

BUSINESS COLLOCATIONS IN ENGLISH AND GERMAN FOR FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING IN THAILAND

Wassamill Watcharakaweesilp

wsangu@kku.ac.th /wassamill@gmail.com

Abstract: *This article aims to illustrate and cast light on the roles, importance, and types of English and German collocations and to investigate the use of collocations in the business context. In this regard, collocations used in describing graphs are examined. The writer also discusses how English and German collocations can be taught in the classroom and presents various kinds of related exercises for those interested in this topic to enhance and improve their learning and teaching skills. In addition, some practical recommendations concerning effective language pedagogy as well as further research studies are provided.*

Keywords: *Business collocations, language pedagogy, English, German*

2019 JGBSE

1. Introduction

One of the language features in English and German that learners inevitably encounter is the use of collocations. Despite the fact that English collocations are widely used in both communicative and academic context, research studies on collocations have not been conducted to a great extent by English educators, instructors, and learners in Thailand. Besides, a study on comparison between English (L2) and other foreign languages (L3) should be conducted in terms of foreign language teaching. As a result, the author intends to present this topic based on the concept of English and German collocations when used in the business context.

2. Review of the Literature

According to McCarthy & O'Dell (2005), there are many different types of collocations:

1. Adjectives and Nouns: *Unemployment is **major problem** for the government at the moment.*
 2. Nouns and Verbs: *The **economy boomed** in the 1990s.*
 3. Nouns and Nouns: *Every parent feel a **sense of pride** when their child dose well or wins something.*
 4. Verbs and Expressions with Prepositions: *I was **filled with horror** when I read the newspaper report of the explosion.*
 5. Verbs and Adverbs: *I would **strongly recommend** that you learn a foreign language.*
 6. Adverbs and Adjectives: *I **am fully aware** that there are serious problems.*
- (Adapted from McCarthy & O'Dell, 2005, p. 12)

In relation to the comparative studies between Business English and German, Wassamill (2016) studies the comparison between Negotiating English and German. In his study, he designed the tests in both languages (Test of English for Negotiation and Test of German for Negotiation)

to investigate the competence of Thai learners. Each test consists of five parts. Apart from the tests, students were expected to do the third test which focused on a comparative study between the two languages. They had to apply the knowledge what they have learned from the tests. The findings based on my comparative study between the two languages in terms of qualitative data reveal that 1) Students could correctly compare words, collocations, and expressions of English with German. 2) Students could relate their syntactical knowledge of L2 to L3.; 3) Some errors found in their translation from German into English and from English into German can be explained by the impact of L1 or L2 on L3 as well as the influence of L3 on L2. The statistical analysis also indicates that all students (n=20) strongly agree to study Communicative German at Work in comparison with English. Additionally, they agree that both English and German are required for their job application.

From the review of the previous research studies, studies mainly focus on collocations in the linguistic and grammatical dimension, but not in the business context. Thus, studies on business collocations both in English and German for business purposes should be considered and conducted to provide practical recommendations concerning effective language pedagogy.

3. Business Collocations in this study: Comparative study between English and German

English can be understood as the Global language widely used around the globe. In Thailand, English is taught as a second (L2). This means that English learners in Thailand are not in the L2-medium environment. When learning other languages, learners may transfer the previously gained knowledge and relate their learning styles, experience, obstacles or problems to their L3 Learning to acquire the third language effectively and efficiently. In other words, English as L2 can affect L3 learning.

In this part, the writer only focuses on the use of of collocation *Nouns and Verbs* in describing graphs. In this regard, Sahanaya, W., Lindeck, J., & Stewart, R. (1998) mention some significant collocations used for describing graphs as follows:

English		German	
<i>Subject</i>	<i>Verb</i>	<i>Subject</i>	<i>Verb</i>
sales	increased	...?...	...?..
sales	fell	...?...	...?..

From this example, learners may rely on their English knowledge and use the key word in this sentence *sales* (in the plural form) to find a comparable German word. They might look up the word in bilingual dictionaries. Then, they will find the word *Umsätze* in German.

After finding the correct noun, they have to further find a correct and an appropriate collocating verb in the past tense which is properly used with this noun in terms of collocation. The correct answers for *increased* in English is *stiegen* (past tense) in German, and for the verb *fell* in English is *fielen* (past tense) in German.

In doing so, they cannot translate collocation from English into German word by word. Using a specific German-English/English-German dictionary based on their English knowledge may be another possibility for learners to find an appropriate and correct collocation in German.

In addition, learners can enhance their language ability to the fullest potential based on their prior knowledge (English) in comparison with the new language they are learning.

Conversely, learners have the background knowledge of German language. They can use a specific keyword in German to find an appropriate word in English.

Example:

German	English
Eine Bestellung (noun)+ aufgeben (verb)?.....

Answer: To place (verb)+an order (noun)

Learners know the word **Bestellung** in German. They are expected to look up the meaning of this word in English which is **order**. In this step, they cannot translate word by word because collocations must be used together with one more specific and acceptable word. Purposively, they have to find out which word should be used together. Finally, they will find the collocation **to place an order**. This is because the word *order (n)* is used with the word *place (v)*.

However, they might not be certain whether the word they found is correct. In this regard, they may use a bilingual dictionary by comparing that collocation in both German and English. Or they can ask the native speakers for their suggestions to check their language use.

4. Teaching collocations in the class: How to enhance the ability of learners in class?

In terms of pedagogical implications, Koya (2005) states that the following things should be considered:

1) Present new vocabulary with some of its most frequent collocations.

When teaching basic vocabulary, a teacher should couple it with words that frequently co-occur and help learners build a database of collocations. For example, *decision* should be introduced with *make*.

2) Present collocations in different ways according to their different features

Different collocations should be taught differently in accordance with their different processes of acquisition. In order to do this, teachers have to be familiar with the features of basic collocations and the process of the development of learners' collocational knowledge. This should be considered in instruction for all vocabulary level learners.

3) Verbs should be explicitly focused on when teaching collocations

Collocations whose constituents were delexical verbs with opaque and peripheral meanings should be explicitly taught to raise learners' awareness of them and keep them firmly in their minds.

(cited in Koya 2005, pp.246-249)

According to McCarthy & O'Dell (2005), a way to study English collocations and to illustrate how sentences are constructed can be shown as the following:

Word	Collocates with	Example (in sentences)
criticism	harsh (strong), constant, constructive (useful)	The play came in for some <i>harsh criticism</i> .
critical	highly and sharply	The writer is <i>sharply critical</i> of our political system.
criticize	roundly (thoroughly), fiercely, bitterly	He has <i>roundly criticized</i> for his rudeness.

(Adapted from McCarthy & O'Dell, 2005, p. 124)

This is a good way to show how the three words *criticism*, *critical*, and *criticize*, are collocated with other words to make appropriate and meaningful sentences. Learners are required to construct a meaningful sentence. Additionally, learners can examine which words can co-occur and be properly used together. This means that the useful pattern in the table can lead them to make sentences correctly.

To sum up, these examples show that how we as language educators can relate the previously gained knowledge of learners to what they are learning.

Discussion and Conclusions

As mentioned in the introductory part, English learners in Thailand have to encounter the use of collocations as they are widely used for both communicative and academic purposes. From the review of the previous studies, studies on collocations in *English for Business Purposes* should be considered and conducted to further provide practical recommendations concerning effective language pedagogy in the Thai context. All the situations and examples illustrated in this article demonstrate a remarkable breadth of knowledge.

Prior to German, it is obvious that Thai learners learn English as a first foreign language (L2). It is suggested in this study that comparing their knowledge with what they have learned previously, namely the knowledge of English, can enhance the competence of learners to their fullest potential when learning German. As mentioned earlier, it may be difficult for Thai learners to find German collocations. This is because business collocations are specific. Comparing the L3 knowledge (German) with the L2 knowledge (English) can be an efficient learning strategy as these two languages have some language features in common which will cause learners to find some similarities as well equivalences for their language studies.

In this study, the knowledge of English can affect the learning process of other foreign languages. Learners may transfer the previously gained knowledge and relate their learning styles, experience, obstacles or problems to their L3 learning to acquire the third language effectively and efficiently. This leads to the further discussion: How can learners, as non-native speakers, correctly use business collocations? In this regard, relating the knowledge of learners to their previously gained knowledge may enable them to learn successfully.

Collocations can also be understood and regarded as a linguistic device when specifically used in English for business communication. As an English instructor, designing and creating exercises as well as activities according to the learners' competence level in class can be a challenging task. As a successful language learner, using a wide range of collocations can indicate the language aptitude of that learner. In terms of language instruction, teaching collocations is essential and indispensable to foster the language proficiency of learners. In other words, this kind of enhanced ability is necessary for their studies. Additionally, research studies on collocations should be carried out further and to a greater extent.

References

- Koya, T. (2005). *The acquisition of basic collocations by Japanese learners of English*. Unpublished dissertation. Waseda University, Japan.
- McCarthy, M. & O'Dell F. (2005). *English collocations in use*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Sahanaya, W., Lindeck, J., & Stewart, R. (1998). *IELTS. Preparation and practice*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Watcharakaweesilp, W. (2016). *Fostering the L3 Competence through the Previously Acquired Knowledge of L2: A Case Study of German and English in the Thai Context*. Retrieved from <http://www.fas.nus.edu.sg/cls/CLaSIC/clasic2016/proceedings.html>.