

# The Importance of Integrating Collocations into Teaching English Skills

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**Abstract:** *Collocation plays a vital role in learning a language. It helps the learners speak more naturally and fluently. The study looks at its importance in language learning and its types so that learners have a general overview of collocation. Besides, to help obtain the collocations effectively requires strategies of teaching English skills. The study explores how collocation contributes to naturalness and fluency, accuracy and better writing.*

**Keywords:** *Collocations, strategies, naturalness, fluency*

## 1. Introduction

Collocation, the tendency of words to occur together frequently, is a crucial aspect of language proficiency. While often overlooked in traditional language instruction, the mastery of collocations significantly enhances a learner's ability to communicate effectively and naturally. So why should students prioritize the learning of collocations? Firstly, collocations are essential for natural and fluent language use. As Lewis (1993) posits, "collocations are the building blocks of fluency." By learning to combine words in natural and idiomatic ways, students can avoid sounding stilted or unnatural. For example, instead of saying "strong rain," a native speaker would typically say "heavy rain." Such subtle distinctions, though seemingly insignificant, can greatly impact the overall impression of a language user. Secondly, collocations aid in vocabulary expansion and retention. When learners encounter a new word, they often struggle to remember it in isolation. However, by learning the word in context, alongside its common collocations, they are more likely to retain it. As Nation (2001) suggests, "collocations provide a rich context for learning vocabulary, making it more memorable and meaningful." For instance, the word "heavy" can be paired with various collocations, such as "heavy rain," "heavy traffic," or "heavy workload." This contextualized learning not only strengthens vocabulary retention but also facilitates its application in diverse situations. Furthermore, collocations contribute to the development of reading comprehension skills. When students encounter unfamiliar words or phrases, recognizing collocations can provide valuable clues to their meaning. By

identifying patterns in word combinations, learners can make educated guesses about the overall context and meaning of a text. This skill is particularly crucial for academic reading, where complex ideas are often conveyed through specific collocations. Lastly, collocations are essential for effective written communication. In academic writing, precise and concise language is paramount. Collocations enable students to convey their ideas with clarity and sophistication. By using appropriate collocations, students can elevate the quality of their writing, making it more engaging and persuasive. As Schmitt (2000) argues, "collocation knowledge is a key component of lexical competence, and it is essential for successful language use."

In conclusion, the incorporation of collocation instruction into language learning programs is essential for fostering well-rounded language development. By understanding and utilizing collocations, students can enhance their fluency, vocabulary, reading comprehension, and writing skills. As language learners strive for excellence, the mastery of collocations should be considered a fundamental aspect of their linguistic journey.

## 2. Literature review

### 2.1. Collocation

Collocation refers to the way words are commonly used together in a language. It's about the natural pairing of words that sound right together. In Oxford dictionary, collocation is defined as a combination of words in a language that happens very often and more frequently than would happen by chance. Celce-Murcia (2000) refers to collocation as 'words come together or 'chunks that native speakers can access for comprehension or production'.

Similarly, McCarthy (2018) states collocations as ‘pairs of words that occur regularly together, with a high degree of probability (p.5). He added ‘these combinations sound natural to native speakers’. Also, Colin et al. (2019) regard collocation as ‘the way words combine in a language to produce natural-sounding speech and writing.’ Learning collocation is important in language learning. By integrating collocation into English skills, learners can significantly enhance their fluency, accuracy, and overall communication effectiveness. However, it is not easy for students of English to remember and use them. Students have to make their special effort to learn collocations because they are often difficult to guess. Some combinations just sound ‘wrong’ to native speakers of English.

One effective approach to integrating collocation is through extensive reading and listening. Exposing to authentic English materials, such as books, articles, movies, and podcasts, allows learners to encounter collocations in their natural context. By paying attention to how words are commonly combined, learners can gradually internalize these natural pairings. Additionally, keeping a collocation notebook can be beneficial. Whenever a new collocation is encountered, it can be recorded along with its meaning and context. This practice helps reinforce learning and facilitates future recall.

Active practice is another key strategy for integrating collocation. Learners can incorporate collocations into their writing and speaking activities. This can be done by deliberately choosing appropriate collocations to express ideas more precisely and naturally. For example, instead of saying “make a decision,” one could use the more natural collocation “take a decision.” Additionally, language exchange partners or language learning groups can provide opportunities for practicing collocations in conversation.

Furthermore, utilizing language learning resources that focus on collocation can be advantageous. Collocation dictionaries and online exercises can provide structured learning experiences. These resources often present collocations in thematic categories, making them easier to remember and apply. Additionally, language learning apps and websites frequently incorporate collocation exercises, allowing learners to practice in a convenient and engaging manner.

In conclusion, integrating collocation into English

skills is a valuable endeavor that can significantly enhance language proficiency. By actively engaging in reading, listening, writing, speaking, and utilizing various language learning resources, learners can effectively master collocations and elevate their overall English language abilities.

## ***2.2. The importance of collocation in English learning***

Collocations play a crucial role in effective communication because they help learners achieve

- Natural and Fluent Language: Collocations make their language sound more natural and fluent to native speakers. Using them correctly makes learners’ communication more authentic and easier to understand.

- Clarity and Precision: The right collocation can convey their meaning more precisely. For example, when talking about using medicine to treat illness, instead of saying “drink medicine,” using “take medicine” is accurate and concise.

- Avoiding Misunderstandings: Incorrect collocations can lead to misunderstandings. Using the right collocation ensures that their message is clear and avoids confusion.

- Enhanced Vocabulary: Learning collocations expands their vocabulary and helps them use words in appropriate contexts. This improves their overall language proficiency.

- Improved Writing and Speaking Skills: Strong collocation skills enhance both their writing and speaking abilities. Well-chosen collocations make their writing more engaging and their speech more persuasive.

In short, collocations are the building blocks of natural language. By mastering collocations, students can communicate more effectively, confidently, and with greater impact.

## ***2.3. Types of collocations***

Collocations can be classified based on different criteria. Take into account the semantic relationship of words and phrases in the context, collocations are divided into strong collocations, fixed collocations, and weak collocations. In strong collocations, the words are very closely associated with each other. They are fixed phrases where the words are almost always used together, like ‘fast food’ or ‘heavy rain.’ Weak collocations are more flexible, and the words can be combined with other words, like ‘strong’ which can collocate with ‘wind,’ ‘coffee,’ or ‘opinion.’ Concerning the grammatical feature of

collocations, collocations are commonly classified as follows:

- Adjective + Noun: e.g. strong wind, heavy rain, deep sleep, bright future
- Noun + Noun: e.g. a piece of cake, a cup of tea, a moment of silence, a pack of cards
- Verb + Noun: e.g. make a mistake, do homework, catch a cold, take a break
- Verb + Adverb: e.g. work hard, speak softly, laugh loudly, eat quickly
- Adverb + Adjective: e.g. strongly agree, highly recommend, perfectly clear, deeply sorry
- Verb + Prepositional Phrase: e.g. fall in love, look forward to, get on well with, believe in
- Noun + Prepositional Phrase: e.g. at risk of, on the verge of, in the middle of, at the end of

By understanding these different types of collocations, learners can improve their English language skills and sound more natural when speaking and writing.

#### **2.4. Strategies to integrate collocation into teaching English skills**

To teach helps learners use English fluently and naturally, there are some effective strategies to incorporate collocation into English language instruction, supported by relevant research and practical examples.

One fundamental strategy is to raise learners' awareness of collocations. Explicitly introducing the concept of collocation and explaining its importance can motivate learners to pay attention to word combinations. Teachers can use activities like collocation matching exercises or gap-fill exercises to highlight common collocations.

Another effective approach is to incorporate collocation into reading and listening activities. By exposing to authentic language materials, learners can encounter collocations in their natural context. Teachers can guide learners to identify and analyze collocations within texts, encouraging them to notice how words naturally occur together.

Furthermore, writing activities provide excellent opportunities for practicing collocation. Teachers can assign writing tasks that require learners to use specific collocations.

Learners could be encouraged to use vivid adjectives and strong verbs that collocate naturally. Additionally, peer review can be a valuable tool for reinforcing collocation usage.

Finally, incorporating games and interactive

activities into the classroom can make learning collocations more engaging and memorable. Games like "Collocation Bingo" or "Collocation Pictionary" can create a fun and competitive atmosphere, motivating learners to practice collocations actively. Additionally, using technology, such as language learning apps or online games, can offer personalized learning experiences and cater to different learning styles.

By raising awareness, incorporating repeated exposure to collocation in reading and listening activities, utilizing writing tasks, and employing engaging games and activities, teachers can effectively help learners master collocations, avoid common errors, or misunderstandings and enhance their overall language proficiency.

#### **3. Conclusion**

While grammar and vocabulary are undoubtedly important, the ability to use words appropriately in context is equally essential. In fact, collocation is vital for achieving native-like fluency. By learning collocations, learners can produce language that sounds natural and idiomatic. As a result, teaching collocations by incorporating them in the lessons with suitable strategies can help enhance learners' vocabulary, master and retain it longer. This will help learners be fluent in language skills, improve their fluency, accuracy, and overall language competence. Since then, they will communicate more naturally, fluently and confidently.

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