
The importance of collocation in learning english

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Word is a central unit of a language. Life experiences by words, because thoughts are made by words. Learning a new language is a matter of learning the vocabulary of that language. Not being able to find the words you need to express is the most frustrating experience in speaking another language. Of course vocabulary is not the whole of the language. Over the last few years, vocabulary teaching has gained more interest from English teachers and theorists who argue that, without a wide range of vocabulary, grammar does not help learners much. Therefore, language teachers need to make sure that their students know which word goes with which other word(s), and that necessitates teaching collocations. Doing so will help learners acquire the language more quickly and efficiently. When we learn vocabulary, we might understand the meaning of the word using a dictionary, but many times, we do not know how to use the word in a sentence. The best way to learn vocabulary is to learn what words are commonly used with the word in an example sentence. The importance of vocabulary acquisition has always been recognized, although, at times, vocabulary was treated as separate from grammar and skills. However, the communicative and natural approach emphasized the importance of vocabulary development, which resulted in more interest in vocabulary teaching.

It is accepted that choosing our words carefully in certain situations is more important than choosing grammatical structures. [1.]

Collocation describes the relationship between words that often appear together. At the moment we can find many different resources dedicate to the problems of “teaching collocations”. In our practice of teaching English at the university level we often face with this problem. We cannot use structures correctly if we do not have enough vocabulary knowledge. Although many techniques and approaches, such as word families and key words, have been employed in teaching vocabulary. Collocation describes the relationship between words that often appear together. At the moment we can find many different resources dedicate to the problems of “teaching collocations”. In our practice of teaching English at the university level we often face with this problem.

Collocations sound natural to native speakers, but students of English have to make a special effort to learn them because they are often difficult to guess. Some combinations just sound ‘wrong’ to native speakers of English. For example, the adjective *fast* collocates with *cars*, but not with *a glance*. *fast cars* not *quick cars*.

Learning collocations in groups helps you fix them in memory. I must **find a way** to help him.

Can you **find your way** back to my house?

I **learnt the hard way** that Jack can't be trusted.

Please tell me if I'm **getting in your way**.

You must **give way** to traffic from the left.

I've **tried every possible way** to get him to change his mind.

Loud **music** was **blaring out** of the radio in the kitchen.

Marie has such a **shrill voice**. I can't listen to her for long.

I don't think a horror story makes good **bedtime reading**.

The book is **beautifully written** — I highly recommend it.

Helen had to **bring up** four young **children** on her own.

We live with my mum now, but we will **set up home** on our own soon.

He greeted me with a **firm handshake**.

I can't decide if he's good-looking — he's got very **close-up** eyes.

Years of smoking had left him with a **husky** voice.

Dan is very fashionable — he only buys **designer** clothes.

When you communicate with other English speakers, you'll definitely notice the way they speak and what phrases, expressions and word combinations they use to describe certain things.

Collocation describes the company that a word keeps; from this we can examine; *lexical sets*, a family of words the members of which collocate with each other, for example *strong and powerful* which both collocate with *argument*. Sometimes a pair of words may not be absolutely wrong, and people will understand what is meant, but it may not be the natural, normal collocation. If someone says *I did a few mistakes* they will be understood, but a fluent speaker of English would probably say *I make a few mistakes*.

Incorporating collocations into any language lesson plan is a tried-and-true way of getting students to begin speaking, writing and reading their new language in a way more consistent with the native speakers.

Used literature:

1. Harmer, J. 1991. *The practice of English language teaching*. Second Edition. London: Longman.
2. Hill, J. and M. Lewis. 1997. *LTP dictionary of selected collocations*. Hove, England: Language Teaching Publications.
3. Michael Mc Carthy Felicity O' Dell English collocations in use Cambridge