



An Investigation into the Developmental Patterns of Lexical Collocation among Iranian EFL Learners

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ABSTRACT

It is commonly accepted that collocations are of utmost importance in the field of L2 acquisition. However, EFL/ESL learners' deficiency in knowledge of English collocations along with the trouble they encounter in learning and using them is well documented. Furthermore, it is not clear which pattern of lexical collocation (adjective + noun or verb + noun) exerts more degree of difficulty on learners. Therefore, the current study investigated the Iranian EFL learners' (N=56) receptive and productive knowledge of collocations in one hand and tried to analyze the degree of difficulty each pattern of lexical collocation (adjective + noun or verb + noun) brings to bear on learners, on the other. To measure the learners' knowledge of lexical collocation, the authors constructed, validated and used a 100 test, consisting of 50 multiple-choice and 50 blank-filling collocation items. Pearson correlation along with a series of paired-samples t-test was run to analyze the data. The findings of the study showed that 1) the participants' receptive and productive knowledge of collocations are not significantly related to each other, 2) their productive knowledge of collocations lagged far behind their receptive knowledge of collocations, and 3) the participants' performance were similar on the two patterns of lexical collocation tested. The findings of the study suggest the need for a broader view of knowledge of collocations and adopting a pedagogical approach to the teaching and learning of this important aspect of L2.

Keywords: Lexical collocations; Receptive knowledge; Productive knowledge; Pattern.

1. Introduction

It is widely acknowledged that collocations are an indispensable constituent of second language knowledge and they are important to non-native speakers of a language in order to accurately and fluently master the language (Jaén, 2007, Skrzypek, 2009; Siyanova-Chanturia, 2015; Sonbul & Schmitt, 2013). Collocation has been defined within a variety of theoretical frameworks; consequently, it is demanding to propose a clear-cut definition of collocation. One of the fundamental reasons that gave rise to the dissimilarity in the use of collocation is that it is employed by scholars working in a wide variety of fields, and its definition is usually adapted to the diverse aims and methods of researchers' investigations (Nesselhauf, 2005; Peters, 2015).

Among the various views and concerns in defining the term 'collocation', two main viewpoints can be recognized. In one view,

collocation is characterized as the grouping of lexical items at a particular distance that make a distinction between frequent and non-frequent collocations. This viewpoint is referred to as the 'statistically oriented approach' or 'frequency-based approach' (e.g., Ellis, 2014; González Fernández & Schmitt, 2015; Moon 1998; Sinclair 1991; Stubbs, 1995). In the other view, collocation is regarded as a type of word combination that is fixed to a specific extent, but not completely. This view is called the 'significance-oriented approach' or the 'phraseological approach' (e.g., Cowie, 1992; Gries, 2008; Nation, 2005; Simpson-Vlach & Ellis, 2010). The proponents of the first view (frequency-based approach), often deal with the "computational analysis of syntagmatic relations" (Nesselhauf, 2005, p. 12). On the other hand, scholars of the second view are usually concerned with the areas of lexicography or pedagogy.

Additionally, different scholars have defined collocation in different ways; either affected by the two earlier-mentioned viewpoints or take on a different approach. Lewis (2000) defined collocation as naturally co-occurring lexical items in statistically significant ways. Nation (2001) maintained that it is inadequate to define collocation as a combination of lexical items that regularly co-occur. According to Nation (2001) "collocations are closely structured groups whose parts frequently or uniquely occur together" (p. 324).

Generally, collocations have been categorized as the vocabulary depth, referring to the extent to which learners acquire a multidimensional knowledge of words involving pronunciation, spelling, meaning, register, frequency, and grammatical and collocational patterns (Qian & Schedl, 2004; Schmitt, 2012; Sonbul & Schmitt, 2013). Vocabulary depth is mainly associated with receptive and productive knowledge.

Receptive vocabulary knowledge refers to the capacity to understand a word upon hearing or seeing it, while productive knowledge is the knowledge of producing a word when one writes or speaks. In general, words are understood receptively first and only after intentional or incidental learning they become accessible for effective use. Therefore, vocabulary knowledge is a continuum on which a word grows from receptive to productive status. In this study, receptive knowledge is the ability to choose a lexical item from among the options provided and productive knowledge is the capacity to fill in the blanks with an appropriate lexical item.

However, with a great number of studies investigating collocations, little has been done to explore the relationship between receptive and productive knowledge of collocational behavior and the importance of this relationship in language teaching. Thus, the purpose of this study is to analyze both the relationship between receptive and productive knowledge of collocations in one hand, and to explore which pattern of lexical collocation (adjective + noun and verb + noun) exerts more degree of difficulty for learners.

2. Literature Review

2.1 The Importance of Collocations in L2 Learning

In the process of vocabulary learning, L2 learners often have trouble dealing with appropriate lexical choice (Ahmadian & Darabi, 2012). A number of scholars have asserted this and claim that prefabricated units, involving collocations, play an important role in language pedagogy and language fluency (Brezina, McEney & Wattam, 2015; Ebeling & Hasselgård, 2015; Erman, Forsberg Lundell & Lewis, 2016; Nation, 2001, 2005; Paquot & Granger, 2012; Schmitt, 2012; Webb, 2008; Wray, 2012, 2013). Nation (2005), for instance, argues that collocation teaching and learners' development of their collocation repertoire are crucial so as to accomplish the globalized standards of their language. Hill (2000) claims that one of the fundamental reasons that EFL learners often find listening and reading complicated is because of the density of collocations. Pawley and Syder (1983) argue that one of the main mysteries behind the fluency of native speakers' language is the existence of ready-made prefabricated units including collocations in their minds. Lewis (1997), who is another researcher giving priority to collocations in language pedagogy, also gives support to this claim by arguing "fluency is based on the acquisition of a large store of fixed or semi-fixed prefabricated items" (p. 15). He argues that fixed or semi-fixed prefabricated items that include collocations are the basis for the establishment of any linguistic novelty and creativeness. Therefore, collocations

are crucial for fluency in both oral and written production. Moreover, Kjellmer (1990) argues the difference in the automation of collocations largely accounts for the differentiation between native speakers and language learners. He adds that native speakers have already learned the collocations, and in producing utterances, natives take advantage from those ready-made prefabricated units. Conversely, L2 learners have a small number of ready-made collocations in their mental lexicon; consequently, language learners tend to employ lengthy sentences or improper phrases while articulating their ideas.

Carter and McCarthy (1988) also assert that “L2 learners do not have to reconstruct the language each time when they want to say something; instead, they can use these collocations as pre-packaged building blocks” (p. 75). Sometimes learners, who are deficient in collocational knowledge, stop in the middle of conversation, since they cannot find appropriate phrases for communicating their messages. This is also approved by Hill (2000), who maintains that collocations make thinking simpler, because they permit us to “identify and produce complex ideas without using all our brain space to focus on the form of the words” (p. 55). Furthermore, Hill (2000) in his article mentions that “students with good ideas often lose grades because they do not know the four or five most important collocations of a key word that is essential to what they are speaking or writing” (p. 5). Consequently, collocations are as ready-made phrases for articulating diverse ideas. The knowledge and the competence of using collocations are indispensable for language learners and for naturalness of language. Unfortunately, however, language students, even advanced ones also encounter substantial difficulties in applying collocations properly.

2.2. Empirical Studies on Collocations

The importance and the need for research on collocations have been acknowledged by several researchers (e.g., Bahns & Eldaw, 1993; Channell, 1981; Goudarzi & Raouf Moini, 2012; Gries, 2013; Siyanova-Chanturia, 2015; Zarei & Koosha, 2003). Many of these studies have noted learners' inadequate knowledge of collocations, along with the difficulties learners face in dealing with collocations on both the receptive and productive levels. As indicated by learners' performance in second language studies, collocational errors comprise a great percentage of all errors made.

Channell (1981) is among the earliest researchers to undertake a study on overall knowledge of collocations. In her study, Channell asked a group of eight EFL learners with advanced-level proficiency to fill in a collocational grid. The grid comprised four adjectives as its vertical axis and fifteen nouns as its horizontal axis. The findings revealed that although the learners all understood the meaning of these words unmistakably, they still could not produce a significant portion of appropriate collocations: only 111 (40%) out of 272 collocations were marked as acceptable.

Employing two instruments, a translation and a cloze task, Bahns and Eldaw (1993) also investigated fifty-eight German post-secondary students' knowledge of fifteen English verb-noun lexical collocations. While thirty-four of these fifty-eight students completed a German-English translation task, the other twenty-four took a fill-in-the-blank test. The translation task included fifteen German sentences written specially to elicit the targeted English collocations. At the same time, the cloze test was made of ten questions written in English where each verb within the verb-noun collocations was omitted. Results in this study demonstrated that all the subjects showed inadequate knowledge of lexical collocations as their performance was poor in both tests. Although the German collocations were direct equivalents of the English counterparts, the participants produced more than twice as many mistakes in their translation where the nouns were expected in the verb-noun collocation as in their translation of general lexical items.

Zarei and Koosha (2003) investigated Iranian advanced learners' problems in producing English lexical collocations. Their study was divided into two phases: in the first phase, they focused on the collocational errors that were chosen from 240 pages of materials produced in English by Iranians. By analyzing the list of collocational errors extracted from the production of 27 high-proficiency level Iranians, they found five patterns of collocations that were more problematic. In the second phase, six cued production tasks were given to 64 participants. Analysis of the data revealed that about 55% of the time, Iranian advanced learners of English had difficulties in their production of

English collocations.

In a similar study, Nesselhauf (2003) examined 32 essays which were written by German speaking learners of English. She took three steps in her investigation. The first step was extracting the verb-object-noun combinations from the essays. After that, she classified them based on their degree of restrictions, i.e. free combinations (F), restricted collocations (RC) and idioms (I) and, in the last step, she evaluated their acceptability in English. She extracted 1072 verb-object-noun combinations from the learners' essays, and divided them into 846 free combinations, 213 restricted collocations, and 13 idioms. She found that about 255 out of 1072 of these combinations had several mistakes and that the most frequent mistake was the inaccurate choice of verbs. She found that the most important reason in making these mistakes was the influence of the learners' first language.

Begagić (2014) carried out a study on the productive and receptive knowledge of lexical collocations among English language students whose native language is the Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian (BCS) language examining the probable differences in collocational knowledge between first and fourth year students, along with the difference between subjects' performance on three kinds of collocations: verb + noun, adjective + noun, and verb + adverb. The results demonstrated students' poor collocational knowledge. However, both first and fourth year students showed superior knowledge of receptive than of productive collocations. Furthermore, findings indicated that fourth year learners demonstrate more superior collocational knowledge than first year learners, and that verb + adverb collocation type is the most problematic to learn for both groups of learners.

Nguyen and Webb's (2016) study attempted to determine Vietnamese EFL learners' knowledge of verb-noun and adjective-noun collocations at the first three 1,000 word frequency levels, and the degree to which five parameters of node word frequency, collocation frequency, mutual information score, congruency, and part of speech predicted receptive knowledge of collocation. The results revealed that the subjects were not close to a level of proficiency of collocational knowledge at any word frequency level; knew less than 50% of each type of collocation on the whole; and that their collocational knowledge considerably declined at each level. Findings also indicated that there were significant large positive correlations between knowledge of collocations and single-word units, and that node word frequency parameter was the strongest one in predicting the receptive knowledge of collocation.

Talakoob and Koosha (2017) investigated the possible difference between intermediate and advanced EFL learners' receptive and productive collocational knowledge. The subjects at each level of proficiency were given receptive collocation test and productive test of collocations. Paired-samples *t*-test revealed no statistically significant difference between productive and receptive collocational knowledge of the advanced EFL learners. On the other hand, the mean comparison between the receptive and productive collocation test scores of intermediate EFL learners showed a significant difference.

From the above-mentioned studies, one may infer that EFL learners, either intermediate or advanced, have problems with English collocations. Hence, Iranian learners of English are by no means an exception.

According to Nesselhauf (2003), "owing to the nature of collocations (i.e. the fact that they are fairly transparent), comprehension is normally unproblematic for learners, so that identifying the problems of learners must mean analyzing their production" (p.223). However, several studies (Bahns & Eldaw, 1993; Howarth, 1998; Hsu & Chiu, 2008; Li, 2005; Nesselhauf, 2003; Zinkgraf, 2008) have shown that learners may have problems in dealing with both comprehension and production of collocations.

3. Purpose of the Study

Overall, it seems that most of the studies have been concerned with the investigation of collocational knowledge; few to the investigation of the developmental patterns of collocation. As such, the present study, hence, attempts to investigate EFL learners' developmental patterns of English collocations, and to determine which patterns exert more difficulty for EFL learners. Thus,

the following research questions are raised:

1. Is there any significant relationship between the receptive and productive collocation (adjective + noun and verb + noun) among Iranian intermediate-proficiency level students?
2. Do these two patterns of lexical collocations exert the same degree of difficulty for Iranian EFL learners?

4. Method

4.1. Participants

The participants involved in this study were some Iranian EFL learners (N=56) at Shahid Chamran University of Ahvaz, Iran, selected based on convenience sampling. They were all at intermediate level of proficiency based on their performance on a general proficiency test (Oxford Quick Placement Test) administered to 136 university students. There were 22 males and 34 females whose ages ranged from 22 to 29. All of them were native speakers of Persian and have learned English as a foreign language for a minimum of eight years.

4.2. Instruments

The following three tests served as the measurement instruments:

4.2.1. Proficiency Test

Oxford Quick Placement Test (2001) was used to measure the proficiency level of the participants. The Quick Placement Test is a flexible test of English language proficiency developed to provide teachers a reliable and time-saving method for recognizing a student's level of language proficiency. Geranpayeh (2006) argued that Quick Placement Test which is a standardized English proficiency test has been pretested and validated by about 6000 students in about 20 countries.

4.2.2. Blank-filling test of English collocations

To analyze and test out EFL students' productive knowledge of collocational behavior, the authors constructed a blank-filling test by consulting the following resources: *The English Collocation in Use* (2005) and *Oxford Collocations Dictionary for Students of English* (2002). It consisted of a 50-item adjective + noun and verb + noun collocation in a blank-filling format that attempt to elicit learners' production of a set of particular English collocations. Each item was composed of an English sentence with a *blank + a noun* collocation. The participants were required to fill in each blank with the most appropriate *adjective* or *verb* that could produce an acceptable collocation with the highlighted *noun* in the sentence. In order to help participants produce the intended collocations, the authors provided a definition of the whole collocation in English as a prompt. A sample of items of the test appears in appendix A. The rationale behind choosing these types of collocations, namely, adjective + noun and verb + noun collocations to be the focus of the current study was two-fold. First, these two types of collocations are the most common types of collocations in English (Lewis, 2000; Newman, 1988). Second, these types of collocations create more problems for L2 learners in comparison to other types of lexical collocations (Nesselhauf, 2003; Schmitt, 2000).

4.2.3. Multiple-choice test of English collocations

To measure students' knowledge of receptive collocations, the authors constructed, validated and used a multiple-choice test of collocation, including the same (50) items and tasks as in the blank-filling test, but with different sentences. Nicol (2007) argued that one of the most commonly used tests to assess learners' receptive knowledge of a certain structure or lexical item is the

multiple-choice test. Thus, the authors chose the multiple-choice format to check whether the participants were aware of lexical collocations in English. The participants were required to choose the most appropriate *adjective* or *verb* that could probably collocate with the highlighted *noun* in the sentence. A sample of items of this format appears in appendix B.

4.2.4. The Pilot Study

In the present study, the authors took different steps to gather information regarding the usefulness of the tests and for the enhancement of testing procedures. The first step was item analysis. When the items constructed, reviewed, and revised, the collocation test was ready for experimentation on a sample group of 40 EFL learners. To that end, the authors administered the tests to a selected group of candidates, item analyzed to attain the index of item difficulty and item discrimination. The authors also analyzed the scores gathered from this administration utilizing Brown's (2004) cut-off score.

The next step in the process of standardization was to ascertain the desired reliability. The Cronbach's alpha reliability indexes for the fill-in-the-blank test was .89 and for multiple-choice was .83.

The third phase of test standardization through the pilot study was to establish the construct validity of the tests. To achieve this objective and to establish concurrent validity, the authors first administered the newly developed collocation tests (NDCTs) to a group of 40 students. To minimize the possibility of test-retest effect, they first administered the fill-in-the blank test. Then, within two weeks' interval, we administered the criterion collocation tests (CCTs), developed by Hawraz(2010) to the same group. The findings revealed that the test fulfills the criterion Table 2 summarizes the results.

Table 1. Correlation between NDCTs and CTs

NDCTs		CTs
Fill-in-the-blank	Pearson correlation	.452*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.006
	N	50
Translation	Pearson correlation	.484*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.003
	N	30
Multiple-choice	Pearson correlation	.579*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	50

Note: * $p < .01$.

4.3. Procedures

First a proficiency test was administered to determine the participants' levels of proficiency based on which those participants whose scores fell within the range of 50-69 were classified as intermediate proficient.

Second, after explaining the purpose of the study and giving detailed instructions concerning English collocations, the authors administered a 50-item adjective + noun and verb + noun collocation in a blank-filling format in 40 minutes.

Third, within two weeks' interval, the authors administered the multiple-choice test including 25 sentences with blanks for adjective + noun collocations and 25 sentences with blanks for verb + noun collocations in 35 minutes.

4.4. Data Analysis

All the collocations produced by the students were rated for their adequacy to ensure the accuracy of judgment; several dictionaries of collocations (mentioned above) were consulted. In assessing the accuracy of collocations produced, there were several significant factors that had to be taken into consideration. The combinations of adjective + noun and verb + noun were judged to be accurate and acceptable if they occurred in the participants' production the same as those combinations that existed in the sources of the acceptability's judgment. A combination in production test was considered identical if it appeared in the same form; adjective + noun and verb + noun and in the same sense as that which occurred in sources of validity in the acceptability's criteria cited above. The data were then entered into the computer, using SPSS (version 19). To investigate the relationship and the difference between the participants' receptive and productive collocational knowledge, a Pearson correlation and a paired samples t-test were run respectively. And to examine whether any difference existed between the participants' performances on the two types of collocation in the productive test, another paired samples t-test was run.

5. Results

In order to obtain an overview of the relationship between learners' receptive and productive knowledge of lexical collocations two steps were taken. First, using descriptive statistics, the participants' mean scores on receptive and productive tests of collocations were calculated. Table 1 summarizes the results.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics of participants on receptive and productive collocation tests

	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance	Minimum	Maximum	N
Receptive test	42.34	6.986	48.810	20	49	5
Productive test	26.30	5.180	26.833	17	42	6

By looking at Table 3, one can clearly see that the mean score obtained on the receptive test (42.34) was larger than that obtained on the productive test (26.30). This indicates that the participants performed better at the receptive level than at the productive level.

Second, using Pearson correlation, the correlation between the participants' receptive and productive knowledge of collocations was calculated. Table 4 shows the correlation between these two variables.

Table 3. Correlation between receptive and productive knowledge of collocations

		Productive test
Receptive test	Pearson Correlation	.140
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.304
	N	56

Note: * $p < .01$.

As indicated in Table 4, the results of the study indicate the fact that there is no significant correlation between learners' performance on receptive and productive tests of collocations.

Furthermore, in order to scrutinize whether there is a significant difference between the participants' receptive and productive knowledge of collocations, a comparison was carried out using a paired-samples t-test. For the resulting comparison, the alpha level was set at 0.05.

Table 4. Paired-samples t-test for receptive and productive knowledge of collocations

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Receptive test	56	42.34	6.986			
Productive test	56	26.30	5.180	14.824	55	.000

As table 5 indicates, the paired-samples t-test revealed that the difference between the mean score for both variables was significant ($t = 14.824$, $df = 55$, $p < .001$).

Research question 2 is an attempt to see whether these two patterns of lexical collocation (adjective + noun and verb + noun) exert the same degree of difficulty for learners.

To answer this question, first the descriptive statistics for both patterns, i.e., adjective + noun and verb + noun were calculated. Descriptive statistics are presented in table 6.

Table 5. Descriptive statistics of participants' performance on adjective + noun and verb + noun collocations

	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance	Minimum	Maximum	N
Adjective+ Noun	31.07	6.155	37.886	18	40	
Verb + Noun	28.79	5.864	34.39	20	39	56

As can be seen in the table 6, the mean scores of participants on both patterns are statistically very close. It was 31.07 and 28.79 on adjective + noun and verb + noun collocations respectively.

Second, in order to compare the obtained mean scores on both patterns, a paired-samples t-test was performed. Table 7 indicates the results of paired-samples t-test.

Table 6. Paired-samples t-test for adjective + noun and verb + noun collocations

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Adjective+ Noun	56	31.07	6.155			
Verb + Noun	56	28.79	5.864	-1.865	55	.068

The results reported in Table 7 show no significant difference between adjective + noun and verb + noun patterns ($t = -1.87$, $p > 0.05$). This means that the participants performed similarly on the two patterns of collocation.

6. Discussion

The purpose of this study was first to examine the relationship between learners' receptive and productive knowledge of lexical collocations. The findings revealed that participants' productive knowledge of collocations did not increase as their receptive collocational knowledge. In other words, the reception of collocations was much easier than their production because the receptive knowledge is regarded as the base that the learners begin from. These findings remind the assertions of Clark (1993) who argued that there is solid evidence for the prominence of the lacuna between receptive and productive knowledge, starting from the earliest stages of language development:

Young children can understand forms well before they can produce them. Infants

under a year old, for example, understand some words for up to three or four months before they try to produce them; older children understand comparative word forms, for instance, long before they themselves can produce any, as well as novel-derived nouns before they themselves coin any. (Clark, 1993, p.245)

Even though some scholars (e.g., Laufer & Nation, 1999) assert that the receptive-productive gap is just preponderant at the beginner levels and then progressively vanishes as L2 learners' proficiency develops, the present study, examining the intermediate EFL learners, casts doubt on this observation and adds evidence to the common sense that the receptive knowledge of collocations is in general larger than the productive one and it precedes the productive knowledge at all phases of language learning, as was stated by Henriksen (1999), Melka (1997), Nation (2001), and Waring (2002). For instance, Melka (1997, p. 85) maintains that "receptive and productive vocabulary knowledge is a continuum and it expresses the idea that one has to distinguish a word in reception before s/he is able to produce it in speech or writing". In other words, after learners come across a new word and acquire knowledge of its pronunciation, word grammar, spelling, meaning and the use, they will be able to use it on their own.

In line with the underpinning presumption in the literature that the L2 learner -when developing collocational knowledge - needs to go through the same developmental processes explained in most single-word vocabulary acquisition studies, it can be argued the Iranian EFL learners are by no means an exception in their development of collocation knowledge. Based on this developmental process, the learner must be able to 1) identify collocations, i.e. perceive and describe them in the input; 2) understand the meaning and function of the collocations, i.e. make form-meaning and form-function mappings; 3) understand collocational use limitations, i.e. broaden knowledge of use; 4) select between different collocational choices, i.e. discriminate between collocations in the lexical network; and 5) expand collocational fluency so as to retrieve the collocation straightforwardly. As for all these facets, collocation must expand both receptively and productively. The development of knowledge of collocations is therefore, like single-word learning, a very complicated and accumulative practice, necessitating massive quantities of diverse language exposure and productive circumstances for reinforcement by means of repetition and language use.

However, all the words are not essentially learned along the continuum. Melka (1997) argues that according to diverse linguistic and pragmatic factors, the boundary between reception and production is fuzzy. To put it another way, some words can be produced quickly after comprehending them and some words may be comprehended and produced at the same time. For example, in a study by Koya (2005), it was found that for some collocations like *write book*, *say thing*, *raise money*, *lose job*, the percentage of correct answers in the productive collocation test was more than that in the receptive collocation test. This means that some collocations may not be steadily acquired in accordance with the development of learners' general vocabulary knowledge. Although such cases were not observed in the present study, there were certain collocations whose test scores in the productive test were equal to those in the receptive test and six of them, *have a responsibility*, *break somebody's heart*, *take control of*, *golden opportunities*, *last chance*, and *heavy traffic*, and were all collocations which have direct L1 equivalence in Persian. Therefore, it can be inferred that L1 equivalence is a parameter which give rise to L1 transfer. In other words, the resemblance between L1 and L2 result in L1 positive transfer throughout the acquisition of L2 collocations, whereas the difference between them brings about negative transfer. This finding has been robustly confirmed by lots of researchers (Bahns & Eldaw, 1993; Gitsaki, 1999; Nesselhauf, 2003; Pavičić & Višnja, 2013). Therefore, the more congruent two items in L1 and L2, the easier it will be for L2 language learners. For this reason, Bahns and Eldaw (1993) and Biskup, (1992) proposed that, due to the large number of collocations to cover, the intentional teaching of collocations needs to be restricted to collocations that have no equivalent in learners' mother tongue.

A deeper look at previous studies on vocabulary in general and collocations in particular also reveals that many of the studies provide evidence that the ability to produce acceptable collocations

in L2 enhances very slowly and unequally (e.g. Groom, 2009; Laufer & Waldman, 2011; Szudarski & Carter, 2014). Even so-called 'high proficient learners' who are relatively proficient in other facets of English (e.g. morpho-syntax) often encounter difficulty in producing proper collocations (e.g., Biskup, 1992; Farghal & Obiedat, 1995; Laufer & Waldman, 2011). This may underscore the need to redefine the concept of 'high-proficiency in language', if numerous high-level learners do not indeed succeed in mastering such common and fundamental characteristics of language use.

In sum, it can be concluded that the findings of the present study correspond with the general belief amongst teachers that a learner's receptive abilities generally surpass his productive abilities and that identification of an item is more straightforward than its retrieval in production.

The other point is that since the format of the receptive collocation test was multiple-choice and it had a restricted number of options, it might be simpler to choose appropriate answers than to produce them in productive collocation test which requires more mental effort. Therefore, it needs to be known that the findings attained in this study (and in others) may be because of the nature of the multiple-choice and fill-in-the blank collocation tests administered. As Bahns and Eldaw (1993) argue, learners' knowledge of English collocations does not denote adequate productive knowledge of collocations. This indicates that collocations need to be explicitly taught, with great prominence given to the limited type and on learners' productive knowledge.

In addition, these results indicated that since Iranian EFL learners are of little chance to practice the collocational knowledge productively due to neglect of teaching of collocations in EFL classrooms, their poor performance on the production test was not unexpected.

The second purpose of current study was to explore the differentiation between participants' performance on two patterns of collocation, namely, adjective + noun and verb + noun. The results revealed that participants performed similarly on the two patterns of collocation. This finding is in line with Al-Amro's (2006) study, who reported that the participants were more accurate in the adjective + noun and verb + noun collocations than in the adverb + adjective and noun + noun collocations. Although, Al-Amro argued that "it was due to the fact that the collocations included in adverb + adjective and noun + noun collocations were of lower frequency than adjective + noun and verb + noun collocations" (p. iv).

The finding also supports other empirical studies which investigated EFL learners' knowledge of collocations such as Hsu (2002) who conducted a study on the development of collocational proficiency in a workshop on English for General Business Purposes for Taiwanese college students. Based upon the data he gathered from students' writing, he concluded that there was a positive relationship between the students' use of lexical collocations and their competence. He also found that there was no consistent pattern in any of the learners' free, controlled, or cued production of collocations in terms of the collocation sub-types. Therefore, he came to the conclusion that the sub-types of collocations are unlikely to influence the learnability of lexical collocations.

However, the finding is in opposite to the findings by Wray (2002) who examined the differences between learners' knowledge of three categories of collocations: verb + noun, adjective + noun and verb + preposition. The purpose was to detect which collocation type was easiest to acquire. The results revealed that participants received far better scores on the verb + noun collocation test ($M=9.1$) than on the adjective + noun ($M= 3.39$) and verb + preposition ($M= 3.67$) collocation tests. He attributes these findings to the fact that verb + noun category involved more cross-linguistically congruent collocations in comparison to adjective + noun and verb + preposition which involved more non-congruent collocations. This finding is also in contrast to the findings of both Channell's study (1981) and Koya's study (2005) that revealed that learners at different vocabulary levels encountered problem in producing adjective-noun collocations. Channell (1981) argues that learners were incapable to spot a large number of collocations as appropriate despite being individually acquainted with the words. Likewise, Koya (2005) mentioned that it was difficult for the Japanese learners to use the acceptable adjectives with the given nouns. Thus, learners made more errors in their production of adjective-noun collocations than verb-noun collocations. Both attribute their findings to the frequency of verb + noun collocations in the learners' books and the

emphasis given to verbs rather than adjectives in classrooms in general, and on vocabulary lists.

7. Conclusion and Implications

To sum up, based on the findings of this study no significant difference was found between performances of participants on the two patterns of collocation. This finding may be due to the fact that adjective + noun and verb + noun collocations included in tests of collocations were of almost the same level of difficulty and frequency.

The findings of the present study may have some implications too. EFL learners may have a receptive knowledge of a large number of collocations, which implies that they can recognize L2 collocations and comprehend their meanings while listening and reading (i.e. the two receptive skills: *listening* and *reading*). However, their productive use of a wide variety of collocations could be generally restricted (i.e. the two productive skills: *speaking* and *writing*) (Hill, 2000; Lewis, 2000). This is why it is one of the domains that call for more attention in teaching and research. The major consideration is, thus, not merely the learners' comprehending of the meanings of collocations, but also their ability in using them properly in writing and speaking.

The learners' inadequate proficiency in the production of collocations, as shown in this study, necessitates a more constructive, instructional focus on collocations. To generate a productive learning environment, a combination of approaches, including explicit and implicit, is essentially a necessity. There are various types of exercises and activities that can increase and improve learners' productivity skills, such as telling or writing stories of their own past and then underlining the collocations used. Furthermore, teachers can make use of 'collocational grids' or 'brainstorming' in which learners are provided with words and then required to list all the appropriate collocates present. It is also very helpful to concentrate on those collocations that have no equivalent in the learners' L1. Teachers should make obvious the distinctive nature of collocations and the differences among them. For example, when a language learner questions the difference between *injury* and *wound*, teachers usually attempt to present definitions to such pairs. However, this is not a complete explanation of the terms and can lead to problems. Therefore, it is best to use the collocational fields of the two words to reveal differences in usage. For example, English speakers say *stab wound* rather than *stab injury* and *internal injuries* rather than *internal wounds* (Lewis, 2000).

Overall, this study helped prove the necessity of incorporating the teaching of collocations into the curriculum for developing students' English proficiency. L2 learners can be taught to discern collocations and practice employing them in either spoken or written forms outside of the classroom. One more way to improve learners' knowledge of collocations is to encourage EFL learners to effectively utilize English dictionaries, particularly the ones written with learners in focus. The dictionary is a reliable and esteemed repository of essentials about the lexicon of a language. Dictionaries including the BBI Combinatory Dictionary of English (BBICDE), Collin COUBUILD English Dictionary (CCED), and Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (OALD), which are based upon comprehensive naturally occurring data are specifically suitable for the acquisition of the collocational characteristics of English.

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Appendix A

Complete each blank with an **adjective** or a **verb** which makes acceptable collocation with **bold noun** so that they express the meaning provided in the brackets below each item. Don't use the adjectives or verbs from the parentheses. If you think more than one answer is possible, give all alternatives.

1. I spent all morning**housework**. (= to perform an action or activity such as washing dishes or cleaning a house etc.)
2. He an **oath** of allegiance to his adopted country.(= make this promise or swear)
3. Will you please.....your **eye** on my house while I'm on vacation?(= to look after someone or something and make sure that they are safe)
4. Mineral water.....your **thirst**. (= to stop yourself feeling thirsty, by drinking something)
5. I have found the best way to**advice** to your children is to find out what they want and then advise them to do it. (= to tell someone what they should do)
6. Statistics indicate that men are more likely to *crime* than women.(= to do something wrong or illegal)
7. Would you please me a *favor* and take this letter to the post office? (= something that you perform for someone in order to help them or be kind to them)
8. Ia very disturbing **dreams** last night. (= a series of thoughts, images, and feelings that you experience when you are asleep)
9. He **Revenge on** his employers by setting fire to the factory. (= something you do in order to punish someone who has harmed or offended you)
10. We'llwhatever **action** is necessary. (= the process of doing something, especially in order to achieve a particular thing)
11. I just want to **a line** under the relationship.(= to say that something is completely finished and you will not think about it again)
12. Tom had a bad fever yesterday; consequently, he failed to.....well on **vocabulary test**.(= to work at an activity or job)
13. If you stay out in the rain you'll **a cold!** (= become ill)
14. The programme enables pupils tosome **experience** of the world of work.(= knowledge or skill that you achieve from doing a job or activity)
15. The program is designed tothe *needs* of adult learners.(= provide something that people want or need)
16. I can't any **conclusions** from what she said. (= to decide that a particular fact or principle is true according to the information you have been given)
17. He has always an accurate **record** of his spending.(= information about something that is written down or stored on computer, film etc so that it can be looked at in the future)
18.a *secret* is quite bad for you because it causes a lot of stress.(= to not tell anyone about a secret that you know)
19. A military junta**control of** the country. (= to get possession or control of something)
20. Special **measures** are being to protect the local water supplies.(= an action, especially an official one, that is intended to deal with a particular problem)
21. What I'd add is that there is a right way to a *promise* when you have no choice.(= to fail to do something you promised)
22. The couple**tribute** to the helicopter crew who rescued them. (= praise and

- admire publicly)
23. A senior army officer was **hostage** for four months. (= to keep someone somewhere, and not allow them to leave)
24. John was always**trouble** in class.(= to deliberately try to cause arguments or bad feelings between people)
25. The government has threatened to bring in the army to the 10- month- old **strike**.(= make it end)
26. She was a(n)**acquaintance** of my family in Vienna.(= happening by chance without being planned)
27. Their new house is located in a(n) **alley** called Lisary. (= a small narrow street with no way out at one end)
28. In addition to fashion, Bond Street is also renowned for its auction houses and for its **art** galleries.(= forms of art, especially paintings or sculpture, that are produced and admired for their beauty and high quality)
29. Cigarette smoking can double our risk of dying from a heart attack and **smokers** are even more likely to die young. (= someone who smokes a lot.)
30. We were stuck in..... **traffic** for more than an hour.(= a large amount of traffic)
31. The cheese is firm in texture and has a(n) **flavor**.(= the resentful taste of a food or drink)
32. I'll give you one**chance** and if you don't bring it on Monday, you'll be in trouble. (= a final time or situation which you can use to do something that you want to do)
33. The **administration** of company created many serious problems. (= not as good as it could be or should be)
34. I have had a(n)..... **headache**, and have not been able go to work for a month.(= a regular pain in your head)
35. The mother's behavior has a(n)**impact** on the developing child.(= having a strong influence or effect)
36. Several committee members expressed their**dislike** of the chairman. (= very strong dislike)
37. There's no need to tell **jokes**, David.(=an unpleasant joke)
38. Bring me a..... **tape** and I'll record it for you.(= a special plastic box containing a length of tape that is not pre-recorded and you can record sound on)
39. The government creates laws for the**good**. (= the advantage of everyone)
40. He was an impatient and**man**.(= in a bad mood)
41. He wasted a**opportunity** when he missed from the penalty spot.(= a good chance to get something valuable or to be very successful)
42. They were caught in a(n) **circle**—in low-paid jobs because they were women, while the jobs were low-paid because women did them.(= a situation in which one problem causes another problem, that then causes the first problem again, so that the whole process continues to be repeated)
43. Jed looked forward to starting life again with a **sheet**.(= a record of someone's work, behavior, performance etc. that shows they have not done anything wrong or made any mistakes)
44. Do you need to skip work, but don't have a(an)**excuse**?(= a justifiable reason that you give to explain careless or offensive behavior)
45. The company is short of **money**.(= money that you can spend

immediately)

46. There will be a(an).....**rain** in most parts of the country.(=a lot of rain)
47. We both had**sleep** that night.(= to rest your mind and body usually peacefully)
48. India has a.....*network of road* over 4,689,842 kilometers in 2013; from this view, it is the second in the world.(= a tortuous system of lines, tubes, wires, roads etc. that cross each other and are connected to each other)
49. I never go to Pantry restaurant because I heard it serves **food**.(= things that people and animals eat, such as vegetables or meat likely to make them sick)
50. Bearing in mind that the knife is a(n) **weapon**, what happens if you get it wrong?(= causing or likely to cause death)

Appendix B

Choose the verb or adjective that best collocates with the bold noun in each sentence.

1. Whose turn is it to the housework?

- a) carry out b) perform c) make d) do

2. Witnesses are required to..... the oath.

- a) make b) take c) have d) carry out

3. Can you an eye on my car while I go in the shop?

- a) lay b) catch c) put d) keep

4. She's her hair red -- it looks so unnatural.

- a) darkened b) dyed c) painted d) coloured

5. He tried to her some advice but she wouldn't listen.

- a) suggest b) propose c) make d) give

6. In his mind, Jack had..... a crime which was unforgivable.

- a) committed b) made c) performed d) conducted

7. I wonder if you could me a favor and carry this box for me.

- a) do b) give c) make d) provide

8. I a bad dream last night and woke up sweating.

- a) made b) saw c) got d) had

9. He vowed to revenge on the man who had killed his brother.

- a) obtain b) take c) make d) gain

10. We need to action immediately!

- a) get b) take c) do d) make

11. Let's a line under the whole episode and try to continue our work.

- a) design b) write c) paint d) draw

12. We have to a vocabulary test every Friday.

- a) accomplish b) make c) perform d) do

13. He cold, developed pneumonia and that was the end of him.

- a) attracted b) acquired c) caught d) got

14. She was studying French and went to France to experience.

- a) take b) expand c) gain d) achieve

15. This book will the needs of students.

- a) please b) answer c) fill d) satisfy
16. Unless we talk about this together, we won't any conclusions.
- a) obtain b) get c) take d) draw
17. Teachers are expected to records of the work done by their students during the semester.
- a) keep b) take c) note d) make
18. Can you..... a secret?
- a) carry on b) keep c) hold d) protect
19. The new teacher..... good control of his class.
- a) takes b) catches c) grasps d) exercises
20. We have to measures to curb inflation.
- a) assume b) choose c) take d) make
21. A teacher who constantly his/her promise cannot be a reliable one.
- a) disobeys b) breaks c) violates d) breaches
22. He tribute to the guest speaker.
- a) presented b) offered c) gave d) paid
23. Eight people were hostage for four months.
- a) detained b) confined c) held d) grasped
24. He went on his way, not wanting to trouble.
- a) break up b) cut short c) stir up d) raise
25. Some workers the strike.
- a) broke b) stopped c) violated d) cut off
26. I don't know him very well. It is just a(n)acquaintance.
- a) accidental b) casual c) unanticipated d) spontaneous
27. He took the next turning to the left as he had been told, but found himself in a..... alley.
- a) blocked b) closed c) shut d) blind
28. The termart is used to refer to the visual arts such as painting and architecture.
- a) good b) fine c) pleasant d) nice
29. She is a smoker. That's why she always stinks of smoke.
- a) hard b) big c) strong d) heavy
30. The traffic made me late for my appointment.

- a) hard b) heavy c) violent d) severe
31. Brenda doesn't like olives, capers or anything with a flavor.
- a) heavy b) hard c) strong d) powerful
32. Today is yourchance to submit your final project.
- a) ultimate b) last c) absolute d) final
33. The college loses a lot of money through administration.
- a) poor b) low c) weak d) short
34. I've had thisheadache ever since I woke up this morning.
- a) potential b) dominant c) primitive d) chronic
35. Tolstoy's experiences of war had a effect on his work.
- a) deep b) primitive c) profound d) genuine
36. They must have a(n) dislike for the job.
- a) acute b) sever c) intense d) strong
37. It was a(n) joke.
- a) morbid b)sick c) unwholesome d) diseased
38. We need a(n) tape so that we can record the film.
- a) empty b) clear c) clean d) blank
39. The results of the research should be used for the good rather for individual profit.
- a) public b) popular c) common d) collective
40. She hated hishumor.
- a) bitter b) ill c) sick d) harsh
41. Polytechnics presentopportunities to a bright young lecturer.
- a) golden b) flourishing c) prosperous d) precious
42. If you earn more, you have to pay more for things; if you have to pay more, you want to earn more; so, it's a(n) circle, unless wages and prices are frozen.
- a) dilemma b) vicious c) helpless d) plight
43. "I don't know anything about the man's past history," he told the inspector, but I can give a sheet for the five years he's been working here.
- a) pure b) clean c) good d) clear
44. Many people are worried about the economy, withoutexcuse.
- a) fine b) right c) good d) proper

45. He was only willing to sell it for money.

- a) ready b) prepared c) pure d) easy

46. The forecaster predicted rain during the afternoon storm.

- a) massive b) strong c) heavy d) serious

47. You could never get.....sleep in this house.

- a) comfortable b) calm c) sound d) good

48. There is a network of roads connecting Glasgow and English.

- a) compound b) complex c) composite d) complicated

49. Don't feed the cat withfood, it may get sick.

- a) unwholesome b) diseased c) sickly d) morbid

50. A loaded gun is always aweapon.

- a) fetal b) deadly c) poisonous d) mortal