STUDENTS’ COLLOCATIONAL COMPETENCE

Recent developments in corpus linguistics have forced the methodologists to change their view of language. They consider it is time for a re-valuation of many of the accepted ideas about teaching and learning. One of them is the idea on collocation.

In this paper we wish to demonstrate that lexis is one of the central organizing principles of the syllabus and concentrate on some important issues of its implications for teaching and learning English.

Not long ago we were encouraged to think of grammar as the bones of the language and vocabulary as the flesh. The current view is that language consists largely of prefabricated ‘chunks’ of lexis. The key feature to the formation of these chunks is collocation.

Even if the word ‘collocation’ is new to students, the concept is not. We have all heard the question. Can you say X? and had to give the reply, ‘Well, no, not really. It’s not just English. We don’t say it.’ The reason why we don’t say it is usually to do with collocation.

What is collocation? Collocation is ‘what goes together with what.’ It is a habitual combination of two or more words which occur in predictable combination: ‘Strong coffee’ is a typical collocation in English but ‘powerful coffee’ is not. We can say: ‘Strong’ collocates with coffee but ‘powerful’ does not.

Any analysis of naturally-occurring text shows how densely collocations occur. Every text has 7 out of 10 words occurring in some kind of collocation which has serious consequences for its comprehension. Learners may know a lot of words but their collocational competence may be very limited. This would explain why learners with even ‘good vocabularies’ have problems.

The English language teaching world has always recognized two types of collocations: idioms and phrasal verbs. Simple examples of collocations might be: make a mistake (verb + noun), heavy traffic (adjective + noun), totally misunderstood (adverb + noun), extremely generous (adverb + adjective), guilty of (adjective + preposition), management program (noun + noun).

Another classification includes: 1. unique collocation: leg space (meaning the distance between two seats in, for example, a plane); 2. strong collocation (words occur frequently in a particular combination): move to tears; 3. weak collocations (words occur with a greater than random frequency): white wine, red hair: 4. medium-strength collocation (they make up the most part of what we say): hold a conversation, make a mistake etc.

Collocation is the key to fluency. Native speakers can speak at a relatively fast speed because they are calling on a vast repertoire of readymade language in their mental lexicons. Similarly, their reading and listening comprehension is ‘quick’ because they are constantly recognizing ‘chunks’ of language.
Any analysis of non-native speakers’ speech or writing shows that the lack of collocational competencies is one of the most obvious weaknesses. When students do not know the collocations which express precisely what they want to say, they create longer utterances often with errors. Their stress and intonation can be difficult for the listener.

Many teachers are trying to incorporate lexical ideas into their teaching. Their role is changing from language practisers to language providers. They are using different strategies for vocabulary learning at different stages of learning. Students need to become ‘collectors of lexis’. Conventional dictionaries cannot give all the necessary information about collocation but bilingual ones can.

Greater emphasis on lexis means less on grammar. Considering language in ‘large chunks’ also means that grammar and vocabulary merge into one another. No doubt, students should constantly increase their collocational competence.

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MULTILINGUALISM AND LINGUISTIC DIVERSITY WITH A FOCUS ON THE LANGUAGE OF ADVERTISING

Linguistic diversity in the world today is an issue of growing social importance because a majority of all living languages are threatened in their continued existence. How they can be sustained is a matter of study and debate. Changes in the vitality of a language have important implications for individuals and societies. Multilingualism is a common and increasing phenomenon in present day society which can be studied from different perspectives.

The purpose of the thesis is to focus on language of advertising as a cultural asset and to establish the relationship between linguistic diversity and human welfare. Most of the world’s population speaks more than one language but most of the population in western cultures is monolingual in one of the ‘big’ languages in spite of being exposed to other languages mainly in the media context. Therefore we can say that multilingualism at the sociolinguistic level is more spread than multilingualism at the individual level but even in this case it is extremely common. The spread of multilingualism justifies its importance in research. In fact the study of different aspects of the diversity of languages should be one of the main goals of linguistics.

Multilingualism can be defined in different ways but basically it refers to the ability to use more than two languages. A basic distinction when discussing bilingualism and multilingualism is between the individual and societal level. With a growing role of globalization in the world, it is impossible to eliminate the spread of English and its influence on other languages. English as a lingua franca has been a great interest to the researchers, but few studies have been conducted paying precise attention to the local impact. There are many reasons for borrowing English loan words, as well as for their constant penetration into vernacular languages. This thesis investigates the main motives for the borrowing of English words, the attitudes towards