Impact of Collocation Instruction on Kuwaiti ESL/EFL Learners' Reading Comprehension

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Abstract
Collocation refers to a group of two or more words that often go together or located in a certain manner in speech and writing. This research was intended to observe the impact of collocation instruction on Kuwaiti ESL/ EFL learners' reading comprehension. The setting of this pragmatic research was English Language Unit (ELU), Kuwait University. For this purpose, 80 Arabic-speaking English learners, both male and female, at intermediate level were selected from English Language Unit. The participants' age ranged 22-25 years. Their level of English was determined on the basis of their scores on Nelson Proficiency Test which was administered at the same time in four different classes i.e., two classes as the experimental group while the other two classes as the control group for the purpose of recent research. Some participants, however, were disqualified from the data analysis because a few of them didn't show up in the pre-experimental test, while others missed some of the sessions in the experimental stage, or failed to answer the questionnaire. Due to these reasons, the participants in the experimental group and the control group were not equal. Finally, there were 32 students in the experimental group and 35 students in the respective control group. Therefore, the final total number of the sample was 67 subjects. The statistics for this study were collected from 67 participants. The paired-sample t-test showed very interesting results. The participants in the experimental group performed better than the participants in the control group in reading comprehension test. This research verified that collocation instruction, before the test is administered, had an important impact on Kuwaiti ESL/ EFL learners' reading comprehension.

Keywords: Collocations; Conscious-raising (C-R); Reading comprehension; L2 acquisition.

1. Introduction
1.1. Recent Views on the Definition of Collocation
The term "collocation" was first introduced by Firth, who considered that meaning by collocation is lexical meaning "at the syntagmatic level" (Firth, 1957). The syntagmatic and paradigmatic relations of lexical items can be represented by two axes: a horizontal and a vertical one. The paradigmatic axis is the vertical axis and comprises sets of words that belong to the same class and can be substituted for one another in a specific grammatical and lexical context. The horizontal axis of language is the syntagmatic axis and refers to a word's ability to combine with other words. Thus, in the sentence 'Khalid ate the apple' the word 'apple' stands in paradigmatic relation with 'orange', 'sandwich', 'steak', 'chocolate', 'cake', etc., and in syntagmatic relation with the word 'ate' and 'Khalid'. Collocations represent lexical relations along the syntagmatic axis. However, structural linguists have widely used syntagmatic relations between sentence constituents. For example, 'Khalid ate the apple' is a 'Subject-Verb-Object' construction' but not in the study of lexical meaning as Firth considered. According to Firth (1968), "collocations of a given word are statements of habitual or customary places of that word". He proposes that words obtain their meaning from their co-occurrence in texts.

The subsequent research attempts to define and explain collocations more clearly and specifically. Cruse (1986) proposes that collocations are a "sequence of lexical items which habitually co-occur". For instance, 'sour milk', 'thick eyebrows', 'to collect stamps', 'to commit suicide', 'to reject a proposal', etc. "Up till now, studies on collocation have been insufficient in defining the concept of collocation in a more rigorous way" (Cowan 1989:1). Collocation is still defined as the tendency of a lexical item to co-occur with one or more other words (Halliday et al., 1964; Zhang, 1993).

Nattinger and DeCarrico (1992), point out that a collocation unit includes a "node" that co-occurs with a "span" of words on either side. They define collocations as "strings of specific lexical items, such as 'rancid butter' and 'curry favor' that co-occur with a mutual expectancy greater than chance". They regard lexical phrases, such as 'how are you', as collocations with pragmatic functions. "The new approach would include an examination of the syntagmatic relations of collocation between lexical items, a skill that is evident in the adult native speakers of a language" (Carter, 1987; McCarthy, 1984; Sinclair, 1991).

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Most of the researchers performed their experiments to research on the use of collocations on productive language, especially in writing, but a few empirical studies discuss collocations with respect to receptive skills (reading and listening) and nobody discussed how collocation instruction is important in the development of ESL / EFL learners' reading comprehension. Due to the lack of empirical studies on collocational knowledge in relation to reading comprehension, this study will investigate the impact of collocation instruction on ESL/ EFL learners' reading comprehension.

1.2. The Aim of This Study

In this research, the researchers tried to investigate the impact of this highly recommended technique for teaching collocation, consciousness-raising, in learning this linguistic item. After devising some C-R activities, based on R. Ellis's weak interface theory (1984), and practicing them in two English language classes, the researchers attempted to answer the question by examining the importance and effect of such activities on learning collocations through comparing the results. In conclusion, the research tried to find the answer to the following question:

1.3. Research Question

Does teaching collocations, based on consciousness-raising activities, have any impact on Kuwaiti ESL/ EFL learners' reading comprehension of intermediate students at Kuwait University?

1.4. Research Hypothesis / Null Hypothesis

Taking into account the research question, one null hypothesis could be examined:

Collocation instruction, based on consciousness-raising activities, has no impact in the development of ESL / EFL learners' reading comprehension of intermediate students at Kuwait University.

2. Literature Review

This section outlines the role of collocations in the field of L1 and L2 language acquisition; review of empirical studies on collocations in general, and review of empirical studies on Arabic-speaking learners of English.

2.1. The Role of Collocations in L1 and L2 Acquisition

The role of collocations in L1 and L2 acquisition has been acknowledged by a large number of linguists. According to Bloom (1973, cited in Miyakoshi (2009), young children acquiring their first language produce unanalyzed chunks that an adult would recognize as multi-morphemic, such as 'lemme-see', 'I-wanna- do-it'. This phenomenon questions the validity of the general assumption that most children start producing only one word at a time.

Wray (2002), highlighted the role of collocations in the process of first-language acquisition. For instance, by using collocations, young children supplement gestures and other nonlinguistic behaviors when conveying salient messages prior to the development of their rule-governed language. Thus, children store and use complex strings before developing their grammatical knowledge. For example, a child may produce the string 'what's-that?' before knowing the internal makeup of wh-questions. Another role that their use of collocations can play is to "reduce the child's processing load once novel construction is possible". This allows the child to maintain fluency while obtaining control of processing.

Peters (1983), also underlined important role of collocations in the acquisition and use of a first language. In her study, Peters reveals that young children adopt both a gestalt (holistic) and an analytic (inferential) approach to acquiring a language. Children begin by extracting speech formulas from adults and then store and later reuse them creatively as both analyzed or segmented units and unanalyzed or whole chunks. In the field of second language acquisition, children seem to have many advantages over adults with regard to the acquisition of collocations. Leaving aside the biological factor, children interact with other children who are very lenient to incomprehension. Moreover, an adult, unlike a child, avoids the shock of being a non-speaker of the new language by choosing not to communicate with other peers (Wray, 2002). Such advantages facilitate the second language acquisition process in general, and assist children to sound native and idiomatic in their use of formulaic expressions in particular.

In order to uphold the above-mentioned view, Fillmore 1979, cited in Al-Zahrani (1998) examined the acquisition of formulaic speech of five Spanish-speaking learners of English paired with their counterparts (English-speaking children) for one year. The findings of her study reveal striking similarities in the use of formulaic sequences between the two groups. She explains that her subjects began by learning the formulaic expressions as unanalyzed or whole chunks, and later, after gaining confidence in their use, they start segmenting them into individual units. She comments:

> "Once in the learner's speech repertory, they become familiar, and therefore could be compared with other utterances in the repertory as well as those produced by the speaker. Their function in language learning process, is not only social, but cognitive too, since they provide the data on which the children were to perform their analytical activities in figuring out the structure of the language."

On the other hand, Post-childhood L2 acquisition is viewed from a different point of view. According to Wray (2002), adult second language learners reveal themselves by not knowing the grammatically possible ways of conveying a message that sounds idiomatic for native speakers. The reason, he says, is that an adult language learner

starts with individual units and then builds them up, whereas a first language learner begins with large and complex units and never segments them unless it is necessary. As he comments,

"Phrases and clauses may be what learners encounter in their input material, but what they notice and deal with are words and how they can be glued together" (p. 206).

As a result, a classroom learner aims for individual words and disregards what other words they may be combined with. For instance, when native speakers encounter the collocation 'major catastrophe' it would be stored as a sequence without the need to analyze or segment its units. Thus, native speakers would know that the right way to express a big or terrible disaster is to say major catastrophe. On the other hand**,** adult second-language learners would segment the string 'major catastrophe' into two words meaning 'big' and 'disaster' and then store them individually, without realizing that this combination goes together. Therefore, when the time comes to talk about the same idea again, they will start looking for any pairing that conveys the same meaning as major (e.g., big, large, important) and catastrophe (e.g., disaster, calamity, mishap), which may or may not sound like native speech (Wray, 2002).

On the other hand, formulaic language still plays a fundamental role in the field of L2 acquisition. Ellis (1984c, cited in Al-Zahrani (1998) points out that three ESL learners employed some sort of formula as a communication strategy (e.g., 'how do you do?' 'I wanna', 'I can't speak English'). He determined that formulas are common in both classroom and naturalistic settings and are utilized by L2 learners to decrease the learning burden, while increasing the communicative demands. We can wrap up discussion by saying that results in the areas of L1 and L2 acquisition have drawn attention to the role of collocations in language acquisition.

In an early study, (Brown, 1974) supported that increasing students' knowledge of collocation helps improve oral proficiency, listening comprehension, and reading speed and that teaching collocations enables learners to be aware of language chunks used by native speakers in their speech and writing. According to Brown,

"Collocations, along with context and concept, should be incorporated when introducing new words to advanced learners because of their vital importance in language learning."

Nattinger (1980), believes that language production comprises,

"piercing together the ready-made units appropriate for particular situations and that comprehension relies on knowing which of these patterns to predict in these situations" (p. 341).

Alexander (1984), asserts that the learning process may benefit from the three C's of vocabulary learning: collocation, context and connotation. Collocations and context have a strong connection and both are important in developing reading comprehension, for "every useful collocation is another step towards understanding the concept of a word".

Aghbar (1990), points out in his study that the reason ESL/EFL learners perform poorly in the test of formulaic expressions is not due to a lack of vocabulary knowledge, but rather due to insufficient learning of language chunks. He remarks,

"Although the construction of such chunks by and large follows the lexical and grammatical rules of English, we recognize them as formulaic only because we have a previous memory of them." (p.5)

A large number of researchers and language instructors have supported the importance of collocations in language development and teaching. Yorio (1980), claims that conventionalized language forms, including collocations, "make communication more orderly because they are regulatory in nature". Similarly, Channell (1981) asserts that increasing learners' awareness and knowledge of collocations is a very effective way of heightening their communicative competence. Cowie (1992) found that a large number of familiar and stable collocations appear in newspaper writing and emphasized essential receptive as well as productive language competence. Hunston and Francis (1998), specify that syntax and lexis are completely interdependent and "pattern and meaning are strongly associated". Moreover, Lewis (2000) affirms that learning chunks or strings of words aid language learners in improving their communicative competencies better than merely learning words in isolation. Similarly, Nation (2001) asserts that collocational knowledge is significant in enhancing fluency: "all fluent and appropriate language use requires collocational knowledge".

To summarize, collocations are important and unique, and indeed not only improve learners' language competence (both perception and production) but also help learners approach native fluency.

2.2. Review of Empirical Studies on Collocations

Review of empirical studies on collocations can be discussed in two sections:
1. Review of Empirical Studies on Collocations in General
2. Review of Empirical Studies on Arabic-speaking Learners of English

3. Review of Empirical Studies on Collocations in General

Even though research on collocations and their role in the development of L1 and L2 acquisition has long been acknowledged, it is only in recent years that empirical research on ESL/EFL learners' collocational knowledge has been specifically conducted. Empirical studies on collocations have basically focused on four aspects: measuring collocational knowledge, development of collocational knowledge, pedagogical aspects on collocations, and types of collocational errors.

Among the earliest researchers, (Channell, 1981) was the first to study on overall knowledge of collocations by using "collocational grid". The findings revealed the learners' inability to produce a significant number of acceptable collocations: only 111 (40%) out of 272 collocations were marked as acceptable. Channell comments,

"It is essential to present a good number of typical collocations at the moment a word is first acquired. This is particularly true for students who have little access to native speakers with whom they can 'try out' the collocational possibilities of new words they learn" (p. 120).

After Channell, Aghbar (1990) conducted an experiment to test participants' command of collocations, by using a "cloze test". The results showed that native speakers with higher English proficiency produced more appropriate answers than native speakers with lower English proficiency and non-native speakers. Moreover, ESL learners produced the lowest number of expected word combinations. He reached the conclusion that:

"ESL learners' poor performance on the test was not due to their insufficient vocabulary acquisition but rather to the "lack of acquisition of those language chunks that make discourse fluent and idiomatic" (p. 6).

So far as the research on 'pedagogical aspects of collocations' is concerned, some researchers have tried to give ESL/EFL teachers pragmatic advice. Cowie (1992), was one of them. He conducted a comparative study to investigate verb-noun collocations learning in a single news item and an editorial written on the same subject.

Biskup (1992), conducted an empirical study to examine the types of collocational errors that are most common, or may occur frequently among learners. In order to know whether L1 has an impact on L2 learners' comprehension and production of collocations, he conducted a comparative study, in which he examined 28 German- and 34 Polish-speaking advanced learners of English. The results revealed that Polish students relied on accuracy rather than guessing. German students used different strategies to guess the meaning of the target collocations. The researcher explained that this result can be attributed to the influence of the educational systems in Poland and Germany.

Gitsaki (1996), claims that there seems to be a developmental process that L2 learners follow in the acquisition of collocations. After her study, she concluded that as language proficiency develops, collocational knowledge expands steadily.

Howarth (1998), studied written academic performance in English. He analyzed a set of 10 essays written by 10 non-native graduate students as coursework for an MA in applied linguistics in the University of Leeds in the United Kingdom. He pointed out that the majority of non-native speakers' (NNS) errors were the production of collocations in an "overlapping cluster," a cluster of collocations that could be "predicted by analogy, but are arbitrarily blocked by usage" (p. 37)

Howarth further writes:

"While they are not fully lexicalized, they are quite institutionalized, and, therefore, form part of the stock of complexes that help to mark a piece of writing as natural and proficient. It appears that the ability to manipulate such clusters is a sign of true native speaker competence and is a useful indicator for the establishment of degrees of proficiency across the boundary between non-native and native competence." (p. 38)

Hsu (2002) was one of the latest researchers whocarried out a qualitative study which examined whether the teaching of lexical collocations would improve the development of Taiwanese EFL learners' collocational proficiency in a one-month, intensive, business English workshop. Hsu found that there are some possible factors affecting students' ability to learn collocations. These factors include frequency of collocations, degree of idiomaticity, differences of L1/L2, teacher's instruction, and language experience acquired outside the classroom. He concluded that it is necessary to include the teaching of collocations in the ESL/EFL classroom because it helps learners develop collocational competence.

To sum up, this review of empirical studies shows that collocations play a crucial role in the development of ESL/EFL learners' language perception and production as they have confirmed the poor and deficient knowledge of the collocations of L2 learners at different levels of proficiency. Hence, ESL/EFL language instructors and curriculum designers should pay heed to collocations to facilitate language learning and also to bring about fruitful results of teaching.

4. Review of Empirical Studies on Arabic-speaking Learners of English

A large number of researchers have conducted their research on Arab learners studying English in ESL/EFL settings e.g., Elkhatib (1984), Hussein (1990); Farghal and Obiedant (1995); Al-Zahrani (1998); Zughoul and Abdul-Fattah (2003); AL-Amro (2006), and Shehata (2008). A review of some of these researchers' studies is given below:

Elkhatib (1984), investigated the lexical errors of Arab ESL learners. He analyzed the writing samples of four undergraduate Egyptian ESL students with the objective of classifying lexical problems, identifying the causes of the problems, and verifying whether learners were used to the material of the language. Elkhatib concluded that lack of collocational knowledge caused the students to compose incorrect collocations such as 'shooting stones','the aircrafts can remove us to many countries', 'beautiful noise', and 'do progress'. Elkhatib recommended that in order to help overcome collocational problems, students should be given new words along with their most typical collocations.

Hussein (1990), in his research, administered a 40-item multiple-choice test to evaluate the students' receptive collocational knowledge. Only (48.4%) of the collocations were answered correctly, which was far below the initial set rate (60%). Hussein suggested that the students' low achievement on the test was due to some general factors, such as negligence of the lexicon, including collocations, in the teaching of English as a foreign language, insufficient reading habits, and reduction and simplification, which seem to be characteristics of the teaching components of a foreign language.

Farghal and Obiedant (1995), explored the issue of collocations as a neglected variable in EFL classroom. In their study, they examined the lexical collocational knowledge of 57 Jordanian advanced EFL learners. Two test

instruments were used in the study: a fill-in-the-blank test and an Arabic-English translation task. They found that both groups were unaware of the fundamental existence of collocations.

AL-Amro (2006), assessed the lexical and grammatical collocations of Saudi learners as well as their receptive and productive collocational knowledge. The data was drawn from 51 Saudi advanced English learners at the Institute of Public Administration in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. The subjects' collocational knowledge was measured by a C-test, a multiple choice test, and an essay writing task.

He found that there was a lack of collocational knowledge among the subjects as reflected by their poor performance on the collocational test. He emphasized that the EFL learners' lack of collocational use is the direct result of the neglect of the lexical approach in the foreign language teaching and learning environment.

Shehata (2008), observed the L1 influence on the productive and receptive knowledge of collocations by advanced Arabic-speaking English students. The results showed that L1 interference had a strong effect on the participants' collocational knowledge. On the whole, Arabic-speaking male learners have poor knowledge of collocations. This can be attributed to the influence of the learning environment. She concluded that English textbooks should include a bilingual glossary of collocations to help learners to become more familiar with the similarities and differences between L1 and L2.

To sum up, this section appraised the acquisition of collocations in L1 and L2 as well as the significance of collocations in L2 learning and teaching.

5. Research Methodology

5.1. Setting

The setting of this pragmatic research was English Language Unit (ELU), Kuwait University. Kuwait University (KU) was established in October, 1966 under Act N. 29/1966. The university was officially inaugurated on 27th November, 1966 to include the College of Science, the College of Arts, the College of Education, and the College for Women. The university is the state's first public institution of higher education and research. It comprises 17 colleges offering 76 undergraduate and 71 graduate programs. The university has seen its enrollment growth from about 418 to 40,000 students, faculty from 31 to 1,565, colleges from 4 to 17, and administrative and academic support personnel from 200 to more than 5,000. Kuwait University has more than 100,000 alumni serving the country and the region and some have attained prominent positions. Kuwait University follows the Credit Hour System (approved hours), with teaching arranged on semester basis, except in the Faculty of Law, which follows the yearly system of continuous teaching, and the Health Sciences Center's faculties.

Admission requirements may require students to take an aptitude test prior to being accepted to a faculty; in such instances, admission is determined using the equivalent average system (combining the student's high school grade point average (GPA) with the results of the aptitude test) as a prerequisite for admission to the College of Engineering and Petroleum, Allied Health Sciences, Administrative Sciences, Health Science Center, Life Sciences, and Computing Science and Engineering, or through personalized interviews, as determined by the College of Law, and the College of Education.

The major task of English Language Unit (ELU) is to train the Kuwaiti youth to meet modern requirements in the job market. Upon entering into Kuwait University, students must successfully pass a one-year intensive English program in order to major in business administration, banking, office management, or similar subjects. Students in the English Language Unit are required to pass English courses 141 and 142. Each course lasts for eight weeks, during which students are taught five components: reading, writing, speaking, listening, and grammar. The Computer-assisted Language Learning (CALL) program is also used. Classrooms are equipped with modern technology, such as overhead projectors and computers with Internet access. They have a capacity for more than thirty students.

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Kuwait University Official Websites: http://www.kuniv.edu , http://ku.edu.kw

5.2. Participants

Approval to conduct the study on all participants was sought through the Vice Dean "College of Social Sciences" where the English Language Unit (ELU) is located. Keeping in view the participants' availability and research purpose, 4 intact classes with 80 Arabic-speaking English intermediate learners, both male and female, were selected from English Language Unit (ELU), Kuwait University. The participants' age ranged 22-25. The level of these participants' English was determined on the basis of their scores on Nelson Proficiency Test. Out of 4 classes, 2 intact classes were randomly selected as the experimental group while the remaining 2 classes were selected as the control group for the purpose of this research. Some participants, however, were disqualified from the data analysis due to some reasons. For instance, a few of them didn't show up in the pre-experimental test, while others missed some of the sessions in the experimental stage, or failed to answer the questionnaire. Due to these reasons, the participants in the experimental group and the control group were not equal. Finally, there were 32 students in the experimental group and 35 students in the respective control group. Thus, the final total number of the sample was 67 subjects.

5.3. Instrumentation
5.3.1. Criteria for the Selection of Reading Passages for Current Research

Three reading comprehension passages were used for the purpose of this study. Participants were supposed to read the selected reading comprehension texts and then answer the questions related to the articles. Three reading passages were obtained from magazines and newspapers as reading materials. The following criteria were applied for the selection of these reading texts in order to test the level of participants' reading comprehension: Firstly, the length of the article. The texts should neither be too long nor too short and these should be according to the level of participants. Due to this reason, some parts which were hard to understand or had a lot of difficult words were modified or deleted. Secondly, the articles had to include a certain number of collocations for the purpose of this research. The three selected reading passages had about 90 collocations, 30 collocations in each text. In addition to the above-mentioned criteria, the topic chosen for this research were interesting and motivating for the participants. Therefore, these topics were examined very carefully before selection.

5.3.2. Reading Comprehension Pretest and Posttest

Keeping in view the level of difficulty of the above-mentioned three reading passages, some questions were created to check the reading comprehension of the students. According to Nuttall (1982), a test can strike at least four types of meaning individually or all together including grammatical meaning, informational meaning, discourse meaning, and the meaning conveyed by the writer's tone. However, questions on writer's tone were included because assessing the meaning conveyed by the writer's tone is most appropriate for testing advanced reading skills. Because the students might answer multiple-choice tests by chance, the test questions included for the purpose of this study focused only on checking informational meaning and discourse meaning.

Consequently, the four said written recall tests were designed to recognize the level of participants' comprehension of the main ideas and the supporting details since the researchers wanted to focus only on testing the participants' reading comprehension. Each test included ten questions that gave away some of the details of the article and its vocabulary. Those questions were not easy to answer for the students if they were not able to fully comprehend the texts. Totally, 30 questions were selected as the pretest of this study.

Moreover, internal consistency reliability for the instrument was estimated by computing Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient. The overall test's Cronbach's Alpha coefficient was 0.72. This implies that the test has sufficient internal consistency reliability. In order to determine the validity of the instruments utilized in the study, the researchers discussed it with some of their colleagues to give their opinion about the validity of the given material for the research. Furthermore, the language instructors of the selected intact classes for the present study were asked in both perspectives to express their comments. After taking their comments into account, some modifications were made to the questions before the study was formally conducted.

So far as the posttest of this study is concerned, the researchers applied the same pretest as posttest however some believe in memory effects for the short period experiment of 4 weeks. According to Hughes (1989), "subjects are likely to recall items […and] make same responses, [which results in] the reliability spuriously high (p. 39)".

5.4. Method

Keeping in view the participants' availability and research purpose, 4 whole classes with 80 Arabic-speaking English intermediate learners, both male and female, were selected from English Language Unit (ELU), Kuwait University. After taking permission from the Head of English Language Unit (ELU) and the Vice Dean, college of Social Sciences, one of the faculty members from ELU was requested to administer the instruments on the researchers' behalf. All details and procedures regarding the test administration were explained. The participants were given the Nelson Proficiency Test. In order to rule out the possibility of guessing, participants were told not to use dictionaries and to leave blank any item they were unconfident of. Then, out of 4 classes, 2 intact classes were randomly selected as the experimental group while the remaining 2 classes were selected as the control group for the purpose of this research. In order to see whether there is any major difference between the two groups or not before intervention program, the scores obtained from this test were analyzed.

Subsequently, the experimental group was given collocation treatment while there was no treatment for control group. In other words, collocations used in the reading pretest were taught to the participants of this group. In order to teach these collocations, they were selected from the reading passages that they read in the pretest before without any access to reading texts themselves. There were about 30 collocations selected from each reading text and there were a total of three teaching lists of collocations. The procedure of collocation instruction included teaching and recognizing collocations, giving examples, and practicing activities, all of which were designed to develop the participants' comprehension of collocations.

Subsequent to collocation instruction used in the reading passages, the participants were asked to read the reading passages again and answer the comprehension tests at the end of each reading comprehension passage. It is very significant to point out again that both tests were exactly the same i.e., there was no difference between pretest and posttest in this study but there was one and half month time between pretest and posttest. Whereas as the control group was concerned, the participants received no collocation instruction related to the reading comprehension passages before they read the reading comprehension passages again in the posttest stage. To put it differently, they had to comprehend and figure out the provided text without lending a hand and finish the reading comprehension posttest.

5.5. Results and Discussion

With the intention of answering the research question raised for the purpose of this study, the facts and statistics collected together were analyzed as follow:

Before answering the research question, it was presumed whether there was any significant difference between subjects in control and experimental group before any intervention program takes place in the experimental group classrooms. Table 1 and 2 indicate the results of data analysis. As it is clear from table 2, no significant difference was found between the control and experimental groups before collocation intervention program for experimental group (F=.887; P= .350). Therefore, we can conclude that if there was any significant difference between these two groups after teaching collocations used in reading comprehension passages for experimental group, we can relate these results to the effect of the intervention program in this study.

Table-1. Descriptive Statistics for Pretest in Control & experimental Group

Group	Number	Mean	Standard Deviation
Control	35	16.20	2.772
Experimental	32	16.82	2.195
Total	58	16.50	2.508

Table-2. Results of ANOVA for Mean Pretest Scores of Samples in Control & Experimental Group in Kuwaiti ESL/EFL Context

Sum of Squares		df	Mean of Square	F	Sig. (P Value)
Between Groups	5.593	1	5.5930	0.887	0.350
Within Groups	352.907	56	6.3020		
Total	398.500	57			

Table-3. Paired Sample t-test for Pretest and Posttest in Control & Experimental Group

Group	Pair	Mean	Std. Deviation SD	Std. Error Mean	T	df	Sig. (P value) (2-tailed)
Control	Pre-and Posttest	-.2670	1.4370	0.2621	-1.017	29	0.318
Experimental	Pre-and Posttest	-1.643	1.0620	0.2011	-8.189	27	0.000

Table-4. Descriptive Statistics for Control and Experimental Group in Kuwait

Group	Test	Number	Mean	Standard Deviation
Control	Pretest	35	16.20	2.772
	Posttest	35	16.47	2.193
Experimental	Pretest	28	16.82	2.195
	Posttest	28	18.46	1.551

Consequently, in order to answer the research question, data were analyzed in both control and experimental group according to Table 3 and 4. As it is evident from Table 3, there is no significant difference between pretest and posttest in control group (t= -1.017; P= 0.318) while with regard to the importance of collocation instruction used during reading comprehension passages for the development of ESL/EFL learners' reading comprehension, results of data analysis (t-test) in Table 3 above indicate that there is a statistically significant difference between participants' performance in reading comprehension in pretest and posttest (t= -8.189; P= 0.000).

However, Table 4 indicates that the participants scored higher in posttest (M=18.46, SD= 1.551), as compared to their pretest score (without teaching collocations) that was (M=16.82, SD= 2.195). After analyzing these results, the null hypothesis "Teaching collocations has no importance in the development of Kuwaiti ESL/EFL learners' reading comprehension at intermediate level" is rejected. In other words, collocation instruction, based on consciousness-raising activities, has an impact on Kuwaiti ESL/EFL learners' reading comprehension at intermediate level.

6. Conclusion

On the whole, purpose of the current study was to evaluate the performance of Arabic-speaking learners of English as a second/foreign language on tests evaluating their use of English collocational knowledge. Keeping in view the findings of the study, it can be concluded that collocation instruction could play a significant role in the development of Kuwaiti ESL/EFL learners' reading comprehension at intermediate level.

In 'Literature Review' section, it has been discussed in detail that learning vocabulary can play a significant role in reading, listening, speaking as well as writing. So far as Arabic-speaking ESL/EFL learners are concerned, I believe the lack of essential vocabulary can be considered as one of the most common reasons why the Arabic-speaking students are not capable to express themselves fluently in speech and writing. Another problem is that Arabic-speaking students cannot use English outside the classroom in their real life situations in spite of studying English for years. Moreover, they have a lot of problems in finding suitable collocates of words. Some of the students cannot understand a reading comprehension text mostly because they are not well-familiarized with

collocations. These students have been observed to translate English vocabulary words into Arabic during their class tests. I believe that the result of this study may be helpful for English language instructors and students to improve their vocabulary and English collocations.

In accordance with Nist and Simpson (1993), knowing the definition of a word is important and may be sufficient in many situations, but it is just a beginning point. They also emphasized that a memorized definition is often the tip of the iceberg, the part mistakenly believed to be the total iceberg because it is so visible and obvious. Thus, we can deduce that classical vocabulary teaching techniques do not contribute to the development and retention of new vocabulary items. Moreover, Maghsodi (2010) validates the aforesaid idea by saying that although memorizing terms with their respective translations is quick and preferred by learners, it is superficial and does not let students use the needed vocabulary correctly in context. We can also quote (Hsu, 2010) in order to support our idea. Hsu investigated the effects of direct collocation instruction on Taiwanese college English majors' reading comprehension and vocabulary learning. He concluded that direct collocation instruction improved the subjects' vocabulary learning and improved retention. To conclude, he suggested that collocation instruction could be considered as a teaching option.

However, Altınok (2000), had different point of view. Although, she concluded that collocation instruction did not produce any fruitful results in her study. She still suggests the idea that collocates of words should be taught when presenting new vocabulary.

This study used quantitative methods in seeking to determine the impact of collocation instruction on Kuwaiti ESL/ EFL learners' reading comprehension. In this way, it is only one of its kind trends in research on collocations. Nevertheless, this can be considered as an initial point, and further research in this area certainly will be very important. Several implications are provided here for future research:

First, while this research was performed with ESL/EFL learners studying English in English Language Unit (ELU) at Kuwait University, it would be interesting to repeat this study with other groups of learners and different nationalities. It would be valuable to study the relationship between knowledge of collocations and reading comprehension at different proficiency levels, especially at the foundation level, to see how the beginners understand reading comprehension passages although they have been provided with imperfect knowledge of collocations.

Second, to conduct a similar study but using qualitative methods to observe ESL/EFL learners' slight progress and their reactions to collocations and collocation instruction while they engage in collocation instruction. By detecting ESL/EFL learners' improvement in the process of learning collocations and their reactions to learning collocations, researchers have the chance to study how ESL/EFL learners grasp their learning of collocations, and turn that knowledge into their capability of comprehending texts. In fact, it is satisfying to examine how ESL/EFL learners obtain collocational knowledge and turn their input into output, which enables ESL/EFL learners to comprehend texts without difficulty.

Regarding pedagogical implications, the recent study established a consensus in L2 learners' lack of collocational knowledge. The results put together a dire need for more attention to the teaching of collocations. Thus, the following suggested pedagogical implications can serve as a framework for teaching collocation:

Firstly, since the educational language environment plays an important role in learning collocations, as shown in this study, it may be useful to employ bona fide texts in the teaching of collocations in Arabic-speaking learners' context. Such texts seem to offer a richer environment for exposure to collocations than in typical textbooks where the input is modified. According to Burger and Gallina (2008)

"When students see words in authentic contexts, they learn how the words

function and what their typical collocations are" Burger and Gallina (2008).

Secondly, the insufficient ability in the production of collocations calls for a more constructive, instructional focus on collocations. A mixture of approaches, such as 'explicit and implicit', is essential to generate a productive learning environment. There are various kinds of activities and exercises that can enhance and develop ESL/EFL learners' productivity skills, such as telling or writing stories of their own past and then highlighting the collocations used.

Thirdly, teachers can use "collocational grids" or "brainstorming" in which students are provided with words and then asked to list all the acceptable collocates present. It is also very useful to focus on collocations that have no equivalent in the students' first language.

Keeping the above-mentioned discussion in view, we can maintain that this study helped prove the necessity of incorporating the teaching of collocations into the curriculum for developing students' English proficiency. ESL/EFL language instructors ought to introduce collocations to raise ESL/EFL learners' awareness of the significance of this fact. Instructors should explain the characteristic nature of collocations as well as the distinctions among them. For instance, when a student questions the difference between 'wound' and 'injury', teachers usually try to provide definitions to such pairs. Anyhow, this is not a complete explanation of the terms and can lead to problems. Therefore, it is best to use the collocational fields of the two words to reveal differences in usage. For example, English speakers say 'stab wound' rather than 'stab injury' and 'internal injuries' rather than 'internal wounds' (Lewis, 2000). Furthermore, the need to develop strategies for the acquisition of collocations is very important. Students can be taught to observe collocations and practice using them in either spoken or written forms outside of the classroom. Moreover, one way to improve students' knowledge of collocations is to encourage them to use English collocation dictionaries whenever they are in doubt about the usage of a particular word.

7. Limitations and Suggestions

Even though the study successfully addressed the research question of this proposal, there might be a number of limitations:

This study was restricted to 30 collocations selected from each reading comprehension passage and there were a total of three teaching lists of collocations and a population sample of 67 participants. Thus, this study was not practical to assess the participants' overall knowledge of collocations. Examining more types and considering other aspects of collocations, such as high/low frequency, and a larger population would make it more feasible to generalize the findings. We expect that these limitations will motivate researchers to develop better dimensions in the future. Furthermore, this research may offer direction in this promising field. Suggestions for future research are given as follows:

This fact has been accredited earlier that collocations play a vital role in many aspects of language acquisition, comprehension and use. Yet the field of collocations is still in its infancy, and much remains to be learned about the nature of collocations, such as L1 interference, collocational strategies, the effect of explicit and implicit approaches on the learning of collocations, and the development of collocational proficiency. Therefore, further research on collocations is certainly required. The current study has given forth some interesting results; however, they are not final. In order to create more generalized theories about collocations, researchers should continue conducting their research on university students rather than intermediate students whose English proficiency is more advanced. This could be achieved through a variety of different proficiency tests such as TOFEL, IELTS, or the English language admission proficiency test.

To sum up, the results of this study showed that collocation instruction has a significant impact on Kuwaiti ESL/EFL learners' reading comprehension. Therefore, collocations need more attention from L2 curriculum designers and English language instructors.

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