

## ***Language Proficiency and Collocational Competence***

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Most EFL teachers emphasize vocabulary size at the expense of vocabulary depth, thus neglecting lexical relations such as collocation, etc. Therefore, the current research intends to study the relationship between collocational competence and general language proficiency along with testing the go-togetherness of quantitative and qualitative aspects of lexical knowledge. To that end, 30 senior EFL students were selected from two Iranian universities through a tailored TOEFL test. They received an MC test of lexical (n + v) collocations. The results showed a relationship between the scores on TOEFL and the collocation test, and between the scores on the collocation test and the vocabulary section of the TOEFL. Therefore, collocational competence is much related to general proficiency and that the learners' qualitative knowledge accompanies their quantitative knowledge, implying that collocation must be attended to properly at the right time through direct teaching or consciousness-raising techniques.

**Key words: language proficiency, vocabulary knowledge, collocation, qualitative knowledge**

## INTRODUCTION

There are two principles, offered by Sinclair (1991) on the basis of corpus linguistics, that account for language organization and interpretation. The principles explain the way in which meaning arises from language text: “idiom principle” versus “open-choice principle”. *The idiom principle* states that a language user has available to him or her a large number of semi-preconstructed phrases that constitute single choices, even though they might appear to be analyzable into segments. At its strongest, we might say all senses of all words exist in and are identified by the sequences of morphemes in which they typically occur. If these semi-preconstructed phrases are the general rule in language rather than the exception, then they are able to be incorporated into the organizing principle of language as the idiom principle (Hunston & Francis, 2000). The idiom principle, insufficient to account for all instances of language use, is contrasted with the *open-choice principle* that is a way of seeing language as the result of a very large number of complex choices. At each point where a unit is completed (a word or phrase or a clause), a large range of choices opens up and the only restraint is grammaticalness (Sinclair, 1991). Virtually all grammars are constructed on the open-choice principle. Then a language user, faced with an instance of language use, has to decide whether to interpret this as a chunk, or as a series of individual items. Sinclair himself suggests that the idiom principle takes priority in normal texts.

On the other hand, parallel with the pedagogical trends in the last two decades or so, much attention has been given to lexis and lexical relations. Collocation is one of the aspects of vocabulary and/or lexical relations receiving much attention. Defining collocation as the occurrence of two or more words within a short space of each other, Sinclair (1991) maintains that collocations can be productive and unpredictable or fixed and predictable. In addition, he believes that collocation illustrates the idiom principle in that if the words collocate significantly, then to the extent of that significance, their presence is the result of a single choice.

## Review of Literature on Collocation

In reviewing the related literature on collocation, we have tried to organize the material with reference to the following four points. Yet, it should be acknowledged that the available material might be viewed and organized differently. The organizing points are as follows: a) collocations are multi-word units where the items that make them up frequently co-occur, b) some collocations take on functions which are different from the literal meaning of their parts, c) collocations might become a stumbling block to learning and teaching, and d) collocations might be viewed from teachability perspective.

### *Collocation as a Multi-word Unit*

There is no consensus over a formal, clear-cut definition of the term collocation (Fontenelle, 1998; Melčuk, 1998). However, some collocations are multi-word units where the items that make them up frequently co-occur. Firth (1957) coined the term and defined it as “an abstraction at syntagmatic level...not directly concerned with the conceptual or idea approach to the meaning of words (p. 196)”. Kane (1983) defines it as a group of words making a “small unit of meaning within the larger framework of a clause or a sentence (p. 722)”. Bussmann (1996) refers to the introduction of the term collocation by Firth in his semantic theory to designate characteristic word combinations that have developed an idiomatic semantic relation based on their frequent co-occurrence.

Benson, Benson, and Ilson (1986) explain that in English as in any other language there are many fixed, identifiable, non-idiomatic phrases and constructions. Such groups of words are called recurrent combinations, fixed combinations or collocations, e.g. *commit a murder*. Similarly, Finch (2000) points to the fact that collocative differences sometimes separate words which are otherwise synonymous or paradigmatically related; *Quiver* and *tremble* are synonyms, but we use *tremble* with *fear* and *quiver* with *excitement*, and *profound* and *deep* can both occur with *sympathy*, but only

*deep* with *hole*. Johnson and Johnson (1998) introduce collocation as one of the binding forces in language, organizing lexis according to which words typically occur together, and showing networks of word associations.

#### *Collocation as Having an Idiomatic Meaning*

Some collocations take on functions that are different from the literal meaning of their parts. Nattinger and Decarrico (1992) differentiate collocations from lexical phrases:

Collocations are strings of certain items that co-occur with a mutual expectancy greater than chance and have not been assigned particular pragmatic functions. Lexical phrases are collocations such as *how do you do?*, that have been assigned pragmatic functions and consist of two main groups: a) strings of specific (non-productive) lexical items which allow no paradigmatic or syntagmatic substitution, and which can be both canonical and non-canonical e.g. *what on earth* (can.) and *as it were* (non.), b) generalized (productive) frames consisting of strings of category symbols and specific lexical items which have been assigned a pragmatic function (pp. 36-37).

Coulmas (1981) argues that “the invariable form of many multiword [lexical] units has the effect, in time of draining away referential meaning from their constituents and transferring it into a new focus (p. 4)” which is the discourse function of the expression concerned (e.g., *good morning* is perceived as a greeting). However, they are different from idioms in that they lose their meaning in becoming less analyzable, while idioms develop a unitary (rather than referential) meaning. Also, Cowie (1988) refers to them as “formulas” in contrast with composites of which idioms and collocations are members. He defined composites as “word combinations”, more or less, invariable in form and, more or less, unitary in meaning which function as constituents of sentences and contribute to their referential or propositional meaning and collocation as a “composite unit which permits the substitutability of items for at least one of its constituent elements” (Cowie, 1981, p. 224).

*Collocation as a Stumbling Block to Learning and Teaching*

Different lines of research show that language learners and teachers apparently have trouble dealing with collocations. First, some researchers have studied the learners' competence in using collocations. Through a translation and a gap-filling task with German advanced learners of English, Bahns and Eldaw (1990) found that the students' knowledge of collocations had not developed at the same rate as their knowledge of vocabulary in general. Similarly, Farghal and Obeidat (1995) administered an English fill-in-the-blank test and its Arabic translation version on collocation – on topics such as foods, colors, and weather – to senior and junior English majors and teachers in Jordan. Both groups were deficient in collocations and heavily relied on strategies of lexical simplification like synonymy, paraphrasing, avoidance, and transfer. In a rather contradictory study on testing the quality of word knowledge, however, Greidanus and Neinhuis (2001) found that there was a relation between frequency and quality of knowledge: The more frequent a word, the better the knowledge of the tested aspect.

Second, researchers have tried to detect the learners' errors in collocations. In a longitudinal study of four German learners of English, Lennon (1991) found that in production, 23% of the errors were lexical choice/collocation and 22% were preposition and adverbial particle choice (grammatical collocation) errors. Collocation type errors were almost close to half (45%). Errors, however, reduce with time and more exposure to the target language data. Further, Zughoul (1991) analyzed lexical choice errors of Arab students of English in a writing task quantitatively and qualitatively and classified them into thirteen types. Although he ranked collocation errors fourth in frequency, at least four or five of the other twelve types could be classified as collocation errors: assumed synonymy (e.g., 'to apply for a work' for 'to apply for a job'), literal translation, overuse of some lexical items, circumlocution, etc. He attributed collocation errors to the first language (L1) interferences and the lack of extensive reading of contemporary English prose. Also in a study on perception and production, Biskup (1992) tried to

establish whether lexical collocation posed any problems for L2 learners and which subtype(s) was (or were) particularly difficult. As to perception, no difficulty was seen, since collocations were fully transparent and comprehension test produced 100 percent correct answers. However, in producing translation equivalents of L1 collocations, students faced a real problem, especially with v-n collocations. To find the causes of observed collocational errors and to determine L1 influence, Biskup (1992) then conducted a comparative study to observe advanced learners of English whose L1 was either genetically close (German) or more distant (Polish). The participants were required to render their native language collocations into English. The results showed that Polish students relied more on their L1 and German learners looked for more creative strategies (leading to other error types). Lennon (1996) focused on the errors in lexical verb choice in speech by a small group of advanced learners of English. He scrutinized erroneous uses of 'put', 'go', 'recognize' and 'take' and concluded that although in some cases L1 (German) influence was to be discerned, subjects' problems were more fundamental. In particular, they included lack of knowledge of 'collocational probabilities and restrictions, and confusion as to the semantic boundaries of verbs of deictic movement and appreciation, respectively, complicated where these did not map onto the German system neatly in terms of 'translation equivalents' (p. 23).

The third line of research has been on corpora. Granger (1998) studied amplifiers, i.e., intensifying adverbs. With text-retrieval software TACT, all the words ending in *-ly* were automatically retrieved from native speaker (NS) and non-native speaker (NNS) (French) corpora. The number of types and tokens in the two corpora were compared, revealing a statistically significant underuse of amplifiers in the NNS corpus, both in the number of types and tokens. He concluded that learners use fewer phraseological expressions than their NS counterpart. Further, their under-use of *-ly* amplifiers was compensated by their overuse of the amplifier 'very'. Howarth (1998), also, embarked on a comparative corpus study, in relation to the use of collocations (verb + noun), between NS and NNS from a variety of language backgrounds and came up with the learners' under-use/misuse of

lexical collocations vis-à-vis NSs. And he found no correlation ( $r=0.15$ ) between their average use of collocations and their performance on a measure of proficiency. Investigating native and non-native (Chinese) writing, Liu and Shaw (2001) found that learners' knowledge of a word as common or easy as 'make' was different from that of NSs. Senses of *make* include: 1) produce, 2) do something, 3) cause a state/situation, 4) cause somebody to do something, 5) earn profit. Non-native learners underused sense 2 whereas they overused sense 4. However, it was the reverse for the NSs. NNSs' under-use of sense 2 indicates that "they are not fully aware of the syntactic and semantic restrictions on the uses of words and word occurrences (p. 187)". In addition, they related learners' overuse of sense 4 to the deficiency of their vocabulary knowledge. In an identical study, Altenberg and Granger (2001) came up with the same results with English learners of two different language groups (Swedish and French).

#### *Collocation as an Issue of Teachability*

There are different viewpoints about the significant issue of whether collocations can be taught. For Marton (1977), "mere exposure to the target language is not sufficient for the advanced learners to acquire the knowledge of conventional syntagms" (i.e., collocations). He argues that if language teachers want to guide advanced learners towards a native-like command of the foreign language, they "should pay special attention to their effective learning of conventional syntagms" (p. 43).

Apparently, Mackin (1978) is rather skeptical about the possibility of actually teaching collocations. For him, collocations are in any case "so numerous as to rule out any methodical teaching or acquisition of them" and the only way for foreign language learners to acquire some degree of collocational competence is "years of study, reading, and observation of the language" (pp. 150-151). Challenging the idea, Bahns (1993) adopts a contrastive approach, however. He believes that collocations with direct equivalence in L1 need not be taught. Instead, those lacking equivalence

should be concentrated on. Bahns suggests that the collocations chosen for inclusion in materials for learners of TOEFL will have to be different, not the same, depending on the L1 of the learners.

Nevertheless, many researchers seem to prefer consciousness-raising strategies over direct teaching of collocations (Altenberg & Granger, 1998; Lenon, 1996; Liu & Shaw, 2001; Newman, 1988, each taking a different strategy). Newman (1988) suggests describing words in terms of meaning components derived from componential analysis and collocational restrictions and avoiding mistakes that arise from negative transfer from L1. Lennon (1996) contends that learners would benefit from consciousness-raising as to areas in which lexico-semantic divisions do not correspond in L1 and L2. Altenberg and Granger (2001) hold the same view and encourage the use of concordance-based exercises extracted from native corpora as “a useful resource for arising advanced learners’ awareness of the structural and collocational complexities of high frequency verbs (p. 189)”, then followed by a consolidation exercise in which learners fill in the blanks in corpus excerpts from which common collocates of the base word have been removed. This would increase the learners’ depth of processing and their degree of retention. Liu and Shaw (2001) suggest concordancing technique with which learners analyze their usage of words and compare it with NSs’ in terms of syntax and semantics. They also urge word list compilers as a comprehensive presentation of common lexical items. Moreover, Liu and Shaw (2001) refer to Sinclair and Renouf’s (1988) argument that vocabulary teaching should concentrate on making full use of the words that the learner already has, at any particular stage.

### **The Study**

Second language (L2) learners, as the above studies indicate, are often unaware of the lexical relationships (esp. collocation) that hold between items within the language they are learning. Part of the problem may be due to the over-reliance on a quantitative approach to lexical acquisition; Teachers try

to expand learner's vocabulary knowledge in breadth at the cost of depth, and most studies concentrate on investigating *how many* words learners know rather than *how well* they know the existing words. To shed some light on the issue, the present research tries to investigate the following questions:

1. *Is there any relationship between general language proficiency and collocational competence?*
2. *Is there any relationship between quantitative and qualitative knowledge of words, as designated by collocations and vocabulary tests?*

## **METHOD**

### **Subjects**

With proficiency as one of the major variables, the participants were selected from among senior EFL students at Allameh Tabatabaei University, Tehran, and Azad University of Qom, Iran. The former is a state university and the latter is a non-state one. Azad University is a very big non-state university with too many branches throughout the nation that admits students for different courses through its separate entrance examination that is nationally run. State universities also admit students through its uniform national examination. The non-state Azad University and the state universities follow the same curricular activities and procedures. The participants at this level have a good command of English and are at the advanced level. They have passed, more or less, 100 credit courses on different subjects of English study. Before coming to university, students take four hours of English study for six years through secondary and high school.

A pretest was administered and 30 subjects – 20 females and 10 males – were selected from an initial sample of about 70 students. They averaged 22 years of age. Sex was not a variable in this study, for the limited number of final subjects. Three subjects were MA students in teaching English as a foreign language.

## **Instruments**

Two tests were used in this study: a test of proficiency and a collocation test. The proficiency test was a tailored version of the so-called TOEFL tests (Gear & Gear, 1996; Sharpe, 1996), consisting of structure (20 items), vocabulary (30 items), and reading comprehension (10 items) (See Appendix A for a sample of the three sections of the test).

The structure section was divided into two subsections; Section one included 10 items on a variety of grammatical issues like conjunctions, parallelism, subjunction, apposition and inversion, and section two involved determining erroneous element(s) from among underlined words or expressions on articles, prepositions, quantities, tense, etc. The vocabulary subtest consisted of two equal subsections: a) gap-filling, b) choosing the proper synonym for the underlined word or expression in the lead. Giving more weight to the vocabulary section (which in modern TOEFL tests is non-existent) was due to the fact that we wanted to correlate the scores on this section with those of the collocation test. So we had to have enough items to be able to make sound generalizations (on the relationship between quantitative and qualitative knowledge of words). The reading section included three short passages on moral, scientific, and agricultural issues, each followed by a few questions requiring referential and/or inferential answers.

The collocation test included 50 items testing the verb + noun lexical collocations with more emphasis on delexical verb collocations such as *make*, *take*, and *set* in *make a proposal*, *take a gamble*, *set a record*. The lexical verb collocation items were followed by either four synonymous words such as *change*, *alter*, *modify*, and *vary* or by binary synonyms such as *hold ... keep*; *bear ... carry* (A sample of the collocation test can be found at the end of the article under Appendix B).

The collocational test was validated against the tailored TOEFL test. TOEFL is a general language proficiency test whose validity was already presupposed. The subjects – senior level students – have already acquired

enough general language competence and collocational knowledge accordingly. Therefore, it is appropriate to compare the scores on collocational test against those of TOEFL. Furthermore, the scores on the tests were compared because the tests properly represent vocabulary knowledge and collocational knowledge, and that these different kinds of knowledge are equally difficult. In other words, the tests are in essence equally difficult. The reliability indices estimated through Kuder and Richardson formula (KR-21) were 0.81(high) and 0.63 (moderate) for the proficiency test and the test of collocation, respectively.

### **Procedure and data analysis**

The proficiency test was a combination of several TOEFL test versions with more emphasis on vocabulary. Regarding the fact that collocation is a matter of restrictions on word combinations where a word combines with another rather than its synonym, the researchers had to make sure that the alternatives were, more or less, synonymous, and that only one of them fitted the missing part in the combination. Since access to NSs was impossible, reference was made to dictionaries such as OALD, BBI combinatory dictionary, and Oxford collocations.

The two tests were administered within a period of two weeks. Then the subjects with scores below the cut-off score ( $x = 30 = 50\%$ ) were excluded along with extreme cases toward the other end of the cline. Once test scores were organized, the following steps were taken: 1) The raw scores were converted into uniform scores. The total scores for the TOEFL, collocation test and the vocabulary subtest were 60, 50, and 30, respectively, so the researchers decided to take one as the criterion for total scores and change the other two into that criterion, i.e. the total score for each test was set at 50, then, if someone in the TOEFL received 42 out of 60 it was changed into 35 out of 50, for instance; 2) Reliability was estimated, as described in the instrument section; 3) The mean score along with the standard deviation for each test was calculated; 4) The difference between mean scores was also

determined; 5) Correlation was calculated between the scores on the proficiency test and those on collocation test, and between the scores on collocation test and those on the subtest of vocabulary.

Collocation involves different categorizations and categories. This study is restricted to word combinations, intermediate between free combinations and idioms. In addition, testing subjects on different categories of collocations (i.e., adj. + n, adv + adj.) required a test battery whose design and administration were beyond the time limit and the resources available to the researchers, hence impractical. Therefore, the researchers only concentrated on the verb + noun category of lexical collocation.

Another limitation concerns the test instrument of collocation. There are two ways of discovering learners' collocational competence: corpus analysis and devising experimental procedures for eliciting collocations. The first was not feasible for the lack of any organized corpus of the students' writings. Moreover, asking the learners to write on a variety of issues was impracticable. Then, the only way out was an elicitation technique. At first it was decided to include a translation task involving the rendering of L1 collocations into L2, along with a multiple-choice test of collocation. But it was supposed that the learners might not produce the target collocations in their translation. So the testing instrument was limited to a multiple-choice test of collocation. A further problem concerns the validity of the test in that the researchers had no standard criteria to establish its validity. So it was decided to validate it against the TOEFL whose validity had been presupposed. Moreover, the test items and their alternatives were designed solely on the basis of relevant dictionaries, since there was no access to the NSs. Consequently, there might be a low generalizability for the findings. Nevertheless, the study sheds more light on interesting areas.

## **RESULTS**

Following the above steps, the researchers came up with the following

results. The mean score was 32.52 for the TOEFL (after converting scores), 20.8 on collocation test, and 30.55 on the vocabulary subtest (See Table 1). The mean score for the tailored TOEFL test is higher than that of the other two tests. Vocabulary mean score is in the middle. The high mean score for TOEFL might be related to the point that probably the grammar and reading sections of TOEFL are the areas in which the participants have high talent and much practice, etc. Iranian system of English education is conducted in a foreign language learning situation, and therefore it is mostly concerned with grammar and reading. Another possibility might be that vocabulary acquisition is a vast area for the foreign language learners to master in comparison to grammar. The mean score for collocation is the lowest. It might be due to the fact that mastering collocation is very difficult and it is mostly achieved at the higher levels of language proficiency (DeCarrico, 2001), hence reflecting the native-like competence.

The mean difference between TOEFL and collocation test was 11.27, whereas it was 9.75 between vocabulary test and collocation test. The standard deviations (SD) were 6.11 for TOEFL, 5.64 for collocation, and 4.5 for vocabulary (Table 2). The standard deviation for TOEFL is 6.11, higher than that for the other two tests. Comparing the three tests together, it reflects the least homogeneity among the learners. It might be due to the fact that several components and sub-skills are tapped in TOEFL whereas vocabulary checks the component of vocabulary only. Therefore, the standard deviation for vocabulary test shows the highest homogeneity among the learners, i.e., 4.5. Collocation is a bit complicated because there are at least two words in the construction.

Correlation was used to account for the go-togetherness of the TOEFL and collocation test on the one hand, and collocation and vocabulary tests on the other. The correlation between the proficiency (TOEFL) test and the collocation test was 0.55, and between the collocation test and the vocabulary subtest was 0.59 (Table 3). The correlation coefficient between the tailored TOEFL test and collocation test is lower, whereas it is a bit higher for collocation and vocabulary tests. The former is a little concerned with

different kinds and areas of language proficiency but the latter seems to be almost the same in nature.

**TABLE 1**

	TOEFL	COLLOCATION	VOCABULARY
X	32.52	20.8	30.55
N	30	30	30
K	60	50	30

Comment: X refers to the mean score of the three tests. N refers to the number of participants in the study and K indicates the number of items.

**TABLE 2**

SD	TOEFL	Collocation	Vocabulary
	6.11	5.64	4.5
Differences	0.47		1.14

**TABLE 3**

Correlation	TOEFL – Collocation	Collocation – Vocabulary
	0.55	0.59

$\alpha = 0.01$        $df = 28$

Based upon the above results from statistical analysis, it can be stated that a) there is a moderate relationship between general language proficiency and collocational competence, b) there is also a moderate relationship between qualitative and quantitative word knowledge as designated in the correlation between collocation test and the vocabulary subtest, respectively.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The correlation observed between the proficiency test and the test of collocation and the correlation between the vocabulary subtest and the collocation test were strong enough to rule out the initially proposed null hypotheses at  $\alpha$  level of 0.01 with a  $df$  of 28. The mean difference between

the TOEFL and collocation test is 11.25, and the mean difference between tests of vocabulary and collocation is 9.75. There is a correlation of 0.55 between TOEFL and the collocation test, and a correlation of 0.59 between the collocation test and the vocabulary subtest, revealing that there is much go-togetherness between the learners' general proficiency and their collocational competence. If we square the correlations to see how much of the variance they account for, then one conclusion should be that collocational knowledge accounts for about more than 25% (.55 times .55) of the factors involved in general proficiency. When we think of all the other factors that could be involved in proficiency – vocabulary knowledge, grammatical knowledge, knowledge of discourse, an understanding of how texts are organized, skill in reading, writing, etc., and fluency – then more than 25% for collocational knowledge is very substantial. Similarly, about 36% (.59 times .59) of the knowledge involved in collocations that is accounted for by vocabulary seems very reasonable.

It might be the case that the learners might not be familiar with the many uses and senses of the most highly frequent words in terms of differing co-texts and contexts. However, it so seems that the subjects' knowledge of lexical relations (or qualitative word knowledge) is most probably a companion to their quantitative knowledge of words. The higher the quantitative knowledge of words, the better the qualitative knowledge of the tested aspect.

Collocation seems to be a difficult aspect of vocabulary knowledge for foreign language learners and it is apparently gained at the later stages of language learning. One reason for this might be that vocabulary or words in particular can be broken into their constituent parts, that is, their roots, suffixes, and prefixes. This potential lends to the strategic teaching and learning of words. However, this does not seem to hold true in the case of collocations. That is to say, collocations might not be broken into their building blocks. Therefore, foreign language learners have to learn collocations as a whole (DeCarrico, 2001).

Based on the findings of this study, one comes to the conclusion that a

concrete measure should be taken with regard to the probable areas of the learners' deficient knowledge of lexical relations, particularly collocations. One thing that immediately arises is whether we should teach collocations. The question has received different answers from teachers and researchers in the field.

With respect to the studies conducted so far and the findings of the present research, it is suggested that learners should be exposed to the target language in a way that their consciousness is raised so that they acquire some degree of collocational competence. Collocations might be consolidated in the learners' mind once they are encountered in a few contexts. Besides, better results might be yielded when the learners produce them in original sentences. The subtle syntactic, semantic, and grammatical features of words and particularly idioms or collocations are acquired after they have been used in some way (Atai, Akbarian, & Afzali Shahri, 2004).

Knowledge of collocations can contribute to the learners' comprehension and production. The meaning of a word has a great deal to do with the words with which it commonly associates. Not only do these associations assist the learner in committing these words to memory, they also aid in defining the semantic area of a word. Besides, collocations permit people to know what kinds of words they can expect to find together. Memorizing collocational groups makes learners aware of certain lexical restrictions. As an instance, English speakers use *convenient time/situation*, but not *\*convenient person/cat* since 'convenient' is only used with inanimate nouns. Learners then will not have to go about reconstructing language each time. Instead, they can use these collocations as pre-packaged building blocks.

While there is no doubt about the importance of enlarging vocabulary size, much is still left to be dealt with concerning learners' qualitative knowledge of words. Therefore, there should be a balance of quality and quantity of word knowledge in our curriculum, ruling out a sacrifice of one of these two aspects of vocabulary knowledge at the expense of the other.

Lexical issues in general and collocations in particular highlight interesting areas for further research, such as if teaching collocations makes a difference,

or if collocational competence helps listening comprehension. Researchers can also investigate if there is a relationship between perceiving collocations and producing them (orally/in writing). A local issue can be raised concerning the influence of L1 on the students' rendering of English collocations in translation or other forms of production.

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## APPENDIX A

### Proficiency Test

#### A. Structure

##### I. Gap-filling (total: 10 items)

1. New York's Statue of Liberty was designed to be a beacon for ships and a monument.....  
A) also                      B) in addition to                      C) as well                      D) both
2. George Gallup, ..... specialized in opinion polls and business surveys.  
A) whose statistician                      B) a statistician,  
C) a statistician who                      D) as statistician, he
3. Not until a monkey is several years old ..... to exhibit signs of independence from its mother.  
A) it begins                      B) begins                      C) that begins                      D) does it begin

##### II. Error recognition (total: 10 items)

The terrain of Antarctica, near one and a half times as big as the US, is amazingly varied.

A                      B   C                      D

The amphibians are of few economic importance to humans.

A   B   C                      D

The astrophysicists claimed that in about a million years the earth will melt.

A   B                      C                      D

#### B. Vocabulary

##### I. Gap-filling (total: 15 items)

1. She is very .....; she believes in anything she is told.  
A) fallible                      B) gullible                      C) sensible                      D) tractable

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2. We had a lovely visit because the Hopkins are so .....  
A) hospitable    B) tolerable    C) hostile    D) respectable
3. The soldier ..... the hand grenade.  
A) denigrated    B) delegated    C) detonated    D) demolished
4. I never know what he means; he speaks so .....  
A) indubitably    B) equivocally    C) incorrigibly    D) demonstrably
5. He was terribly shocked when he heard of the ..... of the war crimes.  
A) sanctity    B) leniency    C) atrocity    D) legacy

**II. Synonymy** (total: 15 items)

1. Even as a child Edison had a very curious mind.  
A) brilliant    B) complex    C) inquisitive    D) mature
2. Proximity to the courthouse makes an office building more valuable.  
A) eagerness    B) similarity    C) usefulness    D) nearness
3. Travel agents will confirm your reservation freely.  
A) verify    B) purchase    C) exchange    D) obtain
4. Because light travels faster than sound, lightning appears to go before thunder.  
A) traverse    B) precede    C) proceed    D) repel
5. When hurricane is about to happen, the national weather bureau issues a warning.  
A) adjacent    B) imminent    C) perilous    D) virulent

**C. Reading Comprehension** (total: 3 texts with 10 items)

Prejudice means literally prejudgment, the rejection of a contention out of

hand before examining the evidence. Prejudice is the result of powerful emotions, not of sound reasoning. If we wish to find the truth of matter, we must approach the question with as nearly open mind as we can and with a deep awareness of our own limitations and predispositions. On the other hand, if after carefully and openly examining the evidence we reject the proposition, that is no prejudice. It may be called "post-judice". It is certainly a prerequisite for knowledge.

1. What is the main concern of the passage?  
A) knowledge    B) evidence    C) judgment    D) limitations
2. According to the passage, prejudice is caused by.....  
A) feelings    B) wisdom    C) sound reasoning    D) past experiences
3. The author implies that everyone's judgment is sometimes affected by.....  
A) partiality    B) competition    C) ill health    D) legal considerations

## **APPENDIX B**

### Collocation Test

1. In weight-lifting, Reza-zade ..... a record.  
A) made    B) set    C) took    D) gave
2. My uncle, who is a real bibliophile, ..... a bookshop.  
A) leads    B) holds    C) runs    D) manages
3. After hours of deliberation, the committee did not ..... an agreement.  
A) reach    B) come by    C) arrive    D) get to

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4. My success made him ..... me a good compliment.  
A) give            B) get            C) hand            D) pay
5. Why should I ..... blame for others' mistakes?  
A) pick            B) get            C) take            D) face
6. I wrestled with the problem for hours, but finally had to .....defeat.  
A) accept            B) admit            C) take up            D) approve
7. Try to ..... a good impression on the interviewers.  
A) have            B) put            C) make            D) lay
8. The UN did not ..... the sanctions imposed on Iraq.  
A) lift            B) remove            C) raise            D) put off
9. He didn't ..... his promise to be on time by coming late to the party.  
A) hold            B) keep            C) make            D) go on
10. The police warned to ..... his driving license for speeding.  
A) revoke            B) abrogate            C) annul            D) rescind
11. He ..... no resentment towards his opponents.  
A) keeps            B) holds            C) bears            D) carries