THE METHODOLOGY OF DEVELOPING COLLOCATION SKILLS IN ENGLISH SPEECH FOR NON-SPECIALIZED STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

The acquisition of collocational competence plays a critical role in the development of fluency and communicative competence in English. Non-specialized students, who may not possess advanced linguistic knowledge or specialized English proficiency, often struggle with mastering natural language combinations. This paper aims to explore the methodology of teaching collocation skills to non-specialized students, providing a comprehensive framework that addresses challenges in vocabulary acquisition, contextual usage, and communicative competence. Drawing on established pedagogical principles such as the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach, the Lexical Approach, and task-based learning, this study proposes practical strategies and teaching techniques for integrating collocations into English language instruction. Through the application of these methodologies, learners can gain proficiency in using collocations to enhance fluency, contextual appropriateness, and pragmatic competence.

KEYWORDS: Collocations, Lexical Approach, Non-specialized Students, Fluency, Communicative Competence, Task-based Learning, Language Acquisition, Vocabulary Teaching, Collocational Competence, Contextualized Learning, Pragmatic Competence, Pedagogical Strategies, Language Teaching Methodology, High-frequency Collocations, English as a Second Language (ESL), Vocabulary Acquisition, Collocation Discovery, Natural Language Use, Teacher-directed Learning, Student-centered Learning;

INTRODUCTION

The importance of collocations in English cannot be overstated, as they form the backbone of fluent and natural speech. Collocations refer to the habitual pairing of words that frequently occur together in specific contexts, such as "make a decision" or "take a break." Mastery of collocations is crucial for learners striving to achieve high levels of fluency and communicative competence in English. However, non-specialized students, who may not have an advanced linguistic background or exposure to a wide range of real-life English contexts, often face challenges in acquiring these natural word combinations. This paper seeks to explore the methodologies and strategies that can be employed to effectively teach collocation skills to non-specialized learners. By focusing on pedagogical approaches and practical applications, this study aims to bridge the gap in collocational competence, ultimately helping students enhance their fluency, communication, and understanding of English in context.

Collocations are defined as pairs or groups of words that occur together more frequently than by chance alone. These combinations can range from simple adjective-noun pairings like

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"strong coffee" to complex verb-preposition combinations such as "rely on." Collocations are crucial for several reasons:

1.   Naturalness: Collocations allow learners to speak and write more naturally and idiomatically, which is a key component of fluency.

2.   Cognitive Efficiency: By learning set word combinations, students can reduce the mental effort required to form grammatically correct sentences.

3.   Contextual Accuracy: Correct use of collocations ensures that language is not only grammatically correct but also contextually appropriate.

Research in the field of second language acquisition highlights the importance of collocations in language fluency. According to Lewis (2000), learning collocations should be a central focus in language teaching, as they allow students to understand and produce language in a way that reflects native-like speech patterns. Furthermore, McCarthy and O'Dell (2005) emphasize that collocations are a key component of pragmatic competence—the ability to use language appropriately in different social and cultural contexts.

Non-specialized students often lack extensive exposure to native or near-native English contexts. They are typically more familiar with formal, textbook language, which does not always reflect how English is used in everyday speech. Without sufficient real-world exposure, learners may struggle to identify and internalize the collocations that are prevalent in authentic communication.

For non-specialized students, one of the biggest hurdles is insufficient lexical knowledge. They may know individual words but lack the ability to combine them into meaningful and natural-sounding expressions. This issue is compounded by the fact that many common English collocations involve less frequent vocabulary that is not typically covered in general language courses. Collocation teaching is often fragmented and not systematically incorporated into traditional curricula. While students may learn individual words, they may not be explicitly taught how those words combine naturally with others. This lack of instruction leads to unnatural language use, as students are not aware of the expected word combinations.

The CLT approach focuses on teaching language through communication and interaction in real-life contexts. In the case of collocations, this means that learners should be exposed to collocations in context rather than in isolation. The goal is to help students use collocations naturally in their own speech and writing, prioritizing fluency over grammatical perfection. According to Richards and Rodgers (2001), task-based learning within the CLT framework allows students to engage with authentic language while practicing collocations.

The Lexical Approach, as outlined by Michael Lewis (2000), argues that vocabulary acquisition—including collocations—should be at the center of language learning. Rather than focusing on grammar rules, this approach emphasizes learning chunks of language that occur frequently together. Teaching collocations as fixed word combinations rather than isolated vocabulary enables students to use language in a way that reflects real communication patterns.

Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) focuses on using tasks that mirror real-world communication. Tasks such as role-playing, problem-solving activities, and scenario-based discussions can encourage students to use collocations in context. These tasks provide opportunities for students to practice collocations in a meaningful way and develop their ability to use language naturally in specific contexts.

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One of the key principles in teaching collocations is to present them in context. Non-specialized students benefit from learning collocations that they are likely to encounter in everyday situations. For example, presenting collocations related to daily activities (e.g., "do the dishes," "take a break," "make an appointment") or common academic expressions (e.g., "write an essay," "give a presentation") helps students to make connections between the collocations and real-life communication.

Teachers should prioritize high-frequency collocations that are most commonly used in everyday communication. These may include verb-noun combinations like "make a decision" or adjective-noun collocations like "strong opinion." By mastering these frequently used expressions, students can quickly improve their ability to communicate fluently and effectively in a wide range of contexts. A critical aspect of learning collocations is encouraging students to discover them independently. Students can be taught to notice and extract collocations from reading texts, listening exercises, or conversations with native speakers. Techniques such as keeping a "collocation journal" or using collocation dictionaries and online corpora (e.g., the COCA or BNC) allow students to build their own understanding of how words commonly combine.

Interactive Activities and Games

Task-based activities that involve the use of collocations in real-time communication are essential for engaging students. Examples include:

• Role-playing: Students simulate real-life scenarios, such as ordering food in a restaurant or making a complaint, using appropriate collocations.

• Collocation Bingo: A game where students match collocations to pictures or definitions, encouraging them to recall and use common word combinations.

• Fill-in-the-Blank Exercises: Students complete sentences with appropriate collocations, helping them internalize correct word pairings.

Collocation-based Writing and Speaking Tasks

• Writing Prompts: Students can be asked to write short stories or essays using newly learned collocations. This practice helps them integrate collocations into their active vocabulary.

• Speaking Practice: Group discussions, debates, or interviews that require students to use collocations in natural speech.

Assessment of collocational competence should focus on both recognition and production. Formative assessment methods such as peer reviews, quizzes, and oral presentations allow teachers to gauge students' understanding and ability to use collocations accurately. Summative assessments might include writing tests or oral exams that require students to use collocations in context, ensuring that their understanding extends beyond mere memorization. The development of collocational competence is essential for achieving fluency and effective communication in English. For non-specialized students, mastering collocations requires targeted teaching methods that focus on context, frequency, and practical application. By integrating approaches such as the Lexical Approach, Communicative Language Teaching, and Task-Based Language Teaching, educators can provide students with the tools they need to use collocations naturally and appropriately. Ultimately, this focus on collocations will empower students to communicate more effectively and authentically in a variety of real-life situations.

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