

**A STUDY OF UNIVERSITY STUDENTS' ABILITY IN USING
ENGLISH COLLOCATIONS**

A MASTER'S PROJECT

BY

ANGKANA MONGKOLCHAI

**PRESENTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE MASTER OF ARTS DEGREE IN ENGLISH
AT SRINAKHARINWIROT UNIVERSITY**

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AN ABSTRACT

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The objectives of this research were to study the ability of third year English majors at Srinakharinwirot University about English collocations. A collocation test comprising 56 items, based on seven patterns of Lewis (2000) strategy, was used as a research tool. The results revealed that the informants' ability was fair (52.32%). The findings showed that the informants' ability in the noun + noun pattern collocation was at the highest level (68.64%), followed by the adjective + noun pattern (67.32%), the verb + noun pattern (55.26%), the adjective + preposition pattern (51.10%), the phrasal verb pattern (46.05%), the verb + adverb pattern (41.67%), the adverb + adjective pattern (36.18%), and the adverb + adjective collocation pattern respectively. An analysis of the informants' collocational violations was conducted and plausible explanations for the violations were attempted. It was found that the sources of the violations were, for example, the informants' limited knowledge of collocations (Nation, 1992; Howarth, 1998), the informants' application of the strategy of transferring L1 to L2 collocations (Farghal and Obiedat, 1995), the engrossing effect of the source text patterning (Baker, 1992), the informants' application of the strategy of synonymy (Farghal and Obiedat, 1995) and the informants' limited knowledge of cultural-specific collocations (Baker, 1992).

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บทคัดย่อ

โดย

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เสนอต่อบัณฑิตวิทยาลัย มหาวิทยาลัยศรีนครินทรวิโรฒ เพื่อเป็นส่วนหนึ่งของการศึกษา
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การศึกษากครั้งนี้มีจุดมุ่งหมายเพื่อศึกษาความสามารถของนิสิตชั้นปีที่ 3 วิชาเอกภาษาอังกฤษ
มหาวิทยาลัยศรีนครินทรวิโรฒ ในการใช้คำปรากฏร่วม และวิเคราะห์ข้อผิดพลาดที่นิสิตเลือกใช้คำ
ปรากฏร่วมพร้อมคำอธิบาย ผลการศึกษาพบว่านิสิตมีความสามารถในการใช้คำปรากฏร่วม อยู่ในระดับ
ปานกลาง (52.32%) ผู้เรียนมีความสามารถด้านคำปรากฏร่วมประเภท คำนาม + คำนาม มากที่สุด
(68.64%) รองลงไปได้แก่ประเภท คำคุณศัพท์ + คำนาม (67.32%) คำกริยา + คำนาม (55.26%)
คำคุณศัพท์ + คำบุพบท (51.10%) คำกริยาลี (46.05%) คำกริยา + คำกริยาวิเศษณ์ (41.67%) และ
คำกริยาวิเศษณ์ + คำคุณศัพท์ (36.18%) ตามลำดับ ผู้วิจัยวิเคราะห์ข้อผิดพลาดในการใช้คำปรากฏร่วม
ของผู้เรียนและพบว่า ข้อผิดพลาดในการใช้คำปรากฏร่วมของผู้เรียนอาจเกิดจากการความรู้ที่มีจำกัด
ของผู้เรียน (Nation, 1992; Howarth, 1998) การถ่ายทอดความหมายของคำปรากฏร่วมจากภาษาที่
หนึ่งไปยังภาษาที่สอง (Farghal and Obiedat, 1995) อิทธิพลจากภาษาแม่ (Baker, 1992) การ
เลือกใช้คำปรากฏร่วมที่มีความหมายคล้ายคลึงกัน (Farghal and Obiedat, 1995) และการที่ผู้เรียนมี
ความรู้เรื่อง คำปรากฏร่วมที่เกี่ยวข้องกับวัฒนธรรมเฉพาะน้อย (Baker, 1992)

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The Master's Project Committee and Oral Defense Committee have approved this Master's Project as partial fulfillment of the requirements of the Master of Arts degree in English of Srinakharinwirot University.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The importance of vocabulary acquisition has always been recognized although, at times, vocabulary is treated separately from grammar and skills (Deveci, 2004). Vocabulary should be at the centre of language teaching because “a language consists of grammaticalised lexis, not lexicalized grammar” (Lewis, 1993). It is accepted that choosing words carefully in certain situations is more important than choosing grammatical structure (Hammer, 1991). We cannot effectively communicate if we do not have good vocabulary knowledge (Hanks, 1987).

Collocations have proven to be an important part of L2 vocabulary development. Nonetheless, vocabulary teaching is traditionally limited to the learning of definitions of a single word and the usage (Mallilamas and Pongpaibroj, 2005). Learners’ knowledge of collocations develops in parallel with their knowledge of vocabulary (Bahns and Eldaw, 1993). For example, the word “*understanding*”, which means knowledge about subject, situation, etc. can occur with many words such as *gain understanding, enhance understanding, full understanding, good understanding, profound understanding*, etc. A large amount of collocational knowledge is included in one’s knowledge of a language and that a native speaker’s knowledge includes an awareness of collocational patterns in the language. In other words, collocational knowledge is crucial for language acquisition (Hanks, 1987).

Collocation is the occurrence of words which occur together more often than being expected. Collocations are *common* combinations of words that native speakers use instinctively (Lewis, 2000). English collocations have specific characteristics;

therefore, they cause serious problems both for EFL/ESL learners and translators.

Dzierzanowska (cited in Martynska, 1988), states that collocations should be focused in classroom teaching and teachers should earnestly raise awareness of collocations among students.

Hill (2000) asserts that when teaching collocation, EFL/ESL teachers should make students aware of collocations, and encourage them to store collocations in their memory. They should help learners notice collocations. Hill also says that writing and speaking skills give learners an opportunity to practice collocations. Doing so will help learners acquire the language more quickly.

Collocation is one of the most difficult problems for Thai students. Not many people are aware of the existence of collocation. Instead, they give more importance to grammar and the grammar-translation approach has played a key role in the teaching of English in Thailand for decades. Mother-tongue interference is a big problem in communications for Thais. It is now time to turn to the lexical approach. Lewis (1993) coined the term of the lexical approach and he posits his ideas that vocabulary should be the most important aspect in teaching English. The lexical approach focuses on the idea that “an important part of language acquisition is the ability to produce lexical phrases as chunks and that these chunks become the raw data by which learners perceive patterns of language traditionally thought of as grammar” (Lewis, 1993, p.1).

EFL/ESL university students should have some knowledge of collocations since they started learning the English language when they were in primary school. Collocations may have been acquired automatically because they have probably met a number of simple chunks of such as *to take a bath* and “*to do an exercise*” or more

difficult ones such as *to go for good* or *to pass away*. It is, therefore, interesting to study about the fourth year English majors' ability in using collocations. It is also an indirect way to encourage students to realize the existence of English collocations. If the students want to master the language or to be native-speaker like, they should be competent in using collocations. Otherwise, they will surely be foreign (James, 1998).

The researcher was interested in investigating the level of collocational ability of the third year English majors at Srinakharinwirot University and in finding out if they had problems about collocations.

The Purposes of the Study

The purposes of this study were as follows:

1. To study the ability of the third year English majors at Srinakharinwirot University about English collocations.
2. To study the patterns of collocation used by the students.
3. To attempt plausible explanations for the students' violations about English collocations.

Significance of the Study

The results of the study included the following:

1. The fourth year English major students' ability about English collocations.
2. The patterns of collocational violations that the informants committed.
3. Plausible explanations for the students' violations about English collocations.

The Scope of the Study

The scope of the study was as follows:

1. The informants of the study consisted of 57 third year English majors in the 2007 academic year at the Faculty of Humanities, Srinakharinwirot University (SWU), in Bangkok.

2. The study focused only on seven patterns of collocation based on Lewis (2000)'s strategy.

- | | |
|----------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. adjective + noun | e.g. a difficult decision |
| 2. verb + noun | e.g. submit a report |
| 3. noun + noun | e.g. a radio station |
| 4. verb + adverb | e.g. apologize humbly |
| 5. adverb + adjective | e.g. sound asleep |
| 6. adjective + preposition | e.g. (to be) fond of |
| 7. phrasal verb | e.g. turn off |

3. The informants' collocational violations were analyzed and plausible explanations for the errors were attempted, with reference to major learning strategies, not being specific to any particular linguist.

4. Violations on articles, spellings, punctuations, or other grammatical points were not counted in this study.

Definition of Terms

1. **A collocation** is the way in which words co-occur in a natural text in statistically significant ways (Lewis, 2000). The co-occurrences of words and phrases are frequent and they sound correct to the native speakers such as *bitter chocolate*.

2. **A collocate** is another word or words which often occurs with a particular word. For example, *bitter chocolate* and *chocolate bar*, *bitter* and *bar* are collocates.

3. **A node** refers to a particular word or phrase. The node is generally introduced with other words to the left or to the right or what are called collocates (Sinclair, 1991) such as in *bitter chocolate* or *chocolate bar*, *chocolate* is a node.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE

This chapter focuses on four main parts: definition of collocation, characteristics and classifications of collocations, teaching of collocations and the related research.

1. Definitions of Collocation

Most linguists offer a similar view on the concept of collocation, all containing a focus on the co-occurrence of words. The term *collocation* has its origin from the Latin verb *collocare* which means *to set in order/to arrange* (Martynska, 2004). Firth (1957) defines collocation *as an abstraction at the syntagmatic level*. For example, one of the meanings of *night* is its collocability with *dark*, and of *dark*, of course, collocates *night*. Sinclair (1991) defines collocation as a regular combination between items, in such a way that they co-occur more often than their respective frequencies.

Celce (cited by Martynska, 2004) defines collocations as a co-occurrence of lexical items in combination, which can differ in frequency or acceptability. Items which collocate frequently with each other are called *habitual*, e.g. *tell a story*, whereas those which cannot co-occur are called *unacceptable*, e.g. *powerful tea* instead of *strong tea*.

Baker (1992) defines collocations as a tendency of certain words to co-occur regularly in a given language. Likewise, Lewis (1994) defines collocation as a subcategory of multi-word items, made up of individual words which usually co-

occur. Also, Hill (2000) explains that a collocation is predictable combinations of the content words e.g. *foot the bill* and *weather forecast*, etc.

Woolard (2000) defines collocation as “the co-occurrence of words which are statistically much more likely to appear together than random chance suggests”

(p.29). Also, Nation (2001) identifies that the term *collocation* is used to refer to a group of words that come together, either because they commonly occur together like *take a chance*, or because the meaning of the group is not obvious from the meaning of the parts, as with *by the way* or *to take someone in* (p.317).

According to *Oxford Collocations Dictionary* (2002), collocation is a means of combining words in a language to produce natural-sounding speech and writing. Incorrect combinations such as *heavy wind* or *strong rain* do not sound natural in English.

Lastly, Benson and Ilson (cited in Wei, 1999) state that

Collocations are arbitrary and non-predictable. Non-native speakers cannot cope with them; they must have a guide. They have no way of knowing that one says in English *make an estimate*, (but not *make an estimation*), *commit treason* (but not *commit treachery*). In English one says *commit fraud* and *perpetrate fraud*. However, only the collocation *commit suicide* is possible; one does not say *perpetrate suicide*. One says *bake a cake*, but *make pancakes* (not *bake pancakes*) (p.258)

To sum up, collocation shares the same concept. Collocation is a co-occurrence of words or words that usually keep company with one another.

2. Characteristics and Classification of Collocations

2.1 Characteristics of Collocations

Boonyasquan (2005, p.11-13) summarized the characteristics of collocation as follows:

1. Collocations are frequent co-occurrences of items between which no word can be added. For example, in *knife and fork*, it is very unusual to add a word to this collocation like, *knife, spoon and fork*.

2. Collocations consist of components that cannot be replaced by a synonym or word of similar meaning. For example:

John makes a cake; but not
John makes a pancake.

3. Collocations are binomials that cannot be reversed. The order of the parts of a collocation is more or less fixed, for example, *bread and butter*, not *butter and bread*.

4. Some collocations are predictable; for example, if a person hears a collocation *apply...* and *shrug...* s/he automatically expects that *for* and *shoulder* will follow respectively.

Beekman and Callow (cited in Baker, 1992) indicate that the two main factors influencing the collocation range of an item are as follows:

1. A level of specificity: this means “the more general a word is, the broader its collocational range; the more specific it is and the more restricted its collocational range” (p.50). For example, the verb *bury* is likely to have much broader collocational range than any of its hyponyms, such as *inter* or *entomb*. Only

people can be *interred*, but you can *bury people, a treasure, your head, face, feeling and memories* (p.50).

2. The number of senses an item has: this means most words have several senses and they tend to attract a different set of collocates for each sense (Baker, 1992). For example, in its sense of *manage*, the verb *run* collocates with words like *company, institution, and business*. Meanwhile, its sense of *operate or provide*, it collocates with words like *service* and *course* (Baker, 1992, p.50).

To recap, collocations usually have specific characteristics. Their frequent co-occurrences are observed and their collocates can not be changed.

2.2 Classifications of Collocations

Linguists classify collocations into similar ways. Mahmoud (2005) points out that there are two types of collocation: open and restricted collocations.

1. Open collocations refer to nodes that can cluster with a wide range of other words e.g. *a red car, a small car, an expensive car*, etc.

2. Restricted collocations refer to clusters that are fixed or like idioms e.g. *kick the bucket, rain cats and dogs*, etc.

Likewise, Huang (2001) focuses only on lexical collocations and adopts Howarth's (1998) categorization as follows:

1. Free combinations: this category of collocation refers to a combination of words of which meaning is from the literal meaning of each element, for example, *blow a trumpet* and *blow a whistle*.

2. Restricted collocations: this category is used in a more specific context and the number of collocates is few, for example *blow a fuse*.

3. Figurative idioms: this category refers to a metaphorical meaning as a whole that can somehow be derived from its literal interpretation e.g. *blow your own trumpet*.

4. Pure idioms: this category has a unitary meaning that is totally unpredictable from the meaning of its components e.g. *blow the gaff*, meaning to reveal a secret.

Similarly, Hill (2000) categorizes collocations as follows:

1. Unique collocations: These refer to collocations which are fixed and cannot be replaced by any other words, such as *to foot the bill*, *to foot the invoice*, or *to foot the coffee* is obviously wrong.

2. Strong collocations: These collocations are strong or very strong but not unique. Usually, strong collocations have few other possible collocates. For example, *moved to tears* or *reduced to tears*.

3. Weak collocations: This kind of collocation consists of a number of word co-occurrences and can be easily guessed, such as *a white shirt*, *a red shirt*, *a green shirt*, *a long shirt*, *a small shirt*, etc.

4. Medium- strength collocations: These collocations are of the same meaning as suggested by Lewis (2000). They can sometimes be weak collocations such as *to hold a conversation* and *to make a mistake*. Normally learners already know each individual word such as *to hold* and *a conversation* but they are able to use as a single item or as a collocation.

Meanwhile, Lewis (2000) classifies collocations as follows:

1. Strong collocations: these refer to collocations that have a very limited number of collocates. Most collocates are fixed, for example, *rancid butter* or *rancid oil*.
2. Weak collocations: these refer to collocations that have a wide variety of collocates; for example, many things can be *long or short*, *cheap or expensive*, *good or bad*.
3. Medium-strength collocations: these are words that always go together more frequently than weak collocations. Some examples are *hold a meeting*, *carry out a study*, etc.

In addition, Benson, and Ilson (1986) divide collocations into two major categories: grammatical and lexical collocations. Grammatical collocations consist of content words: a noun, an adjective or a verb plus a preposition or *infinitive*. Meanwhile, lexical collocations consist of neither prepositions nor infinitives. They comprise only content words.

Examples:

Grammatical collocations

<u>Pattern</u>	<u>Examples</u>
noun + preposition	blockade against
adjective + preposition	pleased with
preposition + noun	by accident

Lexical collocations

<u>Pattern</u>	<u>Examples</u>
noun + noun	traffic accident
verb + adverb	smile broadly
verb + noun	do homework

Lastly, Sinclair (1991) divides collocation into two categories as follows:

1. The upward collocations: this category consists of words which habitually collocate with other words more frequently used in English than they are themselves and most of them are prepositions, adverbs, conjunctions and pronouns. For example, the word “*back*” normally combines with *at, down, from, into, on*, etc. “*back*” is used with another word, more than standing alone.

2. The downward collocations are words which combine with other words less frequently than standing by themselves and give a semantic analysis of a word. For instance, *arrive* and *bring* are less frequently combined with other words than *back*.

In conclusion, these are various ways of classifying collocations. However, the frequent classifications found are firstly lexical and grammatical collocations and secondly, unique, strong and weak collocations.

3. Teaching of Collocations

This topic focuses on three parts: how to teach collocations, encouraging students to be aware of collocations and learners’ problems about collocations.

3.1 How to Teach Collocations

Wei (1999) makes some interesting points about how to teach collocations as follows:

1. Collocations are of enormous number. It has been roughly estimated that there are tens of thousands of collocations. For example, in *Collins COBUILD English words in use*, more than 100,000 collocations are given. Also, there are more than 70,000 collocations listed under about 14,000 entries in the *BBI Combinatory Dictionary of English* (Bahns, 1998). Obviously, collocations are too numerous and there is no need for learners to learn all of those collocations. Focus needs to be placed on building students' consciousness of how words work in combination with one another, so that they can continue developing their collocational competence after they leave the ESL class. Clear and explicit introduction is needed provide guidance in building learners' awareness.

Kenneddy (cited in Wei, 1999) captures the teacher's feeling about teaching collocations in the following statement:

“Just as the teacher of botany does not take students into the jungle and expect them to learn about all the plants by simply being exposed to them, so the language curriculum designer and classroom teacher can facilitate learning by systematic presentation of role of important language items and their linguistic ecology the company words keep” (p.227).

2. In teaching collocations to advanced ESL students, the teacher should use the frequency guide to select some words that are common for students. After selecting the words, it might also be necessary to select the meanings. For example, the word *manage*, with the meaning of *succeed in* has higher occurrences than the meaning of *be in charge of*. The two meaning have their own distinct collocations:

the former most frequently occurs in the structure *manage to do something*, such as *manage to finish the project in time*. The latter usually collocates with a noun that refers to a business such as *a shop, a company, a restaurant*, etc.

3. Choose techniques, activities, and exercises that can be used effectively in teaching collocation. There are many useful ways in teaching collocations. The most useful ones are interactive and introducing challenge to learners. Some of the activities and techniques that teacher has found effective are as follows:

3.1 Peer correction is a student-centered procedure that provides instant feedback and reinforcement. It allows itself to the learning of collocations since students are responsible for exercises or quizzes and have many chances to reinforce what they have learned.

3.2 The teacher asks students to make sentences and have students write in a notebook for the sentences they make. In writing sentences, students start by trying the steps as follows:

3.2.1 Asks learners to read the collocations and examples of the words that the teacher selects.

3.2.2. Make one sentence with each word without looking at the example.

3.2.3. Write down their sentences on the board so that the teachers and other learners may comment on them.

The mentioned activities are designed to raise students' awareness of collocation and the principles. The learners will benefit in their on-going process of vocabulary learning.

Also, Hill (2000) asserts that when teaching collocation, teachers should pay attention to pronunciation, intonation, stress and grammar. He lists topics to be considered when teaching collocations as follows:

1. Make learners aware of collocation. Learners need to know that learning collocations is necessary for learning English, and noticing collocations is an important stage in learning.

2. Teacher should introduce collocations as individual words. At higher levels, when learners learn less common vocabulary items, they need to be made aware that some words are used in a very strict number of collocations. Learners also need to know how to use new vocabulary items, which makes it necessary to know about their collocational field and contexts in which they are used.

3. Learners need to have an organized vocabulary notebook to record and store collocations. Learners can organize their notebook in different ways: grammatically, by common key words, by topics, etc. Learners can also record certain collocations under headings such as *have*, *take*, *do* or *make*.

When teachers teach collocations, they cannot ignore reading and listening skills which help learners notice collocations. Writing and speaking skills give them the chance to practice collocations, too.

Likewise, Boonyasaquan (2005) proposed some suggestions on collocation teaching as follows:

1. Learners should have confidence that collocations are useful in their communication. Generally, it is natural for EFL/ESL learners to aim for being able to communicate like a native speaker.

2. Encourage learners to notice and be regularly aware of collocations when they learn English. Ying and Hendricks (2004) suggested four steps in teaching collocations. First, make students understand what collocations are. Second, raise collocation awareness by introducing materials for target collocations. Third, teach students the step of noticing and noting collocations, followed by the step of incorporating the learnt collocations in tasks. Lastly, examine and give feedback on students' work.

3. Select what collocations to teach. Do not confuse learners with independent collocations or idioms that are too difficult.

4. Encourage learners to guess the meaning of an unknown word from the context and suggest them to look up difficult words and pay attention to the examples provided in a dictionary.

5. Repeat and recycle the collocations in class to help students register in their memory.

6. Have students' work corrected by their friends.

7. Work in group, for exchanging knowledge and asking others to explain the unknown words.

8. Encourage learners to reinforce learnt collocations by having a variety of activities.

9. Advanced learners should work with language corpuses accessible on the Internet.

Therefore, teachers should introduce a new word together with its frequent co-occurrence/s or its collocates/s when teaching new vocabulary.

3.2 Encouraging Students to be aware of Collocation

Collocational knowledge is crucial for language acquisition. “A central element of language teaching is raising students’ awareness of, and developing their ability to chunk language successfully” (Lewis, 1993: Vi).

It is necessary to make students aware of collocations. EFL/ESL learners have a problem of mother-tongue interference on top of many other problems in learning English as a foreign/second language. Therefore, teachers should know how to introduce collocations in their class. Conzett (cited in Boonyasquan, 2005) has suggested the following methods for doing this:

1. If learners’ ability is not very limited, teach them the definition of collocations.
2. If the ESL textbook does not give the importance of collocation, teachers should adapt the text by adding ideas and exercises about collocations in their classroom activities.
3. Teach collocation in a meaningful context.
4. Ask questions to reinforce the collocations learned and have them repeated to register them in learners’ memories.
5. Teachers should choose vocabulary textbooks because learners can notice that there are a variety of lexical items related to one idea.
6. Teacher should encourage their learners to notice collocations when reading and have learners make a list of lexical words and their collocates.
7. In writing class, teachers may introduce some related collocations to the topic and ask learners to use them in their writing.
8. The teachers should suggest learners to recheck their writing for

accuracy and encourage them to use a collocation dictionary.

Also, Deveci (2004) suggests that activities are the way to raise students' awareness of collocations. His suggestions include the following:

1. Ask learners to underline chunks in a text. It is helpful to give them different kinds of chunks to look for because more complex chunks would confuse them.

2. Small extracts from the concordances published can be used to explore the possible environments of a word. However, ready-made concordances would be more suitable for higher levels because they do not include enough contexts for lower level learners to understand the meaning without help.

3. Learners can be given a set of incomplete phrases taken from the text after they have read a text.

4. After noticing collocations in a text, learners find pairs of collocations arranged randomly.

5. Encourage learners to look for certain collocations in a dictionary in order to draw learners' attention to collocations.

6. Give learners phrases in their native language and equivalent phrases in English, and ask learners to match the phrases. This activity will help learners see that collocational ideas are not always formed in the same way in English.

In brief, there are many interesting, methods of teaching collocation. It is teachers' responsibility to choose what methods are appropriate for their students. The major objective is to raise the learners' awareness of the importance of collocation.

3.3 Learners' Problems about Collocation

Deveci (2004) pointed out related problems of collocations such as the following:

1. Learners may have intralingual problems. For example, instead of *doing homework*, they might incorrectly use *making homework*.
2. Learners may make negative transfer from their mother tongue language. For example, some Thai learners tend to say *close the light* instead of *turn off the light*.
3. Learners may look for general rules for collocations that do not work for all collocations. For example, they might overgeneralize rules of collocations, for example, the use of prepositions in phrasal verbs. They could think that *put off your coat* is the opposite of *put on your coat*.
4. When learners learn words through definitions, their chances of using appropriate collocations or remembering the words decrease.
5. Learners may fail to make sense of an idiom. To illustrate, some English idioms such as *raining cats and dogs* does not make sense to Thai learners of English because this idiom does not exist in their culture.
6. When students read texts, they may not recognize collocations as meaningful phrases, which would inhibit their understanding of the text.

To recap, ESL/EFL learners do have problems in producing correct collocations due to several sources. The best solution is to teach and train the students seriously in all language classes.

4. Related Research

4.1 Overseas Research

Wei (1999) studied the way in which words are combined with one another. He described in his study the major types of collocation, typical collocational errors made by ESL students in their learning process, and the teaching applications.

Meanwhile, Huang (2001) investigated Taiwanese EFL students' knowledge of English collocations and the collocational errors they made. The results indicated that free combinations created the least amount of difficulty, whereas pure idioms were the most challenging. They performed about equally well on restricted collocations and figurative idioms. It was concluded that EFL learners' errors in collocations could be attributed to negative L1 transfer.

Nesselhauf (2003) studied the use of collocations by advanced learners of English and some implications for teaching. This study reported an exploratory study that analysed the use of verb-noun collocations by advanced German-speaking learners of English in free written production. The implications of these results for teaching were discussed, most importantly the role of L1-L2 differences.

Sun and Wang (2003) investigated concordancers in the EFL classroom: cognitive approaches and collocation difficulty. The study investigated the relative effectiveness of inductive and deductive approaches to learning collocations by using a concordance. The results showed that the inductive group made more significantly. The inductive group was better than the deductive group in the performance of collocation learning. It was also found that easy collocations seemed more suitable in the concordance learning setting.

Also, Martynska (2004) investigated the level of collocational competence among intermediate learners of the English language. The study revealed the degree learners knew about English collocations and their different linguistic attitudes toward the phenomenon of collocation and its categorization.

Deveci (2004) studied the importance of collocation and how to teach collocations. This study showed activities used to raise students' awareness of collocations and activities to practice collocations.

Lastly, Yang and Hendricks (2004) studied collocation awareness in the writing process. This study focused on the importance of lexical collocations for second/foreign language learning. This was a classroom-based study that investigated one way-dubbed CAR (Collocation Awareness Raising). The results suggested that the process did raise learners' collocation awareness throughout via the writing process.

4.2 Related Research in Thailand

Mallikamas and Pongpaibroj (2005) investigated Thai learners' receptive and productive knowledge of English collocations. This study analyzed the problem of three types of collocations: lexical, grammatical and bound. The data were collected from multiple choice, error recognition and gap-filling tasks. The results revealed a variety of problems in Thai learners' collocational knowledge.

Grammatical collocations were a problem for learners in both tasks. Lexical and bound collocations caused more problems in reception than production. Moreover, the researchers suggested the lexical approach to help develop Thai learners' collocational knowledge.

Boonyasquan (2005) studied collocational violations in translation of a business article. The results of the study revealed that the informants' ability in translating a business text from Thai into English, with effective use of collocations, was at a low level. Both lexical and grammatical collocations were problematic for the informants. The data showed that the informants were not aware of collocations when translating a Thai text into English. The major sources of the violations were learners' mother tongue interference and deficiency of collocational knowledge.

Toomnun (2007) studied about use of collocations by a professional translator. The data were from a tourism article in *Kinnaree*, a magazine published by Thai International Plc. The results of the study revealed that the translator used the adjective + noun collocations at the highest level (44.64%) and the adverb + adjective collocations were used at the lowest level (1.79%). Also, it was found in her study that the weak collocations occurred at the highest rate (46.67%), followed by the medium-strength (38.68%) whereas the strong collocations occurred at a much less frequent rate (14.66%) and unique collocations were not found in this study.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

This study aimed at investigating the ability in using English collocations of the third year English majors at Srinakharinwirot University. This chapter gives information about research informants, research instrument, data collection, data analysis and statistics.

1. Informants

The informants of this study were 57 third year English majors in 2007 academic year at the Faculty of Humanities, Srinakharinwirot University, Bangkok.

2. Research Instrument

2.1 The research instrument used to investigate the informants' ability of English collocations was a test of two parts: the first was in a sentence completion form and the second was in a multiple choice form. Seven patterns of collocation on the basis of Lewis (2000)'s strategy used in this study were as follows:

- | | | |
|----------------------------|------|----------------------|
| 1. adjective + noun | e.g. | a difficult decision |
| 2. verb + noun | e.g. | submit a report |
| 3. noun + noun | e.g. | a radio station |
| 4. verb + adverb | e.g. | apologize humbly |
| 5. adverb + adjective | e.g. | sound asleep |
| 6. adjective + preposition | e.g. | fond of |
| 7. phrasal verb | e.g. | turn off |

2.2 The test was approved by three specialists who are English lecturers. One of these is an English native speaker.

2.3 The researcher tried out the test with 23 third year students, minoring in English of Srinakharinwirot University, Bangkok, in the 2007 academic year. A tried-out test, comprising 70 items, ten items for each pattern was conducted. The test scores were calculated using Kuder Richardson to analyze the test score and item difficulty. Only 56 item were selected, eight items for each of the seven patterns.

2.4 The 56 item test was used as a research tool and it was conducted with 57 third-year English majors.

3. Data Collection

3.1 The informants took the test in the first semester of the 2007 academic year.

3.2 The time allowed for the test was an hour.

3.3 The informants' answers were marked and the information gained was analyzed.

4. Data Analysis and Statistics

4.1 The data were analyzed and calculated in terms of percentage, applying the following formula:

$$\frac{S \times 100}{N}$$

N

S = Score of the correct answer

N = Total number of the test

4.2 The collocational violations were accumulated and categorized.

4.3 Major strategies used in the plausible explanations for the informants' violations about English collocations were for example,

4.3.1 The informants lack of limited knowledge of collocations (Nation, 1992; Howarth, 1998)

4.3.2 The informants' application of the strategy of transferring L1 to L2 collocation (Farghal and Obiedat, 1995; James, 1998; and Huang, 2001)

4.3.3 The engrossing effect of the source text patterning (Baker, 1992)

4.3.4 The informants' application of the strategy of synonymy (Farghal and Obiedat, 1995)

4.3.5 The informants' limited knowledge of cultural-specific collocations (Baker, 1992)

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

In this chapter, the findings of the study are shown in two main parts. First, the students' ability in English collocations is revealed. Second, collocational violations found are presented and classified into seven kinds of collocation (Lewis, 2000): adjective + noun, verb + noun, noun + noun, verb + adverb, adverb + adjective, adjective + preposition and phrasal verb. Lastly, plausible explanations for the students' violations about English collocations are attempted.

1. The Informants' Ability in English Collocations

To gain data about the informants' ability in English collocation, a test of collocation was applied based on the seven patterns of Lewis (2000). Three specialists, two native-speakers and one Thai lecturer approved the test before the test was tried-out. The tried-out test, comprising 70 items, ten items for each pattern was conducted with third year English minors. The test scores were calculated using Kuder Richardson 20 (KR20) to analyze the test score and item difficulty. The statistical reliability was at 0.325 and the mean item difficulty was at 0.718. The gained statistical data were applied in choosing the good items to be used for the study. The items that were not selected were those with the statistical reliability low than 0.325 (KR20). The total number of the items that were deleted was 14. The test was adjusted, under the supervision of the project advisor, before it was administered to the sampled group. Only 56 items were used, eight items for each of the seven patterns.

Basic statistics, mean and standard deviation, were used to find out the students' ability about collocations. The results showing the ability of the informants are presented in the table below.

Table 1: The mean, percentage and standard deviation of the test scores

Total No. of Students	Total Score	Mean	Percentage	Standard Deviation
57	56	29.30	52.32	4.21

Table 1 shows that the students' ability about collocations was fair with the mean of 29.30 while the total score was 56. The standard deviation, however, was at 4.21 indicating that the whole group's collocation ability was close to each other. It was possible that the test was quite difficult for the informants.

Table 2: Classification of the informants' collocational ability

Classification of Collocation	Average Score	
	Raw Score	Percentage
1. noun + noun	5.49	68.64
2. adjective + noun	5.39	67.32
3. verb + noun	4.42	55.26
4. adjective + preposition	4.09	51.10
5. phrasal verb	3.68	46.05
6. verb + adverb	3.33	41.67
7. adverb + adjective	2.89	36.18

The findings revealed the informants' ability in noun + noun collocation was at the highest level (68.64%), followed by adjective + noun (67.32%), verb + noun (55.26%), adjective + preposition (51.10%), phrasal verb (46.05%), verb + adverb (41.67%), and adverb + adjective (36.18%) and adverb + adjective collocation respectively.

2. Analysis of Collocational Violations and Plausible Explanations for the Informants' Violations about English Collocation

As indicated, the results revealed that the students' ability was fair. Plausible explanations for the students' collocational violations are attempted.

2.1 Noun + Noun Collocational Violations

Examples of noun + noun collocational violations are shown in Table 3. The causes of violations were examined and plausible explanations for the violations are given below the table.

Table 3: Examples of noun + noun collocational violations

No. of the test item	The correct answer	The students' answers
5	I stopped to buy a magazine at a <i>newspaper kiosk</i> .	<i>newspaper booth</i>
8	Many families in USA on a low income are dependent on <i>state support</i> . They get financial assistance from the government monthly	<i>privacy support</i>
35	A routine <i>police patrol</i> spotted signs of a break-in at that bank.	<i>guard patrol</i>
36	The government usually has a <i>firework display</i> on the fifth of December.	<i>firework exhibit/ fair</i>

From the above table, the noun + noun collocational violations were found at the highest frequency (68.64%). It is plausible to say that the violations were due to the following sources.

2.1.1 The Informants' Application of the Strategy of Synonymy (Farghal and Obiedat, 1995) and the Limited Knowledge of Restricted Collocation (Howarth, 1998)

Example:

The correct answer (henceforth CA): I stopped to buy a magazine at a *newspaper kiosk*.

The student's answer (henceforth SA): I stopped to buy a magazine at a *newspaper booth*.

The error that the students made could plausibly be explained that the students were familiar with the word *booth* and they knew the meaning quite well, particularly in Thai. They, therefore, used *booth* to collocate with *newspaper* because of *booth* and *kiosk* are of the same meaning in Thai. Also, the informants had limited knowledge of restricted collocations and probably rarely saw collocations like a *newspaper kiosk* or a *newspaper stand*.

2.1.2 The Informants' Application of the Strategy of Transferring L1 to L2 Collocation (Farghal and Obiedat, 1995; James, 1998; and Huang, 2001) and the Strategy of Synonymy (Farghal and Obiedat, 1995)

Example:

CA: The government usually has a *firework display* on the fifth of December.

SA: The government usually has a *firework fair* on the fifth of December.

It is plausible to explain the collocational violation found above that the two words *display* and *fair* are synonymous in Thai, the source language. Hence, students who did not know about word partnerships could easily make a mistake by using *fair* to collocate with *firework*. They just transferred their first language collocation to the second language collocation because both *display* and *fair* mean the same in Thai. If the students had been aware of the correct word partnerships, or looked up in a collocation dictionary, they would not have chosen the word *fair* to collocate with *firework*.

2.1.3 The Informants' Limited Knowing of Cultural-Specific

Collocation (Baker, 1992)

Example:

CA: Many families in USA on a low income are dependent on *state support*.
They get financial assistance from the government monthly.

SA: Many families in USA on a low income are dependent on *private support*.
They get financial assistance from the government monthly.

In this example, when a collocation found in the context is unfamiliar for the students, they could not use it correctly. In Thailand, people with low income do not receive money from the state which differs from those living in USA. Since the students were brought up this way, they automatically related the idea to their real life and used a wrong collocation. Difference in culture and practice influenced foreign language learners.

2.2 Adjective + Noun Collocational Violations

Examples of adjective + noun collocational violations are shown in Table 4.

The causes of violations were examined and plausible explanations for the violations are given below the table.

Table 4: Examples of noun + noun collocational violations

No. of the test item	The correct answer	The students' answers
3	This is <i>environmentally – friendly</i> washing powder. It is not harmful to the environment.	<i>environmentally-elaborate</i>
4	We urge you to adopt all <i>necessary</i> measures to guarantee people's safety	<i>optional measures</i>
30	She has built a <i>great</i> reputation as an entertaining speaker.	<i>well-known reputation</i>
31	There were several <i>big</i> Hollywood stars at the function. Everyone knew them.	<i>professional Hollywood stars</i>

It is plausible to explain that the above violations are probably due to the following source.

2.2.1 The Informants' Limited Knowledge of Collocational

Specialization (Nation, 2001) or their Restricted Collocation (Howarth, 1998)

Example:

CA: This is *environmentally – friendly* washing powder. It is not harmful to the environment.

SA: This is *environmentally – elaborate* washing powder. It is not harmful to the

environment.

With reference to the third test item, the collocate of *environmentally* is *friendly*, meaning harmless to the environment. However, some students chose *elaborate* as an answer. It is possible to explain that the informants did not know a collocation of *environmentally* – *friendly*, which is in fact quite common in our every day's life because people currently try to keep the environment green. The informants had a limited knowledge of collocations so they wrongly produced an incorrect collocation.

2.2.2 The Engrossing Effect of the Source Text Patterning (Baker, 1992) and the Informants' Application of the Strategy of Transferring L1 to L2 Collocation (Farghal and Obiedat, 1995; James, 1998; and Huang, 2001)

Example 1:

CA: She has built a *great* reputation as an entertaining speaker.

SA: She has built a *well-known* reputation as an entertaining speaker.

Taking a close look at this example, it is plausible to conclude that the students were influenced by their native language. They were influenced by their mother-tongue language and thought that *well-known* collocated with *reputation* despite that both *well-known* and *reputation* mean almost the same and it is redundant to use those two words together. In Thai, however, these two words can co-occur (มีชื่อเสียงเป็นที่รู้จัก). The informants, therefore, transferred then L1 knowledge to L2.

Example 2:

CA: There were several *big Hollywood stars* at the function. Everyone knew them.

SA: There were several *professional Hollywood stars* at the function. Everyone

knew them.

From the above example, the word which goes along with *Hollywood star* is *big*, but some students replaced *big* with *professional*. It is plausible to explain that the informants were influenced by their mother-tongue language, the Thai language. Also, students believe that to become famous in any profession, s/he needs to be professional or very skillful in a specific area. They might think that *professional* was a correct answer. Therefore, it can be said that the informants just transferred L1 knowledge to L2 of collocation and this resulted in a collocational violations.

2.3 Verb + Noun Collocational Violations

Examples of verb + noun collocational violations are shown in Table 5. The causes of violations were examined and plausible explanations for the violations are given below the table.

Table 5: Examples of verb + noun collocational violations

No. of the test item	The correct answer	The students' answers
14	He <i>had an argument</i> with a barman and was thrown out of the hotel.	<i>did/ made an argument</i>
15	He merely <i>shrugged his shoulders</i> in reply.	<i>made/ erupted/ gave his shoulders</i>
41	She <i>won the first prize</i> and her family was so happy for her.	<i>had the first prize</i>
42	The minister, on behalf of all guests, ended his speech by <i>making a toast</i> to the bride and groom.	<i>doing a toast</i>

From the examples above, it is plausible to explain that the collocational violations were due to the sources as follows:

2.3.1 The Engrossing Effect of the Source Text Patterning (Baker, 1992) and the Informants' Application of the Strategy of Transferring L1 to L2 Collocation (Farghal and Obiedat, 1995; James, 1998; and Huang, 2001)

Example:

CA: She *won the first prize* and her family was so happy for her.

SA: She *had the first prize* and her family was so happy for her.

One major problem of Thai students is inability to use a suitable verb to collocate with a noun. It is plausible to explain that in this case, the students did not have the idea of collocations and simply used a verb that was an equivalent to a Thai meaning. Generally, Thai students use *to win* with games and sports and a few know that *to win* can be used with *a prize or a scholarship*. Errors could easily arise if the students were interfered by the mother-tongue language.

2.3.2 The Informants' Limited Collocational Specialization (Nation, 2001), their Lack of Collocational Knowledge (Howarth, 1998)

Example 1:

CA: He merely *shrugged* his shoulders in reply.

SA: He merely *made/ erupted/ gave* his shoulders in reply

In the above example, the correct collocation is *shrugged his shoulders*, but some students gave wrong answers such as *made, erupted and gave* his shoulders. In this context, the word *shrugged* is needed to be a partner with *shoulders* because *to shrug* one's shoulder is considered a unique collocation (Hill, 2000). It is a

collocation which can not be replaced by another collocate; for example, it is impossible *to shrug one's arms or hands*. This violation is plausibly explained as the informants' collocational specialization was very limited.

Example 2:

CA: The minister, on behalf of all guests, ended his speech by *making a toast* to the bride and groom.

SA: The minister, on behalf of all guests, ended his speech by *doing a toast* to the bride and groom.

From the example, it is plausible to explain that EFL or ESL learners always had difficulties in using verbs *to do* and *to make*. *To make a toast* is another example of a unique collocation and if students are not competent in collocations, they will surely have problems.

2.4 Adjective + Preposition Collocational Violations

Examples of adjective + preposition collocational violations are shown in Table 6. The causes of violations were examined and plausible explanations for the violations are given below the table.

Table 6: Examples of adjective + preposition collocational violations

No. of the test item	The correct answer	The students' answers
17	I became <i>skilful at</i> drawing.	<i>skilful in/ or drawing</i>
18	I was <i>pink with</i> anger because his car was stolen.	<i>pink at anger</i>
46	She used to be a nurse as she is <i>experienced in</i> looking after children.	<i>experienced of/ with/ at looking</i>
47	The two books are more or less <i>equal in</i> length.	<i>more or less equal as/ with length.</i>

The reasons for the informants' violations are plausibly explained as follows:

2.4.1 The Informants' Application of the Strategy of Transferring L1 to L2 Collocation (Farghal and Obiedat, 1995; James, 1998; and Huang, 2001)

Example:

CA: I became *skilful at* drawing.

SA: I became *skilful in* drawing.

It can plausibly be assumed from the above example that the informants wrongly used adjective + preposition collocations because they transferred their L1 knowledge about word partnership to L2 and used an incorrect preposition to collocate with *skilful*.

2.4.2 The Informants' Limited Collocation Specialization (Nation, 2001), and their Limited Knowledge of Cultural-specific collocation (Baker, 1992)

Example:

CA: He was *pink with* anger because his car was stolen.

SA: He was *pink at* anger because his car was stolen.

It is possible that the violation found in the above example was due to the students' limited collocation knowledge and particularly the students might not understand this expression, *to be pink with anger*, because there is a cultural difference between the Thai and western cultures. In Thai, when you are angry, we say that *your face is very* (หน้าแดงกล้า).

2.5 Phrasal verb Collocational Violations

Examples of phrasal verb violations are shown in Table 7. The sources of violations were examined and plausible explanations for the violations are given below the table.

Table 7: Example of phrasal verb collocational violations

No. of the test item	The correct answer	The students' answers
26	He <i>puts back</i> a little every month for a deposit on his new house. I think he saves about 5,000 baht monthly.	<i>puts on/ aside</i>
28	He <i>takes after</i> his mother. He is similar to her in his character.	<i>takes back/ aside</i>
54	He <i>passed away</i> in his sleep at his home.	<i>passed down</i>
56	This result has <i>set up</i> their chances of winning the competition. However, they may be the runner-up team.	<i>set back/ down</i>

It is plausible to explain the informants' violation in using collocations as follows:

2.5.1 The Informants' Limited Knowledge of Collocational

Specialization (Nation, 1992) and their Lack of Collocational Knowledge

(Howarth, 1998)

Example:

CA: He *takes after* his mother. He is similar to her in his character

SA: He *takes aside* his mother. He is similar to her in his character.

From the above, it is plausible to explain that the collocational violations were due to the informants' low knowledge of collocational specialization. It is quite obvious that the sentence that follows clearly indicates that the only phrasal verb that can complete the preceding sentence is *to take after*. The informants probably had little or no knowledge in collocations; therefore, this error arose.

2.5.2 The Informants' Application of the Strategy of Transferring L1 to L2 Collocation (Farghal and Obiedat, 1995; James, 1998; and Huang, 2001)

Example:

CA: He *passed away* in his sleep at his home.

SA: He *passed down* in his sleep at his home.

From the example above, it can plausibly be assumed that the informants wrongly used this phrasal verb because they transferred their L1 knowledge about phrasal verbs to L2. Also, it is possible that they misunderstood that the word *down* should collocate with *pass* and gave a better meaning of *to die* of which meaning was similar to a meaning in Thai.

2.6 Verb + Adverb Collocational Violations

Examples of verb + adverb collocational violations are shown in the table below:

Table 8: Example of verb + adverb collocational violations

No. of the test item	The correct answer	The student's answer
37	Whenever the song begins, she <i>hums along</i> with the music.	<i>hums together/ loudly</i>
38	House prices have <i>risen sharply</i> in recent months.	<i>risen strongly</i>
39	She seems <i>extremely energetic</i> for a woman of her age.	<i>wonderfully energetic</i>
40	The attention of the mass media is <i>mainly focused on</i> the general election.	<i>wholly/ seriously</i>

2.6.1 The Engrossing Effect of the Source Text Patterning (Baker, 1992) and the Informants' Application of the Strategy of Transferring L1 to L2 Collocation (Farghal and Obiedat, 1995; James, 1998; and Huang, 2001)

Example:

CA: House prices have *risen sharply* in recent months.

SA: House prices have *risen strongly* in recent months.

The error that the informants made in the above example could plausibly be explained as a transfer of L1 knowledge to L2. The students obviously realized the meaning of the missing collocates but could not produce a correct answer. This is because they just transferred the meaning of the Thai language to the English language, resulting in a *foreign* collocation like to *rise strongly*.

2.6.2 The Informants' Limited Knowledge of Collocational Specialization (Nation, 1992) and the Informants' Lack of Collocational Knowledge (Howarth, 1998)

Example:

CA: She seems *extremely energetic* for a woman of her age.

SA: She seems *wonderfully energetic* for a woman of her age.

From this example, it is plausible to explain that some students did not know about word partnerships. They thought that *wonderfully* should collocate with *energetic* because the context was related to a woman so *wonderfully* might collocate with *energetic* in this context. It is possible to explain that ESL/EFL students have problems about using intensifiers since they are the same in meaning in the source language. However, they were not aware that each intensifier collocates with a different node.

2.7 Adverb + Adjective Collocational Violations

A table of example of the adverb + adjective collocational violations is shown below.

Table 9: Examples of adverb + adjective collocational violations

No. of the test item	The correct answer	The student's answer
21	She is <i>justly proud</i> of her achievements. She really deserves the 1 st prize award.	<i>absolutely/ oddly/ rather/ perfectly proud</i>
24	When I passed the entrance exam, my parents were <i>perfectly happy</i> with my success. They held a special cerebration at the Oriental.	<i>absolutely happy</i>
49	It was a <i>remarkable productive</i> meeting. We gained a lot of useful ideas	<i>wonderfully productive</i>
51	She looked <i>absolutely lovely</i> in the blue dress.	<i>completely/ highly lovely</i>

2.7.1 The informants' Limited Knowledge of Collocational

Specialization (Nation, 2001), their Lack of Collocational Knowledge (Howarth, 1998), and their Application of the Strategy of Synonymy (Farghal and Obiedat, 1995)

Example:

CA: It was a *remarkable productive* meeting. We gained a lot of useful ideas.

SA: It was a *wonderfully productive* meeting. We gained a lot of useful ideas.

The words *remarkably* and *wonderfully* share similar meanings. It is not surprising why the informants made mistakes in choosing a correct collocate. The informants' limited knowledge of collocational specialization was a major source of violations.

2.7.2 The Engrossing Effect of the Source Text Patterning (Baker, 1992) and the Informants' Application of the Strategy of Transferring L1 to L2 Collocation (Farghal and Obiedat, 1995; James, 1998; and Huang, 2001)

Example:

CA: She looked *absolutely lovely* in the blue dress.

SA: She looked *completely lovely* in the blue dress.

The adjective *proud* collocates with many adverbs such as *especially*, *extremely*, or *really*. However, in this example, the second sentence greatly helps the students to choose the correct answer. The informants were greatly influenced by the source language. They just thought in a Thai way; consequently, they thought the correct collocate were *absolutely or perfectly proud of*.

In brief, it is plausible to say that the collocational violations found in this study resulted from various sources. The major ones were due to the informants' lack of or their limited knowledge of collocations (Nation, 1992; Howarth, 1998), and their application of the strategy of transferring L1 to L2 collocations (Farghal and Obiedat, 1995). Another important source of violation was the engrossing effect of the source text patterning (Baker, 1992). Meanwhile, other sources of collocational violations found were such as the informants' application of the strategy of synonymy (Farghal and Obiedat, 1995) and their limited knowledge of cultural-specific collocations (Baker, 1992). Students had a lot of collocational problems since they were unawareness of the existence of collocations.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

This chapter reveals three parts: a conclusion of the study, discussion of the findings and suggestions for further studies.

Conclusion

The purposes of this study were to study the ability of the third year English majors at Srinakarinwirot University about English collocation, to study the problematic patterns of collocations used by the students, and to attempt plausible explanations for the students' violations on English collocations.

In this study, the analysis was based on seven patterns of collocation of Lewis (2000)'s classification. Then, the informants' answers were calculated into percentage and accumulated and categorized. Major strategies used in the plausible explanations for the students' violations on English collocations were, for example, the informants' limited knowledge of cultural-specific collocation (Baker, 1992), the engrossing effect of the source text patterning (Baker, 1992), the informants' application of the strategy of synonymy (Farghal and Obiedat, 1995), the informants' limited knowledge of restricted collocation (Howarth, 1998; Nation, 2001), and the informants' application of the strategy of transferring L1 to L2 collocation (Farghal and Obiedat, 1995; James, 1998; and Huang, 2001).

The first purpose of this study was to study the ability of the third year English majors at Srinakharinwirot University about English collocation. The findings revealed that a collocation test of 56 items based on seven patterns of Lewis (2000)'s

classification was applied to a sample group of 57 students. The students' ability was fair with the mean of 52.32%. The findings revealed that the informants' ability in using noun + noun collocations was at the highest level (68.64%), followed by adjective + noun (67.32%), verb + noun (55.26%), adjective + preposition (51.10%), phrasal verb (46.05%), verb + adverb (41.67%) and adverb + adjective (36.18%) respectively.

The other purpose was to study the patterns of collocations which were problematic for the students. The findings revealed that the problems mostly resulted from the informants' limited knowledge of collocations, their engrossing effect of the source text patterning, and their transfer of L1 to L2 collocations. Plausible explanations were also attempted to account for the violations.

Discussion

The results of this study revealed that the students' knowledge of English collocation is rather limited. It is plausible to say that the students lacked an awareness of the existence of collocations. Also, they were probably not well – trained on vocabulary specialization. The findings coincided with Bahns and Eldaw (1993) who state that learners' knowledge of collocations does not develop in parallel with their knowledge of vocabulary and this may be in part due to the fact that collocations are not taught and that learners do not, therefore, pay any attention to learning them. Also, Lewis (1993) points out that raising awareness of collocation can be incorporated into the teaching and learning process to expand the learners' mental lexicon efficiently. Therefore, collocation should be emphasized in second foreign language classrooms to enhance effective language learning.

The findings of this study disclosed that the students' ability in using noun + noun collocations was at the highest level (68.64%). It is plausible to explain that this pattern had been one of the most familiar patterns to the students since their earlier years of the English language learning. (Boonyasquan, 2005). On the contrary, the adverb + adjective collocations were found being used correctly at the lowest level, (36.18%). This finding was supported by the study of Martynska (2004) showing that the adverb + adjective collocational violations were found by the students the most difficult and troublesome. She also found that there was no direct dependence of the students' ability about collocation on the number of years they have been learning English.

However, this study showed that the students committed collocational violations because when deciding which collocates should be used, it is plausible that they applied the strategy of their synonymy. Moreover, they might have low collocation or limited knowledge of collocational specialization. Examples are *a newspaper booth* (instead of *a newspaper kiosk*), *environmentally- elaborate* (instead of *environmentally- friendly*), *had the first prize* (instead of *won the first prize*), *takes aside* (instead of *takes after*), *risen strongly* (instead of *risen sharply*) or *wonderfully productive* (instead of *remarkable productive*).

In addition, the findings revealed that the informants applied the strategy of transferring L1 to L2 collocation when deciding to choose word partnership. The results were similar to those found by Farghal and Obiedat (1995). Farghal and Obiedat discovered that the students had a problem of collocational deficiency and they were unawareness of collocations so they applied the strategy of transfer from their native language to produce English collocations.

Also, a lack of knowledge about specific collocation led the students to rely heavily on simple and general expression. Students tended to use common verbs such as *good* with all positive things, for example, *a good man*, *a good book*, *a good story* and they ended by introducing a *good appearance* (instead of *an attractive and handsome appearance*). They also overuse some common verbs such as *do* in the following example, *do an activity*, *do a task*, and *do some achievements* (instead of *represent/ constitute some achievements*).

Interestingly, the findings of this study also endorse Boonyasaquan (2005)'s which indicated that major sources of the violations were the learners' interference of the source language patterns and their unawareness of the existence of collocations due to deficiency of collocation knowledge. Examples are *doing a toast* (instead of *making a toast*), *absolutely happy* (instead of *perfectly happy*), and *passed down* (instead of *passed away*).

Similarly, the findings of Huang (2001) supported this study. Huang showed that collocational violations were plausibly due to the informants' application of the strategies of transferring, avoidance, paraphrasing and synonymy. He also found out that EFL learners had insufficient knowledge of English collocations and the learners' poor performance in restricted collocations. These findings coincide with the viewpoints of Bahn and Eldaw (1993), who assumed that learners' collocational knowledge seems not to parallel with their competence in vocabulary.

Limitations of the Study

1. The data of this study gained from only 56 third year English majors in the 2007 academic year at the Faculty of Humanities, Srinakharinwirot University (SWU), in Bangkok. The results might be different if the test was conducted with English majors of other years or with other majors of other levels.

2. The study focused only on seven patterns of collocation based on Lewis (2000)'s strategy. The research results based on other strategies and other classifications may differ from this present study.

Applications

Collocation plays an important role in learning the English language. Collocation teaching should start from the first lesson. Teachers should be encouraged to employ collocation as a part of their teaching devices. In the same way when a teacher teaches individual words or vocabulary s/he needs to include teaching collocates. Teachers need to present a new word in context. For example, instead of teaching new words such as *a bath, an exam, friends*, the teachers can introduce them in chunks of words like *have a bath, pass an exam and make friends*,. Learning individual words and their meaning is not enough to achieve great fluency in a second language. Knowing the way words combine into chunks is imperative. If learners' sensitivity to various relations between words is not high lightened enough or words are not learned in chunks, learners are not bound to approach the native-like level of proficiency (Martynska, 2004). Teachers should train students in using collocations since the very beginning stage in order that students are able to remember and use them correctly.

Raising awareness among students of the importance of collocations is what English teachers should have in mind. On the simplest level, teachers could encourage students to think bigger than a word – always to look for a two – or three word expression (Hill, 2000). Noticing is an important stage in learning, as well. Biskup (1992) pointed out that *noticing* and *becoming aware of* collocations might be the first steps leading to internalizing and learning collocations.

To sum up, teaching and raising awareness collocations among students are important because if the students choose the right collocation in communication, it means that they can communicate more naturally and more native speaker-like.

Suggestions for Further Studies

The following are suggested topics for further studies:

1. A study of the collocation ability of students at other levels such as at the secondary school or graduate levels
2. A comparative study of undergraduate and graduate students' knowledge of collocations
3. Use of collocation in writing
4. Collocational violations in writing or speaking

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APPENDIX

I. Collocation Test

Collocation Test

The test is divided into two parts:

Part 1 Sentence Completion (28 items)

Part 2 Multiple Choices (28 items)

Part I: Complete each of these sentences with an appropriate word. Each word can be used only once.
Write your answers on the answer sheet provided.

<i>full</i>	<i>optional</i>	<i>limited</i>
<i>friendly</i>	<i>elaborate</i>	<i>necessary</i>

<i>eternally</i>	<i>warmly</i>	<i>perfectly</i>
<i>willingly</i>	<i>absolutely</i>	<i>relatively</i>

1. I have a *limited* knowledge of French.
I am good at reading, but not at speaking and writing.
2. I will have to write a *full* report of the situation to my boss. It will cover all the detailed information.
3. This is environmentally – *friendly* washing powder. It is not harmful to the environment.
4. We urge you to adopt all *necessary* measures to guarantee people's safety.

9. Khun Somchai is *totally* competent always follows professional standards and is successful in all the assignments.
10. There is a *relative* moderate increase in the rate of inflation.
11. Without any hesitation, I *strongly* Recommend her as an MA candidate at your university.
12. Political theories are not *absolutely* valid. They can change from time to time.

<i>kiosk</i>	<i>state</i>	<i>booth</i>
<i>privacy</i>	<i>business</i>	<i>appearance</i>

<i>did</i>	<i>had</i>	<i>gave</i>
<i>made</i>	<i>shrugged</i>	<i>erupted</i>

5. I stopped to buy a magazine at a newspaper *kiosk*
6. She recalled her first television *appearance* forty years ago.
7. You can call the helpline during normal *business* hours. None works after 6.00 p.m.
8. Many families in USA on a low income are dependent on *state* support. They get financial assistance from the government monthly.

13. He *gave* me a gift home because we are neighbors.
14. He *had* an argument with a barman and was thrown out of the hotel.
15. He merely *shrugged* his shoulders in reply.
16. She has *made* no attempt to contact her mother.

<i>for</i>	<i>with</i>	<i>by</i>	<i>on</i>	<i>of</i>	<i>at</i>
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17. I became skilful *at* drawing.
18. He was pink *with* anger because his car was stolen.
19. My coat was rather small *for* Bob.
20. He was coldly indifferent *to* other people.

<i>rather</i>	<i>absolutely</i>	<i>badly</i>
<i>justly</i>	<i>perfectly</i>	<i>oddly</i>

21. She is *justly* proud of her achievements. She really deserves the 1st prize award.
22. Don't worry. Your voice sounds *absolutely* fine.
23. She looked *rather* lost and lonely, standing in a corner by herself.
24. When I passed the entrance exam, mum seemed *perfectly* happy with my success.

<i>on</i>	<i>out</i>	<i>for</i>
<i>back</i>	<i>after</i>	<i>aside</i>

25. You should check *out* books on American history from the library and you will get more ideas on this issue.
26. He put *back* a little every month for a deposit on his new house.
27. They are calling *on* all men and boys over the age of 14 to join the army.
28. He takes *after* his mother. He is similar to her in his character.

Part II Choose the best alternative.

29. It is a *luxurious* hotel with its own swimming pool and restaurant. However, spending a night there is quite expensive.
a. luxurious b. colorful
c. memorable d. enjoyable
30. She has built a/an *great* reputation as an entertaining speaker.
a. great b. well-known
c. recognized d. considerable
31. There were several *big* Hollywood stars at the function. Everyone knew them.
a. big b. amateur
c. brilliant d. professional
32. It is difficult to live in a(n) *foreign* country. if you cannot speak the language of that country.
a. remote b. foreign
c. international d. nationwide
33. I've lost my marriage *certificate* So, I don't have any documents to show that I am a married man.
a. vows b. certificate
c. status d. relationship
34. People's behavior style consists of the words they use, their voice, their facial expression and their *body* language.
a. body b. sign
c. appearance d. gesture
35. A routine *police* patrol spotted signs of a break-in at that bank.
a. police b. guard
c. soldier d. fireman
36. The government usually has a firework *display* on the fifth of December along the Chao Phraya river.
a. fair b. myth
c. exhibit d. display
37. When the song begins, she hums *along* with the music.
a. along b. loudly
c. together d. suddenly

38. House prices have risen *sharply* in recent months.
a. sharply b. enormously
c. strongly d. tremendously
39. She seems *extremely* energetic for a woman of her age.
a. extremely b. undoubtedly
c. wonderfully d. extraordinary
40. The attention of the mass media is *mainly* focused on the general election.
a. wholly b. granted
c. mainly d. seriously
41. She *won* the first prize and her family was so happy for her.
a. had b. granted
c. won d. awarded
42. The minister, on behalf of all guests, ended his speech by *making* a toast to the bride and groom.
a. doing b. making
c. requesting d. announcing
43. Make sure you *have* a look at the engine before you buy the car.
a. give b. have
c. make d. manage
44. The ships all *blared* their sirens when the princess was born.
a. blared b. heard
c. sounded d. screamed
45. I think you are mistaken *about* the time.
a. on b. in
c. with d. about
46. She used to be a nurse and she is experienced *in* looking after children.
a. in b. at
c. with d. of
47. The two books are more or less equal *in* length.
a. to b. in
c. as d. with
48. His statement was inconsistent *with* other accounts of the events. It's fine *with* rough work.
a. of b. to
c. for d. with
49. It was a/an *remarkably* productive meeting. We gained a lot of useful ideas.
a. remarkably b. unbelievably
c. wonderfully d. breathtakingly
50. He's sad because his mother is *desperately* ill in hospital.
a. strongly b. desperately
c. ultimately d. particularly
51. She looked *absolutely* lovely in the blue dress.
a. highly b. absolutely
c. seriously d. completely
52. She was not exactly good-looking, but she is *perfectly* presentable.
a. perfectly b. madly
c. completely d. extremely
53. The clouds are drifting away and the weather is clearing *up*.
a. up b. out
c. down d. away
54. He passed *away* in his sleep at his home. He died in peace.
a. by b. off
c. away d. down
55. To conform *with* hygiene regulations, there must be more sinks for hand washing in the restroom at this restaurant.
a. to b. with
c. for d. against
56. This result has set *back* their chances of winning the competition. However, they may be the runner-up team.
a. back b. forth
c. aside d. down

II. Seven Patterns of Students' Collocational Violations

Adjective + Noun Collocations

Item	Correct collocations	Students' answer
1	I have a <i>limited</i> knowledge of French. I am good at reading, but not at speaking and writing.	<i>elaborate / full / optional</i>
2	I will have to write a <i>full</i> report of the situation to my boss. It will cover all the detailed information.	<i>necessary / elaborate</i>
3	This is environmentally – <i>friendly</i> washing powder. It is not harmful to the environment.	<i>elaborate / optional</i>
4	We urge you to adopt all <i>necessary</i> measures to guarantee people's safety.	<i>full / elaborate / optional</i>
29	It is a <i>luxurious</i> hotel with its own swimming pool and restaurant. However, spending a night there is quite expensive.	<i>colorful / memorable / enjoyable</i>
30	She has built a/an <i>great</i> reputation as an entertaining speaker.	<i>well-known / recognized / considerable</i>
31	There were several <i>big</i> Hollywood stars at the function. Everyone knew them.	<i>amateur / brilliant / professional</i>
32	It is difficult to live in a(n) <i>foreign</i> country. if you cannot speak the language of that country.	<i>remote / international / nationwide</i>

Noun + Noun Collocations

Item	Correct collocations	Students' answer
5	I stopped to buy a magazine at a newspaper <i>kiosk</i>	<i>booth</i>
6	She recalled her first television <i>appearance</i> forty years ago.	<i>kiosk / privacy / booth</i>
7	You can call the helpline during normal <i>business</i> hours. None works after 6.00 p.m.	<i>privacy</i>
8	Many families in USA on a low income are dependent on <i>state</i> support. They get financial assistance from the government monthly.	<i>appearance</i>
33	I've lost my marriage <i>certificate</i> So, I don't have any documents to show that I am a married man.	<i>status / relationship / vows</i>
34	People's behavior style consists of the words they use, their voice, their facial expression and their <i>body</i> language.	<i>sign / appearance / gesture</i>
35	A routine <i>police</i> patrol spotted signs of a break-in at that bank.	<i>guard /soldier /fireman</i>
36	The government usually has a firework <i>display</i> on the fifth of December along the Chao Phraya river.	<i>fair / myth / exhibit</i>

Verb + Adverb Collocations

Item	Correct collocations	Students' answer
9	Khun Somchai is <i>totally</i> competent always follows professional standards and is successful in all the assignments.	<i>perfectly / absolutely</i>
10	There is a <i>relative</i> moderate increase in the rate of inflation.	willingly / relatively / eternally / warmly
11	Without any hesitation, I <i>strongly</i> recommend her as an MA candidate at your university.	<i>absolutely / willingly /warmly</i>
12	Political theories are not <i>absolutely</i> valid. They can change from time to time.	<i>eternally / eternally /warmly/ perfectly</i>
37	When the song begins, she hums <i>along</i> with the music.	<i>loudly / together / suddenly</i>
38	House prices have risen <i>sharply</i> in recent months.	<i>enormously / strongly/ tremendously</i>
39	She seems <i>extremely</i> energetic for a woman of her age.	<i>undoubtedly / wonderfully/ extraordinary</i>
40	The attention of the mass media is <i>mainly</i> focused on the general election.	<i>wholly / granted / seriously</i>

Verb + Noun Collocations

Item	Correct collocations	Students' answer
13	He <i>gave</i> me a gift home because we are neighbors.	<i>erupted / shrugged / had / made</i>
14	He <i>had</i> an argument with a barman and was thrown out of the hotel.	<i>made / did / gave</i>
15	He merely <i>shrugged</i> his shoulders in reply.	<i>made / had</i>
16	She has <i>made</i> no attempt to contact her mother.	<i>had / gave</i>
41	She <i>won</i> the first prize and her family was so happy for her.	<i>had / granted / awarded</i>
42	The minister, on behalf of all guests, ended his speech by <i>making</i> a toast to the bride and groom.	<i>requesting / announcing / doing</i>
43	Make sure you <i>have</i> a look at the engine before you buy the car.	<i>make / manage / give</i>
44	The ships all <i>blared</i> their sirens when the princess was born.	<i>heard / sounded / screamed</i>

Adjective + Preposition Collocations

Item	Correct collocations	Students' answer
17	I became skilful <i>at</i> drawing.	<i>on / by / of</i>
18	He was pink <i>with</i> anger because his car was stolen.	<i>by / to / on</i>
19	My coat was rather small <i>for</i> Bob.	<i>to / by</i>
20	He was coldly indifferent <i>to</i> other people.	<i>by / for</i>
45	I think you are mistaken <i>about</i> the time.	<i>on / in / with</i>
46	She used to be a nurse and she is experienced <i>in</i> looking after children.	<i>at / with / of</i>
47	The two books are more or less equal <i>in</i> length.	<i>as / to / with</i>
48	His statement was inconsistent <i>with</i> other accounts of the events. It's fine <i>with</i> rough work.	<i>of / to / for</i>

Adverb + Adjective Collocations

Item	Correct collocations	Students' answer
21	She is <i>justly</i> proud of her achievements. She really deserves the 1 st prize award.	<i>rather /absolutely /badly / perfectly / oddly</i>
22	Don't worry. Your voice sounds <i>absolutely</i> fine.	<i>rather /badly / perfectly /oddly</i>
23	She looked <i>rather</i> lost and lonely, standing in a corner by herself.	<i>absolutely /badly / perfectly / oddly</i>
24	When I passed the entrance exam, mum seemed <i>perfectly</i> happy with my success.	<i>rather /absolutely /badly /oddly</i>
49	It was a/an <i>remarkably</i> productive meeting. We gained a lot of useful ideas.	<i>unbelievably /wonderfully/ breathtakingly</i>
50	He's sad because his mother is <i>desperately</i> ill in hospital.	<i>ultimately / particularly / strongly</i>
51	She looked <i>absolutely</i> lovely in the blue dress.	<i>seriously / completely / highly</i>
52	She was not exactly good-looking, but she is <i>perfectly</i> presentable.	<i>madly / completely / extremely</i>

Phrasal verbs

Item	Correct collocations	Students' answer
25	You should check <i>out</i> books on American history from the library and you will get more ideas on this issue.	<i>on / for / back / after / aside</i>
26	He put <i>back</i> a little every month for a deposit on his new house.	<i>on / for / out / after / aside</i>
27	They are calling <i>on</i> all men and boys over the age of 14 to join the army.	<i>out / for / back / after / aside</i>
28	He takes <i>after</i> his mother. He is similar to her in his character.	<i>on / for / back / out / aside</i>
53	The clouds are drifting away and the weather is clearing <i>up</i> .	<i>out / down / away</i>
54	He passed <i>away</i> in his sleep at his home. He died in peace.	<i>by / down / off</i>
55	To conform <i>with</i> hygiene regulations, there must be more sinks for hand washing in the restroom at this restaurant.	<i>to / for / against</i>
56	This result has set <i>back</i> their chances of winning the competition. However, they may be the runner-up team.	<i>forth / aside / down</i>

VITAE

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