

RESEARCH ARTICLE

A Study of Analyzing the Impact of L2 on Learning the Collocations of English among University Students in Punjab, Pakistan

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Abstract: The current study explores the role of the knowledge of learners' language L1 in acquiring the collocations of English language L2. The population for the study was students at the BS level across Punjab, Pakistan. The questionnaire was developed in both Urdu and English and administered to measure the impact of L1 collocations in learning the collocations of the English language. The study has investigated the impact of the learners' native language expertise on collocation and its transfer and role in learning the collocations of English. In the Urdu collocation test cumulative percentage of correct and incorrect answers were respectively 94.25% and 5.75% while in the English collocation test, the cumulative percentage of correct and incorrect answers were respectively 63.5% and 36.5%, which clearly illustrated many ESL learners had not better awareness about English collocation that was why they faced difficulties in choosing adequate English collocation.

Keywords: Second Language Learning, Collocation, Lexical, Grammatical, Punjab, Pakistan.

Introduction

The ability to communicate and interact with others in English is of the utmost importance in the modern world of global communication and interconnectedness. As English continues to serve as a lingua franca across a variety of fields, such as education, business, and technology, the ability to effectively use the language in a variety of contexts is becoming an increasingly recognised requirement for success. The mastery of collocations, which are conventional combinations of words that frequently occur together, is an essential component of language acquisition. Learning collocations is essential to achieving fluency and communicative competence in English. The role of the learners' first language in shaping their understanding and usage of collocations is still a topic of considerable scholarly interest and empirical investigation despite the fact that there is a multitude of factors that influence the acquisition of a second language. The significance of understanding the impact of second language acquisition on the acquisition of English collocations is especially important when considering the context of students in Punjab, Pakistan, who are at the intermediate level and for whom English language education is a central component of the curriculum.

When two or more words are frequently used together, this is known as a collocation. It is necessary for English language learners to make a concerted effort to learn these combinations because they are frequently difficult to guess (McCarthy & O'Dell, [2017](#)).

Native speakers of English have a natural ability to use these combinations. According to Siyanova-Chanturia ([2015](#)), the term "collocation" refers to the combination of two or more words that are observed to occur in a variety of different language contexts. There is a great deal of interest in the etymology of word collocation due to the fact that it was first traced in the 17th century in the writing of Sir Francis Bacon, a great English prose writer; in his *Natural History*, which was written in 1627. Bacon did not make use of this

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term with regard to certain linguistic constructions. The term is thought to have been used by Harris as a linguistic term one hundred years later, in the year 1750. According to Palmer ([1933](#)), he determined that it was the linear constellation of words. It wasn't until the 1930s that the term was used to refer to the unit of words that extends beyond a single word. Prior to that, it had gradually taken on its current interpretation. A natural combination of words and the way in which words combine within a language to produce speech and writing that sounds natural have been referred to as "natural combinations" in the most recent usage of this term (Gyllstad, [2007](#)).

According to Rabih ([2009](#)), making appropriate use of collocations is considered to be one of the most important factors in proficient language use. Students who are enrolled in an intermediate level of education in Pakistan should place a significant emphasis on acquiring the appropriate knowledge and ability to use collocations. It is going to be beneficial to them and will help them become more acute in their understanding of the text. One of the most significant challenges that students who are at an intermediate level encounter when attempting to comprehend their text is their reliance on the Grammar Translation Method (GTM) and the literal meanings of various word combinations. While translating a variety of short stories, poems, and plays at an intermediate level, they make an effort to learn the English vocabulary by using Urdu words that are equivalent to English words. The purpose of this study is to determine the extent to which learning English collocations is influenced by learning a second language. In addition to this, it will attempt to determine whether the transfer of L2 is positive or negative when it comes to learning the collocations of FL, which involves learning English in the context of Pakistan.

Types of Collocations

Lexical and Grammatical Collocations

Collocations can be categorized into two major types: lexical and grammatical. Lexical collocations consist of two or more content words, such as nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs, as demonstrated below:

noun + verb: dust accumulates

verb + noun: express gratitude

adjective + noun: an occupational hazard

adverb + adjective: grammatically correct

verb + adverb: vary considerably

adverb + verb: fully understand

Grammatical collocations, on the other hand, are combinations made up of a content word and a function word, which is usually a preposition, as shown below:

noun + preposition: an increase in

verb + preposition: approve of

adjective + preposition: familiar with

preposition + noun: in actuality (Phoocharoensil, [2012](#)).

Objectives

- ▶ To know how native language influences the learning of other languages.
- ▶ To know how the knowledge of a native language influences the learning of foreign languages, especially in educational settings.

Research Questions

- ▶ What is the impact of L1 on learning the collocations of English among intermediate students in public and private colleges of South Punjab?
- ▶ What is the role of the knowledge of collocations of L1 in understanding the collocations of English among students?

Literature Review

Significance of Collocations for EFL Learners

It is without a doubt that students who are learning English as a foreign language (EFL), such as Thais, require a solid comprehension of English collocations in order to be able to use vocabulary in the target language (TL) in an effective manner (Phoocharoensil, [2014](#)). In an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom, Hill ([2015](#)) has proposed several reasons that advocate for the prioritisation of collocations.

In the first place, the selection of vocabulary frequently adheres to predictable patterns. This is because the utterance of a word by a speaker can cause the listener to anticipate a variety of different word combinations. A good example of this would be the expectation that the verb "drink" will be followed by a liquid that can be consumed, such as water, milk, or lemonade, as opposed to a liquid that cannot be consumed, such as engine oil, or solid food, such as bread, rice, or meat. Because of this, it is essential for students of English as a foreign language to develop an awareness of the predictability of collocates.

Second, the use of collocations in English constitutes a significant portion, accounting for nearly 70 per cent of authentic spoken and written English. As a result, it would appear that teaching students English as a foreign language collocations is of great benefit to them. Collocations play an important role in the human thought process, making it possible for people to communicate more effectively and fluently. This is another characteristic that makes them noteworthy. EFL learners, due to limited exposure to L2 English, often process L2 word-by-word due to a lack of an extensive repertoire of ready-made or formulaic language, such as collocations, as stated by Hill ([2015](#)) and Wray ([2000](#)). This is in contrast to native English speakers, who are able to recognise multi-word units with ease. Thus, having sufficient knowledge of collocations significantly accelerates the ability of learners to process second-language information (Moon, [2009](#)). The idea that formulaic sequences improve processing efficiency is supported by Kuiper et al. ([2009](#)), who made the observation that formulaic sequences allow single memorised units that are composed of a string of words to be processed more quickly and easily than creatively generated word sequences. Additionally, Conklin and Schmitt ([2008](#)) brought attention to the fact that nonnative speakers who read formulaic sequences more quickly than non-formulaic sequences have an advantage when it comes to reading text.

Apart from the reasons mentioned above, advanced English as a Foreign Language students can benefit tremendously from using collocations. The ability to express complicated concepts in a natural and accurate manner is afforded to these students by their proficiency in chunks or prefabricated units (Wray, [2002](#)). In accordance with Hill ([2015](#)), "The more exposure students have to good quality input and the more awareness they develop of the lexical nature of language, the more they will recognise and eventually produce chunks themselves" (p. five hundred fifty). In the following section, we will investigate the impact that the learners' native language has on their ability to acquire English collocations. Learners of the English language, regardless of the context in which they are learning the language, whether it be English as a Foreign Language (EFL), English as a Second Language (ESL), or English as an International Language (EIL), face difficulties in acquiring vocabulary in their second language (L2) (Phoocharoensil, [2014](#)). It is essential for them to acquire the knowledge they need to comprehend the meanings of new words in English and to comprehend the potential words that can collocate with those words. Collocation has been the subject of a number of research studies, and these studies have demonstrated that its native language plays a significant role in learners' subsequent learning of second language collocation. The learner's reliance on their knowledge of collocations in both their first language (L1) and their second language (L2) may be an indication of their assumption that there is a one-to-one correspondence between the collocational choices in their mother tongue (L1) and their second language (L2). There is a tendency for a positive transfer of learners' native language to occur when the collocations of their native language (L1) match those of their second language (L2). In contrast, when there are differences between the linguistic units of both the first language and the second language,

it steers the learners in the direction of the negative transfer and causes them to produce L2 deviant collocational combinations.

Methodology

The nature of the current study was quantitative, which measured the relationship of available variables. A questionnaire was developed in Urdu and English to elicit knowledge of collocation. Each questionnaire consisting of twenty multiple-choice items was prepared to gather the data from the respondents. The sample comprised 240 (male and female) students from the BS classes of public and private universities in Punjab. All the students were from the BS Eng. program and were studying English as a second language, while their native language was Urdu. All the respondents were regular public and private college students, and their ages ranged from 15 to 20. The researcher had chosen these participants because they were studying at the upper level; therefore, they were expected to have already learned a certain number of collocations.

After administering the questionnaires, the researcher scored all the collocation test papers. The possible range score of each questionnaire was 0 to 20. The students got 1 point for the correct answer and 0 scores for each incorrect answer. Furthermore, unanswered items were considered incorrect. So, SPSS-XX (Statistical Package of Social Sciences) was utilized to analyze the collected data. At first, descriptive detail was provided to determine the respondents' performance in English and Urdu collocation tests. Then, a paired sample t-test was run to examine the statistical significance of L2 learners' English and Urdu collocation test scores.

Data Analysis

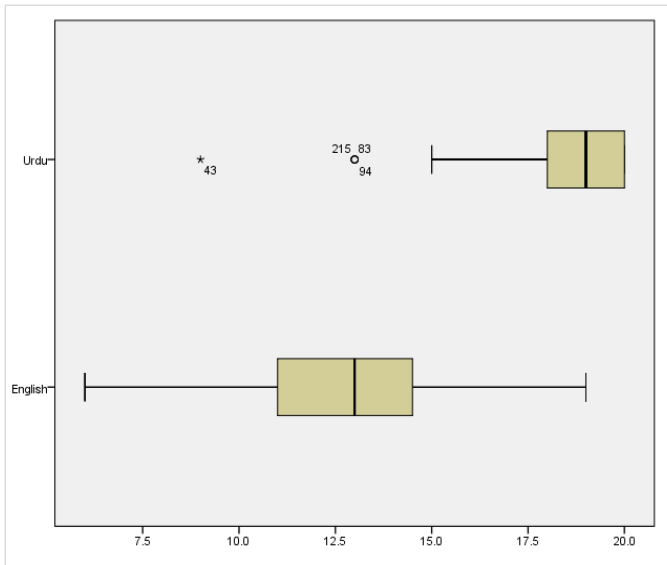
Table 1

1				2			
Item	Urdu		Rank	Item	English		Rank
	Frequency N=240				Frequency N=240		
	Correct	Wrong			Correct	Wrong	
1	235 (97.9%)	5 (2.1%)	5	1	156 (65.0%)	84 (35.0%)	10
2	223 (92.9%)	17 (7.1%)	10	2	166 (69.2%)	74 (30.8%)	9
3	231 (96.3%)	9 (3.8%)	7	3	98 (40.8%)	142 (59.2%)	17
4	239 (99.6%)	1 (0.4%)	1	4	46 (19.2%)	194 (80.8%)	20
5	238 (99.2%)	2 (0.8%)	2	5	190 (79.2%)	50 (20.8%)	6
6	236 (98.3%)	4 (1.7%)	4	6	193 (80.4%)	47 (19.6%)	5
7	239 (99.6%)	1 (0.4%)	1	7	188 (78.3%)	52 (21.7%)	7
8	212 (88.3%)	28 (11.7%)	13	8	207 (86.3%)	33 (13.8%)	3
9	221 (92.1%)	19 (7.9%)	12	9	96 (40.0%)	171 (60.0%)	18
10	237 (98.8%)	3 (1.3%)	3	10	223 (92.9%)	17 (7.1%)	1
11	211 (87.9%)	29 (12.1%)	14	11	137 (57.1%)	103 (42.9%)	13
12	222 (92.5%)	18 (7.5%)	11	12	206 (85.8%)	34 (14.2%)	4
13	236 (98.3%)	4 (1.7%)	4	13	150 (62.5%)	90 (37.5%)	11
14	238 (99.2%)	2 (0.8%)	2	14	216 (90.0%)	24 (10.0%)	2
15	228 (95.0%)	12 (5.0%)	9	15	125 (52.1%)	115 (47.9%)	15
16	233 (97.1%)	7 (2.9%)	6	16	142 (59.2%)	98 (40.8%)	12
17	216 (90.0%)	14 (10.0%)	15	17	134 (55.8%)	106 (44.2%)	14
18	167 (69.6%)	73 (30.4%)	16	18	111 (46.3%)	129 (53.8%)	16
19	233 (97.1%)	7 (2.9%)	6	19	177 (73.8%)	63 (26.2%)	8
20	229 (95.4%)	11 (4.6%)	8	20	84 (35.0%)	156 (65.0%)	19
Total	94.25	5.75		Total	63.5	36.5	

The data in the above table describes the frequency, rank, and percentage of correct and incorrect answers to both Urdu and English collocation tests. The test consists of 40 items divided into two sections in a multiple-choice format. According to the present statistics of Table 1, in the Urdu collocation test, item 18 is considered the most difficult, which is wrongly responded to by the students at the rate of 30.4%, and it stands at the highest rank, sixteenth. Furthermore, items 16 and 19 found equal difficulties, 2.9%, at rank ^{sixth}. Whereas items 7 and 4 were considered the easiest, recorded 99.6% correct scores, and ranked first. Therefore, in the Urdu collocation test, the cumulative percentage of correct and incorrect answers were 94.25% and 5.75%, which yielded that the majority of the learners had better awareness about Urdu collocation, which was why they faced a little bit of difficulties in choosing appropriate Urdu collocation.

On the other side, in the English collocation test, the most difficult item faced by the students was 4, with the lowest rank being 20. Moreover, item 1 obtained a 65% score at rank 10th. Item 10 recorded the highest score, 92.9%, and s, standing. Therefore, the table above demonstrated that the cumulative percentage of correct and incorrect answers in the English collocation test was 63.5% and 36.5%. This clearly illustrated that many ESL learners had no better awareness of English collocation, so they faced difficulties choosing adequate English collocation. Additionally, figure 1 illustrates the visual display of Table 1.

Figure 1
The Percentage of Correct Answers of Each Collocation Test



The abovementioned boxplot (figure 1) indicates students' performance in Urdu and English collocation tests. So, we can easily assume that the median of Urdu collocation test scores is extremely higher than the median of English collocation test scores. Furthermore, it's quite clear that most participants performed better on the Urdu collocation test than the English one.

The paired sample t-test results revealed in Table 2 reinforce the preliminary findings from the above descriptive data of Table 1.

Table 2:

Paired Samples Test									
Paired Differences									
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		T	DF	Sig. (2-tailed)
					Lower	Upper			
Pair1	U1 - E1	.32917	.48834	.03152	.26707	.39126	10.442	239	.000
Pair 2	U2 - E2	.23750	.55441	.03579	.16700	.30800	6.636	239	.000
Pair 3	U3 - E3	.55417	.53846	.03476	.48570	.62264	15.944	239	.000
Pair 4	U4 - E4	.80417	.39767	.02567	.75360	.85473	31.328	239	.000
Pair 5	U5 - E5	.20000	.41114	.02654	.14772	.25228	7.536	239	.000
Pair 6	U6 - E6	.17917	.40548	.02617	.12761	.23073	6.845	239	.000
Pair 7	U7 - E7	.21250	.42001	.02711	.15909	.26591	7.838	239	.000
Pair 8	U8 - E8	.02083	.43342	.02798	-.03428	.07595	.745	239	.457

Paired Samples Test									
Paired Differences									
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		T	DF	Sig. (2-tailed)
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 9	U9 - E9	.52083	.53299	.03440	.45306	.58861	15.138	239	.000
Pair 10	U10 - E10	.05833	.28331	.01829	.02231	.09436	3.190	239	.002
Pair 11	U11 - E11	.30833	.63108	.04074	.22809	.38858	7.569	239	.000
Pair 12	U12 - E12	.06667	.44314	.02860	.01032	.12302	2.331	239	.021
Pair 13	U13 - E13	.35833	.51416	.03319	.29295	.42371	10.797	239	.000
Pair 14	U14 - E14	.09167	.31678	.02045	.05139	.13195	4.483	239	.000
Pair 15	U15 - E15	.42917	.55942	.03611	.35803	.50030	11.885	239	.000
Pair 16	U16 - E16	.37917	.54310	.03506	.31011	.44823	10.816	239	.000
Pair 17	U17 - E17	.34167	.58568	.03781	.26719	.41614	9.037	239	.000
Pair 18	U18 - E18	.23333	.74016	.04778	.13922	.32745	4.884	239	.000
Pair 19	U19 - E19	.23333	.44314	.02860	.17698	.28968	8.157	239	.000
Pair 20	U20 - E20	.60417	.49852	.03218	.54078	.66756	18.775	239	.000
Total	Urdu-Eng.	6.154	3.066	.198	5.764	6.544	31.092	239	.000

To find out the statistically significant difference in the scores of participants between the Urdu and English collocation test, a paired sample t-test was employed through SPSS (Version-20). The paired sample t-test reveals the difference between the Urdu and English collocation tests in twenty pairs, as shown in Table 2. The above table indicates the meaningful difference among pair 1, pair 2, pair 3, pair 4, pair 5, pair 6, pair 7, pair 9, pair 10, pair 11, pair 12, pair 13, pair 14, pair 15, pair 16, pair 17, pair 17, pair 18, pair 19, and pair 20 with significant p-value 0.00. Pair 8 had recorded a p-value of .457, which is higher than the significance value of 0.05, which was why no significant change was seen in this pair

Moreover, the overall statistics of the paired sample t-test shown in the last cell of previous Table 3 demonstrated that the calculated value of $T = 31.092$ at 239 degrees of freedom (DF). The mean scores for Urdu and English collocation were 18.77 and 12.62, respectively, which creates a difference of 6.15 in favor of Urdu collocation. Moreover, the findings yielded significant results because the significant value of the two-tailed t-test is .000, which is considered less than 0.05. Eventually, it was proved that L1 Urdu collocation positively affected L2 English collocation because most of the students relied on literal translation to find adequate test answers.

Conclusion

In other words, by studying this work, it has emerged that the process of transfer of the first language is a particularly common technique that students use when it comes to creating collocations in the second language, particularly English (L2). In general, learners rely on translations from the first language whenever they are at a loss as to which lexical unit—noun, verb, adjective, or an article, preposition, etc.—the target language requires. This has become a widespread tendency, and the overuse of L1 often leads to mistakes when choosing collocations in L2.

In addition, this study supports and extends prior research carried out on EFL learners in English as a Foreign Language. The effectiveness of L1 interference evidenced in these studies can hardly be overestimated. In particular, the views obtained from the answers to the questionnaires given in Table 1 show that, though the participants have good knowledge of L1 collocation, they still fail in the FL, in this case, English, in identifying the right choices.

The emergence of a new language raises a desire to focus on future transformations in language education. Although the results show that all subjects, including students who comprehended the label and accurately identified L1 collocations, had difficulty choosing the right FL collocations, this warrants further teaching implications. This implies that perhaps current conventional approaches to teaching and learning may require some fine-tuning to deal with and circumvent the corresponding factor: native language transfer in collocation.

The data elaboration confirms that language learning is not a simple process, especially when focused on collocational knowledge. These findings provide additional information regarding L1 interference that underlines the role of specific intervention in language teaching and learning. Assignments that engage teachers entail finding ways of responding to the learners' difficulty in understanding the complexities of collocation options.

It also points to future research interest in designing instruction focused on improving collocation knowledge since L1 proficiency disseminates the impact of L2 collocations. Looking into the impact of language immersion, using technology-integrated learnability or communicative language teaching to reduce L1 interference could yield results that could help educators who wish to be the best when teaching a language.

Therefore, the study supports various earlier theories that native language transfer selectively impacts collocational production in the second language, English. In a way, the study continues conceptual investigations on L1 interference in EFL learning environments and underscores the urgency of related pedagogical modifications. It calls for a reconsideration of language teaching approaches in relation to better tackling the issues pertaining to collocational selection, especially with learners with rich L1-linked collocations types knowledge.

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