

# REFORMING THE STUDENTS' WRITING ERRORS IN COLLOCATION BY APPLYING COLLOCATION LEARNING: PROMOTING LEARNERS' WRITING COMPETENCY

Achmad Kholili

*University of Islam Malang*

[achmadkholili93@gmail.com](mailto:achmadkholili93@gmail.com)

## Abstract

As a language, English has now spread all over the world and has been known by quite a few people currently. English is known as crucial and salient to learn. The language quite reveals complexities that make some people sometimes give in to continue studying it. It has such as grammar, linguistic terms, and other rules that play a very significant role while applied to daily life. One of the rules that are quite hard to do is combining words within a sentence called as collocation. This paper aims at investigating whether the students at University of Islam Malang have known about collocation. In this study, the researcher conducted a quick survey. The data was collected with an open-questionnaire containing five different sentences in which the students should translate the Indonesian sentence into English correctly using a correct combination of words. The result of the study revealed that the students from University of Islam Malang still have been committing errors in combining words in a sentence; it is due to their little acquaintance with collocation even having no knowledge of it. Since it has happened to the students, by conducting this small research, the researcher expects that the students may learn much more about collocation either from this paper or other resources with regards to collocation learning in English.

*Keywords: English, Collocation, Students of University of Islam Malang*

## I INTRODUCTION

One of the propositions with which is most frequently dealt by EFL while practicing English is writing. This issue, in fact, not only occurs to the EFL student but happens to the ESL students as well both beginners and advanced students of English. L2 learners, for the most part, assume that writing in English is rather complex. They claim that they do not only have to think about how to arrange the words in a sentence, but also have to consider the grammatical structure and appropriate vocabulary that will be used in the sentence itself. In writing English, a writer not only thinks about how to present an idea in the text but also reckons the language usage he/she uses. Thomas (1988:14) states that usage designates rules of a less basic and binding sort, concerning how we should use the language in certain situation. It is obvious that usage in writing such as words is of great importance to use. It is closely related to how we should utter words well in a sentence. Both EFL/ESL are sometimes confused about how to use some words in the sentence. Thomas (1988:14) also notes that usage establishes the ground rules of writing, circumscribing what you are free to do. It is also clear-cut explanation from him that words become the most important fundamental rule that will bring a good idea in the text. One of the factors which have a profound impact on students' writing ability is word combination in a sentence called as Collocation. In this case, the writer focuses on the students' writing ability to collocate words in a sentence since the writer has found that so many students of English both EFL/ESL have yet to be able to do such thing so far. It is claimed by a linguists that one of the factors that learners of language are successful in learning language is because of the social customs of native speakers in which the social customs involve the way to converse and to write in a language that native speakers practice in their daily life. One example is collocation. Ellis (1985:11) states that learners who are interested in the social and cultural customs of native speakers of the language they tend to be more successful. According to Michael (2006: 06) a collocation is a pair or group of words that are often used together. The combination sound natural to native speakers, but the students of English have to make a special effort to learn them because they are often difficult to guess. The statement above gives us awareness of how to collocate the words well in order to be natural. The students sometimes have difficulty to collocate their words in a sentence. As a result, they make errors and eventually sound unnatural. Therefore, this study aims at improving the students' ability to collocate the words in the sentence by practicing collocation learning. The students, later on, may learn not only arranging the words but also collocating the words well in a sentence based on the rules of English collocation.

## II MATERIALS AND METHOD

### 2.1 LITERATURE REVIEW

In this part, the researcher provides a clear account of collocation based on the theoretical perspectives; this consists of the definition of collocation including what collocation is and why we learn it, varieties of collocation including metaphor, intensifying and softening adverb communicating, and several examples of collocation including three topics such as behavior, weather, and religion. Michael and Felicity (2008: 04) notes that collocation means a natural combination of words; it refers to the way English words are closely associated with each other. For example, *Pay* and *Attention*, *Go* with *Together*, *Blond* goes with *Hair* and *Heavy* with *Rain*.

Michael clearly states that collocation is a combination of words arranged to be natural, this is the reason why the EFL/ESL have to learn collocation both writing and speaking so as to be native speaker-like. As Michael (2008: 04) says "English learners need to learn collocation because they will help you to speak and write English in a more natural and accurate way". Collocations are not just a matter of how adjectives combine with nouns. They can refer to any kind of typical word combination. For example Verb + Noun (e.g. arouse someone's interest, lead a seminar) Adverb + Verb (e.g. flatly contradict) Noun + Noun (a lick of paint) and so forth (Michael and Felicity, 2008: 06).

In addition to the reason above, learning collocation is also of great benefit i.e. use the words you know more accurately, sound more natural when you speak and write, vary your speech and your writing and understand when skillful writer departs from normal patterns of collocation. (a journalist, poet, advertiser, etc.)

Michael & Felicity (2008: 16 – 20) states that there is a wide range of collocation as follows:

#### 2.1.1 REGISTER

In most languages, particularly in English, you will find formal and informal expressions. For example, if your close friend hosts a party, then you say "Thanks for the party, it was a blast". This is informal expression. However, when your boss was the host, then you would probably say. "Thanks for the party, I really enjoyed it". It was informal expression. L2 learners should also consider using both formal and informal language. Example of the register as follows:

The police are investigating/looking into the arms deal (Neutral)

The cops are trying to dig out info about the arms deal (Informal)

The police are conducting an investigation into the arms deal (Formal)

#### 2.1.2 METAPHOR

##### 2.1.2.1 Metaphor based on the Body

Collocation	Example	Meaning
Face up to the fact	You are never going to run in the Olympics. It's time you faced (up to) the fact.	Accepted the reality
Shoulder the blame	Although others were responsible for the problem, Sue decided to shoulder the blame.	Take responsibility for something bad
Have an eye for	Gina has an eye for detail, so ask her to check the report	Is good at noticing

##### 2.1.2.2 Metaphor based on Weight

Heavy can be used to mean serious or difficult

e.g. heavy responsibility / a heavy burden.

It means "a difficult responsibility".

##### 2.1.2.3 Metaphor based on Movement

Run into difficulty

Walk straight into

Run into trouble

Jump to the conclusion

### 2.1.3 INTENSIFYING AND SOFTENING ADVERB

Deeply offensive (intensifies – *very/extremely*)

Slightly offensive (softener – *a little bit*)

#### 2.1.3.1 Intensifying adverbs

These words below means “*extremely or completely*”

Jane enjoys doing housework, you should see her flat – it’s always *spotlessly clean*.

It was *downright rude of* Antonio to tell Paul that she looked older than her own mother

I feel *thoroughly ashamed* etc.

#### 2.1.3.2 Softening adverbs.

Slightly means “*a little bit*” it can be used with a wide range of adjectives. For example:

The spokesman and the insurance scheme was only *slightly different* from the old one.

The chief executive said he was *mildly surprised* by the public interest in the firm’s plans

(*Mildly* also collocates with *amusing/ed, irritating/ed, offensive*)

Alfredo Scaiussi’s new film is *loosely based* on nineteenth century novel. (*Loosely* also collocates with *centered, structured, related, connected*)

This film is *faintly amused*

*Faintly* is fairly formal

*Faintly* also collocates with *amused, surprised, patronizing, absurd*)

### 2.1.4 ALTERNATIVE TO VERY

Highly	unlikely, educated, recommended	not appreciate, influence, interesting
Strongly	influence	Appreciate
Greatly	appreciate, influence	
Utterly	absurd, ridiculous	sorry, busy, glad, lonely
Thoroughly	Enjoy	

Several examples of collocation, based on different topic

#### 2.1.4.1 Behavior (Conduct)

Adj. Good, Discreditable, Immoral, Improper, Unprofessional. Criminal, Fraudulent, Negligent, Wrongful personal, Homosexual, Sexual, Business, Professional.

Verb + Conduct: engage in, regulate

e.g. The committee concluded that the senators had engaged in improper conduct

Conduct + Verb: constitute something

e.g. Conduct constituting a crime

Prep. By, Toward,

e.g. The violent conducted by the strikers was condemned

#### 2.1.4.2 Weather

Summer

Adj. Last, Next, This (Coming), Early, Late, mid (also Midsummer), High, Good

e.g. it seems to be a good summer

Summer + Noun:

Noun: Temperature, Weather, Sunlight, Sunshine, Breeze, Gale, Sky, Term.

e.g. there are two being run on the summer term

#### 2.1.4.3 Religion

Adj. great, major, orthodox, alternative

e.g. Islam is one of the great world religions.

Verb + Religion: Belong to, Have, Follow, Practice, Abandon, Reject, Defend, and Spread.

Do you still practice your religion?

Religion + Verb: Be Based on something, Originated from something, Develop, Spread

e.g. He believes that all religions originated from a single source

Prep. By, In a/the

In their religions, mountains are sacred

Note: Improvement & additional information

## 2.2 METHODOLOGY

The researcher seeks to provide the data of the study. The data was collected from the students' writing results in translating the words in a sentence based on their background knowledge of collocation. The researcher acquired the data from the postgraduate program of University of Islam Malang consisting of 5 students, particularly in Class C of the first semester. The data was derived from on the 16th of January, 2018 while the students were studying one of their subjects of English. At that moment, the researcher conducted a small research through surveying their writing ability in English. The researcher used scientific instrument i.e. direct questionnaires. The researcher provided the students with questionnaires that contain the words in Indonesian in order for the students to be able to translate them into English easily. The researcher then went over the students' errors in writing with regard to the collocation.

The following are the questions that are to be answered by the students. In this section, the students are assigned to translate the sentence into English using their own background knowledge of collocation. They are as follows:

"Pertemuan itu akan ditunda sampai minggu depan".

"Ibu saya saat ini sedang menjalani pembedahan".

"Saya sangat menganjurkan agar dia belajar dengan orang-orang yang berpendidikan".

"Setelah seminggu, dia mendapatkan teman baru".

"Saya dapat menarik kesimpulan bahwa dia telah melakukan kejahatan".

The data obtained by observation. The researcher provided some questions that will subsequently be answered by the students. Students are asked to answer the questions immediately on the paper. In this case, the researcher limited the study. He only carried out the research on five students since the time was limited. The questions above consist of five series of questions. Each student received one question. The researcher directly observed the students' writing singly by walking around them. Students are only given fifteen minutes to complete their tasks. When the time is up, the students must submit it.

## III RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The students' writing errors in combining with words in the sentence are accounted for below. The followings are the findings taken from some of the students' writing errors in collocation.

Pertemuan itu akan ditunda sampai minggu depan

Yasin: "The meeting will be **postponed** until next week".

Ibu saya saat ini sedang menjalan ipembedahan

Umi: "My mother is **passing through** surgery right now

Saya sangat menganjurkan agar dia belajar dengan orang-orang yang berpendidikan

Yogi: "I **very encourage** that he studies with educated people".

Setelah seminggu, dia mendapatkan teman baru.

Rinda: "After a week, he **got** a new friend"

Saya dapat menarik kesimpulan bahwa dia telah melakukan kejahatan.

Dini: "I can **make a conclusion** that he has **done a crime**".

The results of the students' writing errors in collocation are discussed as follows:  
(Pertemuan itu akan ditunda sampai minggu depan)

Yasin "The meeting will be **postponed** until next week".

This sentence has a wrong combination of word. Michael and Felicity (2008: 08) notes that **adjourn** is very strongly associated with **meeting and trial**. Yasin writes a word "**postponed**" in the sentence, so it is wrong. Although **postponed** has the same meaning as **adjourn**, **adjourn** is appropriate vocabulary to be collocated with "**meeting and trial**". The sentence must be "**the meeting will be adjourned until next week**".

(Ibu saya saat ini sedang menjalani pembedahan)

Umi – "My mother is **passing through** surgery right now"

**Passing through** is not collocated with **surgery**. Colin, et al (2009: 774) states that surgery is collocated with some verbs: Verb + Surgery: **have, undergo, perform, need, require**. Thus, **pass through is not appropriate** verb for **surgery**, she can use "**undergo**" or "**perform**". That should be: My mother is **undergoing surgery** right now.

(Saya sangat menganjurkan agar dia belajar dengan orang-orang yang berpendidikan)

Yogi: "I **very encourage** that he studies with educated people"

This is also obvious that the word "**encourage**" is not appropriate for suggestion or recommendation. The best word to replace it is "**recommend**". Whereas "**very**" is not natural either to be used in the sentence since "**recommend**" has a particular adverb "**Strongly**". Thus, the sentence must be "**I strongly recommend her studying with highly educated people**". As Colin, et al (2009:628) suggests that in giving advice to do something, the adverb of recommendation is "**Strongly**". For example: I would **strongly recommend** that you get professional advice.

(Setelah seminggu, dia mendapatkan teman baru)

Rinda: "After a week, he **got** a new friend"

The verb "**get**" is not collocated with **friend**. Instead **friend** is collocated with **make, find, become, remain, stay, win, and have**. (Colin, et al. 2009: 329). Therefore, it is supposed to be "**After a week, he made a new friend**".

(Saya dapat menarik kesimpulan bahwa dia telah melakukan kejahatan)

Dini: "I can **make a conclusion** that he has **done a crime**".

Although that is grammatically correct, based on the collocation, however, that is wrong. The verb "**make**" is not collocated with "**conclusion**" and neither is **do** with crime. Colin, et al.(2009: 146) notes that the Verb + Conclusion: **draw, arrive at, come to, reach**. While the Verb + Crime: **carry out, commit, report**. For example: "**You committed a crime**". "**Many crimes are never reported to the police**". Therefore, the Dini's sentence above is error in collocation. The sentence should be "**I can draw a conclusion that he has committed a crime**".

#### IV CONCLUSION

It is very important to recall that most EFL/EFL Students, so far, still have been committing errors in collocation; especially in placing the word with which word it should collocate. These errors are caused by their lack of knowledge on collocation even having no knowledge of it. Therefore, since the researcher has discovered some mistakes from the students, the best way to improve their writing ability is by learning collocation. The students will subsequently know exactly appropriate words they will use in the sentence in order to be natural-sounding English.

Since the researcher has provided the students with some knowledge of collocation. The researcher expects both EFL/ESL students to be more careful of using words in a sentence. They may learn some from this paper or from other resources concerning collocation learning.

## REFERENCES

- Kane S.T. 1988. *Oxford, Essential to Writing*. USA: The Barkley Publishing Group.
- Ellis. R. 1985. *Understanding Second Language Acquisition*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- McIntosh, Francis, B. and Poole. R. 2009. *Oxford Collocation Dictionary*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- McCarthy, M. and O'Dell, F. 2008. *English Collocation in Use: Advanced*. United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press.
- McCarthy, M. and O'Dell, F. 2006. *English Collocation in Use*. United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press

