

INDONESIAN EFL STUDENTS' PRODUCTION OF ENGLISH LEXICAL COLLOCATION IN WRITING

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ABSTRACT

Knowing a word is not only knowing its form and meaning. Hanks (1987) affirmed that words do not co-occur freely and randomly. Uncommon production of collocation may pose confusion to the listeners. Although a word can possibly be synonymous with one another; improper combinations of words can cause incongruity. The respondents of the study are students of the English Language and Culture Department (BBI) from semester 6 at Bunda Mulia University, as they all have accomplished their reading subjects and are expected to have a wide vocabulary at this level. This research is conducted to spot collocational errors, as well as to relate the errors to the influence of the L1 (mother tongue) in the production of the collocations in the students' writings. From 20 students' essays of which topic was "How do movies or televisions influence people's behavior", it is found that there are twenty two errors that were possibly resulted from six different causes.

Keywords: *Collocational errors, mother tongue*

ABSTRAK

Memahami suatu kata tidaklah hanya memahami bentuk dan arti kata saja. Hanks (1987) menegaskan bahwa kata-kata tidak terbentuk secara bebas dan acak. Produksi kolokasi yang tidak umum dapat menimbulkan kebingungan bagi pendengarnya. Meski suatu kata bisa identik satu sama lain; Kombinasi kata-kata yang tidak benar dapat menyebabkan ketidaksesuaian. Responden dari penelitian ini adalah siswa Jurusan Bahasa dan Budaya Inggris (BBI) dari semester 6 di Universitas Bunda Mulia, karena mereka semua telah menyelesaikan mata kuliah *reading* dan mereka diharapkan memiliki kosa kata yang luas pada tingkat ini. Penelitian ini dilakukan untuk mengetahui kesalahan kolokasional, serta untuk menghubungkan kesalahan dengan pengaruh L1 (bahasa ibu) dalam produksi kolokasi pada tulisan siswa. Dari 20 esai siswa yang topiknya adalah "Bagaimana film atau televisi mempengaruhi perilaku orang", ditemukan bahwa ada dua puluh dua kesalahan yang mungkin dihasilkan dari enam penyebab yang berbeda.

Kata Kunci: Kesalahan kolokasi, bahasa ibu

INTRODUCTION

Background

It is a fact that grammar and vocabulary are parts of languages. However, vocabulary plays a more important role than grammar in languages, since it is significantly used for communicative purposes. In other words, grammar may have its role to avoid confusion toward the intended meaning; however, vocabulary serves the most important part in language. As quoted in Farghal & Obiedat (1995), Wilkins states "Without grammar very little can be conveyed, without lexis nothing can be conveyed." To put it differently, grammar is of course of importance, for ungrammatical sentences or utterances may lead to misinterpretation. Nevertheless, without grammar, people can still communicate in

spite of their ungrammatical utterances, but communication does not take place if people only possess very limited vocabulary.

Knowing a word is not only knowing its form and meaning. Hanks (1987) affirmed that words occur together to make collocational patterns. In other words, they do not co-occur freely and randomly. Besides, collocations are of particular importance for learners, as not only do they enhance accuracy, but they also enhance fluency.

Statement of Problem

As previously mentioned, vocabulary plays a crucial role in languages as through words, one can understand what others need or desire. However, knowing its form and meaning may not be adequate. Uncommon production of collocation may pose confusion to the listeners. One word can possibly be

synonymous with one another, yet improper combination of words can cause incongruity. For that reason, the research is conducted to find answers to the problems the writer formulates:

- 1) What collocational errors did the students make in their writing?
- 2) How does the L1 play its role in the production of collocation?

Objectives of the Study

It is said that having knowledge of vocabulary is more important than that of grammar. Wilkin, as quoted in Farghal & Obiedat (1995), asserted that “without grammar, nothing can be conveyed; without vocabularies, nothing can be conveyed.” However, knowing a vast knowledge of vocabularies does not seem to be adequate, for it is essential to look at not only the words, but also natural language.

There are some scholarly researches on students’ English collocation. However, the medium used to measure students’ capacity of English collocation was a lexical distribution test, in which the tests already provided the words that were expected to be measured.

This research, on the contrary, is expected to find out students’ collocational errors, specifically “verb + noun” type in the students’ writing. The students were only given a topic, and they were free to write down anything that came into their mind.

Significance of the Study

The research is expected to show students’ collocational competence of 6th semester of the English Language and Culture Department at Bunda Mulia University. It is of importance to find out their level of lexical competence, since the more collocational competence they have reached, the more natural and accurate the language will be.

Moreover, the writer wishes this research can be used for future reference to Indonesian collocation dictionary, as well as corpus, since there is only KBBI (Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia), but no corpus (collection of writers’ written and spoken material).

Scope and Limitation of the Study

As cited in Veronica (2009), Benson, Benson, and Ilson suggested there are 7 types of lexical collocations. However, the

researcher solely focuses on one type, specifically “verb + noun”, since such type is one of the most used in speech and writing, and the time to conduct research was limited. Moreover, the medium utilized is a composition since he believes that a composition would be the best instrument to measure one’s knowledge of lexical collocation.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Previous Research

Veronica (2009) conducted an experiment on the knowledge and production of English lexical collocations by Indonesian teachers of English. The study displayed that the teachers were quite adept at identifying collocations, but quite poor at producing them. Besides, the cause for their non-native-like collocations was due to the influence of their mother tongue, particularly Bahasa Indonesia.

Another similar research on the lecturers’ collocational competence was conducted the following year by Nugroho (2014). The main objective of this research was to discover the lecturer’s competence to identify and produce collocations of both “verb + noun” types and “adjective + noun” types. The study revealed that even the English lecturers had a hard time identifying and producing lexical collocations. They claimed that they were quite familiar with the collocations, and yet the results showed they were not fully proficient in its identification and production. Even so, of the two components measured, the lecturers somewhat did better in the identification section than in the production one. Moreover, the lecturers appeared to have more problems with the “adjective + noun” type of collocation than the “verb + noun” type. They also said that they more frequently produced “verb + noun” collocations than “adjective + noun” ones.

Collocation

Having knowledge of a word is not only knowing its form and meaning. Words occur together to make collocational patterns, or they do not co-occur freely and randomly (Hanks, 1987). Conzett (2001) also affirmed that collocation is “two or more words that tend to occur together (collocate). Based on

these definitions, we can draw a conclusion that collocation is combination of words which do not co-occur freely and randomly.

Hill, Lewis, and Lewis (2000) also added that collocation is somehow vital as to some extent; the choice of words that can be combined in language is predictable. In other words, that substituting one word with another as long as it is grammatically correct is not enough, and the combination in which one word and another co-occur is already somewhat fixed.

That a word has similar sense to other words does not mean that it can serve in a place of another in all occasions. For instance, the words *hear* and *listen*, although similar in meaning in the sense that both verbs mean to listen to someone or something, we cannot just substitute one word with another. The combinations of words in *listen to music* and *hear music* have different sense; *Listen to music* means that one really gives attention to someone or something in order to hear music, while *hear music* signifies one becomes conscious of music. Hence, it can be concluded that the combination of words are already somewhat predictable and fixed, and it is these fixed combinations that distinguish one word with another, even though they are synonymous in meaning.

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

Benson, Benson, and Ilson (1997) further described grammatical collocation as a recurrent combination of a dominant word followed by a grammatical word, typically a preposition (abide by, admiration for, adjacent to, etc.). Sinclair, Jones, and Daley (2003) further pointed out lexical items are words that belong to open classes (noun, verbs, adjectives). Lexical collocations combine two equal lexical components (open class words), but grammatical collocations incorporate a lexical word (noun, verb or adjective) and a grammatical word, resulting in the combination of one open class word and one closed class word.

Classification of Lexical Collocations

There are many classifications of collocations proposed by several experts. However, the classification of collocations as suggested by Benson, Benson, and Ilson (1986, as cited in Veronica, 2009) is applied. They classified collocations into seven types which can be seen from the table below.

Table 1. Types of Lexical Collocations

No.	Types of Lexical Collocation	Examples
1.	verb (creation-activation) + noun (pronoun, prepositional phrase)	reach a verdict; fly a kite
2.	verb (eradication-nullification) + noun	break a code; demolish a house
3.	adjective + noun	reckless abandon; sweeping generalization
4.	noun + verb (action characteristic of a person or a thing)	Bees buzz; Bombs explode
5.	noun + of + noun (groups / units of things)	a bouquet of flowers; an act of violence
6.	adverb + adjective	strictly accurate; deeply absorbed
7.	verb + adverb	appreciate sincerely; argue heatedly

RESEARCH METHOD

Respondents of the Study

The respondents of the study are students of the English Language and Culture Department (BBI) from semester 6 at Bunda Mulia University, as they all have accomplished their reading subjects and are expected to have a wide vocabulary at this level. In addition, as they have already taken the Semantics and Pragmatics subject, in which the topic of collocation is discussed, they should be knowledgeable about the nature of this research.

Data Collection Procedures

In the previous studies, the writer notices that the medium used to find out the respondents' competence in English Lexical collocations was adapted lexical collocation tests. This means that the tests were controlled. Moreover, in such tests, there are parts with different purposes which mainly focus on the recognition, and the production of collocations.

On the other hand, the data for this research is collected by means of a free composition. The writer believes that a free composition is the right instrument to measure language competence as the respondents are not given the contexts, but they have to apply their knowledge of English lexical collocations.

In order to collect the data, the writer gave the students a general topic taken from TOEFL test, namely "*How do movies or televisions influence people's behavior?*" and then had the respondents write an essay. The essay is around 250 words and the students were given about 45 minutes to write it.

Data Analysis Procedures

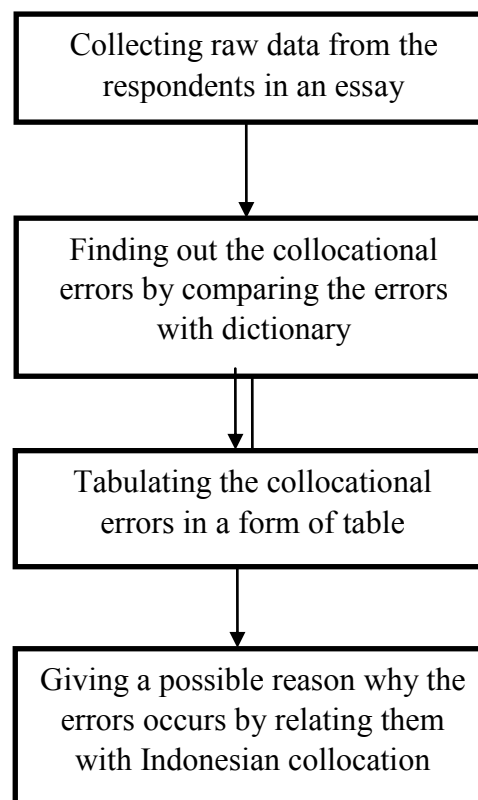
After the respondents were done with the essay, the writer collected the raw data. He then made an attempt to find out the collocational errors, more specifically errors of "verb + noun" type in the writing, and then tabulate them.

To spot the collocational errors, the writer compared the raw data with Oxford Collocations Dictionary as well as Cambridge Advance Learner's Dictionary (third edition).

After the writer had collected the collocational errors in the form a table, he tried to find out how L1 played its role in the production of the collocation.

The diagram below summarizes the data analysis procedure of the study.

Figure 1. Data Analysis Procedures



FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

The writer collected data from 20 students' work, of which topic was "*How do movies or televisions influence people's behavior?*". He found out there are twenty two (22) data of collocational errors in their writing.

Table 2. Collocational Errors in the Students' Writing

No.	Errors	Oxford
1	Burn boredom	relieve boredom
2	carry out a change	make a change
3	reach desire	fulfill desire
4	bring impact	have impact
5	use clothes	Wear clothes
6	provide programs	create programs
7	imitate / copy behaviour	mimic behaviour
8	know news	hear news
9	waste childhood	lose childhood
10	do sacrifices	make sacrifices

11	involve communication	establish communication
12	see channels	watch channels
13	see movie	watch movie
14	bother privacy	disturb / violate privacy
15	judge decision	question decision
16	Leave the culture	change the culture
17	include violence	involve violence
18	know the effect	observe the effect
19	see the truth	know the truth
20	use time	spend time
21	influence habit	change habit
22	give impact	make impact

Analysis

There are two objectives that the writer tries to meet: (1) to find out collocational errors in the students' writing, and (2) to find out how the L1 plays its role in the production of collocation.

To help him determine the collocational errors in the students' writing, the writer made use of the Oxford Collocations Dictionary. He used the dictionary to find out if the collocations, more specifically errors of "verb + noun" type, are mistaken.

Furthermore, to find out how the L1 plays its role in the production of collocation, the writer has three Indonesian speakers to lend him a helping hand to give possible reason(s) why the collocational errors take place, since there is no Indonesian collocations dictionary available on the market, nor there is online.

There are twenty-two collocational errors found in the students' writing, namely:

➤ Burn boredom

(1) *Movie or television has the main role to burn the boredom

In one of the students' writing, collocation of *burn boredom* was found. In fact, such collocation does not even exist in Indonesian collocation. In English collocation, the noun *boredom* collocates with *relieve*. Despite its correct collocation, native speakers of English never use it, but rather use *kill time* to show an activity done to keep

one busy while waiting for something else to happen.

Kebosanan has a collocation of *mengatasi* in Indonesian. However, the student ended up having *membakar kebosanan*. The probable cause might be that both *mengatasi* and *membakar* are equivalent in meaning according to the student, which is to get rid of something.

➤ Carry out a change

(2) *The movie or television can carry out a change in people's life.

The verb *carry out* is synonymous with *do*; however, it is not synonymous with *make*. These two verbs frequently cause confusion. Both Indonesian collocations *melakukan perubahan* and *membuat perubahan* are acceptable. However, the acceptable English collocation is *make a change*.

➤ Reach desire

(3) *They speculate to reach their desire...

When talking about desire, Indonesian people would regard it as a goal that they want to achieve. In fact, both collocations *reach desire* and *fulfill desire* are synonymous in meaning, that is *memenuhi ambisi*. Nevertheless, speaking of collocations, a synonymous word cannot just take place one another. In other words, *fulfill their desire* is acceptable in English, though *reach desire* is the same in meaning.

➤ Bring impact

(4) *Some movies also bring impact, and have influenced people's behavior.

Bring impact (*membawa dampak*) is regular expression in Indonesian to show a powerful effect something following has. The noun *impact*, however, co-occurs with *have* in English collocation.

➤ Use clothes

(5) *Teenager use clothes which are inappropriate.

Use is one difficult verb which often leads to confusion to Indonesian learners of English, as they assume that *wear* and *use* are interchangeable when it comes to

clothes. Apparently, *use clothes* (*menggunakan pakaian*) is more common to Indonesian speakers, yet the acceptable collocation is *wear clothes* (*memakai pakaian*).

- Provide programs
 - (6) *Providing a good quality program is people's responsibility.

In Indonesian expression, it is common to say *provide programs* (*menyelenggarakan program*) in a television, while in English, the acceptable expression is *create programs*.

- Imitate behavior
 - (7) *Children tend to imitate other human being's behavior and other things.
 - (8) *Young people like to copy behavior, style from the actor or actress in the movie.

Since the topic given was all about the influence of movies or televisions over people's behavior, this collocation is one of the most to have occurred in the writing. It appears that the noun *behavior* co-occurs frequently with *imitate* as well as *copy* in Indonesian collocation, which is not a collocation in English. Despite the fact that *imitate*, *copy* and *mimic* have the same sense; the correct verb to go with *behavior* is *mimic*. In other words, having the same sense or similar meaning does not manifest the acceptable use of the collocation

- Know news
 - (9) *People use television as a media to know the news

In Indonesian collocations, either *know news* (*mengetahui berita*) or *hear news* (*mendengar berita*) is acceptable. Nonetheless, *hear the news* is the correct English collocation.

- Waste childhood
 - (10) *Children will waste their childhood by watching TV instead of playing outside with their friend.

The English collocation, *lose childhood* (*kehilangan masa kecil*) would sound unnatural to Indonesian speakers. To them, *waste childhood* (*menghabiskan*

masa kecil) makes more sense, since *waste* has something to do with wrong use of time, energy, etc.

- Do sacrifice
 - (11) *... I become a person who ... do sacrifice for other people around me.

It appears that the student still failed to grasp the difference between *do* and *make*. Indonesian people always say *do sacrifice* (*melakukan pengorbanan*) or even *sacrifice* (*berkorban*) and never say *make sacrifice* (*membuat pengorbanan*). In English collocation, however, *do sacrifice* never takes places among native speakers of English.

- Involve communication
 - (12) *Media is very important to human nowadays as everything involves communication, from one to another.

In the sentence above, there is no such a thing as *involve communication* (*melibatkan komunikasi*) in the English collocation, but rather *establish communication* (*membangun komunikasi*). However, *involve communication* is acceptable.

- See channels
 - (13) *Nowadays, I see American channels more than Indonesian channels.

The verbs *see* seems to be one of the ambiguous words to Indonesian speakers. However, they actually have slightly different meaning; *see* is to have a look at something at a glance, and *watch* is to look or observe attentively. Despite the fact that they are different, the students still cannot perceive those words. Apparently, Indonesian people tend to use *see channel* (*melihat saluran*), and not *watch channel* (*menonton saluran*). The correct collocation, however, is supposed to be *watch channels*.

- See movie
 - (14) *When we see horror movies, we tend to be afraid to

The expression *see movie* actually does not even exist in Indonesian. Indonesian people always use *watch movie*

(*menonton film*), but not *see movie* (*melihat film*). In the end, the student failed to recognize the difference between *watch* and *see*.

➤ Bother privacy

(15) *..., and people cannot bother privacy.

The English collocation *bother privacy* (*mengganggu privasi*) is supposed to be *disturb privacy*, or *violate privacy*. *Bother* and *disturb* are actually similar in meaning. However, *bother privacy* is not acceptable.

➤ Judge decision

(16) *I also learn not to judge other's decision, because it is his right to make a decision.

Indonesian people generally say *judge decision* (*menghakimi keputusan*) when the decision one makes is not in accordance with another person expects. Nevertheless, the acceptable English collocation is *question decision* (*mempertanyakan keputusan*).

➤ Leave culture

(17) *There are certain people who leave their culture about having religion...

In English collocation, *change culture* (*merubah gaya hidup*) is acceptable. However, Indonesian collocations can possibly be both *leave culture* (*meninggalkan gaya hidup*) and *change culture*. To Indonesian people, those collocations have the same purpose, which is to have different culture.

➤ Include violence

(18) *Movies and television can influence people's behavior, specially television which includes violence.

In Indonesian collocation, it is possible to say *include violence* (*memasukkan adegan kekerasan*). Similarly, *involve violence* is also acceptable, which is the acceptable expression in English collocation.

➤ Know the effect

(19) *The children tend to imitate a character that they like, without knowing the effect.

It is obvious the collocation *know the effect* (*mengetahui efek*) is one of the most collocations to occur in the Indonesian expression. Indonesian people never say *observe the effect* (*mengamati efek*), but they also say *see the effect* (*melihat efek*), which does not sound natural as well to native speaker of English.

➤ See the truth

(20) *It is such an irony to see the truth that the purpose of television is to make life become easier and more comfortable.

In fact, Indonesian people do not say *see the truth* (*melihat kebenaran*). However, as an Indonesian speaker, the writer understands the possible explanation for this phenomenon. The student might have thought that *truth* is something that is supposed to be obvious or visible to his/her eyes. However, the acceptable collocation in English is *know the truth*.

➤ Use time

(21) *They will only use their time to watch movie or television ...

The expression *use time* (*menggunakan waktu*) is actually acceptable to Indonesian people. Nevertheless, it does not sound right to English speakers. To them, *time* is something that people *spend*, and not *use*. Thus, *spend time* is the correct one.

➤ Influence habit

(22) *Televisions and movies can influence people's habit and behavior.

The Indonesian collocation *influence habit* (*mempengaruhi kebiasaan*) is allowed, especially in this context provided by the Indonesian student. In fact, the expression *change habit* still sounds natural to Indonesian speakers, but applicable to different context (e.g. *you have to change your bad habit*). However, in English collocation, the acceptable one is *change habit*, even in the context above.

- Give impact
(23) *Televisions and movies give negative or positive impact.
The collocation *give impact* (*memberikan dampak*) is another expression that Indonesian people always use. In other words, they never say *make impact* (*membuat dampak*), which native speakers of English actually say.

*news, *involve communication vs establish communication, *leave the culture vs change the culture, *include violence vs involve violence, *use time vs spend time, *influence habit vs change habit).*

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

Summary

As the writer's focus is to find the English collocational errors from the Indonesian collocations perspective, the writer found that not all the collocational errors in the students' writing come from literal translation from Indonesian collocations.

The writer found that the English collocational errors the students might have been resulted from:

- (1) Literal translation from Indonesian collocations (e.g. **bring impact vs have impact, *waste childhood vs lose childhood, *do sacrifice vs make sacrifice, *judge decision vs question decision, *know the effect vs observe the effect, *give impact vs make impact.*).
- (2) The inability of the students to distinguish the difference between intentional and non-intentional verbs (e.g. **see movies vs watch movies, *see channels vs watch channels*).
- (3) The incompetence of the students to recognize the dissimilarity of the verbs (e.g. **carry out/do a change vs make a change, *use clothes vs wear clothes, *see the truth vs *know the truth*).
- (4) The unawareness of the words having similar sense, which results in the production of meaningful yet unacceptable collocations (e.g. **reach desire vs fulfill desire, *copy/imitate behavior vs mimic behavior, *bother privacy vs disturb/violate privacy*).
- (5) The desire to have fancy words in the production of the English collocation, which creates non-existent English and Indonesian collocations (e.g. **burn boredom s relieve boredom*).
- (6) The plausible combinations of having more than one acceptable Indonesian collocations, but unacceptable in English collocations (e.g. **provide programs vs create programs, *know news vs hear*

Conclusion

From the summary discussed in the previous chapter, the writer concludes that the English collocational errors were due to six aspects. The possible reasons might be:

- (1) The students literally translate Indonesian collocations to English collocations, since both English and Indonesian collocations are completely different (e.g. **judge decision vs question decision*).
- (2) The students were unaware that intentional and non-intentional verbs may be similar in meaning, but different in function (e.g. **see movies vs watch movies*).
- (3) The students just used the common verbs that they think similar in meaning, and inappropriately combined the words (e.g. **use clothes vs wear clothes*).
- (4) The students did not realize that even though the words may have the same sense, they cannot just combine the words to make collocations (e.g. **copy/imitate behavior vs mimic behavior*).
- (5) The student might have wanted to use fancy words in the writing, which in the end results in the production of a completely unacceptable collocation (e.g. **burn boredom s relieve boredom*).
- (6) The students just had any combinations that are acceptable in Indonesian but not in English (e.g. **use time vs spend time*). In this example, both *use* and *spend time* are acceptable in Indonesian collocation.

Suggestions

Based on the findings in the previous chapter, it is found that the still produced a lot of unacceptable collocations. They still have difficulty producing proper collocations. This due to the fact that they have no idea about the proper collocation, as well as the L1 also plays its role in the production of the English collocations.

From the research conducted, it would be suggested that students be given a lot exercises on the English collocations, so that they will be aware of the proper ones. Secondly, let students watch movies and listen to the conversation and the language used in the film, and then have them answer the questions related to the movie.

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