

**NATIONAL CORPORA AND THEIR SIGNIFICANCE IN  
LINGUISTICS**

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***Abstract:*** Collocations play an essential role in learning any language because they help learners understand how words naturally combine in real communication. Many students may know a lot of single words, but they often face difficulties when trying to use them correctly in context. For this reason, studying collocations becomes an important part of vocabulary development. This article discusses different types of collocations, their functions in everyday speech, and the benefits they bring to language learners. Special attention is given to how collocations support fluency, make expressions more natural, and help students avoid common mistakes. The paper also highlights several teaching strategies that can be applied in English classes to improve learners' awareness and use of collocations. Overall, the study shows that learning collocations can make the language learning process more effective and help students develop confident and accurate communication skills.

***Key Words:*** collocations; lexical combinations; language acquisition; vocabulary development; natural speech; language competence; fluency; fixed expressions; teaching vocabulary; contextual learning; phraseology; learner difficulties; authentic language use; pedagogical strategies; second language

learning.

### **Introduction**

In recent years, the study of vocabulary has become one of the central topics in language education, especially for learners who want to improve their speaking and writing skills. While many students try to learn new words by memorizing long lists, this approach often does not help them use the language naturally. In real communication, people rarely rely on single words; instead, they use groups of words that usually appear together. These natural word combinations are known as collocations.

Understanding collocations is important because they show how the language actually works in everyday situations. Native speakers use collocations automatically, without thinking about grammar rules or translation. However, for language learners, using collocations correctly can be challenging, as many combinations cannot be guessed from individual word meanings. For example, English speakers say *make a decision*, not *do a decision*, and *heavy rain*, not *strong rain*. Such examples prove that collocations are not random but follow certain patterns that students need to learn.

The purpose of this article is to explore the role of collocations in language study and to explain why they are essential for developing vocabulary, fluency, and overall language competence. The article also discusses common problems learners face with collocations and suggests practical methods teachers can use to introduce and practice them in the classroom. By studying collocations, students can build more natural and confident communication skills, which is a key goal in foreign language education.

### **Literature Review**

The importance of collocations has been discussed by many scholars in the field of linguistics and language teaching. Early research, such as that of J.R. Firth, emphasized that “you shall know a word by the company it keeps,” pointing out that words naturally form partnerships in real communication. Later studies continued this idea, showing that collocations help speakers produce more fluent

and idiomatic language. Researchers also noted that learners who understand collocational patterns can express their thoughts more clearly and avoid unnatural phrasing.

Another contribution to collocation studies comes from corpus linguistics. Many modern researchers analyze large language corpora to identify frequent word combinations and observe how they are used in authentic contexts. This approach has made it easier for teachers and students to study collocations systematically. Works by linguists such as Michael Lewis also highlight the role of lexical chunks and propose that vocabulary should be taught not only as single items but as ready-made combinations.

Studies in second language acquisition show that learners often struggle with collocations because their choices are influenced by their native language. This can lead to literal translations and incorrect combinations. Researchers agree that special attention should be given to raising learners' awareness of common collocations, especially in academic writing and everyday conversation.

In general, previous research shows that collocations are an essential part of vocabulary knowledge, and their systematic teaching can significantly improve learners' language competence.

### ***Types of Collocations***

Collocations can be grouped in several ways depending on how strongly the words are connected. Some combinations are fixed, meaning that they almost never change. For example, expressions like *by the way* or *strong coffee* appear in English exactly in this form. Other collocations are more flexible. For instance, the verb *take* forms many collocations such as *take a seat*, *take responsibility*, or *take notes*. Even though the meaning of the verb changes slightly in each example, learners need to remember these combinations as natural patterns of language use.

Researchers usually divide collocations into grammatical and lexical types. Grammatical collocations involve a main word (often a verb, noun, or adjective) combined with a grammatical element, such as a preposition. Examples include *interested in*, *rely on*, or *responsible for*. Lexical collocations include combinations

of two content words, such as *make progress*, *rich vocabulary*, or *heavy traffic*. Both types play an important role in helping students understand how English sentences are formed in a natural way.

### **The Role of Collocations in Vocabulary Development**

Learning collocations helps students expand their vocabulary more effectively. Instead of memorizing words separately, students learn them in meaningful groups. This helps them remember the words faster and understand how to use them in real communication. For example, knowing the word *advice* is useful, but knowing collocations like *give advice* and *take advice* helps students express themselves more clearly and appropriately.

Collocations also support students in academic writing. When learners use natural combinations, their writing sounds smoother and more professional. Many common expressions used in essays, such as *play a significant role*, *increase awareness*, or *conduct research*, are actually collocations. Mastering them makes learners' writing more accurate and stylistically appropriate.

### **Collocations and Fluency in Speaking**

One of the reasons native speakers sound fluent is that they use many ready-made word combinations. These combinations allow them to speak quickly without planning each sentence word by word. For learners, acquiring such chunks reduces hesitation and increases the speed of speech. For example, phrases like *as far as I know*, *in my opinion*, or *at the same time* help speakers express ideas smoothly.

Using collocations also reduces the number of mistakes. When students memorize correct combinations, they avoid typical errors such as *do a mistake* instead of *make a mistake*, or *strong rain* instead of *heavy rain*. These small details make speech more natural and understandable.

### **Difficulties Learners Face with Collocations**

Although collocations are important, many learners struggle to use them correctly. One common difficulty is interference from the native language. Students often translate expressions word by word, which leads to unnatural combinations.

For example, in some languages it may be normal to say *big rain* or *say a compliment*, but in English these are incorrect.

Another problem is that collocations must often be learned through exposure, not simply through rules. Unlike grammar structures, collocations do not always follow predictable patterns. This makes it necessary for learners to read, listen, and practice regularly in order to notice them.

Finally, because there are many thousands of collocations in English, students may feel overwhelmed. Without guidance, it is difficult to decide which combinations are the most useful to learn first.

### **Teaching Strategies for Collocations**

Teachers can help learners master collocations by using practical classroom techniques. One effective strategy is introducing collocations in meaningful contexts rather than isolated lists. When students see a collocation in a story, a dialogue, or an exercise, they understand its function better.

Another useful method is using collocation dictionaries or corpora. Modern learners can easily search for common word combinations and see examples of real usage. Teachers can also design activities such as matching exercises, gap-filling tasks, or speaking tasks that encourage students to use collocations actively.

In addition, teaching students to keep a personal collocation notebook can be very helpful. Instead of writing random vocabulary, they write combinations like *make an effort*, *commit a crime*, or *highly effective*. Over time, this notebook becomes a valuable resource for both speaking and writing practice.

### **The Role of Collocations in Language Competence**

Language competence includes accuracy, fluency, and appropriateness. Collocations contribute to all three. Accuracy improves because learners use correct word combinations; fluency increases because collocations allow faster and more automatic speech; appropriateness develops because students learn expressions commonly used by native speakers.

For learners who plan to use English in academic or professional settings, collocations are especially important. They help avoid literal translations and create

a more natural and confident style of communication. In this way, collocations serve not only as a vocabulary tool, but as an essential part of overall language mastery.

### **Conclusion**

The study of collocations shows that vocabulary learning is much more than memorizing individual words. In real communication, people depend on natural word combinations that make their speech fluent, accurate, and easy to understand. For language learners, mastering collocations is an effective way to build confidence and express ideas more naturally. As this article has shown, collocations help students improve both their spoken and written language, support better vocabulary retention, and reduce common mistakes caused by direct translation from the native language.

Although learning collocations can be challenging, these difficulties can be overcome through regular exposure, practice, and well-planned teaching strategies. Activities that involve reading, speaking, and using corpora help students notice and remember useful combinations. Teachers also play an important role by selecting the most frequent and practical collocations for classroom use. Overall, developing collocational competence is an essential step toward achieving higher levels of language proficiency, and it should be considered an important part of modern language education.

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