

Evaluation of the Semantic Field Theory and Componential Analysis as Theoretical Approaches of Potential Value to Vocabulary Acquisition: with Special Reference to the Learner's Collocational Competence

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**تقويم نظرية الحقل الدلالي والتحليل المكوناتي باعتبارهما طرقاً نظرية في
امكانية اكتساب مفردات اللغة الانكليزية بالاشارة الخاصة لقدرة المتعلم في
السيطرة على المنظومة المتابعة للمفردات اللغوية**

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الملخص

ينقسم هذا البحث إلى محورين. يتحرى المحور الأول المهام المختلفة لعلمي اللغة الرئيسيين، هما (علم اللغة النظري و علم اللغة التطبيقي). يهدف علم اللغة النظري إلى التعريف بالمبادئ العامة لتركيب ووظيفة اللغة بينما يسعى علم اللغة التطبيقي إلى تطبيق رؤى وطرق علم اللغة من أجل حل المشاكل اللغوية المتعلقة بالأخص في حقل تعليم اللغة الانكليزية. يشكل التحليل المكوناتي للمفردات اللغوية المحور الثاني من البحث. التحليل المكوناتي هو الطريقة المنظمة في وصف التشابهات والاختلافات بين الكلمات وذلك بتجزئة المفردة أو المفردات إلى صفات مختلفة تسمى (المكونات الدلالية).

ومن أجل الوصول إلى الغرض من التحليل، يناقش الباحث بصورة رئيسية الفكرة التي مفادها: فيما إذا يمكن أن يعد علم اللغة النظري ذا فائدة ممكنة في تعليم المفردات اللغوية أم لا؟ ولتحقيق هذا الهدف، قام

الباحث بتبني طريقة تعليم مفرداتية التي تعتمد على نواح متعددة من علم الدلالة النظري وذلك لكي يوضح بأن اللغة لا تشمل قائمة من المفردات فقط، ولكن تشمل أيضاً شبكات مترابطة عديدة من العلاقات المفرداتية بين الكلمات. ينهي الباحث بحثه بالتوصل إلى الفكرة القائلة بأن نظرية الحقل الدلالي يعد طريقة مفيدة في اكتساب المفردات اللغوية للغة الانكليزية.

Abstract

This research is divided into two parts. The first part investigates the different tasks of the two major fields of Linguistics (Theoretical and Applied). The theoretical Linguistics aims at identifying the general principles of structure and function of language whereas Applied Linguistics endeavors to apply the ideas and methods of linguistics to practical problems of particular concern to language teaching. Componential analysis forms the second part of this research. It is the systematic way to describe the similarities and dissimilarities between words by breaking down the meaning of word or words into deferent feature called Semantic Component.

For the purpose of analysis, the researcher discusses mainly the idea of whether theoretical linguistics is of potential value in teaching vocabulary or not. To achieve this aim, an approach to English vocabulary language teaching which draws on several aspects of theoretical semantics has been adopted to show that language includes not only a list of words, but rather of many associated networks of lexical relations between words. To end the researcher, it is arrived at that the Semantic Field Theory is a useful approach for acquiring the lexical items of language.

1- Introduction

The first part of this research investigates the different tasks of the two major fields of Linguistics. (a) theoretical linguistics and (b) applied linguistics. In the former, we aim at identifying general principles of structure and function of language whereas in the latter we sometimes endeavor to apply the ideas and methods of linguistics to any number of practical problems which are particularly

related to language teaching. Applied linguistics is also of useful application to lexicography, translation and analysis and treatment of the psychological linguistics disorders.

For the purpose of analysis, the researcher will verify, mainly, the hypothesis of whether theoretical linguistics is of potential value in language teaching, vocabulary learning or not. In this respect, this hypothesis led to a long debate in English language teaching circles.

In order to investigate the research – hypothesis, we start describing an approach to English vocabulary teaching which draws on several aspects of theoretical semantics. The semantic field theory starts from the idea that the vocabulary of a language consists of not only a list of words, but rather of many associated networks of lexical relations between words. This type of word – association falls under a title of semantic fields such as kinship terms, colour terms, cooking, musical terms, political parties, species of birds, branches of government, types of trees, geometrical shapes, etc. when words are of the same aspects of meaning, they are considered to belong to the very semantic field.

Componential analysis forms the second part of research. It uses a systematic way to describe similarities and differences between words. This way is performed by breaking down the meaning of a word or words into different species called semantic components. For example, the analysis of the verb: "walk" and "Run" is shown respectively as follows:

- (a) **Walk** [+ move] + [+by feet] + [on land] [+placing down one foot after] [+contact maintained with ground]
- (b) **Run** [+move] + [+quickly] [+by feet] [=on land] [+placing down one foot after another]

In this analysis, it is obvious that there are some shared common components, but not all components.

In brief, we can say that the semantic field theory is regarded as a useful approach to learn lexical items. Linguistically, this approach offers a systematic way for the vocabulary description which is, at least, compatible with what we know about how the brain encodes words. An evidence from psycholinguistics shows that mind takes account of semantic similarity (Miller and Johnson, 1976: Ch.4).

2. The Value of Vocabulary Learning in Association

Methodologically, it seems that a great attention is paid to the grammatical, phonological and orthographical levels while the lexical level receives little interest and attention. The effect of this is the dearth of knowledge on how teachers can handle the English language lexical problems. Teachers, therefore, focus on other problems and make little efforts to help students in their lexical problems. When a learner has mastered the basic syntactic structures of English, he may have a basic vocabulary of more than one thousand words. In fact, the more practice a learner has, the more he will be able to extend his vocabulary knowledge. One important point to mention, here: is learning new meanings of new words sufficient for a learner in his vocabulary acquisition?

In teaching, the lexical items, teachers emphasize more the paradigmatic sense relations paying little care or attention to the syntagmatic relations of lexical terms – the habitual co-occurrence of words together termed linguistically, as collocations. Owing to this little knowledge of the collocational competence on the part of a learner, a learner will, definitely, commit mistakes of lexical associations. These mistakes may fall into the following:

- (a) Competence of a word-meaning, but incompetence of its collocations such as "to put up a campaign", "she laughed broadly", "to estimate the evidence", etc.
- (b) Native-language interference such as: he closed the door with the key (locked), a voyage by train (journey), when can I touch Mr. John (contact)?
- (c) Over-use of a few general items which a learner is sure of such as: "a good teacher / lesson / meal / girl / university, etc.
- (d) Insufficient generalisation.

In this, for example, the learner knows "pretty girl", but does not know that "pretty" may also co-occur with: bird, flower, view, landscape, picture. Thus, he does not realize the potential of even the words he does know.

The aspect that the vocabulary of a language has a number of lexical systems the semantic structure of which can be described in terms of paradigmatic and syntagmatic sense-relations is best referred to by Lyons (1968: 443) as follows:

This last point is of considerable theoretical and methodological importance. It is one of the cardinal principle of 'structuralism', as developed by de Saussure and his followers, that every linguistic item has its' place in a system and its function, or value, drives from the relations which it contacts with other units in the system. Acceptance of the structural approach in semantics has the advantage that it enables the linguist to avoid commitment on the controversial question of the philosophical and psychological status of 'concepts' or 'ideas'.

3. Vocabulary and Syllabus - Content

The current use of lexical mistakes may come out of the lack of concentration that most syllabuses place on vocabulary. In this sense, Wilkins (1976: 1) postulates that "the learning of a language is most commonly identified with acquiring mastery of its grammatical or "structural" organization". To remedy the situation, the adopted syllabuses have to reconsider the two important things a learner wants to know about every new word he wants to make as a part of his active vocabulary. The two basic considerations concerning this last point are:

- (a) How does a certain word associate with other words of similar meaning?
- (b) Which other words can a learner use it with and in which contexts?

The non-linguist's point of view may consider the foreign vocabulary acquisition as a matter of no more than learning lists of words with their inflectional features. In such a case, he thinks that the words of the foreign language have shapes that are different from those of his native language and he will see his major task in vocabulary learning is to be that of replacing which of the forms in the new language to attach to the concepts which he already possesses. It is an idea that for every word in the native language, there is a one – to – one correspondence in the foreign language. What makes matters worse is the existence of bilingual dictionaries where single word translations are given, and perhaps too by the practice of teaching vocabulary through the encouragement of learners to memorize bilingual random lists of words. Really,

to help learners acquire vocabulary items correctly, Nasr (1980: 109 – 110) states that:

To describe the meaning of the words it is necessary to look at them in two respects – in terms of their relations with the physical world, and in terms of their relations with one another. The study of semantics has traditionally been the former, but in recent years linguists have been more occupied with the latter.

4- Preliminary Concepts about the Semantic Field Theory

The semantic field (often referred to as the lexical field theory) is a theory to the study of word – meanings which stresses the way such meanings are related within a particular area of the vocabulary such as kinship terms or cooking terms; each of these areas is called a semantic field. (Trask, 1997: 196). This approach developed in the 1930's and it had the idea that the vocabulary of a language is not merely listing of independent words as the entries in dictionaries, but is set in areas or fields within which words interrelate and define each other in different ways such as the words referring to colour are often cited as an example of a semantic field (Crystal, 1991: 311).

Not only are words of kinship relations such as: father, mother, son, daughter, brother, sister, aunt, uncle, grandfather, grandmother, etc. included in a certain semantic field, but also there are words denoting verbs and not nouns like the verbs of movement: "walk, run, stroll, amble, trot, jog". This verb – field differs from the kinship field in the idea that we may say that "stroll" is also part of another field including verbs like "wander, stroll, sprint, canter, gallop, dash". The vocabulary of a language, in this respect, is thought of as a network of interrelated items. According to this belief Robins (1964: 66) mentions that "vocabulary, or such of it as is available to a speaker at any time, is not a mere conglomeration or aggregation of independent items, and that word meanings cannot be understood or adequately described as if it were ... the meaning of a word might be best understood as the contribution it could make to the meaning or function of the sentences in which it could appear".

So, in classifying the vocabulary items into different fields according to their common semantic features, we can establish a good helpful vocabulary

systematic structure for foreign language learners. To support this contention, Miller and Johnson (1976: ch. 4) sum up that psycholinguists suggest that the mind takes account of semantic similarity as in, for example, the speech errors made by native speakers show that many wrong words, far from being random mistakes, really result from the same semantic field as the intended word (that is, the intended word shares some meaning with the wrong word as in the following example.

1. I have my book and my jigsaw ... I mean my crossword.
2. we invited him to ... asked him to buy crisps.
3. I really like to ... hate to get up in the morning.

In certain cases the 'wrong' word is a group of two words from the same semantic field like the following:

- ✗ I swindged (switched/changed).
- ✗ Momentaneous (instantaneous/ momentary)
- ✗ Horrible (terrible/horrible)

Whereas this belief is not fully conclusive, but it, generally suggests that a learner's brain depends on the semantic similarity in the classification of words; therefore it would be more helpful to teach language vocabulary in semantic fields.

5- The Semantic Features (Components) and the Componential Analysis

The semantic features mean anyone of the basic elements into which the meaning of a word can be decomposed in componential analysis (Trask, 1997: 196). Semantically, the term component, refers to irreducible feature in terms of which the sense of lexical items can be analysed, e.g. 'girl' can be decomposed into components 'human', 'female', 'child' , etc.

The semantic features form a procedure that is used to analyze meaning according to certain features such as [+animate]; [-animate]; [+human]; [-human]; [+male]; [-male] which are considered as the fundamental ones involved in distinguishing the meanings of each word in the language from every other word. So, the basic distinguishing features of the meaning of group of words such as (table, cow, girl, woman, boy, man) are analysed as follows:

	Table	Cow	Girl	Woman	Boy	Man
animate	-	+	+	+	+	+
Human	-	-	+	+	+	+
Male	-	-	-	-	+	+
adult	-	+	-	+	-	+

From a feature analysis like this, we can:

- (a) Say that the least part of the basic meaning of the word 'boy', for instance, in English involves the components (+human, +male, -adult),
- (b) Also characterize that a feature which is crucially required in a noun in order for it to appear as the subject of the verb, supplementing the syntactic analysis with the semantic features.

Ex. The _____ is writing a letter.

The crucial feature in the blank is a noun [+human]. This approach gives us the ability to predict what nouns would make the above sentence semantically odd. Examples would be "chair", or "tree", or "cat" because all these nouns are characterized by [-human].

There are some difficulties related to the semantic features that words of a language have. The difficulties are: (a) for many words in a language, it is not easy to set clear – cut distinguishing components of meaning, for example, the words "loyalty", "hatred", "sincerity", etc. Abstract nouns like these are hard to decompose according to these semantic features. (b) It seems that the semantic approach adopts the idea that words of language are considered as some sort of containers carrying meaning – components. In fact, this is not the only way in which we think of the meaning of words. Words can be thought of in terms of sense – relations, too. This type of lexical relations includes the following terms like, synonym , hyponymy, antonymy , homophony, homonymy, polysemy, etc. (Yule, 1985: 93 – 97).

6- Componential Analysis

Componential analysis represents another aspect of meaning. It attempts to represent words intention by breaking it down into smaller semantic components; sometimes it is labelled as componential analysis or semantic decomposition (O'grady, Dobrovolsky and Aronoff, 1997: 251) refers to componential analysis as "the representation of a word's intention in terms of smaller semantic components called features". Semantically, the term component or feature refers to an irreducible feature in terms of which the sense of lexical items can be, e.g. "girl analysed into components, 'human', 'female' 'child'. (Crystal, 1991: 69).

Componential analysis is a semantic approach which was, first, developed from a technique for the analysis of kinship terms devised by the American anthropologists in the 1950. It assumes that all lexical items can be decomposed using a limited set of components (or semantic features) which may, it is believed be universal.

To analyse lexical items of a language componentially is regarded as useful in that it gives us the possibility to group entries into natural classes. For example, the words, 'man' and 'boy' can be put together under the components: [+human] and [+male] while 'man' and 'woman' can be put in another class characterized by the components [+human] and [+adult].

Not only the componential analysis is used to analyze the lexical items, but it is also used to analyze verb meaning. In this analysis, the semantic components (features) are not written as Binary Components. A semantic component that is especially useful for the analysis of verb Meaning is "Go" which is used to refer to a change of various sorts as in the following example.

(a) Positional change

Ex. Harvey went from Chicago to Boston

(b) Possesional change

Ex. The inheritance went to Mary

(c) Identificational change

Ex. John went from being a notional gentleman to being a stark raving lunatic.

This notion of change can be shown in many verbs other than just 'go' like 'fly' (go through the air), walk (go on foot), crawl (go on hands and knees). For

the positional change 'go' is manifested in the meaning of 'give', 'buy' and 'inherit' and for the identificational it is manifested in "become" and "turn" into as in, e.g. Caterpillar turned into a butterfly (O'grady, Dobrovolsky and Aronoff, 1997: 251)

7- The Goal of Linguistic Theory and Foreign Language Learner's Need

When a linguist starts analyzing language, his major aim will be based on providing an exact , accurate and explicit model which could account, for all possible sentences of that language and which reflects the native speaker's intuitions in the use of language.

While the language learner is not consciously interested in providing a 'description' of the language he is learning, it is obvious that he must be able to have, to a certain extent, a complete control over the grammatical and lexical system of language which will be of great help in using language correctly. The native speaker is, with no doubt, possesses the ability to use the grammatical rules and lexis of language correctly. From a lexical point of view – the main focus in this research -, he/she will find no difficulty in making a distinction between, for example, "an attractive girl, a pretty girl, a beautiful girl, a good – looking girl, a nice girl" since they are of his/her every day use of language situations. But, these distinctions are not easy to be tackled by the foreign language learner unless there exists an approach to teaching them and helping learners to use them correctly. The lexical possibility can be best achieved by depending on the Semantic Field Theory and Componential Analysis. Which have been referred to in the previous discussion.

The previous discussion has been based on the theoretical part of the semantic theory which is represented by the two – aspects of meanings: semantic fields and componential analysis. Now, the researcher attempts to apply this semantic approach to teaching the lexical items, particularly collocations.

8- Collocations: Introductory Notes

It is quite obvious that one of the basic problem facing a foreign language learner is the way the lexical items are connected to form new larger semantic items. The reason for this problem is not the meaning of the lexical combined units, but it is that the new formed expression carries another meaning which is not simply determined by the meanings of the words in it like the idioms "let the cat out of the bag, not get to first base, a pig in a poke or turn the other cheek" (Trask, 1997: 109).

Collocation is another part of the learner's inability to understand the meaning of lexical items. Thus, incompetent learner of collocation may, for example, say "the train began" instead of "the train started because he thinks that the verbs, "begin" and "start" are used interchangeably.

8-1 What is Collocation?

A Collocation is the way words combined in a language to produce natural sounding speech and writing. For example, we say "strong wind", but "heavy rain". It would not be normal to say "heavy wind" or "strong rain". And while all four of these words would be recognized by a learner at pre – intermediate or even elementary level, it takes a greater degree of competence with the language to combine them correctly in productive use. It is one of distinguishable aspects of meaning in the idea that, on the lexical level, one finds certain words which usually occur in habitual combination with other words and this accompaniment contributes to their meaning (Dinneen, 1967:305).

The term collocation is used by different linguists to refers to "what are often very different combinations of words forms. It refers to combinations of two lexical items which make an isolable semantic contribution, belong to different word classes and show a restricted range" (Gramley and Pätzold, 1992: 61). The combinations of word – groupings together sound natural to native speakers, but students of English have to make a special effort to learn them correctly because they are often difficult to predict. Some combinations just sound 'wrong' to native speakers of English, for example, the adjective 'fast'

collocates with 'cars', but not with a glance. To expand describing collocations, Lewis (2000: 1) States that:

Collocations might be described as the words that are placed or found together in a predictable pattern. Example ranges from two word combinations such as 'problem child' to extended combinations such as 'He's recovering from a major operation'. These language patterns comprise much of speech and writing. But there are many more collocations than words, since many words occur in several different collocations. Consequently, the task of achieving proficiency in a second language is even greater than was thought when vocabulary acquisition was thought of in terms of learning words.

A part from the limitation to two-word forms, a few explanations are in order. A first criterion (two lexical items, not grammatical ones) separate lexical combinations (collocations in a wider sense) from grammatical combinations. Sometimes, the term collocations is used to refer combinations of lexical items with grammatical items or grammatical constructions, like "do in, put up with, on approval, under consideration, proud of and finish" /stop + ing – construction. The second criterion, referring to the independent meaning of units) marks the non – idiomatic combinations off the idiomatic ones.

To distinguish between the collocation ranges and grammatical classes, Robins (1964: 64) mentions that:

Collocational ranges are unlike grammatical classes in that they are peculiar to each word, and almost certainly no two words in a language share exactly the same range and frequency of occurrence within a range, whereas grammatical classes may each contain many different words and members.

What is important about the collocational meaning is that each unit or constituent represents also a semantic component. This illustrates that the units of collocation can have special meanings which are restricted to one particular collocation.

Collocations refer to various degrees of fixedness. This is best summed up by Gramley and Patzold (1992: 65) as follows:

- (a) Morphology: here the adverbs are not formally marked by "-ly" morpheme as in 'swear – blind; drunk – blind, forget – clean' etc.
- (b) Substitutability: here, lexemes can often be changed by close synonyms as in, for example, 'hardened criminal' is found side by side with 'confirmed criminal, though' hardened *burglar' or *hardened murderer'
- (c) Additions: additions, most often pre – or post – modifying nouns, are normal.
- (d) Deletion: although deletions are not impossible, they are much rare than additions as in, for example, I have not got the faintest, foggiest .
- (e) Separability: some collocations can not be separated as in, for example, 'foot the bill and curry favour' which are called bound collocations.

8-2 The Importance of Collocation

Collocation is a distinguished feature of language in that no piece of natural spoken or written English is totally free of collocation. For the student, to choose the correct collocation will make his/her language sound natural and semi – like native speakers. For example, a student who says, 'strong rain' may make himself understood, but possibly not without provoking a smile or a correction, which may or may not matter.

English language is collocationally rich; it is also precise because most single words in it, especially the more common words, embrace a whole range of meanings, some quite distinct and some that shade into each other by degrees. The exact meaning of a context is decided by that context; that is by the words that surround and combine with the core word by collocation. A student who is able to use the best collocation will express himself well and more clearly and correctly. If we compare the following two sentences (1.) This is a good book and contains a lot of interesting details, (2.) This is a fascinating book and contains a wealth of historical detail. We notice that these sentences are 'right' as far as grammar and lexis are concerned.

8-3 Kinds of Collocation

Collocations in English are of different kinds:

1. Adjective and noun: bright/ harsh/ intense/ strong light.
Ex. The students had **a brief chat** about the exam, but didn't have time to discuss them properly.
2. Quantifier and a noun:/ a beam/ ray of light
Ex. The **ray of light** passed through the window.
3. Verb and a noun: Cast/ emit/ give/ provide/ shed light
Ex. The sun **gives us light**
4. Noun and verb: / light gleams/ glows/ shines
Ex. The internet has **created opportunities** for our business.
5. Noun and noun : a light source/ pang of nostalgia
Ex. As John read the lies about him, he felt **a surge of anger.**
6. Preposition and noun :by the light of the moon.
Ex. We sometimes find lost things **by the light of the moon.**
7. Noun and preposition : the light from the moon.
Ex. **The light** emitted **from the window** helped them to see the thief.
8. Adverb and verb : choose carefully
Ex. The captain of the football team was **chosen carefully.**
9. Verb and verb : be free to choose
Ex. She **placed** the beautiful vase **gently** on the window edge.
10. Verb and expressions with prepositions/ choose between
Ex. The boy was **fulled with horror** when he saw the lion.
11. Verb and adjective: make/ keep/ declare sth. safe
Ex. **Keep** your money **safe** by carrying it in an inside pocket.
12. Adverb and adjective: perfectly/ not entirely/ environmentally safe
Ex. I am **fully aware** that there are some difficulties in the exam.
13. Adjective and preposition: safe from attack
Ex. They were **safe from** attack.

8-4 The Use of Collocation in Language Learning

In foreign language, collocation is important and basic because it can: (a) help learners to give the most natural way to say something as in, for example, "smoking is strictly forbidden" seems to be more acceptable than " smoking is strongly forbidden". (b) give learners the alternative ways of saying something which may be more colourful, expressive or more precise. For example, instead of repeating "it was very cold and very dark", we can say "it was bitterly cold and pitch dark" (c) improve learner's style in writing. For example, instead of saying "poverty causes crime" we can say " poverty breeds crime"; instead of saying " a big meal" we can say "a substantial meal". Learners may not need or want to use these expressions in informal conversations, but in writing they can give the text more variety and make it read better.

In order to practise finding collocations, a learner should train himself to notice them whenever he/she reads or listens to anything in English. A learner should also pay attention to the words that collocate with the word that he/she wants to look up it. For example, if he looks up the word 'sharp', he will find the following collocations that co – occur with it:

1. A sharp pain.
2. A sharp bend/ turn.
3. A sharp contrast/ difference/ distinction.
4. A sharp rise/ increase/ drop

Collocation, therefore is regarded as a central part of vocabulary learning. Really, the actual and active use of language on the part of the foreign language learner depends mainly on his store of conventional collocations which are described by a variety of degrees of restrictedness. Learners whose collocational competence is poor, sometimes make longer sentences as they are unable to find the right and exact collocations which convey precisely their ideas and thoughts. For example, a learner may say a long part of a sentence as in : "people have the ability to say what they like" instead of short equivalent one as in "freedom of expression".

Consequently, learners who do not receive good teaching for the lexical resources of the language concentrate on the decontextualised lexical items as they are found in a dictionary, ignoring the idea that the lexical items of a

language are placed or found together in a predictable pattern (word – concomitance). Familiarity with typical collocations in English will make learners appreciate the humorous or aesthetic power of unlikely collocation, such as:

1. I will now **abolish** my **speech**.
2. The **bus** crossed the road and **fell down**.
3. They suppose to **press** the **gear**.

As has been mentioned above, one of the important aspects of learning words is learning their collocations. So, the presentation of words must always be accompanied by a good number of typical collocations in the form of examples like the following:

	woma n	ma n	child	dog	bird	Flower	Weather	landscape	View	house	Furniture	bed
Handsome	-	+	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	+	-
Pretty	+	-	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	+	-	+
Charming	+	-	+	-	-	-	-	-	-	+	-	-
Lovely	+	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+

It is necessary to present a large number of collocations at the time a certain word is learned. This is particularly true for those learners who have no or little contact with native speakers of English with whom they could communicate and try out their use of right collocations of the new learned lexical items. The preparation and teaching this type of material will definitely help and provide sufficient and good collocational language in the form of semantic fields. So, when a foreign language learner is aware and competent of the field theory, componential analysis and collocation, his knowledge of the meaning and use of particular words will reinforced by providing some exercises which are particularly written to cover such concepts as in the following:

- (a) Exercise which ask the learner to make an informal componential of the two words given, e.g.

What are the similarities and differences between the following items?

To see something/ to look at something —→ to surprise/ to astonish

To pour tea/ to spill tea —→ ability/ skill

To meet somebody/ to bump into somebody —→ task/ duty

Paint/ varnish —→ target/ goal

- (b) Exercise which measures the learner's collocational competence and his knowledge of relating words of a certain field to each other, e.g.

Choose from the words in brackets the one which best fits the given context as in:

As we reached the top of the hill a view stretched out before us. (good – looking, handsome, beautiful)

When the learner is competent to run through the above – mentioned exercises without hesitation, it means that these words have been mastered and have become part of his active store of vocabulary. But, if he is not able to master these, then he should turn back to the relevant grids and go through them again. Teaching learners according to this approach will be of certain assistance to know the meaning of the word very quickly. In addition, learners will not look for synonyms to help them.

8-5 Collocations for Advanced Level: Classroom Activities

In language teaching, the classroom is regarded as a one of the best means to practice language communication. Collocation is an important part of this ability; therefore, teachers ask them to suggest certain classroom activities which will be of great help to develop the collocational competence. In this sense, Thornbury (2002: 116) states that "the ability to deploy a wide range of a lexical chunks both accurately and appropriately is probably all that distinguishes advanced learners from intermediate ones". The suggested activities are:

8-5-1 Textual Analysis

These activities can be practiced by the following: (a) learners can analyse texts to heighten their awareness of collocations. Here, the teacher plays his role in asking the students to find, for example, five useful collocations that occur around a certain topic. He can also give his students a list of words or phrases and ask them to find what collocations have occurred with them in the text. The teacher can go further than this and ask his students to find further probable collocations with certain items in the text by the help of a dictionary of collocations. (b) make up gap – fills based on authentic texts, particularly

omitting verbs from verb + noun collocations. (c) let the students practise prediction exercises, using a kind of a word – association technique to reveal a text gradually (using power-point display) and help the students to predict the word or phrase in question.

8-5-2 Preparation

This is practised by asking the students to brainstorm nouns on a particular subject, perhaps for a writing task, like suggesting verbs and adjectives that collocate with those nouns. By this activity, learners can learn a number of lexically dense collocational fields.

8-5-3 Speaking

It is practised by asking the students to do creative drills For example, device a 'find somebody who ...' activity them to practise collocations. For example, find someone who

1. has been on a strict diet.
2. has found themselves in an embarrassing position.
3. has made an inspired choice, etc.

The teacher, can ask students to repeat the same activity as he may give them a short talk or may tell a story three or four times.

8-5-4 Dictionary

This is practised by encouraging students to use a dictionary of collocations in order to find the best ways of expressing ideas, for example, the replacement of the words 'new' and better with better and stronger words in order to create typical collocations or finding the 'odd verbs out'. For example,

(1) Which verb does not collocate with the word 'answer'?

(2) Spot the odd verb as in:

Can you find the verb which does not collocate with the underlined noun?

1. acknowledge, feel, express, make, hide, overcome, admit, shame.
2. apply for, catch, create, get, hold, hunt for, lose, take up job.
3. acquire, brush up, enrich, learn, pick up, tell, use language.

4. assess, cause, mend, repair, suffer, sustain, take **damage**.
 5. beg, answer, kneel in, offer, say, utter **prayer**.
- (3) Give the students a number of words which collocate with the same core word. Here, the student is asked to guess this word. for example, saying 'year, loss, haven, evasion' to produce 'tax'. This could be made into a game by awarding points. To practise this, the teacher reads out the words one by one and then in group again.

Exercise

Which word collocates with all the words given?

1. fried, poached, fresh, raw, frozen, grilled, smoke.....
2. summer, warm, winter, tatty, shabby, trendy, second – hand
3. dangerous, desperate, common, born, hardened, master
4. massive, huge, crowded, packed, outdoor, indoor, sports.....

The answers: 1. fish. 2. coat. 3. criminal. 4. stadium.

- (4) Encourage students to record collocations in a variety of ways like using boxes, grids, scales, matrices and word maps.
- (5) Encourage students to use translation where possible and appropriate so as to highlight differences and similarities between the native language and the foreign language.

9- The Teacher's Role in Dealing with Collocation Errors

It is quite obvious that the learners of a language face the problem of having little control over the collocational patterns of the lexical items. So, they will be highly prone to all kinds of collocational errors which can be more disruptive in the process of communication than structural errors. To remedy this bad situation, the teacher should play a distinguished role in dealing with errors by proposing some practical procedures which can be of great assistance in lessening the collocation errors, committed by the learners inside the classroom. These procedures are summarized as follows:

1. Teachers should not stick rigidly to text – books only. These books represent no more than guide – books handling the complex nature of lexical collocational acquisition. Teachers should increase their learners' capability through the use of some aids to lexical items learning such as given exercises of lexical matching (from group **A** to group **B**) and networks. Such aids to learning should not be presented as immutable, but rather as a hypothesis which the learners can test against further data; this technique can thus be noticed to further creative and dynamic ends (Meara, 1977: 28 – 47).
2. Teachers should encourage their learners to read more in literature. Developing this ability helps learners not only to get a mastery over vocabulary items, but also to discover and acquire new collocations. In this sense, Taiwo (2001: 323) states that "chances that ESL learners cannot combine words correctly without having previously read them are very high".
3. Teachers should encourage their learners to make effective use of English dictionaries. Dictionaries such as the Collins Cobuild English Dictionary, (CCED), BBC English Dictionary, Oxford. Advanced Learners Dictionary and the Oxford Collocations are regarded the best and most helpful ones in developing the learners' collocational competence.
4. Teachers should concentrate on collocations in the teaching for register .

Examples of such errors are:

- (a) Government should allow the farmers to **borrow loans**.
- (b) I learnt from the head girl in the school how to **type** the keyboard.
- (c) If possible **to post** me a **mail**.

Here, the learners should be taught that the mere fact the two lexical items belong to the same register does not mean that they can collocate. The same item may have different collocational features in different registers.

5. Teachers should pay close attention to some common collocations which are fruitful in their language use, e.g.

- (a) Sounds animals make, e.g. : mouse – squeak, monkey – chatter.
- (b) Sounds objects make, e.g.: trumpet – blare, brakes – screech.

There is a tendency for the learners to resort to the most general items when they are not familiar with the specific collocates.

6. Teachers should refer to the points of differences between the native language and the target language as far as the collocational patterns are concerned. It is clear that the learners commit collocational errors out of their direct translation from the native language into the target one. For instance, Arab learners say: "went from house" for "went out of house".

10- The Test: Description

To validate the problem of the research, the researcher conducted a test. The test was given to fourth-year students, College of Education, University of Basrah in order to measure their collocational ability in English. The number of the testees who represented the present students in the class when the test was carried out was (48). To achieve practicality, the students were left at ease and were given one class – period to answer the test items.

The format of the test included four questions. It was divided into:

- (a) Adverb matching items.
- (b) Verb phrases matching items.
- (c) Adjective matching items.
- (d) Completion and head-and-tail matching items. (See appendix, p.25)

The scores of the test varied according to the number of the testing items that each question had. Each testing item received four marks. The scoring scheme is as follows:

- 1- (16) marks are allotted to question (1).
- 2- (20) marks are allotted to question (2).
- 3- (32) marks are allotted to question (3).
- 4- (32) marks are allotted to question (4).

In this analysis, the researcher didn't concentrate on sex variable as the psychological factor was not a major concern of investigation in this research.

10-1 Statistical Procedures

Since the major aim of this research is to measure the collocational competence of the testees, the researcher tried to:

1. find out the Mean and the Standard Deviation of the whole number of the testees' scores.
2. compare the arithmetic mean with the hypothetical value of the test. Statistically, this hypothetical mean was 50% because the required highest score for the test was 100%.
3. carry out the T. test in order to find out the significance of the statistical differences between the arithmetic value and the hypothetical value. If the difference is statistically significant, we should check the two values of the two means. Accordingly, if the arithmetic value is higher than the hypothetical value, this means that the testees have high collocational competence, compared with the hypothetical value. But, if the difference is not statistically significant, this means that the testees' collocational ability is approximate to the hypothetical value.

Table (1)

Testes scores of the collocational competence in the test given to the fourth year students, College of Education, University of Basrah

TESTEE S' NO.	TESTEES' SCORE	TESTEES' NO.	TESTEES' SCORE	TESTEE S' NO.	TESTEES' SCORE
1.	8	20.	16	39.	26
2.	8	21.	16	40.	26
3.	8	22.	16	41.	26
4.	8	23.	18	42.	28
5.	8	24.	18	43.	28
6.	10	25.	18	44.	28
7.	10	26.	18	45.	28
8.	10	27.	18	46.	30
9.	10	28.	18	47.	32
10.	10	29.	20	48.	34
11.	10	30.	20		
12.	12	31.	20		
13.	12	32.	20		
14.	12	33.	22		
15.	12	34.	22		
16.	12	35.	22		
17.	14	36.	22		
18.	14	37.	22		
19.	14	38.	24		

In order to measure the collocational competence of the testees' samples, the arithmetic value of the whole testees (10 males and 38 females) was calculated; it was found (17 – 87). This result was less than the hypothetical value (50%). Here, the T-test result (-30.86) was found out in order to know the difference between the two means. The following table shows all the statistical results of the test.

Table (3)**The statistical Results**

Variable	Arithmetic Value	Hypothetic Value	Standard Deviation	Number of Sample	T-test	Significant value
Measurement of the collocational competence	17 – 87	50%	7.29	48	- 30.86	Significant

Stating the Results

Out of the above – mentioned table, we can conclude that the testees don't have the collocational competence because the arithmetic value is less than the hypothetic one in the measurement adopted. When the arithmetic value was checked with the T- test, it was found out that the T- test was of statistical significance.

Conclusion

It is concluded that the semantic component of language, particularly, the collocational organization of the lexical items is as basic as the grammatical component of language. The major cause of the collocational errors is the neglect of conscious collocational teaching and no prescribed textbook for collocational in the whole language teaching process.

This research – paper considers lexical errors as equally significant as the grammatical errors and, in fact, it is more disruptive in communication in the sense that lexical errors are perceived by native speakers as more serious than all other types of errors because it is in the choice of words that effective communication is hindered most.

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Appendix

Format of the test

Dear student,

I would like you to do as required; your answer will be taken into consideration for research purposes only. Thank you in advance.

1. In each of the following sentences one of the adverbs is not a common collocate of the underlined verb. Decide which is and cross it out.

- (a) She **argued** (fiercely/ heatedly/ hotly) about her right to compensation.
- (b) They will (fiercely/ heatedly/ hotly) **defend** their rights.
- (c) He **Grinned**(owlishly/sheepishly/wolfishly) at her.
- (d) His frugal life style **contrasted** (brutally/ markedly/ starkly) with his wife extravagance.

2. Match the two halves of these or phrases. Then use the phrases to complete the sentences below. You may need to change the forms of the verb.

Drink	and pant	a. The message to drivers is simple; don't.....
Mix	and drive	b. There's no point in; we can't change the situation
Moan	and turn	c. I spent all night ...; unable to sleep.
Toss	and match	d. You can ... colours to create your own design.
Puff	and groan	e., we heaved the wardrobe upstairs.

Crack	for breath	f. The car ... outside the station.
Grin	to a halt	g. You need a holiday before you
Dawn	from ear to ear	h. The next morning ...
Pause	bright and cold	i. Kaby was clearly pleased about something; she was
Brake	under the strain	j. Jack went on arguing, scarcely

4. Match each adjective with the most suitable adverb. Then use each combination to complete one of the sentences on the right.

Adverb	Adjective	Sentences
Blissfully	Absent	a. I'm not ... by the latest figures.
Conspicuously	Composed	b. She is ... of her achievements.
Eerily	Concerned	c. He seems .. of the trouble he's caused.
Justly	Familiar	d. The former chairman was From the guest list.
Notoriously	Fickle	e. Her voice sounded ... to me.
Addly	Proud	f. She seemed, despite pressure.
Outwardly	Silent	g. The street was ... after the explosion.
Unduly	Unaware	h. The world of fashion is

5. complete and match the heads and tails of the sentences.

a. The scandal was damaging ...	The new software
b. I always used to be late for ...	His money
c. I need some more time to get acquainted ...	The last crime statistics
d. She was insistent	Secrecy
e. His good looks made hem irresistible ...	School
f. Tickets are limited	Two per person
g. He's mean	The government
h. I always was alarmed	women