The Effect of a Program Based on the Lexical Approach on Developing English Majors' Use of Collocations

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Abstract—As nonnative preservice teachers of English face many difficulties when using collocations, the present study seeks to identify the areas of collocation difficulty where learners have the biggest trouble. A training program based on the practices of the lexical approach (Lewis, 2008) was thus developed to solve this problem. Senior English majors at two Egyptian Universities represented the sample of the study. Instruments included a test on lexical collocations, and a training program based on the practices of the lexical approach (a framework, a teacher's guide and students' worksheets). Results showed that explicit teaching of collocations through various corpus-based activities helped learners get an intuition unto the right collocates, and drastically raised their scores in the posttest.

Index Terms—collocations, the lexical approach, vocabulary intuition, teacher education

I. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Collocation, as a linguistic term, refers to the tendency of certain words to keep company with other words. For example, *take a shower, strike a balance, armed forces* instead of *have a shower, make a balance and armed powers* respectively. Crystal (2008: 86) defines collocations as "the habitual co-occurrence of individual lexical items … Collocations are, then, a type of syntagmatic lexical relation. They are linguistically predictable to a greater or lesser extent". For Lewis (2008), collocations refer to "the readily observable phenomenon whereby certain words co-occur in natural text with greater than random frequency" (p.12). Thornbury (2002) treats collocations as part of a continuum of strength of word associations.

A person may communicate well even if there are major errors in grammar, however communication is lost if the errors are in vocabulary. David Wilkins observed many years ago, 'Without grammar little can be conveyed; without vocabulary nothing can be conveyed'. (Cited in Lewis, 2000, p.8). Some applied linguists consider collocations to be the most important element in learning a foreign language as it is this linguistic aspect that distinguishes native from nonnative speakers of a language (Hsu, 2009; Keshavarz and Salimi, 2007; Durrant and Schmitt 2010; and Nation 2001 for example).

The problem with collocations is that there are no fixed rules for word collocates. Traditional Grammar books do not normally include chapters on collocations or ways to detect them. Traditional dictionaries tend to list synonyms for a lexical item with pronunciation symbols and a few examples with very little information about the word natural or most frequent collocates. Learning collocations then depends on practice, more experience with native speakers of a language and insightful intuition unto the system of the foreign language.

While collocations constitute an essential part in learning a foreign language, very few studies and training courses have been devised for this purpose in the Arab world. One reason may be due to the fact that most student rely heavily on using synonyms or paraphrasing in their speech, and instructors find it sufficient to have this basic successful communication (Farghal and Obiedat, 1995). Another reason may be the difficult and intriguing nature of developing intuition unto an unexpected linguistic phenomenon. Shokouhi and Mirsalari (2010) confirm this nature by showing that EFL learners' general linguistic knowledge is not significantly correlated with collocational knowledge. Collocations are thus central to vocabulary acquisition and may be the most important process in learning a language (Lewis, 1993; Hill, 2002). That's why there is a dire need for benefiting from the promising applications of the lexical approach.

The lexical approach has been introduced basically as a lexical way for teaching language. Michael Lewis (2008), the founder of the lexical approach, sees that the rationale behind this approach is that "the most fundamental linguistic insight of the Lexical Approach is that much of the lexicon consists of multi-word items of different kinds" (p.8). Like Krashen's Natural Approach, and in the tradition of the Communicative Approach, the Lexical Approach places communication of meaning at the heart of language and language learning. This leads to emphasis on the main carrier of meaning, vocabulary. The concept of a large vocabulary is extended from words to lexis, but the essential idea is that fluency is based on the acquisition of a large store of fixed and semi-fixed prefabricated items, which are available as the foundation for any linguistic novelty or creativity. Without a clear understanding of the different kinds of lexis we cannot begin to look at classroom implications.

Lewis (2008) lists areas where the Lexical Approach pays more attention and areas that are not as much concerned in the following table (p. 15):

More attention will be paid to:	Less attention will be paid to:
Lexis - different kinds of multi-word chunks	Sentence grammar - single sentence
• Specific language areas not previously standard in many EFL texts	gap-fill and transformation Practices
• Listening (at lower levels) and reading (at higher levels)	• Uncollected nouns
• Activities based on L1/L2 comparisons and translation	• Indiscriminate recording of 'new
• The use of the dictionary as a resource for active learning	words'
• Probable rather than possible English	• Talking in L2 for the sake of it
• Organizing learners' notebooks to reveal patterns and aid retrieval	because [we] claim to use 'a
• The language which learners may meet outside the classroom	communicative
• Preparing learners to get maximum benefit from text	approach'

Corpus linguistics and the development of language corpora facilitated the way we look at the frequency of word uses and word collocates. This is a rather radical change after the early attempts to calculate word frequencies in English done by Thorndike in the beginnings of the 20th century (Alexander, 1981). In their basic form, those word frequencies constituted the general service list for Basic English courses that were developed by Charles Ogden (Ogden, 1940). Studies based on various corpora thus began to explore different areas of language and language acquisition (for example Kennedy, 2003; Webb and Kagimoto, 2010; Hang, Rahim, Hua and Salehuddin, 2012). Modern developments in technology, and language teaching materials facilitated the teaching and learning of collocations. Examples include the use of search engines like "Google", online specialized dictionaries like "ozdic.com" and Oxford dictionary of collocations (2003), well designed series like McCarthy and O'dell's "English collocations in use" (2005), conventionalized grammar books like Thornbury's "Natural grammar"(2003).

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The literature around learning and teaching collocations seems to fall within three main lines of research: a) studies focusing on analyzing errors on collocations committed by learners of a foreign language, b) studies focusing on the identification and use of collocations through analyzing corpora and comparing native and nonnative uses of collocations, and c) studies experimenting programmes for developing collocations or using training on collocations to develop other areas in language.

The first type of studies includes Farghal and Obiedat study (1995) in which they surveyed students' and teachers' language ability in using collocations. Senior and junior English majors at Yarmouk University in Jordan along with their language instructors were assessed by using a fill-in-the blanks test around general topics like food, weather, and color. Although the researchers used the same test with both teachers and students, the result was shocking as both teachers and students proved to have a very low level in understanding and using collocations. The authors see that such a deficiency in dealing with English common collocations sets an alarm towards paying more attention to integrate collocation training in university courses of English. In 2003, Nesselhauf reported on a study that analyzed errors in verb-noun collocations committed by advanced German students. She identified the types of errors and investigated the degree of restriction of a combination and the role of learners' mother tongue. She found out that learners' L1 had a high degree of influence on learners' production of collocations in a foreign language. While such a study draws the attention to the role of L1 in acquiring L2, European languages should not be taken as an example to follow when it comes to the role of non-European (i.e., Semitic) languages in bearing the responsibility for learners' error in English collocations. This claim is supported in Yamashita and Jiang's study in 2010 where the author investigated the influence of first language on the acquisition of second language collocations by comparing the performance of Japanese EFL learners, Japanese ESL learners and native speakers of English. The test included both congruent and incongruent examples of collocations. Results suggested that both L1 congruency and L2 exposure affect the acquisition of L2 collocations, and that L2 collocations are processed independently of L1 once they are stored in memory.

Likewise, Kuo (2009) analyzed errors in the use of collocations by intermediate EFL college students in Taiwan. The author had 98 writing samples under two topics by 49 students. The British National corpus in addition to a collocation checker were used as the main tools of the study for identifying errors in collocation in addition to having two native speakers of English comment on students' writings. Results showed that students' errors are attributed to three main causes: the use of synonyms (31%), negative transfer (20%), and approximation (49%).

In Malaysia, Hong, Rahim, Hua and Salehuddin (2012) investigated the types and sources of verb-noun collocational errors. The corpus consisted of 130 essays written by Malay students from three different districts. Their error analysis showed that the collocation area that had the most frequent errors was the preposition-related collocations. Sources of errors included dependence on synonymy, overgeneralization and intralingual transfer, with the latter found to be the most prominent among students' errors. In Iran, Shokouhi and Mirsalari (2010) investigated whether acquiring collocations is correlated with having a good background knowledge in Linguistics. He screened 35 students through a proficiency test of 90 MCQ items. Results showed that there was no significant correlation between general linguistic knowledge and use of collocations by EFL learners.

The second line of research includes Siyanova and Schmitt's study (2008) where they investigated problems in collocation intuition between native and nonnative speakers. Essays written by Russian EFL learners were taken as a corpus of analysis. Results showed that there was a very little difference between native speakers (NS) and nonnative speakers (NNS) in the use of appropriate collocations. However, NNSs showed poorer intuition than NSs regarding the frequency of collocations, and they (NNSs) were slower than NSs in processing collocations. In 2011, Alsakran compared the use of collocations by 38 Saudi EFL and 30 Arab ESL learners using three guided tests where the initial letter of the collocant was provided and where the meaning of the phrasal verbs was also provided. ESL learners outperformed EFL learners in all the tests. Results suggest that learners' learning environment had a strong effect on the acquisition of L2 collocations both on the level of receptive and productive knowledge of collocations.

The third line of research can be divided into two broad categories; studies that aim to develop the use of collocations, and studies that use collocations to develop other areas of language. Of the first category, Fan's study (2005) was conducted to investigate the effect of different levels of attention on the acquisition of verb collocations. She indicated 4 levels of attention: semantic processing (embedded collocations), memorization for recall (for a later recall test), rule given (a study of the target collocation rules), and rule given plus negative evidence (impossible collocates). A sample of 94 Mandarin University students was divided into four groups assigned to the four types of attention practice. Results showed that the semantic processing group was the least efficient in learning L2 collocations, while learners in the rule-oriented groups (the third and fourth conditions) excelled in various parts of the test: recalling of passage collocations, producing new collocations, and judging bad collocations.

In a similar track, Fahim and Vaezi (2011) evaluated the effectiveness of visual/textual input-based enhancement on the acquisition of verb-noun collocations by Iranian EFL learners. The researchers selected 96 intermediate students and assigned them to three groups; an experimental who received training where collocations were capitalized or bolded in the reading passages, another experimental who had collocations taught conventionally within enhanced visuals in the reading passages, and a control group who had no collocation instruction in their reading passages. Results showed that those who studied with the aid of visually enhanced collocations surpassed their counterparts in the other two groups.

Both Fan's and Fahim and Vaezi's studies shed light on the importance of explicit collocations teaching, as does the study carried out by Seesink (2007). Seesink examined how explicit collocation teaching via a blended learning programme could affect the writing development of six EFL learners. Data were collected through a questionnaire, observations, students' journals and sample writings in addition to interviews and reflections. Results showed that learners benefited from explicit teaching of collocations in developing the quality of their writings which by themselves reflected rich use of collocations. Similar to Seesink blended learning programme, Amer (2010) developed a mobile learning application to assess its effect on developing the use of idioms and collocations by 45 EFL learners. While results showed that students didn't score above an average of 70%, learners' usage of the application correlated with their average scores on the collocation quiz; the more learners used the application, the higher they scored on the quizzes. Likewise, Zengin (2009) explored the potential benefits of Google search engine in learning and teaching collocations. Her results showed that the higher number of search results can be macro indicators of collocations. She concluded that Google may be used as a practical free-of-charge tool for the EFL learner to make informed guesses about the tendency of collocations.

Finally both the studies of Falahi and Moinzadeh (2012) and Webb and Kagimoto (2009) investigated the effects of receptive vs. productive tasks on the development of certain types of collocations (verb-noun, and noun-noun with Iranian and Japanese students respectively). In both studies, there were two experimental groups and one control group. While the first experimental group dealt with receptive tasks (reading passages including collocations), the second experimental group dealt with productive task types (cloze tests). The control group didn't receive any training on collocations. Results for both studies showed that both the experimental groups manifested significant enhancements in their knowledge of collocations. The Japanese study, however, found out that when participants were grouped according to level, the productive task was more effective for higher level students, and the receptive task was more effective for lower level students.

On another vein, the second category of experimental studies made use of collocations for developing other areas of language. Hsu and Chiu (2008) assessed the effectiveness of training on collocations on the speaking proficiency of Taiwanese EFL learners. Results showed that there was a significant correlation between the learners' knowledge of lexical collocations and their speaking proficiency. However, no significant correlation existed between their use of collocations and their speaking proficiency. This draws our attention to the importance of practicing collocations in speaking not just to recognize them once we hear them. In 2009, Hsu assessed the effects of collocation instruction on the reading comprehension skills and vocabulary learning of the same type of learners. Three groups of Taiwanese college English majors were divided according to their academic levels. Each group received 3 different types of instruction—single-item vocabulary instruction, lexical collocation instruction, and no instruction—in separate classes. Results indicated that collocation instruction improved the subjects' vocabulary learning more than their reading comprehension across all three academic levels. Again, this study suggests that direct collocation instruction can be a worthy option for exploration in teaching vocabulary and reading. Lin (2009) examined the effects of explicit and long-term collocation instruction on the development of reading proficiency of EFL vocational high school students in Taiwan. She designed an instructional programme based on Lewis' (2000) lexical approach and Van Lier's (1996) 3A

curriculum design (*awareness, autonomy, and authenticity*) and implemented it with 40 EFL learners for six months. The results showed that the experimental class made significantly more progress than the control class in their English reading proficiency.

III. CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

A. Statement of the Problem

English majors in the college of Education at Sohag University, among other Egyptian universities, have always shown low levels in recognizing and using collocations. Most students tend to follow the prescribed rules written in grammar textbooks, and since collocations represent a missing area in traditional grammar books, students seem to be unaware of their importance nor the importance of developing an intuition unto their use. In a pilot study, 30 students in the fourth year English department couldn't score higher than 50% in the average on a sample MCQ test on collocations.

Based on this low level, the present study proposes a program that aims to develop that missing intuition unto collocations through making use of various activities within the lexical approach.

B. Hypotheses of the Study

The following main hypothesis will be tested:

There is no statistically significant mean difference between the scores of the experimental group students and those of the control group students in the posttest of collocations.

From this main hypothesis, the following sub hypotheses branch:

There are no statistically significant differences between the scores of the experimental group students in posttest and those of the control group students with regard to recognition and use of:

1- Adjective + noun collocations
2- Noun + verb collocations
3- Noun + noun collocations
4- Verb + adverb collocations
5- Adverb + adjective collocations
6- Verb + preposition
7- Adjective + preposition

IV. METHODOLOGY AND MATERIALS

A. Programme on Lexical Collocations

To develop students' skills in recognizing and using collocations, a programme based on the practices of the lexical approach was developed. The programme consisted of seven units, each devoted to one type of collocations, Students' worksheets, teachers' notes for each unit, in addition to a framework of the programme. The main objective of the programme was to introduce the concept of collocations and train students on the use of English collocations to develop their intuition unto the right word collocates in the seven types of collocations.

In each unit, the structure was as follows:

1- Objectives of the unit: objectives are listed for students to know what to expect in this unit and the learning outcomes they are supposed to produce.

2- Raising awareness: graded examples of collocations are presented to students and they are required to underline, circle or highlight certain words to direct their attention to.

3- Exploring collocations: Contrasting examples are given and analyzed for students to let them see the relation between the two parts of the collocation.

4- Analyzing collocations: students are asked here to analyze other examples are followed in the parts above.

5- Corpus work: screenshots from different corpora software results are presented to students to analyze the frequent words that collocate with other words. They are then encouraged to try their own searches on similar collocation search engines.

6- Homework: Students are asked to undertake additional collocation work based on the focus of the unit.

7- Students' resources: Some of the materials students may need to answer some of the exercises or the homework are attached here. In addition, reference sheets of different language areas that are related to the focus of the unit are also attached (i.e., list of common phrasal verbs, list of uncountable partitive expressions, list of animal collective nouns. etc.) The resources part is meant to be a reference for students once in doubt about a collocation in this programme or in their future study.

For samples of the training programme, refer to appendices (B) and (C).

B. The Achievement Test

To assess students' knowledge and intuition unto using collocations, a pre-posttest was developed. The test consisted of 70 items of the MCQ type, ten items corresponding to each of the seven units in the suggested training programme. The test was piloted on a sample of 30 students from Qena college of Education at South Valley University to measure

its validity and reliability. For validity, a jury of EFL professionals assessed the content of the test items against the objectives of the training programme as specified in the framework of the programme.

Validity and reliability of the test:

In addition to the views of the TEFL jury members, internal consistency of the test was calculated using alpha coefficient, and was found to be 0.524 which reflects a reasonable validity of the contents of the test.   The reliability of the test was calculated using the test-retest method. Alpha coefficient was found to be 0.885 which reflects a high reliability value of the test. Table (1) shows the reliability value for each section of the test.

TABLE (1)
RELIABILITY OF EACH SECTION OF THE TEST

Section	adj +n	n +v	n +n	v + adv	adv +adj	v +prep	adj +prep
Correlation coefficient	0.837	0.965	0.947	0.942	0.988	0.970	0.963

Item difficulty of the test:

Item difficulty is simply the proportion of students who answered an item correctly (CET, 2012). If j indicates item number, **Nc** is the number of students getting the item correct, and **N** is the total number of students taking the test, then the item difficulty for the **jth** item is

$$p_j = \frac{N_c}{N}$$

Table (2) shows the item difficulty for each section of the test:

TABLE (2)
SECTION DIFFICULTY AND FACILITY FOR THE TEST

Section	adj +n	n +v	n +n	v + adv	adv +adj	v +prep	adj +prep
Item difficulty	0.58	0.54	0.37	0.48	0.42	0.40	0.69
Item facility	0.42	0.46	0.63	0.52	0.58	0.60	0.31

All sections were in the mid-range of difficulty / facility except for the last section where the difficulty value was higher than the facility value. This can be attributed to the nature of the section (adj+ prep) where students make most of the errors influenced by the irrelevant prepositional system in the Arabic language. Refer to appendix (A) for the pre-posttest.

C. Sample and Administration of the Programme

The sample of the study consisted of 96 male and female students who were all the students enrolled in the "Language Exercises-2" course at two different universities; 46 students enrolled at Sohag University, college of Education constituted the experimental group who were taught using the suggested programme on collocations. 50 other students enrolled at South Valley University, Qena College of Education (150 kilometers south of the location of the experimental group) represented the control group who studied the same course "language exercises-2" without the intervention of the training programme on collocations. Both groups studied the same course materials as the researcher supervised the course in both universities. The experimental group students were informed about the purpose of the study and how it related to the nature of their course. The training programme was introduced to the experimental group students after two weeks of their normal study of the "Language exercise -2" course. The programme was carried out by a junior faculty member at Sohag college of Education for six week, one lecture a week for two hours each. The experiment started on the 1st of March 2014 and ended on the 15th of April 2014. The control group students, on the other hand, were taught the course in the traditional method that focused on excessive practice of different grammatical and lexical exercises. The typical role of the instructor in such contexts was to provide the correct answers for these exercises especially when areas of dispute arise among students.

V. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

T-test was run to calculate the difference between the scores of the experimental and the control groups before and after the administration of the training programme. Results showed that experimental group students outperformed their counterparts in the posttest and that their scores were drastically higher than they were in the pretest of collocation use. T-value for the difference in the mean scores of the experimental and the control group in the pretest was 0.627 which is insignificant. This shows that students in both groups were of close levels with regard to knowledge and use of collocations before the administration of the programme. The experimental group students' mean score in the posttest was 66.6 out of 70 while the control group mean score in the posttest was 37.46. T- value was 35.887 which is highly significant at .000 level. Tables (3), (4) and (5) show these results.

TABLE (3)
MEANS AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS OF THE EXPERIMENTAL AND THE CONTROL GROUPS IN THE PRE AND POSTTEST

group	test	N	mean	SD	SD error mean
Experimental	**pre**	46	35.6739	4.38206	.64610
	Post	46	66.6522	3.41481	.50334
Control	**pre**	50	36.2600	4.77583	.67540
	Post	50	37.4600	4.51849	.63901

TABLE (4)
T-TEST FOR THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE TWO GROUPS IN THE PRETEST

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Scores	Equal variances assumed	1.087	.300	.625	94	.534	.58609	.93806	-1.27645-	2.44862
	Equal variances not assumed			.627	94.000	.532	.58609	.93467	-1.26973-	2.44190

TABLE (5)
T-TEST FOR THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE TWO GROUPS IN THE POSTTEST

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Scores	Equal variances assumed	4.963	.028	35.477	94	.000	-29.19217-	.82285	30.82597	27.55838
	Equal variances not assumed			35.887	90.663	.000	-29.19217-	.81344	30.80805	27.57629

These results show that the experimental group students benefited a lot from the training programme and achieved higher after they went through the lexical activities presented in the programme. Therefore, the main hypothesis is rejected as there are statistically significant differences in the scores of the experimental group students and those of the control group students in the posttest favoring those of the experimental group.

In order to identify which type of collocation students benefited from the most, t-test was run to calculate the differences between the totals of the different sections of the test in the posttest for both groups. Tables (6) and (7) show these results.

TABLE (6)
MEANS AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS OF THE SAMPLE OF THE STUDY IN THE DIFFERENT SECTIONS OF THE POSTTEST

Section	Group	Mean	SD	SD error mean
ONE	**Exp.**	9.6957	.59140	.08720
adj + n	**Con.**	5.4565	1.06888	.15760
TWO	**Exp.**	9.5652	.91049	.13424
n + v	**Con.**	5.4130	1.40754	.20753
THREE	**Exp.**	9.5435	.95932	.14144
n + n	**Con.**	4.5435	1.12953	.16654
FOUR	**Exp.**	9.5000	.88819	.13096
v +adj	**Con.**	5.4348	1.37683	.20300
FIVE	**Exp.**	9.7174	.77926	.11490
adv + adj	**Con.**	4.8043	1.66826	.24597
SIX	**Exp.**	9.4130	1.04512	.15409
v + prep	**Con.**	4.6739	1.39928	.20631
SEVEN	**Exp.**	9.3261	1.19358	.17598
adj + prep	**Con.**	6.9348	1.75629	.25895

Table (6) shows that experimental group students' mean scores in the different sections of the test were higher in the posttest as compared to those of the control group. The highest mean score achieved by the control group was 6.9348 out of 10 in the seventh section (collocations in adjectives + prepositions), while the lowest mean score attained by the control group was 4.5435 in the third section (collocations in nouns + nouns). The highest mean score attained by the experimental group was 9.7174 in the fifth section (collocations in adverbs + adjectives), while their lowest mean score was 9.3261 in the seventh section (collocations in adjectives + prepositions). Table (7) provides information on the significance of these differences.

TABLE (7)
T-TEST FOR THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE TWO GROUPS IN THE DIFFERENT SECTIONS OF THE POSTTEST

Section		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means					95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
ONE	Equal variances not assumed	16.581	.000	24.624-	79.098	.000	-4.19565-	.17039	4.53479-	3.85651-
TWO		7.506	.007	17.107-	84.365	.000	-4.12522-	.24115	4.60474-	3.64570-
THREE		3.514	.064	22.879-	93.303	.000	-4.90348-	.21432	5.32906-	4.47790-
FOUR		9.217	.003	17.199-	85.090	.000	-4.00000-	.23257	4.46240-	3.53760-
FIVE		18.772	.000	18.754-	71.290	.000	-4.85739-	.25901	5.37381-	4.34097-
SIX		1.403	.239	19.078-	91.274	.000	-4.69304-	.24599	5.18166-	4.20443-
SEVEN		4.058	.047	-8.033-	86.724	.000	-2.44609-	.30450	3.05133-	1.84084-

Table (7) shows that all the differences between students' scores were statistically significant at .000 level. This shows that experimental group students benefited from each part of the programme and this was reflected in their achievement in the posttest.

The highest t-value is in the first section (collocations in adjectives + nouns) t =24.624. The second higher t-value is in the third section (collocations in nouns + nouns) t=22.879. Differences in section six (collocations in verb + prepositions) come third with t= 19.078. Differences in section five (collocations in adverbs + adjectives) come fourth with t= 18.754. Differences in section four (collocations in verbs + adjectives) come in the fifth place with t=17.199. Differences in section two (collocations in nouns + verbs) come sixth with t = 17.107. The lowest t value was in the differences in section seven (collocations in adjectives +prepositions) with t= -8.033.

As all differences in all the sections proved to be statistically significant, all sub-hypotheses are rejected as the differences between the experimental group and the control group students' scores in each part of the posttest are statistically significant favoring those of the experimental group students.

It seems natural to have students benefit from the training programme the most in the first section (adjectives + noun collocations) as this is the first section they face in the test as well as in the programme. It is also one of the tricky parts in lexical collocations; as it was noticed that students tend to have a good intuition unto the lexical collocation that incurs a verb rather than a noun. It is also natural to have the lowest significance value of -t- in the seventh section (adjective + prepostions collocations) as students had a lot of language training in phrasal verbs and adjectival phrases in the secondary stage of their study. The results of the study thus coincide with those obtained by Fan 2005 who showed that rule-oriented teaching of collocations was effective in recalling, producing and judging new collocations. Results also echo those attained by Fahim and Vaezi (2011) who showed the effectiveness of visual enhancement (thus explicit) in collocation teaching. Results also confirm those attained by Seesink (2007) who used explicit collocation teaching in developing writing. Results can also related to those attained by Amer (2010), Falah and Moinzadeh (2012) and Webb and Kagimoto (2009) which all confirmed the effectiveness of explicit collocation teaching.

VI. CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Lexical collocations seem to be one area where university students in the Arab world face lots of difficulties. Because there are no updated textbooks on structural rules for grouping words, a student has to resort to his/her intuition unto the lexical pair. And since the students' intuition is limited to the university readings and everyday electronic communications with no training on how to infer the relation between the lexical pair, the need is dire for introducing such systemic training for Arab students. The lexical approach offers promising opportunities for developing students' knowledge and use of lexical collocations. The present study is an attempt to make use of the lexical approach activities in training Egyptian university students on recognizing and using collocations.

Results indicated the effectiveness of the training programme in developing the seven different types of lexical collocations. Students' scores show how they had a big jump from the uncertainty of collocation choice to the more confirmed confident choice in the posttest as compared to their counterparts in the control group. We hope language instructors in Arab universities would find this training programme worthy of application in their institutions. We also think that university students can indulge in self-study development through trying the different activities in the course. Course designers for the university level are also encouraged to make use of the principles and practices employed in this training programme in developing other vocabulary-oriented language courses for the upper intermediate level.

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APPENDIX (A). A PRE-POSTTEST IN ENGLISH COLLOCATIONS

Dear Student,
• This is a test in English collocations that is intended to measure your ability in recognizing and using English collocations.
• Please answer all the questions as required.
• Time allowed is two hours.
• Total score of the test is 70 marks.
_____
Part One: "Adjectives + nouns" Collocations
Choose the right word from those between brackets:
1. 17, 29, and 395 are all (strange- odd- unequal) numbers.
2. Jean always wears red or yellow or some other (faint- bright- light) colour.
3. We had a (small - brief- short) chat about the exams but didn't have time to discuss them properly.
4. Unemployment is a (major- principle- chief) problem for the government at the moment.
5. Improving the health services is another (care- key- basic) issue for government.
6. Susan took the (express - fast - terrific) train to the airport in order to save time.
7. This region has a (rich- dear - precious) history and culture.
8. He was tall and strong with (heavy- strong- powerful) features.
9. There was a (strong - heavy- powerful) smell coming from the rubbish bin.
10. They gave him a (chilly- cool- freezing) reception.
****
Part Two: "Noun + Verb" Collocations
Choose the right word from those between brackets:
1. This paper (proposes - presents - offers) the case for the complete revision of the theory.
2. Recent research (hints- explains- suggests) that Jackson's theory of economic development is flawed.
3. The author of the book (adopts- adapts- affects) an unusual position on the topic.
4. the writer of the article (explains- states- declares) his opinion very clearly.
5. the article (concludes - finishes - ends) by briefly summarizing the main points that the author wishes to put across.
6. I (hold- keep- take) firmly to my belief in the importance of basic human rights.
7. The book (raises- rises- arises) some key questions but fails to deal with them in a satisfactory manner.
8. Tom and Joe are (changing- transferring- moving) house to be nearer Joe's elderly parents.
9. The standard of living has (grown- risen- increased) in the last ten years.
10. I usually find that I can (trust- rely- depend) my intuition.
****
Part Three: "Noun + noun" Collocations
Choose the right word from those between brackets:
1. As Sam read the lines about him, he felt a (surge - hint - shadow) of anger.
2. Every parent feels a (sense - feeling - touch) of pride when their child does well or wins something.
3. I felt a (pang - hit- knock) of nostalgia when I saw the old photos of the village where I grew up.
4. The (volume - size- magnitude) of traffic has increased in big cities in recent years.
5. I bought a (pack - bar - bag) of chocolate.
6. The ceasefire (agreement - acceptance - permission) came into effect at 11am.
7. In Africa, we saw a (herd- flock- pride) of lions.
8. Don't get near this (crowd -hive - school) of bees or you will get stung.
9. On the ship, I could take a glance at a (school-pack - colony) of dolphins jumping around.
10. Let's give Mr. Jones a (piece - round - sound) of applause.
****
Part Four: "Verbs + adverbs" Collocations
Choose the right word from those between brackets:
1. He pulled (strongly-steadily-powerfully) on the rope and helped her to safety.
2. She placed the beautiful vase (softly- gently- mildly) on the window ledge.
3. She smiled (proudly -boastfully- scornfully) as she looked at the photos of her new grandson.
4. I (vaguely - foggily - dizzily) remember that it was growing dark when we left
5. John has been (seriously- earnestly - critically) injured.
6. The onions should be (finely - lightly - thinly) chopped.
7. You have to (soberly - earnestly - solemnly) swear you won't tell anybody.
8. They had to (correctly - finely - accurately) assess losses and gains.
9. He doesn't write very (neatly -tidily - efficiently). I can never read his letters.
10. I waited (excitedly- patiently- zealously), but she never came.

****
Part Five: adverb + adjective" Collocations
Choose the right word from those between brackets:

1. I am (totally - completely - fully) aware that these are serious problems.
2. I was (bitterly - sadly- deeply) disappointed when I failed the exam.
3. The restaurant was (highly- deeply- ridiculously) expensive. I don't think we'll go again.
4. The whole area was (totally- utterly- fully) devastated after the earthquake.
5. He was (deeply- strongly- ridiculously) concerned about this topic.
6. They are from among the (fully- highly- strongly) educated in the city.
7. It was (strongly- strictly- completely) forbidden to use the sports ground for political activities.
8. This is a (highly- strictly- likely) controversial issue.
9. This holiday offer does seem (avidly - heavily - irresistibly) attractive but I think we are going to have to pass on it because of the high cost.
10. After a warm start to the month, the weather in the second half of June was (unfortunately - unseasonably - unpredictably) cold.

****
Part Six: "Verb+ preposition" Collocations
Choose the right word from those between brackets:

1. He looks like his mother; he takes (after- to - for) her.
2. Do you take me (after - in - for) an idiot?
3. The plane couldn't take (off- up -to) because of the snow.
4. He tried a couple of judo lessons and took (to- over- away) it right away because he found it made him feel so much fitter.
5. The concert was ___ because of the rain.
   a. called off b. blacked out   c. turned off
6. He must be about 90. He is really ___.
   a. getting on b. bringing up   c. bringing forward
7. I am sorry that I am late. I got ___ in traffic.
   a. lifted off   b. held down   c. caught up
8. After the accident a lot of people ___.
   a. turned out b. set out   c. crowded around
9. If you're going there tomorrow, count me (down- in -off). I'd love to go.
10. He gave his homework (up - off - in) to the teacher on the very last day.

****
Part Seven: "adjective + preposition" Collocations
Choose the right word from those between brackets:

1. England is famous (of - for - with) its rainy weather.
2. I'm very proud (with - from - of) my daughter, she worked very hard.
3. I've been married (with - to - from) my husband for 10 years.
4. My niece is afraid (from - of- at) dogs.
5. Are you pleased (in - with- of) your new house?
6. It wasn't very polite (from - of - with) to leave without saying thank you
7. He lives a house near (from - to - of) mine.
8. Unfortunately, I'm very bad (in - with - at) music.
9. Are you satisfied (about - with -at) your score in the test?
10. We stayed at home because Mary wasn't very keen (to - on - at) going out in the rain.

_____

End of Test
Good Luck

APPENDIX (B)

Answer Key

Part One		Part Two		Part Three		Part Four		Part Five		Part Six		Part Seven	
1.	Odd	11.	Proposes	21	Surge	31	Steadily	41	Fully	51	after	61	For
2.	Bright	12.	Suggests	22	Sense	32	Gently	42	Bitterly	52	for	62	Of
3.	Brief	13	Adopts	23	Pang	33	Proudly	43	Ridiculously	53	off	63	to
4.	Major	14	States	24	Volume	34	Vaguely	44	Utterly	54	to	64	Of
5.	Key	15	concludes	25	Bar	35	seriously	45	Deeply	55	Called off	65	With
6.	Express	16	Hold	26	Agreement	36	Finely	46	Highly	56	Getting on	66	of
7.	Rich	17	Raises	27	Pride	37	Solemnly	47	Strictly	57	Caught up	67	To
8.	Heavy	18	Moving	28	Hive	38	Accurately	48	Highly	58	Turned out	68	At
9.	Strong	19	risen	29	School	39	Neatly	49	Irresistibly	59	in	69	with
10.	chilly	20	trust	30	Round	40	Patiently	50	Unpredictably	60	in	70	on

Table of Specifications

section	aims	Item type	Number of items
ONE	-Identify collocations made out of (adjectives + nouns) - identify types of adjectives used with colors, numbers, odors , describing people, and describing scientific issues.	MCQ	10
TWO	- identifying collocations made out of (nouns + verbs) - indenting the types of verbs used with academic writing, beliefs, opinions, feelings and talking about people's behavior.	MCQ	10
THREE	- identify collocations made of (nouns + nouns) - identifying common expressions made of (a + noun + of + noun) related to feelings. - identify common expressions used to describe groups of animals - identify common expressions used to describe pieces of uncountable nouns	MCQ	10
FOUR	- identify collocations made of (verbs + adverbs) or the other way round.	MCQ	10
FIVE	- identify collocations made of (adverbs + adjectives). - identify types of adverbs and adjectives related to people's feelings, opinions and behaviors .	MCQ	10
SIX	- identify collocations made of (verbs + prepositions) or (phrasal verbs). - identify the correct preposition for a phrasal verb. - Identify the correct form of (verb+ preposition) in context.	MCQ	10
SEVEN	- identify collocations made of (adjectives + prepositions).	MCQ	10
Total		MCQ	70

Sample of Students' Worksheets
Unit (1)
Worksheet (6):

Talbot,a gleaming green Rolls and the mustard-**yellow** 1928 Austin, complete with its `dickie" or
linked to the starter and carry large day-glo **yellow** flags. [p] The grey gate will continue to
        as in this case, I would opt for gloss **yellow**. [p] In September 1960 wg768 - serialled
    W1.5-1.8m/5-6ft. F3-6. Z8-9. Aureus", greeny **yellow** stems, spines and leaves turn clear yellow
    shoots appear. The whole bush becomes butter-**yellow**, toning down later in summer. Full sun
W45cm/18in. F7-9. Z4-9. Moonbeam", light lemon-**yellow** flowers, scented foliage, multi-branched
    preppy. He had a very British thatch of straw-**yellow** hair, combed floppily to one side. I wanted
had sunk into the wood. It was beautiful light **yellow** wood, from a tree that grew in the yard
    hot side of the line, and case ground green-**yellow**. G.E. Minagear num;5scp10mg19x. Takeouts in
several weeks. F2- 3. `Primavera", pale canary-**yellow** flowers, yellow-orange autumn colour,
    a neat clump and produces double, egg-yolk-**yellow** blossoms that keep coming if you cut off
Bumpy Dog, Whiskers the cat, Noddy's bright **yellow** car - parp! parp! - fully licensed to be
    sun. [c] flower name [/c] [p] Smooth, pale **yellow** flowers, darker at the tips. [c] flower
of vines in new leaf, on the rich, brilliant **yellow** of broom, the pink and white of eglantine
but brighter yellow foliage in summer, orange-**yellow** in winter. Purple flowers. H25- 30cm
    bull; Paint is original Volkswagen greenish **yellow** in excellent condition [p] bull; Three-
    singing in her ears and saw nothing but vivid **yellow** flashes. Giddily, she felt her body being

Look at this screenshot from a corpus search. Fill in the table accordingly:

Food or drink	Nature or people	Two-colour collocations
Two-colour collocations with (y)	Two-colour collocations with (ish)	Adjective + noun for strength / temp.

Unit (2)

Worksheet (4)

Delete the weakest verb from those that collocate with each noun of the following:

examination	revise for, re-sit, pass, fail, take.
job	apply for, look for, get, lose, hold down.
rules	obey, stick to, bend, explain, change.
advice	accept, act on, disregard, follow, ignore, make, take.
car	crash, finish, hire, park, repair, start, write.
homework	do, forget, lose, prepare, finish, hand in.
trouble	be in, expect, make, discover, get into, ask for.

APPENDIX (C). SAMPLE OF TEACHER'S NOTES

Unit (1)

Exploring Collocations

Worksheet (2):

Ask Ss to look at the table and circle words that describe numbers.

Get Ss to elicit in groups the meanings of (odd), (even), (decline), (enormous), (significant).

Ask each group fill in the last column with their comments like in this:

Collocation	Example	comments
Odd/even numbers	51 is an odd number - 50 is an even number.	Odd numbers = 1,3,5 etc. Even numbers = 2,4,6 etc.
Increase number / a rise in the number	There is an increased number of homeless people.	Increased is opposite of declined. you also say an increase "/ a decline in the number of".
Total number	The total number of figures in the article is 16.	You can also say "a total of 16".
Enormous / considerable / surprising / significant + amount / number	The new budget mean an enormous number of people will have to pay taxes.	All these adjectives refer to a large amount / number
Minute / substantial/ tiny / insignificant + amount / number	Put a tiny amount of chilli in the soup.	All these adjectives refer to a small amount / number

Analyzing Collocations

Work sheet three:

In pairs, Ss use the adjectives to replace the underlined words to complete the collocations. Give feedback through other groups, and provide final answers if Ss cannot still reach the right answer.

Unit (3)

Raising awareness

Worksheet (1):

Pieces of uncountable nouns:

Find someone who: (write their names on the lines). Ss move around, and ask and answer each other. The first person to collect names for all items is the winner. Once they finish, ask Ss some students to report what they have found out. They can say something like "Ahmad likes to drink a cup of coffee".

When they finish, ask Ss to underline the uncountable words, and circle the words that collocate with them.

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