3.4 Criteria for identifying and classifying formulaic sequences

Attempts to describe formulaic sequences revealed a number of facts according to which the form and meaning of a particular combination of words can be qualified as a formulaic sequence.

a-Irregularity

Under this subheading, there are two main sub-criterion: semantic opacity and syntactic deviance. To start with, semantic opacity refers to the extent to which the meaning of the whole can be inferred from the individual meaning of the parts. Idiomatic and metaphorical expressions are a good example of the degree of the semantic transparency of lexical chunks. To assign a figurative meaning to a particular prefabricated stretch of language, it is required to consider the form as a whole without the need to break down the block and investigate the interconnection among the constituent elements. For example, if we look at the meaning of the idiomatic expression *to foot the bill*, there are no absolute clues in the meaning of the individual words that can tell us about the intended meaning of this kind of formulaic sequences (Wray,2002) .In most cases, formulaic sequences convey non-literal meaning because they are not fully in compliance with the authority of grammar .As a result, a hearer is likely to struggle to make sense of them unless s/he relates them to a particular pragmatic frame of reference. Some instances of formulaic sequences use figurative meaning that can be deduced directly without any reference to a particular context such as in the idiom *to read someone like a book*.

Although the poetic use of language challenges the criterion of semantic opacity in conventionalized utterance and instead shows that semi-literal expressions are not necessarily formulaic, idioms remain to be one of the main defining components of language formulaicity (Wray & Perkins, 2000). Van Lancker expresses his view on the centrality of the metaphorical meaning in drawing a dividing line between what is formulaic sequence and what is non-formulaic sequence. He states “formulaic phrases of all kinds, idioms, speech formulas, proverbs, have a meaning that flows from the utterance as a whole. Analysis results in the wrong interpretation” (as cited in Wray, 2002, p.56). It is evident that dissecting the block in pursuit of comprehension affects the semantic integrity .However, some exceptions prove that the meaning of the whole fades away, loosens and is ultimately taken over by what the individual words convey. Still, a number of scholars chiefly Cowie (1998) asserts that atomistic semantic interpretation can be possible though there is no clear cut distinction in terms of the semantic transparency versus semantic opacity.

Undoubtedly, this tractability stems from regarding the formulaicity of language as an opaque organism rather than a fluid pattern where the behavior of the parts of speech and the possibility of the syntactic insertion count in qualifying a particular string of words as formulaic.

Therefore, the inadequacy of the criterion of semantic substitutability highlights the need to consider other aspects such as the noticeable structural irregularities.

The syntactic oddity in formulaic sequences refers to the unsystematic behavior of certain morpho-syntactic patterns. This phenomenon can be seen in a number of instances of language use where the grammatical abnormality results from manipulating the transformational and inflectional features of some words and expressions. Usually, it is unquestionable that a word or phrase following an intransitive verb behaves as a complement. However, Flavell (as cited in Wray, 2002) illustrates that with the verb “*come*” in the expression “*to come a cropper*” in which the word “*cropper*” flouts the grammatical norms and thus functions as an object of the intransitive verb “*to come*”. According to Cowie 1992, this peculiarity is not a result of a particular string of words becoming formulaic. However, if a particular sequence passes unnoticed in terms of the atomistic analysis of its composition then it becomes fossilized as their integrity remains unaffected by changes at the level of language use.

b-Flexibility

It seems that the degree of modification in terms of the components of a particular prefabricated form adds more to its main features. Certain chunks are completely fixed and do not allow any morpho-syntactic edition or insertion into their compositions. In other cases, flexibility is central to account for certain levels of phraseology. Ergo, it is possible in many cases that a large number of prefabricated patterns have several form-based realizations. Alternatives as such are characterized by varying degrees of morphological tolerance. If we look at Sinclair’s (1987) example, in the idiom “*to know **something** like the back of **one’s** hand*” the words in bold serve as slots for a number of possible fillers.

Apparently, the extent to which a particular ready-made expression is fluid and amendable arises from the need to produce a particular effect. Notwithstanding the fact that form-related modification may cost the metaphorical meaning and pragmatic function of the formulaic nature of language, some idiomatic expressions seem to have their meaning intact. For instance, it is possible to use some idioms in the passive form (e.g. *it should be borne in mind*) while others would be erroneous (e.g. **the bill was footed*) (Wray, 2002).

Linguists and lexicologists attribute the intolerance of certain word strings to take on lexical and grammatical flexibility to two main reasons. First, the meaning of the whole is very unlikely to be shared by the meaning of the parts in the sense that any transformational attempt

results in a meaningless form (Wary & Perkins, 2000). Second, it is the grammatical category (parts of speech) and its functions which most of the time comes in an adverbial frame and proves to be not subject to substitutionality. Pedagogy wise, learners need to acquire not only the semantic and pragmatic knowledge of the units of language but also the grammatical knowledge for that the absence of flexibility in most cases is conditioned by certain extent of syntactic function on the one hand and the unavailability of literal meaning on the other (Wary, 2002).

Collocation proves to be a good testimony to the varying degrees of flexibility that characterizes formulaicity at the level of grammar. Given that there is a great deal of alternatives, the fact that multi-word units are stored in one's mind presupposes that it is possible to construct word strings by operating on the Open Choice Principle. However, it has to be borne in mind that the constraint to that is not only the concept of grammaticality, but also a number of contributing factors (e.g. social-cultural and arbitrary).

3.5 Formulaicity and its processing mechanism

Unarguably, the aforementioned evidence related to the holistic storage and retrieval of prefabricated language can tell us a lot about the cognitive aspects concerned with either making sense of a given ready-made string of words encountered in the input or having one's output encoded in previously memorized language forms. Therefore, understanding how the mind processes such default expressions requires shedding light on a range of studies on the perception and production of formulaic sequences.

3.5.1. The perception of formulaic sequences

If we look at the kinds of lexical chunks there are many of them that, due to their high frequency, may pass unrecognized as formulaic by native speakers. Notwithstanding, idiomatic expressions are singled out as being the most widely researched kind of formulaic sequences due to the complicated mental processes required in comprehension.

Over the past decade, a number of studies were conducted to examine the comprehension of idioms by L2 learners. Using different elicitation techniques (e.g. self-paced reading and eye movement tracking) and several experimental procedures (comparison between native and non-native perception of idioms), most of the findings imply that the degree of figurativeness and the frequency of the patterns affect the comprehension of idioms. For instance, as early as 2004 Underwood et al used an eye-movement tracking- based experiment to compare between the

comprehension of idioms by native and that of the non-native ones. The researcher concluded that native speakers are more likely to make sense of idiomatic expressions faster than their non-native counterparts. In other words, idioms as bearing most hallmarks of the concept of formulaicity, offer a processing advantage for one with more experience with a given language. Similarly, but with another research procedure, Conklin and Schmitt (2008) probed into the comprehension of idioms in L1 and L2. They required their participants to process idiomatic expressions in a self-paced reading task. The researchers confirmed that there is an observed level of ease to recognize and read idioms more quickly than matched expressions whether in the mother tongue or the target language. However, regarding the difference between the perception of the literal and non-literal meaning of idioms a contradictory issue seems to be observed. (Wood, 2002). In a listening task he exposed his participants to a list of common idioms (e.g. *to be in the same boat*). The research subjects were L2 learners engaged in doing a classroom task based on suggesting synonyms related to the figurative meaning of a given list of words and, conversely, suggesting synonyms related to the literal meaning of a given list of words. The main findings of the study showed that the processing time of words with literal meanings was less than the time required to deal with the words with figurative ones. Crudely put, the implication is that in comprehending L2 idioms, the literal meanings arises before ideas related to other connoting aspects of words germinate.

It seems that the sensitivity to information encoded in frequent phrases contributes to the rapidity of internalizing idiomatic expressions in the input on the part of L2 learners. We should not also lose sight of the fact that factors other than phrasal frequency may also determine the processing advantage for formulaic sequences that the aforementioned studies have experimentally proven. In other words, the degree of figurativeness in L2 idioms may help or hinder the comprehension of L2 formulaic sequences according to the extent to which the arbitrary nature of L1 and L2 lexis is different.

3.5.2 The production of formulaic sequences

The significance of on line processing of formulaic sequences seems to have laid the groundwork for investigating the mechanism concerned with producing ready-made expressions. Evidence that support the holistic production (retrieval) of prefabricated utterances emerges from a number of linguistic studies into different aspects of language production. Being at the fore front of studies into the production of L1 chunks, Van Lancker et al (1981) contends that

hesitation, false restarts and longer intervals for resumption characterize the oral production of non-formulaic phrases which, in turn, make the uttering of the individual words less fast compared to that of the prefabricated chunks. Another study supporting the short duration of uttering frequent formulaic sequences was conducted by Janssen and Barber (2012). In their experiment they recruited a number of participants who were tasked with producing L1 strings of words of different grammatical categories (adjective + noun combinations and noun + noun combinations). The results of this study showed that, as opposed to a less frequent one, the more frequent a particular word combination is the shorter time it takes to be produced. Such a claim suggests that the brain has sensitivity towards retrieving information encoded in linguistic items that function as inseparable units and whose use is repeatedly encountered by a language user. Other evidence contributes to our understanding of the mechanism involved in the externalization of formulaic sequences seems to be of a more articulatory nature. For instance, a recent inquiry by Arnon and Cohen Priva (2013) focused on examining phonetic duration in the articulation of prefabricated expressions of varying degrees of frequencies. The researchers concluded that phonetic duration tends to be shortened in relation to the ubiquity of a given ready-made expression while the opposite is also true. That is, sparsely occurring ready-made expressions are characterized with extended phonetic duration whether in planned or unplanned speech. In the light of the findings that account for the production of ready-made expressions, it can be argued that although these studies are focused on L1 formulaic production, they still provide a major contribution to the understanding of how non-native speakers use the learnt linguistic system in general and formulaic expressions in particular. At the same time conclusions drawn from research into the perception of L2 formulaic sequences can also echo certain insights into how the production process is done. However, to the author's best knowledge no study (during the time of writing) has presented empirical evidence regarding the production of L2 formulaic sequences. This lacuna may provide a motive for future studies to delve into the issue. Yet, ample evidence confirming the processing advantage that is exclusive to formulaic sequences highlights the key role of formulaic sequences in second language settings.

3.6 The salience of formulaic sequences in L2 context

Formulaic sequences of all kinds have a vital importance in different contexts of second language use. Most obviously, L2 beginner learners and holiday makers in L2 speaking countries have always learnt/ been taught certain phrases and expressions to cope with the demands of

interaction in common daily life situations such as greeting people, asking for directions, ordering food at a restaurant ...etc. The aim of equipping such people with knowledge of lexical chunks highlights the major role lexical knowledge plays in our daily use of language. Therefore, in what follows we will discuss the main functions of formulaic sequences that have appeared in different literature.

3.6.1 Develop fluency

Learning formulaic language can contribute to native-like selection. Pawley and Syder (1983) point out “native speakers do not exercise the power of syntactic rules to anything like their full extent”. Therefore, he goes on to say “if they did they would not be accepted as exhibiting native-like control of the language” (p.98). This means that although there is a possibility of expressing new ideas in perfectly grammatically created utterances, the output will always sound unnatural and contrived as long as it deviates from what is most likely expected to be said ! Hence, the more learners use formulaic language the more natural their production will seem, since formulaic sequences help speakers cope with the demands of on-the spot language processing while maintaining fluency. Put another way, as the stock of memories increases, retrieval of the information that is needed to perform certain act will become gradually faster. Eventually, the speaker will reach a point of mastery where memory retrieval is faster than executing grammar rules for the sake of negotiating meaning. In Wary (2002) claims, formulaic sequences economize efforts and reduce the likelihood of marring one’s performance with certain disfluencies such as repeated pauses and hesitations.

3.6.2 Enhance accuracy

Formulaic sequences provide grammar with the raw data that it needs to base its generalizability of rules in language. Besides, it is evident that formulaic sequences are encoded with particular grammatical properties of language which, if attended to, can help learners develop more practice and consequently better command of the target language (Lewis, 1997). One of the main recommendations that Lewis’s Lexical Approach stresses is that by attaching more importance to word selection, it is more likely to enhance this aspect of lexical accuracy. Many studies on SLA emphasize that foreign language learners usually experience a period of silence which may be attributed to different factors. One explanation is that they remain silent because they constantly feel inability to produce proper sentences to convey a particular message. To this end, helping learners use formulaic sequences encourage them to interact and

appropriate their performance with a particular expected use of language. Moreover, having a mental repository of formulaic sequences on hand can contribute to unburden the processing load of checking accuracy.

3.6.3 Improve interactive skills

It has to be admitted that although non-formulaic sequences function socially, formulaic sequences have proved to be most central to the health of relationships among speakers in social settings. Wray and Perkins (2001) account for three functions that linguistic formulacity is characterized with in relation to social interaction. The first explains the use of institutionalized forms (e.g. requests, commands...etc.) that express the need of a speaker to achieve certain communicative goals and get his/her biological, emotional and cognitive needs met. The second function can be seen in one's attempt to express his individuality and identity as he/she uses certain markers of politeness to be taken seriously (e.g. turn claimers and holders). Lastly, one can express group membership by using the language needed to ensure his active role within a particular speech community in which he contributes to its uniqueness and social fabric emotionally and ideologically (e.g. the use of group chants, proverbs, rituals...etc.).

3.6.4 Secure access to L2 community

Besides the importance of formulaic sequences use in helping one single out his identity or express his group membership, it is clear that native-like idiomaticity, in which there is a perfect way of expressing something in a speech community, seems to indicate that certain word strings are prioritized during language processing and, hence, likely to be selected as a default expression of verbalizing a particular state of affair. Even though there is an infinite number of correct ways of expressing the same idea, adhering to the customary ways of saying things allows one, chiefly non-native speaker, to be an active part in a particular speech community and in turn maximizes his /her chances to make the most of the L2 world (Wray,2002).

3.6.5 Ease the processing burden

Most research on formulaic sequences widely conducted in psycholinguistics and cognition confirm that using lexical chunks is of prime importance for both of the speaker and the hearer. According to Pawley and Syder (1983), in terms of the language production (i.e. the speaker), there is less effort and strain required of the brain to recall language forms that are, on the one hand, already composed and, on the other, tailor-made for a particular speech event. The ease of such use is credited to the effortless process of retrieving something stored in memory

than trying to appropriately create it from scratch where one might run the risk of producing anomalous language which may either hold someone up to ridicule or offend him. At worst, one with poor knowledge of formulaic sequences is very likely to take longer time laboring to put his/her ideas into words. This is very likely to cost him/her the effectiveness of communication.

If we look at formulaic sequences from the dimension of language perception (i.e. the hearer), it is widely acknowledged that when the brain is accustomed to a particular linguistic task, it will be in a better position to cut short the required mechanism to process and make sense of a given input. In so doing, language hearer feels less cognitive pressure to deal with the encountered load and decipher the content with the aim of reacting or acting upon it (Wary & Perkins, 2001).

3.6.6 Boost self-confidence and maintain motivation

In foreign language classes motivation is the impetus for successful language acquisition. Noticeably, highly motivated learners have always proven to excel in the learning process. Since they feel a prestige and an enjoyable experience in getting themselves acculturated to a given foreign language, such learners tend to achieve high language proficiency in short time. However, learners may feel frustrated due to their inability to match what they really wish to express with what they can currently really express. In other words, failure to produce creative discourse by mere applications of syntactic rules which were traditionally thought of as generative structures puts learners off the task of communicating in the target language. This may result in getting learners to feel bored with their fruitless attempts to use the target language correctly and this encourages them to switch to the L1 instead! Therefore, ready-made expressions contribute to improve learners' motivation by serving as a communicative prop for foreign language learners mainly at the beginning stage of language learning. In this respect, Nattinger and Decarrico (1992) emphasize “lexical chunks allow for expression that learners yet unable to construct creatively, simply because they are stored and retrieved as whole chunks, a fact which should ease frustration and at the same time promote motivation”(p,114).

Since most lexical chunks function beyond the semantics of language, they are loaded with pragmatic meanings (e.g. ordering, agreeing, greeting...etc.) which allow one to effectively communicate and enjoy the skill of using the learnt language whose effect is reflected on the hearer/ reader either changing a particular state of mind or course of action, In so doing, learners self-confidence is boosted as they feel a sense of accomplishment.

3.6.7 Simplify the learning process

It has been claimed in the literature on multiword units (e.g. Wray, 2002 & Siyanova, 2015) that our memory capacity is highly sensitive to linguistic information in the sense that memory tends to largely store language in the form of combinations of words that are frequently associated with a particular context of use. This view was acknowledged early in the publication of Lewis (2000) who maintains that it is not only the frequency of item occurrence which is important to memorability but also the length of the chunk. Lewis explains his view in the following words “the larger the chunks are, which learners originally acquire, the easier the task of re-producing natural language later is” (p.133).

The essence of Lewis’ claim is that it is not much demanding to breakdown a chunk into constituents (supposedly in order analyzes it grammatically) than to form, due to the fact that learners are noticed to be comfortable with learning the building blocks of language whose components are subsequently examined in atomistic way. This strategy of learning has proven to be productive and, for this reason, Lewis puts forward the Lexical Approach to teaching formulaic sequences and whose main fulcrum is based upon the concept of pedagogical chunking. That is, facilitation of the task of learning the L2 by which the teacher focuses learners attention on noticing and memorizing multi word units (MWUs) used in a given input.

3.7 Material selection for teaching collocations

Undoubtedly, in the teaching process the quality of the input plays a major role in the acquisition of the target form. It is true that collocations are ubiquitous, but reinforcing learners’ exposure to collocations requires considering the source of the input itself. Getting learners to pore over a bulky textbook and do a battery of exercises is both demanding and demotivating. Thanks to the advent of technology and the accompanying reforms in the educational system, foreign languages, mainly English, has become widely available everywhere (e.g. on TV, radio and, mainly, the Internet). This privilege has encouraged many teachers to wean from the disrupting school authority and its artificial restricted materials. In turn, this encouraged teachers to embark on a new task of choosing richer, more updated and more effective source of collocations. The following is some of those sources.

3.7.1 Collocations Dictionary

Dictionaries in general seem to be the most referred to language material mainly in case of doubt about certain meaning .Learners usually look up a particular item in a dictionary and

explore most of its linguistic properties. A good dictionary enriches learners' knowledge about a given word not only in terms of meaning but also in terms of spelling, pronunciation, use and its collocational fields which Lewis (1993, p.103) terms "the word grammar", i.e. the linguistic environment (context) where the word in question occurs frequently. Dictionaries enhance learners' processing of language (comprehension and production). However, by the rapid increase of commercial editions the plethora of language learning books (grammar and pronunciation books in the first place), the seemingly sale gimmick, downplayed the importance of dictionaries in language learning / teaching. General claims that words should not be learnt contextlessly and in isolation has opened Pandora's Box of avoiding the use of dictionaries as long as they encourage learners to seek the knowledge of individual meaning of words (Bullard as cited in Summers, 1988). This tendency of learning proved to support the myth of generative grammar where words are learnt for the sake of filling slots provided by grammatical structures.

Unsurprisingly, collocation dictionaries lend much support to the acquisition of language communicatively where knowledge of the proper context of using a particular language item plays a key role. Besides context, collocation dictionaries are in fact based upon the generative power of the co-text that we discussed in the previous chapter. They equip their users with a detailed explanation regarding the collocational fields of a given word. Crudely put, collocation dictionaries highlight most, as Firth (1957, p.176) describes, "the company a word keeps". Lewis (2000) stresses the use of collocation dictionaries for effective acquisition of language. He illustrates that through the use of the word *criticism* in the Dictionary of Selected Collocations. Accordingly, if we look at this word we find a number of other possible items that together with the word *criticism* forms what we term as collocation. Such a range of collocates includes a related word class that can syntactically either precede or follow the word in question (e.g. verb: *escape, attract, accept...*etc. Adjective: *fierce, friendly, mild ...*etc. Preposition: *over, from, about...* etc.) .Collocation dictionaries can also present the user with certain phrases that can be used to express the idea of quantity which is found in a number of phrases such as *torrents of criticism, barrage of criticism, chorus of criticism ...*etc.

On the careful compiling of entries for such dictionaries, Lewis also adds that dictionary entries are designed in a way that reinforces learners' exposure to the required language forms as they are also meant to enrich their mental lexicon (collocational knowledge). This, consequently, improves learners' production of idiomatic and natural language. No doubt that learners can

tremendously benefit or draw on information contained in a collocations dictionary to do particular essay writing. For instance, they can keep it nearby in case of doubt regarding which word goes with which other word. Learners can look up a given word and choose the proper collocate that best corresponds to the idea they want to express (Laufer, 2010). In Oxford Collocations Dictionary for Students of English Runcie (2002) , the publisher who prefaced this dictionary, maintains that the learner who chooses to use this dictionary of collocations as a necessary and irreplaceable tool for learning English will have his/her English produced more fluently and idiomatically than another learner who uses an ordinary dictionary. Diana Lea (2002), the head of the managing editors of the aforementioned dictionary, stresses that the focus of this dictionary is to simplify the comprehensibility of the collocational information on the one hand and increase its accessibility to a wider audience who are interested in developing their English proficiency and, above all, write more naturally. This does not mean that such a dictionary is intended for non-native students and teachers only but, as Lea contends, it is also meant to be used by native teachers, translators, academics and everyone who aims to produce fluent English.

In the literature on the acquisition of English collocations, the so called Oxford Collocations Dictionary for English Students seems to be the most reported source of collocations and a reliable tool (yardstick) that is commonly adopted to judge language proficiency and measure the collocational competence in the corpora of non-native users of English. Furthermore, the luxury that using this dictionary offers is due to its careful design and the quick accessibility of its entries as well as the graphically and thoroughly well- presented content. For instance, it excludes non-collocational content and, instead, it highlights collocations that are used in different domains and genres (e.g. law, journalism, literature...etc.). Dictionaries as such suggest a number of topics of general interest to learners (e.g. weather, sports, weather...etc.) where these topics server as a supplementary teaching material for classroom use.

Unsurprisingly, teachers' rejection of the ubiquitous presence of dictionaries inside the classroom seems to be prompted by observing their learners using bilingual dictionaries very often. To say the least, bilingual dictionaries encourage a tendency to embark on the learning process in a very negative and counterproductive way. Thus, instead of taking risks and learning language in its natural and no-linear way (for instance, by the process of immersion in the target

language) learners slack off on enriching their mental lexicon. Consequently, when learners encounter an unfamiliar word, they resort to the short cut of translating and finding the equivalent word(s) in their mother tongue. Regrettably, a tendency as such affects learners cognitive and metacognitive skills and, worst of all, is very likely to contribute to the negative transfer that is, in the first place, the culprit of unidiomatic output and miscollocations. In this respect, Lea (2002) maintains that bilingual dictionaries unreliably divide meaning into single words. Though it is a powerful tool to deconstruct the meaning of a given text, such privilege proved to be limited especially in case of trying to construct a text by creating appropriate meaningful word combinations. Besides, bilingual or monolingual ordinary dictionaries can offer the most possible linguistic help to their users. Notwithstanding, bilingual dictionaries are too general in the sense that they have always fell short of covering the specific language items that better help decipher the word in question. In contrast, a collocations dictionary as Lea puts:

allows students to build up their own collocational competence on need-to know basis starting from the word they already know –or know in part. Occasionally, or even regular collocation exercises in course books cannot fulfill this role, although they do a useful job of raising the profile of collocations as an essential feature of language, and teach some useful collocations in the process (p.VIII).

It is also worth mentioning that non-collocation dictionaries, especially the monolingual ones that are intended for advanced learners, can be used as a source of collocations. In addition, learners pre-existing dictionary skills can also be harnessed in order to enrich those learners collocational knowledge. Usually, modern dictionaries include useful information about collocations through different entries. This kind of dictionaries also use graphic techniques (e.g., bolding, underlining, or shading) to attract learners' attention to certain use of collocations. To mention some of those dictionaries, Oxford Advanced Learners' Dictionary, known as OALD, is one of the world's best seller. In addition to its massive vocabulary bank, it includes a wide range of topic-based collocation boxes. Such a dictionary is a reliable source of collocations since it is based on the reliable and highly acknowledged authority of the British National Corpus¹⁴ (BNC) and Oxford English Corpus¹⁵ (OEC).

¹⁴ BNC is a very huge collection of millions of texts of spoken and written English that is gathered from a wide range of different sources. The corpus includes 100 million words and its compilation started in 1991 and finished in 1994. The corpus was last updated in 2007. It is one of the most widely used representative sources of natural occurring English.

On how monolingual dictionaries can be drawn on to enrich learners' collocational knowledge, Lewis (2000) explains that the examples, usually short sentences, these dictionaries provide very often include some of the collocates to demonstrate the frequent use of a particular word. Therefore, it is necessary for teachers to train their learners and focus their attention on finding any included collocation(s) while they read examples in such dictionaries. Lewis points out that this strategy of searching for occasional collocations enables to use ordinary monolingual dictionary as an "encoding rather than decoding" tool. To optimize a strategy as such, learners need to be trained and guided by their teachers through a battery of classroom exercises and tasks. The latter are meant to shift learners attention from examining the different meanings of a particular word to exploring the range of its collocates. To illustrate, Lewis reports that during one of his classroom proceedings the word *criticism* happened to attract learners' attention in the sentence *the government has received heavy criticism*. Together with the aim of finding the meaning of this word, learners were referred to an English-English dictionary to explore the different uses of this word. The motive behind this step is to increase learners' sensitivity towards noticing the main items that usually accompany the word *criticism*. To reinforce learners encounter of collocations through the use of this dictionary-based classroom activity, Lewis recommends engaging learners in a sentence completion-based activity where the missing items represent the appropriate similar collocates. In so doing, such teacher-guided noticing can tremendously help learners turn their findings from a consultation of a monolingual dictionary into a powerful means of producing natural language. It is worth mentioning that the major downside in the use of ordinary dictionaries lies in the limited number of collocates that such dictionaries may include in their defining vocabulary and examples. In other words, this deficiency may come into play when learners are in need of using a particular collocate that faithfully conveys the desired meaning of the word combination they are trying to use.

With the advancement of sciences and the dominance of cutting edge technology, the luxury of using electronic dictionaries has over shadowed the need to use hard-copy dictionaries. Rezaei and Davoudi (2016) argue that electronic dictionaries, including the ones that are available on CD, can help learners access the needed language quickly as it allows them to form hypothesis about the different uses of a particular item. As a result, learners create a lexical

¹⁵ OEC is a myriad of millions of texts taken from a wide range of genres. It includes 1.9 million words. This corpus was last updated in 2006. It is owned by Oxford University Press which uses it for certain projects such as in the field of lexicography.

framework within which their collocational knowledge can be expanded. In a similar vein, Lewis (2000) points out that a good electronic dictionary offers a speed of search advantage as it encourages learners' autonomy in developing collocational competence. In this respect he advises "in order to promote and assist the independent learning of collocations, we need to make this type of resource (meaning electronic dictionaries) available to our students and train them in constructive use of their powerful tool" (p.38).

Nowadays, cellphone dictionaries, known as application dictionaries, are the most commonly used type of electronic dictionaries. With a tap of a finger, this hand-held search tool presents its users with a detailed explanation about the meaning and use of a given word. Needless to say, a cellphone collocations dictionary is by far the easiest and the most quickly consulted electronic dictionary in terms of explanation about the combinatory system of words. With its developed search options and easy settings, the content of such a dictionary can be updated via the Net. Thus, much wealth of collocational information about a given word will all be available at the learners' fingertip!

It is wise to acknowledge that through the course of conducting the classroom experiment reported in this PhD thesis, the researcher provided the participants with software of a collocations dictionary to install in their cellphones (see appendix D) as he strongly encouraged them to use it as part of the classroom main practices. We will return to discuss this in detail in the fifth chapter.

3.7.2 Concordancer and electronic corpus

Similar to the design of dictionary and its role in language learning, concordancers are a constantly updated and far richer source of collocations. According to Yavuz (2014), a concordancer refers to a computer program that provides a search based-access to an electronically stored corpus. The latter can be either linked to the concordancer online via the Internet or retrieved straight from the computer database. Through displaying the occurrences of a given word in a diversity of authentic texts, this powerful computer software enables us to know the different uses of this word. In explaining the main features of a concordancer search, Lewis (2000) describes that the target searched word is singled out by being positioned clearly in the middle of the page that the concordancer screen displays. Besides, every searched word is featured within a single line that serves as the defining context of use. The latter is usually displayed in the form of an incomplete sentence. However, in modern concordancers further

details about the context of use can be accessed by using the advanced search options. The so-called Key Word In Context (KWIC) ¹⁶sums up the main workings of the concordance program (Yavuz, 2014).

For Lewis (2000), the reason concordancers outweigh dictionaries in terms of providing detailed explanations on collocations lies in the greater amounts of information a concordance program can provide about a certain word. Such a wealth of collocational information can tremendously help learners confirm or contradict their hypothesis about certain language use, all without the intervention of the teacher! However, a concordancer can also be of great help to teachers in the sense that they can use it to effectively and safely correct their learners' errors. This proves to be a tactful strategy especially when it comes to teachers' wish to avoid the trouble of daunting learners by intervening heavily to edit and reproduce a correct version of the learners' writing. To illustrate this idea, Lewis gives the example of capitalizing on miscollocations in a learner's output by referring him/her to concordancer examples. Hence, in case a learner is observed to write a collocationally wrong sentence such as *we will increase our prices because of the increasing coast of advertising our products**, a learner is guided to run a concordancer search for the combination *cost + of* in order to find proper collocates such as *rising* and *growing*. Sun (2007) points out that learners who use a concordancer will have an idea about the extent to which they have acquired a particular word and this, in turn, allows them to remedy their weaknesses and monitor their language learning processes. From an interlingual point of view, Chan (2005) claims that cross-language concordancing (searching for an item using a concordancer) contributes enormously to raise learners' awareness of the area of similarities and differences that is related to the co-occurring of two or more words between the languages in question.

As we discussed previously, the motto of the lexical approach regarding foreign language acquisition is summed up in the advantage of noticing collocations. Following the line of Lewis (2000) argument, recognizing collocations in their natural authentic context can help learners convert the input into intake. More strikingly, this acquisition process can even take place without formal instruction. In this respect, Lewis accounts for the virtue of accessing natural context via concordancing. He specifies:

¹⁶ KWIC is a very common format of concordance search. It is based on an indexing system where words are sorted, aligned and searched alphabetically.

Concordancers sensitize learners to the fact that text does consist of chunks and noticing these chunks accurately does help them produce language more easily, fluently and accurately themselves. The process both confirms your intuition...and persuades you of the danger of taking examples away from the natural context...the danger of inventing examples inside the classroom(p.119).

By the time the development of corpus linguistics triggered a series of trends in other areas of language studies, the pedagogical implications drawn from corpus linguistics paved the way for foreign language teachers to integrate concordance-based activities into their usual classroom practices. There are a number of useful concordance programs that can be used easily to teach learners. Word Smith and Mono Can Pro are among the widely used ones. With Ant Con program, teachers, for instance, are able to take their learners' exposure inside the classroom far beyond the limited examples in a dictionary. This is not only in terms of enriching their exposure to natural context, but also in terms of increasing their exposure to word co-text too (Kezhen, 2015).

On training learners to use concordancers for increasing their awareness of the collocational fields of words, Lewis (2000) suggests that simple exercises should be designed to acquaint learners with the workings of the concordancers on the one hand and, on the other, familiarize them with how words combine properly in a natural context. A good guiding approach a teacher can use is , for example, to create a gap in a particular sentence extracted from a natural context(usually from a native speaker corpus) then he/she asks his/her learners to complete this sentence by finding the missing collocate. The teacher provides these learners with copies of screenshots from a concordance search findings which are already obtained about the word in question. The learners pore over the lines that contain this word with the aim of selecting an appropriate collocate that completes the gapped sentence. Lewis stresses that the effectiveness of this classroom exercise lies in the fact that with much practice, further exploration and exposure to collocations in natural contexts, learners' sensitivity towards the right collocate will be increased. Moreover, instead of rushing our answers to learners' queries about the possibility of putting certain words together, it is very useful to encourage learners to run a concordance search in order to explore and discuss, in Lewis terms, "probable language" on their own (p.46).

A word of warning is needed regarding the surplus amounts of corpus data that may overwhelm learners especially at the beginning level. There is no denying that a foreign language

learner is not expected to have a theoretical and principled knowledge about how language is best acquired or taught. This seems to be the concern of an applied linguistics expert. Therefore, to ensure that learners perceive the input in a desired way, teachers should bear in mind Parr and Krashen (1986) concept of authenticity of input when it comes to the selection of corpus examples for illustrative purposes. In other words, it is helpful to simplify the corpus -based teaching materials, but at the same time it is necessary to bear in mind that much editing of these archetypal instances of natural language use brings the authenticity of the teaching materials into question. Notwithstanding, advocates of chunk-based teaching explain that teachers should attract learners' attention to the kinds of naturally occurring instances of language use that have been pedagogically selected on the basis of a particular aim in mind (Lewis,2000).

In sum, it should be acknowledged that concordancers are the only reliable demonstrating tool available so far to offer access to a large amount of instances of naturally occurring language. Thanks to corpus evidence and the wide variety of authentic materials, concordancers enable learners to explore the frequency and the relationship between certain items quickly and extensively. As a result, foreign language learners' exposure to naturally occurring language increases and, in turn, their collocational intuitions become more accurate.

3.7.3 Grammar and collocations reference books

As we have pointed out previously, the development of corpus linguistics and the findings obtained from cognitive studies have revealed striking evidence about how language works and how native speakers process it. All of this has highlighted the importance of collocations in language teaching /learning process. For this reason, many authors and publishing houses around the world have released many teaching materials, either the ones which include incidental collocation activities that are designed together with general activities about grammar (grammar books) or others which are based on exercises meant for teaching collocations exclusively (practical classroom handbooks). In either case such books have become a major source of collocations and whose effectiveness of content is worth considering.

To start with, grammar reference books are so common in EFL classes. Such ubiquity contributes to provide good insights into the mechanics of language use. However, books intended for teaching language through grammatical rules exclusively are still problematic especially in terms of the way they are organized. In case one is doubtful about some area of language use, it is possible to check things, but in other cases where there is much perplexity,

grammar books have always fell short of providing the desired information. Notwithstanding, we cannot lose sight of the fact that grammar books still contain useful information especially that they provide effective practice and illuminating examples about lexical chunks. However, if they are not approached with caution, grammar books can be of more counterproductive nature. Following the principles of the Lexical Approach and in order to teach collocations appropriately, any classroom practice that is based on certain grammatical understanding has to be in line with the following criteria: the provision of natural co-text, the provision of supra-sentential practice and the inclusion of well-chosen archetypal examples (Lewis,1993.p.181).

First, the role of naturally occurring co-text should be taken into consideration when using grammar books as a resource to teach collocations. As we have pointed out earlier in chapter three, every word has its own grammar and system of use (collocational fields). Traditionally, the teaching of vocabulary has long been known to adhere to a concept that is commonly termed as “semantic fields”. Accordingly, in order to organize the acquisition of vocabulary, the language teacher is expected to introduce a number of words under a particular theme. Exercises to teach grammatical rules and vocabulary, included in most modern course books, are designed in such a way to claim that the unpacked content is communicative! In fact there is no harm theoretically, but pedagogically this process results in learners acquiring nominalized vocabulary knowledge. In other words, nouns would be the predominant word class in the learners’ mental lexicon. Therefore, in order to reap the benefits of teaching lexis, mainly collocations, in conjunction with a particular theme, it is important to focus learners’ attention on different kinds of lexical collocations (Grains & Redman as cited in Lewis, 1993).

Second, it is widely acknowledged that grammar books exhibit mostly decontextualized sentences which are very likely to have an adverse effect on learners’ ability to produce cohesive and coherent output. Evidently, grammatical devices that guarantee a holistic perception of a text (more than a mere sequence of sentences) form what we call a supra-sentential mechanism. Regrettably, such a kind of grammatical system remains a peripheral part in most instructional programs. For this reason and to ensure better effective language courses, the effective implementation of the Lexical Approach requires that any classroom procedure for presenting language to be based on supra-sentential practices. The latter represents one of the major requirements to be fulfilled when it comes to using grammar reference books to teach collocations (Willis, 1990).

Lastly, it is widely accepted that what has always led to the dismissal of the quality of language used in the illustration of a particular grammar rule is the artificial and contrived examples. There is no denying that grammar books seem to be the number one source of unnatural examples, simply because their main focus is to demonstrate the use of a particular structure and help learners internalize it and generate language accordingly. No matter how unrealistic the learners' externalization (output) might be, the main focus of grammar books is that the accuracy of the target displayed grammatical structure outweighs any possible error including word choice, in particular the collocability of words! A problem as such underscores the need to focus learners' attention on natural archetypal examples. As a matter of fact, words in a language are coupled up randomly but for certain reasons a teacher is, by certain pedagogic wisdom, required to invent examples. Such an attempt to exemplify necessitates that the teacher creates stimulated conditions under which a particular use of item in language takes place (Lewis, 1993).

Drawing on a grammar reference book to illustrate a particular collocational range of a given word also requires the teacher to be cautious about archetypal examples themselves, in the sense that such examples should only represent one manageable sub-category of a certain language item at a time (Lewis, 2000). No matter how complex the process of choosing archetypal examples is, this cannot be taken as a justification to use invented illustrations.

Unarguably, the difficulty of recognising typical examples in grammar books lies in the complex and inconsistent nature of the interplay between words and grammar in different kinds of texts. Thus, what might be a typical example in one context might not be the same in another. Regrettably, the tendency of inventing examples to apply a particular grammatical rule accurately has long been a major classroom practice. Usually invented examples are characterized with a very limited number of clauses in a sentence. Very often only one clause is used in a sentence in order to illustrate certain structures. Moreover, it is also evident that lexis-based examples, collocation-related ones in the first place, are based on grammatical structures and vice versa. Thanks to evidence from corpus linguistics, an examination of a particular item via the use of a concordancer is very likely to reveal staggering results regarding the gap between invented examples and authentic ones. To this end, as a safe guard, attending to the co-text in which a particular item is defined keeps the teacher alert as to how to deal with the quality of the examples contained in grammar reference books (Sinclair, 1991).

Another source of collocations that deserves our closer attention is those books that are specifically devoted for teaching collocations. In a very interesting series of books authored by Felicity O'Dell and Michael Mc McCarthy (2005; 2008), practical courses are well presented to improve learners' collocational knowledge. Through a number of socio-cultural and lifestyle-based topics (e.g. music, sports, marriage...etc.) accompanied by a battery of useful exercises, learners' understanding of how words go together in natural English is advanced and their receptive and productive collocation-related skills are reinforced as well. In 2005, the aforementioned authors published their first practical handbook "English Collocations in Use: Intermediate". The illuminating explanation and effective practice this book includes makes of it a rich source of collocations not only for classroom use but also for a self-study program. Likewise, the second edition of this book was published in 2008 and designed to teach collocations explicitly but this time it is intended for advanced students "*English collocations in use : Advanced*". Both of the publications are meant to improve learners' ability to use natural English in spoken and written forms. With a number of tips and a series of activities McCarthy and O'dell, (2005) contend that the intermediate learners -oriented book can also serve as a guide to prepare for standard English proficiency test such as International English Testing System (IELTS) and Cambridge Exam which are aimed at testing candidates collocational competence in different skills. On the other hand, the second book of O'Dell and McCarthy (2008) provides richer practice of very common collocations at an advanced level. It also offers some practical tips and strategies for effective learning of collocations by raising learners' awareness of the most common errors related to the use of collocations. Both of the aforementioned books are based on the authority of Cambridge International Corpus that guarantees the usefulness and high frequency of the presented collocations.

3.7.5 Authentic material

It is noteworthy that the sources of collocations that we have been discussing, mainly dictionaries, grammar reference books and collocation handbooks, provide a kind of language that is specifically designed for pedagogical purposes. However, by the advent of new technology (Internet, computer, TV satellite channels...etc.), learners' exposure to the target language became more open to the world. The long standing authority of written language and the growing luxury of teachers as the ideal speakers of the target language started to fade away as learners become surrounded with the kind of the target language that is free of teachers'

intervention and which, more importantly, has little to do with what the syllabus expects learners to achieve. Such a kind of authentic language has always proven to be highly communicative and very useful to enhance learners' collocational competence. Nunan (1988) explains that authentic materials refer to any form of language (written/ spoken) that is produced by native speakers exclusively and meant to be mostly consumed by native-speakers with no consideration of non-native speakers use or any pedagogical requirement. In other words, authentic materials feature naturally-occurring language that, very often, characterizes interactions among native speakers exclusively. This includes newspapers, public notices, magazines, TV/ radio programs and so forth.

Following evidence of the holistic processing of natural language and, above all, the pervasiveness of collocations in native speakers' output (features of operating on the Idiom Principle) that we have discussed at the beginning of this chapter, authentic materials of all kinds seem to provide learners with an opportunity to reinforce their classroom acquired knowledge. At the same time, authentic materials allow learners to experience first-hand the communicative force of naturally co-occurring words. In the explanatory principles of the Lexical Approach, authentic materials are highly recommended. However, unsurprisingly, the bulk of authentic language that learners are exposed to inside the classroom may turn out to be a source of perplexity and demotivation in case learners attempt to make sense of the different kinds of collocations it includes. To this end, the pioneer of the Lexical Approach Lewis (1993) argues that for effective acquisition of collocations following exposure to authentic materials, two main points have to be borne in mind. First, learners need not understand a given input fully. This is simply because partial comprehension of the perceived materials aids effective acquisition since this process of partial understandability is intrinsic to the ordinary negotiation of meaning in naturally occurring settings. No doubt that non-native learners are constantly under the pressure of understanding every single word or the meaning of every single sentence in a given material. This attempt in fact sets the bar high for them and, worst of all, undermines their self-confidence to interact with the input as it puts them off the performance of a particular classroom task. Therefore, for Lewis (1993, 1997), it is preferable that teachers help learners resist the temptation of seeking full comprehension of all the running words in the authentic materials. This can be done by getting learners repeatedly exposed to a short excerpt of the authentic materials. Additionally, Lewis stresses that it is of prime importance to help learners'

maintain their attention focused by guiding them through the exposure process. A good strategy could be a teacher designs a set of questions or a checklist to ensure learners successful negotiation of meaning. This can also help directing learners' attention towards the co-occurrence of certain words and their function in the creation of the perceived meaning. Second, it should also be noted that any authentic material that is meant to serve as a supplementary tool should be carefully selected and prepared in line with the formal teaching material (e.g. textbook). Both are expected to encourage top-down comprehension in the sense that even a learner with limited linguistic knowledge can find his/her own way to successfully interact and negotiate meaning during exposure to the naturally occurring language (Lewis,1993).

In sum, exploiting the language that occurs beyond the classroom life and the related pedagogical requirements is very demanding for both learners and teachers. However, successful and fruitful immersion of EFL learners in the daily life language that a teacher pedagogically brings inside the classroom requires a principled approach. Furthermore, a short article from a daily popular newspaper seems to be a good example of authentic materials, given that the content of this media report is meant to update people on recent issues and the latest developments in daily life (e.g. political, social, educational ...issues). More importantly, the language used in newspapers is accessible to most people regardless of how limited their linguistic resources are. Such language includes a large number of common collocations around which a teacher can design classroom activities to attract his /her learners' attention and build their collocational competence.

3.8 Conclusion

The range of evidence that confirms the holistic perception and production of language by its native speakers qualifies formulaic sequences as a sine qua none for any attempt to learn or teach a second or foreign language. Collocations of different types are one of the dominant forms of formulaic sequences whose use is a hallmark of nativeness especially in writing. As a prerequisite for obtaining proficiency in EFL writing, teachers are required to focus their learners' attention on the learning of various collocational patterns. Teachers are also expected to rethink their current teaching practices and embark on a teaching methodology that is aligned

with the nature of language, which is confirmed to be arbitrary, and the nature of learning, which is proved to be non-linear.

Chapter Four

Investigating Learners' Awareness of Collocations: Description and Analysis of the Questionnaire

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4.1 Introduction

Since the main aim of this doctoral research is to put the Lexical Approach to the test and measure its potential in relation to EFL learners' ability to produce idiomatic writing, data required for an in-depth understanding of the issue in question were gathered from varying sources. Crudely put, as a triangulation of methods learners' attitudes towards collocations, mainly their pre-existing awareness of collocations during previous exposure to English, have been explored using a questionnaire. The latter was addressed to the target population (first year students of English) prior to the start of the classroom experiment.

Through exploring the participants' attitudes towards the arbitrary combinary system of L2 words (the collocational field of words), the aim of this chapter is to provide a detailed account of EFL learners' pre-existing knowledge and awareness of collocations. Hence, this chapter is devoted to report on the results and analysis of the administered questionnaire. It starts with defining the aims of the questionnaire and the selected sample of the study .In addition, it covers issues related to the administration of the questionnaire as it also provides an outline of the main content of this questionnaire. In this chapter also, the results obtained from the questionnaire are thoroughly analyzed and tabulated using the co-called Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Accordingly, the chapter concludes with discussion and summary of the major findings with reference to the current research questions.

4.2 Defining the questionnaire and its aims

The present study is based on analyzing data obtained from mixed methods, i.e. together with the administered tests (collocational knowledge test and the writing test) and the conducted interview, which will all be fully discussed in the next chapter, the constructed questionnaire in this study is meant to elicit both qualitative and quantitative data. It is designed by the researcher himself, piloted and accordingly edited and improved prior to its official administration inside the classroom. Copies of this questionnaire were handed out to the respondents to complete and return in a printed version only. No electronic version of the questionnaire was distributed to or received from the respondents. Items included in this questionnaire are close ended and open ended questions. They both seek to answer the following:

- a) Are Algerian EFL intermediate learners aware of the collocational restrictions placed on the use of words?

- b) To what extent are they able to recognize the varying degrees of arbitrariness that dictate such collocational restrictions? In other words, how much are these learners aware of the arbitrary relationship that exists among co-occurring words in English?
- c) What are the cognitive strategies that the subjects of this study have employed to process collocations prior to the introduction of the instructional program?

The reason behind adopting questionnaire as one of the main methods used in this research study is that, datawise, questionnaires provide information about the behavior and opinions of the participants (Nunan , 2003). Elicited information as such allows us to identify the pre-existing awareness and knowledge of collocations of EFL learners in order to assess the overall effect of the classroom-based experiment on those EFL learners' acquisition of collocational accuracy. Aside from the demographic information which helps us identify and profile our subjects of the study in terms of some variables such as age and educational background, the questionnaire also helps to access these learners behavior mainly the way they process collocations which, in turn, enables us to explore their previously acquired cognitive strategies related to our participants' tendency, if any, to operate on the Idiom Principle. Methodology wise, questionnaires are easier to administer and respond to by learners compared to other tools of data collection namely interviews. Given that our subjects of the study are recently enrolled first year students of English, they are very likely to be somewhat reticent and reluctant (during interview for instance) due to the fact that they feel daunted, unfamiliar with the new linguistic environment and less able to express themselves accurately in English at the beginning of their course of university study. For this reason, eliciting accurate information from them requires using questionnaire. The latter allows the respondents to disclose at ease and as much as possible without any effect of some constraints such as time or limited communicative skills. Moreover, the anonymity of this questionnaire adds more to the validity and reliability of the obtained data in the sense that it encourages the participants of the study to be more cooperative and objective in terms of the quality of the information they reveal.

4.3 Defining the sample

The investigation of learners' awareness of collocations through this questionnaire is conducted on first year LMD students at the Department of English in Chedli Ben Djidid University of Taref, Algeria during the academic year 2016/2017. The total number of first year

students enrolled in the Department of English is 96. These English majors are divided by the aforementioned department into three groups, with more than 30 students in each. However, given that this present study is based on a classroom quasi-experiment, i.e. it probes into the effect of the designed pedagogical intervention through analysis of the performances of an experimental group and a control group (see chapter six), it was not possible to address the questionnaire to the whole population. Instead, we randomly chose two groups as a representative sample of the study. Thus, the total number of participants (sample size) is 62 students. Their age ranges between 18 to 34 years old. Female students make up 74% (N¹⁷46) of the whole sample, whereas male students represent 26% (N 16). These EFL students studied English as a compulsory school subject for almost the same period of time (from three to four years at middle school and three years at high school). The students were taught English at the aforementioned educational institutions following the practices of the Competency-Based Approach (CBA) which was adopted by the Algerian Ministry of Education in the late 1990s. Our study participants speak Arabic as their mother tongue (L1) and French as their second language (L2). English is taught in Algeria as a foreign language (EFL). Hence, the subjects of this study are homogenous in terms of age and linguistic background as well. It is wise to acknowledge that first year students of English have been chosen as a case of study for the following reasons:

- a) First year students of English have inadequate linguistic resources mainly lexis due to the lack of enough exposure to English. In other words, they were exposed to English, particularly collocations, quite poorly during their course of study at middle and high school. Therefore, this lack of exposure creates the ideal opportunity for the researcher to build the subjects' mental lexicon and measure the impact of the classroom experiment in a credible and valid way.
- b) Due to the predominance of grammar-based activities in middle and high schools 'syllabi, first year students of English have not been previously taught or at least enlightened about how words co-occur in English (arbitrary nature of lexis) to produce natural and free-of oddity English. To this end, the researcher can be well able to help students build their collocational knowledge that is free-of L1 fossilised elements.

¹⁷ The letter "N" is short for the word "numbering".

- c) These EFL learners had limited practice of compositions during their past studies. If any, it was merely guided writing activities that are aimed at getting learners to display correct use of a given grammatical item or structure but with no focus on proper word co-occurring in order to produce idiomatic writing. Thus, exploring the compositions of first year university students of English can reveal a lot about EFL learners' use of collocations.
- d) Usually, the university syllabus devoted to first year students in the writing module (written expression) serves as a preliminary stage that prepares such students for extended and different kinds of writings (descriptive, narrative, argumentative and expository essays). This allows the researcher to safely introduce and embed collocations into the syllabus without derailing from the general objectives of the syllabus that are set by the department.

4.4 Administration of the questionnaire

The administration of the questionnaire took place at the beginning of the academic year (2016-2017) and prior to the start of the classroom experiment. More precisely, in the middle of October 2016 and two weeks before the learners were introduced to the Lexical Approach-based instructional program. The reason behind this timing is twofold. First, to ensure that the majority of the enrolled first year students have joined their university course, so that we can hand out copies of the questionnaire amply to the target audience at large. Second, to ensure that the required data related to these learners knowledge and awareness of collocations is obtained thoroughly in a raw way before the designed classroom experiment produces certain effect on these learners' processing of collocations.

For testable purposes and in order to check the comprehensibility of the questions and ensure the validity and reliability of the questionnaire in general, 15 copies of the questionnaire were piloted with the same target population. However, the chosen sample (the sample of 62 subjects) was excluded from this pilot study in order to eliminate any potential effect on the quality of the elicited information which may result from the respondents dealing with (completing) the questionnaire on different occasions, i.e. filling in the same questionnaire twice. The piloted version of the questionnaire was reviewed and reflected on by two experienced associate professors and some qualified EFL university teachers. The result of this piloting stage revealed some problems that mostly relate to the layout of the questionnaire and the length of

some questions. Accordingly, the questionnaire was amended and a new version was reconstructed.

A total of 62 copies of the new improved version of the questionnaire were officially administered to the selected sample (62 students). These questionnaires were all administered in a printed form and by the researcher himself inside the classroom. None of them was emailed. The respondents were given 60 minutes to fill in the questionnaires under the supervision of the researcher. Our presence during this process is of prime importance: first, to increase the rate of responsiveness by making sure that all learners have understood all of the questions quite well and, second, to ensure that all of the questionnaires are returned by these learners on time. It is noteworthy that our supervision, the instructions we gave to the respondents regarding the completion of the questionnaires, did not include any visual or verbal clues which would affect the quality of the obtained responses, the opinions of the respondents or might stimulate them to answer the questions in a particular way. It is wise to acknowledge that for ethical considerations, an approval of the administration of the questionnaire was obtained from both the aforementioned Department of English and the sample of the study. Both of them were informed about the objectives of the questionnaire and reassured that the information we elicit remains anonymous, research-oriented and would have no effect on the official assessment of the learners.

4.5 Description of the questionnaire

To investigate learners' pre-existing awareness and knowledge of collocations from a cognitive point of view, a four-page questionnaire was administered to the target sample (see appendix A). Being divided into six sections in which each one serves a particular aim, the questionnaire is composed of 24 questions (Qs). These items encompass both close-ended and open-ended questions. Close-ended questions are used in different forms such as Yes/No questions which require the respondents to confirm a given statement by choosing the word *yes* or disconfirm it by choosing the word *no*. Another form of close-ended questions necessitates the respondents to choose their desired answers from a given list of options. Close-ended questions are meant to obtain quantitative information about learners' awareness of collocations. Such questions are easy to answer as they do not require much time to respond to. Moreover, close-ended questions reinforce the consistency of responses which in turn contribute to the validity of the obtained information. As far as open-ended questions are concerned, this kind of

questions is meant to obtain qualitative data that aim at defining the behaviour and cognitive strategies related to the processing of collocations. Accordingly, the respondents are invited to freely express their points of view in the space we provided in the questionnaire. It is noteworthy that the reason behind using open-ended questions is that they allow the researcher to access accurate information as they also encourage the respondents to reflect on the issues addressed by the questionnaire. Thus, the respondents become able co-operate with the researcher by giving adequate and valid responses. The items used in the questionnaire are grouped into six sections according to the theme of the issue about which those items seek answers. The following is a detailed description of the content of each of those six sections.

4.5.1 Section one: Student's profile (Q1-Q3)

This section is of introductory questions that can help getting the respondents involved in the process of disclosure. The main concern of this section is to obtain demographic information in order to well-define the sample. Information as such can help us identify some social factors (variables) and individual differences that are likely to come into play. Thus, as the title of the section suggests, the target audience is profiled in terms of age, gender and newness to the first year university course. To achieve the objectives of this section the included questions are as follows. Starting with question one, the respondent is asked to provide their age. Question two requires the respondent to state their gender. The last question of this section is meant to find whether or not the respondent is retaking the first year university course.

4.5.2 Section two: Background information (Q4-Q6)

As the above subheading suggests the aim of this section is to get an overview of our subjects in terms of their educational background. This section is made up of three questions. Thus, question four seeks to find out the total duration that these EFL learners have spent learning English. Question five attempts to find out whether English was the choice number one in the list of options (for university enrolment) that these students selected after they passed the baccalaureate exam. The last question in this section (Q6) aims at finding out the stream in which a respondent studied at high school. For this reason, we provided the respondents with a list of the Algerian high school streams to specify.

4.5.3 Section three: Students attitudes' towards word co-occurrence and their interest in dictionary use (Q7-14)

The aim of this section is to reveal students' opinions and varying attitudes towards collocational frames in English. It also seeks to explore these learners' interest and skills in dictionary use in relation to learning collocations. In this respect, this part of the questionnaire is comprised of the following set of questions: Question seven explores the respondents' opinions in terms of the easiest way to memorize new words in English: Do learners make a list of separate words with their synonyms? Or do they make a list of combinations of words together with their synonyms? If none of these opinions corresponds to the respondent's desired answer (opinion), the respondent is then invited to specify their own opinions in the provided space. Similarly, question eight attempts to find out whether these EFL learners use near synonyms interchangeably. If the answer to this question is by the word "No", then the respondent is invited to justify. As regards question nine, the main purpose is to determine the kind of dictionaries these EFL learners tend to use most. In this respect, the respondent is provided with a list of suggested dictionaries to specify from: Do they use English French dictionary? English Arabic dictionary? Or English English dictionary? In case the respondent uses a different kind of dictionary other than the aforementioned ones, she/he is invited to specify it in the space we provided in the questionnaire. As a follow up to question nine, question ten seeks to find out the frequency these learners use their favourite dictionary. Do they use it always? Sometimes? Rarely? Or never? Additionally, question 11 verifies whether the respondent uses dictionary to learn a separate single word or a combination of words that go together. In this section of the questionnaire also, learners' strategies of using a dictionary to enrich their mental lexicon in general and collocational knowledge in particular are researched. Thus, question 12 aims at revealing how these learners use a dictionary to learn new words. Hence, the respondent is asked to confirm whether she/he reads all the examples shown in the dictionary about the new word or she/he reads only the examples about one particular meaning of that word. In a similar vein, question 13 is meant to check whether or not these learners notice the kind of items (e.g. noun, adjective, verb or adverb) that precedes the word about which they are reading dictionary examples. In other words, we aim to find out the extent to which their tendency to use dictionary makes the respondents aware of word collocates. Last but not least, question 14 aims at finding out the respondents' most difficult lexical word class to use.

4.5.4 Section four: Students' perception of co-occurring words (15-Q17)

As the above sub-heading suggests, the major concern of this section is to explore the strategies that these EFL learners implement as they perceive collocational patterns during their exposure to English. To this end, the following questions are included: Question 15 aims at examining the different strategies the respondent uses to make sense of an encountered collocation when he/she only knows one part (collocate/node) of it. That is, do these EFL learners usually try to check the meaning of the word they already know? Do they try to look for the meaning of the new word? Do they check the meaning of both words? Do they try to translate only the confusing word into Arabic? Do they try to translate both words into Arabic? Or do they just ignore the encountered collocation and continue reading? It is noteworthy that the respondent is required to choose only one of the aforementioned suggestions as to answer this question. In relation to encountering collocations while reading or listening, question 16 is designed to confirm if these EFL learners recognize the combination of two words that always mean something different from what is known in Arabic. Simply put, the main objective of this question is to find out whether the respondent is aware of the difference that exists between the arbitrary relationship which governs the pairing of words in Arabic and that which governs the pairing of words in English. Lastly, this section of the questionnaire is concluded with question 17. Accordingly, its main objective is to find out whether or not our study participants, when learning a new word, look for the other vocabulary items that usually combine with it.

4.5.5 Section five: Students' production of co-occurring words (Q18-Q 22)

Being based on learners' tendency to use collocations, our main objective in this section is to investigate how our participants produce collocations in their writing. Hence, in question 18 we wanted to know if our respondents try to think in Arabic as to generate new ideas quickly during their brainstorming in a writing task. In case the respondent's answer to this question is by the word "yes", she/he is provided with a list of options (as potential reasons) to specify from: Is it because she/he knows how to combine the keywords about that topic in Arabic easily? Or is it because she/he is not sure as to how to correctly combine the keywords together in English? For reasons other than the suggested ones, the respondent is given space to explain them amply. Question 19 is also concerned with examining these learners' tendencies of combining words when they are writing: Do they often feel the need to rely on putting words together in English the same way they do in Arabic? If the answer to this question is by the word "No", the respondent is invited to justify. As far as question number 20 is concerned, learners'

self-expression through writing is investigated as to whether the mistakes they generally make are grammatical or lexical. Similarly, question number 21 examines learners' difficulties in expressing themselves in English in terms of whether they do not know enough words or they just know some words but do not know how to combine them correctly. As a follow up, question number 22 probes into the problems our participants may have in combining words correctly in English. In this respect, the respondent is given the following list of suggested potential problems to specify from: Is the problem they have due to the fact that they combine words wrongly and do not notice that? Is it because they are aware of their wrong word combinations but cannot correct themselves? Or is it because these EFL learners are not worried about their erroneous word combinations? If none of these suggestions answer the question, the respondent is then invited to provide their own answers.

4.5.6 Section six: Suggestions and recommendations (Q23-Q 24)

As the above sub-heading suggests, this last section's main objective is to tap into our respondents' general understanding of the key issues that we investigated through this questionnaire and, in turn, see what they have to offer in terms of the related suggestions and recommendations. For this reason, in question number 23 we wanted to know what the respondents think of their Departments of English devoting a fee-standing module to teach collocations in the future. In a similar vein, we gave the respondents (in question number 24) space to freely make any comment or suggestion relevant to the general purpose of the questionnaire.

4.6 Analysis of the results

As we have discussed earlier in this chapter, the data obtained using this questionnaire is both quantitative and qualitative. Therefore, these two kinds of information were processed and analysed differently. First, using the SPSS the quantitative data was processed by codifying the responses manually then feeding them into the aforementioned software in order to apply on them the necessary statistical operations. Second, due to the fact that the qualitative data is not numerical but rather textual, the responses obtained in paragraph form (mainly responses to open-ended questions such as students' comments, views and explanations) were coded and examined thoroughly. This started by reading those responses repeatedly and revisiting them as to identify common views and recurrent themes. The latter were grouped into different categories and further examined in terms of the relationship that exists among them (similarities and

differences). In what follows we will present the outcome of the analysis of both kinds of the obtained data. The tabulated data represents the frequency and percentage of the obtained responses, whereas the textual data (in paragraph form) represents the identified recurrent themes.

4.6.1. Section one: Student’s profile

4.6.1.1. Question 01: How old are you?

Table 4.1
Students’ age

| Age | Frequency | Percentage |
|-------|-----------|------------|
| 18 | 18 | 29.0 % |
| 19 | 16 | 25.8 % |
| 20 | 13 | 21.0 % |
| 21 | 06 | 09.7 % |
| 22 | 01 | 01.6 % |
| 23 | 02 | 03.2 % |
| 24 | 01 | 01.6 % |
| 25 | 02 | 03.2 % |
| 34 | 02 | 03.2 % |
| 37 | 01 | 01.6 % |
| Total | 62 | 100 % |

As the above table shows, the respondents’ age ranges between 18 and 37 years. It can be noticed that the majority of the respondents (29%) are adolescent students of 18 years old. It can also be noticed that as many as 16 students (25%) are also adolescent of 19 years old. Furthermore, with the oldest student aged 37, the number of adult students in this sample is very low. In the light of these statistics , it can be said that the sample of the study includes mostly adolescent students who started school at the usual age (6 years old) and may have failed only once during their academic path (probably retook the baccalaureate exam) . As for those adult students, mainly the ones over the age 21, they have either experienced different failure at

different stages of their academic pursuit or joined the English language course in preparation for a second undergraduate degree paper.

4.6.1.2. Question 02: Are you male or female?

Table 4. 2

Students' gender

| Gender | Frequency | Percentage |
|--------|-----------|------------|
| Male | 16 | 25.8 % |
| Female | 46 | 74.2 % |
| Total | 62 | 100 % |

As the above table displays, the vast majority of the respondents (74.2%) are female students. Only a quarter of them (25%) is male. Female students usually outnumber male students in the field of foreign languages learning and this can be attributed to the fact that at high school most female baccalaureate candidates choose to study in foreign languages or literary streams while male ones choose to study in scientific and technical streams. Such tendencies are very likely to affect their subsequent choice of the area of study at university. As a result, female students tend to specialize in foreign languages such as English, while male students show much interest in fields other than foreign languages such as engineering, biology, computation...etc.

4.6.1.3. Question 03: Are you a new first year student or a student retaking the same course?

Table 4.3

Students' newness to the university English course

| Respondents | Frequency | Percentage |
|-------------------------------|-----------|------------|
| First time student of English | 54 | 87.1 % |
| Student retaking the course | 08 | 12.9 % |
| Total | 62 | 100 % |

Following the results shown in table (4.3), out of the 62 students who completed the questionnaire 54 of them (87.1%) are EFL students enrolled in the first year university course for

the first time. Only eight students (12.9%) failed in the previous year(s) and thus retaking the same course. This implies that such vast majority of EFL students who are new to the first year university course are very likely to have the same exposure to English in general and, in particular, collocations at a higher level. In other words, the sample of the present study can be said to have not been part of any experimental or instructional intensive course that might aim at improving their collocational competence.

4. 6.2.Section two: Background information

4.6.2.4. Question 04: How long have you been learning English?

Table 4.4

Students' duration of studying English

| Year | Frequency | Percentage |
|-------|-----------|------------|
| 08 | 41 | 66.1 % |
| 09 | 19 | 30.6 % |
| 10 | 02 | 03.2 % |
| Total | 62 | 100 % |

According to the findings in table (4.4), more than half of the respondents (66.1%) have been studying English for eight years. This means that they had first started learning English at middle school where they spent four years and then continued studying it for three years at high school plus the current first year university course . In other words, this may suggest that these students have never failed during their academic path. On the other hand, only few students (30.6%) have been studying English for nine years. This confirms that they failed once in their academic path and it is very likely that such school failure relates to the baccalaureate exam. A percentage of 3.2% represents the only two respondents how have been studying English for 10 years. This may also imply that such students may have experienced academic failure more than once. All in all, we can say that the sample of this study have fair exposure and mastery of English simply because the high proportion of those respondents who have never failed during their scholastic cycle suggests that they may have richer linguistic resources and better command of English than the ones who have experienced certain school failure.

4.6.2.5.Question 05: Was English your choice number one in the list of options you selected for the university enrolment?

- a) Yes
- b) No

Table 4.5
Students' choice to major in English

| Answers | Frequency | Percentage |
|---------|-----------|------------|
| yes | 40 | 64.5 % |
| No | 22 | 35.5 % |
| Total | 62 | 100 % |

Table (4.5) shows more than half of the respondents (64.5%) report that majoring in English was their choice number one in the list of options they selected after they passed the baccalaureate exam. This may imply that those students are motivated and determined to specialise in this area of studies. By contrast, few students (35.5%) reveal that majoring in English was not their choice number one. Probably, they ranked English somewhere in the list of the selected options and were oriented towards it as a result of not meeting the eligibility criteria for majoring in particular fields which they ranked before English. This means that these students are less motivated and determined to major in English.

4.6.2.6.Question 06: In which stream did you study at high school?

- a) Foreign languages stream
- b) Literature and philosophy stream
- c) Management stream
- d) Scientific and Mathematics stream
- e) Other.....

Table 4.6

Students' high school streams

| Stream | Frequency | Percentage |
|---------------------------|-----------|------------|
| Foreign languages | 29 | 46.8 % |
| Literature and philosophy | 14 | 22.6 % |
| Management | 02 | 03.2 % |
| Experimental sciences | 17 | 27.4 % |
| Other | 00 | 00 % |
| Total | 62 | 100 % |

The tabulated data above shows that almost half of the respondents (46.8%) studied in a Foreign Languages stream at high school. This means such baccalaureate degree holders had a substantial amount of exposure to English. On the other hand, 22.6 % of the respondents studied in a Literature and Philosophy stream at high school, which means that they had fair exposure to English too. However, very few respondents (3.2%) studied in Management stream at high school. This means that they had less exposure to English compared to those respondents who studied in the aforementioned streams. Lastly, a considerable number of the respondents (27.4%) studied in Experimental Sciences stream at high school. In other words, these students had also as little exposure to English as that of students in the Management stream.

4.6.3. Section three: Students attitudes' towards word co-occurrence and their interest in dictionary use.

4.6.3.7. Question 7: In your opinion, what is the easiest strategy to memorise new words in English?
(Only one box)

- a) Making a list of separate words together with their synonyms
- b) Making a list of combinations of words and their synonyms

c) Other, please specify

Table 4.7

Students' strategies to memorize new words

| Options | Frequency | Percentage |
|--|-----------|------------|
| ✓ Making a list of separate words together with their synonyms | 41 | 66.1 % |
| ✓ Making a list of combinations of words and their synonyms | 14 | 22.6 % |
| ✓ Other | 07 | 11.3 % |
| Total | 62 | 100 % |

Following the results demonstrated in table (4.7), a high percentage of the respondents (66.1%) chose option (a), i.e. the strategy to memorize new word(s) in English according to them is by making a list of separate words together with their corresponding synonyms. By comparison, a low proportion of the respondents (22.6%) chose option (b). In other words, the easiest strategy to memorize new word(s) according to these respondents is to make a list of combinations of words together with their synonyms. On the other hand, the few remaining respondents (11.3%) chose option (c), i.e. they self-reported some of the strategies that they consider easiest in order to memorize new word(s) in English. The following is a summary of what they suggested. As to store the new words that are encountered, for instance during listening to songs, some of the respondents explained that they use a small note pad to record and highlight such words and then they try to use these words during their daily interaction in English. Similarly, other respondents described that they record the new words that are learnt at that day and try to check them repeatedly in order to be able to recall them for future use. The respondents added that they try to memorise the new words that they learn, especially through reading, by using them in different sentences that express certain experiences or events related to the students' personal life.

4.6.3.8.Question 8: When two or more words are near synonyms, do you use them interchangeably?

Table 4.8

Students' use of near synonyms interchangeably

| Answer | Frequency | Percentage |
|--------|-----------|------------|
| Yes | 09 | 14.5 % |
| No | 53 | 85.5 % |
| Total | 62 | 100 % |

As table (4.8) clarifies, only a small minority (14.5%) of the respondents replied that they interchangeably use two or more words that are near synonyms. This indicates that these students are unaware of the co-textual properties of many words (collocational field). However, the vast majority (85.5%) of the other respondents reported that they do not use near synonyms in an interchangeable way. In other words, it can be concluded that these students are somehow aware of the collocational field of words.

4.6.3. 9. Question 9: Which dictionary do you like to use most? (*Only one box*)

Table4. 9

Students' preferred dictionary

| Dictionary | Frequency | Percentage |
|----------------------------|-----------|------------|
| English French dictionary | 05 | 08.1 % |
| English Arabic Dictionary | 37 | 59.7 % |
| English English Dictionary | 18 | 29.0 % |
| Other | 02 | 03.2 % |
| Total | 62 | 100 % |

According to the results displayed in the table above, out of the 62 respondents five of them (8.1%) reported that they mostly prefer to use a bilingual English French dictionary. This implies that such students rely on their linguistic resources in French to learn English. In other

words, such a tendency is very likely to influence these students' acquisition of collocations since each of the aforementioned language has its own specific arbitrariness, i.e. the combinatory system of words in French is different from that of English. On the other hand, 37 of the respondents (59%) revealed that they mostly prefer to use a bilingual English Arabic dictionary. This result testifies that such a majority of students rely on their mother tongue (Arabic) to extend their vocabulary knowledge of the target language (English). This is also very likely to affect these students' process of acquiring English collocation simply because the arbitrary relationship that governs most co-occurring words in Arabic is not always similar to that of English. Besides, only 18 respondents (29%) stated that they mostly prefer to use a monolingual English English dictionary. Differently put, it can be acknowledged that this few number of respondents has richer exposure to English and, more precisely, wider knowledge of collocations since more emersion and exclusive use of the target language (in this case English) can, to a great extent, familiarize such learners with the varying degrees of the strength of association between any two co-occurring words (combinatory system) in the target language. It can also be noticed that only two respondents (3.2%) acknowledged that they use other kinds of dictionaries, namely a bilingual Arabic English dictionary. Crudely put, as opposed to the aforementioned bilingual dictionary, by which those EFL learners try to translate words from English as a target language to Arabic or French as a source language, the use of Arabic English dictionary suggests that these two students are trying to look for English words or combinations of words, collocations particularly, which are the exact equivalents of the Arabic ones. This can also mean that such students are aware of the fact that there is a considerable difference between how words combine naturally in each of the L1 and the target language. As a result, this handful of students is somewhat likely to benefit from their encounter with collocations as they notice the collocational restrictions that are placed on the target language words.

4.6.3.10. Question 10: How often do you use that dictionary?

Table 4.10

Students' frequency of using dictionary

| Dictionary | Frequency | | | Total |
|----------------------------|-----------|-----------|--------|-------|
| | Always | Sometimes | Rarely | |
| English French Dictionary | 03 | 01 | 01 | 05 |
| English Arabic Dictionary | 07 | 26 | 04 | 37 |
| English English Dictionary | 03 | 14 | 01 | 18 |
| Arabic English Dictionary | 00 | 02 | 00 | 02 |
| Total | 13 | 43 | 6 | 62 |

The statistics demonstrated in table (4.10) explain the frequency those respondents use their preferred dictionary. Accordingly, we can notice that the majority, three out of the five, respondents who reported that they prefer the use of English French dictionary use such a dictionary always. Only one student reported that he/she uses it sometimes and only one also reported that he/she uses this dictionary rarely. This indicates that such students are heavily dependent on French to learn English. However and more importantly, the majority (N26) of the 37 respondents who revealed that they prefer to use English Arabic dictionary seem to use it sometimes. This may imply that they only resort to Arabic (L1) either to make sense of the difficult words they encounter in English or in case they feel the need to check the exact equivalents of certain English words in Arabic. On the other hand, seven of these 37 respondents confirmed that they always use English Arabic dictionary. This may refer to the fact that these students are heavily dependent on their mother tongue to learn English in general and vocabulary in particular. We can also notice that out of those 37 respondents, only four of them acknowledged that they rarely use English Arabic dictionary. This means that such students are

not heavily dependent on their mother tongue to build their target language vocabulary, but they use their mother tongue only whenever it is badly needed; perhaps to check their comprehension of certain English words.

As far as the 18 students who reported that they mostly prefer to use an English English dictionary the vast majority of them (N14) admitted that they sometimes use such a monolingual dictionary. This may hint that these EFL students resort to this kind of dictionary only in doubt. For instance, to decipher the meaning of a particular word or check its appropriate use in relation to another word. Differently put, such students are expected to be somewhat aware of certain degrees of collocational restrictions that govern certain co-occurring words in English. By contrast, three out of the 18 students acknowledged that they always use this monolingual dictionary. In other words, this can mean that such EFL students are likely to acquire richer vocabulary and probably wider knowledge of how words are naturally combined since those students are in extensive and constant exposure to the semi-authentic and appropriate examples provided in the monolingual dictionary. Surprisingly, we can see that only one student reported that he/she rarely uses English English dictionary. This may be translated into the fact that he/she uses this kind of dictionary only whenever it is badly needed, probably to check the meaning and use of a particular word (in case of confusion). It can be concluded that such a student is less likely to be familiar with how a given word is appropriately used and put together with other words in a natural way. Lastly, all of the two respondents who reported that they prefer the use of Arabic English dictionary use such a bilingual dictionary sometimes. This means that those students try to look for English words or combinations of words which are the exact equivalent of the Arabic ones. This is perhaps in case they realize that a particular word in English combines naturally with another word or is used differently in a pattern that is not similar to the one they know in Arabic. Thus, those two students are, to some extent, likely to be knowledgeable about certain collocational fields of certain English words.

4.6.3.11.Question 11: Do you usually use the dictionary to learn:

- a) Separate single words?
- b) Combinations of two words that go together?

Table 4. 11
Students' use of dictionary to learn new words

| Kind of dictionary | Frequency of learning new item | | Total |
|----------------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------|-------|
| | Separate single Words | Combinations of words | |
| English French Dictionary | 05 | 00 | 05 |
| English Arabic Dictionary | 30 | 07 | 37 |
| English English Dictionary | 11 | 07 | 18 |
| Arabic English Dictionary | 02 | 00 | 02 |
| Total | 48 | 14 | 62 |

The tabulated data above shows the frequency related to the students use of the aforementioned different kinds of dictionaries to learn new items. Thus, according to table (4.11) we notice that out of the total number of the 62 respondents 48 of them use the represented kinds of dictionaries to learn separate single words. On the other hand, we can also notice that the rest of these respondents (N14) use these dictionaries to learn combinations of words. However, if we look closely at the results in this table and relate them to the results shown further back in table 4.9, we notice that all of the students (N5) who prefer to use English French dictionary most are interested in learning separate single words. This could mean that such students have either been little exposed to co-occurring words in English or influenced by their knowledge of French vocabulary (single words) and thus they are unlikely to notice how words naturally combine in English. As far as the total number of the students (N37) who use English Arabic dictionary, the vast majority of them (N30) reported that they use such a bilingual dictionary to learn separate single words. This again might mean that these students rely on Arabic to combine words in English since they are not aware of the fact that the natural co-occurring of words in Arabic is not always necessarily similar to that of English. However, the tiny number of the rest of the students (N7) acknowledged that they use the bilingual English Arabic dictionary to learn combinations of words. Such a statement indicates that these students are aware of the fact that

English words do not always co-occur the same way they do in Arabic. This means that this handful of students is probably trying to look for the areas of differences between the lexical nature of the mother tongue and that of the target language. In turn, such a tendency can enormously contribute to enhance their collocational knowledge in the target language.

Regarding the total number of the respondents (N18) who use the monolingual English dictionary, more than half of them (N11) revealed that they use such a dictionary to learn separate single words. It means that these EFL learners may think of the process of acquiring a proficient use of English as a mere ability to master a set of grammatical rules and acquire knowledge of a considerable amount of individual words. This can also mean that though these students are somewhat in an increasing exposure to English, they seem to have failed to notice that words in English do not pair randomly. As for the tiny minority of the rest of students (N07) who are interested in using the aforementioned monolingual dictionary, they reported that they use this kind of dictionary to learn combinations of words. One possible explanation for this could be that such few students may have noticed that words in English do not pair randomly and for this reason they are interested to extend their knowledge of the collocational fields of either the words they already know or the new words they encounter.

Last but not least, all of the respondents (N02) who reported that they use the bilingual Arabic English dictionary added that they use such a dictionary to learn individual words. This suggests that these students have limited linguistic resources of the target language in general and knowledge of its lexis in particular. As a result, they are very liable to the effect of the L1 negative transfer, more precisely the confusion between the lexical and collocational nature of L1 and that of the target language.

4.6.3.12.Question 12: When you look up a particular word in the dictionary, do you generally

- a) Read all the examples shown in the dictionary about that word?
- b) Read only the examples about one particular meaning of that word?

Table 4.12

Students' tendency to read dictionary examples

| New Item | Examples in the dictionary | | Total |
|-----------------------|---------------------------------|---|-------|
| | All examples about a given word | Only examples about one meaning of a given word | |
| Separate single words | 29 | 19 | 48 |
| Combinations of words | 5 | 9 | 14 |
| Total | 34 | 28 | 62 |

As we can see from the results presented in table (4.12), out of a total of the 62 respondents, 34 (more than half) of them reported that when they look up a particular word in a dictionary they generally read all the examples shown about the use of that word. In contrast, 28 of the rest of the respondents replied that when they look up a particular word in a dictionary, they generally read only the examples shown about one meaning of that word. This might mean that since most dictionary examples accurately demonstrate, through the use of naturally occurring language, how a particular item is differently used, the students who are interested in finding out about how a particular word is used in different contexts then have better access to different word combinations (exposure to a wider range of the collocational fields of words) than do the rest of the students (N 28). The latter can be said to have poor exposure to different collocational fields (collocates) of a particular word since the examples they are usually interested to read are limited to only one meaning and use of the word looked up in the dictionary.

More facts can also emerge if we consider the totals of the aforementioned respondents whom we previously described as using the dictionary either to learn separate single words or

combinations of words. Correspondingly, we notice that the vast majority (29 out of 48) of the students who are interested in learning separate single words read all examples shown in the dictionary about a particular separate single word. In other words, such students can be said to have richer vocabulary compared to those students (N19) who are interested in learning separate single words but they only read the dictionary examples related to one meaning of a given word. On the other hand, it can also be noticed that the majority (09 out of 14) of the students who are interested in learning combinations of words read the dictionary examples that are related to only one meaning of a given word (a constituent element of a particular combination of words). However, the rest of such students (N 05) read all the examples about a given word (constituent element) in a particular combination of words. This can mean that those few five students have richer exposure to the different linguistic contexts where the wider collocational environment dictates which word (constituent element) keeps its accompany with which other word.

4.6.3.13.Question 13: When you are reading dictionary examples about a particular word, do you notice which part of speech the preceding item is?

- a) Yes
- b) No

Table 4.13

Learners' awareness of word collocates in dictionary examples

| Answer | Frequency | Percentage |
|--------|-----------|------------|
| Yes | 40 | 64.5 % |
| No | 22 | 35.5 % |
| Total | 62 | 100 % |

As table (4.13) clarifies, a high percentage (64.5%) of the respondents reported that when they read dictionary examples about a particular word, they notice the type of part of speech that precedes such a word. However, a low percentage (35.5%) of the rest of the respondents replied that when they read dictionary examples about a particular word, they do not notice the part of speech that precedes that word. This may suggest that the ability to notice the parts of speech that are used in a dictionary to exemplify the meaning and use of a given word, more importantly those items that precede the target word, contributes tremendously to raise one's awareness of how a particular meaning of a given word is affected by the meaning of the linguistic item that is

used with. In other words, a learning tendency as such can also increase these learners' sensitivity towards the proper linguistic environment in which a word can be arbitrary but naturally used with a another word. In crude terms, this improves learners' knowledge of the kinds of possible collocates of a given lexical item.

4.6.3.14. Question 14: Which of the following parts of speech do you find most difficult to use?

(only one box)

- a) Adjectives
- b) Verbs
- c) Adverbs
- d) Nouns

Table 4.14

Students' most difficult part of speech

| Part of speech | Frequency | Percentage |
|----------------|-----------|------------|
| Adjectives | 09.50 | 14.50 % |
| Verbs | 17 | 27.4 % |
| Adverbs | 34 | 54.8 % |
| Nouns | 02 | 03.2 % |
| Total | 62 | 100 % |

According to the results shown in the table above, out of the overall number of the 62 respondents nine of them revealed that adjectives are the most difficult part of speech to use. On the other hand, 17 of the respondents acknowledged that verbs are the most difficult part of speech to use. Unsurprisingly, more than half of the respondents (54.8%) admitted that they find adverbs as the most difficult part of speech to use. Lastly, only two respondents stated that according to them nouns are the most difficult part of speech to use. The implications that such results may carry is that adverb-containing word combinations may constitute, for our subjects of the study, the most difficult area of vocabulary acquisition in general and collocational competence acquisition in particular.

4.6.4. Section Four: Students' perception of co-occurring words

4.6.4.15. Question 15: If you only know the meaning of one word in a combination of two words during reading or listening to something in English, do you generally:

(only one box)

- a) Try to check the meaning of the word you already know?
- b) Try to look for the meaning of the new word?
- c) Check the meaning of both words?
- d) Try to translate only the confusing word into Arabic?
- e) Try to translate both words into Arabic?
- f) Ignore and continue reading?

Table 4.15

Students' strategies to decipher encountered co-occurring words

| Strategies | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|-----------|------------|
| ✓ Try to check the meaning of the word you already know | 04 | 6.5 % |
| ✓ Try to look for the meaning of the new word | 25 | 40.3 % |
| ✓ Check the meaning of both words | 23 | 37.1 % |
| ✓ Try to translate only the confusing word into Arabic | 05 | 08.1 % |
| ✓ Try to translate both words into Arabic | 02 | 03.2 % |
| ✓ Ignore and continue reading | 03 | 04.8 % |
| Total | 62 | 100 % |

The tabulated results above represent a number of strategies that our subjects employ in order to make sense of encountered co-occurring words whose only one part is comprehensible to these students. Therefore, according to table (4.15) very few respondents (N04) reported that when they are reading or listening to something in English and happen to encounter a combination of words whose only one item is familiar to them, they generally try to check the

meaning of the word that they already know. This may indicate that such students are likely to have certain lack of knowledge of the collocational fields of the words they already acquired. In other words, these EFL learners might be unaware of the fact that words are not put together randomly in English. On the other hand, most of the respondents (N25) reported a different tendency. They acknowledged that as they are reading or listening to something in English and happen to come across a combination of words whose only one item is familiar to them, they generally try to look for the meaning of the new word. Such a tendency suggests that these students might think that the meaning a particular combination conveys can always be derived from the individual meaning of each of the constituent element of the combination, i.e. the literal meaning. However, many of the respondents (N 23) replied that when they are reading or listening to something in English and happen to come across a combination of words whose only one item is familiar to them, they generally check the meaning of both words. This can be taken to mean that the learners perceive the meaning of a combination of two habitually paired words as two different meanings of two separate words. That is, the learners do not recognise collocations during exposure to English. Few other respondents (N 05) admitted that when they are reading or listening to something in English and happen to come across a combination of words whose only one item is familiar to them, they generally try to translate only the confusing word into Arabic. This means that they rely on their knowledge of vocabulary (single words) to decipher any unfamiliar co-occurring words that they encounter. Differently put, students as such may not be aware of the fact that the relationship between co-occurring words in L2 is not always identical to that of the L1. It can be noticed that the lowest number of respondents (N02) revealed that when they are reading or listening to something in English and happen to come across a combination of words whose only one item is familiar to them, they generally try to translate both words into Arabic. This alludes to the fact that such students try to find a direct equivalent of the English word combination in Arabic as their mother tongue. This can also imply that the students may not be aware of the fact that there are certain differences between the target language and the mother tongue at the level of the lexical nature of each (combinary system). Last but not least, only three respondents informed that when they are reading or listening to something in English and happen to come across a combination of words whose only one item is familiar to them, they generally ignore that and continue reading. Expressed more

crudely, in order to decipher the meaning of a collocation, such students seem to rely on the general context in which the encountered word combination occurs.

4.6.4.16. Question 16: While reading or listening to something in English, do you usually recognise the combinations of words that always mean something different from what you know in Arabic?

- a) Yes
- b) No

Table 4.16

Students' recognition of word combinations with no direct equivalents in Arabic

| Answer | Frequency | Percentage |
|--------|-----------|------------|
| Yes | 14 | 22.6 % |
| No | 48 | 77.4 % |
| Total | 62 | 100 % |

According to the statistics demonstrated in the above table, a high percentage of 77.4% represents the vast majority of the respondents who replied that while reading or listening to something in English, they do not usually recognise the combinations of words that always mean something different from what they know in Arabic. On the other hand, a low percentage of 22.6% represents the respondents who informed that while reading or listening to something in English, they usually recognise the combinations of words that always mean something different from what they know in Arabic. What is implied from these results is that the exposure to English of those 48 students may not have familiarised them with the natural and recurrent coupling of certain words that are intrinsic to English. Thus, these students are to, a great extent, unable to perceive English lexis as unique and natural where certain words are paired in accordance with certain unexplained sociocultural conventions.

4.6.4.17. Question 17: When you learn a new word, do you look for the other words that usually combine with it?

- a) Yes
- b) No

Table 4.17

Students' tendency to look for co-occurring words

| Answer | Frequency | Percentage |
|--------|-----------|------------|
| Yes | 15 | 24.2 % |
| No | 47 | 75.8 % |
| Total | 62 | 100 % |

Considering the data demonstrated in table (4.17), it can be clearly noticed that most of the respondents (75.8%) conceded that when they learn a new word in English, they do not look for the other words that usually combine with it. In contrast, nearly a quarter of the rest of respondents (24.2%) revealed that when they learn a new word in English, they look for the other words that usually combine with it. The reason why the majority of those students (N 47) are not interested in finding out about the collocational fields of the words they learn can be attributed to the fact that such EFL learners have a high tendency to randomly combine words in English provided that the resultant stretch of language is grammatically correct. In other words, EFL students as such might mistakenly think that whatever pattern of words they form is correct if it only adheres to the general norm of the syntactic nature of English.

4.6.5 .Section five: Students' production of co-occurring words

4.6.5.18 .Question 18: When you are trying to write about a particular topic in English, do you try to brainstorm and generate new ideas in Arabic first?

1-Yes

2-No

- If 'yes', is it because:

- a) You know how to appropriately combine words central to your ideas more easily in Arabic?

- b) You are not sure how to appropriately combine such words together in English?

- c) Other, please specify...

Table 4.18

Students' tendency to depend on Arabic while writing in English

| Answer | Frequency | Percentage |
|--------|-----------|------------|
| Yes | 46 | 74.18 % |
| No | 16 | 25.82 % |
| Total | 62 | 100 % |

In the light of the results demonstrated in table (4.18), we can clearly notice that, in percentage terms, 25.82 % of the respondents, i.e. a quarter of them (N16) do not try to brainstorm and generate new ideas in Arabic while they are writing in English. In other words, they do not depend on their linguistic resources in Arabic probably because they have rich vocabulary knowledge in English or they may try to avoid interlingual errors that might result from attempts to translate lexical items, mainly collocations, from Arabic to English. This can also indicate that students have, at one point of their course of studying English, been sensitized to the fact that thinking in Arabic while writing in English may result in idiosyncratic forms. More interestingly, we can also notice that 74.18% of the respondents, i.e. the majority of them (N46) try to brainstorm and generate new ideas in Arabic first then they translate those ideas into English. A tendency as such seems to affect these EFL learners output, in particular the way they put their ideas into proper word combinations in order to express themselves in English as accurately as they do in Arabic.

Table 4.19

Students' reasons for depending on Arabic while writing in English

| Reason | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|-----------|------------|
| ✓ You know how to appropriately combine words that are central to your ideas more easily in Arabic? | 29 | 63.04 % |
| ✓ You are not sure how to appropriately combine such words together in English? | 15 | 32.60 % |
| ✓ Other , please specify | 02 | 04.34 % |
| Total | 46 | 100 % |

In justification of why they are inclined to depend on Arabic as a preliminary cognitive strategy during their writing performance in English, those 46 students explained such inclination in a number of reasons. Therefore, according to table (4.19) we clearly notice that more than half of the respondents (63.04%), i.e. 29 of them, justified their reason behind the aforementioned tendency by choosing option (a). In other words, they try to brainstorm and generate new ideas in Arabic first while they are writing in English because they know how to appropriately combine words that are central to their ideas more easily in Arabic. Though this strategy may psychologically contribute to encourage these EFL learners to maximise their written output in English, it can, to a great extent, fail such learners to produce natural English since their choice of words, collocations in particular, in Arabic cannot always have direct equivalents in English. Therefore, the performance of these EFL learners, mainly their written output, is very likely to be replete with idiosyncratic forms (miscollocations) that can in turn cause certain issues related to comprehensibility and effective communication. We can also notice that few of the respondents (32.60%), i.e. 15 of them, justified the reason behind that tendency by choosing option (b). In other words, they try to brainstorm and generate new ideas in Arabic first while they are writing in English because they are not sure of how to appropriately combine words that are central to their ideas in English. Expressed more crudely, it can be said that though such EFL students have a fair knowledge of English vocabulary, they have

incomplete understanding of how words combine naturally in English. That is, their poor mental lexicon in English created a need for them to resort to their Arabic mental lexicon. One explanation to this may lie in the fact that such students are not familiar with different collocational patterns in English especially the ones that are characterized by high strength of association (strong collocations). As a result, the writing of these students may also include deviant forms of word combinations that, in turn, distort or alter the meaning they wish to convey. Last but not least, we notice that the rest of the two respondents (04.34%) chose option (d) to justify the reason behind their tendency to brainstorm and try to generate new ideas in Arabic while writing in English. In other words, this handful of students provided their own justification. Accordingly, one of the students explained that he/she starts by brainstorming and generating new ideas in Arabic prior to writing them in English because she/he has a poor command of English. Such incomplete knowledge of the basics of English can in turn justify the lack of proficiency in any performance of EFL learners, particularly their idiomatic writing which, as a *sine qua non*, requires featuring a great deal of naturally co-occurring words. The other student justified that he/she starts by brainstorming and generating new ideas in Arabic prior to writing them in English because he/she thinks that this is the easiest way to learn quickly. It seems that this EFL student is heavily dependent on Arabic to learn English and the best strategy that he wrongly considers as quick and effective is translation. An explanation for this could be the fact that this student is unaware of the fact that English and Arabic are not cognate in which certain lexical aspects of language, mainly word co-occurrence, cannot always be cross-transferred positively. Unawareness of such untranslatability is very likely to be the major source of EFL learners' inability to produce proper word combinations and express themselves effectively through writing.

4.6.5.19. Question 19: When you are writing in English, do you often feel the need to rely on combining words in English the same way you do in Arabic?

- a) Yes
- b) No
- Please explain why

Table 4.20

Students' need to combine words in English the same way they do in Arabic

| Answer | Frequency | Percentage |
|--------|-----------|------------|
| Yes | 11 | 17.7 % |
| No | 51 | 82.3 % |
| Total | 62 | 100 % |

According to table (4.20), a percentage of 82.3 % represents the majority of the respondents (N51) who replied that when they are writing in English, they do not often feel the need to rely on combining words in English the same way they do in Arabic. It can be said that such EFL students have at some point experienced that their writing can be clumsy and of poor quality if they put words together in English in a way that resembles that in Arabic. In addition, it can also be acknowledged that these learners have also realized that there are certain aspects in English lexis that function differently compared to those in Arabic. This can be seen in the respondents' justifications. Ergo, the running theme through such justifications is that learners explained that the two aforementioned languages are different from each other at the level of word combinations. In other words, according to these respondents they avoid combining words in English the same way they do in Arabic because each language has its own lexis which makes meaning differs. In addition, they added that the resultant sentences ,if words are combined in English the same way they are in Arabic, would be wrong in the sense that when those sentences are appropriately translated they do not make sense. Some of the respondents looked at the issue from a syntactic point of view and justified that it is a faulty strategy to combine words in English in a way that is similar to that in Arabic, since the syntactic system, word order, of English considerably differs from that of Arabic. Thus, depending on the syntactic patterns of Arabic word combinations to produce meaning in English is, at best, a poor guide to coherent and comprehensible output and , at worst, a source of unidiomatic writing .

As it is also shown in table (4.20), a percentage of 17.7% represents the rest of the respondents (N 11) who replied in contrast and confirmed that they do often feel the need to rely on combining words in English the same way they do in Arabic. It can be noticed that these EFL students have never been alerted to the fact that the particularity of certain aspects of the target language, mainly its unique lexical patterns, is likely to function wrongly and result in deviancy,

if it is merged or confused with that of the mother tongue. Therefore, some respondents justified that, while writing, the process of relying on Arabic to combine words in English is considered a helpful means to express themselves more easily. They also added that such a short cut but faulty strategy ensures them that the meaning of the written output they produce is comprehensible and accessible to any reader! Other respondents went further and argued that they resort to combining words in English in the same way they do in Arabic because they do not know how to produce proper word combinations in English. On the whole, it seems that such EFL learners have little exposure to English and this is perhaps responsible for their poor mental lexicon and unawareness of the uniqueness and untransferability of certain English collocations.

4.6.5.20. Question 20: Generally, what kind of mistakes do you make most when you try to express yourself in English?

Table 4.21

Students' kind of mistakes during self-expression

| Answer | Frequency | Percentage |
|-------------|-----------|------------|
| Grammatical | 46 | 74.2 % |
| Lexical | 16 | 25.8 % |
| Total | 62 | 100 % |

Results in the above table demonstrate that the vast majority of the respondents (74.2%), i.e. 46 EFL students, make grammatical mistakes when they try to express themselves in English. This can indicate that these students may face certain difficulties with the basics of English like the structural pattern of sentences, more precisely the order of words. Consequently, failure to use proper word order is very likely to affect EFL students' ability to use proper word combinations such as collocations. In addition, though collocations are not grammatically governed, i.e. the choice of which word to co-occur with which is not dictated by any grammatical rule, incomplete understanding of the grammatical nature of words (e.g. parts of speech and inflection) may in turn affect learners' ability to use collocations correctly. On the whole, learners making grammatical mistakes are less expected to produce deviant forms of collocations (odd word combinations), since the nature of association in a particular group of co-occurring words is more arbitrary than grammatical.

Another point to consider is that according to table (4.21) also only a handful of students (25.8%), i.e. a quarter of them, make lexical mistakes when they try to express themselves in English. Put another way, these EFL students are very likely to have difficulties in using proper word combinations and, if any, the collocations they use are of low strength of association which are to a great extent similar to free combinations. This is probably due to learners' poor mental lexicon which in fact results from poor practice. Consequently, the written output (compositions) of such students is expected to feature certain underuse of collocations that, in turn, deflects the reader attention from the intended meaning as it can also hinder his/her comprehension.

4.6.5.21. Question 21: Generally, what makes it difficult for you to express yourself in English satisfactorily?

- a) You do not know enough words?
- b) You know a fair amount of words but you do not know how to combine them correctly?

Table 4.22

Students' difficulties in expressing themselves in English

| Difficulty | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|-----------|------------|
| ✓ You do not know enough words | 46 | 74.2 % |
| ✓ You know a fair amount of words but you do not know how to combine them correctly | 16 | 25.8 |
| Total | 62 | 100 % |

In the light of the results demonstrated in table (4.22), we can notice that the overwhelming majority of the respondents (N 46), i.e. a high percentage of 74.2%, find it difficult to express themselves in English due to the fact that they do not know enough words in English. That is, these EFL learners seem to have a serious poor knowledge of vocabulary, mainly productive vocabulary which can consequently hinder their ability to communicate their ideas effectively. Moreover, this lack of appropriate vocabulary in learners' performance can to a great extent affect their choice of words in writing which in turn results in miscollocations. On the other hand, we can also notice that only a handful of the respondents (N 16), i.e. a low percentage of 25.8%, find it difficult to express themselves in English due to the fact that they have a considerable knowledge of words but they do not know how to combine these words

appropriately. What can be said about such EFL learners is that though they have a fair knowledge of vocabulary they are still unable to express themselves effectively due to the fact that lexis, mainly collocations, have a much generative power of language (conveys more meaning) as opposed to individual words that if wrongly patterned they may alter meaning, if not, distort it and hinder communication. Another point to consider is that such EFL learners with limited knowledge of the collocational fields of words may have the source of this lexical problem related to the over emphasis on the importance of grammatical knowledge which regrettably has always secured a lion's share in most EFL instructional programs and school curricula in Algeria.

4.6.5.22 .Question 22: Do you think that your possible problem in combining words correctly in English lies in the fact that: *(only one box)*

- a) You combine them wrongly while you do not pay attention to that?
- b) You are aware of your wrong word combinations but you cannot correct them on your own?
- c) You do not feel troubled regarding your erroneous word combinations?
- d) Other, please specify...

Table 4.23

Students' problems in combining words in English

| Problem | Frequency | Percentage |
|--|-----------|------------|
| ✓ You combine words wrongly without paying attention. | 27 | 43.5 % |
| ✓ You are aware of your wrong word combinations but you cannot correct them by yourself. | 29 | 46.8 % |
| ✓ You do not feel troubled regarding your erroneous word combinations. | 06 | 09.7 % |
| ✓ Other | 00 | 00 % |
| Total | 62 | 100 % |

The aim of this follow up question is to further explore the potential problems that the participants of this study have when it comes to the ability to correctly put words together in English. Hence, according to the tabulated results above, out of the total number of the 62

respondents 29 of them (almost half ,i.e. 46.8%), revealed that their problem in combining words correctly in English lies in the fact that those respondents are actually aware of their resultant wrong word combinations however they feel unable to correct them on their own. In other words, the problem the learners have can be attributed to the fact that the corrective feedback their teachers provide seems to down play collocational mistakes and instead highlights correct and accurate sentence structure such as the appropriate use of tenses and subject-verb concord. It can also be said that these EFL learners were not properly instructed, through a battery of effective strategies such as the use of collocation dictionaries, to identify, check and correct each other's collocational mistakes. Simply put, EFL teachers can be said to have not encouraged their learners' autonomy by weaning them off the over dependency on their teachers to correct miscollocations. Another thing that deserves our close attention is that 27 of the respondents (43.5%) reported that their problem in combining words correctly in English lies in the fact that they put words together wrongly without paying attention to that. This implies that such EFL learners are probably focusing more on the form (accuracy) rather than the meaning (appropriateness). Thus, words that are expected to combine in English are likely to be underused in the output of these learners since the latter are unaware of the fact that words are not necessarily put together in accordance with the set of the syntactic rules that only govern the order and not the choice of words. Lastly, only six of the respondents (09.7%) replied that their problem in combining words correctly in English lies in the fact that they do not feel troubled regarding their erroneous word combinations. Such unawareness of the importance of proper word combinations highlights the counter-productivity of certain classroom practices, indifferent EFL teachers and their pedagogical mind set towards collocations' awareness raising which seems to neglect the effect of teaching collocations on the improvement of learners' writing proficiency. Consequently, learners are very likely to focus their attention on learning only the elements (linguistic areas) that a particular instructional program or school syllabus specifies.

4.6.6. Section Six: Suggestions and recommendations

4.6.6.24. Question: 23 Do you think that co-occurring words (collocations) in English should be taught as an independent and free-standing module at university?

Table 4.24

Students' opinions on devoting a free-standing module to teach collocations

| Answer | Frequency | Percentage |
|--------|-----------|------------|
| Yes | 45 | 72.6 % |
| No | 17 | 27.4 % |
| Total | 62 | 100 % |

As table (4.24) clarifies, most of the respondents (72.6%) replied that English collocations should be taught as an independent and free-standing module at university. This implies that these EFL students are somewhat aware of the vital importance of collocations in the creation of meaning (encoding) as well as the comprehensibility of language (decoding). It is noteworthy that such learners have, to a great extent, realized that the designing of a special syllabus to teach them collocations can also provide them with more opportunities for exposure to the target form. That is, learners can be immersed in an intensive collocation practicing course which can tremendously contribute to increase their ability to notice collocations as it can encourage such learners' autonomy in learning this long overlooked but salient area of the target language lexis. It can also be argued that allocating considerable time to focus learners' attention on collocations solely is very likely to improve the retention of such unique phraseological behavior of words and consequently reinforce fluency in the use of the target language. It goes without saying that by devoting a special module to introduce EFL learners to this basic ingredient of fluency, teachers need to follow an explicit approach.

Another point that deserves further attention in the tabulated results is the small number of the respondents (27.4%) who reported that English collocations should not be taught as an independent and free-standing module at university. Strikingly, these EFL learners probably think that due to the pervasiveness of collocations in the naturally occurring English and given that the relationship between any collocating words is not likely to be explained by any morpho-syntactic rule, then collocations can be merely learnt through exposure over time. In other words, learners may consider the acquisition of collocations as similar to that of vocabulary (individual words) which usually occurs incidentally as a result of exposure to the target language. However, what they probably but wrongly think they need to learn is the set of grammatical rules that help them to use the target language beyond the word level.

4.6.6.25. Question 24: If you would like to say anything (comments, suggestions ...etc.) relevant to the aim of this questionnaire, please write them here.

This question offers space to the participants to give their own feedback and reflection on the key issues that have been investigated through this questionnaire. Thus, this question invites learners to freely reflect and express their opinions in relation to the purpose of this questionnaire. Accordingly, on the basis of their perception of the concept of collocation and its importance in the issues of effective learning of English in general and the frequently co-occurring words in particular (comprehension and production), most of these respondents' suggestions and reflection can be categorized into four main themes : self-reported difficulties in learning English, suggestions on how to effectively learn English in general , suggestions on how to effectively improve vocabulary and collocational knowledge and finally recommendations to devote a special module for teaching vocabulary and collocations.

To start with, the self-reported difficulties in learning English in general range mostly from issues related to lack of self-confidence and inability to combine words appropriately to problems related to learning vocabulary and the inflectional properties in English grammar. In what follows, we are going to quote some of these difficulties. As for the lack of self-confidence, one of the respondents reported, "I have a problem of self-confidence because I always want to express myself correctly and display my skills in English, but I always feel anxious". Similarly, another student reported, "English is a very good language and it is easy to learn, but I can express myself effectively if I only feel confident". For the inability to combine words correctly in English, one of the respondents acknowledged that he/she has a problem in vocabulary and word combinations. He/she thus explained, "I see that I have a big problem in vocabulary and I do not know how to combine words correctly". He/she added, "I do not know how to improve my level in English". In terms of the encountered difficulties in vocabulary use, one of the respondents told "the problem of the majority of us is that we do not have enough vocabulary to express ourselves correctly .So, we have to focus well on learning vocabulary and word combinations because they are very important". Along the same lines, another respondent reported, "I have hard time expressing myself correctly in English, because of many vocabulary mistakes that I make. In my opinion, the best way to learn new words is through watching TV". Other problems related to vocabulary and grammar seem to be attributed to the students' inability to distinguish between near synonyms. Thus, a respondent informed, "When I write I

have many problems related to vocabulary and grammar. I make a lot of mistakes when I try to use synonyms of words”. Concerning problems of the inflectional properties of English, one of the respondents revealed that he/she has difficulties in using correct verb forms. He/she reported, “thank you sir for your interest! I do have a problem in conjugation”. Also, some of the reported problems in this category are related to the effect of the lack of vocabulary knowledge on the writing skill. In this respect, one of the students informed, “I have a problem using English especially in writing because I have a big problem in vocabulary.

It can be said that the aforementioned difficulties, whether the ones related to the learners’ psychological readiness (e.g. lack of self-confidence and the problem of anxiety) or the others related to incomplete mastery of the target language (e.g. poor knowledge of the syntactic and lexical properties of language), are likely to adversely affect these EFL learners’ acquisition of collocations. Such effect can be clearly evident in the way these learners process collocations (perception and production). A point we will return to discuss in the next chapter.

Regarding the suggestions on how to effectively learn English in general, most of the respondents recommendations range from stressing the importance of practicing English through writing and the need for extensive reading (reinforcement of the receptive skills) to the effect of visual aids in classrooms. In this respect and in terms of the importance of the productive skills in foreign languages learning, one of the respondents recommends, “English is an easy language to learn, but we need to practise writing a lot in order to be able to express ourselves better”. Similarly another respondent advises, “I think students should write a lot to develop their skills”. One also suggests, “I think the best way to learn a foreign language is to practise it”. As far as the importance of honing the receptive skills for effective learning is concerned, some of the respondents stressed the need for reinforcing extensive reading and listening .Correspondingly, one respondent recommends, “as a first year student of English, I suggest to those who want to learn English effectively to read different books in English and listen to content that is delivered in formal English because this helps to learn formal and academic English”. Another student also advises, “try to always read many books written in English to develop your abilities to communicate effectively”. Lastly, in terms of highlighting the need for visual aids, one of the students recommends “improving our level in English requires that the university provides the necessary equipment such as computers and overhead projectors for better learning”. In a similar vein, another respondent suggests “for better leaning of English teachers should use electronic

devices. I believe videos and movies with English sub-titles are a very effective means". It is noteworthy that such recommended strategies of effective learning of English reinforce learners' exposure to authentic English which may in turn contribute to raise learners' awareness of how words collocate in naturally occurring language.

Concerning the respondents' suggestions of how to enrich their vocabulary repository and expand their collocational knowledge, most of what they recommended centered on the need for doing extensive reading and the use of dictionary. Other suggestions highlight the need to do much practice (vocabulary and collocation-based exercises) and learning from audio visual means. As far as the importance of reading extensively and using a dictionary to enrich one's lexical knowledge, the majority of the respondents recommend "we need to read different books and use dictionary every day to enlarge our vocabulary", "I suggest developing vocabulary by reading many books and short stories" and "to enrich your vocabulary you need to read many books and use dictionary whenever you encounter a difficult word". Some of those respondents who strongly recommend extensive reading highlight the need to pay attention to how words combine. For instance one of the respondents recommends, "in my opinion, I see that we should pay attention to how words combine. We try to notice that for example when we read newspapers". Similarly, another respondent advises, "reading activities should be reinforced and maximized...., this stimulates learners to focus their attention on learning new words and noticing how words combine correctly". Few respondents recommend the need to engage in doing activities that aim at reinforcing learners' knowledge of vocabulary. For example one of these respondents advises, "I prefer to learn new words by means of writing and paraphrasing". Another one adds "we have to learn new words and always practice the writing because it helps a lot for memorization". Also, one of these few respondents stresses the need to devote many efforts for learning vocabulary. He /she then recommends, "I think it takes determination and a lot of efforts to overcome lack of vocabulary. We need to use many methods". In a similar vein, another one recommends "teachers should give more exercises about word combinations and teach them in more than one lesson". As far as the respondents whose suggestions centered on learning new words and collocations from audio visual means and mass media, most of them, in their words, stress the following : "watch TV and news to learn new words" and "listen to music and watch movies to learn new words and collocation". It is also worth mentioning that two of the respondents stress the need to avoid depending on translation from and to the L1 as

much as possible. Thus, one of these respondents recommends, “we should try hard to learn how to use words in English correctly without the need to check by translating things into Arabic”. Likewise, the other respondent emphasizes the exclusive use of English, for example, by using a monolingual dictionary to enrich one’s knowledge of the English words. He/she then insists, “use English English dictionary a lot and avoid translating things into Arabic”.

It can be noticed that the respondents’ aforementioned strategies for enriching their vocabulary repository and expand their collocational knowledge reveal a lot about the way they process collocations. First of all, in terms of comprehension it can be argued that since learners recommend extensive exposure to the target language (reinforcement of the receptive skills) they seem to be aware of the fact that relying on the semantic properties of the L1 is a poor guide to make sense of the target language collocations. Thus, learners rely more on context to decipher the meaning of English collocations. More importantly, rich exposure to English acquaints EFL learners with the figurative properties of language (e.g. restricted collocations) as it encourages the holistic comprehension that safeguards learners from the potential danger of erroneous word-by word processing (semantically- motivated atomistic analysis) which is , in turn, very likely to mislead learners to decipher a given input successfully. Such holistic comprehension reflects these learners’ ability to retrieve (produce) the stored collocations effortlessly and quickly without the need to use the L1 to compose word combinations from scratch.

Last but not least, the respondents’ recommendation to devote a special and free-standing module for teaching vocabulary and collocations reflects these learners’ needs, lacks and wants to develop their collocational competence as a significant forward step towards the effective acquisition of the target language. The following quoted suggestions demonstrate those respondents’ common motives:

- “we need to have a module about how to learn collocations especially the hard ones ”
- “ I suggest adding a new module to teach us vocabulary and word combinations because they are very important”
- “ we need to learn how to combine words correctly”
- “ it would be a good idea to devote a special module that helps us learn more about words and their different uses with other items ”

The implications that can be drawn from the above recommendations is that the latter ,on the one hand, echo the centrality (end) of collocations to the development of proficiency in the

target language and ,on the other, dictate the appropriate approach (means) for introducing such long ignored area of language learning/teaching in EFL classes .

4.7 Discussion of the findings

The main aim of the questionnaire is to explore EFL learners' initial awareness, preconception and interest in learning collocations. It attempts to unveil the pre-existing cognitive strategies the participants used to employ to process collocations prior to the start of the experimental program. The analysis of the aforementioned results reveals a lot about the subjects in terms of a number of factors that explain their perception, production and attitudes towards collocational patterns in English.

First of all, in terms of the amount of formal exposure to English in general and collocation in particular, the students' profile and demographic information about the sample of the current study implies a great deal of homogeneity. The majority of respondents are adolescent learners (18-19 years old) who started school at the required age of six. This implies that they never failed in their scholastic career which, in turn, suggests that they have similar exposure to English. This can be further explained by the findings related to the sample duration of studying English. That is, the vast majority of the subjects have been studying English for eight years which confirms that they never failed during their scholastic path .This indicates that the respondents have a fairly good mastery of English which consequently affects positively their acquisition of collocations. This is also confirmed by the answer to Q3 which explains that the majority of the respondents are new baccalaureate degree holders (not retaking the first year university course). In other words, the sample of this study can be said to have not been part of any previous experimental instructional program which may have probably aimed at improving their collocational competence. Again, this is further confirmed by the findings related to Q6 (students' high school streams). That is, the sample of the study belongs to foreign language stream which implies that they have similar practice of collocations. Such a high school stream is known to be predominated by female learners for that the latter usually favor humanities over scientific fields. Therefore, the sample of the study is largely (74%) formed of female students (male students make up 26%). This outnumbering suggests that these students are motivated and interested to learn English. More importantly, such interest is evident in the students' choice of the university major. In other words, the majority of the subjects chose to major in English at university. Such findings confirm that the sample of the study is highly motivated to learn

English and this motivation is in turn very likely to significantly affect the acquisition of collocation through this current experimental instructional course.

As for the subjects' strategies in learning vocabulary, the overwhelming majority of the participants follow a counterproductive strategy of learning vocabulary in English. That is, they learn new words by making a list of individual words together with their corresponding synonyms. This fact goes hand in hand with Nagy (1995) claim explaining that good knowledge of a given word has to be based on the knowledge of the different aspects of the context that better defines it. This includes knowledge of the syntactic constructs and, more importantly, the collocational environment within which such a word occurs. Therefore, memorizing word lists and their definitions puts these participants at a disadvantage in terms of combining words appropriately and, in the first place, producing the target language naturally. Paradoxically, the majority of participants do not use near synonyms interchangeably which means that they are, to some extent, aware of the co-textual properties of some words. However, if we look at these subjects' behaviors and tendencies of using dictionary to enrich their word knowledge different facts emerge. First, the majority of the participants prefer to use bilingual dictionaries, namely English Arabic dictionary. This means that they rely on their mother tongue to enrich their vocabulary in English. Consequently, it is very likely to encourage the negative transfer of collocations which results in odd and deviant forms (miscollocations) in this EFL learners' written output. Second and frequency wise, since the majority of the respondents use the aforementioned bilingual dictionary sometimes and very few of them use the monolingual English English dictionary always, then it can, at this point, be concluded that the sample of this study very often resort to their mother tongue (not to any clues in the co-text) to decipher any difficult word they encounter. This result is consistent with what Carter and McCarthy (2014) argue regarding non-native learners use of bilingual dictionaries to learn a foreign language vocabulary. In this respect, Carter and McCarthy point out that the use of bilingual dictionaries have been discouraged by many EFL teachers due to the fact that EFL learners can be mindlessly pre-occupied with decoding any encountered difficult word in the target language by trying to find a direct equivalent of that word in their mother tongue. Thus, collocation wise and given that the sample of this study memorizes new individual words in a decontextualized way, such tendency is further confirmed by the findings related to Q 11. In crude terms, the participants use the bilingual English Arabic dictionary to learn separate single items rather than, at least, trying

to translate collocations from English to Arabic, which means that the students rely on their linguistic, in the first place, lexical knowledge of Arabic to combine words in English. Taken together, this evidences that the subjects are unaware of the area of differences that exists between Arabic and English lexis. Moreover, these EFL learners have proved to be able to distinguish only between near synonyms that are only shared between the two aforementioned languages. Findings as such answer our survey's first question as to whether or not EFL learners are aware of the collocational restrictions placed on the target language words. Hence, it can be concluded that EFL learners have limited awareness of the fact that words do not always combine freely in English nor combine the way they do in Arabic. This is in line with a study conducted in 1995 by Farghal and Obiedat who arrived at the conclusion that EFL learners have a serious problem with collocations due to the fact that they are ignorant of the divergences that exist between the collocational nature of the L1 and that of the L2. Recently, a similar conclusion was highlighted in a number of studies such as those conducted by Kim (2012); Lee (2015) and Lee (2016) in which EFL learners were reported to be heavily dependent on their L1 to produce L2 collocations and in case a particular collocations is unpredictable from the L1, learners (even advanced ones) tend to combine words freely and thus produce a lot of miscollocations.

Other facts emerge if we consider the subjects' interest and attitudes towards reading dictionary examples. First, the vast majority of the students, especially those who use dictionary to learn separate single words, tend to read all of the examples shown about the use of a given word in a dictionary. This means that these learners are likely to be exposed to a wide range of collocational fields of words. Now as it is confirmed by answers to Q13, it becomes evident that the majority of the subjects tend to notice, through dictionary examples, the collocates that are associated with the word they have looked up in the dictionary. Therefore, it can be, on the whole, concluded that the sample of this study have some level of exposure to collocations which have basically been received through consulting dictionary examples. In fact, such limited exposure may have enriched learners' vocabulary knowledge though the majority of these EFL learners still consider adverbs as the most difficult part of speech to learn. This indicates that adverb containing collocations are very likely to pose a major challenge for EFL learners in the process of acquiring collocational competence. In other words, our subjects of the study are expected to perform poorly in terms of the use of collocations that contain adverbs.

Another point that deserves our close attention is that of the participants' perception of co-occurring words. As a strategy these subjects use to decipher an encountered difficult collocation (during reading or listening), most of them look for the meaning of the new word in a combination of two paired words whose only one item is familiar to them. Crudely put, the participants are only aware of the literal meaning of collocations, in particular free weak collocations that, to a great extent, resemble free combinations. One explanation to this could be the fact that such EFL learners may think that the meaning a particular collocation conveys can always be derived from each of the individual meaning of its constituent elements. Therefore, together with what we stated earlier regarding learners' awareness of collocates in dictionary examples (Q13), it can be concluded that our participants do not recognize all kinds of collocations (mainly mid-strong and strong collocations) during exposure since they perceive the meaning of any combination of words atomistically. Such findings answer our study's second question: the extent to which the subjects are able to recognize the varying degrees of arbitrariness that dictate the collocational restrictions on English words use. Put another way, the findings confirm that the sample is to a great extent unaware of the arbitrary relationship that exists among co-occurring words in English. Further evidence in support of this conclusion can be seen if we consider the fact that the vast majority of the subjects are unable to recognize English word combinations which convey meaning other than the one expected in Arabic (see Q16). In this respect, it becomes evident that the exposure to English that these EFL students had may not have familiarized them with strongly collocated words (strong collocations with high MI score) which are intrinsic to the arbitrary nature of English. Thus, it can also be concluded that the sample of this study is unaware of the difference between the arbitrary nature of the L1 lexis and that of the target language lexis. Furthermore, it can also be confirmed that since the majority of the participants (see Q17) do not have a tendency to look for the collocates that usually combine with a particular word they have learnt, then such learners have a high tendency to depend on freely combined words to make sense of a given input. This again confirms the aforementioned second question on the one hand and, on the other, lends support to a number of studies (e.g.Hill,1999; Kecskes,2007;Sinclair,1991&Warga,2005)which commonly acknowledge the atomistic perception of language by EFL learners. In other words, it can be said that the sample of this study are much inclined to operate on the Open Choice Principle in which learners break down the input into parts with the aim of looking for semantic and grammatical clues to

comprehend it. Additionally, this can be explained by what we confirmed earlier regarding EFL learners unawareness of the collocational restrictions that govern the behavior of English words.

The analysis of results related to the students' tendencies in terms of the production of collocations also reveals many facts. Concerning the use of their mother tongue to perform in English (written output), the vast majority of the subjects rely on Arabic (during brain storming) and translate their generated ideas into English. The motive behind this counterproductive cognitive strategy is that such EFL learners find it easier and more effortless to produce writing since they know how to appropriately combine words in Arabic. That is, they see such a strategy as a shortcut to produce the desired output in English. Though it might be contradictory if we consider the fact that the vast majority of the subjects (80%) do not feel the need to rely on Arabic to combine words in English, still the vast majority (74%) of them also find it difficult to express themselves in English due to the fact that they have poor knowledge of vocabulary. Such limited productive vocabulary is very likely to adversely affect their choice of words (accurate or native-like lexical selection) which results in odd forms of language, in particular, miscollocations. In this context, Crystal (2005) explains that since words of the source language do not always have direct equivalents in the target language, then lack of such knowledge qualifies the outcome of the target language users to be under the effect of the negative transfer. Hence, Baker (2011), in his terms, clarifies "a language may express a given meaning by means of a single word, another may express it by means of a transparent fixed expression and the third may express it by means of idiom" (p.68). To illustrate, Baker shows that the two- word English expression '*shake hands*' has only one possible single word equivalent in Arabic; that is the verb "يصافح".

Another point to consider is that of the students' problem in combining words in English. It is evident that the vast majority of the subjects are actually aware of their wrong word combinations, however they cannot correct themselves. Differently put, their inability to correct their own miscollocations on their own seems to be attributed to the fact that the corrective feedback their teachers provide appears to downplay collocational mistakes and instead highlight the need to use correct sentence structure. This claim can be evidenced if we consider the fact that the majority of the respondents (see Q20) reported that ungrammatical forms (morpho-syntactic mistakes) make up the largest amount of the mistakes these students make during their course of self-expression in English. As long as what has seemingly been required from such

learners in EFL classes proves to be related to the ability to use accurate sentence structure and proper tenses, this explains that these students are heavily dependent on their teachers to correct mistake(s) other than morpho-syntactic one(s) (e.g. lexical mistakes such as miscollocations). All in all, it can be confirmed that the subjects' production of co-occurring words is limited to weak collocations. Furthermore, the source of their mid-strong and strong miscollocations is attributed to lack of vocabulary practice and poor formal instruction.

Last but not least, tapping into the subjects' reflections and suggestions also reveals a lot about their interest in learning collocations and the strategies they follow. For instance, the interest of the majority of the subjects (see Q23) in learning collocations in a future free-standing module confirms, on the one hand, what we have stated earlier regarding the poorly instructed EFL learners and, on the other hand, highlights learners' awareness of the vital importance of collocations in the process of encoding and decoding messages in English. Their justification of the interest in devoting more time to learn collocations denotes these students' lacks and needs in developing collocational competence as it also reflects the approach through which collocations should be taught to them. That is, explicitness in teaching such a key ingredient of fluency is very likely to meet these EFL learners' lexical needs and remedy their weaknesses. Thus subscribing to the Noticing Hypothesis¹⁸ (Schmidt, 1990), it becomes self-evident that encouraging an increased attention to the target item helps our study' subjects convert the input into intake and then into output. Nevertheless, if we further consider the subjects' reported difficulties in learning and the strategies they suggest, a number of reasons highlight an urgent need to teach collocations explicitly in a free-standing module. First, lack of self-confidence, lack of vocabulary and inability to distinguish between near synonyms can adversely affect such learners' perception and production of collocations. Second, since the subjects commonly recommend an extensive exposure to English and the reinforcement of the receptive skills, it becomes imperative to acknowledge that their reliance on the grammatical and semantic properties of English lexis proved to be inadequate when it comes to the process of input decoding (comprehension). Ergo, such learners need to be made aware of the co-text (collocational restrictions) and the context (register) for successful comprehension. In turn,

¹⁸ According to Schmidt (1990), for a particular linguistic aspect to be acquired learners need to notice it repeatedly. Thus, he emphasizes that attention aids retention and this led to the emergence of activities that encourage the explicit teaching of language through raising learners' awareness of certain details about the use of a given linguistic form.

acquiring knowledge as such is likely to be echoed in the learners' production. Needless to say, adequate exposure to authentic English and good training of learners to notice, store and retrieve collocations (chunking the input) can tremendously help them produce authentic output.

4.8 Summary of Findings

The interpretation of the above results highlights a number of facts that relate to the main objectives of the questionnaire. In what follows, we are going to sum up the main findings of this survey:

- The subjects are homogenous in terms of the amount of exposure to English in general and collocations in particular.
- They are intermediate adolescent EFL learners who have never been part of any previous experimental instructional program which might have aimed at developing their collocational competence.
- The participants are motivated to learn English effectively and acquire native like-use of this target language.
- The subjects follow a counterproductive strategy of learning vocabulary, i.e. decontextualized learning of individual vocabulary items.
- The subjects rely on their mother tongue (Arabic) to enrich their English vocabulary. Consequently, they are inclined to transfer collocations negatively. In other words, our participants prove to rely on their collocational knowledge of Arabic to combine words in English.
- They are, to a great extent, unaware of the difference between the lexical nature of Arabic and that of English.
- EFL learners in this study have limited awareness of the specificity of collocational restrictions placed on the behavior of words in English.
- These EFL learners are only aware of the literal meaning of collocations and able to recognize weak collocations only, i.e. they operate on the Open Choice Principle in which they perceive input as separate building bricks.
- The participants are to, a great extent, unaware of the arbitrary nature that governs most of the co-occurring of words in English, especially mid and strong collocations.
- Learners in this study have lack of vocabulary knowledge which can consequently affect their proper choice of words and, in turn, result in miscollocations in their output.

- The quality of miscollocations in this learners' output is expected to be of the type adverb+adjective and adverb+verb combinations.
- These participants are unable to self-correct their miscollocations due to the poor formal instruction they received through the CBA practices, lack of practice of collocations use and overemphasis on the production of grammatically well-formed output.
- The collocation-related output of these subjects is limited to weak collocations and their source of miscollocations is attributed to their lack of vocabulary knowledge and practice.
- EFL learners in this study are interested in learning collocations in a free-standing module which could be devoted to develop their collocational competence.
- The subjects' reliance on their knowledge of the grammatical and semantic properties of English lexis has proven to be inadequate in terms of the comprehension and production of collocations. Instead, they need to be made aware of the existing divergences between Arabic and English in terms of the collocational restrictions and register.
- These participants are in need of being taught collocations explicitly and given more opportunities to extend their mental lexicon through well-guided exposure to authentic input.

4.9 Conclusion

The current thesis is an experimental study whose, through the application of the principled paradigm of the Lexical Approach, overriding aim is to develop EFL intermediate learners' collocational accuracy and ability to produce idiomatic writing. Prior to conducting the experiment, these learners' initial awareness and perception of collocations have been examined through questionnaire. The analysis of the main results reveals that the previous exposure to English that these subjects had did not contribute to raise their awareness of collocations. The subjects are only familiar with weak collocations and mid-strong collocations which have direct equivalents in Arabic. The source of such incomplete knowledge lies in this EFL intermediate students' unawareness of the arbitrary nature that governs the collocational restrictions and which specifically characterizes each of the two languages' word combinations. In the light of this, we can conclude that such unawareness, on the part of EFL intermediate students, is responsible for the atomistic perception of English lexis. This perception highlights the tendency of these learners to operate on the Open Choice Principle which, in turn, manifests itself in atomistic production of English mainly in writing. Taken together, these findings lend support to our need

for reconsidering our current classroom practices as they also lay the groundwork for devising a collocation processing -based instructional program which we will discuss at length in the next chapter.

Chapter Five

The Lexical Approach in Action: Results and Analysis of the Experiment

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5.1 Introduction

The study reported in this thesis is based on a true, as opposed to quasi¹⁹, experiment conducted inside the classroom. True experiment or experimental study design aims at investigating the effect of a particular intervention on a given population. The experimental study differs from the quasi-experiment in the sense that it requires random assignment of the participants into groups in order to investigate the cause and effect relationship (Campbell & Stanley, 2015). The current experimental study draws on Kemmis and Mc Taggart's model of action research (1988). This model is comprised of four main moves : plan (planning the action), act (putting the plan into action) , observe (observing of the results of the plan) and reflect (reflecting on the planning for further actions) . The main objective of conducting the present experiment is to put the effectiveness of the Lexical Approach to the test and assess the impact of training the participants to notice, identify and store collocations on their ability to produce accurate collocations and operate on the Idiom Principle. Thus , this experiment is conducted in three main stages: a preliminary stage in which learners are randomly assigned into two groups and sat for an initial receptive collocational knowledge test and a writing test (pre-tests) , an experimental stage in which these learners receive the instructional course (the implementation of the Lexical Approach) and a follow-up stage in which learners are retested again (post-tests) and interviewed to assess the effectiveness of the instructional course on these learners performance.

5.2 The pre-experiment stage

As we explained earlier in chapter four, learners awareness of collocations and their pre-existing cognitive strategies of processing collocations were all investigated prior to the start of experimental course. That would also contribute to assess the effectiveness of current experimental course. The latter is conducted within the aforementioned three stages. As a first step, the pre-experiment stage serves as preliminary move in which the subjects are recruited and given a number of pre-tests. Practically, the overall objective of these initial tests is to measure the participants' pre-existing collocational performance and ability to produce native-like

¹⁹ Quasi-experiment is a kind of empirical research whose aim is to assess the effect of a particular course of action on a chosen population. Though conditions related to the independent variable are manipulated in quasi experiment, sampling and assignment of participants to control and experimental groups is not made at random.

writing. Hence, in this reported preliminary stage we are going to present the main followed procedures.

5.2.1 Subject recruitment

Subjects recruited in this experiment are 62 first year students at the Department of English at Chedli Ben Djidid University of Taref , Algeria. Students' age ranges between 18 and 37 years old. The vast majority of them are adolescent students of the age 18/19. Most of these participants are females (46), i.e. 74%. The rest are males (16), i.e. 26%. These subjects speak Arabic as their mother tongue and English as a foreign language. They studied English as a compulsory school subject for almost the same period of time, i.e. four years at middle school and three years at high school. Back then, English was taught to them following the practices of the Competency -Based Approach (CBA) which was adopted by the Algerian Ministry of Education in the late 1990s. Hence, the subjects of this study are homogenous in terms of age and linguistic background as well, i.e. intermediate adolescent EFL learners.

Since this experimental study is aimed at investigating the effect of the pedagogical intervention (the Lexical Approach -based instructional course) on our target population (first year EFL majors), a sample of 62 students was selected for this experimental study. The overall number of students enrolled in the first year course at this department during the academic year 2016-2017 is 95. These students were put into three groups by the department: group one (numbering 33 students), group two (numbering 31 students) and group three (numbering 31 students). For sampling purposes, only two groups were selected for the experiment. In other words, the participants were randomly assigned to two groups. An experimental group and a control group with 31 students in each.

To ensure more of such homogeneity in terms of their, if any, existing collocational competence, all participants took a collocational knowledge test before the start of the experiment. Their performances in the test were almost the same .The average score (mean/ M) is 11.87 for the control group and 11.80 for the experimental one (see table 6.2) .For ethical considerations, the participants were reassured that the results of test are only used for research purposes and not meant for any official assessment. The motive behind conducting this classroom experiment with first year students is three-fold:

1. First year students are very expected have inadequate linguistic resources mainly vocabulary due to their limited exposure to English (especially at high and middle schools) and this creates the ideal opportunity for the researcher to build their mental lexicon.

2. First year students did not practise writing adequately at middle and high schools. If any, writing tasks there are generally limited and aimed at getting learners to display correct use of grammar in short paragraphs but without any focus on how meaning is created thanks to proper word choice.

3. The syllabus of first year students is a preliminary stage that prepares them for extended and different kinds of writing (descriptive, narrative, argumentative and expository essays) which allows the researchers to safely introduce and incorporate collocations into the content of the writing course.

5.2.2. Administration of the collocational knowledge test (pre-test)

The objectives of adopting the Lexical Approach to teach collocations is to investigate any co-relation between the practices of this approach and the acquisition of the ability to use strongly collocated words and, in turn, operate on the Idiom Principle in the written output of EFL learners. To carry out this study, we first tested our subjects' initial collocational knowledge prior to the introduction of the instructional programme. The subjects were pre-tested on their receptive collocational knowledge . This served as a placement test. The latter was administered at the beginning of November 2016 and a week before the start of the experimental instructional course. The researcher himself administered the test. All of the participants in both groups were given two hours to do the same test at the same time of the same day.

Activities included in this test are of three types. Multiple choice questions (MCQ) -based activity, miscollocation correction-based activity and word re-ordering-based activity (see appendix B). The MCQ -based activity includes the six types of lexical collocations explained by Benson, Benson, and Ilson (1997) which we discussed earlier in the second chapter. This type of activity is meant to measure the participants' ability to choose the most accurate collocate to form a strong collocation with high MI score. The activity is designed by the researcher himself using concordance examples taken from the British National Corpus and Oxford Collocations Dictionary. The different types of lexical collocations around which this activity is based were chosen according to their strength of association, i.e., their high MI scores. The validity of this activity was checked by some qualified EFL university teachers.

The miscollocation-based activity is meant to measure the learners' ability to identify language (collocational patterns) that is used holistically. Differently put, we try to find out the extent to which the participants of this study are able to notice the building blocks in the target language. As for the word re-ordering -based activity, the main purpose is to test learners' ability to produce correct collocations on the basis of these learners' successful identification of the given constituent elements (collocates) of collocations. Both of the last two mentioned types of activities are adopted from "Collocation in Use" book by O'Dell and McCarthy (2008).

5.2.3 Corpus compiling

As we mentioned earlier, one of the main objectives of the pre-experiment stage, besides measuring learners' pre-existing receptive knowledge of collocations, is to measure their pre-existing productive knowledge of collocations. To this end, the written output of these EFL learners was examined in terms of the combinatory strength of words. In other words, the aim of analysing EFL learners' pre-experiment corpus is to assess the extent to which they are able to retrieve language as building blocks (tendency to operate on the Idiom Principle). To gather the required data, a pre-test corpus was compiled. The corpus consists of 62 compositions written by our participants in both groups. Thus, the equivalent of almost 27900 words represented the sample of EFL learners' writings prior to the introduction of the instructional course. Each participant in both groups was tasked with writing between a 450-500 word- composition (see appendix F). To do such essays, the participants were required to write a report in which they describe a given crime. In order to ensure the needed control over the scope of their output, these students were given some instructions to follow. In other words, they were provided with two pictures of an imaginary thief to describe as they narrate the event (see appendix C). These pictures include no cultural content (specific cultural background) which might trigger different contextual interpretations on the part of the participants and consequently affect their word choice (the production of collocations). The participants were not allowed to use any dictionary because it is very likely to affect the quality of their word choice and, consequently, the strength of their produced collocations (IM scores). The pre-test of writing was administered during the same week the receptive collocational knowledge pre-test was given. Put another way, the participants produced and submitted their pre-experiment compositions at the beginning of November 2016 a week before the start of the experiment. This writing test was administered by

the researcher himself in which all of the participants in both groups were given 90 minutes to write on the same topic at the same time and during the same day.

Since this study is based on an experimental method in which the major purpose is to reveal a cause-effect relationship (correlation between the variables), the same pre-tests (collocational knowledge test and the writing test) were re-administered as post-tests. The latter were given to the participants at the end of April 2017. We made sure that time allocated for the post-tests and the sequencing of the given tasks is similar to those of the pre-tests. Simply put, the researcher himself oversaw all the tests and provided similar testing conditions.

5.3 The experimental stage

In this stage learners' receive the instructional course that is based on the Lexical Approach paradigm of OHE .The subjects of the study are put under the effect of the designed pedagogical intervention. The latter is a series of classes which aim at increasing learners' exposure to different collocational patterns and training these learners to notice, store and retrieve lexical collocations.

5.3.1 The instructional course and its aim

The instructional program reported in this study is a set of classroom practices that are based on Lewis's Lexical Approach. The course was designed by the researcher himself. No part of the course incorporated practices other than those of the OHE paradigm. To make the most of the Lexical Approach practices, issues related to the content of the designed course and the selection of collocations were all taken into consideration.

5.3.2 The design of the course

The aim of designing this instructional course is to train the study participants to chunk language successfully. In other words, by helping EFL learners' notice, store and retrieve lexical collocations, their mental lexicon enriches and, correspondingly, their collocational accuracy in writing improves. The present Lexical Approach -based instructional program is also meant to provide the subjects with extensive and well-guided exposure to lexical collocations. The instructional course is comprised of 37 sessions taught to the experimental group only over 19 weeks. Each week the experimental group receives two sessions. Every session was provided by the researcher himself in 90 minutes. The sessions were fully covered over a span of five months, i.e. starting from the mid of November 2016 till the end of April 2017.

Through the designed sessions, participants in the experimental group exclusively received an extensive teaching of lexical collocation and were engaged in noticing, identifying and highlighting activities and then using collocations in writing -based tasks. The reason behind such classroom techniques is to develop the experimental group students' ability to recognise the lexical nature of language , notice the centrality of lexis in the creation of meaning and ,in turn, hypothesise and then experience the communicative and generative power of lexical chunks (lexical collocations). Since the practices of the Lexical Approach reject the traditional paradigm of Present Produce Practise, the experimental group was discouraged to think of language as grammatical frames filled by different individual vocabulary items, instead this group was encouraged to think of language as a combination of formulaic sequences (lexical collocations especially)which function pragmatically in language.

The control group, on other hand, was neutralised. That is, it was taught the same content of the instructional program by the same teacher (the researcher himself) and over the same allocated time but conventionally with no focus on collocations that are included in the given input. Instead, the students in this group were focused on studying single vocabulary items in isolation through doing certain classroom activities such as finding synonyms and antonyms. Besides, these students' attention was also focused on analyzing the different grammatical structures used in a given text (e.g. active/passive voice, types of sentences and tenses).In brief, what differs between both groups lies in the fact that the independent variable (the O.H.E paradigm to teach collocation) is exclusive to the experimental group where, in the first place, the target linguistic items and the classroom techniques for unpacking the course content differ.

The course content provided inside the classroom is taken from different sources ,namely books such as "Collocation in Use" by O'Dell and McCarthy and "Timesaver: Reading Lessons (intermediate)" by Grise Wood and Meyers (see appendix E). The former is a rich source of collocation and specifically designed to teach all kinds of lexical collocations while the latter is a textbook intended for intermediate learners (which is the case of our participants) to teach them the reading skills. Hence, it includes semi-authentic reading passages about topics of general interests that aid the comprehensibility of the input. Additionally, to ensure learners interaction with the input and sustain their level of motivation to learn collocations in and outside the classroom, authentic material was also used. The latter includes some excerpts of articles on world affairs taken from some popular news web sites, namely the BBC.

5.3.3 The selection of collocations

Collocations are found everywhere in any instance of language use. As a result, EFL learners can be faced with a confusing myriad of collocations to learn. Likewise, their teachers may find it a demanding task to expose their learners to such a plethora of collocations and require them to milk every single given text to the last drop of collocation ! (Lewis,2000). A process as such would be indeed demotivating and counterproductive; for this reason decisions about which collocations to teach and which to leave out had to be made. Expressed more crudely, students in the experimental group were focused on learning either the collocations that do not have direct equivalents in their mother tongue (Arabic) or the ones that are only intrinsic to English. That is, medium -strength collocations and strong collocations which cannot be translated to Arabic. As to the former Lewis confirms “they make up a large part of what we say and write ...they are of prime importance in expanding learners mental lexicon” (2000, p.64). Regarding the latter, many researchers such as Durrant and Schmitt (2009); Granger and Bestgen (2014) emphasize that the use of collocations with high mutual information scores are typical of native speakers’ fluent use of language.

5.3.4 The application of the instructional course

The implementation of the instructional program with the experimental group lasted five months. Over this period, the subjects of the current study went through a number of stages to deal with collocations encountered in the given input. The stages are included in the form of classroom procedures carried out through a series of sessions that the subjects took twice per week.

5.3.4.1 The OHE paradigm in action

The optimization of the Lexical Approach requires its practitioners to emphasize the centrality of lexis and develop strategies for chunking the input. Therefore, the methodology that underpins each session of the instructional program is based on Lewis’ (1997) paradigm of Observe, Hypothesis, and Experiment (OHE). Correspondingly, the unpacking of the course content was divided into three stages:

a.Observe: After getting learners warmed up and introduced to the notion of collocations, the aim of this stage is to direct learners' attention towards lexical collocations found in the input. Each of the first seven sessions of the treatment is meant to introduce one of the six kinds of lexical collocations (*Adj+N,N+V,V+N,N+of+N,Adv+Adj,Adv+V*).The major activities that are

recommended to be done in this stage range from highlighting and circulating collocations to matching and crossing out the odd ones. For example, learners are given a reading passage and then tasked with underlining a given set of collocations.

Also, to facilitate learning to chunk the input and store these building blocks, learners are provided with typographically enhanced texts (e.g. bolded and italicised collocations) which allow better recognition and retention of collocations. Students are also trained to store the collocations they encounter in their lexical notebooks. The latter are divided into sections. Each one is devoted to a record a particular type of lexical collocations with some examples of their use.

b.Hypothesise: In this stage and according to Lewis (1993;2000) and O'molly and Chamot (1990) learners are expected to make predictions about language use, process the input in terms of form and meaning, compare and contrast the input and, more importantly, draw conclusions as to certain collocations that they have noticed in the earlier stage. To this end, learners are required to do activities that boost their collocational sensitivity and develop their intuition towards the appropriate collocates. Such classroom exercises are centred on collocation grid (near synonyms), providing missing collocations in addition to activities that reinforce using collocations dictionary to correct miscolllocations. As to check the proper use of certain collocations, screen shots of concordancer, namely, "Just the Word" (see appendix D) are provided to those learners in the experimental group. It is in this stage that learners' mental lexicon could be effectively enriched as they explore examples of collocations in use taken from the British National Corpus in the form of these screenshots that we provide inside the classroom. This stage also contributes to train learners to store in their lexical notebooks the collocations they have encountered.

c.Experiment:Last but not least, learners in this step are required to check the hypothesis they have formulated about the use of a particular aspect of language, in our case lexical collocation, in the previous stage. Thus, learners are involved in communicative activities that are meant to help them convert the intake into output and dismiss their incomplete knowledge of the phraseological nature of language which might be in violation of the arbitrariness of collocation. As Lewis (2000) puts "the communicative situations a learner experiences in or outside the classroom provide the ideal opportunity to use language" (p.178). Activities chosen in this stage are focused on getting learners to use the collocations they previously learnt to produce

compositions. In so doing, students are made able to contextualise the collocations they have learnt by using them to write short paragraphs about something related to their personal life (communicative use of language). To illustrate, learners are engaged in a communicative task known as “expand the event” which was introduced by Wilberg in 1987 and developed later by Lewis in 2000. We will return explain that later in this chapter.

5.3.4.2 The experimental sessions

To conduct this classroom experiment and adhere to the syllabus of the written expression module that is set by the department, collocations were integrated in the content of every class taught to both groups. However, as for the experimental group the main objective of every class (besides covering the syllabus) is to immerse learners in activities that are meant to enrich their collocational knowledge and raise their awareness of the difference between the collocational nature of Arabic and that of English. These activities include identifying, comparing and contrasting collocations, correcting miscollocations and using collocations in different contexts. The control group, on the other hand, was focused on studying words in isolation and analyzing the different grammatical structures used in a given text (active/passive voice, types of sentences and different tenses’ use...etc.). It is noteworthy that the same content and duration of exposure are provided for both groups by the same researcher teacher.

The following outlined sessions of the 19 weeks of the experimental course are representative of the total amount of the 37 sessions. The first seven sessions are aimed at introducing the experimental group to the six kinds of lexical collocations which we discussed previously in the first chapter. Each session of the experimental course is also devoted to cover a given element in the written expression syllabus. We made sure that the target kind of lexical collocations that we integrated in the objectives of every session suits best the nature of the elements to be covered in the syllabus. For example, we planned to introduce adjective+ noun collocations within the class /lecture on descriptive paragraph writing and adverb+ adjective collocations within the class/lecture on expository paragraph writing.

Session 01

The main components of a paragraph

Allocated time: 90 minutes

I. Objectives

- 1- Introducing the concept of collocation in English to learners and giving them a general idea about the six kinds of lexical collocations.
- 2-Raising learners' awareness of the arbitrary nature that governs words co-occurrence.
- 3- Raising learners' awareness of the difference between English and Arabic lexis in terms of the collocational restrictions that determine certain word co-occurrence in each language.
- 4-Introducing to learners the concept of paragraph writing in English and the main components of a paragraph (topic sentence, supporting sentences, transitional sentence, and concluding sentences).
- 5-Getting learners, after they explore the collocational fields of many words, to practise writing a paragraph using collocations.

II. Material

- 1- Reading passage
- 2- Dictionary of collocations (app/cell phone dictionary) (See appendix D)
- 3- Printed screenshots of a concordance search in the BNC (See appendix E)

III. Procedure

A-Warm up : (15 minutes)

- Learners are provided with the collocations *strong tea* and *fast food* to discuss its meaning
- Learners try to substitute the adjectives *strong* and *fast* in those combinations with their near synonyms that the teacher provides (e.g. *strong* = *powerful*, *mighty*. *Fast* = *quick* , *swift* , *rapid*)
- Learners together with the teacher discuss the output (deviant collocations); translate that into Arabic, compare and contrast
- Teacher points out to the learner the term collocation and explains that words tend to co-occur in different patterns forming different kinds of collocations which are prevalent in every language use

B-Observe : (20 minutes)

- The following paragraph is given to learners to read.

- Learners are asked to underline all the items that precede the words in bold.
- Learners are asked to sort out the sentences in which the target combinations (collocations) appear.

How do you succeed in life?

*Succeeding in life is caused by having a rewarding **career**. Some careers will allow you to earn **money** a lot. Examples of good jobs are being engineers, doctors, architects and more. Getting these types of jobs comes from getting a well-rounded **education** at college. Choosing the right college is vitally **important**. You must regularly **attend** a college that specializes in the field of study you are keenly **interested** in. You must also prepare yourself **fully** and spend a lot of time writing papers and studying not partying. Being involved in extracurricular **activities** in college will help you stay focused. If you want to get accepted into a college, you need to get good grades in high school. Best-laid **plans** and meticulous **preparation** for exams will help you achieve a resounding **success**. Doing well on the tests is also of prime **importance**. Being actively **involved** in school activities can tremendously **help** on a college resume. You may even qualify for a college scholarship. If you want to get into a good high school, you must study and do well in grammar school. Grammar school is the foundation of your education. It is here that you learn the basics of math, English, science and history and gain a wealth of **experience**. You also learn how to get along with others and establish healthy **relationship** with your peers. In brief, succeeding in life starts from the day you are born. If you have parents who love and care for you, they will nurture your **ambition** from the day they bring you home. They will teach you how to walk and talk. They will teach you right from wrong. But most importantly, they will teach you that you are loved and that love always **blossoms** between you and them no matter what you become in life.*

Adopted from <https://www.megaessays.com/viewpaper/96213.html>

C-Hypothesise: (30 minutes)

- Learners are asked to carefully categorise the selected sentences according to the order they appear in the paragraph.
- Together with the teacher learners discuss the functions of those sentences by assigning them the following labels: topic sentence, supporting sentences, transitional sentences and concluding sentences.

- Learners are asked to put the collocations they identified into different categories according to their parts of speech. (e.g, Adj+N , V+N, N+V, Adv+Adj, Adv+V, N+of+N). Then they check and explore those collocations by looking up the bolded words in their collocations dictionary.
- Learners are asked to do the following backwards vocabulary exercise. They are given the following set of collocations to match with their corresponding definitions (see appendix F for answer keys).

Match collocations in column A with their corresponding definitions in column B

| A | B |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| 1- Vitally important | 1- A period of time that you spend in your life working that earns you a lot of money. |
| 2- To nurture ambition | 2- The big increase of a strong feeling of deep affection for somebody or something. |
| 3- Well-rounded education | 3- Learning practices that are not part of the usual course of studies or work at school or college. |
| 4- Rewarding career | 4- To make a huge improvement in a particular situation or make it very easier for something to happen. |
| 5- Love blossoms | 5- A training process that provides a variety of experiences, abilities and skills. |
| 6- To gain a wealth of experience | 6- Having a very great value in a very essential way. |
| 7- To tremendously help | 7- A very carefully made set of arrangements in order to achieve the desired results. |
| 8- Extracurricular activities | 8- To obtain a large amount of knowledge and skill that you gained through doing something for a period of time. |
| 9- To establish healthy relationship | 9- To fuel a desire or determination to be successful. |
| 10- Best-laid plan | 10- To develop a successful and working-well way in which you deal with someone or behave towards them. |

- Learners are given the following screenshot (see figure 6.1) about examples taken from the BNC in order to demonstrate more the use of the extracted collocations.
- Learners are asked to select the collocations whose meaning is semi or non-literal, i.e. the ones that do not have direct equivalents in Arabic.
- Learners are asked to record these collocations in their lexical notebooks.

C-Experiment: (25 minutes)

- Learners are asked to provide their own examples in which they use those collocations to express something related to their personal life or interest.
- Learners are asked to rewrite the previous paragraph in which they substitute the words they underlined previously with their synonyms. They use their collocations dictionary to do so.
- Teacher prompts learners by providing them with the initial letter of every target collocation.

- The right food and drink are vitaly important to keeping warm and healthy in the long winter days.
- It is vitaly important to know how to reduce the risk of food poisoning
- Educating the people is vitaly important too, because unless families understand why immunisation is so important, they will not bring their children forward to be vaccinated.
- St John nurtured his ambition by going to India as planned, and is still there.
- In my view, at the peak of his career, my father is still able to nurture the ambition of his grandchildren.
- John was strong enough to take on the role of nurturing the ambition or providing a supportive home for creative filmmakers.
- At Cornell University, she received well-rounded education.
- While alignment between high school and college requirements will improve college completion rates, few states require students to complete a truly well-rounded education in order to graduate high school.
- Students need exposure to a well-rounded education that includes the arts, humanities, sciences, social sciences, English, and math.
- In recent years, Italian graduates have found rewarding career opportunities in commercial management and insurance.
- For some most people, poor educational system does not guarantee any rewarding career.
- Despite all the mental torment he caused, love still blossoms in their life.
- For wise men adversities strengthens one's will and ensures that love still blossoms no matter how long the test of time may last.
- A good researcher must have a wealth of experience on his area of inquiry.
- It isn't easy to overlook the wealth of experience that one has accumulated in the course of a career.
- The interview we conducted with the presidential candidate was based on the wealth of experience he gained from his previous candidacies.
- Talking to a counselor has tremendously helped her to design a better plan.
- The whole process was tremendously helped by the much more widespread availability of computers.
- Elderly people can be tremendously helped if we listen to what they say, and receive their information as important.
- A school with a long tradition of extra curricular activities is likely to continue with an extensive provision even if the activities alter to reflect the expertise of the adults involved.
- Sue declined the offer and explained that she is afraid of getting far more from her extracurricular activities than she did from her studies.
- A wide provision of extracurricular activities can also enhance any new school's reputation.
- Dancers on stage must establish healthy relationship to each other.
- Secondary school has to establish healthy relationships with neighboring primary school so that it becomes the automatic choice of child and parent for the next phase of education.
- Fish isn't capable of establishing a relationship with their owner in the same way as dogs and cats do.
- The government has best-laid plans for prison reforms.
- Even best-laid plans can go wrong no matter how much committed you might be.

Figure 5.1: Screenshot of collocations used in the BNC.

It should be acknowledged that in this session, and in some of the subsequent ones, we embedded some collocations in the adopted reading passages with the purpose of providing learners with the desired exposure to the different kinds of lexical collocations. The embedded

collocations were selected using Oxford Collocations Dictionary: For Students of English²⁰([Francis](#) & [McIntosh](#),2002) and the BNC. While the former was used to select the proper collocates, the latter was used to check the proper use and strength of association (MI score) of the target collocates .

Session 02

Paragraph writing

Allocated time: 90 minutes

I. Objectives

- 1- Raising learners' awareness of the arbitrary nature that governs the co-occurring of words
- 2- Raising learners' awareness of the difference between English and Arabic in terms of the collocational restrictions that determines word co-occurrence in each language
- 3- Familiarizing learners with different kinds of lexical collocations and demonstrating to them the importance of collocations in the process of effective communication of ideas
- 4- Training learners to notice and identify collocations during any encounter of language use
- 5- Training learners to use collocations dictionary in order to enrich their metal lexicon
- 6- Getting learners to practise paragraph writing using collocations

II. Material

- 4- Reading passage
- 5- Dictionary of collocations (app/cell phone dictionary)
- 6- Printed screenshots of a concordance search in the BNC

III. Procedure

A-Warm up: (10 minutes)

- Quick reminder of the concept of collocation and its importance in encoding and decoding language.
- Learners are given the following Arabic miscollocation- embed sentence and asked to compare it with its correct equivalent in English in terms of collocations:
اعطى الرئيس خطابا بعد تلك التصفيقة الرعدية الساخبة → *The president gave a speech after that thunderous applause.*

²⁰ This dictionary provides common collocations that are essential for naturally-sounding English. It includes over 250,000 collocations and 75,000 examples.

- Learners are reminded that collocations in English do not necessarily have direct equivalents in Arabic and vice versa.
- Quick reminder of the six kinds of lexical collocations and that identifying them in any form of language use (written or spoken discourse) requires looking to the left, the right and, again, the left of the following parts of speech: nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs. (the Green Cross Code²¹ by Philip Brown, 1994).
- Teacher demonstrates this simple technique for identifying collocations. Some examples from the previous class are written on the board: *well-rounded education* (N), *wealth of experience* (N), *tremendously help* (V) *keenly interested* (adj), *prepare fully* (adv)

B-Observe: (20 minutes)

- Learners listen to the following paragraph²² read to them twice by the teacher. During the first reading they try to listen for the gist only. However, during the second reading (listening) they try to take notes by recording some collocations in full sentences.

*When I left university I **made a decision** to **take up** a **profession** in which I could be creative. I could **play the guitar**, but I had never written any songs. Nevertheless, I decided to become a singer-songwriter. I made some recordings but I had a rather **heavy cold** so they did not sound good. I made some more, and I send them to a recording company and waited for them to replay. So, while I was waiting for them to become famous, I got a job in a fast food restaurant. Because I **intrinsicly dislike** being a waiter, I **flatly rejected** that job. Few months later, I realised that I was face with the **spector of unemployment**. For this reason, I **changed** my **mind** and **applied for that job** again. It was the last **glimmer of hope**. That was five years ago. I am still doing the same job.*

Adopted from English Collocations in Use (McCarthy & O'dell, 2005,p.7)

- Using those collocations, learners are asked to sort out the topic sentence, some supporting sentences, transitional sentence and concluding sentence.
- Teacher writes them on the board and discusses them with the learners.

²¹ A technique devised by Philip Brown whose aim is to train learners to easily identify the collocational fields of words. Accordingly, in order to extend their knowledge of collocations, learners are advised to always consider the co-text, namely the vocabulary item which precedes a given word.

²² We supplemented, mainly at the end, the adopted reading passage with some collocations for the purpose of increasing learners' exposure to the different kinds of lexical collocations. The embedded collocations were selected using the aforementioned dictionary of collocations and the BNC.

C-Hypothesise: (30 minutes)

- Students are asked to use the notes and collocations they have taken to reconstruct the paragraph in their own words. Afterwards, they share their writing with each other for peer correction.
- Students are asked to highlight miscollocations, underline grammatical mistakes and circle spelling and punctuation mistakes.
- Students are asked to correct each other's mistakes with special focus on word combinations. They do that by using their collocations dictionary. Teacher writes the miscollocations and the suggested correction on the board.
- Students are provided with copies of the original version of the paragraph with collocations written in bold.
- Students read the paragraph carefully, suggest an appropriate title and sort out the topic sentence, some supporting sentences, transitional sentences and concluding sentences.
- Students are asked to classify collocations according to parts of speech then record them in their lexical note books.
- Students try to find the equivalents of those collocations in Arabic then they try to find the difference in terms of the direct equivalence of collocates.
- Students are asked to substitute the collocations in the paragraph with their synonyms by looking up the underlined words in their collocations dictionary.
- Students are asked to underline the miscollocations in the paragraph then provide the correct node by looking up the bolded collocates in their cell phone collocation dictionaries.

D-Experiment: (30 minutes)

- Students are provided with collocations related to the theme of getting a job. For example, *to apply for a job, to desperately try to ..., to meet requirements, to carve out a niche, wealth of experience, to start a business, promising future, rewarding career, to be cautiously optimistic.*
- Teacher demonstrates the use of those collocations in different examples taken from the BNC (see appendix E).
- Students are asked to brain storm in small groups and try to write a paragraph about what they would do after they graduate. While generating ideas, students are encouraged to think of

nouns related to that topic then they look them up in their collocations dictionary to find adjectives and verbs which collocate with those nouns then adverbs which collocate with those adjectives and verbs.

- Students exchange their paragraphs and try to highlight any miscollocations, underline grammatical mistakes and circle spelling and punctuation mistakes.
- Teacher selects some paragraphs to be read.
- Together with learners, the teacher discusses the components of these paragraphs and writes the identified mistakes and their corresponding correction on the board with special focus on word combinations.

Session 03:

Descriptive paragraph and Adj+ N collocations

Allocated time : 90 minutes

I. Objective:

1. Demonstrating the main features of a descriptive paragraph
2. Getting learners to listen for the gist by focusing on collocations in the input
3. Reinforcing learners' ability to process language holistically by enriching their mental lexicon
4. Raising learners' awareness of the dominant use of adjectives in descriptive writing, especially the ones that collocate with certain nouns (Adj+N collocations)
5. Reinforcing learners ability to convert the input into output by focusing their attention on chunking language successfully
6. Training learners to practise the writing of descriptive paragraph using collocations

II. Material

- 1- Reading passage
- 2- Dictionary of collocations (app/cell phone dictionary)
- 3- Printed screenshots of a concordance search in the BNC

III. Procedure

A-Warm up: (10 minutes)

- Quick reminder of the concept of collocation and its importance in encoding and decoding messages in English .
- Learners are reminded that collocations in English do not necessarily have direct equivalents in Arabic and vice versa.
- Quick reminder of the six kinds of lexical collocations and that their identification using the Green Cross Code.
- Teacher demonstrates this simple technique for identifying collocations. Some examples from the previous class are written on the board: *heavy cold* _(N), *glimmer of hope* _(N) , *take up a profession* _(n) , *intrinsically dislike* _(V) , *flatly rejected* _(adj), *prepare fully* _(adv).

B-Observe: (25 minutes)

- Learners listen to the following paragraph read to them twice by the teacher. During the first reading they try to listen for the gist only. However, during the second reading (listening) they try to take notes by recording some collocations within full sentences.

*The city skyline is a wonderful **mix**, and the city itself has a lot of busy, narrow cobbled **streets**. The old town is a conservation area and it has a lot of quaint-old **buildings** dating back to the city's foundation in the 1500s. Doradella Street has a lot of upmarket **shops** and rather pricey, sometime overpriced **restaurants**, but not far away the Genasia district, where you will find restaurants which offer good value and more relaxed **atmosphere**. The streets are full of lively bar and fashionable clubs. As you drive into the city, the tree-lined **avenues** of the residential **areas** are soon replaced by high-rise **flats** of the inner **city**. Then comes the imposing **buildings** of the parliament and government departments. Some of the inner-city areas are urban waste **land** and are somewhat dangerous for visitors. In fact some streets have become no-go **zone** with heinous **crimes**. There are also numerous run-down **buildings** and some deprived **areas** around the city centre with huge social problems.*

Adopted from English Collocations in Use (Mccarthy & O'dell, 2005,p.36)

- Learners are asked to share their notes with each other. Teacher selects some of the learners' notes and writes them on the board for discussion.

C-Hypothesise: (30 minutes)

- Students are asked to use the notes and collocations they have taken to reconstruct the paragraph in own words. Afterwards, they share their compositions with each other for peer correction.
- Students are asked to highlight miscollocations, underline grammatical mistakes and circle spelling and punctuation mistakes.
- Students are asked to correct each other's mistakes with special focus on word combinations. They do that by using their collocations dictionary. Teacher writes the miscollocations and the suggested correction on the board.
- Students are provided with copies of the original version of the paragraph with collocates written in bold.
- Students read the paragraph carefully, suggest an appropriate title, and try to find out the main tense used in the paragraph and the predominant part of speech.
- Teacher points out to learners the main features of descriptive paragraphs (e.g. the dominant use of adjectives, nouns and the present tense).
- Students are asked to underline all the adjectives that precede the nouns in bold then they suggest the type of collocation according to the parts of speech in question.
- Students are asked to match the following definitions with the collocations that are found in the paragraph :
 - *Not having enough things that are necessary for a decent life.*
 - *The central part of a city where people live and where there are often social problems.*
 - *Expensive in a negative sense.*
 - *For people with expensive tastes.*
 - *In a very bad conditions*
 - *Attractive because of being unusual and especially old fashioned.*
 - *Where police and other authorities are afraid to enter.*
 - *Made up of regular patterns of stones.*
- Students try to find the equivalents of these collocations in Arabic then they try to find the difference in terms of the direct equivalence of collocates. Students record these collocations in their lexical note books.

D-Experiment : (30 minutes)

- Students are provided with some collocations, mainly Adj +N ones, which are related to the theme of describing places (cities). For example, *fresh paint* , *heavy traffic*, *light/ quiet /busy morning* , *rush hour crowd*, *local delicacy* , *frozen food* , *fresh food* , *soft drink* , *refreshing drink* , *dense population* , *spare population* ...etc .
- Teacher demonstrates the use of these collocations in different examples taken from the BNC
- Students are asked to brain storm individually and try to write a paragraph about any big city they visited in Algeria. While generating ideas, students are encouraged to think of nouns related to that topic then they look them up in their collocations dictionary to find adjectives that collocate with these nouns. In addition to the collocations the teacher suggested, the paragraph these students write has to include also the collocations they have just learnt and the ones they have found themselves.
- Students exchange their paragraphs and try to highlight any miscollocations, underline grammatical mistakes and circle spelling and punctuation mistakes.
- Teacher selects some paragraphs to be read aloud. Together with learners, the teacher discusses the content of the paragraph and writes the identified mistakes and their corresponding correction on the board with special focus on proper word combinations.

Session 04:

Expository paragraph and Adv+ Adj collocations

Allocated time: 90 minutes

I. Objective:

- Demonstrating to learners the main features of expository paragraphs.
- Getting learners to listen for the gist by focusing on collocations in the input.
- Reinforcing learners ability to process language holistically by enriching their mental lexicon.
- Raising learners' awareness of the substantial use of adjectives in expository writing, at the same time focusing their attention on a variety of adverbs that collocate with given adjectives.
- Reinforcing learners ability to convert the input into output by focusing their attention on chunking language successfully.
- Training learners to practise the writing of expository paragraph using collocations.

II. Material

- 1-Reading passage
- 2-Dictionary of collocations (app/cell phone dictionary)
- 3- Printed screenshots of a concordancer search in the BNC

III. Procedure

A-Warm up: (10 minutes)

- Quick reminder of the concept of collocation and its importance in encoding and decoding messages in English.
- Learners are reminded that collocations in English do not necessarily have direct equivalents in Arabic and vice versa.
- Quick reminder of the six kinds of lexical collocations and the technique of the Green Cross Code.
- Teacher demonstrates this simple technique for identifying collocations. Some examples from the previous class are written on the board: *heinous crimes* (N), *glimmer of hope* (N), *take up a profession* (n), *intrinsically dislike* (V), *flatly rejected* (adj), *prepare fully* (adv).

B-Observe: (20 minutes)

- Learners listen to the following paragraph²³ read to them twice by the teacher. During the first reading they try to listen for the gist only. However, during the second reading (listening) they try to take notes by recording some collocations in within sentences.

*According to Young Minds, in a school of 1000 pupils aged 14-18, fifty of them might be seriously **depressed**. Being a teenager has always been difficult. Emotions and moods change rapidly. Many teenagers feel terribly **confused** and deeply **afraid** when the safety of childhood is left behind .Peter Wilson, the director of Young Minds says “we live in notoriously **difficult** times for a growing youngster potentially **huge** cultural pressures and a lot of broken homes. Children may have notoriously **difficult** relationships with their parents, or in other cases, have no one to support them”. No one is blissfully **happy** all the time. Everyone feels deeply **unhappy**, desperately **lonely** or badly **misunderstood** from time. But a small number of*

²³ We supplemented, mainly at the end, the adopted reading passage with some collocations for the purpose of increasing learners' exposure to the target type of lexical collocations. The embedded collocations were selected using the aforementioned Oxford Collocations Dictionary and the BNC.

teenagers become seriously **depressed** for weeks or months without change, and they begin to find that they cannot continue with their normal lives. They may stop believing that anything could be any good anymore: I became highly **aggressive**, I snapped at my parents and I lost touch with friends! It is a good idea for teenagers who feel severely **depressed** to try and talk to someone they like and feel entirely **comfortable** with. But if they do not want to talk to friends and family, there are lots of people who are there to help. They could talk to their teacher or school nurse or maybe their doctor. Alternatively, there are telephone helplines which give highly **confidential** help to anyone with a problem. Talking to someone might help others to cope with how they are feeling.

Adopted from Timesaver Reading Lessons (Grisewood & Meyers, 2002, p.37)

- Learners are asked to share their notes with each other. Teacher selects some of the learners' notes and writes them on the board for discussion.

C-Hypothesise: (30 minutes)

- Students are asked to use the notes and collocations they have taken to reconstruct the paragraph with their own words. Afterwards, they share their compositions with each other for peer correction.
- Students are asked to highlight miscollocations, underline grammatical mistakes and circle spelling and punctuation mistakes.
- Students are asked to correct each other's mistakes with special focus on word combinations. They do that by using their collocations dictionary. Teacher writes the miscollocations and the suggested correction on the board.
- Students are provided with copies of the original version of the paragraph with collocates written in bold.
- Students read the paragraph carefully, suggest an appropriate title, and find out the main tense used in the paragraph and the dominant part of speech.
- Teacher defines expository paragraph and points out to learners its main features.
- Teacher directs learners' attention to the dominant use of the present tense in expository writing.
- Students are asked to underline all the adverbs that precede the adjectives in bold then they suggest the type of collocation according to the parts of speech in question.

- Students are asked to substitute the words they underlined (adverbs) with their synonyms by looking up the word in bold (adjectives) in their collocations dictionary.
- Students try to find the equivalents of these collocations in Arabic then they try to find the difference in terms of the direct equivalence of collocates. Students record those collocations in their lexical note books.

D-Experiment: (30 minutes)

- Students are provided with some collocations, mainly Adv+ Adj ones, which are related to the theme of boredom and how to relieve it. For example, the collocations *terribly bored*, *highly motivated*, *desperately anxious*, *profoundly sad*, *highly energetic*, *cautiously optimistic*, *deeply pessimistic ...etc.*
- Teacher demonstrates the use of these collocations in different examples taken from the BNC.
- Students are asked to use such collocations in sentences of their own.
- Students are asked to brain storm individually and try to write a paragraph about what would they advise someone to do if she/he feels terribly bored. While generating ideas, students are encouraged to think of nouns and adjectives related to that topic then they look up such adjectives in their collocations dictionary to find adverbs that collocate with them. In addition to the collocations the teacher suggested, the paragraph they write has to include also the collocations they have just learnt and the ones they have found in the dictionary.
- Students exchange their paragraphs and try to highlight any miscollocation, underline grammatical mistakes and circle spelling and punctuation mistakes.
- Teacher selects some paragraphs to be read aloud.
- Together with learners, the teacher discusses the content of the paragraph and writes the identified mistakes and their corresponding correction on the board with special focus on proper word combinations.

Session 05:

Expository paragraph and N+of+N collocations

Allocated time : 90 minutes

I. Objective:

1. Reinforcing learners' knowledge of expository paragraph

2. Getting learners to listen for the gist by focusing on collocations in the input
3. Reinforcing learners' ability to process language holistically by enriching their mental lexicon
4. Reinforcing learners' knowledge of noun +of + noun collocations
5. Developing learners' ability to convert the input into output by focusing their attention on chunking language successfully
6. Training learners to practise the writing of expository paragraph using collocations

II. Material

1-Reading passage

2-Dictionary of collocations

3- Printed screenshots of a concordancer search in the BNC

III. Procedure

A-Warm up: (10 minutes)

- Quick reminder of the definition of expository paragraph and its main features.
- Quick reminder of the concept of collocation and its importance in encoding and decoding messages in English.
- Learners are reminded that collocations in English do not necessarily have direct equivalents in Arabic and vice versa.
- Quick reminder of the six kinds of lexical collocations and the Green Cross Code.
- Teacher demonstrates that simple technique for identifying collocations. Some examples from the previous classes are written on the board.

B-Observe: (20 minutes)

- Learners listen to the following paragraph²⁴ read to them twice by the teacher. During the first reading they try to listen for the gist only. However, during the second reading (listening) they try to take notes by recording some collocations within full sentences.

²⁴ We supplemented, mainly at the end, the adopted reading passage with some collocations for the purpose of increasing learners' exposure to the target kind of lexical collocations. The embedded collocations were selected using the Oxford Dictionary of Collocations and the BNC.

*Family camping is a trip that begins with a sense of **adventure** and is good for a collective sigh of **relief** after long hectic time. First of all, families have no choice but to spend much time together. They are depended for each other for solving all the new tasks. Everyone is needed for setting up camp. Not just the mother is involved in cooking .Many people are needed for gathering firewood and setting fire. Putting up the net and laying out the equipment requires a lot of teamwork. Without any distraction such as the telephone, Internet, TV, or DVD games to occupy the children, they are able to do what has to be done without any lapse of **concentration**. Camping also gives a family a chance to share a wealth of **experience** together. During the day every one exercises his measure of **freedom**. They go hiking or swimming .They are all busy exploring and conquering the new terrain together. Looking at the starlit night sky at night and listening to a range of sounds of forest are very exciting and relaxing. In addition, family gathering offers every family member an air of **luxury** and creates a window of **opportunity** to talk about the world around them that gets forgotten in a busy city and discuss the nature wonders. This also helps them overcome bouts of depression .Thus when the families arrive home they will have a new found closeness and that has been awakened by time spent together in a peaceful natural surroundings.*

Adopted from [http:// www.uni-koeln.de/owe/expository.htm](http://www.uni-koeln.de/owe/expository.htm)

- Learners are asked to share their notes with each other. Teacher selects some of the learners' notes and writes them on the board for discussion.

C-Hypothesise: (30 minutes)

- Students are asked to use the notes and collocations they have taken to reconstruct the paragraph in their own words. Afterwards, they share their compositions with each other for peer correction.
- Students are asked to highlight miscollocations, underline grammatical mistakes and circle spelling and punctuation mistakes.
- Students are asked to correct each other's mistakes with special focus on word combinations. They do that by using their collocations dictionary. Teacher writes the miscollocations and the suggested correction on the board.
- Students are provided with copies of the original version of the paragraph with collocates written in bold.

- Students read the paragraph carefully, suggest an appropriate title and find out the main tense used in the paragraph and notice the different parts of speech.
- Students are asked to underline all the nouns that precede the words in bold then they suggest the type of collocations according to the parts of speech in question.
- Students are asked to substitute the words they underlined (nouns) with their synonyms by looking up the words in bold in their collocations dictionary.
- Students try to find the equivalents of those collocations in Arabic then they try to find the difference in terms of the direct equivalence of collocates. Students record those collocations in their lexical note books.
- Teacher demonstrates the use of those collocations in different examples taken from the BNC.

D-Experiment :(30 minutes)

- Students are asked to use such collocations in sentences of their own.
- In small groups, students brain storm and try to write a paragraph about the psychological benefits of family gathering and family trips. While generating ideas, students are encouraged to think about nouns that are related to that topic then they look up such nouns in their collocations dictionary to find other nouns that together form N+of+N collocations . In addition to the collocations the teacher suggested, the paragraph they write has to include the collocations they learnt before and the ones they have found themselves.
- Students exchange their paragraphs and try to highlight any miscollocations, underline grammatical mistakes and circle spelling and punctuation mistakes.
- Teacher selects some paragraphs to be read aloud.
- Together with learners, the teacher discusses the content of the paragraph and writes the identified mistakes and their corresponding correction on the board with special focus on proper word combinations.

Session 06:

Narrative paragraph and V+N /N + V collocations

Allocated time: 90 minutes

I. Objective:

1. Demonstrating the main features of a narrative paragraph

2. Getting learners to listen for the gist by focusing on collocations in the input
3. Reinforcing learners' ability to process language holistically by enriching their mental lexicon
4. Raising learners' awareness of the substantial use of verbs and nouns / nouns and verbs collocations
5. Reinforcing learners ability to convert the input into output by focusing their attention on chunking language successfully
6. Training learners to practise the writing of a narrative paragraph using collocations

II. Material

- 1-Reading passage
- 2-Dictionary of collocations (app/cell phone dictionary)
- 3- Printed screenshots of a concordancer search in the BNC

III. Procedure

A-Warm up:(10 minutes)

- Quick reminder of the concept of collocation and its importance in encoding and decoding messages in English.
- Learners are reminded that collocations in English do not necessarily have direct equivalents in Arabic and vice versa.
- Quick reminder of the six kinds of lexical collocations and the Green Cross Code.
- Teacher demonstrates that simple technique for identifying collocations. Some examples from the previous class are written on the board.

B-Observe: (20 minutes)

- Learners listen to the following paragraph read to them twice by the teacher. During the first reading they try to listen for the gist only. However, during the second reading (listening) they try to take notes by recording some collocations in within sentences.

*Once upon a time, a tribesman came and spread the **news** of a tiger's attack on a woman. This was not the tiger's first appearance in the village. Before the tiger made this **attack**, the villagers had lost few goats and poultry, but the disappearance remained a mystery as nobody could confirm that it was the tiger that launched the **attack**. This time, the victim was a 32-year old woman who was doing **laundry** near on the river bank. The villagers at once organised a hunting **party**. Armed with matches and rifles, the hunting party included six*

*stocky men and us. We left the village on June 10th. We had an early night full of mosquitoes that we almost made up our **minds** to abort the **mission**. At the break of the dawn, we ate food and got ready!*

Adopted from <https://www.pinterest.com/pin/259097784795389421/>

C-Hypothesise: (30 minutes)

- Students are asked to use the notes and collocations they have taken to reconstruct the paragraph in their own words. Afterwards, they share their compositions with each other for peer correction.
- Students are asked to highlight miscollocations, underline grammatical mistakes and circle spelling and punctuation mistakes.
- Students are asked to correct each other's mistakes with special focus on word combinations. They do that by using their collocations dictionary. Teacher writes the miscollocations and the suggested correction on the board.
- Students are provided with copies of the original version of the paragraph with collocates written in bold.
- Students read the paragraph carefully, suggest an appropriate title and find out the main tense used in the paragraph and notice the different parts of speech.
- Teacher defines narrative paragraph and points out to learners its main features (e.g. characters, plot, setting or chronology of events ...etc.) . Teacher directs learners' attention to the predominant use of the past tense in narrative writing.
- Students are asked to underline all the verbs that precede the nouns in bold then they suggest the type of collocation according to the parts of speech in question.
- Students are asked to substitute the words they underlined (nouns) with their synonyms by looking up the word in bold in their collocations dictionary.
- Students try to find the equivalents of those collocations in Arabic then they try to find the difference in terms of the direct equivalence of collocates. Students record these collocations in their lexical note books.
- Teacher demonstrates the use of those collocations in different examples taken from the BNC.

D-Experiment:(30 minutes)

- Teacher points out to learners that the story they read is incomplete and lacks a plot. Thus, learners are prompted to imagine the complementation of the story in order to provide a plot.
- Learners are provided with some collocations they need to complete the storyline. (e.g. *night fell* , *dawn broke* , *stomach rumbled*, *bushes rustled*, *tiger's shadow loomed* , *tiger roared* , *shiver ran* , *tension ran high*, *mission accomplished...*etc.). Students are given some examples from the BNC in order to demonstrate the use of such noun-verb collocations.
- In small groups, students brain storm and try to write a complementary narrative. While generating ideas for their narrative, students are encouraged to think about nouns that are related to that topic then they look up such nouns in their collocations dictionary to find collocating verbs. In addition to the collocations the teacher suggested, the paragraph they are tasked to write has also to include the collocations they learnt before and the ones they have found themselves.
- Students exchange their paragraphs and try to highlight any miscollocations, underline grammatical mistakes and circle spelling and punctuation mistakes.
- Teacher selects some paragraphs to be read aloud.
- Together with learners, the teacher discusses the content of the paragraph and writes the identified mistakes and their corresponding correction on the board with special focus on proper word combinations.
- Students record some collocations in their lexical notebook.

Session 07:

Argumentative paragraph and Adv+ V/Adv+V collocations

Allocated time: 90 minutes

I. Objective:

1. Demonstrating to learners the main features of argumentative paragraphs
2. Getting learners to listen for the gist by focusing on collocations in the input
3. Reinforcing learner's ability to process language holistically by enriching their mental lexicon
4. Raising learners' awareness of the substantial use of adjectives in expository writing, at the same time focusing their attention on adverbs that collocate with certain verbs

5. Reinforcing learners ability to convert the input into intake by focusing their attention on chunking language successfully
6. Training learners to practise the writing of argumentative paragraph using collocations

II. Material

- 1-Reading passage
- 2-Dictionary of collocations (app/cell phone dictionary)
- 3- Printed screenshots of a concordancer search in the BNC

III. Procedure

A-Warm up:(10 minutes)

- Quick reminder of the concept of collocation and its importance in encoding and decoding messages in English.
- Learners are reminded that collocations in English do not necessarily have direct equivalents in Arabic and vice versa.
- Quick reminder of the six kinds of collocations and the Green Cross Code.
- Teacher demonstrates that simple technique for identifying collocations. Some examples from the previous class are written on the board.

B-Observe:(20 minutes)

- Learners listen to the following paragraph²⁵ read to them twice by the teacher. During the first reading they try to listen for the gist only. However, during the second reading (listening) they try to take notes by recording some collocations within full sentences.

*People who commit heinous crimes deserve the death penalty and such penalty should not be strictly **forbidden** in many countries. When the law and order are flagrantly **violated** that no deterrent measure is effective, death penalty is better than releasing prisoners who may resort back to life of terrible crimes. Though any sane man vehemently **condemns** heinous crimes, many bitterly **oppose** the death penalty on moral and ethical basis. However,*

²⁵ In order to increase learners' exposure to verb adverb/adverb verb collocations, most of the words(verbs) in bold are supplemented with appropriate collocating adverbs . We selected these adverbs using the aforementioned Oxford Collocations Dictionary and the BNC.

*every moment some criminals are alive is another threat to the community. No matter how profusely they **apologize** and bitterly they regret, criminals must be summarily **executed** because, if kept in prison, such murderers put their fellow prisoners and guards life at risk. Revenger may also add to the rate of crime. Families of victims find it hard to move on properly while who killed their family member is still alive. The dire need to even the score is very likely to be though murdering someone. We cannot categorically **deny** the fact that by taking the offender's life, society will fully **realise** that such acts are intolerable and will not go unpunished. In short, the only way to severely **punish** such criminals is to put an end to their life of evil.*

Adopted from <http://www.bartleby.com/essay/The-Death-Penalty-Is-Necessary-F3CZCTXYVC>.

- Learners are asked to share their notes with each other. Teacher selects some of the learners' notes and writes them on the board for discussion.

C-Hypothesise:(30 minutes)

- Students are asked to use the notes and collocations they have taken to reconstruct the paragraph with their own words. Afterwards, they share their compositions with each other for peer correction.
- Students are asked to highlight miscollocations, underline grammatical mistakes and circle spelling and punctuation mistakes.
- Students are asked to correct each other's mistakes with special focus on word combinations. They do that by using their collocations dictionary. Teacher writes the miscollocations and the suggested correction on the board.
- Students are provided with copies of the original version of the paragraph with collocates written in bold.
- Students read the paragraph carefully and suggest an appropriate title .
- Teacher defines argumentative paragraph and points out to learners its main features.
- Students are asked to underline all the adverbs that precede the verbs in bold then they suggest the type of collocation according to the parts of speech in question.
- Students are asked to substitute the words they underlined (adverbs) with their synonyms by looking up the word in bold (verbs) in their collocations dictionary.

- Students try to find the equivalents of these collocations in Arabic then they try to find the difference in terms of the direct equivalence of collocates. Students record these collocations in their lexical note books.

D-Experiment:(30 minutes)

- Students are provided with some collocations, mainly Adv+ V ones, that are related to the theme of crime. Teacher demonstrates the use of these collocations in different examples taken from the BNC.
- Students are asked to use such collocations in sentences of their own.
- In small groups, students are asked to brain storm and try to write an argumentative paragraph about whether sending criminal to jail guarantees lower rate of crimes. While generating ideas, students are encouraged to think of nouns that are related to that topic then they look up such nouns in their collocations dictionary to find verbs and then adverbs that that collocate with those verbs. In addition to the collocations the teacher suggested, the paragraph they write has also to include the collocations they have just learnt and the ones they have found on their own.
- Students exchange their paragraphs and try to highlight any miscollocations, underline grammatical mistakes and circle spelling and punctuation mistakes.
- Teacher selects some paragraphs to be read aloud. Together with learners, the teacher discusses the content of the paragraph and writes the identified mistakes and their corresponding correction on the board with special focus on proper word combinations.

Session 08:

Paraphrasing and Summarizing

Allocated time: 90 minutes

I. Objective:

1. Demonstrating to learners the main techniques of paraphrasing and summarizing
2. Getting learners to listen for the gist by focusing on collocations in the input
3. Reinforcing learners' ability to process language holistically by enriching their mental lexicon
4. Raising learners' awareness of the substantial use of collocations in any kind of writing

5. Reinforcing learners ability to convert the input into intake by focusing their attention on chunking language successfully
6. Training learners to practise paraphrasing and summarizing

II. Material

- 1-Reading passage
- 2-Dictionary of collocations (app/cell phone dictionary)
- 3- Printed screenshots of a concordancer search in the BNC

III. Procedure

A-Warm up: (10 minutes)

- Quick reminder of the concept of collocation and its importance in encoding and decoding messages in English.
- Learners are reminded that collocations in English do not necessarily have direct equivalents in Arabic and vice versa.
- Quick reminder of the six kinds of lexical collocations and the Green Cross Code.
- Teacher demonstrates that simple technique for identifying collocations. Some examples taken from the previous class are written on the board.

Part one (Paraphrasing)

B-Observe: (20 minutes)

- Learners are asked to fill in the gaps in the following paragraph by looking up the words in bold in their collocations dictionary. The initial letter of every missing word is provided. (see appendix F for answer keys).

*When **war** **b**.....my grandfather J.... the army. **War** was **d**..... on his 25th birthday. He didn't want to go to war but he had no choice. The government were sending troops to the south where they expected **f**.... **fighting**. At first there were just **m**..... **incidents** but soon it developed into **a**..... **war**. My grandfather has told me how terrified he was the first time he came within the **f**.....**range** of the enemy. They saw him and **o**..... **fire** but he was able to escape. A couple of his friends were killed or **h**..... **prisoners**. After several months our army **W**.....into **action** in the first **d**.....**battle** of the war. The **battle** **r**..... for several days. My grandfather said he hated being involved in **f**..... the **war** and that the only armies we should have should be peace keeping forces. He can never forget the **h**.....of **war** , and he believes that we must do everything we can to **a**.....**war** in the future.*

Adopted from English Collocations in Use (McCarthy & O'dell, 2005,p.80)

C-Hypothesise:(30 minutes)

- Using the collocations identified in this paragraph and their collocations dictionary, learners are asked to paraphrase the following sentences and replace the words in brackets. (see appendix F for answer keys).

1. *The war between Adverbia and Collocania (started) in 1983. At first, there were just (small events) but soon it turned into (total war). The war ended after (a battle which finally decided the course of events) in 1987.*
2. *There was (very violent fighting) in the capital city yesterday. The UN forces (who will maintain peace) are expected to enter the city as soon as (the armies say that they will stop firing at each other)*
3. *Forces sent in to (make the peace continue) in (region of problems) had to (turn back) after they came in (within the firing distance) of the rebel artillery.*
4. *The Sornak Republic today (officially stated that it was at war) against Hobraia.*
5. *Armed trooped were sent in to (bring order) again after the riots and violence last week.*
6. *Representatives of the two sides are meeting in Zurich in an attempt to (make peace) in the troubled region. It is hoped that they will (have negotiations and agree details for peace) which both government can accept.*

Adopted from English Collocations in Use (McCarthy & O'dell, 2005, p.81)

- Students are asked to look up the words in bold (in the previous paragraph) in their collocations dictionary to find their synonymous collocations.

D- Experiment: (30 minutes)

- Using the synonymous collocations and other collocation they have learnt in previous classes, the students are required to rewrite the paragraph in their own words.
- Students are asked to share their compositions with each other for peer correction.
- Students are asked to highlight miscollocations, underline grammatical mistakes and circle spelling and punctuation mistakes.

- Students are asked to correct each other's mistakes with special focus on word combinations. They do that by using their collocations dictionary. Teacher writes the miscollocations and the suggested correction on the board.
- Teacher selects some paraphrased paragraphs to be read aloud.
- Together with learners, the teacher discusses the content of the paragraph and writes the identified mistakes and their corresponding correction on the board with special focus on proper word combinations.

Part two (Summarizing)

A-Observe:(20 minutes)

- Learners listen to the following new report read to them twice by the teacher. During the first reading they try to listen for the gist only. However, during the second reading (listening) they try to take notes by recording some collocations within sentences.

Egypt declares state of emergency after deadly church attacks

Egypt's president has announced a three-month state of emergency after attack on two churches. The measure allows authorities to make arrests and search people's homes without any issued warrant. The measure needs to be approved by the parliament before it is implemented. The so-called Islamic State (ISIS) said it was behind the blast in Alexandria on Sunday. The group targeted Egypt recently and warns of more attacks. Mr Sisi made a defiant speech at the presidential palace after a meeting of the national defence council to discuss the explosions. The president warned that the war against the Jihadists would be "long and painful" , and said that the passed law for the state of emergency would come into force after all " legal and constitution steps " were taken. The president had earlier ordered military to be deployed across the county. ISIS said that the two suicide bombers carried out the attack. One of them detonated his explosives outside, leaving 17 dead, including several police officers. The Christian community's trust in the state's ability and willingness to protect them will now be deeply shaken after the attack.

The move by Mr Sis is likely to raise concerns among human rights activists, observers say. The president, a former army chief, has been heavily criticised by local and international groups for severer restrictions on civil and political rights in Egypt. Human Rights Watch says tens of thousands of people have been arrested in a crackdown on dissent, and that

security forces have committed flagrant abuses, including torture, enforced disappearance and likely extrajudicial execution.

Adopted from <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-39548645>

- Students share their notes with each other. Teacher selects some of their sentences and writes them on the board for discussion in terms of form and meaning with special focus on word combinations.

B-Hypothesise:(35 minutes)

- Students are asked to identify any collocations they heard, categorise them according to their parts of speech then use their collocations dictionary to explore the collocational fields (collocates) of the nodes they noticed.
- Students are asked to use those collocations in their own examples.
- Students are provided with copies of the news report and asked to read it carefully.
- Together with teacher, students discuss the content of the news report in terms of, the characters, the dramatic elements (event) and settings.
- Students are asked to extract the collocations they could identify. Teacher prompts students by suggesting some collocates such as; *deeply, flagrant, deployed ...etc.*

C-Experiment: :(35 minutes)

- In small groups, learners are tasked with coping only 15 key words from the news report. The key words must include some two -or three word collocations. Students have to select these lexical chunks carefully according to the order they appeared in the text. The groups share their output with each other.
- Using the selected chunks (collocations), students are tasked to summarise the content of the news report in no more than 5 lines.
- The groups exchange their summaries and try to highlight any miscollocations, underline grammatical mistakes and circle spelling and punctuation mistakes.
- Teacher selects some of the summaries to be read aloud.
- Together with learners, teacher discusses the content of the paragraph and writes the identified mistakes and their corresponding correction on the board with special focus on proper word combinations.

The described sample lesson plans represent the 37 sessions that covered the syllabus for the subjects of the study. Every reported session represents just one of every two planned lessons that are required to cover each element in the syllabus of the writing module. The sessions also reflect the Lexical Approach methodology that we optimized in order to unpack the course content for the experimental group. In addition, every procedure taken during the course of practice, with the experimental group, inside the classroom is underpinned by the 19 principles of the Lexical Approach. To illustrate, the core principle that "language consists of grammaticalized lexis not lexicalised grammar" (Lewis, 1993, p.VI) underlies the Observe stage by which learners are guided towards the holistic perception of the input (reading passages). That is, learners are trained to notice that language consists of building blocks that if attended to and learnt effectively, it will be easier to produce language more naturally and effectively. It can be noticed that learners are first exposed to language through listening since most of the human communication are done through casual listening comprehension. In addition, cognitive processes (such as comparing, contrasting, guessing ...etc.) are involved in learners' interaction with the aural received input (Lewis,1993) and thus learners are prepared to pick up language naturally. In this respect, Lewis endorses his view in the following principle "receptive skills, particularly listening, are given enhanced status"(p.10). As far as the Hypothesise stage is concerned, the principle that " a central element of language teaching is raising students' awareness of, and developing their ability to chunk language successfully"(Lewis,1993,p. VI) underpins the task of getting learners to reconstruct the input on the basis of the identified chunks. It is also noteworthy that in the Experiment stage , learners are required to do a writing task in order to retrieve and recycle the intake on the grounds that the main carrier of meaning is vocabulary and that every word has its own grammar (collocates).Therefore , the acquisition of a new language takes a short time if learners focus his/her attention on learning those chunks rather than focusing their attention on individual contextless words . This is underpinned by Lewis' core principle that "grammar/vocabulary dichotomy is invalid: much language consists of multi-word chunks" (1993, p.08).

5.4 The post experiment stage

After learners received the instructional course over a period of five months and the syllabus of the writing module was successfully covered, the classroom experiment moved to a final stage in which the effectiveness of the Lexical Approach on the subjects' performance was

measured. Thus, another course of data collection was required. That is, learners' performance after the end of the instructional program was tested in the form of a post-test. The latter was administered to assess the extent to which the participants acquired the ability to produce more accurate collocations and, consequently, more native-like writing. On the other hand, as a supplement to the objective of the post-test, an interview was conducted as a probing means to explore the cognitive strategies that the subjects have acquired to process collocations. Hence, in what follows we are going to present the main procedures followed in this post experimental stage.

5.4.1 Learners' interview and its main objectives

Interviews are widely adopted in second language research for that they help obtain data on different stages of language acquisition. Since an in-depth understanding of the issue in question requires gathering data from varying sources and using, for example, questionnaire and tests, conducting an interview serves as a post survey to unveil how the experimental course have affected EFL learners cognitive strategies in relation to the perception and production of collocations. The present interview was conducted on the basis of the subjects' experience of the collocational knowledge test that they re-took as a post-test after the end of the experiment in April 2017. The post-test was administered in the very same testing conditions in which the pre-test was done. In other words, the content, allocated time and sequencing of the given tasks in the pre-test are typical to those of the post-test. It is worth acknowledging that the teacher researcher himself oversaw the post-test within the same instructions given in the pre-test.

The interview 's main objective is to explore learners acquired skills and developed cognitive strategies which they employ in order to process collocations and produce native-like writing. Hence, the reason behind adopting such a method as one of the main three elicitation techniques used in this doctoral research is that interviewing learners provides easier access to richer information. The latter is qualitative data that can be best obtained in the form of self-description, impression, narratives and reflection. In other words, unlike the limited qualitative data obtained from questionnaire, interviews encourage learners to amply report (verbal reporting) on their experiences and cognitive strategies that they use to process co-occurring words. In addition , since the required data is related to learners ' reflection on their performance in the post test, interviewing them after taking the post test (during the same day) is the only

means of accessing these learners' impressions and reflections when it is still fresh in their mind. In so doing, this contributes to the accuracy of obtaining the required data.

Since this type of interviews is determined by the nature of the research and the extent to which the interviewer controls the course of interaction with the interviewees, the kind of interview adopted in this study is semi-structured. As Seliger and Shohamy (1989) define, a semi-structured interview is generally -based on a pre-determined number of questions at the same time it gives space to the informants to elaborate and contribute to the course of interaction through which much information emerges. Thus, conducting such a kind of interviews allows us to seek more details and supplement our exploration of the subjects' skills and cognitive strategies.

5.4.2 The course and schedule of the interview

The interview reported in this doctoral study was conducted at the end of the experiment in order to assess the extent to which the experimental course affected the subjects cognitive processing of collocations. That is, learners were interviewed following the administration of the post-test. The latter was administered one week after the instructional program ended in May 2017. Both of the control and experimental groups were interviewed the same day they were sat for the post-test.

Due to time constraints, it was not possible to conduct a one-on one semi-structured interview in which every single participant from the control and experimental groups is interviewed individually and given plenty of time to reflect and elaborate. Hence, the informants in both groups were randomly sub-grouped for what is commonly termed as a focus group interview. As defined by Green and Hart (1999) , a focus group interview is conducted with a group of ,ranging between five to ten, people in which they interact by talking to each other, asking questions , commenting on each other 's views and reflecting on particular issues presented by the interviewer. The role of interviewer in such an interview is to moderate the discussion at the same time he/she makes sure that the emerging information falls within the category of the required data. To this end, we put the informants from both of the control group and experimental group into small four sub-groups. Each sub-group includes from six to seven participants. The latter were given 20 minutes to interact by answering some questions. The theme of the interview centred around learners' reflections on their course of doing the post-test activities. Generally, conducting a semi-structured interview requires the use of what is

technically termed as interview schedule. It is a list of questions or topics put by the interviewer for answer and discussion while space is given for elaboration on any related emerging theme (Nunan,1992; Seliger & Shohamy,1989). For this reason, we designed the following interview questions as a stimulus to encourage the informants to share their experiences in processing collocations:

- 1 What is the most difficult MCQ activity among the ones you did?
- 2-What are the difficulties you had in choosing the right item in the MCQ?
- 3 Tell me about the techniques you have used to find out the right answer in that activity (MCQ)?
- 4- Would I ask you about anything else? Do you have anything to add?

The interview was audio taped using Samsung Galaxy S Duos GT-S7562 smart phone. However, for ethical concerns and to ensure a comfortable and a non-threatening experimental environment, the informants were, beforehand, told about the researcher need to use the audio recorder just for data collection purposes. They were also informed about the objectives of the interview and re-assured that the information they reveal would be kept confidential and used just for research purposes with no effect on the official grade-based assessment of the learners. In such a briefing also, the informants were told that they could ask questions , pass comments and reflect on anything related to the topic of the interview.

The interview was conducted in English and in classroom settings. 90 minutes were allocated for the control group and the experimental group each. To obtain richer and more accurate data, the interview was conducted immediately after the participants took the post-test. Furthermore, to ensure good acoustic conditions for good tape recording, each sub-group was interviewed privately without the presence of the rest of the class.

5.5 Results and data analysis

To accurately assess the impact of the Lexical Approach on EFL learners' ability to produce accurate collocations and operate on the Idiom Principle, the required data was gathered using different techniques. Accordingly, the findings of the experiment that we conducted inside the classroom emerged from a number of analytical procedures and statistical processes. In this respect, we are going to present and discuss these main results.

5.5.1 The collocational knowledge test (pre/post-tests)

As we pointed out previously, the main purpose of the administration of the first collocational knowledge test (as a pre-test) is to measure the participants' collocational receptive (passive) knowledge prior to the introduction of the pedagogical intervention.

First of all, the performance of the participants in the pre-test can be taken to check their lexical homogeneity which contributes to the reliable measurement of the effectiveness of the conducted experiment. The overall number of the target collocations in this test is 36. Correspondingly, every proper use of a collocational item by every participant is scored one point. Table (6.1) demonstrates the participants' scores in the pre and post-tests.

Table 5.1

Students' scores in the collocational knowledge test.

| | Pre-test | | Post-test | |
|----|---------------|--------------------|---------------|--------------------|
| | Control Group | Experimental Group | Control Group | Experimental Group |
| 01 | 10 | 22 | 11 | 17 |
| 02 | 14 | 19 | 14 | 12 |
| 03 | 20 | 09 | 13 | 10 |
| 04 | 13 | 07 | 10 | 14 |
| 05 | 10 | 09 | 12 | 09 |
| 06 | 15 | 15 | 09 | 17 |
| 07 | 08 | 10 | 19 | 14 |
| 08 | 16 | 10 | 17 | 19 |
| 09 | 11 | 11 | 14 | 16 |
| 10 | 12 | 12 | 14 | 26 |
| 11 | 16 | 12 | 09 | 23 |
| 12 | 09 | 14 | 18 | 10 |
| 13 | 10 | 08 | 14 | 10 |
| 14 | 11 | 19 | 18 | 15 |
| 15 | 16 | 07 | 09 | 14 |
| 16 | 10 | 13 | 10 | 20 |

| | | | | |
|--------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| 17 | 14 | 10 | 17 | 07 |
| 18 | 10 | 15 | 13 | 14 |
| 19 | 11 | 11 | 17 | 20 |
| 20 | 09 | 10 | 17 | 21 |
| 21 | 12 | 09 | 18 | 19 |
| 22 | 14 | 16 | 17 | 22 |
| 23 | 12 | 12 | 11 | 19 |
| 24 | 14 | 10 | 14 | 16 |
| 25 | 11 | 09 | 07 | 02 |
| 26 | 09 | 06 | 15 | 14 |
| 27 | 13 | 09 | 18 | 19 |
| 28 | 07 | 14 | 23 | 19 |
| 29 | 12 | 14 | 11 | 19 |
| 30 | 11 | 11 | 15 | 17 |
| 31 | 08 | 13 | 13 | 23 |
| <i>Total</i> | 368 | 366 | 437 | 497 |

To analyse these scores, some inferential statistical tests were performed using the SPSS. As shown in table (5.2), each of the means 11.87 and 11.80 represent close score averages in the pre-test performance of the control and experimental groups respectively.

Table 5.2
Students' performance in the collocational knowledge pre-test .

| Groups | N | Mean | Std. Deviation | Mean difference | Sig. |
|--------------|----|-------|----------------|-----------------|------|
| Control | 31 | 11.87 | 2.87 | | |
| Experimental | 31 | 11.80 | 3.71 | 0.7 | .513 |

The small mean difference (0.7) indicates that the sample of this study had similar poor knowledge and lack of mastery of collocations before the start of the instructional course. To

further confirm such similarity, the statistical analysis of variance (ANOVA)²⁶ was adopted. Correspondingly, the Levene's Test²⁷ was performed to verify the equality of variance in the sample. The outcome of this statistical procedure shows that the P-Value in this test (the significant value) is .513. This explains that, by conventional criteria ($p > 0.05$), there is no statistical difference in the scores of both groups. In other words, the results of both groups' performance in the pre-test are not significantly different due to the lexical homogeneity the participants had initially. Such homogeneity might be attributed to the fact that learners had poor exposure to collocations and lack of practice which did not help raise learners' awareness of the use of collocations. This, in fact, confirms what was revealed previously in the analysis of the questionnaire concerning the fact that learners' unawareness of collocations can be attributed to the very limited incorporation of collocations in the syllabi of teaching English at middle and high schools in Algeria.

Table 5.3
Students' performance in the collocational knowledge post-test.

| Groups | N | Mean | Std. Deviation | Mean difference | Sig. |
|--------------|----|-------|----------------|-----------------|------|
| Control | 31 | 13.09 | 3.15 | | |
| Experimental | 31 | 16.03 | 5.22 | 2.94 | 0.02 |

If we consider the performance of both groups in the post-test different facts emerge. According to the results displayed in table (5.3), learners in both groups had their knowledge of collocations improved compared to that at the beginning of the year. First, although the control group did not receive any of the experimental training sessions, which would affect their knowledge of collocations, their performance in the post -test ($M=13.09$) improved compared to that of the pre-test ($M= 11.87$). No doubt that such increase in the collocational knowledge of the control group is natural since the improvement of language proficiency in general and vocabulary knowledge in particular can, to certain extent, impact one's knowledge of collocations. This is consisted with Howarth s' claim (1998) that increase in language

²⁶ ANOVA is a set of statistical models used to analyze differences between the means and checks whether or not this difference is significant between groups.

²⁷ Levene's Test is a statistical procedure that is used to estimate the equality of variances. If the result of this test is less than 0.5 this indicates that the changes in a dependent variable are not due to chance.

proficiency is usually associated with an improvement in one's knowledge of collocations. We should not also lose sight of the fact that the similar amount and duration of exposure to collocations we provided to all participants might have impacted on the control group knowledge and perception of collocations. This was implied in a study conducted by Web, Newton and Chang (2013) who investigated the learning of collocations from incidental exposure. Accordingly, their study reported that reading which is associated with listening can, to some extent, enrich learners' receptive knowledge of collocations. Recently, in 2017 Pellicer-Sánchez conducted a study to assess the effect of incidental encounter on the acquisition of collocational knowledge. She concluded that collocations can be learnt through constant exposure, mainly reading.

Second, if we look at the results of the experimental group in the post-test (M= 16.03), learners' collocational knowledge improved tremendously compared to that during the pre-test (M= 11.80). To confirm such a remarkable change in statistical terms, the Independent-Samples T- Test was performed. Put another way, a comparison between the means of the experimental group in the pre and post-tests reveals that the P-Value is 0.02 which, in turn, explains that, by conventional criteria ($P > 0.05$), there is a statistical difference between the scores of the aforementioned tests, therefore the results of the classroom experiment are statistically significant. This indicates that the major improvement in the experimental group receptive knowledge of collocations did not occur by chance, however it was due to the effective impact of Lexical Approach. More strikingly, a simple comparison between the scores of each of the control group (M=13.09) and the experimental group (M=16.03) in the post-test implies a remarkable difference (M difference 2.94) in the improvement of collocational knowledge. Such an outperformance is attributed to the effective classroom practices of the Lexical Approach. In crude terms, the OHE paradigm that we adopted raised the participants' awareness of the fact that words in English are, on the one hand, not combined randomly and, on the other, any co-occurring words are governed by an arbitrary relation which differs from one language to another. This goes hand in hand with what James (2005) believes. He endorses his views in the following terms "cross language awareness can be practiced inside the classroom ... advising learners when they can and cannot resort with profit to the mother tongue" (p.111). Empirically, this was confirmed in a number of studies. For instance, Xiao and Mc Enery (2006) conducted a contrastive investigation of collocational patterns in Chinese and English. Their study evidences

that pointing out to EFL learners the areas of differences between the L1 and the target language reinforces learners' ability to recognize collocations in the input and, consequently, process language holistically. Similarly, Laufer and Girsai (2008) examined the impact of explicit contrastive analysis on the acquisition of collocations. They concluded that providing cross-linguistic instructions on collocations improves learners' collocational accuracy in the target language.

It should also be acknowledged that both of Observe and Hypothesis stages in the experimental sessions proved to have shaped learners receptive knowledge of collocations as well. The provided practice on collocations in those stages helped the experimental group develop an increasing attention towards the collocational field of many English words. That is, learners started to develop an accurate intuition towards the right collocates. Consequently, these learners manifested such a skill in their improved performance, particularly in choosing the proper collocates in the MCQ. Furthermore, training learners to use collocations dictionary and reinforcing their exposure to collocations (through examples taken from the BNC) proved to have also enlarged those learners knowledge of different word collocates. As a result, the learners became independent from their pre-existing knowledge of L1 collocations to process English ones. This in fact echoes the findings of a series of studies (e.g. Channell ,1981; Çelik, 2011; Fox 1998) which recommend that exposure to a wide range of collocational fields of the target language words through the use of concordance examples reinforces learners recognition of different kinds of collocations as it can also speed up the process of collocations' acquisition.

5.5.2 The pre/ post corpora (the writing test)

To examine learners' collocational competence in their writing, the analysis of co-occurring patters in the participants' corpora was limited to the aforementioned six types of lexical collocations. In other words, grammatical collocations, those combinations whose constituent elements are joined together by a grammatical item, except N+of+N collocations, (Bahns, 1993 & Benson, 1997) were excluded from the current analysis because they are beyond the scope of this doctoral research.

First of all, the extraction of lexical collocations was done manually starting by identifying all lexical items used in the learners' compositions. Having different parts of speech on hand, we selected the patterns that correspond to the aforementioned kinds of word combinations for the analysis. We initially looked up those identified combinations in Oxford

Collocations Dictionary (McIntosh, 2009). Second, using BNC data²⁸ we double checked the learners' combinations. As argued by Huston (2002) and recently confirmed by Siyanova (2015), identifying collocations in a reference corpus requires calculating the MI of the target combinations. Thus, to ensure the most possible accuracy in the identification of collocations using MI scores, we set the latter at level 03 as a standard threshold. Most literature on collocations analysis considers the MI score of 03 as a valid threshold value for labelling a particular word combination as a collocation (Durrant & Schmitt, 2009; Granger & Beston, 2014; Siyanova, 2015). Consequently, any extracted combination whose MI score is below the value 03 was excluded from the analysis.

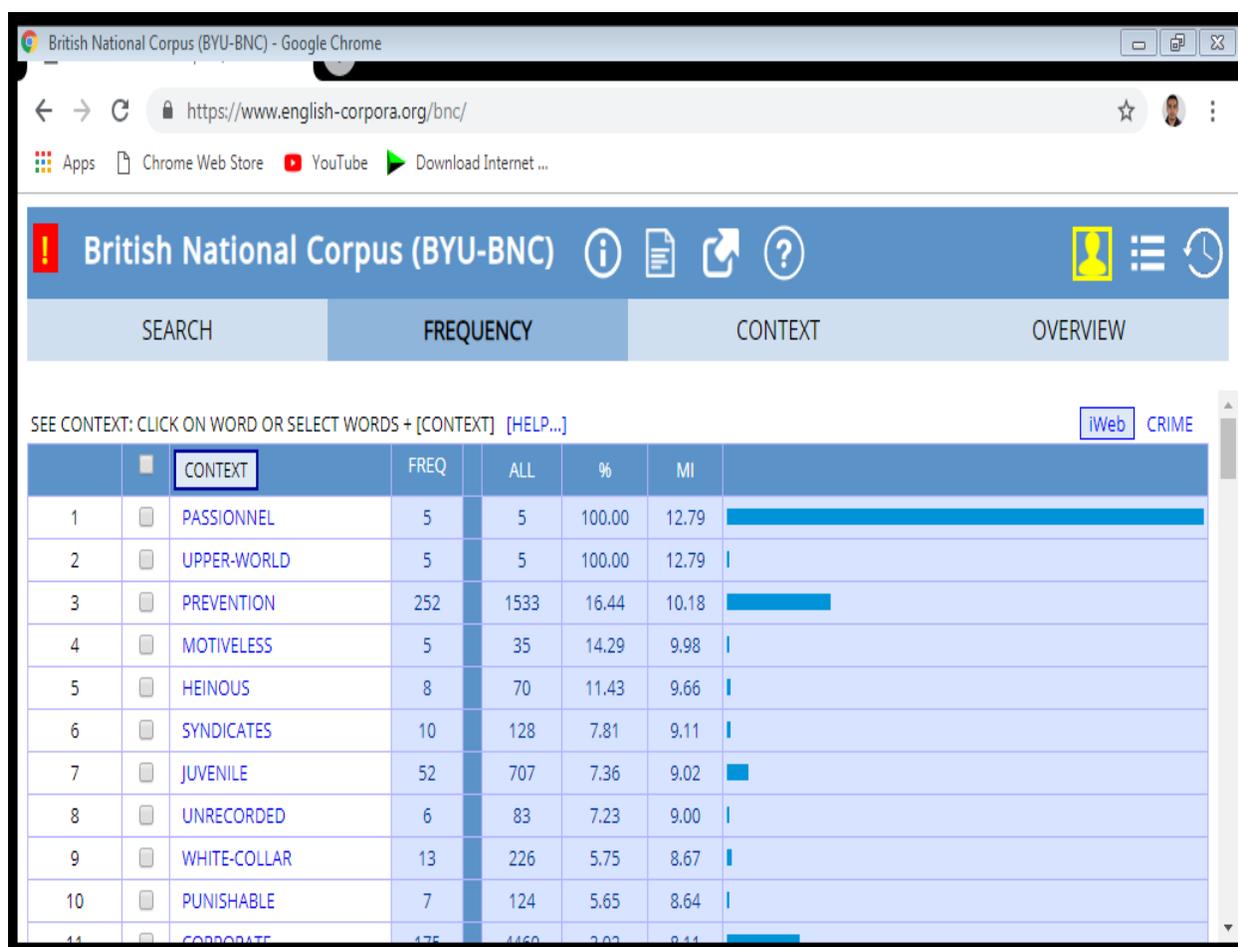


Figure 5.2. Search results of the MI scores of collocates of the word “crime” in the BNC

²⁸ BNC data is available online on www.english-corpora.org/bnc/.

The examination of learners' corpora reveals a lot about their inclination in combining words to express themselves in writing. First of all as shown in the following figure, the corpus of learners that we compiled at the beginning of the year (pre-test corpus) shows that the means (M=5.95/5.75) in both groups respectively are almost the same. Nearly six collocations were produced by every learner in each group. This number is small if we compare it with the average numbers of collocations used by those learners in the post-test corpus.

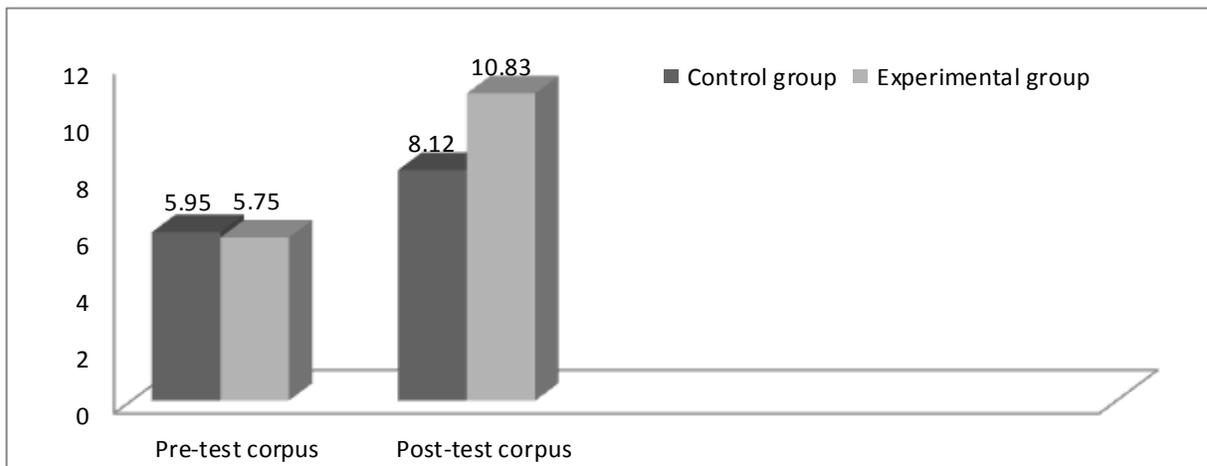


Figure.5.3. *Density of collocations in learners' corpora*

On the whole, the mean (M=8.12) of the control group and the mean (M=10.82) of the experimental group indicate a remarkable improvement in learners' collocational productive knowledge that is reflected in the amount of collocations they produced in their post-test corpus. Such progress can be attributed to the fact that the use of collocations is affected by the increase of language proficiency. This is absolutely natural since collocations are part of learners' acquired vocabulary which develops as a result of more experience with the target language. However, if we compare the performances of each group individually in both tests we can say that thanks to the extensive practice of the use of collocations in the experimental group, learners' production of collocation jumped from five (M=5.75) collocations in every essay to 10 (M=10.83) ones. This is consistent with what Paker and Ordem (2016) found regarding the increase of collocations in EFL learners output which is due to exposure and regular practice. Differently put, the OHE classroom practice that we adopted enriched the target learners' knowledge of the collocational field of English words, which, in turn, made learners more able to

combine words more naturally and, consequently, convey meaning using native-like chunks. More precisely, the Practice Stage encouraged the experimental group to retrieve language holistically and focus on proper word combinations to express themselves accurately.

After having identified collocations in the learners' corpora, we explored the varying degrees of the fixedness (the strength of association) of those collocations. Thus, we classified them over the scale of the strength of collocability. In other words, we categorised learners' collocations into three sets according to the following MI data: weak collocations (MI ranges from 3-4), mid-strong collocations (MI ranges from 5-6) and strong collocations (MI starting from 7). As figure (5.4) demonstrates, most of the writings of the EFL learners in the pre-test feature weak collocations. Although there are similar amounts of considerable use of mid-strong collocations in the pre-test corpus of both groups (34.62% control group and 33.51% experimental group), almost half of students in both groups (41.62% control group and 39.10% experimental group) used weak collocations. This tendency can be attributed to the fact that our participants perceived language as a string of open class words that are joined together by different grammatical rules. Moreover, since weak collocations bear close resemblance to free combinations, where no collocational restrictions is put on word choice (e.g. *black car, black cat, black pen,...* etc.), learners who have limited vocabulary find it easier to combine words at random. That is why as few as 24.86% and 27.37% of strong collocations are used by the control group and the experimental group respectively in the pre-test corpus. Such a fact goes hand in hand with Granger (1998) and Wray's (2002) claim which implies that L2 learners mistakenly depend on their mastery of grammar to build their mental lexicon and ,in turn, produce language as separate building bricks (slot and filler process).

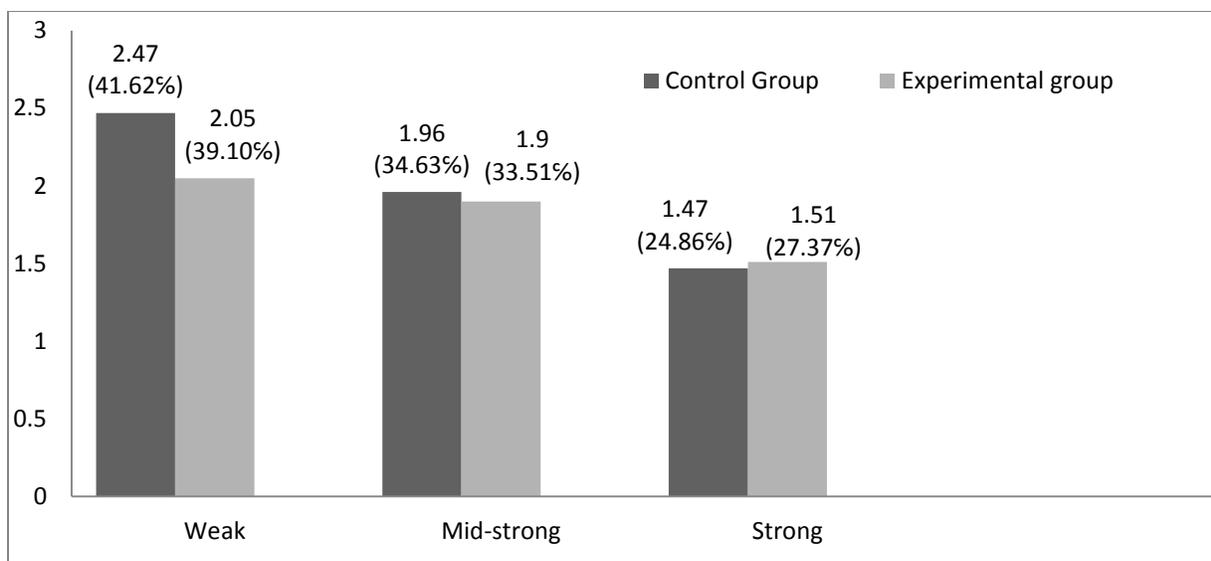


Figure.5.4 *Strength of word collocability in the pre-test corpus*

A closer look at the writings of learners in the post-test corpus informs us of different realities. Figure (5.4) clarifies the remarkable improvement in the quality of collocations. As opposed to their performance in the pre-test, nearly half (48.36%) of learners in the experimental group proved to produce writing that features a predominant use of strong collocations. For instance, adjective +noun (e.g. *heinous crime, deterrent effect, bushy eyebrows...etc.*), verb+ noun (e.g. *file a suit, commit crimes, issued arrest...etc.*), noun +verb (e.g. *fear gripped , siren was wailing ,blood was trickling...etc.*), noun+of +noun (e.g. *ounce of truth, spark of hope , wealth of experience...etc.*), adverb+ verb (e.g. *fiercely resisted, badly needed, heavily bleeding...etc.*) and adverb+adjective (e.g. *blissfully happy cautiously optimistic, seriously injured...etc.*). Unsurprisingly, while the experimental group demonstrated a decreased use of weak collocations (21.06%) in the post-test corpus, their counterparts' corpus proved to sustain almost the same amount (39.01%) of weak collocations that they used in the pre-test.

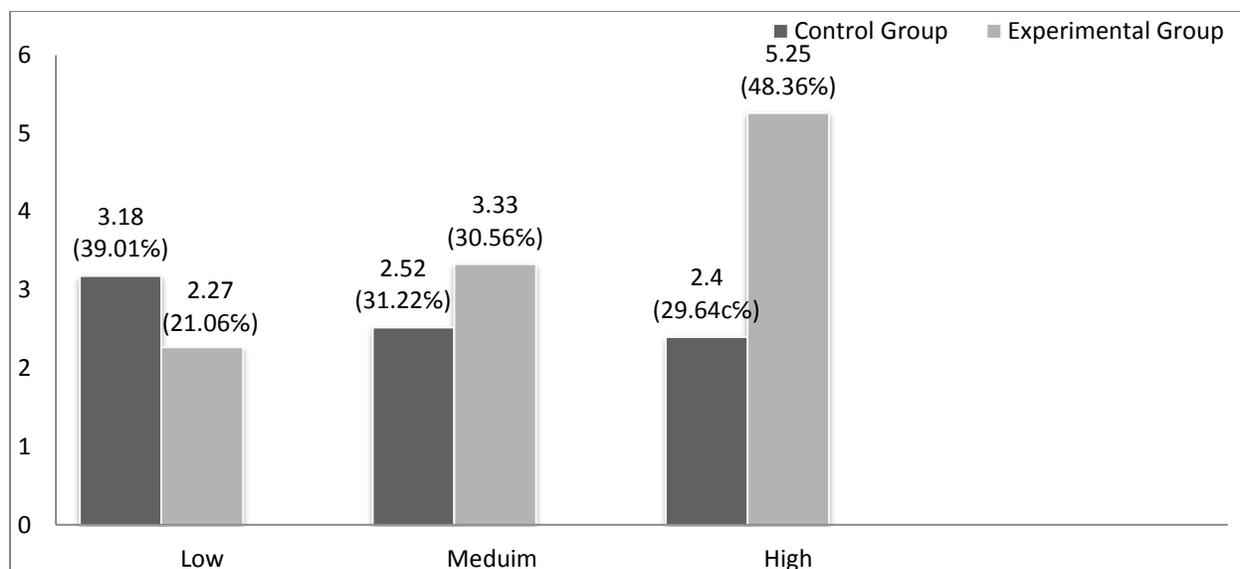


Figure. 5.5. *Strenght of word collocability in the post-test corpus*

Obviously, figures (5.4) and (5.5) evidence that weak collocations in the control group's writing are still the predominant type of word associations compared to low use of mid-strong and, more importantly, strong collocations (21.06%). One explanation of this can be related to the continuous unawareness of the control group of the fact that the meaning of words in the L2 is culturally determined and so are word pairings. Despite the fact that the exposure to English that we provided to both groups inside the classroom was similar in terms of amount and duration, the control group used mostly the kind of collocations whose constituent elements have a literal meaning (e.g. *violent attack, do a crime*). In other words, they failed to notice the cultural restriction put on word choice which is responsible for the degree of fixedness and figurativeness of strong collocations. In this respect, Lewis (2000) explains that strong collocations derive their non-literal meaning from the arbitrary nature of language, more precisely from what has been decided by cultural conventions and institutionalized accordingly. Thus, helping learners become aware of the arbitrary nature of L2 lexis improves their acquisition of this kind of collocations. It could also be said that such learners fell back on their knowledge of the combinatory system of their L1 words to combine words in English. This implies that EFL intermediate learners are still unaware of the uniqueness of the socio-cultural and arbitrary nature of L2 lexis. Such results lend support to what was recently reported in the

literature ,mainly that of Granger and Bestgen (2014) who concluded that EFL intermediate learners avoid using strongly associated collocational patterns due to their poor mental lexicon.

Another point to consider is that it can also be argued that the jump from low use of strong collocations in the pre-test corpus to the high use of those collocations in the post-test corpus of the experimental group can be accounted for in a number of reasons. First, the explicit instructional program may have improved learners collocational knowledge and competence to identify the kinds of collocations whose meaning does not have direct equivalents in the L1. In other words, learners' attention became more focused on expressing themselves accurately at a proper word choice level than at a grammatically well-formed sentence level. In so doing, learners developed much interest in learning to use strong and fixed collocations and this attitude was reflected in their writing (e.g. *shrug his shoulders*, *police siren wails* ,*mitigating factors...etc*).Hence, the experimental group started writing in a more native-like way. It can also be argued that these findings are significant in the sense that they echo what Brashi (2009) and Nesselhauf (2003) emphasized concerning the importance of informing EFL learners about the difference between L1 and L2 collocations in order to increase their proficiency in writing. Second, the explicit teaching of collocations accustomed learners to notice how words fit together in a particular unpredictable arbitrary way which helped those learners avoid combining words randomly and draw on less grammar to produce meaning. This is in line with a study recently conducted by Chen (2017) in which he revealed that EFL learners can use strong collocations if they are trained to notice and identify them. It should be acknowledged that the results of the current study lends support to what Gablasova, Brezina, and McEnery (2017) recently found concerning the fact that since strong collocations are intrinsic to native speakers' mental lexicon (stored as wholes and cannot be generated from scratch by morpho-syntactic rules), featuring them in the L2 writing qualifies it as idiomatic and native-like.

Since the main purpose of this doctoral research is to examine the relationship between the study variables²⁹ we performed what is technically called the Pearson' Correlation test³⁰. Differently put, the latter was run to investigate the interplay between the experimental group's

²⁹ The implementation of the Lexical Approach in this study serves as an independent variable which we aim to measure its effect on the dependent variable: the acquisition of the Idiom Principle.

³⁰ Pearson' Correlation test is a statistical process that measures the relationship (strength of correlation) between two variables.

performance in the post-test of collocational knowledge and the strength of collocability in their writing (post-test corpus).

Table 5.4
Correlation coefficient between the variables

| Experimental group performance | Pearson's correlation | Sig. (2-tailed) |
|--|-----------------------|-----------------|
| Collocational knowledge (post-test) | .543* | 0.03 |
| High-strength collocations (post-test of writing) | | |

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

In the light of the results shown in table (5.4), the Pearson's correlation is positive ($r = .543$). Additionally, the P-Value is $.03 (p < .05)$. That is, the examined correlation is statistically significant at the level $.05$. This is in fact a clearer index that the correlation between the aforementioned variables is positive in the sense that the more EFL learners identify and store language holistically, as strongly collocated items, the more they are likely to retrieve and produce it likewise.

At this point , it is worth inferring from the outcome of the experimental course that learners' writing became pithier, more natural and native-like as they relied more on using strongly collocated words than using a mere sequence of grammatically-governed word combinations. It is therefore wise to acknowledge that such initial evidence answers the second question of our doctoral research. That is, raising EFL learners' awareness of the generative power of collocations helps them become less independent on grammar to convey the desired meaning.

5.5.3 The learners' interview

As we mentioned earlier in this chapter, the main objective of conducting the interview is to unveil how the experimental course affected learners cognitive strategies in relation to the perception and production of collocations .Together with results obtained from the previously analysed quantitative data, the qualitative data that we gathered using the interview reinforces our understanding of the issue in question. Such data was analysed following a model devised by Spaulding, Lodico and Voegtler (2010).Accordingly, the principled analysis of interview data requires the transcription of data, identification and categorization of themes and the

investigation of the relationships in these themes to interpret the results. Following such a mode and going through the transcript of the interview multiple times, we could categorise the answers of our informants to the interview questions into different themes.

To start with, the first question on the most difficult MCQ activity that the learners did in the post test, most of the informants in the experimental group emphasized that verb + adverb collocations took them more time to answer. In a similar vein, the informants in the control group reported to have faced certain difficulties with verb + adverb collocations, in addition to verb +noun and noun+ verb collocations as well. The reported difficulties, especially with verb+ adverb collocation, in fact reiterate what the participants reported before the beginning of the experimental course. If we go back to Q14 in the questionnaire, more than half of respondents (54.8%) admitted that they find adverbs as the most difficult part of speech to use. Such confirmation can be taken to explain that adverbs in the participants' mother tongue (Arabic) function totally in a different way from those in English, in the sense that they cannot be expected to combine with certain parts of speech to form a particular collocation. This, on the other hand, supports our previous claim that EFL learners, to some extent, depend on their L1 to process English collocations.

Concerning the second question of the interview (the difficulties the participants had in choosing the right item in the MCQ), most of the informants' answers can be grouped under the following three themes: poor knowledge of the collocational fields of the English words, poor knowledge of English vocabulary, and, for the experimental group in particular, inability to distinguish between the collocational behaviour of words in English and those in Arabic. First, the interviewed learners in both groups revealed that they were confused of the similar meaning the suggested collocates convey. In this respect they explained, "all words have similar meanings that we can use them interchangeably!", "the words have very close meaning they made me feel confused!", "the words are synonymous, I could not find the one that has more relationship with the sentence!". This means that learners, especially in the experimental group, are still not fully aware of the fact that there is no absolute synonyms of a particular word (only near synonyms) in the sense that every word has its own proper context of use where it combines with a specific item to form a collocation. Second, both of the groups reported that they encountered certain difficulties in choosing the right collocates due to their limited vocabulary. In his/her terms one of the informants stated, "I do not have enough vocabulary.

There are many new words!". In a similar vein, others informed, "the words seem strange", I don't know the meaning of the suggested words !". Given that this problem of lack of vocabulary was previously reported in the learners' questionnaire, it seems that the exposure the participants received inside the classroom is inadequate to enrich their vocabulary. Lastly, it was reported by the experimental group only that they are unable to distinguish between the collocational fields of English words and those of Arabic. Accordingly, they assured, "the meaning is the same even when I translate it into Arabic", "when I translate it into Arabic I get wrong meaning". What can be implied from such answers is that these EFL learners are still, to some extent, affected by their L1 receptive knowledge of collocations and this in fact echoes what was concluded earlier from the questionnaire findings: intermediate students depend on the collocational behaviour of Arabic words to process English collocations.

As regards the third question, the techniques the participants used to find out the right answer in the MCQ activity, two main themes sum up the cognitive strategies employed by both groups to process collocations in the input, i.e. cross-linguistic analysis and reliance on experience in English exclusively. As a common technique of using Arabic, learners in the control group read the sentences multiple times to get the intended meaning then translate it into Arabic and, on that basis, they chose the right collocate. In this scope, some of them acknowledged " I read the sentences three times , I try to understand the general meaning and , then I choose ...I used Arabic and it helped me a lot", " I chose the proper item according to the general meaning of the sentence in Arabic". Others reported that they use Arabic to translate each item individually then try out them out one by one to figure out the right collocate. Accordingly, one of the informants explained "I tried to understand the meaning of the sentences in Arabic and I tried out each word from those choices". Interestingly, these results lend further support to what we discovered earlier from the questionnaire data regarding the fact that more than half of the participants (59.7%) use bilingual dictionary to learn individual vocabulary items and this made them heavily dependent on L1 to make sense of encountered English word combinations. Furthermore, if we consider the fact the participants, before the beginning of the experiment, reported to be unaware of the areas of difference between Arabic and English collocations, then the aforementioned technique of individual translation of items proves that EFL learners in the control group were and are still operating on the Open Choice Principle. This answers our first main question that the deficiency in collocational accuracy in the writing of our

participants is related to their tendency to perceive language as separate building bricks joined together using a number of grammatical rules. That is, non-native learners rely on their syntactic knowledge to process the input in which they view any sequencing of words in L2 as a matter of items used to fill gaps provided by certain structural frames (Hills, 1999; Wray, 2002).

Though the use of L1 is a cognitive strategy common among learners in the experimental group as well, a different technique of such use was reported by these informants in the interview. Learners resort to L1 to translate the suggested combinations only and then choose the proper item (collocate) accordingly. Some of the informants explained “I translated each possible combination in Arabic. If it makes sense to me, I consider it as the right answer”, “I use Arabic to decide which combination fits best to complete the intended meaning of the sentence”. As opposed to their counterparts in the control group, learners in the experimental group resort to the arbitrary nature of collocations in that 1 to judge the acceptability of the formed ones in English. Though this technique may work only with some collocations which are not of high MI scores, this strategy is misleading since each language has its own specificities, namely the collocational restrictions. However, this suggests that the experimental group have become inclined to transfer their L1 holistic processing of language to the target language. At the same time they bear in mind the fact that the collocational fields of words in Arabic is not necessarily similar to those in English.

Last but not least, the cognitive strategy of reliance on experience with the target language exclusively also differs between the aforementioned groups. Though only few of the informants in the control group reported that the processing of English collocations required them to avoid translation into Arabic, they drew on the non-linguistic context together with their background knowledge to make sense of the given collocations. However, if we look at their counterparts in the experiment group, the outright majority of these informants informed about the use of different techniques to process collocations. For example, as a common strategy, they tried to activate their lexical background knowledge in English by recalling any similar previously learnt collocations. Differently put, those EFL learners tried to familiarize themselves with each of the suggested combinations which could help them retrieve previously encountered synonymous chunks and, on that basis, they chose the right collocate. The following is some of their quotes explaining this technique: “I repeatedly tried to read the words as combinations and tried to deduce the suitable combination from the general meaning of the sentence because it is

not the same in Arabic”, “I read and re-read the combinations and from the words that are familiar I could automatically know how it goes correctly!”, “some of the collocations are familiar, we dealt with them before”. Besides, the informants acknowledged that what they studied and practiced about collocations helped them identify the appropriate collocates in the MCQ. Thus, they admitted “I chose the right combination from my experience of doing collocations’ activities”, “I tried to remember if I saw any of those combinations before”, “I tried to remember what you gave us in those classes in terms of distinguishing collocations from other combinations !”. Other informants in this group seem to be guided by their intuition in English and assumption about the perceived strength and precision of the conveyed meaning. In this scope they revealed “it is all about meaning. When I read the sentence, meaning comes automatically. I keep one of the suggested word in mind till I feel it is the right one !”, “ I do not know how , but I felt it fluent that way !”, “ I focused on the word that have strong meaning !”, “ when you read the sentence for the first moment you can tell there is something wrong with the combinations !”. Following what the informants in the experimental group maintained, it can be concluded that such EFL learners acquired a tendency to view language as a sequence of chunks in which they are formed in a way that cannot be explained by the semantic properties and grammatical regularities that these EFL learners are aware of. This again highlights the difference between how the participants used to process collocations (atomistic processing) prior to the start of the experimental course and how they have started to perceive language (holistic processing) at the end of the experimental course.

At the end of the interview the experimental group, mostly, recommended to be taught collocations adequately in a specifically designed syllabus. More importantly, they stressed the fact that they developed a habit of trying to find collocates for certain words in handouts their teachers give in different modules and in many texts they read in different books. They also indicated that the collocations they have learnt made them feel more proficient than before. By contrast, most of the informants in the control group implied a need to learn vocabulary in order to be able to speak English fluently.

In the light of these interview findings, it became clear now that the effect of practices of the Lexical Approach on EFL learners’ processing of collocations proved to have shaped these English majors’ view of the behavior of words in English. That is, the subjects of the study have learnt that the grammatical regularities and semantic properties of English are, on the one hand,

different from those of Arabic in most cases and, on the other, inadequate in terms of helping a non-native speaker process and comprehend the collocational behavior of English words. In turn, such learners have started to develop certain intuition in English which guides them through the process of perceiving and storing language in different collocational patterns. Also, it is needless to say that such holistic perception and storage of English words prompted our subjects to express themselves by relying on the co-occurring words they can retrieve.

5.6 Summary of the experiment's findings

There is no denying that accuracy of collocations in non-native speakers' writing can reflect a quick acquisition of collocational competence. Given our case, the performances of the subjects at the different stages of the experiment reveal a lot in terms of the perception and production of collocations with varying degrees of restrictedness (MI scores), as they also suggest certain tendencies related to the transition to operate on the Idiom Principle in the writing of EFL intermediate learners.

First of all, in terms of their pre-existing receptive knowledge of collocations, the learners have limited knowledge of different kinds of collocational patterns due to limited exposure and poor instructional program (lack of practice). Such poor receptive knowledge is reflected in these students' deficient use of collocations in writing, mainly accurate collocations with high MI scores. Evidently, this is a definite answer to our first question that EFL intermediate learners operate on the Open Choice Principle in which they process language as, in Hill's terms, "one huge substitution table with vocabulary items merely filling slots in grammatical structure" (2000.p48). Although exposure to collocations without awareness-raising seems to generally impact on EFL learners receptive knowledge of collocations, the OHE paradigm that we adopted in the experimental training sessions proved to be very effective in improving these learners receptive knowledge of collocations. As a result, the participants' use of collocations increased. Practically, this is an answer to our second question that raising EFL intermediate learners' awareness of the generative power of collocations and the varying degrees of collocational restrictions (arbitrary nature of lexis) can wean such learners off much dependence on their acquired morpho-syntactic knowledge to produce meaning in English. Second, the Observe and Hypothesize stages have proven to be effective in helping EFL learners develop an intuition towards the collocational fields of many English words they encounter. This, on the other hand, encouraged less dependence on Arabic knowledge of collocations to process

English collocations. In crude terms, such evidence confirms our first hypothesis that raising EFL intermediate learners' awareness of the varying degrees of lexical arbitrariness, which dictate collocational restrictions, helps such learners become less independent on Arabic to produce collocations.

The featuring of collocational patterns in the writing of the participants is also related to the extensive practice of the use of collocations. For instance, the Practice stage encouraged the experimental group to retrieve language holistically by focusing more on proper word combinations in order to express themselves pithily. As regards the strength of association of lexical items in the subjects' compositions, the results of examining the MI in EFL learners' use of collocations prove that unawareness of collocational restrictions placed on English words as well as the over dependence on the mastery of different grammatical rules are very likely to result in the sparseness of strongly associated words in EFL learners' writing. At best in this case, learners writing can be stilted and pedestrian due to the much use of weak collocations whose meaning is literal. In fact this also occurs because these learners perceive language as a sequence of open class words that are joined together by different grammatical rules. At worst, their writing is also very likely to be perceived as foreign sounding due to the use of idiosyncratic word combinations. In contrast, raising awareness of the cultural restrictions placed on certain word choice (arbitrary nature of co-occurring words), which is responsible for the degree of figurativeness, contributes tremendously to the improvement of EFL learners collocational accuracy. Evidently, this further confirms our first hypothesis. In this respect, we can conclude that the OHE classroom practices of the Lexical Approach are very likely to develop in EFL intermediate learners a tendency to operate on the Idiom Principle. In line with the second hypothesis, it is worth asserting that the Lexical Approach encouraged learners to constantly focus their attention on expressing themselves accurately at a proper word choice level than at a syntactic one. In so doing, learners developed much interest in learning to use strong and figurative collocations and this attitude was reflected in their writing.

Regarding the third question on the cognitive strategies our participants employ to produce accurate collocations, difficulties such as poor knowledge of the collocational fields of English words, poor knowledge of English vocabulary, and, for the experimental group in particular, inability to recognize the collocational behaviour of words impact on these students collocational processing which seems to be adversely affected by their L1 in the first place. That

is, techniques such as cross-linguistic comparison and resorting to the arbitrary nature of collocations in L1 to judge the acceptability of a particular English word combination, though this may work only with some collocations which are not of high MI scores, are misleading since each language has its own collocational restrictions. However, other techniques such as exclusive reliance on the non- linguistic context by means of generalization, avoidance of cross-linguistic comparison, activation of the lexical background knowledge and reliance on previously encountered synonymous chunks through multiple reading, all seem to echo such EFL learners growing tendency to retrieve collocational patterns holistically. In consistence with our third hypothesis, it is worth concluding that the OHE classroom practice helped intermediate EFL learners develop a strategy of chunking the input successfully and, accordingly, displaying those chunks in the output. This leads us to reiterate our conclusive result of testing the potential of the Lexical Approach. That is, the implementation of the Lexical Approach correlates with the improvement of the collocational accuracy in EFL writing and this, in turn, leads to a growing tendency to operate on the Idiom Principle.

5.7 Conclusion

As we have seen earlier in this chapter, the effectiveness of the Lexical Approach was assessed at different stages of the experiment. The pre-experiment stage proved that EFL intermediate learners operate on the Open Choice Principle in which they perceive and produce language as individual vocabulary items joined together using certain grammatical rules. However, during the experimental stage, the OHE raised learners' awareness of the unique collocational restrictions that do not exist in their L1(Arabic) and this prompted adequate production of idiomatic forms. In other words, learners can feature high-strength collocations in their writing as they notice the behavior of different lexical phrases in English and are informed about the nature of the lexical gap between Arabic and English. The post experimental stage proved that alerting intermediate EFL learners to the varying degrees of lexical arbitrariness (collocational restrictions) helps develop learning strategies where those EFL learners became less dependent on their L1 to process collocations. It can be concluded that helping such learners acquire the habit of perceiving language as building blocks correlates with their acquired ability to produce language idiomatically. Thus, it can also be concluded that a span of five months is

sufficient for EFL intermediate learners to acquire the ability to operate on the Idiom Principle through the OHE practices of the Lexical Approach.

Chapter Six
**Main Findings, Pedagogical Implications and Suggestions for Future
Research**

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6.1 Introduction

The current study reports on a classroom experiment that we conducted to assess the effectiveness of the Lexical Approach-based instructional course. The analysis of data that we presented in the previous chapter demonstrates the potential of the Lexical Approach at different levels of the acquisition of the ability to chunk language successfully. Now, in this sixth chapter we are going to sum up the main findings of the study and accordingly draw certain pedagogical implications for EFL teachers, syllabus designers and dictionary makers as well. This final chapter concludes with a number of suggestions for related future inquiries.

6.2 Main findings and conclusions

The concept of collocation refers to the habitual co-occurrence of two or more items in language (Stubbs, 1996). It is a tailor-made patterning in which a group of words can fit together to add more to the power of language use. The pervasiveness of collocations in native-speakers use of language has highlighted their vital importance in achieving native-like fluency. Therefore, any underuse, overuse or misuse of collocations is viewed as a common source of inaccuracy and foreign sounding in one's L2 output (Pawley & Syder, 1983). Notwithstanding, in the process of second language acquisition, over emphasis on the syntactic accuracy at the expense of collocational accuracy seems to have dominated many current EFL teaching practices. The latter is little researched in relation to the acquisition of collocational competence and the idiomaticity of EFL learners' writing. To this end, our study is based on a classroom experiment whose main objective is to assess the extent to which the Lexical Approach can help learners improve their collocational accuracy and, in turn, operate on the Idiom Principle in their writing. To carry out this research, we recruited a sample of 62 first year university students at the Department of English in Chedli Benjdid University of El Tarf, Algeria. These EFL intermediate majors were assigned to an experimental group and a control group. The former was taught collocations explicitly through OHE practices of the Lexical Approach, while the latter was taught English with no focus on collocations. The experiment lasted five months where the performances of our study subjects were tested in different ways and at different stages. With the aim of assessing the effect of the experiment and finding answers to our research questions, the required data was collected using three tools: a questionnaire was administered before the start of the experiment in order to identify the participants' pre-existing awareness and knowledge of collocations, pre and post-tests were given to measure the

participants' receptive and productive knowledge of collocations and, lastly, an interview was conducted to explore the skills that the subjects acquired to process collocations. Information elicited using such tools respectively was processed using different analytical and statistical procedures.

Following the findings of the questionnaire, the participants' knowledge of collocations before the start of the experimental course of teaching collocations proved to be affected by their mother tongue. Their limited exposure to collocations could only familiarize these English majors with weak collocations with literal meaning in addition to mid-strong collocations which have direct equivalents in Arabic. The source of this poor knowledge of collocations explains learners' ignorance of the arbitrary nature of collocational restrictions in English. This leads us to conclude that such unawareness then explains EFL intermediate learners tendency to perceive English lexis atomistically. In other words, the results of questionnaire analysis reveal that the subjects of our study operate on the Open Choice Principle and this is what was manifested in their writing.

Practically, the participants' performance in the pre-test (receptive knowledge of collocations) proved that EFL intermediate learners are not knowledgeable enough about collocations with high MI scores due to the fact that these learners' mental lexicon was built on the basis of the arbitrary, but not necessarily similar, combinary system of the L1 words. Consequently, this poor receptive knowledge translates into the deficiency and deviance that was demonstrated in the underuse of collocations in their writing (pre-test corpus, i.e. productive knowledge). On the other hand, the five-month implementation of the OHE practice of the Lexical Approach proved to be effective in raising EFL learners' awareness of the varying degrees of lexical arbitrariness which dictates collocational restrictions on the behavior of many English words. In so doing, EFL intermediate learners become less independent on their L1 to produce strongly associated words. Furthermore, those three stages of the Lexical Approach procedures have accustomed these learners to express themselves accurately at a proper word choice level rather than at a mere fine sentence structure one. As a result, the aforementioned classroom practices increased the accuracy of collocations with high MI scores in the output of the participants.

Further evidence of the effectiveness of the Lexical Approach was provided by the findings of the interview. The practices of Lexical Approach helped the participants develop

their cognitive strategies for processing collocations. In this respect, reliance on the non-linguistic context, activation of their lexical background knowledge and avoidance of cross-linguistic comparison are techniques acquired by the subjects as a result of becoming aware of the collocational gap that exists between Arabic and English. Processing as such highlights learners acquired tendency to retrieve collocational patterns holistically. Above all, what can finally be concluded from this research is that five months of adopting the OHE practices inside the classroom proved to be effective in developing EFL intermediate learners' collocational competence. The latter reflects an increased collocational accuracy which proved to correlate with learners' acquisition of a tendency to operate on the Idiom Principle.

6.3 Pedagogical implications

The fact that collocations are arbitrary in nature and cannot, most of the time, be explained by referring to the morpho-syntactic regularities and semantic properties of language, non-native learners find it difficult to acquire this area of language without certain principled procedures. At the same time, language teachers, non-native in particular, syllabus designers and text book writers alike find it also demanding to introduce these irregular linguistic forms to their learners without a sound pedagogical framework. In this respect, we can draw on the present study's findings for a number of pedagogical implications.

First of all, raising learners' awareness of collocation requires an explicit instructional approach in which learners are engaged in classroom activities that direct their attention towards the use of different collocational patterns in given input. Encouraging learners to notice, identify, store and retrieve collocations help widen their collocational knowledge of many collocates of the vocabulary items they already know. Teachers can also harness learners own strategy of learning single vocabulary items to increase such learners exposure to collocations not only inside classroom but also outside it. Classroom activities such as filling- in the gaps, matching collocations with their definitions and cross-linguistic approach to restricted collocations are very effective in terms of raising learners' awareness of the high-strength collocations (collocations with high MI scores) which do not have direct equivalents in the learners L1.

Since collocations are pervasive in native-speaker use of language, doing extensive reading should be an encouraged practice among EFL learners. Authenticity of the given input must be ensured as to increase learners' exposure to high-strength collocations. For example, teachers can select some excerpts from a daily newspaper, radio talk or TV program and

highlight certain collocations for their learners' attention. It is also an effective strategy to provide learners with gapped extracts from the aforementioned sources of authentic material and ask them to find the missing collocates using a collocations dictionary. Interestingly, teachers should introduce collocations inside the classroom in a systematic way. As to help learners easily recognise collocations, teachers should help EFL learners distinguish between different parts of speech and pay constant attention to the behaviour of the four major lexical items: nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs. It would be easier for EFL learners to grasp the use of many verb-containing collocations by focusing their attention on the use of delexical verbs, such as *give*, *take*, *make* and *have*, which can be used with certain nouns to form collocations.

The findings of this study have implications for dictionary makers as well. Many collocations dictionaries such as Oxford Collocations Dictionary and BBI dictionary list collocations according to their high frequency and give peripheral attention to low frequency but of high MI collocations. Thus, devoting special dictionary entries to cover the use of mid-strength and strong collocations would contribute to raise learners' awareness of the importance of using such semi-literal and figurative collocations that are typical of English lexis. Unarguably, many native speakers' standard corpora, the likes of BNC and COCA, are used for instructional purposes. Therefore, learners would also benefit from using corpus-based activities that, on the one hand, develop these learners' intuition towards how native speakers combine words to produce language fluently and, on the other, help them self-correct their miscollocations without the, probably, disruptive intervention of the teacher.

As we pointed out earlier in chapter five, due to the absence of teaching collocations in different EFL instructional courses in Algeria, mainly at university, collocations have become a grey area for EFL learners and teachers alike. Therefore, it is recommended to give due attention to this important area of language acquisition by devoting a special instructional module in which EFL teachers can effectively and adequately involve their learners in activities that expand their collocational knowledge. Another thing that deserves our close attention is that although collocations can be approached syntactically in terms of the usual word order which can define the expected parts of speech in a sequence, strongly collocated words, as one of the main ingredients of native-speakers' use of language, are not governed by any language rule. Hence, it is necessary to design a special syllabus oriented towards the teaching of strong collocations that are very often different from the one in the learners' L1. It is also recommended that English

Departments had better integrate the teaching of collocations in general in the syllabi of grammar and written expression modules that are intended for EFL intermediate students. This can contribute to yield better results in terms of the language proficiency such departments prepare their students for.

6.4 Suggestions for future research

The current research is conducted on English majors studying at one of the English Departments in Algeria where English is only taught for academic purposes. No wonder that replicating such a study and relating it to the context of teaching English for specific purposes (ESP) would be of richer and more insightful findings, given that many scientific and professional fields are defined by their terminologies in which specific collocational patterns make up a large part. It is worthy acknowledging that in order to have a complete account of the effect of the Lexical Approach on the ability of EFL learners to use accurate collocations and , in turn, operate on the Idiom Principle, more research with larger corpora including different genres should be carried out. A comparison of the present study findings with other collocations-related studies' findings on EFL learners from different educational and cultural backgrounds would also provide a thorough account of how the acquisition of the ability to operate on the Idiom Principle is affected by other factors such as learners' L1 and level of proficiency. As to answer the question of why the degree of restriction and the corresponding figurativeness of collocations with high MI score are of a big source of difficulties in learning collocations, cross-linguistic studies could be done to probe into the issues of polysemy and near synonyms. This would also answer the question of why acquiring collocational competence is challenging for even advanced EFL learners.

Another suggestion for future inquiries would be to conduct a similar study, but longitudinally. Differently put, the progress of EFL learners in the process of acquiring the ability to operate on the Idiom Principle could be tracked at different stages of the OHE paradigm. Furthermore, experimenting the Lexical Approach on a wider population and a larger size of corpus would yield richer results especially that focusing on the acquisition of longer lexical chunks (e.g. idioms and proverbs) contributes to broaden our horizon of finding new and more effective ways to develop the acquisition of the Idiom Principle in EFL writing. It is hope that the findings of this research pave the way for future inquiries to advance our understating of the acquisition of formulaic sequences in general.

6.5 Conclusion

Our general assessment of the extent to which the O.H.E practices of the Lexical Approach can improve intermediate EFL learners' collocational accuracy highlights key points in our experimental study. First, limited exposure to collocations and frequent dependence on the mother in learning the L2 can to a great extent result in learners' recognition of only the literal meaning of collocations and the awareness of only the collocations that have direct equivalents in the mother tongue. Second, poor receptive knowledge of high MI collocations explains the reason why such learners operate on the Open-Choice Principle in their perception of the input and, accordingly, the production of the output. However, the principled optimization of the Lexical Approach has proved to be effective in installing a tendency in learners to notice the gap that exists between the mother tongue (Arabic) and the target language (English) in terms of the varying degrees of the collocational restrictions that dictate the co-occurring of words in an arbitrary way. This in turn prompts a tendency to produce high MI collocations and operate on the Idiom Principle in the writing of these EFL intermediate learners. Experimentally, it has been proved through this study that the principled optimization of the Lexical Approach correlates with the increase of the collocational accuracy and the tendency to operate on the Idiom Principle in the EFL intermediate learners writing. In pedagogical terms, these findings underscore the need for an explicit instructional approach , the use of authentic material , the devotion of special dictionary entries to cover issue of IM collocations and the devotion of special syllabus and a free-standing module to introduce this aspect of formulaic language to EFL learners in general .

General Conclusion

In rebuttal to the idea that grammar is the backbone of language and without it only little can be expressed, Wilkins (1972) maintains “without vocabulary nothing can be conveyed” (as quoted in Lewis, 1997.p16).However, compared to individual vocabulary items collocation is more generative meaning wise. It is the tailor-made patterning where a group of words can fit together to add more to the power of language. For a number of words to be labeled as a collocation they must not co-occur randomly as they cannot be invented from scratch since they are intrinsic to native-speakers’ mental lexicon. Therefore, any created combination of words is very likely to sound anomalous if it does not match the one that exists in the lexical repository of native speakers and which stems from their natural collocational competence. The latter was introduced by Hill (1999) who describes a collocationally competent user of language as the one who chooses the most appropriate collocations that sum up what he/she wishes to express at best rather than producing longer clumsy utterances. The classification of collocations according to the degree of fixedness can be narrowed down to two main categories: strong collocations refer to a combination of two words in which the use of one word of the combination necessarily requires the presence of the other. Weak collocations, on the other hand, refer to the combination of words in which one of the constituent items can co-occur with a large number of other words. It can be said that this kind of collocations is an open combination where there is little fixedness in terms of the range of items that combine with a given word.

The luxury of using a second or foreign language in a native-like way is associated with the ability to operate on the Idiom Principle which can, in turn, be seen in the perception and, more importantly, production of strings of arbitrarily governed lexical chunks known as collocational patterns. Collocation is an important aspect of natural language processing and an essential prerequisite to produce native like language. The acquisition of collocational competence by EFL learners can secure their access to the world of English community as it can tremendously contribute to the communicative force of their writing. The prevalence of collocational patterns in native speakers’ use of language has underscored the centrality of teaching/learning this linguistic form to the achievement of native-like fluency. According to Pawley and Syder, 1983; Wray, 2002, failure to use this linguistic form signals one’s use of language as inaccurate and foreign sounding. This departure from the natural use of language is due to the violation of Idiom Principle. According to this idiomatic account of language

production, any text is in nature a compilation of prefabricated utterances and semi-preconstructed phrases that are stored in our mental lexicon and retrieved as single choices for later use (Wray, 2002). Evidence that supports the pervasiveness of formulaic sequences, namely collocations, in the written production of language abounds in the literature. For instance, according Erman and Warren (2000) more than 40% of native speaker writing is in nature formulaic .In addition, Glucksberg (1989) asserts that on average four collocations are produced in every minute of fluent language use. Thus, non-native speakers may be at a disadvantage of producing language in violation of the holistic nature (idiom principle) and instead in favor of the use of separate words and novel constructs. This tendency, which Sinclair (1991) refers to as “the open choice principle”.

Failure to use the Idiom Principle is usually attributed to the practices of unorthodox methods the likes of the Grammar Translation Method (GTM). Downplaying collocational accuracy and, instead, prioritizing syntactic accuracy has been a long-time common practice in many current EFL instructional programs in Algeria. Consequently, EFL learners output is very likely to be, though might be grammatically well-polished, replete with deviant forms of improper word combinations that obscure meaning. Despite the fact that ineffective decoding of messages may stem from poor knowledge of grammar, poor knowledge of collocations is likely to result in a total failure to make sense of conveyed messages. Deficiency in the use of collocations, mainly in writing, can result in undermined fluency as it can also adversely affect the linguistic felicities that EFL learners are expected to display in order to achieve the desired effect on their readers. To this end, the major concern of this doctoral research is to assess the extent to which the use of the Lexical Approach can help Algerian EFL intermediate learners improve their collocational accuracy and, as a result, operate on the Idiom Principle in their writing.

To carry out this study, we chose a sample of 62 first year university students at the Department of English in Chedli Benjdid University of El Tarf, Algeria. The Students’ age ranges between 18 and 37 years old. The vast majority of them are adolescent students of the age 18/19. Most of these participants are females (46), i.e. 74%. The rest are males (16), i.e. 26%. These subjects speak Arabic as their mother tongue and English as a foreign language. Since this experimental study is aimed at investigating the effect of the pedagogical intervention (the Lexical Approach -based instructional course) on our target population (first year EFL majors), a

sample of 62 students was selected for this experimental study. The overall number of students enrolled in the first year course at this department during the academic year 2016-2017 is 95. These students were put into three groups by that Department of English. For sampling purposes, only two groups were selected for the experiment. In other words, the participants were randomly assigned to two groups. An experimental group and a control group with 31 students in each. The former was taught collocations explicitly through the Observe Hypothesis Experiment (OHE) practices of the Lexical Approach, while the latter was taught with no focus on collocations. The instructional course that the experimental group received exclusively is comprised of 37 sessions that were covered in 19 weeks. Each week the experimental group receives two sessions. Every session was provided by the researcher himself in 90 minutes. The sessions were fully covered over a span of five months, i.e. starting from the mid of November 2016 till the end of April 2017. The experimental group exclusively received an extensive teaching of lexical collocation and were engaged in noticing, identifying and highlighting activities and then using collocations in writing -based tasks. The reason behind such classroom techniques is to develop the experimental group students' ability to recognise the lexical nature of language, notice the centrality of lexis in the creation of meaning and, in turn, hypothesise and then experience the communicative and generative power of lexical chunks (lexical collocations).

To gather the required data three tools were used: a questionnaire was administered to the participants before the start of the experiment in order to identify their pre-existing awareness and knowledge of collocations, pre and post-tests were given to measure the participants' receptive and productive knowledge of collocations and, finally, an interview was conducted to explore the skills that these EFL students acquired to process collocations. Information elicited using such tools respectively was processed using different analytical and statistical procedures. The findings of this study revealed that Algerian EFL intermediate learners have poor knowledge of collocations due to their unawareness of the arbitrary nature of collocational restrictions in English words. Limited exposure to collocations could only familiarize these learners with weak collocations which have literal meaning and mid-strength collocations which only have direct equivalents in Arabic. In other words, existing EFL instructional programs in Algeria encourage their learners to operate on the Open Choice Principle. However, in a number of ways, the present study has empirically proved that the use of the Lexical Approach correlates positively

with the growing tendency of Algerian EFL intermediate learners to operate on the Idiom Principle, especially in their writing. First of all, five months of using the instructional procedure of OHE proved to be fairly sufficient to raise EFL learners' awareness of the varying degrees of lexical arbitrariness which dictates collocational restrictions in the phraseology of language. As a result, learners become less dependent on Arabic to produce strongly collocated words in English. More importantly, it is also an effective technique that down playing grammatical mistakes and, instead, emphasizing collocational accuracy in the course of self-expression leads to a considerable use of strongly associated words in EFL intermediate learners' writing. An increase in collocational accuracy is a precondition for such learners to acquire a tendency to operate on the Idiom Principle. Therefore, it could be concluded that the Lexical Approach can provide a shortcut methodology for EFL learners and teachers alike to speeding up the process of language acquisition, more importantly the process of developing native-like writing proficiency.

It is evident that though this study into collocations is based on a small-scale corpus analysis and that our target population is intermediate EFL learners who can only produce limited compositions, the learners' production of language at different stages (pre and post-tests) can contribute to advance our understanding of the acquisition of native-like lexical choice. In the light of this, it is worth acknowledging that the effectiveness of using the Lexical Approach lies in the fact that its underlining methodology is of more exploratory nature than explanatory one since the lexical nature of language itself is arbitrary. Therefore, developing learners' sensitivity towards the arbitrary nature of word co-occurrence, through noticing, storing and recalling-based activities, proved to help EFL intermediate learners to positively transfer their skills of operating on the Idiom Principle in Arabic to those in English.

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Appendices

Appendix A Questionnaire

Dear students,

This questionnaire is part of doctoral research. It aims at exploring Algerian EFL intermediate learners' knowledge of collocations. The information you are going to provide will be treated anonymously and used for research purposes only. You are kindly requested to tick (√) the appropriate box or make full statement(s) where necessary.

Thank you in advance

Section One: Students' Profile

1-How old are you?

2-Are you male or female ?

3- Are you a new first year student or student retaking the same course? a) Yes b) No

Section Two: Background Information

4-How long have you been learning English?Years

5-Was English your choice number one in the list of options you selected for university enrolment? a)Yes b) No

6-In which stream did you study at high school?

a) Foreign languages Stream

b) Literary and philosophy Stream

c) Management Stream

d) Scientific and mathematic stream

e) Technical and mathematic steam

f) Other, please specify

Section Three: Students Attitudes' Towards Word Co-occurrence and Interest in Dictionary Use

7- In your opinion, what is the easiest strategy to memorise new words in English?

(Only one box)

- a) Making a list of separate words together with their synonyms
 - b) Making a list of combinations of words and their synonyms
 - c) Other, please specify
-

8- When two or more words are near synonyms, do you use them interchangeably? a) Yes
No .

9- Which dictionary do you usually like to use? (Only one box)

- a) English-French dictionary
- b) English-Arabic dictionary
- c) English-English dictionary
- d) Other, please specify.....

10- How often do you use that dictionary?

- a) Always
- b) Sometimes
- c) Rarely
- d) Never

11- Do you usually use the dictionary to learn:

- a) A separate word?
- b) A combination of two words that go together?

12- When you look up a particular word in the dictionary, do you generally:

- a) Read all the examples shown in the dictionary about that word?
- b) Read only the examples about one particular meaning of that word?

13- When you are reading dictionary examples about a particular word, do you notice which part of speech the preceding item is? a) Yes b) No

14 Which of the following parts of speech do you find most difficult to use? (Only one box)

- a) Adjectives

- b) Verbs
- c) Adverbs
- d) Nouns

Section Four: Students' Perception of Co-occurring Words

15- If you only know the meaning of one word in a combination of two words while reading or listening to something in English, do you generally: *(Only one box)*

- a) Try to check the meaning of the word you already know?
- b) Try to look for the meaning of the new word?
- c) Check the meaning of both words?
- d) Try to translate only the confusing word into Arabic?
- e) Try to translate both words into Arabic?
- f) Ignore and continue reading?

16- While reading or listening to something in English, do you usually recognise the combinations of words that always mean something different from what you know in Arabic?

- a) Yes b) No

17- When you learn a new word, do you look for the other words that usually combine with it?

- a) Yes b) No

Section Five: Students' Production of Co-occurring Words

18- When you are trying to write about a particular topic in English, do you try to think in Arabic as to generate new ideas quickly? 1-Yes 2-No If yes, is it because:

- a) You know how to appropriately combine words central to your ideas more easily in Arabic?
- b) You are not sure of how to appropriately combine such words together in English ?
- c) Other, please specify.....

19- When you are writing in English, do you often feel the need to rely on combining words in English the same way you do in Arabic?

- a) Yes b) No

20- Generally, what kind of mistakes do you make most when you try to express yourself in English?

- a) Grammatical b) Lexical

21-Generally, what makes it difficult for you to express yourself in English satisfactorily?

- a) You do not know enough words
- b) You know some words but you do not know how to put them together correctly

22- Do you think that your possible problem in combining words correctly in English lies in the fact that: *(only one box)*

- a) You combine them wrongly while you do not pay attention to that?
- b) You are aware of your wrong word combinations but you cannot correct them on your own?
- c) You do not feel troubled regarding your erroneous word combinations?
- d) Other, please specify.....

Section Six: Suggestions and Recommendations

23- Do you think that co-occurring words (collocations) in English should be taught as an independent and free-standing module at university? a)Yes b) No

24-If you would like to say anything (comments, suggestions ...etc.) relevant to the aim of this questionnaire, please write them here.....

**Appendix B
Collocational Knowledge Test**

Activity one:

Dear students, fill in the gaps by choosing the right word from the items provided between the brackets.

1. It is easier to remembernumbers such as 8, 22,100 and 600 (odd, strange , weird) .
2. In a plane crash there is always achance of survival (thin, slim, little).
3. The constant bombing in Syria causeddamage (big, huge, collateral).
4. Algeria tookactions to deal with the cholera breakout (rapid, swift, quick) .
5. The instructional program can help you your study skills (promote, advance, hone).
6. It is unwise toyour shoulders when you see an act of corruption (shake , raise, shrug).

7. The short story I readsome resemblance to a cartoon I watched in my childhood (holds, bears, implies).
8. The main role of the UN annual meeting is topolitical tensions in the world (lower, defuse, minimize).
9. As the old ship hit an iceberg in the middle of the sea, the young men hope (faded, finished , ended).
10. In the run up to the World Cup, every day our excitement (builds up, doubles, develops).
11. In North Africa the living standards have sharply..... (decreased, dropped, fallen).
12. Without the watchful eyes of police, driving in high ways would chaos (falls into, descend into, come into).
13. The old man slammed the car door with a.....of anger (flame, storm, burst).
14. She has dashed her last of hope as she turned down a the proposal of marriage in her fifties (flash, glimmer, ray).
15. The signed arm deal has created aof opportunity to increase the production of warheads (measure, window, wealth).
16. The president was given aof applause as he delivered his speech (shout, round, blast).
17. The governmentcondemned the terrorist attack (completely, vehemently, fully).
18. The perpetrators of the attack will beexecuted (immediately, summarily, quickly)
19. Once he was interrogated the suspectdenied his relation with the victim (flatly, categorically, quickly).
20. The new president promised to protect the country interests (honestly, sincerely solemnly).
21. Alcoholic drinks are..... forbidden in Saudi Arabia (strictly, strongly, totally).
22. We need to work hard and always feeloptimistic about our future (heavily , terribly , cautiously).
23. The guards were.....injured during the explosion (terribly, seriously, dangerously).
24. I amaware that everybody agrees with me (acutely, totally, entirely).

Activity two:

Correct the eight wrong words in the following text:

In the morning I made some work in the garden, then I spent a rest for about an hour before going out to have some shopping in the town. It was my sister's birthday and I wanted to do a special effort to cook a nice meal for her. I gave a look at a new Chines cookery book in the bookshop and decided to buy it. It has some totally easy recipes and I managed to do a good impression with my very first Chines meal. I think my sister utterly enjoyed her birthday.

(adopted from Mccarthy & O'dell,2005,p.09)

Activity three:

Put the following words in the right order to make sentences.

- 1.Criticism/the/responded/ of /to/disapprove/how/i/thoroughly /she/.
- 2.Him/condemn/lying/for/severely/judge/the.
- 3.Disapprove/my/behavior/of/want/I/express/to/her.
- 4.Outspoken/were/but/dismissed/critics/he/criticism/their.

(adopted from Mccarthy & O'dell,2005,p.125)

Appendix C
Writing Test

Imagine you were an eye-witness. You witnessed a street crime (robbery). A thief attacked and robbed a woman of her bag. You are going to help her by reporting that crime to a police station. First, start your report by narrating the story of how the crime happened in that street (how the thief came? Where was that woman walking? How did the thief attack her? ...etc.). Second, try to describe the thief in the pictures below to help police identify and capture him!



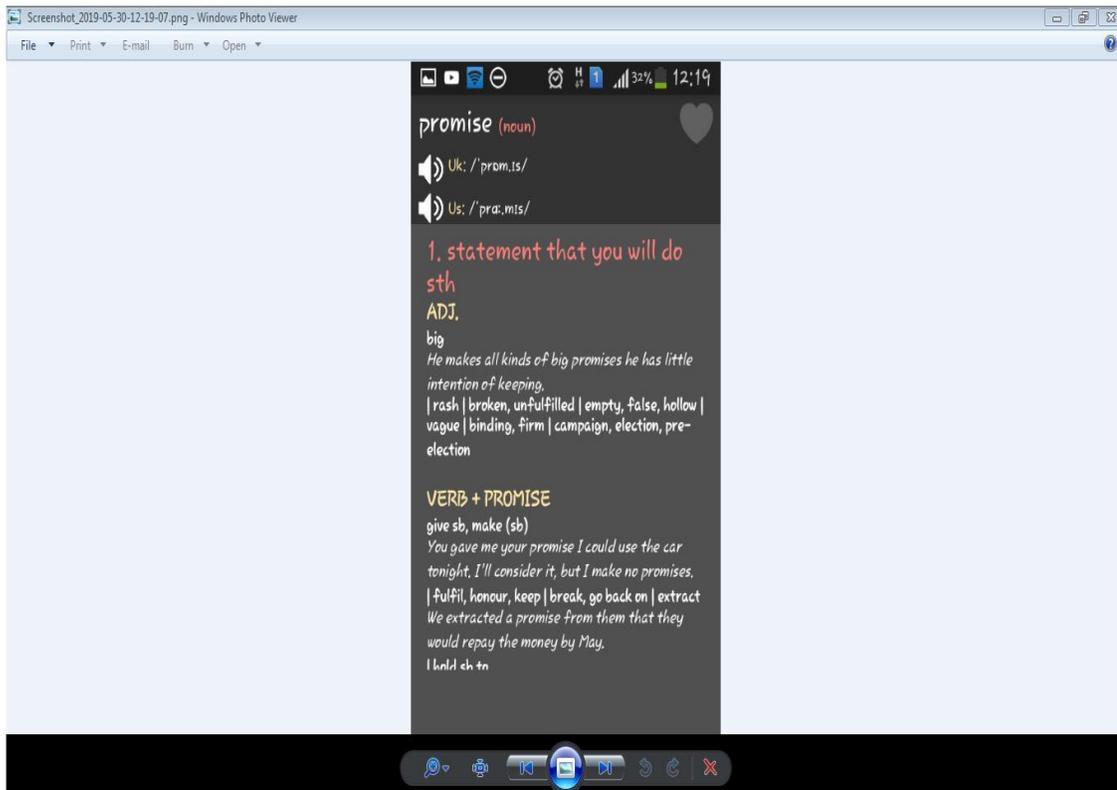
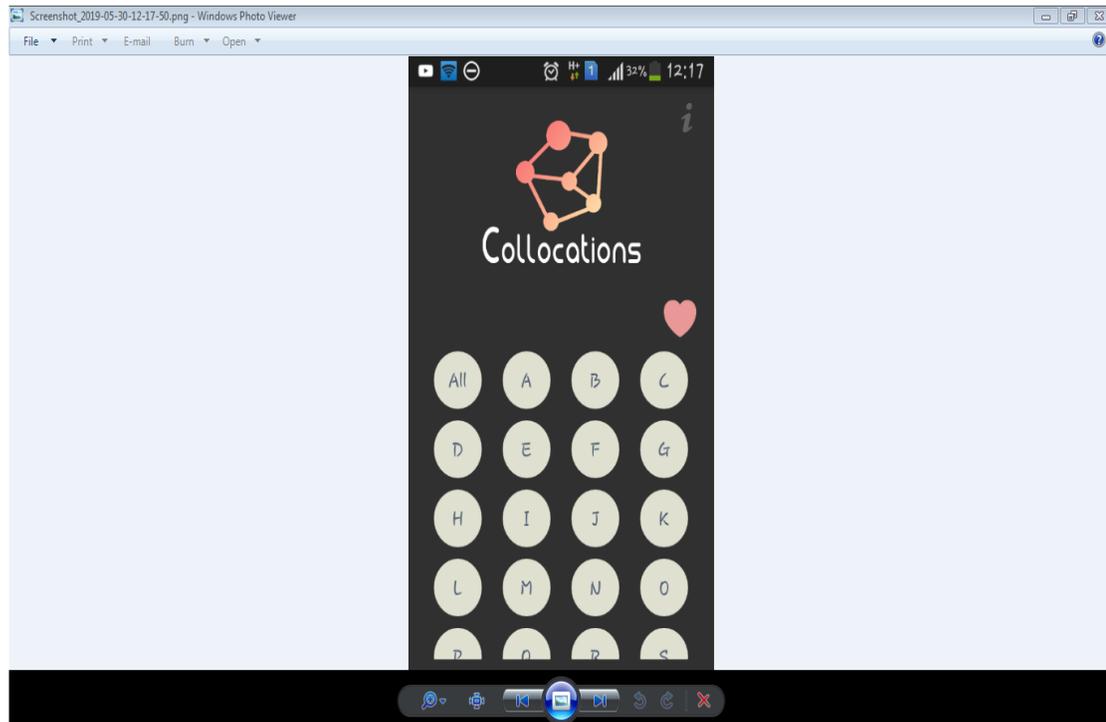
Appendix D

Concordancer and App/cellphone Collocations Dictionary

1- Concordancer (Just The Word screenshot)

| | | |
|--------------|---|---|
| A03 - 001048 | ui and released Im Su Kyong as to me Kim Hyun-hui | committed the more serious crime. |
| A3G - 00197 | on that he will be properly treated and if he has | committed a war crime he would be tried accordingly,' Lord Aldington replied. |
| A4K - 00437 | The offence of hacking with intent to | commit serious crime - including all serious forms of dishonesty, serious offences against the person and blackmail - you |
| A4K - 00577 | walking along a street, whether or not they have | committed a crime: 'The new PNC2 police national computer will be capable of storing digitised photographs to which detec |
| A50 - 00570 | PARENTS who fail to prevent their children | committing crimes are to face heavy financial penalties, under legal changes foreshadowed by Douglas Hurd, the Home Secre |
| A5A - 00144 | has been much more exact in specifying intent to | commit serious crime as a necessary ingredient for one of the two more serious offences it proposes. |
| A5A - 00181 | As a juror, would you find that a defendant had | committed a serious crime on such a basis? |
| A5Y - 001034 | from practical experience of people who typically | commit crime in Easton, but also from prejudices that derive from middleclass notions of respectability. |
| A7G - 000846 | on conditions despite the fact that they have not | committed any crime. |
| A7V - 00390 | They had | committed the 'counter-revolutionary crime' of celebrating the Dalai Lama's Nobel Peace Prize. |
| A96 - 000911 | cuted for the common law offence of incitement to | commit a crime. |
| ABF - 000767 | executing people who are mentally retarded or who | committed their crimes when they were juveniles, though the Supreme Court has refused to rule either unconstitutional. |
| ABP - 000588 | If he | committed the crime under an insane delusion, his liability depends on the question whether he would have been liable had |
| ABV - 001822 | If a son or daughter | commits a crime and is sentenced to imprisonment, the court will not allow an anxious father or mother to take their plac |
| ACJ - 000430 | me he caused V's death, and that what he did when | committing this crime was objectively dangerous. |
| ACJ - 000430 | me he caused V's death, and that what he did when | committing this crime was objectively dangerous. |
| ACJ - 000430 | me he caused V's death, and that what he did when | committing this crime was objectively dangerous. |
| ACJ - 000432 | First, D must have been | committing a crime. |
| ACJ - 000452 | rd requirement is that the defendant's conduct in | committing the crime must have been objectively dangerous. |
| ACJ - 000599 | alizes the possession of a firearm with intent to | commit a crime or to resist arrest: this is a more specific variation of section 16, catering for the defence that the fi |
| ACJ - 001114 | assault other than rape, buggery, and attempts to | commit those crimes. |
| ADP - 001012 | Goethe once said: 'I would be able to | commit all crimes in my life if I did not have the possibility to express them.' |
| AKP - 00097 | sells his goods to a 15-year-old who looks 20 has | committed a crime, unless he successfully employs the permitted defence that he sold the goods innocently. |
| AKY - 000895 | rmit undercover policemen to infiltrate gangs and | commit crimes as part of their duties. |
| AMC - 000960 | at getting married seems to be in the category of | committing a crime.' |
| ANK - 001154 | Had all four defendants | committed the brutal crimes, or had just two of the brother perpetrated these heinous events, later to be joined by Willi |
| ANK - 001371 | xplained that, to his knowledge, Joseph Shill had | committed no crime, and his tenants were entitled to their Privacy. |
| ARA - 00639 | The great majority of non-employees who | commit crimes against business will live in the immediate area. |
| ARJ - 001844 | But the lad | commits a crime, then the father covers up. |
| ARW - 001234 | If a child's parent is suspected of | committing a crime against them, how can they have a 'right' to be consulted about, let alone be involved in the investig |
| AS6 - 000732 | holding constant other variables, the same youths | commit more crimes while unemployed. |
| AT7 - 002751 | what was going to happen to her if Father should | commit a crime and she was left here on her own. |
| B17 - 000117 | Naturally enough, those who | commit crimes will tend to conceal their actions and protect themselves. |
| B17 - 000371 | n officers as having committed or being likely to | commit a crime. |
| B17 - 000718 | viduals; organisations cannot themselves plan and | commit crimes. |
| B17 - 000719 | Businessmen who | commit corporate crime are not forced to do so. |
| B17 - 000754 | They include businessmen who have never before | committed any substantial crime; people who make their living principally from fraud; and other professional criminals wh |
| B17 - 000819 | Women tend to | commit few crimes of violence, and those which do occur are mainly committed within the confines of the family. |
| B17 - 000828 | Furthermore, women who did | commit crime were seen as not feminine. |

2-App/cellphone collocations dictionary



Appendix E

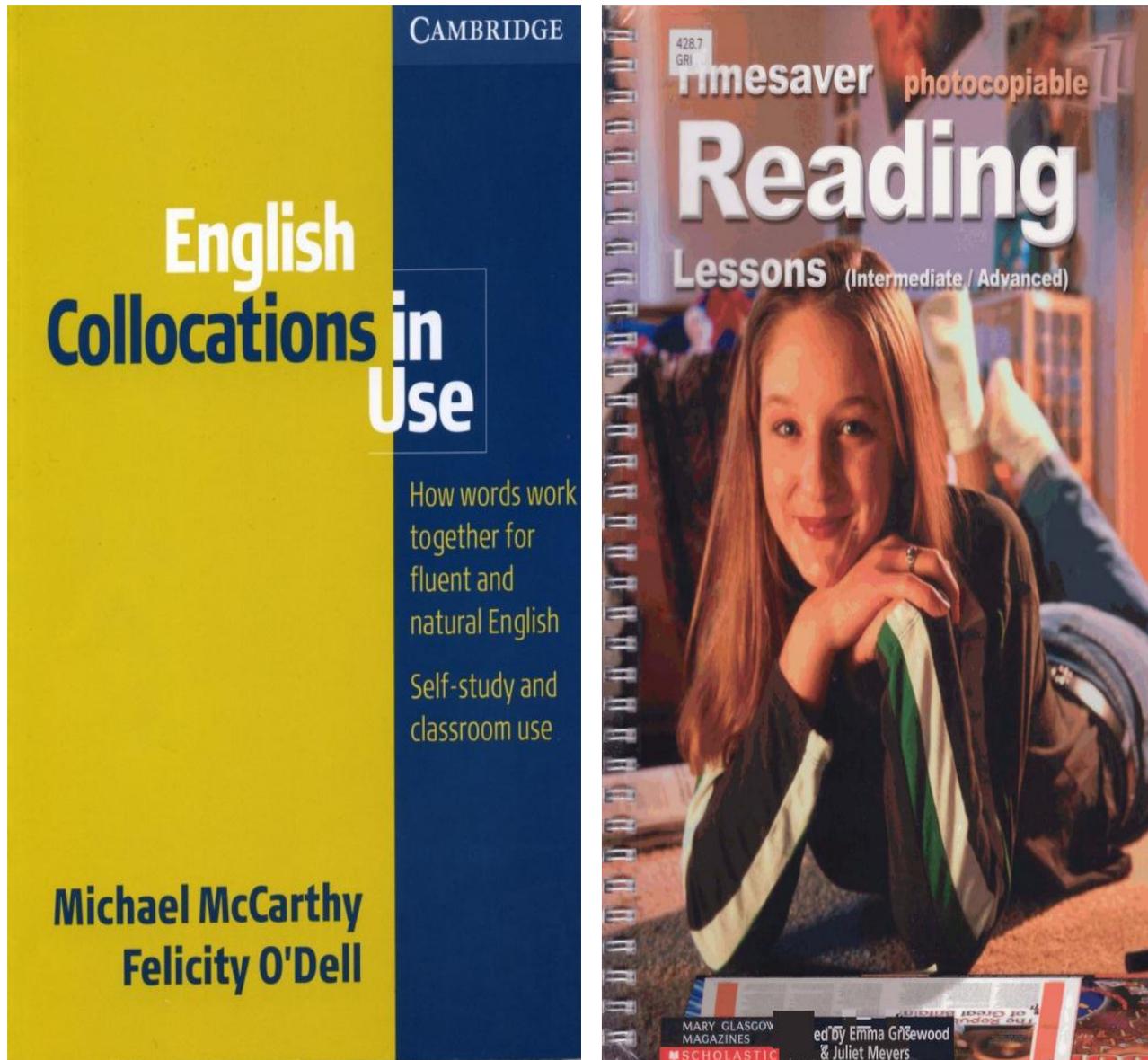
Teaching Material

1- Screenshot of concordance search results in the BNC

The screenshot shows the British National Corpus (BNC) website interface. The browser address bar displays 'https://www.english-corpora.org/bnc/'. The page header includes the BNC logo and navigation icons. Below the header, there are four tabs: SEARCH, FREQUENCY, CONTEXT (which is active), and OVERVIEW. The main content area shows search results for the word 'promise'. At the top of the results, there are links for 'FIND SAMPLE: 100 200 500 1000' and 'PAGE: << < 1 / 38 > >>'. A 'CLICK FOR MORE CONTEXT' button is visible, along with a search filter icon and a 'SHOW DUPLICATES' link. The results are presented in a table with 17 rows, each containing a row number, a sample ID, a context type, a part of speech, and the concordance text. The word 'promise' is highlighted in green in each row.

| Row | Sample ID | Context Type | Part of Speech | Concordance Text |
|-----|-----------|--------------|----------------|--|
| 1 | FUK | S_meeting | A B C | they're not gon na behave as er real gentlemen Roger. (pause) I can promise you. They're gon-- gon na be interested in that (SP:PS1UT) Oh n-- no. |
| 2 | G5G | S_meeting | A B C | to people that matter, yourselves, and I'll be guided. you never promise things that, you know, totally before you've seen the facts, but |
| 3 | G5G | S_meeting | A B C | inviting in erm companies er You know, transnationals, the lot, on the promise it's cheaper to get our workers to work for you, you don't |
| 4 | G5K | S_meeting | A B C | er another dissertation about verses one and two here. (reading) That is the glorious promise of what you shall be. verses one and two. (SP:G5KPSUNK) Mm. (SP:G5KPSUNK) |
| 5 | GY4 | S_meeting | A B C | 's house and, and advise them on their security. Which is a nice promise to make but when you've got so many thousand houses to get through it |
| 6 | HDD | S_meeting | A B C | , hope, and wonder. And for the Ascension Day we have leaving, promise , command, glory, peace, question, waiting, expectation. (pause) We |
| 7 | HDD | S_meeting | A B C | (pause) er section is about. Er we've got this thing called Command and Promise haven't we? (SP:PS1RN) Mhm. (SP:PS1RP) Right. (pause) (SP:PS1RN) Do you want |
| 8 | HDD | S_meeting | A B C | look at the er the scripture and now you should er fill that Command and Promise in. Erm it says (pause) er (reading) before Jesus ascended in to heaven, |
| 9 | HDD | S_meeting | A B C | all the commands I give you. (pause) Tara's also read the, the promise that comes in the last of that section. (reading) Jesus also made a great |
| 10 | HDD | S_meeting | A B C | that comes in the last of that section. (reading) Jesus also made a great promise , what was it? (pause) What was it Tara? (laugh) (SP:HDDPSUNK) (reading) And |
| 11 | HVE | S_meeting | A B C | one area that er, where there is an upturning in business activity and mo-- promise (unclear) have come into the U S A. So, you know, we expect |
| 12 | HYJ | S_meeting | A B C | 's gon na be alright (SP:HYJPSUNK) dropping off the end. (SP:HYJPSUNK) No. (SP:PS3C0) I promise you, I promise you that isn't (unclear) (SP:HYJPSUNK) (unclear) gr |
| 13 | HYJ | S_meeting | A B C | alright (SP:HYJPSUNK) dropping off the end. (SP:HYJPSUNK) No. (SP:PS3C0) I promise you, I promise you that isn't (unclear) (SP:HYJPSUNK) (unclear) grant available |
| 14 | HYJ | S_meeting | A B C | (unclear) (SP:HYJPSUNK) Yeah. Well, I'm looking at this, we didn't promise not about this, any more than the community there once (unclear) (SP:PS3C0) Well, |
| 15 | HYJ | S_meeting | A B C | no, don't pack your papers away (unclear) (SP:HYJPSUNK) (unclear) I, I did promise that I'd be away at eight o'clock. (SP:PS3C0) Right. (SP:PS3C4) (unclear) (SP:PS3C |
| 16 | HXX | S_meeting | A B C | All my staffing costs for Smallwood are in that budget, and therefore I can promise Chair, that it would be extremely well examined. May I just point out |
| 17 | J3P | S_meeting | A B C | to, to address those in the longer term. (SP:J3PPSUNK) You, you did promise me Mr Chairman, that I could just ask a quick question. (SP:PS3MM) Oh |

2-Reference books



Appendix F Learners' composition sample

Fy



It was a Sunday afternoon when it happened. Last Saturday afternoon. The weather was gloomy and it was raining cats and dogs as I was on my home from school. I forgot my umbrella, so I decided to head to the nearest store possible to buy one. The streets were strangely empty and you could easily hear cricket sounds coming from the lined benches in the park. It was dead quiet. Suddenly it became extremely foggy and I could barely see what was in front of me, so I walked steadily. All stores were closed, but there was this big neon lit sign, down the street, it was an electronics store, so I ran as fast as possible to it to cover up. It was my only shelter to hide in. I got all wet from the rain. I waited a few minutes underneath it for the rain to stop, but it never did. So I decided to take a look at what they were selling. The workers thought that I was window shopping so they invited me in. It was an upmarket shop, the prices were very high. I could never afford to buy anything from there.

no for

It was a sunny afternoon after a long day at work, I was on my way back home until I sensed that something horrible was strangely going to happen. So I payed it no mind and continued walking by the "saint claud" street in Annaba city while humming to the song "cops and robbers" that I would have never guessed that it will become my reality after a few seconds. As I was about to cross the road, a man came out of no-where and tried to take a woman's bag but she had a tight grip on it as if her life depended on it, so he took the knife out of his pocket and freed the bag from the lady's shoulder and ran away.

You would have thought that after the wealth of experience in my life I could have stopped him or something, but no... I was frozen in my place.

I felt useless when I saw the mess that the lady was in, the glimmer of hope in her eyes that it was some kind of a horribly boring prank done by the Algerian T.V channel.

Appendix G Answer Keys

1-Collocational knowledge test

Activity one:

1-odd. 2- thin. 3- collateral. 4- swift. 5- hone. 6- shrug. 7- bears. 8- defuse. 9- faded. 10- builds up. 11- fallen. 12- descend. 13- burst. 14- glimmer. 15- window. 16- round. 17- vehemently. 18- Summarily. 19- categorically. 20- solemnly. 21- strictly. 22- cautiously. 23- seriously. 24- acutely.

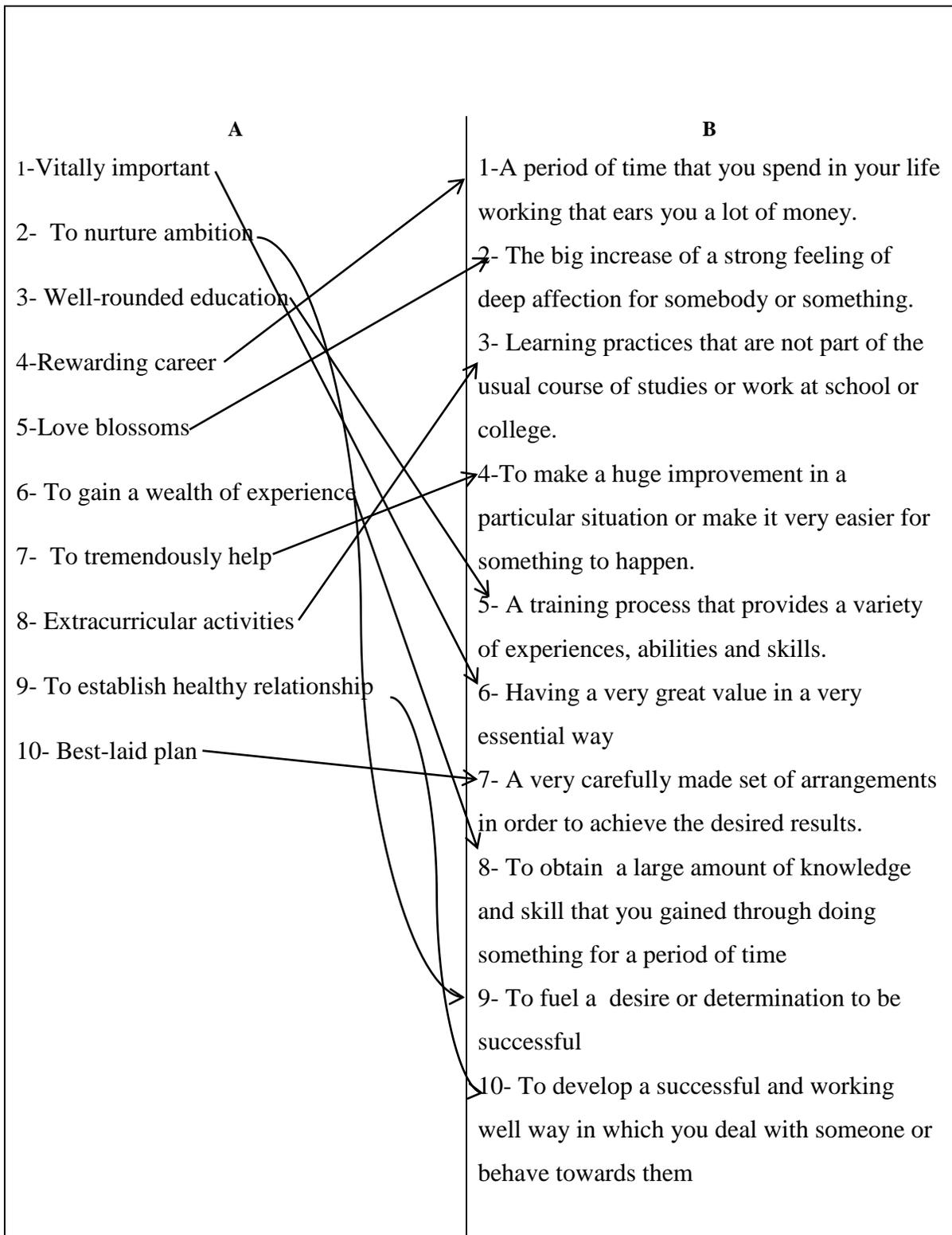
Activity two:

In the morning I ~~made~~ **did** some work in the garden, then I ~~spent~~ **had** a rest for about an hour before going out to ~~have~~ **do** some shopping in the town. It was my sister's birthday and I wanted to ~~do~~ **make** a special effort to cook a nice meal for her. I ~~gave~~ **took** a look at a new Chinese cookery book in the bookshop and decided to buy it. It has some ~~totally~~ **remarkably** easy recipes and I managed to ~~do~~ **make** a good impression with my very first Chinese meal. I think my sister ~~utterly~~ **thoroughly** enjoyed her birthday.

Activity three:

1. I thoroughly disapproved of how he responded to the criticisms.
2. The judge severely condemned him for lying.
3. I want to express my disapproval of her behavior.
4. The critics were outspoken but he dismissed their criticism.

2. Backward vocabulary exercise



3-filling in the gaps

*When war **broke out** my grandfather **joined** the army. War was **declared** on his 25th birthday. He didn't want to go to war but he had no choice. The government were sending*

troops to the south where they expected **fierce** fighting. At first there were just **minor incidents** but soon it developed into **all-out** war. My grandfather has told me how terrified he was the first time he came within **firing** range of the enemy. They saw him and **opened** fire but he was able to escape. A couple of his friends were killed or **held** prisoner. After several months our army **went** into action in the first **decisive** battle of the war. The battle **raged** for several days. My grandfather said he hated being involved in **fighting** the war and that the only armies we should have should be peace keeping forces. He can never forget the **horror** of war, and he believes that we must do everything we can to **avert** war in the future.

4-Rewriting of the sentences and the provision of collocations

1. The war between Adverbia and Collocania **broke out** in 1983 after a dispute over territory in the northern province. At first , there were **minor incidents** but it soon turned into **all-out war**. The war ended after a **decisive battle** in 1987.
2. There was a **fierce fighting** in the capital city yesterday. United Nations peace keeping forces are expected to enter the city as soon as a **ceasefire is called**.
3. Forces sent to **keep peace** in the **troubled region** of Phrasilia had to withdraw after they came within firing range of the rebel artillery.
4. The Sorank Republic today declared war against Hobrania.
5. Armed troops were sent to **restore order** after the riots and violence of last week.
6. Representatives of the two sides are meeting in Zurich in an attempt to **bring about peace** in the troubled region. It is hoped that they will **negotiate a peace agreement** which both governments accept.

5-Collocations identified in the news report

Make arrests, issued warrant, measure implemented, made a defiant speech, passed law, come into force, military deployed, carried out the attack, detonated explosives, deeply shaken, raise concerns, heavily criticised, severer restrictions, committed flagrant abuses .