التحقيق في تأثير تدريس التجميعات المعجمية على مهارة التحدث

لطلاب المدارس المتوسطة في العراق من وجهة نظر المعلمين

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Investigating the Effect of Teaching Lexical Collocations on Iraqi EFL Intermediate School Students' Speaking from Teachers' Perspective

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Abstract

    This study aims at investigating the effect of teaching lexical collocations on Iraqi EFL intermediate school students' speaking skill from teachers' perspective. The study examines how the book content meets the requirements of using lexical collocations in order to help teachers improve the student's speaking skill. If the selected materials have already matched with young learners' needs or not, so that they can have some decisions to improve the students' English competence. The data of this study has been collected through a questionnaire.

Keywords :Lexical collocations; speaking skill; EFL learners; Intermediate school.

الخلاصة: تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى التحقق من تأثير تدريس التجميعات المعجمية على تحدث طلاب المدارس المتوسطة في اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية من منظور المعلمين. تبحث الدراسة في كيفية استيفاء محتوى الكتاب لمتطلبات استخدام التجميعات المعجمية من أجل مساعدة المعلمين على تحسين مهارة التحدث لدى الطالب وما إذا كانت المواد المختارة قد تطابقت بالفعل مع احتياجات المتعلمين الصغار أم لا ، حتى يتمكنوا من اتخاذ بعض القرارات لتحسين كفاءة الطلاب في اللغة الإنجليزية. أُستخدِم الاستبيان لجمع البيانات.

الكلمات المفتاحية: التجميعات المعجمية، مهارة التحدث، متعلمي اللغة الانجليزية كلغة ثانية، المرحلة المتوسطة

Section One

Introduction

Collocation, or the tendency of certain words to occur together, is an intriguing linguistic phenomenon. Collocations can be found in a variety of ways in all text types and languages. Furthermore, people all over the world use collocations to express their ideas, thoughts, and feelings in their own unique way [1].

The study's primary goal is to investigate lexical collocations and their role, if any, in English language. Furthermore, the study aims to demonstrate these roles in speaking skill and to clarify this issue in practice by comparing two samples of intermediate school students' speaking skill from the perspective of teachers.

1. Statement of the Problem

This study is made to help EFL second intermediate students learn how to use lexical collocations learning and how to overcome their problems in oral performance. To realize this, the study sought to investigate the effect of lexical collocations strategy and to probe its effectiveness in developing lexical richness of the oral performance (in terms of lexical collocations) among EFL intermediate student. The problem of the current study can be stated in the following major questions:

- Is there a way to reduce these enormous learning and teaching loads?
- Does the learner really have to learn all of these collocations? Teachers may find a solution to this problem if teachers look at collocations from a contrastive point of view.
- How to Investigate the effect of teaching lexical collocations on Iraqi EFL second Intermediate school students' speaking skill from teachers' perspective?

2. Significance of the Study

The current study specifically an important in investigating the effect of teaching lexical collocations on Iraqi EFL intermediate school students' speaking from teachers' perspective.

The importance of this investigation lies in analyzing teaching EFL leaners speaking skill methods to suggest new solutions and ways to teachers in order to improve speaking skill to EFL leaners specifically those who are studying English in an intermediate stage.

3. Aims of the study

This study aims to open up new ways with which teachers could help learners improve their knowledge of vocabulary by collocation activities.

4. Limitation of the study

The present study is limited to English language textbook units for the second intermediate school in the city of Babylon governorate, the academic year (2020-2021).

5. Definition of Basic Terms

1) Collocations

As stated in [2], Collocation is the syntagmatic association of lexical items, quantifiable, textually, as the probability that there will occur, at n removes (a distance of n lexical items) from an item x, the items a, b, c..

Collocation refers to the restrictions on how words can be used together, for example which prepositions are used with particular verbs, or which verbs and nouns are used together [3].

2) Lexical Collocations

As indicated in [4], lexical collocations do not contain clauses, infinitives, or prepositions; instead, various combinations of nouns, verbs, adverbs, and adjectives. Again, if you compare lexical collocations to closed class structure of grammatical collocations, it can be easily seen that lexical collocations include no subordinate element, and are composed of two equal open-class lexical items.

3) Speaking Skill

Speaking is defined as an interactive process of constructing meaning that involves producing, receiving and processing information. Its form and meaning are dependent on the context in which it occurs, the participants, and the purposes of speaking [5].

4) An intermediate School

It is a school that covers students who are roughly aged 11 through to 12 years old. This age group is often referred to as the young adolescent age group.

Section Two

2. Theoretical Background

A. Principles of Teaching Speaking Skill

According to [6], following are the principles of teaching speaking skills:
- Encourage students to speak right from the first day. If not, as early as possible and not to wait till she teaches them a stock of words, phrases or sentences.
- Tolerate the students if some of them simply repeat what they say.
- If a student gives one word answer to any question, bear it for the time being. - Let the learners speak actively with whatever English knowledge they have.
- Propose structures/phrases/words and let the learners use it in different situation and drill as much as possible.
- Encourage back-chaining or tail-forwarding technique to make long sentences by combining more than ten sentences.
- Organize role play and pair-work as much as possible and supervise the learners to correct the active ones and activate the passive ones.
- Be well prepared in advance in terms of lesson planning, activities and tasks.
- Allow the learners commit errors and mistakes at the primary stage. Interruption and correction hinder fluency and discourage the learner.
- Individual weaknesses should be taken into account and the teacher should be sympathetic in outlook for individual attention.

B) Challenges to Teaching Collocations

Teaching collocations has raised a huge problem which is the unlimited number of collocations in English language that makes their teaching impossible. As supposed

in [7], "the teaching of lexical collocations in EFL should concentrate on items for which there is no direct translation equivalence in English and in the learner's respective mother tongues". However, in [8], Lewis considers this huge number of collocations as a challenge or an advantage rather than a problem. He sees that teaching collocations, whatever is their number is an effective way in learning. At the same time, Lewis argues that this is a heavy burden for the foreign learner: "a mature language- user's mental lexicon is much larger than we previously thought, and the non- native learner's task in learning a sufficiently large lexicon correspondingly more difficult".

Therefore, teachers think that English language teachers have to concentrate on the most common collocations that are used by native speakers and could lead to fluent and natural writing. Hence, teachers could proceed to other collocations that are less frequent in speech/writing provided that there is much time. To sum up, here are a number of challenges which would mean to teaching collocations [9]:

1- Teachers should stop using out of-date grammar rules which, if you are honest you have probably never really believed helped any way.
2- Forget any inhibitions about possible defects in your own English, and move the focus of your attention to helping students understand and speak English.
3- Don not use the exams as an excuse for conservative teaching.
4- Develop a real linguistic curiosity.
5- Learn how to identify multi-word items, help your students to develop the ability to do the same.
6- Make sure you are familiar with the modern corpus-based reference books which offer so many helpful insights into English and which have only become available in the few years.
7- Use the reference books regularly in class, and teach all your learners to do the same.
8- Pay more attention to fluency and communicative power and less to mere accuracy.
9- Remember the sheer size of the lexicon. Choose only what is useful for your learners.
10- Teach the spoken language, make full use of new media available to you, increase the time you spend talking naturally to your learners. Value the ability to speak English, even a little as a genuinely life enhancing skill.

Section Three
3. Methodology and Procedure

1. Experimental Design

Descriptive research is adopted to investigate the effect of teaching lexical collocations on Iraqi EFL intermediate school students' speaking, which is one of the research methods used in education and psychology.

The process of building analytical tool is the first step of conducting research for evaluating the questions. The tools were personally administered by the researcher with assistance of the teachers who were selected.

The major tool used for collecting the primary data is a validated questionnaire. Ten questionnaires have been completed. This tool was divided into Five Tables, as follows:

1. Part One: a table of 8 questions of personal questions about the teacher who will answer the questions.
2. Part Two: a table of 15 questions about the requirements for learner that available in English curriculum.

3. Part Three: a table of 10 questions about the requirements for lexical collocation that are available in English teacher.
4. Part Four: a table of 12 questions about the requirements for all learning that are available in English learners.
5. Part Five: a table of 10 questions about the requirements for all learning that are available in English learners.

The process of analyzing the answers collected from the teachers who answered these questionnaires was the second step of this research.

2. Population and Sample of Study

The population of this study included in total one hundred and six English teachers at Babylon governorate during the academic year. As follows:
1) 34 Male teachers, who teach English at Babylon governorate.
2) 72 female teachers, who teach English at Babylon governorate.

These 106 teachers are as follows:
- 99 of them have Arabic language as first language while 7 of them have English language as first language.
- 32 of them are Less than 31 years old, 38 of them are (31-40) years old, 28 of them are (41-50) years old and 8 of them are (51-60) years old.
- 86 of them have a Bachelor's degree, 16 has master's degree and 4 of them has PhD degree.

The major sample was the second intermediate student book, which is the book taught to the second intermediate students in the education institutes in Iraq which contains eight units.

3. Evaluation Criteria

To evaluate this research, the investigator analyze the questionnaires with SPSS program taking into consideration analyzing all the answers to all tables and their percentages.

Section Four

4. Data Analysis

The results will be presented into four parts, each part related to one of the tables in the questionnaire that we analyze.

A. Results related to the Requirements for learner that available in English curriculum

Table I. Table of Requirements for learner that available in English curriculum means and percentages

Item	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total	Weighted	Percent weight
The major cause of your learners' errors is because of using lexical collocations.	18	32	34	17	5	106	3.39	67.74
Teaching collocations can be difficult.	20	35	31	16	4	106	3.48	69.62
It is difficult to design many strategies for teaching speaking skill.	29	41	20	12	4	106	3.75	74.91
speaking is the most difficult skill for students in an intermediate level	30	44	14	17	1	106	3.8	76.04
Lexical collocations can make a good effect when teaching speaking skill.	24	58	9	10	5	106	3.81	76.23
Learners' Self-learning skills were well considered in the Curriculum Content developments.	26	50	19	7	4	106	3.82	76.42
Lexical collocations can make a good effect when teaching speaking skill.	29	40	29	6	2	106	3.83	76.6
We have to design a collocational syllabus.	26	49	22	8	1	106	3.86	77.17
Presenting new words through collocations result in a better learning of the words than presenting them using classical techniques.	27	50	17	12	0	106	3.87	77.36
Leaner's speaking skill development was well considered in the curriculum design.	25	51	22	8	0	106	3.88	77.55
There is a relationship between participants' knowledge and their use of collocations in their speaking.	25	50	25	6	0	106	3.89	77.74
Presenting new words through collocations result in a better learning of the words than presenting them using classical techniques.	29	49	19	8	1	106	3.92	78.3
There are many challenges face teachers when they teach speaking skill	30	48	23	4	1	106	3.96	79.25

Teachers make learners notice words that goes together when teaching	32	56	14	2	2	106	4.08	81.51
Teacher may encourage students to learn collocations on their own to improve speaking skill.	45	35	17	8	1	106	4.08	81.7
There is a need for designing the curriculum in a way that makes different syllabus complete each other and suit to the next stage of study	30	58	18	0	0	106	4.11	82.26
Average							3.84	76.9

As it is seen in table I, the lowest responses were to that, the major cause of the learners' errors is using lexical collocations, teaching collocations are difficult to be taught (67.74%), It is difficult to design many strategies for teaching speaking skill (69.62%) and speaking is the most difficult skill for students that are in an intermediate level (74.91%). However, the highest responses were to that, there is a need for designing the curriculum in a way that makes different syllabus complete each other and suit to the next stage of study (82.26%), There is a need for encouraging students to learn collocations on their own (81.7%), Teachers make learners notice words that goes together when teaching (81.51%), There are many challenges face teachers when they teach speaking skill (79.25%). Other items go in between the lowest and the highest as it is shown in the table.

B.   Results related to the Requirements for lexical collocation that are available in English teacher

Table II. Requirements for lexical collocation that are available in English teacher means and percentages

Item	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total	Weighted	Percent weight
Dictionaries help teachers with teaching lexical collocations.	27	42	24	12	1	106	3.77	75.47
Teachers have the ability to develop the learners' experiences and new skills for learners	25	48	21	10	2	106	3.79	75.85
Teachers use different methods and new techniques in teaching lexical collocation and speaking skill.	26	52	22	4	2	106	3.91	78.11
Words in isolation or words combinations require more emphasis in teaching collocation.	27	56	15	5	3	106	3.93	78.68
The teacher have the ability to use educational programs in teaching English language.	31	54	17	2	2	106	4.04	80.75

Teachers focus on developing student's speaking skill.	34	55	10	7	0	106	4.09	81.89
In speaking, we encourage student to use the dictionary when we need information about English vocabulary	43	39	19	2	3	106	4.1	82.08
Teachers have the ability to control the lessons through changing the activities.	34	54	15	2	1	106	4.11	82.26
we must divide the students into groups and encourage them to talk with each other in English language	52	28	17	6	3	106	4.13	82.64
we must encourage students to use speaking skill in their daily life.	60	27	11	2	6	106	4.25	85.09
Average							4.01	80.28

The results in table II show the lowest responses were to that, dictionaries help teachers with lexical collocations (75.47%) and the teacher has the ability to develop new experiences and skills for learners (75.85%). However, the highest responses were to that, we must encourage students to use speaking skill in their daily life (85.09%) and we must divide the students into groups and encourage them to talk with each other in English language (82.64%). Other items go in between the lowest and the highest as it is shown in the following table.

C. Results related to the Requirements for all learning that are available in English learners

Table III. Requirements for all learning that are available in English learners means and percentages

Item	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total	Weighted	Percent weight
The learner has a good self-learning skill.	3	29	28	24	22	106	2.69	53.77
The learner has the ability to deal with electronic courses	14	43	26	22	1	106	3.44	68.87
The learner has the ability to use communication courses	11	51	23	17	4	106	3.45	69.06
Collocations as a linguistic topic has not been handled in the curriculum	21	37	26	20	2	106	3.52	70.38
Learners use technology in English language classes.	19	49	22	13	3	106	3.64	72.83
The learner has the ability to use teaching center sources	21	43	26	15	1	106	3.64	72.83
The lack of Arabic–English or English-Arabic dictionaries of collocation that survey collocations in the source language and their	21	44	30	5	6	106	3.65	73.02

equivalents in the target language may further complicate matters								
The learner has a skill in cooperative work	20	48	22	13	3	106	3.65	73.02
The learner can actively participate to change from listener to knowledge partner	25	35	36	7	3	106	3.68	73.58
The cultural factors and to the natives' tendencies can be the major reasons for the difficulty of collocation	17	59	18	10	2	106	3.75	74.91
Iraqi EFL learners face difficulty in rendering their native lexical collocations into the suitable equivalent English ones	24	50	23	9	0	106	3.84	76.79
Iraqi EFL learners face difficulty in using English lexical collocations	30	44	20	11	1	106	3.86	77.17
average							3.57	71.35

The results in table III show the lowest responses were to that, the learner has a self-learning skill (53.77%), The learner has the ability to deal with electronic courses (68.87%) and the learner has the ability to use communication courses (69.06%). However, the highest responses were to that, Iraqi EFL learners face difficulty in using English lexical collocations (77.17%) Iraqi EFL learners face difficulty in rendering their native lexical collocations into the suitable equivalent English ones (76.79%) and the cultural factors and to the natives' tendencies can be the major reasons for the difficulty of collocation (74.91%). Other items go in between the lowest and the highest as it is shown in the table.

D. Results related to the Requirements for lexical collocation that are available in English learners

Table IV. Requirements for lexical collocation that are available in English learners means and percentages

Item	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total	Weighted medium	Percent weight
Collocations have to be taught Through other skills as a separate module	14	53	21	13	5	106	3.55	70.94
The teacher takes into consideration the learner collocation mistakes	17	45	29	8	7	106	4.54	70.75
When you teach collocations, you require emphasis on Words in isolation	20	42	22	22	0	106	3.57	71.32

The major cause of your learners' errors in using collocations interferences is they do not know how to combine words	21	44	28	7	6	106	3.63	72.64
Collocations can be taught by using collocation dictionaries	18	52	20	12	4	106	3.64	72.83
The collocations Can be taught Through highlighting word combinations to encourage the learner to notice them	16	58	20	4	8	106	3.66	73.21
Collocations can be taught through feedback from wrong words combinations in students' essays	15	54	27	9	1	106	3.69	73.77
Collocations can be taught by raising students' consciousness to them	18	56	22	5	5	106	3.73	74.53
When you teach collocations, you require emphasis on words combinations	16	61	20	6	3	106	3.76	75.28
collocations can be taught through exercises	36	52	13	4	1	106	4.11	82.26
Average							3.69	73.75

The results in table IV show the lowest responses were to that, the teacher take into consideration the learner collocation mistakes (70.75%) and collocations have to be taught Through other skills as a separate module (70.94%). However, the highest responses were to that, collocations can be taught through exercises (82.26%) and When teachers teach collocations, they require emphasis on words combinations (75.28%). Other items go in between the lowest and the highest as it is shown in the table.

Section Five

5. Discussion of the Results

For further explaining to the results, the whole tables percentages will be considered. As it is clear the responses to the table III that has question related to the Requirements for all learning that are available in English learners were the lowest (71.35%) with lowest response to the participant answers about if learner has a self-learning skill (53.77%), which means that most teachers do not see that students are capable of improving their speaking skill by themselves and there is a large burden on the teachers because of the continuously needs for more teaching to develop the students speaking skill.

The second lowest responses were to the table IV that has question related to the requirements for lexical collocation that are available in English learners (73.75%), which refers to the lack of using lexical collocation in teaching and how students are not adopted to this, the highest response in this table was to "collocations can be taught through exercises" which means that teachers encourage using lexical collocation through exercises to develop students' skills.

The third responses ascendingly were to table I that has question related to Requirements for learner that available in English curriculum (76.9%) with highest response to "There is a need for designing the curriculum in a way that makes different syllabus complete each other and suit to the next stage of study" (82.26%). Taking into consideration that the responses to this table were not low, give us the point that teachers are pretty satisfied with the curriculum but also see the needs for a new design to it in a way that makes different syllabus complete each other to reduce the gap in students' speaking skill and develop their English learning.

The highest responses were to that has question related to the Requirements for lexical collocation that are available in English teacher (80.28%) with highest response to "we must encourage students to use speaking skill in their daily life" (85.09%), which present the needs for more encouragements to the students, so that they can relieve the burden on teachers and develop their speaking skill by having conversations with each other in English, using English in their daily lives and develop their self-learning skill.

Section Six

6.1. Conclusions

1- There is a need for more use of lexical collocations in teaching English to improve EFL students' skills especially speaking skill.
2- There is a need for a new design in English curriculum in a way that makes different syllabus complete each other and suit to the next stage of study.
3- There is a need for more encouragement to the students to develop their self-learning skill in order to develop their English learning skills.
4- There is a need for encouraging students on talking with each other in English language to develop their speaking skill.
5- Teachers need to more focus on using lexical collocations in teaching English for fast development in students' vocabularies.
6- Teachers can teach EFL learners Lexical Collocations through exercises.
7- Iraqi EFL learners less adopted to English lexical collocations and face difficulty in using them.
8- English teachers must encourage EFL students to use speaking skill in their daily life.

6.2. Suggestion

In the light of the results the researcher wants to present the following Suggestions:
1- The researcher suggests for ministry of education in Iraq to develop the English curriculum for second intermediate students with a new design in a way that makes different syllabus complete each other and suit to the next stage of study.
2- The researcher suggests for English teachers to more focus on using lexical collocations in teaching English for fast development in students' vocabularies.
3- The researcher suggests for English teachers to encourage EFL students to use speaking skill in their daily life and talk with each other in order to develop their learning.

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