AN ANALYSIS OF THE USE OF COLLOCATION IN STUDENTS' WRITING

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Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mendeskripsikan penggunaan *collocation* dalam tulisan esai tiga sampai lima paragraf. Pola *collocation* yang di analisa dalam tulisan ini adalah *verb + noun collocation* dan *adjective + noun collocation*. Penelitian ini adalah penelitian deskriptif . Populasi penelitian ini adalah mahasiswa kependidikan semester tiga yang telah telah mempelajari *Writing 2.* Sampel penelitian ini adalah kelas KP2 tahun masuk 2011. Instrument penelitian ini adalah tes dimana responden diberikan sejumlah waktu untuk menulis sebuah esai tiga sampai lima paragraph. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa penggunaan *verb + noun collocation* dan *adjective noun collocation* berada pada level *"good"* dan *"excellent".* Oleh karena itu, dapat disimpulan bahwa penggunaan *verb + noun collocation* dan *adjective + noun collocation* bukanlah masalah utama dalam esai tiga sampai lima paragraf mahasiswa semester tiga. Serta, dapat juga disimpulkan bahwa penggunaan *verb + noun collocation* lebih sulit dibandingkan dengan penggunaan *adjective + noun collocation.*

Kata kunci : *Collocation, writing, use of collocation*

A. Introduction

There are four basic skills in learning English. One of them is writing. Because writing is one important and basic skill in learning English, teaching writing is divided into four levels, Writing 1, Writing 2, Writing 3, and Paper/ Thesis Writing. The purpose of dividing writing skills into four levels is to teach writing intensively. In Writing 1, students are taught how to write a paragraph. In Writing 2, students are taught how to write an essay two to five paragraphs long. In Writing 3, students are taught how to write a scientific writing. Lastly, in

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Paper/Thesis Writing, students are taught steps and techniques of writing paper and thesis in English.

On students' writings, there were some common problems found like grammatical problems, mechanical problems, wrong organizations of the ideas, and wrong use of words or wrong combination of words. Wrong word combination means that students misuse natural combination of words or collocations. For instance, they tended to use *make homework* while English native speakers use *do homework*. They replaced the verb *do* with *make*. Another one is that some students collocate the word *suicide* with *do,* do suicide. This is not the right combination. The right collocation of suicide is *commit suicide*.

Students cannot combine words freely because words usually have their natural combinations called collocation. If they combine the words freely, their collocation usage will be wrong. This is worth noting because using collocation properly is one of the factors differentiating ESL and EFL learners from native speakers of English. Like McCarthy (1990) and McCarthy and O'Dell (2008) say that if EFL learners can use collocations accurately, their writing and speaking will be natural and accurate. If not, their English will remain a major indicator of foreignness. This means that learners' ability in using collocation is an important thing because it differs native speakers from ESL or EFL learners. Learners' written or spoken will be natural and accurate or will be native like if they use the right collocations.

Moreover, the nature of collocation itself has been tried to be defined by some experts. Some say that collocation is habitual co-occurrence of words or group of words. This statement is proposed by Baker (1992), Schmit (2000), and Nation (2001). They state that collocation is tendency of words or group of words that commonly co-occur together. Then, there is also given the definition of collocation that focuses on the high frequency combination of lexical items. Thornbury (2002) say that words are collocates if they occur together with more than chance frequency. Also, an easy definition of collocation is given by McCarthy and O'Dell (2008) that is words that associate and combine naturally. They focus on the association and combination of words. From the ideas above it can be inferred that collocation is a co-occurrence of words that usually keep company with one another naturally.

To understand deeper about collocation, there will be elaborated the four characteristics of collocation which are proposed by Boonyasaquan (2005). First is no word can be added. If the collocation is added by another word, the collocations will be unusual and unnatural. For example, in *knife and fork*, it is very unusual to add a word to this collocation like, *knife, spoon, and fork.* Second is being not able to be replaced by a synonym or word of similar meaning. For example: *John is away on business trip,* but not *John is away on business journey.* Third is binomials that cannot be reversed for example, *bread and butter,* not *butter and bread.* The fourth is that collocation is predictable. For example, if a person hears a collocation *apply...* and *shrug...* s/he automatically expects that *for* and *shoulder* will follow.

There are some classifications of collocations proposed by experts. The two major classifications, grammatical and lexical collocations, are proposed by Benson *et al.* (1997). 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. The common types of collocation, which have been adopted by most researchers, are seven types of lexical collocations. It can be seen in the following table 1.

Lexical Collocation categorized by Benson et al. (1997)

Type	Pattern	Example
L1	V (creation/ activation) + N/ Pron. / Prep. Phrase	1. Verb denoting creation: Come to an agreement, compose a music 2. Verb denoting activation: Fly a kite. Launch a missile.
L2	Verb (eradication/ cancelation) + N	Reject an appeal, break a code
L3	Adj. + N	Strong tea, a chronic alcoholic
L4	N + V	Bombs explode, bees sting
L5	N (unit or quant.) + N	A banquette of flower. A piece of advice
L6	Adv. + Adj.	Hopelessly addicted, sound asleep
L7	V + Adv.	Argue heatedly, apologize humbly

English as foreign language (EFL) students do make mistakes in using collocations. The mistakes are caused by several problems proposed by Deveci (2004). The first one is intralingual problems in which the students have problem within the language itself for example grammar problem like instead of *much sugar* they might say *many sugar* incorrectly. The second one is interference of the mother tongue. The example is *take medicine*. In Indonesian, regularly the noun *medicine* collocates with the verb *drink*, *drink the medicine,* but in English *medicine* collocate with *take*, *take medicine*. The third one is over generalization of collocations. For instance, they could think *put off your hat* is the opposite of *put on your hat*. *Put off* means *delay* while *put on* means placing something. The fourth one is failure to make sense of an idiom. An idiom such as *raining cats and dogs* does not make sense to Indonesian learners because this idiom does not exist in their culture. In Indonesian culture, *cats and dogs* are used for saying people disputing. The last one is not recognizing collocations as meaningful phrases. The example is *run across*. In this example it is known that know that nobody runs or crosses. If the learners do not understand this phrase as a meaningful phrase they might misunderstand it.

The purpose of this study was to see and to analyze use of collocations in writing examination of the third semester English departments students. Since there so many types of collocation, the study was limited to two kinds of collocation. They were verb + noun and adjective + noun. Also, according to Al-Zahrani (1998), these two patterns of collocations are typical errors occurring frequently in learners' production.

B. Research Method

This research was a descriptive research since its purpose was to describe the use of collocations found in students' writings. According to Gay (2009), descriptive research attempts to present an answer of the questions about the accurate fact or describe the existing phenomena. Therefore, by conducting this research, it described the use of collocation on third semester English department students' writing examination.

Population of this research was four classes of third semester students of English educational program at State University of Padang. Gay (2009) mentions that the population is the group which makes the researcher generalize the result of the research and the population is accessible and available. In this research the population was English department students in the third semester that had learned Writing 2 in which students were taught how to write an essay three to five paragraphs.

The sampling that was used was cluster sampling technique. Gay (2009) says that cluster sampling selects the group randomly, not individuals. All the members of selected group have similar characteristics and the minimum student is at least 10% of the group. The sample was chosen by using lottery system. The name of the each class was written on four separated pieces of paper, and then it was rolled. After doing that procedure, one class KP2 was chosen.

Instruments of the research were the Writing 2 semester test and tables of data tabulations. Writing 2 semester test was a test in which the students were asked to write an essay three to five paragraphs. There were two kinds of data tabulations used in this research. They were data tabulation of verb + noun collocation and data tabulation of adjective + noun collocation. The data tabulations consist of columns of student, total of collocation, correct collocations, and incorrect collocations. Moreover, Oxford Collocation Dictionary by Runcia (2002) and British National Corpus were used to decide whether the collocations found on students' writing were correct or wrong. Then, to get the qualitative description of each type of collocation use, the percentage of correct collocation was calculated by using the following formula proposed Sudjana (1991)

$$P = \frac{F}{N} \times 100 \%$$

Where:

P = Percentage of correct items

F = Frequency of correct item

N = Total number of items

Next, the percentage of correct collocation was classified into the following interval as in *Panduan Akademik UNP* that was adapted for this research as below:

Table 2 : The classification of interval percentage

Interval percentage	Classification
81 – 100	Excellent
66 – 80	Good
56 – 65	Average
41 – 55	Poor
0 – 40	Very poor

After that, the result was described to answer the research problems. The conclusion was obtained from the table.

C. Discussion
1. Verb + Noun collocations
In this research it was found that there were many collocations found on 33 students' writings. For more specific description about verb + noun collocation, the data are described in table 3 below

Table 3: Data Tabulation of Verb + Noun Collocation

St.	TC	CC	IC
1	4	3	1
2	3	2	1
3	4	2	2
4	3	3	0
5	4	3	1
6	6	6	0
7	7	5	2
8	3	3	0
9	2	1	1
10	4	2	2
11	5	2	3
12	4	3	1
13	3	3	0
14	9	4	5
15	6	5	1
16	3	3	0

17	5	5	0
18	8	4	4
19	3	2	1
20	3	2	1
21	4	1	3
22	2	1	1
23	7	3	4
24	1	1	0
25	1	1	0
26	6	4	2
27	3	2	1
28	2	2	0
29	2	2	0
30	5	5	0
31	2	2	0
32	6	3	3
33	1	0	1
$\sum$	131	90	41

Note: St   : Student
       TC   : Total Number of Collocation
       CC : Correct collocation
       IC   : Incorrect Collocation

From the table above, it can be seen that there were 131 collocations found in students' writing. 90 collocations were the correct ones and 41 were the wrong ones. It means that from 131 collocations found, 68.70 % of the use of collocation were appropriate. Also, percentage of wrong collocation was 31.30%. In *Panduan Akademik UNP*, it is stated that if the interval percentage of correct answer is from 66 to 80, the score level is classified as good. Based on interval of percentage as in *Panduan Akademik UNP*, the use of verb + noun collocation was good because the percentage of correct use of collocation was 68.70%. This percentage was in good classification.

2. Adjective + Noun collocations

In this research, it was found that there were many collocations found on 33 students' writings. For more specific description about adjective + noun collocation, the data are described in table 6 below

Table 4 : Data Tabulation of Adjective + Noun Collocation

St.	TC	CC	IC
1	4	4	0
2	12	10	2
3	3	3	0
4	6	5	1

5	7	6	1
6	7	7	0
7	7	5	2
8	5	3	2
9	7	7	0
10	7	7	0
11	5	5	0
12	4	4	0
13	7	6	1
14	4	3	1
15	4	2	2
16	4	4	0
17	8	8	0
18	6	4	2
19	5	5	0
20	9	7	2
21	3	3	0
22	11	11	0
23	3	3	0
24	8	8	0
25	1	1	0
26	10	9	1
27	9	7	2
28	10	9	1
29	7	7	0
30	5	5	0
31	3	3	0
32	7	6	1
33	6	6	0
$\sum$	204	183	21

Note: St : Student

TC : Total Number of Collocation

CC : Correct collocation

IC : Incorrect Collocation

From the table 4 above, it can be seen that adjective + noun collocation is used more frequent than verb + noun collocations. There were 204 collocation found on these 33 pieces of writings. 183 (89.71%) collocations were correct combinations and 21 (10.29 %) collocations were incorrect. In *Panduan Akademik UNP*, it is stated that if the interval percentage of correct answer is from 81 to 100, the score level is classified as excellent. Based on interval of percentage as in

Panduan Akademik UNP, the use of adjective + noun collocation was excellent because the percentage of correct use of collocation is 89.71%. This percentage was in excellent classification.

Based on the two findings above, it can be seen there were many collocations found on students' semester writing examination. Students used many verb + noun collocations and adjective + noun collocations. Some students used more collocations than the others. Also, from the finding, many collocations were found in the right combinations although there were still small amount of incorrect collocations.

Furthermore, based on analysis it was found that using verb + noun collocations and adjective + noun collocations was not a major problem for students. This is not in line with Al-Zahrani (1998) that says that these two kinds of collocations are collocations that are typical errors occurring frequently in learners' productions. It can be seen from the findings that the percentages of correct collocations are high. Percentage of verb + noun collocations was classified as good and percentage of adjective + noun collocations was classified as excellent. This means that most of adjective + noun collocations are used correctly by students.

However students made more mistakes in using verb + noun collocations than they did in adjective + noun collocations. From the analysis it was found that there were two main problems faced by students in using collocation in their writing. First, students replace a certain words with its synonym. From student 10's writing, for example, it was found that he made *repair the problem* while it should be *fix the problem*. Although *repair* and *fix* are synonymous, *repair* cannot replace the use of *fix* in *fix the problem*. If someone replaces it, the use this collocation will be incorrect and unnatural. This is in line with Boonyasaquan (2005) that states that collocations consist of components that cannot be replaced by a synonym or word of similar meaning.

The second problem was that students' mother tongue influences the use of correct collocations. For instance, student 14 wrote *use motorcycle*. This example is not correct because in English *motorcycle* usually collocate with *ride*, not *use*. On the other hand, in Indonesian the word use (*menggunakan*) can collocate with motorcycle (*sepeda motor*). They become use motorcycle (*menggunakan sepeda motor*). So, mother tongue influences their English, especially in using collocations. This is also in line with what Deveci (2004) has found that some students just directly transfer their mother tongue into English.

Meanwhile, the use of collocations in writing, in this case using verb + noun collocation was more difficult than using adjective + noun collocation. It can be seen from the higher percentage of using wrong verb + noun collocations than the percentage of using adjective + noun collocations. In other words, students tended to make mistake more in using verb + noun collocations than they did in using adjective + noun collocations in their writings. The main factor is wrong use of

synonyms like the use of *make* and *create*, *decrease* and *reduce*, *get* and *gain*, and *search* and *seek*.

D. Conclusion and Suggestion

Based on the finding of the research, there are four points that can be concluded. First, the use of verbs + noun and adjective + noun collocations in writing essay three to five paragraphs was not a major problem for students. It can be seen from the high percentage of using correct collocation. Second, the use of adjective + noun collocations in writing was classified as excellent. Almost all of adjective collocations were correctly used by the students in their writing. Third, the use of verb + noun collocations was classified as good. More than half of these collocations could be used correctly by students. Last, from the number of wrong collocation, it can be seen that using verb + noun collocations was more difficult for students than using adjective + noun collocations.

Based on the research conducted, there are some suggestions that can be proposed to students that will write academic writing, writing lecturers, and other researchers. First for students, they still need to be aware of using collocations because they just cannot combine words freely for words have their own natural combination. Next for writing lecturers, the lecturers need to emphasize on the use of correct collocations so that the students' writing will be more natural and accurate. For other researchers, this study only looked for the use lexical collocations, verb + noun and adjective + noun collocations. Further types beyond these two kinds of collocation and grammatical collocations need to be identified. Thus, we can have a clearer and complete picture of the use of collocations.

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