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Difficulties Encountered by Libyan University Students of English as a Foreign Language in the Use of Lexical Collocations

Aisha Ali Dukali

A thesis submitted to the University of Huddersfield in partial
fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)

The University of Huddersfield

October 2016

*To the memory of my beloved father
who is, and always will be, the
inspiration for any success
I may achieve in the future.*

Acknowledgements

In the Name of Allah,

First and foremost, I must express my limitless thanks to Allah, the Knower of All, for his help and blessing, and peace be upon Mohamed, his messenger.

I owe my deepest gratitude to Prof. Dan McIntyre and Dr Brian Walker, my supervisors, for their useful and careful guidance, valuable feedback and constructive comments on every step taken throughout my research. I deeply appreciate what they have done for me which made this study possible.

I sincerely wish to give my deepest gratitude to my husband, Ahmed, and my children, Anas, Owess and Areen for their patience, help and support. My success would not have been possible without their continuous presence with me in the UK during the years of my study.

I also would like to express my wholehearted thanks to my dear family, my mother, brothers and sisters, who have encouraged and supported me throughout this research all the way from Libya. Their unconditional love and prayers have made it possible for me to complete this thesis.

I would like to thank all the staff members in the Department of English, Faculty of Languages, at the University of Tripoli and the staff members at the University of Huddersfield who have helped and supported me. Special thanks go to Dr Aboubaker El-Aswad, Dr Habib Al-Ramash, Dr Suhbi Balhouq and Dr Mustafa Al-Dabiaa, and Dr. Jim O'Driscoll. In addition, my deepest thanks go to the two native speakers, David Ellis and Margaret Lyons-Purton, who volunteered to make judgments on the acceptability of learners' collocational patterns.

I would also like to thank all the students who participated in my study and made it possible. They are too numerous to be mentioned here separately but I am grateful to them all. My deepest gratitude goes to all my beloved friends who have been supportive and helpful throughout the process of my PhD.

Finally, I am grateful to the Libyan Ministry of Higher Education, the Libya Cultural Affairs Bureau and the Libyan Embassy for their financial support throughout the journey.

Abstract

The main goal of this research is to investigate the difficulties Libyan undergraduate university English major students have in the use of verb-noun and adjective-noun collocations by looking at their performance in free production. Twelve verbs and twelve adjectives¹ were investigated in depth with the aim of determining their collocational patterns when used by Libyan learners. Having done this, I also investigate whether there is a significant difference between native speaker ratings of English language learner collocations in academic as opposed to non-academic contexts.

To achieve the main aim, a 250-word academic writing task was used to collect data from 186 fourth-year university students (90 males and 96 females) at Tripoli University (the Department of English, Faculty of Arts). The data was analysed using AntConc 3.2.1w (Anthony, 2007). After extracting the learners' collocations, four sources were used to determine and judge their acceptability in terms of conforming to native-like use. They are: (1) the Oxford Collocations Dictionary (2009), (2) the online British National Corpus (BNC), (3) consultations with two native speakers, and (4) a survey to triangulate the above three methods. Gass and Selinker's (2008) error analysis framework is adopted as the basis for analyzing the learners' collocational violations. In addition, quantitative and qualitative methods were used to analyse the data. For example, the writing task data was analysed quantitatively in order to identify the frequency of learners' acceptable collocations, erroneous collocations and collocational errors, and

¹ The twelve verbs are *do, provide, acquire, gain, enhance, make, offer, take, give, get, have* and *require*. The twelve adjectives are *good, academic, high, higher, modern, current, practical, specific, basic, general, great* and *special* (for details, see section 3.3).

qualitatively to identify various types of collocational errors and to determine the sources of learners' difficulty in producing collocations.

In addition, a two-version acceptability survey (i.e. academic rating and non-academic rating) was administered to 100 native speakers of English in order to achieve the secondary aim. Furthermore, a student questionnaire and a lecturer questionnaire were used as a supportive method to explore collocation as a linguistic phenomenon from the learning and teaching perspectives. The participants were 155 students and 12 university lecturers. The results from the questionnaires are useful as they potentially suggest reasons why Libyan students have difficulty with collocations. In addition, they contribute to our understanding of how lecturers and students think collocations are taught and learned in the Libyan educational system.

Findings from the academic writing data reveal that: (1) verb-noun collocations were more difficult for the participants than adjective-noun collocations; (2) independent samples t-test results showed that the participants' use of the twelve adjectives in the adjective-noun collocations showed significantly more accuracy level compared to their use of the twelve verbs in the verb-noun collocations. Therefore, the statistical investigations confirm that verb-noun collocations posed more difficulties for the participants than adjective-noun collocations.; (3) three broad categories of errors were identified in the erroneously produced verb-noun and adjective-noun collocations in the Libyan Learner Corpus (LLC): (i) grammatical errors, (ii) lexical errors and (iii) errors related to usage; and (4) eight main types of sources of difficulties are suggested, such as L₁ interference – the negative influence of the mother tongue - and the use of synonymy. The results of the survey data reveal that there were significant differences in the native speakers' judgments in the academic rating survey and the non-academic rating survey.

Finally, on the basis of these results, several recommendations are made in order to improve the teaching of collocations in EFL classes in the light of the obtained results.

Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis is an original piece of work of mine. No part of this thesis has been previously published or submitted for another award or qualification in any other universities or institutions.

Aisha Ali Dukali

October 2016

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Word count: 81, 410

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List of Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Term
Adj-N	Adjective noun
BNC	British National Corpus
BBI	The BBI Dictionary of English Word Combinations
CCED	The Collins COBUILD English Dictionary
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
ESL	English as a Second Language
EMAS	The English of Malaysian School Students
IELTS	The international English language testing system
LLC	Libyan Learner Corpus
LI	Lexical Item
L ₁	First language
L ₂	Second language
MMU	Manchester Metropolitan University
NNS	Non Native Speaker
NS	Native Speakers
OALD	The Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary
SPSS	Statistical Package for Social Science
TANGO	A national e-learning project established by National Science Council
TEFL	Teaching English as a foreign language
TOEFL	Test of English as a Foreign Language
V-N	Verb noun
Vs.	Versus

Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Introduction

Libyan EFL university learners majoring in English generally do not sound like a native speaker² when using the language, despite the fact that they have been learning English for about ten years by the time they graduate. One reason for this is that vocabulary learning has been shown to be a very long and complicated process for EFL/ESL language learners (Schmitt, 2000:117). Meara (1980) points out that language learners admit that they encounter considerable difficulty with vocabulary even when they progress from an initial stage of language learning to an advanced level.

Compared to the teaching of grammar, vocabulary has not received enough attention in Libyan English language teaching. The Grammar-Translation method is still widely used by a number of Libyan teachers (Saaid, 2010; Emhamed and Krishnan, 2011). This method entails focusing on the teaching of grammatical rules and explaining them in the learners' L₁. With regard to the meaning of a text, "the students are asked to translate English sentences to Arabic, or *vice versa*" (Emhamed and Krishnan, 2011:183). However, Wilkins (1972:111) argues that "[w]hile without grammar very little can be conveyed, without vocabulary nothing can be conveyed". It is not surprising, therefore, to find a number of researchers in the field of foreign language learning

² Please see section 1.8 Terminology used in the study for detailed information on my definition and discussion of the term native speaker.

(FLL) who *do* highlight the importance of learning vocabulary and agree that vocabulary is at least as important as grammar in language learning, such as Wilkins (1972), Meara (1980), McCarthy (1990), Taylor (1990), Lewis (2000; 2008), and Nation (2001). McCarthy (1990) highlights the importance of vocabulary teaching for second/foreign language learners in the following statement:

No matter how well the student learns grammar, no matter how successfully the sounds of L2 are mastered, without words to express a wide range of meanings, communication in an L2 just cannot happen in any meaningful way (1990:8).

McCarthy goes on to explain that in vocabulary teaching there is a high importance of collocation”. In addition, he demonstrates that “collocation is fundamental in the study of vocabulary, and collocation is an important organizing principle in the vocabulary of any language (1990:12).

Accordingly, collocation is considered an important aspect in foreign language learning, necessary for knowing how to combine words to make other special meanings and essential to all language use. Lewis (2000:177) highlights the importance of collocations in language use by proving that both native speakers of a language and successful EFL advanced learners have a high level of “collocational competence – a sufficiently large and significant phrasal mental lexicon”. Furthermore, Yang and O’Neill (2009:182) reported that “[t]his competence plays an important role in helping them use a language fluently, accurately and appropriately”.

To the best of my knowledge, very few teachers in the Libyan context take into consideration the importance and value of collocations when planning their English language lessons. Hence, EFL Libyan learners often encounter huge problems in using English lexical collocations. They cannot explain themselves clearly in writing, for example; although perfect grammar might be used, problems concerning lexical choice (i.e. collocational use) may still continue. In this vein, Hill (2000:50) explains that what the learners produce and use “often sounds awkward and very intermediate”. He goes on to argue that “students with good ideas often lose marks because they do not know the four or five most important collocates of a key word that is central to what they are writing about” (2000:50). Thus, collocational violations are “an old problem” and a frequent feature of learners’ interlanguage (English) (Hill, 2000:50). The mastery of English collocations is consequently found to be a huge problem encountered by EFL/ESL language learners (Gitsaki 1996; Granger 1998; Howarth 1998; Laufer and Waldman, 2011; Nesselhauf 2003, 2005). As McCarthy (1990:13) argues, “even very advanced learners often make inappropriate or unacceptable collocations”. Language learners in this case often fail to select and combine the lexical items in native-like production and usage because they are unaware of the collocational patterns and restrictions. Because there are no generalizable collocational rules that govern the construction of these appropriate combinations of words, there is, consequently, a need for EFL learners to use conventions which have to be memorized rather than learned. The distinction between memorizing and learning is similar to that of declarative and procedural knowledge³, that

³ “Declarative memory” stores individual facts, “procedural memory” stores processes and “working memory” brings the two together in carrying out a task (Anderson, 1983, cited in Johnson and Johnson, 1999:167). Declarative memory, for example, would be used by drivers in terms of knowing which side of the road they drive. Procedural memory is knowing how to drive a car using gears, clutch

is, the difference between “knowing that” and “knowing how” (Johnson and Johnson, 1999:94). In my opinion, in terms of teaching, the teacher would need to conduct classes designed to help students to memorize vocabulary and collocations (building declarative knowledge) and then follow up on this at a later stage by giving them communicative writing tasks that require them to use their memorized collocations. In this way, the teacher would be helping the students to develop their working memory.

This study investigates learners’ problems and difficulties in the use of English lexical collocations. This includes discussing, in depth, learners’ collocational performance in academic written production, since “production data is publicly observable and is presumably reflective of a learner's underlying competence” (Brown, 2000:216). This approach – investigating learners’ written production with regard to collocation – is supported by Lewis (1997:29) who argues that by examining learners’ writing, it is possible to show that miscollocation is a frequent type of error.

The decision to investigate learners’ collocational errors was based on the fact that error analysis has the advantage of providing a better understanding of, and revealing valuable information about the difficulties learners have with this linguistic phenomenon. Thus, in-depth insights can be gained of how language is learned and acquired through examining learners’ errors (Brown, 2000:217). Possible explanations for the students’ misconstrual of English lexical collocations will be given. This kind of study is important to all people who are involved in the educational

and brakes. Therefore, declarative knowledge can be better applied in the case of collocation learning, since it is more related to learning and accumulating factual information.

process, e.g., learners, teachers, syllabus designers and coursebook writers. It is also designed to raise Libyan teachers' awareness of the difficulties Libyan learners encounter when using lexical collocations. Various researchers have focused on this method to demonstrate students' difficulties in using English collocations (e.g. Howarth 1998b; Altenberg and Granger, 2001; Namvar et al., 2012). In addition, Bazzaz and Samad (2011:158) argue that “[c]olloccational knowledge is viewed as a very important issue in writing as it is seen to discriminate (*sic*) native speakers from foreign language learners”.

The focus of this study is on two types of lexical collocation, verb-noun and adjective-noun collocations according to Benson et al.'s (1997) classification of collocation based on the phraseological approach. Twelve verbs and twelve adjectives⁴ were investigated in depth to determine the acceptability of their combinations (see 4.3 for details of the procedure for selecting the two investigated types of lexical collocation). Additionally, I decided to investigate collocations within an extended structure, e.g., a phrase (i.e. verb-noun and adjective-noun phrase [NP] combinations⁵). The noun phrase includes pre-modifiers of the noun such as articles, intensifiers and adjectives within the collocation/combination and/or in some cases a following preposition (for a detailed discussion of this point, see section 2.5).

⁴ The twelve verbs are *do, provide, acquire, gain, enhance, make, offer, take, give, get, have* and *require*. The twelve adjectives are *good, academic, high, higher, modern, current, practical, specific, basic, general, great* and *special*. Those verbs and adjectives were selected from the native speaker English teachers' corpus which I compiled and analysed in order to investigate: (1) the two most frequent types of lexical collocations appearing in the native speaker English teachers' academic essays and (2) the most frequent collocates within those two most frequent types. The size of the corpus was 3,428 words of varied essay length ranging from 250 to 539 words (for details, see section 4.3).

⁵ Throughout the study the verb + noun phrase combinations and adjective + noun combinations will be referred to as verb-noun and adjective-noun collocational patterns.

I also used other methods to collect data for this study, in particular, two questionnaires: i) a students' questionnaire and ii) a lecturers' questionnaire. The questionnaires were used as a supportive method to further interpret and explain the findings obtained from the writing task. I also administered the acceptability-of-collocations survey to 100 native speakers of English in order to: (1) triangulate the three methods used to evaluate the acceptability of learners' collocational patterns, and (2) to answer the fourth research question concerning whether there is a significant difference between native speaker ratings of English language learner collocations in academic as opposed to non-academic contexts as a secondary aim of this body of research (for details of these methods, see section 4.4).

1.2 Aims of the Study

The ultimate goal of this thesis is to provide a better understanding of the competence of EFL university students with regard to their use of verb-noun and adjective-noun lexical collocations in a Libyan context. This is achieved by closely examining their actual performance in an academic writing task. The secondary aim of the study is to discover whether there is a significant difference between native speaker ratings of English language learner collocations in academic as opposed to non-academic contexts. Below are my aims in a series of numbered points:

To determine which type of lexical collocation (verb-noun collocations or adjective-noun collocation) is more problematic for Libyan learners.

To ascertain whether there is a significant difference in using the verbs in verb-noun collocations and the adjectives in adjective-noun collocation.

To identify the types of errors Libyan learners make when producing verb-noun and adjective-noun collocations in an academic writing task.

To identify the cause of the difficulties Libyan learners have when producing verb-noun and adjective-noun collocations in academic writing.

To ascertain whether there is a significant difference between native speaker ratings of English language learner collocations in academic as opposed to non-academic contexts.

To suggest some methods to help students to produce native-like English collocations in producing the above-mentioned collocations.

1.3 A Synopsis of the Libyan Context: (the Libyan Educational System)

Arabic is the medium of instruction throughout the various stages of the educational system in Libya. The Libyan educational system is divided into three main stages: basic, intermediate, and higher education. Undergraduate and postgraduate studies are optional and left to the volition of the students whether to join or not. Table 1.1 illustrates the current stages of education in Libya.

Table 1-1 Stages of education in Libya

Stage		Years	Ages	Period
Basic Education	Primary	1-6	6-12	6
	Preparatory	7-9	13-15	3
Intermediate (secondary) Education		10-13	16-18	3
Higher Education (e.g. University - Higher institutions)		14+	18+	usually 4-7

Table 1-2 Subjects of the Libyan educational system

Primary school		Preparatory school	Secondary school
Duration	Six years	Three years	Three years Used to be four years

1–3 years	4–6 years	7–9 years	10–12
Arabic Language	Arabic Language	Arabic Language	Arabic Language
Mathematics	Mathematics	Mathematics	IT
Islamic Studies	IT	IT	Islamic Studies
Sciences	Islamic Studies	Islamic Studies	Physical Education
Physical Education	Sciences	Physical Education	Drawing
Drawing	Physical Education	Drawing	English Language
	Drawing	Biology	Subjects specialization
	English Language	Physics	
	History	Chemistry	
	Geography	History	
		Geography	
		English Language	

(Adapted from Alhmali 2007)

Basic education generally spans 9 years: six years of primary school and three years of preparatory school. This stage is compulsory and free to all students from the age of 6 to 15. Most schools are run by the government and the emphasis at this stage is on students learning standard Arabic, basic Science, the Quran and basic mathematics in the first three years. Then, all students must attend certain lessons as indicated in the above table. The assessment examinations start in the fourth year. The preparatory school starts at the age of 12 and lasts for three years (see table 1.2 for full list of subjects at this stage).

At Intermediate level, students study for three years and specialize in different fields, i.e. basic sciences; engineering sciences; life sciences, languages (Arabic specialization + English specialization), economics and social sciences. Each specialization has its related subjects and curriculum. For instance, the subjects of English specialization are Arabic language, Islamic studies, French language, IT, listening, speaking, pronunciation, reading, writing, language lab and grammar.

At higher education level, students can continue their studies in universities, higher institutes for training or technical and vocational institutions, depending on how well they do in their final examinations. For example, 85% and above is required for joining faculties such as medicine and engineering whereas students with 65% and under are usually directed to higher training and vocational institutes. In addition, students who graduate from specialized high schools are encouraged to pursue their field of specialization at the university stage (El-Hawat, 2003; Elabbar, 2011). The length of time spent at university varies according to the years of study. For example, students from the faculties of Languages, Arts, Science, Technology, Agriculture, Economics and Education take four years to graduate whereas the Faculty of Engineering takes five years and the Faculty of Medicine takes between five and seven years.

English is taught in all faculties as a general subject for around 2-4 hours a week. The content of the course is left to the staff member who chooses how best to help the learners to use special terms related to their field of study, and also to read and understand specific types of English, such as, scientific English or English for Engineering.

In Libya, most university departments of English teach English as a specialized course related to language skills. The total number of contact hours is between 18 and 22 each week. An outline curriculum is designed for each subject by the Head of Department, but the choice of textbooks is left to the staff members' decision.

The students are taught and prepared to become highly qualified teachers for teaching in secondary schools, professional translators or to pursue their post-graduate studies. Normally, the students take four years to graduate. In the first year, the teaching staff try to develop students'

English in general (i.e. grammar, speaking, writing, and reading comprehension). There are more specialized subjects in the second year such as phonetics, literature and translation alongside the previously mentioned subjects. In the third year, more subjects are offered, such as theoretical linguistics, applied linguistics, creative writing, methods of teaching, oral practice, grammatical structures, literature, translation, English varieties and phonology. In the final year, the students are prepared for graduation and taught the same subjects as in the third year together with research writing.

1.4 English within the Libyan Educational System

It is important for the aim of this study to give an overview of English language as taught in the Libyan educational system in order to make suggestions for improving the quality of English teaching in this foreign language context. Here, foreign language (FL) refers to a language which is not the speaker's mother tongue. At the same time, it is not spoken in the speaker's own country as an official language. At present, a methodology akin to the Grammar Translation method is deployed for the teaching of English in the national schools. A shift in focus is therefore required to bring forth more modern approaches to teaching in order to enable the students to produce a more native-like version of the English language.

From primary to secondary education, the 'English for Libya' series of textbooks is used and it is published by Garnet Education in the UK (see appendix 1). This series includes three books with a CD for listening lessons: the course book, the work book and the teachers' book. The materials, topics and activities in these books are primarily about Libyan life, culture and history. They were designed to improve the linguistic and communicative competence of students, specifically by

using the communicative approach. However, many current teachers of English do not appear familiar with the communicative approach. Orafi and Borg (2009:251) point out that the new curriculum “aims to develop students’ oral communication skills and [the] teachers’ own limitations in this respect are problematic”. In addition, they add that “the curriculum recommends that English be used as much as possible by the teacher and students in the classroom”. Each unit is divided up according to language skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing), grammar and vocabulary. Teaching in basic and intermediate education demands highly qualified, well trained and experienced teachers to implement the innovations of this new curriculum.

Unfortunately, the teaching of these books within the Libyan context is difficult. Although they are based on the communicative approach, as mentioned earlier, it is still the case that many Libyan teachers of English mainly teach by using the Grammar Translation method. For example, many teachers teach the rules of grammar and usually translate the materials into the students’ L₁. Orafi and Borg (2009:244) point out that “Arabic was widely used in English lessons by teachers and students”.

In addition to these issues, the lesson periods are also too short and insufficient to enable the large numbers of students in one class to practise the language. Suwaed (2011), for example, states that EFL Libyan learners’ exposure to the English language is limited to just a few hours in the classroom, which is similar to most EFL teaching contexts. Even after the collapse of the Gaddafi regime, no updates were forthcoming concerning any possible increase in students’ exposure to English language (in terms of the number of hours) within the various stages of the Libyan

educational system and so presumably remains the same as explained in this section and the previous one. It is still considered as a foreign language and has no official status.

Bagigni (2016:90) states that “the role of English in the Libyan context is expanding at an unprecedented rate” and provides several reasons for this trend:

It plays a central role in the secondary education system

It plays a central role in curriculum reform,

The increasing demand for English language skills in the academic and workplace domains

Bagigni (2016) analysed the role and use of English in Libya using O’Driscoll’s (1999) framework which divides all language use into three macro domains: the interpersonal domain, the role-based domain and the general public domain. The method she used to collect data on the use of English in the interpersonal domain was mainly based on “personal knowledge of that society as an insider and my critical reflection as a linguist and teacher” (61) whereas in the general public domain, it was based “largely on direct observation using photography and field notes” (62). The main drawback of the first method was that it was highly subjective as it drew on personal experience, as admitted by the author. For example, she explained that it was English words and phrases such as ‘big problem’, ‘Hi’, ‘O.K.’ which were commonly used among Libyan youth (2016:65). What is more, Libyan females tend to use phrases such as, ‘make-up’, ‘eye shadow’ and ‘perfume’. This could be due to the impact of the beauty programmes and TV series they watch on the Arabic channels. Moreover, the use of English words has become *de rigueur* in Libya.

In addition, a fairly recent development after the collapse of the Gaddafi regime has been the trend to display the signage of some public and private institutions and businesses such as hospitals, restaurants, shops and cafes in English. Bagigni (2016), for example, points out that the signage and announcements at Tripoli International Airport are written and heard in both Arabic and English. However, this practice existed during the period of Gaddafi's regime. However, I would argue that this would not have a significant effect on improving Libyans' English proficiency level since there are many signs in Arabic in, for example, Edgware Road in London and Rusholme in Manchester. This does not mean that native speakers of English will have a reasonably high proficiency in Arabic.

Although it is necessary to train teachers using specific training courses, teacher training is also important for improving the teachers' proficiency, and increasing their methodological competence. However, Orafi and Borg (2009:245) report that the training provided to support teachers in implementing the new curriculum is very limited.

At the higher education level, the situation is very different from primary and secondary education. Libyan university students encounter several learning and educational difficulties. From my own observations as a staff member at the University of Tripoli (the Department of English, Faculty of Arts), there appear to be several difficulties in learning English at the university:

English language has no specific curriculum at this level. A general outline for each subject is previously prepared by the department, and the choice of text books is left to the teacher when it comes to preparing a suitable scheme of work.

The large numbers of students in one class results in limited opportunities for students to practise the language.

There are no technological facilities whatsoever at the higher education level.

1.5 Collocations within the EFL Libyan Curriculum

My aim in reviewing the Libyan EFL curriculum is to explore whether collocations are taught explicitly and included at all the various levels in the Libyan educational system, or whether the curriculum is just limited to traditional vocabulary teaching (i.e. presenting discrete lexical items). As a result of reviewing the curriculum, it is clear that throughout the whole series of textbooks at both the basic and intermediate levels of education, only one textbook (second year of Secondary English specialization in intermediate education) contained a single lesson about collocations, which formed part of the listening skills lessons (Phillips et al., 2008:120) (see appendix 2). As Moras and Carlos (2001:1) claim, traditional vocabulary teaching is “limited to presenting new items as they appeared in reading or sometimes listening texts”.

At the higher education level, there is no direct indication of teaching collocation to Libyan students, as there are no separate vocabulary lessons. The only lessons which may be related to teaching vocabulary are reading comprehension lessons. Therefore, Libyan students encounter many difficulties in the use of collocations in their writing because the teaching of collocation and its use is very limited in the Libyan educational curriculum throughout all educational levels.

According to Smith (2005), including collocation in the curriculum is a necessity; Smith explains that if non-native speakers face extreme difficulty in choosing accurate combinations of words,

collocations can prove to be problematic, regardless of whether learners know the meaning of the individual words. Lewis (1993:14) points out that there is a necessity for students to surpass the “intermediate plateau” because although such students are able to cope in most situations, they may, however, have a tendency to 'talk around' or 'avoid' more demanding tasks related to learning advanced language. Williams (2002) states that collocation instruction acts as motivation for upper level learners. He explains that having the knowledge and awareness of frequently occurring collocations will extend the learner's vocabulary, while also improving fluency, and helping achieve more native speaker-like stress and intonation (for a full discussion of the importance of collocations in FL vocabulary learning, see section 2.3 chapter 2). Finally, Williams goes on to state that collocation errors, as opposed to grammatical errors, can prove to be more damaging to the learner's communication process, thus resulting in unnatural sounding expressions, or odd, outdated phrasing.

Collocations are an important element in English writing and their appropriate use improves learners' writing skills considerably. To sum up, including collocations in the curriculum and helping students to use collocations appropriately in writing will contribute to effective communication.

1.6 Research Questions

In order to achieve the aims outlined in 1.2, I devised the following research questions with regard to university-level, Libyan English language students:

RQ1. Which type of collocation (verb-noun or adjective-noun) is more problematic for Libyan learners?

RQ1.1. Is there any significant difference in learners' performance when using the 24 verbs and adjectives⁶ identified in this research in verb-noun and adjective-noun collocations?

RQ2. What types of errors do Libyan learners make when producing verb-noun and adjective-noun collocations?

RQ3: Do these errors allow us to infer any possible reasons for their presence?

RQ4. Is there a significant difference between native speaker ratings of English language learner collocations in academic as opposed to non-academic contexts?

RQ5. On the basis of the findings relating to the questions above, what methods can be suggested to help the teaching of collocations to EFL students in a Libyan university context?

1.7 Significance of the Study

The significance and originality of my study is as follows:

This thesis represents, to my knowledge, the first large-scale investigation of university learners' difficulties in the use of collocation in academic written English in the Arab EFL context. Furthermore, it is the first large exploratory study conducted in a specifically Libyan EFL context. I aim to fill this gap in knowledge and, in so doing, establish a basis from which future studies may follow.

⁶ The twelve identified verbs are *do, provide, acquire, gain, enhance, make, offer, take, give, get, have* and *require*. The twelve identified adjectives are *good, academic, high, higher, modern, current, practical, specific, basic, general, great* and *special*.

My study is important for EFL Libyan teachers and learners in particular and for EFL English teachers and learners in Arabic speaking countries in general. It may provide some help in solving the difficulties that learners encounter in the process of language acquisition and in the learning of this linguistic phenomenon. In addition, this thesis contributes to the enrichment of collocational studies by examining the difficulties encountered in this area in EFL contexts in general and in the Arab EFL context in particular. The results of my research confirm the findings of other studies in the area of collocational use in foreign language learning.

There have, of course, been many studies about the difficulties encountered by EFL learners in the use of English collocations. Some of them incorporate consultations with native speakers among the methods to assess the learners' collocational patterns. However, none of these existing studies indicate to the consulted native speakers the register (i.e. academic or spoken English) in which the collocations appeared, information which may well help to facilitate their making an appropriate judgment. My study, on the other hand, addresses this deficiency by establishing rigid criteria for the consulted native speakers, enabling them to judge more accurately the acceptability of learners' collocations in terms of academic written English.

In addition, this study is the first to investigate whether there is a significant difference between native speaker ratings of English language learner collocations in academic as opposed to non-academic contexts. This was done by administering a two-version survey (i.e. academic rating and non-academic rating) to 100 native speakers of English. It was found that there were significant differences between the native speakers' judgments in the academic rating and the

non-academic rating surveys. This represents a contribution to both the literature and knowledge within this linguistic area generally.

1.8 Terminology Used in the Study

Apart from the term collocation, I use a number of special terms throughout this study. The following is a list of definitions of related terms:

A collocate is a word that turns up systematically in close proximity to another word; for example, the word *murder* collocates with the verb *commit* as in *he has committed murder* (for further details, see Sinclair, 1991:170).

Learner corpus refers to a set of language learners' naturally occurring texts, both spoken and written, which have been stored on a computer. The main purpose of compiling the corpus is to explore the learners' performance from a variety of perspectives, e.g. lexical collocation, in order to enable comparisons to be made with native language production, evidence of which may be found in well-known corpora such as the BNC. Various computer programmes are used to aid the analysis of learners' data (for more definitions, see Biber, Conrad and Reppen 1998; Sinclair, 1991; and Hunston, 2002).

The Libyan learner corpus (LLC) refers to the current study corpus contained 186 academic written essays by fourth-year English major students. The length of the essays in the LLC varied as 74 essays were under 150 words. Most of the essays complied with the limit of the writing task; however, a few of the essays exceeded the limit, ranging from 260 to 320 words. Table 1.3 below presents information about the structure and size of the compiled Libyan learner corpus.

Table 1-3 Information about the Libyan learner corpus

Components of learner corpus	Description
Total tokens	41,964 words
No. of essays	186
No. of students	186
Age	21-24
Sex	90 males
	96 females

Native speaker: The term native-speaker is used in this thesis according to Crystal's (1997:255) definition who explains that this term is used in the linguistic field to refer to "someone for whom a particular LANGUAGE is a 'native language' (also called 'first language', 'mother-tongue')". The implication is the acquisition of this language has taken place during childhood. Therefore, it can be safely asserted that a native speaker possesses the most reliable intuition and for that reason has the best judgement of how the language is used by native speakers, making him/her the most trusted.

Kachru (1992:356) devised a model to illustrate the spread of the English language around the world. There are three layers to his model the Inner, the Outer, and the Expanding Circle. He explains this model by saying that "[t]he current sociolinguistic profile of English may be viewed in terms of three concentric circles. These circles represent the types of spread, the patterns of acquisition, and the functional allocation of English in diverse cultural contexts" (1992:356). A detailed explanation of these circles is as follows:

The Inner Circle represents countries where English is the native language of the residents which are thought of as the linguistic bases of English, specifically, the UK, the US, Australia, New

Zealand, and Canada (1992:356). Kachru points out that the language spoken in these countries is “*norm-providing*”, i.e. they are regarded as standard versions of the language rather than varieties.

The Outer Circle: this layer of the model contains countries where English is not the dominant language, however, it is used as an official language of the country, for example, India, Nigeria, Malaysia, and Pakistan. This Outer Circle symbolizes the institutionalized non-native varieties of English (ESL) due to periods of colonization. He refers to the use of English language in those countries as “*norm-developing*”.

The Expanding Circle refers to the countries where English is only learned as a foreign language (EFL) within the education system of those countries such as the Middle East, most of continental Europe, China and Japan. He described this use of the English language within these regions as “*norm-dependent*”. According to Kachru’s model, Libya is an extending circle country that draws on the norms of inner circle countries; therefore native speaker intuition is needed in order to determine these norms.

Errors may be systematic or non-systematic. The assessment of errors in this study will cover both types. According to Corder (1967, in Gass and Selinker, 2008:102) non-systematic errors are mistakes which are “akin to slips of tongue”. The speaker in this case is able to recognize the deviant forms. Systematic errors, however, are committed out of ignorance of the grammatical system of the target language. The learner is unaware that (s)he is committing an error and the deviant form has been integrated into his/her interlanguage. Lexical errors (in particular, deviant collocations / misuse of collocations), however, result from the learner’s insufficient knowledge

of appropriate word use and how words are combined or associated. Since collocation is not determined by logic as is the case with grammar, the learner has to resort to linguistic convention in order to produce acceptable word combinations (Lewis, 1997).

The scale of acceptability: I have devised this scale in order to classify the learners' verb-noun and adjective-noun collocations according to specific rigid criteria on the basis of native speaker production and use (naturalness) in academic English. It consists of three degrees of acceptability. They are: (1) acceptable, (2) partially acceptable and (3) unacceptable. The partially acceptable option focuses on the grammatical side of language whilst the unacceptable side targets lexis. I used four reference tools to determine the acceptability of learners' collocations in terms of conforming to native-like use. They were: (1) the OCD (2009); (2) the BNC; (3) consultations with two native speakers; and (4) the acceptability-of-collocations survey, which was used to triangulate the above three methods.

Acceptable collocations refers to learners' collocational patterns which were evaluated as being native-like and common collocations in English such as *take advantage of* and *require special skills and training*.

Partially acceptable collocations means that the components of a given collocation (i.e. node and collocate) are correct and collocate within a span which is deemed acceptable, but the grammatical structure in which it is encased is incorrect. The partially acceptable scale option ignores the possibility of perfect grammar yet the combination is still unusual according to the acceptable scale option. In most cases, those collocations can be easily understood and the hearer can, by extension and by considering the context, accurately guess the intended meaning.

Consequently, they do not have a significantly negative effect on the communication process. The following are illustrative examples: **modern language* instead of *modern languages*, **the topic special* instead of *a special topic* and **enhance the educate* instead of *enhance the education*.

Unacceptable collocations refer to the collocations which are assessed as non-native-like and not common collocations in English. The main components of the collocation (i.e. node and collocate) do not collocate such as **modern knowledge* and **a higher experience*. It is worth mentioning that this area is different from partially acceptable in that the conventions of combining the words in a certain way are not used. The native speaker may understand it but would not use it.

Erroneous collocations are those collocations which do not comply with native-like production, particularly in academic written English. They are not well-formed utterances as they contain errors. This term will be used in this study to cover both partially acceptable and unacceptable collocations to facilitate the presentation of the results.

Collocational errors are errors that occur within phrases which contain collocations. These errors can be classified as lexical errors, grammatical errors and errors related to usage.

Usage errors refer to any collocation, appearing in the LLC which does not exist in English. This type of error impairs communication and as a result misunderstanding occurs and in some cases communication breaks down. In the case of this study, the consulted native-speakers could not recover the intended meaning of some of the learners' collocations and failed to suggest acceptable standard collocations, even after looking at the whole context (i.e. co-text, and

paragraph) in which they appeared such as **a special speciality* and **have many styles*. Therefore, those collocational patterns are assessed as implausible and incorrect combinations.

1.9 Overview of the Study

Following this introductory chapter, which has laid out the aims, significance and research questions of my study, my thesis is structured into 9 chapters which are detailed below.

The theoretical part of this study is divided into two chapters. Chapter 2 provides a review of the notion of collocations. Generally, it clarifies the concept of collocation and discusses two key theoretical approaches to L₂ collocation research: the frequency-based approach and the phraseological approach. It also distinguishes collocations from other types of word combinations such as idioms, compounds and free combinations. In addition, it presents and explains a particular definition of collocation for the purposes of this study. It concludes by discussing and highlighting the importance of collocation in FL vocabulary learning.

Chapter 3 sheds light on the pertinent literature that addresses EFL learners' use of English lexical collocations in production, with special reference to the Arab world and the Libyan context. It is divided into two sections: The first section is concerned with discussing different challenges and difficulties that EFL learners encounter in their use of collocation. It provides a list of different factors which may affect EFL learners' performance in their attempts to use acceptable and native-like collocations. The second section provides a historical account of major research areas and the work done by the many researchers in the field of collocational studies, particularly, that which focuses on the EFL context.

Turning to the practical element of the project, Chapter 4 focuses on the methodology of the study. A full description of the participants, the data collection instruments, i.e. the written task, the students' questionnaire and lecturers' questionnaire, and the procedure for data collection is explained and discussed. The rationale for using questionnaires in the study is explained and discussed in detail. The pilot study procedures and its results is also introduced. Ethical issues regarding how the study was conducted is also covered. To end this chapter, difficulties that I encountered in collecting and analyzing the data for the main study are discussed.

Chapter 5 presents the results of the acceptability-of-collocations survey (i.e. academic-rating and non-academic-rating). It is divided into two main sections: section 5.2 introduces the findings of the academic-rating and non-academic rating surveys, which are then discussed in section 5.3. The chapter closes with a summary of the results.

Chapter 6 presents the results of the writing task. It is divided into six sections: section 6.2 is concerned with presenting the results for the verb-noun collocations. These include: (1) the overall raw frequency of the investigated verbs in the Libyan learner corpus; (2) the results of the participants' overall performance using verb-noun collocations; and (3) types of errors identified in verb-noun collocations produced in the LLC. This section then ends with a summary of the findings. Similarly, section 6.3 introduces the results for the adjective-noun collocations, whilst section 6.4 presents the statistical results derived from the participants' performance in terms of using the investigated verbs and adjectives. These include: (1) the results of descriptive statistics of verb-noun and adjective-noun collocations; (2) the results of the Boxplot; and (3) the results of

the Independent Samples t-test after removing the outliers. Finally, the chapter closes with a summary of the results.

Chapter 7 reveals the results of the students' and lecturers' questionnaires. Six main sections are included in this chapter: Section 7.2 deals with presenting the results arising from the students' questionnaire, which are then discussed in section 7.3. Section 7.4 introduces the results from the lecturers' questionnaire. Section 7.5 then discusses the obtained results. Sections 7.2 and 7.4 are sub-divided into two sub-sections relating to the questionnaire design and arranged in the same order as the questions. Finally, an overall conclusion is given at the end of this chapter to summarise the findings of both questionnaires.

Chapter 8 provides a discussion of the results obtained from the academic writing task (the main research method). Each research question (except the fourth and the fifth questions) along with its results is given, explained and discussed.

Chapter 9 draws conclusions and makes a series of teaching recommendations. The conclusion is made in light of the results obtained from the data of the study. A number of recommendations are suggested in order to facilitate the learners' use of collocations.

1.10 Conventions Used in Writing This Thesis

Throughout the thesis, I use the following conventions:

Italics are used to introduce examples.

Asterisks are used to refer to erroneous collocational patterns such as **get good culture* and **make the curriculum*

X plus number is used to refer to the occurrences of collocations repeated in the learner corpus, e.g. *make a good and useful generation* X2 means this pattern occurred twice in the learners' written essays.

Italics and single inverted commas are used to introduce the substituted verbs and adjectives when suggesting the acceptable collocations, to make them noticeable and easy to follow, e.g., **give a holiday between* instead of '*allowing*', '*permitting*' or '*providing*' a holiday.

Chapter 2

The Notion of Collocation

2.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a review of literature relevant to my study. The main purpose of this literature review is to concentrate on the main elements of collocation generally, with a special focus on providing a historical account and general background about collocation in order to demonstrate their prominence in language structure and their importance as language learning objectives.

This chapter reviews a number of issues including various definitions concerning collocations. Two key theoretical approaches of L₂ collocation research are explained: the frequency-based approach and the phraseological approach. The chapter also deals with distinguishing collocations from other types of word combinations such as idioms, compounds and free combinations. In addition, I present and discuss the definition of collocation that I use in this thesis. Finally, I conclude this chapter by discussing and highlighting the importance of collocations in FL vocabulary learning according to the various interests of different researchers.

2.2 Definitions of Collocations

Different definitions of collocations will be compared below according to the interests and views of a number of researchers. For instance, Aghbar (1990) broadly defines collocations as two words which are linked together in the memory of native speakers and occur together with frequency in both written and oral discourse. For example, *catch a cold* and *severe cold* are two

expressions commonly used as lexical collocations. The verb *catch* and the adjective *severe* recurrently co-occur with the noun *cold*.

The term 'collocation' has a long history in linguistics and second language research. Robins (1967:21) reports that collocation and its use in linguistics in relation to meaning and semantics was mentioned by the Greek Stoic Philosophers 2,300 years ago. The origin of the term is the Latin verb "collocare", which means 'to set in order or to arrange,' (Martynska, 2004:2). Robins (1967:20-21) reported that those philosophers did not accept the idea of "one word, one meaning" and "showed an important insight into the semantic structure of language" which is that "word meanings do not exist in isolation, and they may differ according to the collocation in which they are used".

However, the first use of the term collocation dates back to the 18th century (Carter and McCarthy 1988). Carter and McCarthy (1988) also explain that the British linguist J. R. Firth is "the father of this tendency; he was responsible for bringing the term collocation into prominence in lexical studies" (1988:32). Firth defined it as "the company that words keep" (1957a:183) "at syntagmatic level" (1957a:169). For example, taking the example of the collocation "*dark night*", he explains that since "night" is usually linked with absence of natural light, it is likely to collocate with a word such as 'dark' (Hus 2002; Zughoul and Abdul-Fattah, 2003). In 1957b, Firth further proposed another definition, explaining the importance of frequency and co-occurrences in determining how certain words combine to form common collocations: "collocations of a given word are statements of the habitual or customary places of that word" (1957b:181).

Firth's use of words 'habitual' and 'customary places' can be interpreted as a reference to the important features of collocations in terms of the frequency with which certain words combine and are placed next to each other in a linear relationship in sentences. These notions of frequency and placement are common features of the various definitions proposed by a number of linguists.

Table 2.1 illustrates different definitions provided by different writers.

Table 2-1 Definitions of collocations

No.	Writer/Author/Linguist...	Define the term 'collocation' as ...
1.	Firth (1957b:181)	"collocations of a given word are statements of the habitual or customary places of that word".
2.	Halliday (1966:153)	"a linear co-occurrence relationship among lexical items which co-occur together".
3.	Benson (1986:61)	"a group of words that occurs repeatedly i.e. recurs, in a language".
4.	Kjellmer (1987:133)	"... a sequence of words that occurs more than once in identical form and which is grammatically well structured".
5.	Carter and McCarthy (1988:32)	"How words typically occur with one another".
6.	Crystal (1997:69-70)	"the habitual co-occurrence of individual lexical items"
7.	Lewis and Hill (1998:1)	"... the way in which words occur together in predictable ways".
8.	Stubbs (2001:245-246)	"the habitual co-occurrence of words and a purely lexical relation between words in linear sequence, irrespective of any intervening syntactic boundaries".
9.	Nation (2001:324)	"closely structured groups whose parts frequently or uniquely occur together. We would also expect collocations to contain some element of grammatical or lexical unpredictability or inflexibility".
10.	Nesselhauf (2005:11)	"some kind of syntagmatic relations of words".
11.	Francis and Poole (2009:v)	"the way words combine in a language to produce natural-sounding speech and writing".

As can be seen from the above table, it is difficult to find a complete and clear definition of collocation because, as Schmid (2003:238) argues, "not all criteria are explicitly mentioned but

some are presupposed because they seem so obvious". Schmid (2003) proposes five different criteria to define collocations: 1) The requirement of two or more words are involved; 2) the adjacency of these words, at least within a certain span (for my discussion on 'the span' see 4.7.1); 3) their combined recurrence (co-occurrence); 4) their mutual expectancy or predictability and 5) idiomaticity.

The main requirement of collocation is the number of words used or involved. For example, Sinclair (1991:170) defines collocations as "the occurrence of two or more words within a short space of each other in a text". Obviously, one word cannot form a collocation. Therefore, it is two or more words that are "involved in a collocation whether or not these have to be consecutive" (Nesselauf, 2005:13).

Schmid's second notion incorporates the theme of co-occurrence which is broadly highlighted by various researchers as an important criterion in defining collocations (Schmid, 2003:244). According to Halliday (1966a:153), collocation means sets of words, where 'set' is defined as "the grouping (of) members with like privilege of occurrence in collocation". To explain this point, Halliday indicates that certain words can be joined together within the same lexical set if they all combine with a certain object. For example, *hot*, *cold*, *warm* and *pour* all collocate with the word *water*. He goes further to argue that collocations can 'cut across grammar boundaries' (1966a:151). For instance, the following two propositions, *she argues strongly* and *the strength of her arguments*, are two different grammatical ways of referring to the same degree of intensity of an argument.

The combined notions of recurrence and co-occurrence constitute another significant criterion in defining collocations as common combinations in English. Celce-Murcia (1991) repeats Firth's idea of habitual co-occurrence of lexical items by noting that those items which combine frequently together with each other are said to be *habitual*, such as *run a business and have a holiday*. Baker (1992:47) uses the term collocation to refer to "the tendency of certain words to co-occur regularly in a given language". The use of the word "regularly", here, implies the need to include the notion of frequency in any definition of collocation. For example, Lewis (1993) indicates the significance of frequency by referring to collocation as a subcategory of multi-word items, composed of individual lexical items which usually co-occur together.

This suggests that this combination of lexical components is not random, i.e., words are always deliberately put together in a certain order to make sense. For example, Smadja (1993:147) asserts that "*to make a decision*" and "*to hit a record*" are standard collocations in the English language. This means that these lexical combinations are strongly correlated in terms of their frequency characteristics. Because of this, native speakers of English language are capable of spotting collocational violations and correcting them.

Conversely, there are some lexical items that usually do not co-occur. If they are combined or co-occur, they are considered to be inappropriate or unacceptable combinations such as *powerful tea* instead of *strong tea*. On this point it should be noted that some kind of framework is necessary to measure the degree of acceptability of any given collocation. This would normally be done by consulting a cross section of native speakers and quantifying their assessments. Taking this into consideration, I administered the acceptability-of-collocations survey to 100 native speakers of

English in order to triangulate the three methods used to evaluate the acceptability of learners' collocational patterns, and (2) to answer the fourth research question concerning whether there is a significant difference between native speaker ratings of English language learner collocations in academic as opposed to non-academic contexts (for detailed information on the survey, see Chapter Five).

Another criterion proposed by Schmid (2003:238) is the need to include the idea of predictability in any collocational definition because when certain words are used, there appears to be a strong possibility that they will be followed by further identifiable words. Lewis (2000:127) states that collocates can be described as the words that are placed or found together in a predictable pattern. Crystal (1995:162) explains that we should distinguish between free combinations and predictable collocations. The first term is related to a series of lexical words whose combination is governed by chance. Free combinations are combinations of words such as the verb *like* co-occurring with nouns such as *potatoes*, *fish* and *pizza* or *buy* co-occurring with *bicycle*, *car* and *book*. They are not collocations because there is no mutual expectancy. According to Crystal (1995:162), collocations are defined as mutually predictable associations occurring apart from "the interests or personality of the individual users". On this note, Hill (2000:48) writes that collocation is "the tendency of the way words combine or occur together in a predictable way".

This property of predictability or expectancy may be due to the connotative factors underlying the meaning of certain words. For instance, mature native speakers of English are likely to say "*commit a murder*" but not "*commit a task*" partly because of the semantic prosody that *commit* has, which is that the word *commit* often has a negative connotation, which does not sit well with

the word *task*. Another example would be the verb *happen* which in certain contexts may connote unpleasant events such as *accidents*. Hoey (2000:232) defined semantic prosody as occurring “when a word associates with a particular set of meanings”. He further explains that this is not to claim that lexical items simply link up with other selected words; rather, they collocate with selected meanings. This notion (semantic prosody) is endorsed by Sinclair (1991) who states that “[m]any uses of words and phrases show a tendency to occur in a certain semantic environment”. This predictability can be either weak or strong depending on the number of possible lexical items in a span that could be matched up with the node (the node definition is introduced in 2.3.1). It can be weak, for example, with a node such as the adjective *heavy* which collocates with a wide range of nouns, e.g., *weight, burden, day, loss, expenses* and so on. It can be strong with a word like *red-light* which goes with *district*. Another example is the adjective *torrential* which combines with the noun *rain*. Strong or fixed collocations should be learnt as discrete items (Crystal, 1995:162) because it is necessary for any learner to be aware of certain collocations which have a limited range of collocates, e.g., *rancid butter*.

It is necessary to distinguish between the two concepts stated above: ‘mutual expectancy’ and ‘predictability’. The first concept considers “word combinations from the language users’ perspective”. On the other hand, the second one views them “from the language-immanent perspective of the words themselves” (Schmid, 2003:243). Schmid explains, for example, that when two items “mutually expect each other”, native language users can predict to some extent the occurrence of one item when they come across the other. Therefore, predictability is the pragmatic equivalent to mutual expectancy (Schmid, 2003:243). Both mutual expectancy and

predictability are highly related and valuable criteria because they look at the psychological core of collocations and the syntagmatic connection of their words. However, the weakness of the two criteria is “that they are highly subjective and of little reliability ... since the advantages of corpus examination concerning objectivity are lost if we apply these criteria” (Schmid, 2003:244).

In brief, it is vitally important here to highlight the distinction between frequent co-occurrence, mutual expectancy and predictability. Frequent co-occurrence is a key criterion in defining and determining common standard collocations in English language. The more one lexical item frequently occurs with another lexical item or a small number of other words (i.e. set) as in the case of the adjective-noun collocation *rancid butter*. The adjective *rancid* appears frequently and only with the noun *butter*. Thus, reciprocal expectation between those two words to occur together in a collocation. Additionally, as a result of the former criterion, native speakers of English would expect the occurrence of one of those words once they encounter the other.

Finally, the notion of idiomaticity is used to distinguish collocations from idioms. Idioms are lexical items whose meaning cannot be understood and deduced from their components (Schmitt and McCarthy, 1997:46), for example, *to drive someone around the bend* means *to exasperate someone*. Idioms do not have literal meaning; instead they have a rather figurative or metaphoric sense.

Similar to idioms, some collocations are more opaque in that their meaning cannot be derived from their constituents; nor can an addition to the meaning of the lexical items produce a clearer meaning, e.g. *(table a) white paper*.

On the other hand, others are more transparent and their meaning can be judged directly from the constituent lexical items, e.g. *spend money*, and *rancid butter*. It is important to notice that the meanings of collocations reflect the meaning of their constituent parts (in contrast to idioms). Figure 2.1 shows the scale of idiomaticity from completely transparent to completely idiomatized.


Examples	Degree of idiomaticity	Terms
	Completely transparent	
<i>I love you, the truth is staying out, looking out</i>		Open collocation or unspecific, trivial combination (Hausmann, 1984, 1985)
<i>keep your distance, kept my promise, dressed up, running around</i>		Restricted collocation (Aisenstadt 1981, Cowie, 1981, Gläser 1986:38-41, Carter 1987:62-65)
<i>as far at all at sixes and sevens</i>		Idioms
	Completely idiomatized	

Figure 2-1The scale of idiomaticity (Schmid, 2003:247)

2.3 Approaches to Collocations

Linguists have investigated and studied collocations from a number of different perspectives. Nesslhauf (2005:11-18) identifies two major approaches which are known as the frequency-based approach and the phraseological approach. Barfield and Gyllstad (2009:3) differentiate between these two concepts as the first term refers to “frequency and statistics [which] are intrinsic ingredients in the analysis of textual instantiations of collocation”. The second term, Barfield and Gyllstad explain, is associated with “work on collocation [which] is guided by syntactic and semantic analyses, largely inspired by Russian and continental European work on phraseology” (2009:3). In this research, I employed the phraseological approach in identifying collocations in

the Libyan learner corpus as I am interested in it and I mainly used the criteria of substitutability to distinguish collocations from other types of word combinations such as idioms (see section 2.5 for more information on this). Another related area to be considered for defining collocations in this study is the grammatical framework of the components involved in the collocation (i.e. verb + noun and adjective + noun collocations).

2.3.1 The Frequency-based Approach

This approach is built on the hypothesis that the meaning of a lexical item is established by “the co-occurring words” (Martynska, 2004:2). According to Barfield and Gyllstad (2009:3), collocations in this approach are “seen as units consisting of co-occurring words within a certain distance of each other, and a distinction is often made between frequently and infrequently co-occurring words”.

This approach was mainly devised by the father of collocation, Firth (1952/3, 1956, 1957a, 1957b) and developed by other pioneers, such as Halliday (1966), Sinclair (1966, 1991), Kjellmer (1987, 1990, 1991), Johns (1974), and Greenbaun (1970). In his work (1957a and b), Firth reveals how meaning is generated at “mutually congruent series of levels” (1957b:176) (in terms of context of situation, collocation, syntax, phonology and phonetics). In particular, he proposed “to bring forward as a technical term, meaning by collocation, and to apply the test of collocability” (1957b:194). Although all these language levels are interdependent of each other, Firth (1957b:181-3) distinguished between ‘colligation’ and collocation at the syntactic level. He explained that “[t]he statement of meaning at the grammatical level is in terms of word and sentence classes or of similar categories and of the inter-relation of those categories in

colligations (sic)". He further explained that in a sentence such as 'I watched him' there is a relationship between the lexical item 'watched' and the follow-up object pronoun 'him' such that in a given context one would expect the pronoun 'him' to follow the verb.

As stated in his definitions of collocations, Firth proposed that the meanings of a lexeme could be partially gained through its collocations, arguing that "you shall know the word by the company it keeps" (1957b:179) and not solely by its "intrinsic core meaning". For him, collocations were key lexical items in which meaning and functional value interact through use. He explained that "[t]he distribution of the collocations in larger texts, and the distribution of the word under examination in collocations will probably provide a basis for functional values or meanings for words of all types" (1968a:23).

Halliday (1966) built his ideas of collocations on those of Firth. Halliday refers to collocations as "a syntagmatic association of lexical items, quantifiable, textually, as the probability that there will occur, at n removes (a distance of n lexical items) from an item x , the items a, b, c, \dots " (1961: 276). He defines probability as "the frequency of the item in a stated environment relative to its total frequency of occurrence" (1966a:156). This entails the need for data collection procedures using quantitative analysis and reliable statistical techniques. Halliday also suggests that when speakers use collocations they identify lexical sets (1966a:156) which are groups of lexical items "having approximately the same range of collocations" (1966b:20).

In addition, Halliday (1966) presents three important terms: 'node', 'collocate' and 'span'. The 'node' refers to the investigated item, 'collocate' is the co-occurring / collocating word, and 'span' is the textual environment of the node and collocate. Barfield and Gyllstad (2009:4) state

that “these terms have proven fundamental to the operationalization of collocation and have served as indispensable tools for subsequent research”.

Identifying the span was Sinclair’s extension of Halliday’s concept of probability as discussed above. He defines span by saying that “the usual measure of proximity is a maximum of four words intervening” (1991:170) but advocates the need for further experimentation on collocational combinations in terms of differing spans covering extensions of up to five words. However, Sinclair claims that the “optimum setting” (1991:106) is four positions to both the left and right sides of the collocation in question. This represents the most advantageous span in which 95 percent of collocational combinations occur (Jones and Sinclair, 1974:21).

In further research, Sinclair (1987:318-19; 1991-21) proposes two principles of interpretation to explain how meaning is created in texts: (i) the open choice principle and (ii) the idiom principle. The open choice principle according to Sinclair is an approach to viewing a language text which was created by making use of a wide range of word choices. He further explains that “[a]t each point where a unit is completed (a word or a phrase or a clause), a large range of choice opens up and the only restraint is grammaticalness” (1991:109). The idiom principle, on the other hand, refers to items that do not appear in discourse in free variation; rather, there are constraints imposed on the order of lexical selections in a given phrase. According to Sinclair (1991:109), language users have a stockpile of countless reconstituted phrases that are stored as discrete lexical items, although they may seem to be analysable into separate parts. He further suggests that under normal circumstances, the idiom principle is the default mode as it can be used for the most part in the creation of a text, resorting to the open-choice principle only when called for and

then reverting to the idiom principle at the earliest opportunity (1991:114). The significance of proposing the idiom principle is that collocations demonstrate it as words emerge to be selected into pairs and clusters which do not have to be nearby (see section 2.5 for more on this point).

2.3.2 The Phraseological Approach

This approach has become known as the “significance oriented approach” (Herbst, 1996:380). It is different from the frequency-based approach in that it is “more interested in word combinations, their degree of opacity, and commutability (also called substitutability) of the word elements in these combinations” (Barfield and Gyllstad, 2009:6). In addition, the frequency-based approach is connected with the British researchers, such as Firth, while the phraseological approach is related to and influenced by Russian (Soviet) phraseologists. The primary interest of this phraseological school is ‘phraseological units’, which are, according to Ginzburg et al. (1979, cited in Cowie, 1998b:214) “non-motivated word groups that cannot be freely made up in speech but are reproduced as ready-made units”.

This phraseological approach to collocations has mainly been the preoccupation of researchers such as Aisenstadt (1979, 1981); Hausmann (1979); Cowie (1981b, 1988, 1991, 1998c); Mel’čuk (1998); Benson (1985); Benson et al. (1986a, 1986b, 1997); Howarth (1996, 1998a, 1998b); and Nesselhauf (2005). Among these, Cowie is considered to be “a typical representative of the phraseological approach” (Nesselhauf, 2005:14). In many of his studies, for example, Cowie explains that collocations are special associations of two or more words that take place in a specific collection of grammatical structures and syntactic classifications of their combinations. He categorizes ‘word combinations’ into two major types, ‘formulae’ and ‘composites’. Formulae

are combinations which have a largely pragmatic function, for instance, *How are you?* (1994:3169). Composites, however, are collocations which are depicted as having a mainly syntactic function. He uses two criteria, which he terms transparency and commutability (i.e. substitutability) to distinguish between different types of composites. Four distinct types of combinations are posited on this basis, although he points out that there may be an element of overlap in some cases. They are: 1) free combinations e.g. *drink tea*, 2) restricted collocations e.g. *perform a task*, 3) figurative idioms, e.g. *do a U-turn*, and 4) pure idioms, e.g. *blow the gaff* (for more details about these four types of combinations see 2.4.1).

The central feature in Cowie's use of the term 'collocation' is its application to word combinations in which the restriction on choice is arbitrary and one of its components is used in a non-literal sense. He additionally applies it to free combinations. Thus, he distinguishes between 'open collocations' (i.e. free combinations) and 'restricted collocations'. According to Cowie (1991:102), restricted collocations are those "word-combinations in which one element (usually the verb) [has] a technical sense, or a long-established figurative sense which [has] lost most of its analogical force". In addition, the variation is also shown in his classification of combinations such as *foot the bill*, in which one lexeme (in this case *foot*), used in a specialized way, can combine with one further word only. Generally, such combinations are categorized as 'restricted collocations' (1998b:221), which are considered as forming a further category between idioms and collocations (Cowie, 1981b:228).

Similar to Cowie, Howarth (1998a) also defines collocations in conformity with the phraseological approach. Figure 2 shows how he categorizes word combinations into two types:

functional expressions and composite units. Functional expressions “are identified by their role in discourse” (Howarth, 1998a:27) as proverbs, slogans, and catchphrases.

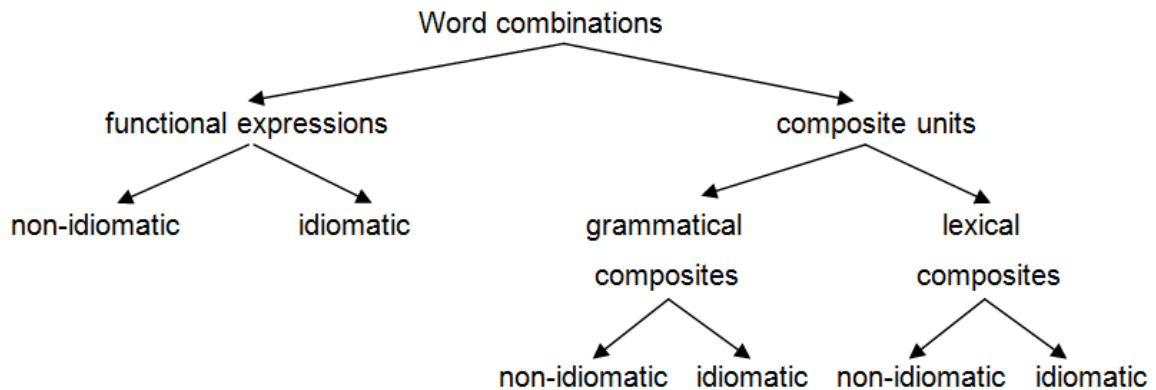


Figure 2-2 Phraseological categories

In contrast, the composite units “have a syntactic function in the clause or sentence and are generally best seen as realizations of phrase structures” (27). Consistent with Benson (1985:61-62), Howarth differentiates between two categories of composites: grammatical and lexical. Lexical collocations usually contain two equal lexical components such as verb + noun combinations, the grammatical collocations are a recurrent combination, usually consisting of a dominant word (verb, noun, adjective), followed by a grammatical word, typically a preposition such as noun+preposition and adjective+preposition (examples from Howarth’s 1998a:28 study illustrated in Table 2.2). He classifies his examples into free combinations (collocations), restricted collocations, figurative idioms and pure idioms. This classification is similar to the ones proposed by Cowie, discussed above.

Table 2-2 Collocational continuum

	free combinations	restricted collocations	figurative idioms	pure idioms
lexical composites verb + noun	<i>blow a trumpet</i>	<i>blow a fuse</i>	<i>blow your own trumpet</i>	<i>blow the gaff</i>
grammatical composites preposition + noun	<i>under the table</i>	<i>under attack</i>	<i>under the microscope</i>	<i>under the weather</i>

Furthermore, Barfield and Gyllstad (2009:6) mention Benson et al.'s (1986b; 1997) development of a different classification of collocation according to the phraseological approach. They make the distinction between two types of collocation: grammatical and lexical. Grammatical collocations include nouns, verbs or adjectives + a preposition or a grammatical structure. They categorise eight major types of grammatical collocation viz: G1= noun+preposition, G2= noun+to-infinitive, G3= noun+that-clause, G4= preposition+noun, G5= adjective+preposition, G6= adjective+to-infinitive, G7= adjective+that-clause, and G8= various verb patterns, e.g. verb+to-infinitive and verb+bare infinitive. On the other hand, lexical collocations consist of word combinations that are related only to the use of nouns, adjectives, verbs and adverbs. Seven major types of these collocations are identified: L1 = verb (which connotes creation/activation) +noun/pronoun/prepositional phrase, L2 = verb (which connotes eradication/nullification) + noun, = [adjective + noun] or [adjective used in an attributive way + noun], L4 = noun + verb

naming the activity which is performed by a designate of this noun, L5 = quantifier + noun, L6 = adverb+adjective, and L7 = verb+adverb.

2.4 Collocations and Other Types of Word Combinations

The main goal of this research is to investigate Libyan learners' use of two types of lexical collocations. Therefore, it is important to distinguish between and discuss collocations from other types of word combinations.

2.4.1 Collocations vs. Idioms

The relationship between idioms and collocations has been discussed in many studies in order to differentiate between the two terms (e.g. Howarth, 1998a; Nesselauf, 2003; Li, 2005; Bazzaz Abd Samad, 2011; and Darvishi, 2011). There are two criteria to distinguish collocations from idioms:

Semantic Transparency/Opaicity: As stated earlier, the meaning of a collocation can be understood from the literal meanings of its component parts as in *strong tea* and *withdraw an offer* whereas the semantic meaning of idioms is not clear or transparent as in *to bite the dust = to die*.

The Degree of Fixedness: Idioms in general are described as relatively frozen expressions. They have fixed structure and their constituent parts cannot be replaced by other synonyms (Bentivogli and Pianta, 2003 cited Alsakran, 2011). The following example illustrates this point: *kick the bucket*" (= *to die*) but not *kick the pail* or *boot the bucket*. However, this does not affect a speaker's creativity with the language as other idioms or expressions can be used as alternatives, such as *popped his clogs* or *passed away*.

In contrast to idioms, collocations are less fixed and they are located somewhere in the middle of the two boundaries of idioms and free combinations. With regard to the degree of possible substitution of their component lexical items, they usually have a limited number of options as in *do your best* and *try your best* but not *perform your best* (Bentivogli and Pianta, 2003 cited in Alsakran, 2011).

2.4.2 Collocations vs. Compounds

Compounds are usually defined as two or more words combined together into one unit. For example, green house, prime minister, royal blue and so on.

In contrast to collocations, compounds are the most fixed lexical combinations and they are completely frozen. Moon (1997:45) concludes that “compounds are generally fixed but their institutionalization can vary as widely as any other lexical items. The degree to which they are compositional varies too. In general, compounding is an extremely productive process in word-formation”. In addition, according to Farrokh (2012:58), compounds are “the most fixed word combinations, are completely frozen, and no variations at all are possible”. Examples of compounds are *floppy disk* and *aptitude test*, while *break through* is a compound verb (or phrasal verb).

2.4.3 Collocation vs. Free Combinations

Free combinations are those combinations of lexical words which are explained by the general rules of syntax. The lexical items can be freely substituted by other words (Benson et al., 1986a:252). For example, the verb *write* can be freely used with *an e-mail*, *a story*, *an article*, etc. In contrast, collocations are more fixed (i.e. the words cannot be freely substituted), arbitrary and

non-predictable (Lewis, 1997; Benson et al., 1986a). For example, the word *total* in *total eclipse* cannot be replaced with *absolute*, *complete*, *entire* or *whole*, while *full eclipse* is acceptable. In *perform a task*, the verb *perform* cannot be replaced with the verbs *make* or *do* (Cowie; 1981, 1994).

This notion of ‘fixedness’ raises the question of unpredictability in certain collocations. In their study, Benson et al. (1986a) report that the synonymy of one of the elements in a collocation is restricted. A good example is the expression *commit murder* in which the verb “commit” can be replaced only by its synonym “perpetrate”. Nevertheless, in the expression *commit suicide*, “perpetrate” is not a valid synonym of the verb “commit” (1986a:253). In fact, in terms of syntactic and semantic rules, the choice of verb in these expressions cannot be predicted. Furthermore, Smadja (1989:163) stated that “many wording choices in English sentences cannot be accounted for on semantic or syntactic grounds; they can only be expressed in terms of relations between words that usually occur together”. This idiosyncratic character of collocations is more obvious across languages and varieties of language (Benson, 1985:64-65). The two collocations *take a bath* (American English), and *have a bath* (British English) are good examples which can indicate that collocations can vary across cultures, although, as Kjellmer (1991) and Hill (2000:53) point out, the choice of vocabulary is to some extent predictable since the presence of one lexical component will anticipate the occurrence of another in any given language/cultural community.

2.5 Defining Collocation: a Discussion for the Purposes of This Study

According to Francis and Poole (2009:v), collocations may be defined as a combination of two lexical items that frequently occur together in a language to “produce natural sounding speech and writing”, i.e. language that would be considered natural and acceptable to a native speaker. However, the scope of this definition needs to be expanded to incorporate a phraseological-based perspective which distinguishes collocations from other types of word combinations such as idioms and compound nouns. Another related area to be considered for defining collocations in this research is the grammatical framework (i.e. verb + noun and adjective + noun collocations; for further details see point 1 below). There are four principles that combine to form collocations that are acceptable and appropriate as native-like performance, which I set out below.

1. Grammaticality refers to the syntactic relations of the components involved in a collocation which are verb-noun and adjective-noun collocations. For example, the following collocation does not conform to the grammaticality criterion: **He shrugged the shoulders*. This fails the grammaticality test because it includes a definite article instead of possessive adjective (i.e. *his*).
2. Substitutability refers to whether certain components (i.e. verb and adjective) of collocations can be substituted for synonyms or near-synonyms. On this note, McIntosh (1967:310) proposes two kinds of collocability. The first entails the recognition of whether certain synonyms are “mutually replaceable to produce English”. He provides the following synonyms as examples: *short, low, small, little, and stubby*. He shows that only one of them could fit into the following sentence: *He took a _____ vacation*.

3. Semantic component refers to the selection of those lexical items which work best to convey meaning and are appropriate to the context. This entails the use of the collocating word which is included in the range or collocational set of the node. According to McIntosh (1967:310) the search for appropriate collocates for a given node is achieved by applying “the test of familiarity”, i.e. he claims that native speakers have a range of possible collocates that go with certain nodes. A native speaker will choose a collocate from this range with which (s)he is most familiar, i.e. the most appropriate in a certain context. The notion of range is exemplified by the verb *shrug* which may collocate with *shoulders* but not with other parts of the body such as *stomach* or *arm*.
4. Conventionality is another principle in defining collocations in this study. It is a cultural phenomenon, i.e. the way in which certain words combine together as they emerge from the collective behaviour and norms of the speech community⁷ which establishes a convention that has to be memorized. For example, English native speakers use *running water* and not *moving* or *going water*. For this reason, I used the intuitions of native speakers of English as a further method for determining the acceptability of learners’ collocational patterns.

To sum up, here is an example of an unacceptable collocation which fails all four criteria: **He enjoyed fit educate* which should read as *He enjoyed a good education*. The following criteria are not met by the above collocation. First, in terms of grammaticality there are two errors, namely,

⁷ Speech community varies according to which part of the world English is spoken, e.g. American speech community. In this study, I assessed the acceptability of learners’ collocations according to the speech community of Britain.

missing determiner (a) and wrong word form (education). Second, with regard to substitutability, there are several possibilities for the placement of an adjective to accompany the noun (*education*) e.g., *good, beneficial, excellent* or *useful*. Here, the student selected the wrong adjective (*fit*). Regarding semanticity, the adjective *fit* represents, in semantic terms, the wrong choice of adjective in the given context. In another context the word *fit* might be more suitable, e.g. a(n) *fit, useful, good, excellent athlete*. Fourth, native speakers would instinctively reject the choice of adjective as well as the grammaticality of the collocation mainly in an academic context. Therefore, I take these principles into consideration when assessing the acceptability of learners' collocational patterns.

A collocation can reside within an extended structure, e.g., a phrase. Therefore, the above definition is not sufficient for the purpose of the study. Hence, the analytical framework needs to be expanded because it is essential for EFL learners to be aware of the whole combination (i.e. lexical and grammatical elements) – for example, *have responsibility for doing something* - in order to match native-like usage, rather than simply knowing whether the two lexical items collocate or not (*have + responsibility*). Taylor (1990:2) indicates that semantics and syntax are two key dimensions which constitute collocations, i.e. “knowing the syntactic behaviour associated with the word and also knowing the network of associations between that word and other words in the language”. He illustrates this point using the example of the verb ‘overtake’, which is usually a transitive verb, followed by article + noun, or pronoun and will, more often than not, appear in the context of transport with such words as ‘*lane*’, ‘*car*’, ‘*speed*’. In this vein, Nesselhauf (2003:231-232) argues that knowing which words combine, e.g., *get + permission, fail*

+ *exam*, is insufficient for learners to produce acceptable combinations. However, knowing the whole combination is important to enable them to achieve that aim e.g., *get permission (to)*, *fail an exam*). Hence, the acceptability judgment of learners' collocations not only entails judging whether the two lexical items (i.e. the node and collocate) combine and comply with native-like usage, but also entails judging the acceptability of the whole combination (i.e. verb-noun and adjective-noun phrase [NP] combination). This conforms to the grammaticality criterion discussed above. The noun phrase includes pre-modifiers of the noun such as articles, intensifiers and adjectives within the collocation / combination and/or in some cases a following preposition. The component parts of the noun phrase constitute the phraseological variations of verb-noun and adjective-noun collocations in constituency variation. For example, some of the collocational variations of the verb-noun collocation *make + difference* are *make a difference* and *make a huge difference*. Biber et al (1999:428) explain that "there are a few semantically light verbs - such as take, make, have, and do, - that combine with noun phrases to form set verbal expressions". Such combinations may include a subsequent preposition in some instances such as *take care of*. Apart from the light verbs, some of the investigated verbs may at times (but not always) require a following preposition according to the grammatical context, e.g., *offer something to someone* and *gain something from*. This was also applied in the case of adjective noun collocations such as a *good level of*.

Thus, the notion of judging acceptability used in this study has been adopted from Nesselhauf (2003:230) who states that "the judgments take into account the combinations in their entirety (including, for example, the pre-modification and complementation pattern of the noun)".

Nevertheless, it could be argued that her description lacks clarity as she does not explain what she means by complementation pattern of the noun, which raises the question of how far the boundary of her analysis extends (for example, does the complementation extend to the preposition or beyond?).

Some linguists such as Hill (2000) consider the different elements of pre-modification and post-modification of the noun as important parts of the collocation. He argues that “collocations can, in fact, be much longer than, for example, adjective + noun, noun + noun and verb + adverb. For example: adverb + verb + article + adjective + noun + preposition + noun = *seriously affect the political situation in Bosnia*” (2000:51). He argues that while the noun may be either post-modified or pre-modified, it does not prevent identification of the collocation (i.e. affect situation) which lies at the heart of the phrase. Hill further explains that “the term ‘collocation’ should help bring **all** (sic) these chunks of language to students’ attention **as single choices**” (my emphases) (2000:51). This implies a need to bring collocations to the attention of students as whole units rather than as discrete lexemes. Hill’s example clearly reflects the notion of the chunk, yet more importantly, demonstrates that collocation can form the root of that chunk. I support Hill’s view concerning pre-modification and post-modification of the noun being important elements in a collocation but in a more specific and limited way in that I take only two types of lexical collocation viz verb-noun and adjective-noun collocations and then extend them to include the pre-modifiers and post-modifiers of the noun, which are then termed verb-noun and adjective-noun collocational patterns. This particular terminology is more suited to the purposes of this study (i.e. looking for acceptable word combinations within a grammatical framework).

Some components of the collocations mentioned above are grammatical words, e.g. articles and prepositions. These grammatical associations between words are referred to as colligations by Stefanowitsch and Gries (2003:210) who define them as “linear co-occurrence preferences and restrictions holding between specific lexical items and the word-class of the items that precede or follow them”. In addition, Lewis defines colligations as “the way one word regularly co-occurs with a particular (grammar) pattern”; for example, some verbs usually appear with a specific tense, or a noun might typically appear preceded by a possessive adjective, instead of an article such as *pass my/your driving test, It’s my/your/our responsibility to...* (c.f. *I’ll take the responsibility for* (2000:137). Hence, when collocation and colligation co-occur and combine in a phrase, they create what is called a phrasal construction. According to Stubbs (2005:1), a phrasal construction may be defined as a set of lexico-grammatical combinations which typically contains a stable lexical element at the heart of it, accompanied by other appropriate linguistic items. In short it may be described as a melange of collocations and colligations (lexical and grammatical) whose meaning may be determined by its communicative function.

In summary, all that has been discussed above reflects what Sinclair (1991:110) proposes as the idiom principle. This principle refers to items that do not appear in discourse in free variation; rather, there are constraints imposed on the order of lexical selections in a given phrase. According to Sinclair (1991:109), language users have a stockpile of countless reconstituted phrases that are stored as discrete lexical items, although they may seem to be analysable into separate parts. In brief, he maintains that collocations constitute an important feature of this

principle stating that “collocation... illustrates the idiom principle. On some occasions, words appear to be chosen in pairs or groups and these are not necessarily adjacent” (1987:325).

2.6 The Importance of Collocation in FL Vocabulary Learning

Collocation plays an important role in FL learning and acquisition, especially in learning vocabulary. As Francis and Poole (2009:2) state, “no piece of natural spoken or written English is totally free of collocation”.

Researchers with different interests assert that learning collocation is important for many different reasons such as developing language performance (Brown, 1974; Francis and Poole, 2009; Nation, 2001). Brown (1974:1-2) concentrates on the importance of collocations in L₂/FL learning and their relationship to the ESL/EFL classroom. She reports that collocation enables the learners to increase their oral proficiency, listening comprehension, and reading speed. Brown supports this notion by suggesting that these language skills contain a ‘feed forward’ element entailing developing skills that combine what has been read or heard with what is expected next in the text.

Highlighting collocational importance, Hill (2000:53) calculates that up to 70% of all we “say, hear, read or write” is collocation. The perfect use of collocations in exams and different tasks will help the learners to obtain good marks (Francis and Poole, 2009:v). This point is taken up by Hill (2000:49-50) who showed that learners usually make grammatical mistakes through producing longer sentences; this was demonstrated by analysing the learners’ speech or writing. Mistakes were made owing to learners’ unfamiliarity with the acceptable native-like collocations that would normally enable them to express meaning more precisely. The following example

illustrates the point in question: *His disability will continue until he dies* instead of *He has a permanent disability*. Furthermore, Hill concluded that learners “with good ideas usually lose marks because they do not know the four or five most important collocates of a key word that is central to what they are writing about”. In the same vein, Kita and Ogata (1997:230) argue that “collocational knowledge is particularly important for developing language skills, which are already difficult to acquire for second language learners”.

Another example is shown by enhancing the development of L₂ vocabulary (McCarthy, 1990; Aitchison, 1994; Lewis and Hill, 1997; Takač, 2008). Laufer (1998) confirms that collocations can expand L2/FL vocabulary and that it is a crucial aspect of vocabulary knowledge. Lewis and Hill (1997:13) argue that “one of the best ways to build vocabulary is to remember collocations rather than single words”. To illustrate this point, Lewis (2000:15) explains that any given collocation may contain only two or three words but that it can convey a large amount of complex information including elements of time, place, participants, situations, and so on. For example, *car accident* and *road accident* are common in English and indeed it is not possible to express these ideas any other way (Lewis and Hill, 1997:12). Thus, it is very important to connect and organize vocabulary by using collocational linking.

Similarly, McCarthy (1990:12) argues that collocation is “an important organizing principle in the vocabulary of any language”. Taylor (1983:39) lists four different reasons for learning vocabulary through their collocations: 1) vocabulary in texts is naturally learnt more easily than that which is not so linked; 2) vocabulary is best learned in context; 3) context is sometimes insufficient without deliberate association; and 4) vocabulary of any language needs to be

developed alongside its grammatical structure. On this note, Lewis (2000:228-242) provides some evidence why vocabulary is best learned in context by claiming that a complete text will reveal a large number of words that have a close association with each other. For example, he maintains that the words *architect* and *accountant* will co-occur with collocates *employ(ed)*, *work(ed)*, *good* and *trained*. Thus, by using the text as context, Lewis asserts that students will find it easier to learn natural sounding collocations because meaning comes through more clearly.

Improving communicative competence is another significant reason for learning collocations (Yorio, 1980; Pawley and Syder 1983; Carter and McCarthy, 1988; Cowie, 1992; Moon, 1992; Herbst, 1996; Lewis, 2000; Hill, 2000; Ellis, 2001; Nation, 2001; Heikkila, T and T, 2005; Koya, 2006). Collocational competence is defined as “the ability to accurately combine chunks of language thus enabling production of fluent, accurate and stylistically appropriate speech” (Heikkila, T and T, 2005:1). As far as the FL learner is concerned, collocation is an essential element of native speaker competence. Keshavarz and Salimi (2007:83) claim that “collocational knowledge has been recognized as a crucial part of native speakers’ communicative competence”. Similarly, Channell (1981) confirms that increasing learners’ awareness and knowledge of collocations is a very effective way of heightening their communicative competence. Hill (2000:49) points out that while “[w]e are familiar with the concept of communicative competence, we need to add the concept of collocational competence to our thinking”. This acknowledges that learning collocational patterns is a vital dimension of communicative competence. When learners lack collocational competence this can cause difficulties for them as

they tend to “create longer utterances because they do not know the collocations which express precisely what they want to say” (Hill, 2000:49).

Lastly, improving language fluency to the level of the native speaker is another key objective (Fillmore; 1979; Hill, 2000; Lewis, 2000; Fan, 2009). Fillmore (1979) argues that one essential element of fluency is the knowledge of fixed expressions of which collocations are part. Fan (2009:111) also states that the use of collocation promotes greater fluency besides enabling learners to make their speech more understandable. This is because being able to call on a huge repertoire of ready-made language in the mental lexicon enables a speaker to think more quickly and communicate more efficiently (Hill, 2000:54). Hyland (2008:4) emphasizes that collocations are significant since “an important component of fluent linguistic production is control of the multi-word expressions referred to as clusters, chunks or bundles”.

2.7 Conclusion

The purpose of this study is to investigate Libyan learners’ use of two types of lexical collocations (i.e. verb-noun and adjective-noun). Therefore, this chapter has discussed key topics specifically related to collocations from different aspects. It began by explaining different definitions of collocations and their relationship with other lexical combinations. This entailed presenting and explaining various criteria used to define collocations such as co-occurrence, predictability and idiomacity. I then discussed, explained and highlighted the differences between two major theoretical approaches to the study of collocation. This was followed by a discussion of collocations and the need to distinguish them from other types of word combinations such as idioms and compound nouns. I then introduced and discussed in detail what I mean by collocation

in this thesis. This included presenting and explaining my adopted definition along with its components, such as grammaticality, substitutability, semantics and conventionality, which unite to form collocations which could be deemed acceptable and appropriate as native-like performance in any context including academic writing. All of these components are taken into consideration when assessing the acceptability of learners' collocational patterns. The investigation was also conducted by studying collocations within an extended structure or phrase (i.e. not just the two lexical components) from a phraseological point of view. Finally, I discussed the important role of collocation in FL vocabulary learning and acquisition according to the different interests of the researchers, for example, it could be important for developing language performance and enhancing the development of L2 vocabulary.

The next chapter will introduce research conducted on the use of English lexical collocations produced in an EFL context, with special reference to the Arab world in order to highlight the significance of my study and to explore and discuss the areas which this research aims to cover.

Chapter 3

Research on Collocation in an EFL Context

3.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to shed light on the relevant research conducted to address EFL learners' use of English lexical collocations in production, with special reference to the Arab world and the Libyan context. It also provides a critical review of the related literature in order to address and highlight the problematic issues constituting the knowledge gap which the current study aims to fill. The reviewed literature enabled me to shape and construct the methodology of this research which tackled all methodological limitations found in the relevant studies.

This chapter is divided into two sections: The first section is concerned with different challenges and difficulties that EFL learners encounter in their use of collocation. It provides a list of different factors which may affect EFL learners' performance in the use of acceptable and native-like collocations. The difficulties are divided into seven subsections including: interlingual transfer, intralingual transfer, arbitrariness and unpredictability of collocations, lack of exposure to the English language, learners' lack of awareness of collocations as lexical entities, the influence of collocations on comprehension and understanding and focus on individual words. The second section reviews the major research and studies conducted by several researchers generally on the use of collocations and it specifically identifies the difficulties that foreign language learners encounter in using collocations at both the receptive and productive levels.

3.2 Difficulties Encountered in the Use of Collocation

ESL/EFL learners tend to encounter several difficulties in the use of collocations within their speech or writing of English (Fan, 2009:111). For example, unacceptable or inappropriate use of words and expressions in learners' interlanguage, though they are linguistically and pragmatically correct, may still sound 'unnatural' or 'strange' (Mahmoud, 2005:117). Experimental research has indicated that collocational difficulties are connected to interlingual transfer, intralingual transfer, paraphrasing, lack of collocational knowledge and other environmental factors (i.e. related to the context where English is learned) such as lack of exposure to the English language (Channall, 1981; Bahns, 1993; Bahns & Eldaws, 1993; Farghal & Obiedat, 1995; Liu, 1999a, 1999b, Fan, 2009). Consequently, this thesis will discuss the following points as the main sources of difficulty in the use of collocations.

3.2.1 Interlingual Transfer

This entails transferring the rules from the learners' L₁, or any other language which has been previously learnt, to the FL. According to Selinker (1969:1972) transfer is one of the major features connected with the unique system of the learner's interlanguage. Two main kinds of transfer have been distinguished. These are positive and negative transfer (Selinker, 1983). Positive transfer occurs when an L₁ lexeme or structure is used in the production of an L₂ lexeme or structure where the L₁ and L₂ structures or lexemes are both identical. This type is said to facilitate the learning of FL/SL learning and acquisition.

L₁ interference (i.e. negative transfer) is one of the key causes of errors in collocation production (Bahns & Eldaw, 1993; Hussein, 1990, Liu 1999b). Károly (2005) also shows that learners may

transfer inappropriate and erroneous lexical items from their native language into the FL. Many studies have established that the main cause of collocational problems is L₁ transfer. Looking at the interlanguage of learners whose mother tongue is closely related to English, Bahns (1993) argued that learners' reliance on the L₁ may lead to both appropriate and inappropriate collocational usage. During my own experience of teaching Libyan students, I also became aware that learners repeatedly transfer language usage from their native language to the target language, with negative effects. For example, some may say *strong car (the equivalent in Arabic is سيارة قوية = syarah qawih) and *make your best (the equivalent in Arabic is يبذل ما بوسعه = ybdul ma bews?h).

3.2.2 Intralingual Transfer

Intralingual transfer involves errors that result from faulty learning of the FL itself. Richard (1974:173) reports that these kinds of errors mirror the competence of the learners. He further argues that "their origins are found within the structure of English itself". Heydari and Bagheri (2012:1584) clarify this kind of transfer of items within the target language by terming it "the incorrect generalization of the rules within the target language". For instance, a learner may produce **several thanks* instead of *many thanks*.

Liu (1999b) further identifies four sources of collocational errors in relation to intralingual transfer:

1. **Overgeneralization** refers to the tendency of FL learners to apply general rules to all collocations (Deveci, 2004). For example, Libyan students tend to overgeneralize the verb make to cover a large number of verbs of which they are ignorant. For example, they

write *Government should make advertisements to warn people about the dangers of pollution, rather than run or use advertisements to warn people about the dangers of pollution (Dukali, 2010:62). As another example, Indian speakers of English use the collocation “drive a bicycle” as they apply the verb ‘drive’ to all vehicles such as “*...I decided to start on the bicycle as slowly as I could as it was not possible to drive fast” (Selinker, 1974:38).

2. **Ignorance of Rule Restrictions** means the application of certain rules where they are not applicable. Richards (1974:175-176) illustrated that errors of this kind are the result of learners’ use of analogy and their failure to observe the restrictions of existing structures, e.g., **request you a favour* is a false analogy of the construction of verb + object + object. Another example is found in the use of articles as in **the sparrows are the small birds* because of the students having made an analogy from *the sparrow is a small bird*.
3. **False Concepts Hypothesized** are errors which result in learners’ misunderstanding of the FL. Liu (1999b) investigates the possibility that most learners might think that words such as make, do, and take are de-lexicalized verbs so they can replace them freely. The participants in Liu’s study make errors such as **do a decision* instead of *make a decision*, **take an experiment* instead of *make an experiment*, and **take more respect* instead of *pay more respect*.
4. **The use of synonyms** is seen as a strategy of employing the synonym or near-synonym of a lexical item in the same way, which causes problems in learning the FL. This is viewed by Farghal and Obiedat’ (1995:321) as a “straightforward application of the open

choice principle”. For example, the Libyan learners may produce **strong car* instead of *powerful car* and **top education* instead of *higher education*. This practice is due to the fact that learners assume that ‘strong’ and ‘powerful’ are synonyms and therefore can be used interchangeably in a collocation (i.e. they have the same range of collocates).

3.2.3 Arbitrariness and Unpredictability of Collocations

Collocations must be memorized as they do not have rules which can be learned (see page 2, for my discussion of the difference between memorizing and learning; i.e. between declarative and procedural knowledge). Therefore collocations can cause difficulty for EFL learners in terms of memory overload as students have to remember exact words (approximations not being acceptable) and correct word order. Thus, it is non-standard to utter *do the bed* rather than *make the bed* (Boonyasaquan, 2006:81). Howarth (1998a:36) explains that a lack of understanding of which words can be combined and which cannot, create a serious problem for learners. Distinguishing the range of collocational options that are restricted from those that are free is a common problem encountered by the non-native writer or speaker. Consequently, Hill (2000:60) argues that “collocation should play an important part in our teaching from lesson one”.

3.2.4 Lack of Exposure to the English Language (Authentic Language)

In the Libyan context, exposure to English can be very limited. It is only in the classroom that learners can practise the language. Consequently, they usually forget what they have learned in the classroom very quickly. This hinders their ability to use collocations in their production of the language. From my own experience of teaching English in Libya, I noticed that the teachers concentrated on teaching grammatical forms and new vocabulary without paying attention to

word combinations. Takač (2008:17) argues that “learners can learn lexical items if they are exposed to sufficient amounts of comprehensible input”. On this note, Fan (2009:111) reports that lack of exposure to the target language is the most serious problem for EFL learners. In contrast, native speakers acquire their knowledge of collocation as they grow up in their speech community, subconsciously and gradually.

To emphasize the importance of exposure to the target language in terms of use and knowledge of collocations, Shehata (2008) examined the relationship between the amount and type of exposure to the English language and the size of collocational knowledge. She was mainly interested in two types of learning environment (EFL and ESL) and the amount of exposure to the English language that they provide. Her findings confirm that ESL learners’ collocational knowledge outstrips that of EFL learners and that there is a positive correlation between amount of exposure to English and knowledge of collocations (for more information about Shehata’s study, and another similar study by Alsakran [2011], see section 3.3.2).

3.2.5 Learners’ Lack of Awareness of Collocations as Lexical Entities

FL learners may not be aware of collocations as lexical units (Ying & O’Neill, 2009) and they are therefore incapable of noticing them in the input. In addition, Woolard (2000:31) states that “for many students learning more vocabulary simply means learning new words”. He further argues that learners should be made aware of their collocational violations and that learning more vocabulary is not just learning new lexical words, but learning familiar words in new combinations.

3.2.6 The Influence of Collocations on Comprehension and Understanding

Collocations generally do not hinder understanding or cause major problems for EFL learners in comprehension (Marton, 1977; Biskup, 1992; Ying and Hendricks, 2004). Collocations are simply a combination of word partners chosen to fit a particular context as each “lexical constituent is also a semantic constituent” (Cruse, 1986:40). Learners could guess the meanings of certain expressions based on the context presented. For example, learners can deduce the meaning of ‘it rained heavily’ from the context of someone being caught in a downpour and being completely soaked. Nevertheless, learners may struggle to actualise their collocational competence when it comes to performance (Marton, 1977). Halliday and Hassan (1976:284) state that collocations are “the most problematic part of lexical cohesion”, thus resulting in recurrent language production mistakes and communication problems (see section 3.3, for information on studies that confirm EFL learners’ difficulties with English lexical collocations). Thus, this study aims to explore Libyan English majors’ difficulties in their use of two types of lexical collocations (verb-noun and adjective-noun collocations) by looking at their actual performance in academic written production.

3.2.7 Focus on individual words

Learning words through dictionary definitions can cause another difficulty for learners as they make inappropriate word choices when attempting to form collocations. According to Woolard (2000), dictionaries concentrate on decoding the meaning of words, i.e., they present meaning(s) of lexical items through their synonyms and other word sense relations e.g. definitions, paraphrasing and contextualisation. However, the structure of most dictionaries limits learners to identifying only the meanings of discrete words. As Woolard (2000:36) indicates, “[a] major

drawback is that most dictionaries give relatively little explicit attention to collocation and other co-textual features of words". Thus, when a Libyan student looks up the word *cook* s/he learns that it is associated with food and meals. This may lead to possible errors such as *my mum cooks a cake* instead of *bakes a cake*. Hence, learners could encounter words which are synonymous in their definitional meanings but cannot be used interchangeably as their collocational fields are not similar (Ying and Hendricks, 2004:54). To demonstrate this point, words such as *injury* and *wound* share similar dictionary definitions, but cannot necessarily be interchanged. It is acceptable to use *stab wound* but not *stab injury* and *internal injury* but not *internal wound* (Lewis, 2000:13). From these examples, we can establish that certain characteristics of words can only be demonstrated and conveyed through their collocations with other words which general dictionary definitions cannot completely illustrate. Moreover, FL learners focus on individual lexical words rather than words in chunks, therefore they would not be able to notice recurring chunks in the input (Henriksen, 2013).

3.3 Empirical Research on Collocation

Various studies already undertaken have concentrated on the difficulties and problems encountered by FL learners in the use of collocations in learning English. It is important to include a comprehensive historical account of that research in order to highlight the knowledge gap that still exists in this field. The purpose of this review is to explore and discuss the areas that my current study covers. Collocational studies involve four main dimensions:

- 1. Learning environment:** this category includes studies which situate the learners' performance in certain contexts or classrooms. For example, the EFL context (e.g.

Farghal and Obiedant, 1995; Mahmoud, 2005), and ESL context (e.g. Bahns, 1993; Bahns and Eldaw, 1993; Fan, 2009)

2. **Research methods:** different methods for collecting data in these studies range from: translation tests (e.g. Bahns and Eldaw, 1993) to writing tasks (e.g. Howarth, 1998b; Granger, 1998; Mahmoud, 2005; Laufer and Waldman, 2011) to gap-fill (e.g. Alsakran, 2011) to multiple choice (e.g. Hussein, 1990; Granger, 1998), and cloze tests (e.g. Al-Zahrani, 1998; Al-Amro, 2006).
3. **Types of collocations:** many types of collocations have been studied, for example, verb-noun collocations (e.g. Lennon, 1996; Al-Zahrani, 1998; Bazzaz and Abd Samad, 2011), adjective-noun collocations (e.g. Kuo, 2009), noun-noun collocations (e.g. Hussein; 1990), and mixed types of lexical collocations (e.g. Kuo, 2009; Darvishi, 2011)
4. **Mixed sample:** some studies populate their samples from different contexts, for example, Shammass (2013) included learners from four different Arab countries: Algeria, Jordan, Syria and Lebanon; Shehata (2008) examined ESL Arabic-speaking learners of English from the USA and EFL Egyptian learners.

The studies below will be classified according to their learning contexts in terms of research on the use of collocations by EFL learners and Arab EFL learners while learning English. My selection of these collocational studies is driven primarily by their relevance to my thesis in terms of context; that is, they investigate learners' use of lexical collocations in production, particularly verb-noun and adjective-noun collocations. They are divided as follows:

3.3.1 Research on the Use of Collocations by EFL Learners

There have been a number of interesting studies in recent years focused on the collocational knowledge of EFL learners all around the world. A list of studies in the EFL context is explained in detail below (see appendix 3 for summary).

In their experimental study, Bahns and Eldaw (1993) examined 58 German advanced EFL students' productive knowledge of verb-noun collocation by using both a cloze and translation test. Twenty-four students completed a cloze test including ten sentences in which the verb had been omitted from various verb+noun collocations while another 34 students answered a German-English translation test. The results revealed that the students' collocational performance was inadequate, and that it caused a major problem in the production of correct English. For example, in the translation test, they discovered that more than half of the translated lexical items were unacceptable and erroneous, in spite the fact that "collocates made up less than a quarter of the total number of lexical words" (p.101). Additionally, the students' collocational phrases were no better in the translation test than in the cloze task even through paraphrasing. Finally, it was noted that some collocations in the translation test were effectively paraphrased by most students. Therefore, the researchers concluded that language teachers should teach their EFL students highly frequent collocations.

Many studies have been conducted in the Asian EFL context. Huang (2001) studied sixty Taiwanese EFL students' knowledge of four types of English collocations and the collocational errors they committed. He used a completion test to measure the students' knowledge of the following lexical collocations: free combinations, restricted collocations, figurative idioms, and

pure idioms. The data analysis showed that the students' performance was good on both restricted collocations and figurative idioms. Among the four types, free combinations were the least difficult, whereas pure idioms were the most problematic. More specifically, it was revealed that the students had limited collocational knowledge. He concluded that the source of EFL students' errors in collocations was due to L₁ negative transfer.

In another context, Koya (2005) studied 130 first-year university students in Japan. He investigated aspects of both productive and receptive collocation usage at different levels of language learning especially verb-noun collocations. He used three kinds of test: a vocabulary test, a receptive collocation test, and a productive collocation test. The results highlighted the following points: a) there is a strong relationship between students' general vocabulary knowledge and their knowledge of collocation; b) there is also a strong connection between their receptive collocational knowledge and their productive knowledge; c) receptive collocational knowledge is influenced by lexical knowledge, L₁ equivalence, knowledge of delexicalized verbs and the meaning of verbs whereas productive collocational knowledge is influenced by semantic opacity, the core meaning of nouns and syntactic collocational structure; and d) it was concluded that the students could not communicate effectively without collocations, even when they made errors such as leaving the answer blank, verbalising nouns and resorting to L₁ transfer (p. 253).

Another study related to the difficulties that language learners encounter when learning English collocations was conducted by Zarei (2002) who aimed to search for the problems that high proficiency level Iranian learners of English had with English collocations. His study included two phases: phase I contained about 4000 pages of materials written in English by 68 students.

He studied a list of the collocational errors he extracted. This list was then analyzed and ten patterns were found, which were adjective + noun, verb + noun, noun + verb, noun + noun, adverb + adjective, idioms and fixed expressions, verb+particle/preposition, preposition+noun, adjective+preposition/particle and general collocations. Among these patterns, the most problematic ones were adjective+noun and verb+noun collocations with error frequencies of 83 and 76 occurrences respectively. Phase II was composed of nine cued production tasks to elicit the students' use of various kinds of collocation. This was given to 163 MA and PhD postgraduates. The results in phase II showed that high proficiency level Iranian learners of English had some serious problems in the use of English collocations.

Nesselhauf's study (2003) is considered one of the most comprehensive studies of collocations in learner written English to date (Martelli, 2007:37). She manually investigated the use of verb-noun collocations (for example, take a break) in free-writing by 3rd and 4th year advanced German University students of English. The data were collected from 32 argumentative essays (500 words). Nesselhauf identified and examined various types of mistakes that occurred in the learners' collocations and also investigated the influence of the learners' L₁ on the production of English collocations. In her research, she differentiated between three main types of word combinations: free combinations, e.g. want a car, collocations, e.g. take a picture and idioms, e.g. sweeten the pill. These distinctions were made on the basis of what she called "restricted sense" (p.225). Various methods were used to judge the acceptability of learners' collocations: a) the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (OALD, 2000) and the Collins COBUILD English Dictionary (CCED 1995), b) the British National Corpus (BNC), and c) consultation with two

native speakers. The results revealed that “even advanced learners have considerable difficulties in the production of collocations” (p.237). Regarding collocational errors it was shown that a) nine types of mistakes appeared in the learner corpus. Among these, the wrong choice of verb was the most frequent with 24 occurrences, and b) the greatest proportion of errors appeared in collocations followed by free combinations and idioms, i.e. 79%, 23%, and 23% respectively. In addition, “the learners’ L₁ turns out to have a degree of influence that goes far beyond that of earlier (small-scale) studies have predicted” (p.223). Consequently, some suggestions were made and discussed regarding teaching collocations. I have included discussion of this study particularly because it highlights the use of an ‘error analysis framework’ which I have adapted for my own research. Furthermore, it is one of the most comprehensive studies in the field of collocation, as indicated earlier.

Similar to Zarei (2002) and Nesselhauf (2003) who examined learners’ collocational errors in the written form, Li (2005) conducted a study to investigate the collocational errors in the written production of 38 EFL learners in Taiwan. They were first-year sophomores in the department of Applied English (Ming Chuan University). The learners’ writing samples were of two types: an assignment and an in-class activity. In addition, a questionnaire containing the twelve types of errors appearing in the learners’ writing was administered to examine their perception of difficulties in using collocations. Three reference sources were used to analyse the students’ collocational violations to supply suggestions for correction: The BBI Dictionary of English

Word Combinations, the British National Corpus, and TANGO⁸ (a national e-learning project established by National Science Council). The results showed that grammatical errors (64.4%) were more frequent than lexical errors (35.6%) in learners' erroneous collocations. Furthermore, errors in the following collocation types: L1 (V+N) and G8 (V+Prep+O / V+O+Prep+O) were the most frequent in learners' writing whereas errors in (Adj+to infinitive) were the least frequent. However, the questionnaire results illustrated that the subjects considered the following types: G4 (Prep+N) and G5 (Adj+Prep) to be the most problematic collocation types. In addition, the main source of learners' collocational errors was ignorance of rule restrictions. However a weakness of this study is that the researcher did not employ a native speaker to assess learners' collocations and did not mention how he dealt with those which could not be found in the above sources. He also did not indicate whether the assessment was carried out on written or spoken English.

Having similar aims to Nesselhauf's study (2003) and using similar methods to judge the acceptability of learners' collocations in written English, Wang and Shaw (2008) attempted to investigate the serious collocational errors of 100 Swedish students in the English Department of Stockholm University, Sweden, and 100 Chinese students from the foreign language school of Wuhan university, China. They were asked to write a short essay of about 200 words in class in 30 minutes. They investigated verb + noun collocations of common verbs: have, do, take and make. The BBI, the CCED, the BNC and the services of a native speaker were used to judge the acceptability of learners' collocational patterns. The results showed that the two groups of

⁸ TANGO is an online dictionary which allows people to search for English collocations. It provides a variety of examples to demonstrate how to combine English words to produce native expressions. The frequencies of various collocations are also given (Li, 2005:35).

students encountered different problems in using these common verbs, and made similar types of errors. In addition, they reported that these errors were due to intralingual factors and negative transfer from their L₁, stating that “the greater typological difference from the target language leads to more serious collocational errors” (p.201). However, the authors did not apprise the native speaker of the register of their corpus to enable him/her to make more informed judgements.

Placing greater emphasis on written tasks within the EFL context like the above-mentioned researchers, Kuo (2009) studied the use of collocation by 49 intermediate level EFL students in Taiwan. He collected 98 writing samples from the students (two topics were written up). His analysis concentrated on two types of collocation: verb + noun and adjective + noun because, as he stated, most of the collocational errors frequently occurred using these two types. Kuo used three reference sources to analyse and assess the acceptability of learners’ collocations: the BNC, collocation checker⁹, which is based on collocational errors gathered from Taiwanese learners, and two native speakers. After data analysis, the results revealed that the students made more errors in the use of verb+noun than in adjective + noun collocations. Therefore, he concluded that “V+N type of collocation is more difficult for students to master” (p.148). The results also revealed that about 17.63% of usage was inappropriate. In addition, three types of lexical collocational errors were identified: approximation (49.18%), the use of synonyms (31.15%) and negative transfer (19.67%). To overcome these problems, this study suggested that the students should be taught lexical items in forms, and that they should keep collocation logs, and read texts

⁹ The website for the collocation checker is (<http://candle.cs.nthu.edu.tw/vntango/>).

paying attention to collocation. However, a methodological weakness of this study is that the researcher did not perform any statistical tests to determine which type of collocation is more problematic for learners; instead, he based his claim on the raw frequency outcomes of errors. Therefore, his claim could be considered dubious.

In the same vein, Bazzaz and Abd Samad (2011) aimed to examine the possible connection between collocational knowledge and the use of verb-noun collocations in writing stories. They investigated 27 PhD Iranian students studying in a Malaysian university. They used six writing tasks and a C-test. The C-test was adopted from other studies in order to measure the students' collocational knowledge. The results revealed that there was a linear relationship between knowledge of collocations and the use of verb-noun collocations in writing stories. However, it was not clear whether or not, in calculating the correlation, only acceptable collocations were included since the authors stated that "the Pearson product moment correlation between the numbers of verb noun collocations used in the essays and the students' score on the collocational C-test was computed" (p.161). Thus, the results of this study are questionable.

With a focus on writing tasks, Darvishi (2011) examined the collocational errors made in writing by 68 EFL sophomore university students in Iran. The data were collected from 38 assignments and 38 in-class practice tasks. The data analysis showed some unacceptable grammatical and lexical collocational errors. In addition, the students were asked to answer a questionnaire to discover their perceptions of difficulty in the use of collocations. The questionnaire's results illustrated that the students' perceptions of collocational types and the collocational error types they made in their writing samples were different. The main source of collocational errors was

ignorance of rule restrictions. Darvishi argued that EFL students make collocational errors in their writing due to “the interference of their mother tongue, lack of the collocational concept, the interlingual or intralingual transfer, paraphrase and their shortage of their collocational knowledge (sic)” (p.52). This is an interesting premise, though the study has a methodological weakness in that Darvishi used two methods to assess the acceptability of learners’ collocations (The BBI Dictionary and the BNC) but did not include consultations with native speakers. Neither did he mention the procedure for analyzing the data; consequently, his study cannot be replicated.

Phoocharoensil (2011) is another researcher who investigated EFL learners’ collocational performance in written production (see also Li, 2005; Nesselhauf, 2003; Wang and Show, 2008; Kuo, 2009; and Darvishi, 2011). He examined 90 first year undergraduate Thai EFL students at a university in Thailand. The participants were divided into two groups according to their English Language proficiency (H = High, L = low) in order to indicate the actual problems that they encounter in producing English collocations. The data of the study were taken from the written essays of the participants in the two groups. The results revealed that lexical collocational errors were more frequent than grammatical errors. He also indicated that the learners’ errors were influenced by their L₁ collocational knowledge (L₁ transfer). He reported in his findings that “the learners’ mother tongue perspicuously plays a significant role in affecting their L2 collocational learning ... most of the students’ collocational problems are attributed to L1 influence” (p.113). According to the written data, then, it can be concluded the errors appear to be influenced by

different factors such as negative language transfer, synonyms and overgeneralization which evidently cause most erroneous collocations.

With a slightly different aim from the above-mentioned studies, Bahardoust (2012) conducted a study to examine the rate of lexical collocations of 200 Iranian EFL learners' writing production between L₁ and L₂. She further investigated the influence of L₁ on L₂ learners' collocational use. The data were collected from midterm, final tests, and assignments of the students. As for the assignments, the students were given one month to do them and "they had more opportunities to refer to different resources and develop their paragraphs" (p.190). The frequencies of words, sentences and texts appearing in the participants' written production were counted in order to assess the rate of collocations. A chi-square test was conducted to determine the rate of different types of lexical collocations. In addition, a comparison was made between the various classifications of lexical collocations regarding their frequencies in EFL writing production. The findings demonstrated that the verb-noun and adjective-noun collocational frequency rates were the highest while that of noun-verb combinations was the lowest. In addition, it was revealed that the rate and frequency of learners' L₁ collocations were higher than those of L₂. It was also found that the mother tongue could have both a positive and negative influence on the respondents' production of collocations in the target language. Similar to Darvish, Bahardoust utilized just one method to assess learners' collocations (Oxford Collocations Dictionary for students of English (2002)) and did not indicate how she dealt with the collocations which she failed to find within this source. No consultations were made with native speakers of English. Another methodological issue in this study is related to giving the assignments to be done as homework. This may have

had a negative impact on the validity of the data, since the learners were allowed to access a variety of references to write them. In addition, the methodology section was vague, with no clear explanation of the analytical framework given. This again affects the replicability of the study. Mindful of such weaknesses, the current study has addressed these methodological limitations in depth. It can therefore be said to have made a major contribution to the body of research conducted in the field of collocation studies.

To measure collocational knowledge in written production, Hong et al., (2011) aimed to examine the types and sources of collocational errors made in the production of verb-noun collocations by four Malaysian learners of English from three different states in Malaysia. The data were collected from 130 written essays (a sub-corpus of EMAS) constituting 35,931 words. The data were analysed by using Wordsmith Tools software. In their study, Hong et al. used two reference sources which were used to analyse the students' collocational violations to supply suggestions for correction, i.e. the Oxford Collocations Dictionary (2009) and the BNC, to evaluate and determine the acceptability of the learners' produced collocations. They used Nesselhauf's (2003) framework as a guide to identify and classify the errors occurring in the learners' collocations. The results reveal that seven types of collocational errors were identified in the written essays. The most frequent collocational error was the proposition errors with 126 (41.72%) instances in 268 erroneous verb-noun collocations. Furthermore, three main categories of sources of collocational errors were discovered: interlingual transfer, intralingual transfer, and paraphrase, among which intralingual transfer was the most prominent. Hong et al.'s findings confirmed the results of previous studies, e.g. Li, 2005; Wang and Shaw, 2008; Darvish, 2011; and

Phoocharoensil, 2011; that interlingual and intralingual transfer were the key sources of learners' collocational errors. However a weakness of this study was that, as in Li's (2005) study mentioned above, no native speakers were consulted to evaluate the learners' collocations.

3.3.2 Research on the Use of Collocation by Arab EFL Learners While Learning English

My study was conducted in an EFL Arab Libyan context. Thus, the main focus of this section will be on those studies which were also conducted in an Arab EFL context. A detailed discussion of these studies is presented below (see Appendix 4 for summary).

In an early study, Elkhatib¹⁰ (1984) investigated the lexical errors of four undergraduate Egyptian students. He analyzed their writing samples in order to identify their lexical problems, discover the causes of these problems, and ascertain whether the learners were more familiar with the meaning content or the language structure. The results showed that the students could not produce appropriate and native-like lexical collocations, e.g. **shooting stones* and **do progress*. They made eight types of lexical such as overuse of a few general lexical items, confusion of related or unrelated words with similar meanings, literal translation and overgeneralization of the use of one translation equivalent.

Measuring learners' lexical collocational knowledge in various production tasks, Farghal and Obiedant (1995) investigated the use of collocations by 57 EFL learners in Jordan. They used two sorts of task: a gap-fill test and an Arabic-English translation task. In the gap-fill task, 34 Arab university learners were examined. Meanwhile, 23 English majors were tested through a

¹⁰ This study proved to be impossible to access, therefore, my discussion of it is limited to its discussion in other sources.

translation task which included 22 common “adjective + noun” collocations about topics such as food, clothes and weather. The results indicate that the scores of the two groups were low at 18.3% in the gap-filling test and 5.3% in the translation task. In both tests, the main type of error involved the use of synonyms. The researchers proposed that this type of error was the result of their teachers’ “tendency to teach words individually rather than collocationally” (321). Nevertheless, the test items seem to be problematic, e.g. the researchers did not indicate the frequencies of the collocations used. In addition, no report was given regarding how the test items were constructed. Some test items did not provide a clear context to elicit an answer, although the test was tried out on two native speakers. For example, the item “some people like salty soup, but others like _____ soup” was meant to elicit the answer “bland”. Thus, the test design was not as well-constructed as it might have been. Consequently, the value of their results must be regarded as questionable.

Al-Zahrani (1998) examined knowledge of English lexical collocations of 81 EFL male Saudi university students at four different academic levels. He conducted a cloze test that included 50 verb-noun lexical collocations as well as a writing test and a paper-and-pencil TOEFL exam which were used to assess the learners’ general English proficiency. The results showed significant differences in the learners’ knowledge of lexical collocations according to their academic levels. The higher the academic level of the learners, the greater the knowledge of lexical collocations. In short, there appeared to be a strong relationship between the learners’ knowledge of collocations and their overall language proficiency. He also noted that the learners’ knowledge of collocations was a good predictor of their scores in the writing test.

With a focus on translation tasks, similar to Farghal and Obiedant (1995), albeit utilizing different and more varied aims, Zughoul and Abdul-Fattah (2003) aimed to investigate three aspects of collocational knowledge: 1) the use of collocations as a sign of language proficiency, 2) the strategies used by Arabic learners of English to produce appropriate collocations, and 3) the differences between Arabic and English words that collocate together. This study mainly explored how university students majoring in English language might appropriately use English collocations. The subjects of the study were 38 graduates and 32 undergraduates (third academic level) from the English Department at Yarmouk University, Jordan. They administered a two-form translation test which consisted of 16 Arabic collocations. The first test form contained a multiple-choice format of the English translation for the Arabic verb *khasara* 'broke' while the other test was a free translation task. The results generally verified that Arab learners of English in both groups encountered difficulty with the use of English collocations. In addition, the researchers identified the following communicative strategies used by Arab learners when producing English collocations: e.g. avoidance, paraphrasing, literal translation, assumed synonymy, overgeneralization, analogy, substitution and imitation of the literary style.

The first extended study of Elkhatib (1984), which examined the learners' written production in the Arab world was carried out by Mahmoud (2005) who studied the learners' actual performance in producing English collocations. A list of topics was given to 42 Arabic-speaking English-major university students to enable them to write an essay as a homework assignment about one of the topics. The results revealed that the EFL Arab learners had limited collocational competence; however, the data showed that the learners used different types of collocations. In addition, the

findings showed that they committed several errors. Indeed, a total of 64% of the collocations they used were erroneous, and 61% accounted for inappropriate word combinations. The researcher reported that these collocational violations were caused by negative transfer from their L₁ (Arabic). Thus, he highlighted the importance of including collocations in EFL teaching. However, the main weakness of this study was that the writing task was assigned as a homework assignment. This may have had a negative impact on the validity of the data, since the learners could have used and accessed different resources and references, such as dictionaries, books, the internet or seeking help from other people, to help them do the task. There was also no mention of the analytical framework followed to analyse the learners' collocations, nor was any indication given regarding the register of the writing task. Another limitation of Mahmoud's small data study of 42 essays was that he made a sweeping generalization of his limited findings to all Arab EFL learners. In addition, he did not specify the size of the study corpus, stating vaguely that the length of the essays "ranged from one and half (sic) to two single-spaced pages in length" (p.120).

Reaching the same conclusion as Mahmoud (2005) that learners have insufficient collocational knowledge, Al-Amro (2006) assessed 51 Saudi advanced English learners in Saudi Arabia. He investigated their use of two types of collocation and also their productive and receptive knowledge of collocation. He used three sets of data: a C-test, a multiple choice test, and an essay writing task. The C-test contained 34 productive items (including verb-noun and verb-preposition collocations) where the initial letters of the target collocations were given. The multiple choice test was divided into 16 receptive items (e.g. figurative-use of verb phrases). The

results indicated that the learners' performance was weak which suggested limited collocational knowledge on the part of the learners. The data also revealed that the learners did better in the productive test ($M = 32.88$) than in the receptive test ($M = 24.64$). This finding contradicts the generally accepted view that receptive knowledge is broader than productive knowledge. However, in this study, the researcher explains this finding by noting that the collocations in the receptive test were less frequent than those in the productive test. Another interesting result was that there was no significant correlation between the students' overall collocational knowledge and their actual collocational use, i.e. the collocational knowledge arising from the collocational test did not relate to the learners' collocational use in the written work. At the end of this study, he argued that the EFL learners' lack of collocational knowledge was a direct result of ignorance of the lexical approach in FL teaching as well as the learning environment. Moreover, the overreliance on synonymy by dictionaries in order to convey the meaning of particular words has resulted in the erroneous view held by many learners that conceptual equivalence involves distributional equivalence.

Contrary to Al-Amro's (2006) results, Shehata (2008) focused on investigating L_1 influence on knowledge of collocations and the link between the amount and type of exposure to the target language and the size of collocational knowledge. She examined 97 advanced Arabic-speaking English students and divided them into two groups, ESL and EFL. Thirty-five were Arabic-speaking students of English at an American university who had TOEFL scores ranging from 567 to 620, whereas the EFL group comprised sixty-two undergraduate English-major advanced students from a university in Egypt. She used five instruments in this study: a self-report

questionnaire, two production tests (gap-filling tests), a reception test dealing with collocations, and a vocabulary recognition test which was implemented to check the learners' familiarity with the collocational constituents. She concentrated on two types of lexical collocation: verb-noun and adjective-noun collocations. In the results, she revealed that there was a positive correlation between the learners' collocational knowledge and their amount of exposure to the target language. Furthermore, she indicated that the learners' receptive knowledge of collocations (ESL M = 38.80/EFL M = 36.24) proved to be broader than that of their production (ESL M = 20.71/EFL M = 9.31). In addition, the results showed that the acquisition of English collocations was strongly affected by the learners' L₁ (Arabic) and their learning environment. She also found that all students performed better on the verb-noun collocation test than on the adjective-noun collocations. This suggests that verb-noun collocations are easier to acquire than adjective-noun collocations. Consistent with previous studies on collocation, she further signified that Arabic-speaking EFL learners have insufficient knowledge of collocations which can be due to the influence of the learning environment.

Within the Libyan context, I myself examined 30 Libyan upper-intermediate learners' actual performance in producing English lexical collocations (see Dukali, 2010). I also investigated the frequency of five common delexicalized verbs (have, make, get, do and take) which occur in V-N collocations in different registers. I used two instruments: formal and informal essays. They were on the same theme in order to compare their performance on the two written tasks. The results indicated that Libyan learners performed poorly in producing verb-noun collocations because of their insufficient collocational knowledge. Learners had various success rates in using the five

verbs as part of verb + noun collocations. For example, “‘have’ (formal corpus) and ‘make’ (informal) were by far the most frequent delexicalized verbs involved in miscollocations” (p.80). Furthermore, learners’ collocational errors were due to the following factors: 1) L₁ interference, 2) overgeneralization, 3) lack of exposure to the language and 4) lack of attention to teaching collocation in the classroom. The results also showed that learners’ vocabulary knowledge far exceeded their V-N collocational knowledge with 1.54% and 1.36% in formal and informal tasks respectively. However, a lack of detailed statistical investigation constituted a methodological drawback in this study. For example, the frequency of the acceptable and erroneous uses of each one of the investigated verbs in the verb-noun collocations along with the frequency of error types was not calculated. In addition, no inferential statistics was performed to determine the students’ use of the investigated verbs in both registers.

Conducting the study in a similar EFL and ESL context and obtaining similar results to Shehata’s (2008) study, i.e. that, for example, adjective–noun collocations are more problematic than verb-noun collocations, Alsakran (2011) looked into the productive and receptive knowledge of the collocations used by Arabic-speaking ESL and EFL learners of English. He also examined whether the learners performed differently in the three types of collocations: verb-noun, adjective-noun and verb-preposition. He used 68 students who were divided into two groups: the first group consisted of 38 Saudi students (at the Institute of Public Administration) in Saudi Arabia, whereas the other group consisted of 30 Arab students in an Intensive English programme (at Colorado state university) in the USA. Three gap-filling tests were used to measure the learners’ productive knowledge. The tests contained 16 verb-noun and 16 adjective-noun

collocations where the initial letter of the answer was presented and 16 verb-preposition collocations where the meaning of the phrasal verb was given. An appropriateness judgment test was administered to assess their receptive collocational knowledge. The results indicated that the learners' language learning environment influenced significantly the acquisition of collocations. Evidence of this was apparent in the EFL learners' lower scores ($M = 46.68$) compared with ESL learners ($M = 57.20$). Another interesting result was that their receptive collocational knowledge far outstripped their productive collocational knowledge. In addition, they clearly had difficulty with verb-noun collocations. On the other hand, the adjective-noun and verb-preposition collocations were much more problematic and difficult.

In her PhD study, Ahmed (2012) examined the use of lexical collocations by 185 Libyan EFL undergraduate university students studying at the Department of English, Faculty of Languages, AI-Jabal AI-Gharbi University. Her study aimed to examine how the students' L_1 (Arabic) influenced their production of collocations and identified their problems in the use of six types of lexical collocations: verb+noun, noun+verb, noun+noun, adjective+noun, verb+adverb, and adverb+adjective. She used a multiple-choice test which included 60 items and a translation task which contained 28 items, alongside a self-reporting questionnaire. The results were calculated and revealed that "the level of Libyan EFL learners' lexical collocation knowledge was relatively low" (p.174). In addition, they encountered problems with all types of English lexical collocations from both a receptive and productive perspective. She concluded that negative transfer from the students' L_1 and ignorance of restriction rules are two possible reasons which could account for students' misuse of collocations. The study also "illustrated that when there is

congruence between the English collocations and Arabic equivalents, the students produced the acceptable collocation such as take a decision [;] on the other hand, where there is a difference between the two languages, students faced difficulty with the items and they produce[d] unacceptable collocations such as made homework”(p.175).

Unlike other studies, Shamma (2013) evaluated 96 Arab postgraduate students' comprehension and use of collocations. They were in their second year of a two-year MA programme in translation studies. In this study, the students were asked to answer three questionnaires: the first questionnaire contained 20 collocations in Arabic to be translated into English; the second consisted of 20 English collocations to be translated into Arabic; and the third questionnaire was composed of nine English collocations with four options along with their Arabic translation equivalents. The results generally illustrated that the students performed poorly in the three questionnaires: The total number of errors in Questionnaire 1 was 1478 out of 1920 (76.97%); 1218 out of 1920 (63.43%) in Questionnaire 2; and 2712 out of 3456 (78.47%) in Questionnaire 3. Judging by the percentage of erroneous collocations, Questionnaire 3 was the most difficult. He further concluded that many errors were unexpected and due to literal transfer from their mother tongue. However, the findings of this research may be subject to criticism on two counts. First, the respondents themselves had varied backgrounds as some were already teachers of English in their own right, others were translators, and yet others were mere students, while, at the same time, their ages ranged from twenty-three to thirty-six. Second, the language learning contexts of the respondents were varied as they would have learned English in different (Arab) countries and would therefore have been exposed to various teaching styles, methodologies,

curricula, timetabling differences, teaching/learning facilities and varying amounts of classroom time. In short, they constituted a heterogeneous rather than homogeneous sample.

Most of the above studies have the following factors in common: 1) the samples of participants in each study are very small which is considered to be a weakness, 2) L₁ negative interference is the main source of difficulty in learning English collocations, and 3) the results showed that the learners have unsatisfactory or insufficient knowledge of the use of collocations.

3.3.3 Summary

In summary, the review of the studies in the previous two sections highlights some of the issues and methodological limitations which my study aims to address. These can be summarised as follows:

1. There is a scarcity of research investigating learners' use of lexical collocations in English academic writing in an Arab EFL context and Libyan EFL context in particular.
2. Earlier studies required the learners to produce single collocates of particular lexical items, and, therefore, the results could not reflect the actual performance of the learners in collocational use, e.g. Huang (2001). This can only be achieved by requiring learners to produce a written corpus in addition to the other methods.
3. Another methodological issue in some studies is related to giving the writing task to the students to be done as homework, for example, Mahmoud, 2005; and Bahardoust, 2012. As explained earlier, this could have had a negative impact on the validity of the data,

given that the learners could made use of different resources and references to help them do the task.

4. Some studies did not consider consulting native speakers of English to judge and assess the acceptability of their learners' collocational patterns, such as Li, 2005; Darvishi, 2011; and Hong et al., 2011. They used the BNC and/or collocational dictionaries such as the Oxford Collocational Dictionary (2009) without considering their drawbacks. For example, the BNC harbours a particular weakness as it poses difficulties when searching for collocations in terms of extracting variations in inflections, changes in the organisation of some constituents, as well as in types of determiner, or in terms of inserting modifiers (Wang and Shaw, 2000:209). Meanwhile, collocational dictionaries are not comprehensive in the sense that they do not list every possible collocate of a certain word.
5. Concerning those studies which did consult native speakers to assess the acceptability of the learners' collocational patterns, they did not consider indicating and specifying the register of the study corpus (i.e. academic or spoken English) to native speakers to enable them to make sound judgements (see Wang and Shaw, 2008; and Mahmoud ,2005). Hence, it can be said that their results are questionable since register can be a very important factor in the process of judging the acceptability of learners' collocational patterns. For example, in reporting the Queen's 90th birthday in a formal news report, a newsreader might use the collocation *an auspicious occasion* whilst people talking about such an event in conversation might say it was a *great occasion*. Therefore, in a formal

context the language user would opt for the adjective '*auspicious*' which is relatively more formal than the adjective '*great*'.

6. There is a dearth of in-depth investigations that carry out inferential statistical analyses to examine whether there is a significant difference in learners' production of different types of lexical collocations. Most of the studies rely on descriptive statistics such as frequency and percentage to determine which type is more difficult, for example, Kuo, 2009; Dukali, 2010; and Shamma, 2013.

In my own study, I have aimed to avoid the pitfalls described above and have followed sound methodological procedures while, at the same time, contributing to the growing body of collocational research in the literature.

3.4 Conclusion

This chapter has discussed learners' problems and difficulties in the use of collocations while endeavouring to speak or write English. I discussed a number of studies on the use of collocations in learning English in an EFL context. This review of the literature revealed that all the studies I took into consideration showed that collocations are problematic for EFL learners, as their collocational performance in many different contexts was consistently unsatisfactory. Furthermore, the current research showed that it is unique in its exploration of the learners' use of two types of lexical collocations in academic English writing in the EFL context and particularly in the Arab world and Libyan context. A number of methodological issues were also considered. Some studies, for example, did not take into account the drawbacks of using only the BNC and/or collocational dictionaries, e.g. the OCD, to judge the learners' collocations. Some studies did not

specify the register of their corpus (i.e. academic or spoken English) to the consulted native speakers to enable them to make judgements accordingly, whereas others lacked in-depth statistical investigations to determine which type of lexical collocations were more problematic for the learners. As a result, my review of relevant literature has led me to:

1. Add to the different research methods used in various studies (i.e. the BNC, collocational dictionaries and consultation with native speakers of English) to assess the acceptability of learners' collocational patterns (i.e. the acceptability-of-collocations survey). Therefore, one of the innovative features of the current study lies in the creation and utilisation of this survey.
2. Conduct a writing task in the participants' regular, scheduled classrooms during lecture times. They were instructed to write the essay individually, without using any kind of reference sources, e.g. dictionaries. Furthermore, no prior preparation time was given to perform the writing task (see 4.5.2 data collection procedure).
3. Judge the acceptability of the learners' collocational patterns according to native-like use of language and in particular academic, written English.
4. Use specific rigid criteria to classify learners' collocational patterns, which I subsumed under what I termed the 'scale of acceptability'.
5. Perform inferential statistics (i.e. independent sample t-test) to answer RQ1 and RQ4.

Chapter 4

Research Methodology

4.1 Introduction

The ultimate goal of this thesis is to conduct an in-depth investigation into Libyan undergraduate English major students' difficulties in the use of two types of lexical collocation (i.e. verb-noun and adjective-noun collocations) by examining their actual performance in an academic writing task. To this end, this chapter specifies the research methodology of my study. This included the following components which were introduced and explained: details of the participants, data collection methods including the written task (i.e. the main research method), the students' questionnaire, the teachers' questionnaire, the acceptability-of-collocations survey, the procedure for conducting the study, and finally, ethical issues.

The analytical framework, including both qualitative and quantitative methods of analysis which were used to analyse the data obtained from various research methods, is also described. The pilot study is presented in section 4.10. A discussion of the difficulties encountered in collecting and analyzing the data for the study is provided in sections 4.11 and 4.12 respectively. Finally, this chapter ends with a summary of the research methodology employed in my study.

4.2 The Study Participants

In the following sections, the participants of the study are introduced and explained according to the methods used for collecting data throughout the various stages of the research.

4.2.1 Participants in the Writing Task and the Student Questionnaire

The participants in the writing task consisted of 186 undergraduate EFL learners majoring in English at Tripoli University (the Department of English, Faculty of Arts). Of these, 90 were males and 96 were females, ranging in age between 21 and 23 years old. They were in their final year of a four year undergraduate degree programme. All of them had taken the same academic courses in their fourth academic year. The main reason for choosing these students was that they were more conversant with the English language as a result of being English majors and in their final year of a four-year university programme. Consequently, I considered them to have the highest level of proficiency of all Libyan students of English and could therefore be used as a benchmark for measuring all other Libyan students' facility with collocations in this department. They had been taught English through various subjects over a ten-year period (which is the required period to learn English in the Libyan educational system). Hence, I expected them to have the ability to write reasonably good quality academic English, i.e. at an IELTS level of 6.5 or higher.

All the participants were native speakers of Arabic, sharing the same Libyan nationality and culture. They were all studying English as a foreign language. English is a compulsory subject within the curriculum of preparatory and secondary education system in Libya. Hence, all of them had received classroom instruction in EFL for a period of at least 6 years by the time they enrolled at the university. Furthermore, the students were assessed as being at intermediate to lower-advanced level based on their mid-term exams.

Notably, of the 186 students described above, only 155 students (Males = 70, Females = 85) filled in the questionnaires.

4.2.2 Participants in the Lecturers' Questionnaire

Twelve lecturers were involved in this study based on the criterion of being people who were or had been teaching the following modules: composition, comprehension and / or conversation in English. The reason for this is that these modules are strongly related to teaching vocabulary in general and to collocations in particular rather than literature or phonetics.

4.2.3 Participants Involved in the Procedure of Selecting the Two Types of Lexical Collocation for Investigation

The participants were nine native speakers (senior English Language teachers at local language centres; teaching academic English to overseas students who are preparing to do either undergraduate or postgraduate degrees in UK universities). The centres were Manchester Language Centre, INTO Manchester, MMU English Language Centre, Courses@manchestercse Centre and EF Manchester Centre.

4.2.4 Participants in the Acceptability (of Collocations) Survey

The survey was administered to one-hundred native speakers of English. Seventy participants were students at the University of Huddersfield, (Department of Linguistics and Modern Languages). They were all doing a BA degree in English Language and Linguistics, a three year undergraduate degree programme. Twenty-nine were first-year students, twenty were second-year students and twenty-one were third-year students. The remaining thirty were students at Manchester Metropolitan University. They were a mix of first, second and third years and they

were doing BSc degrees in Physics, Psychology, Fashion Buying, Biomedical Science, Economics and Physiology.

A detailed description of the participants of the pilot study will be presented in section 4.10 below.

4.3 The Procedure for Selecting the Two Types of Lexical Collocation for Investigation

The purpose of this procedure was to confine and limit the focus of this research investigation to: (1) the two most frequent types of English lexical collocations appearing in the native speaker English teachers' essays, according to Benson et al.'s (1997) classification of word combinations, and (2) the most frequent collocates within those two most frequent types. Benson et al. (1997) made the distinction between two types of collocations: grammatical collocations and lexical collocations (for details on the classification, see the phraseological approach discussed in Chapter 2). This decision to examine the two most frequent types was tempered by time limitations.

I decided to employ a number of senior English Language teachers who were native-speakers to do the written task (i.e. a formal written essay on the theme of education with a topic selected from the IELTS test [see 4.4.1, for detailed information on the written task]). Choosing such teachers meant that the language produced was likely to be of high quality and free of errors. 'High quality' refers to high levels of clarity in terms of meaning and production in academic writing as used by highly educated native speakers in several different areas. One particularly important area in question is whether the writing is always on task. This is important for my study as the collocations are genre-specific consisting of key words and phrases often found in specific

kinds of academic writing – in this case, an opinion essay. Granger (1998:8) supports this view stating that the topic of a task creates a context which when expressed in different genres may lead to variation in writing style since “it affects lexical choice”. Another important area is grammatical and lexical accuracy. An excellent piece of writing should be error-free in terms of use of tense, articles, subject-verb agreement, and so on (for a definition of ‘error’ for the purpose of this study, see section 1.8). As for lexical accuracy, there would need to be evidence of appropriate word choice and form as well as great facility with collocations and idioms. Finally, high quality writing is reflected in the correct choice of style which would have to be appropriate for the genre¹¹ and sub-genre. In this case, genre refers to academic essays whereas sub-genre refers to a specific type of academic essay such as argumentative essays, cause and effect, problem-solution, compare-and-contrast and discursive essays. Such essays would have to be written in a very formal and concise style which involves, inter alia, appropriate choice of vocabulary and sentence structure.

4.3.1 Procedure for Obtaining Permission to Collect Data

The first step was to obtain permission from the Directors in each of my chosen language centres in order to conduct the research. Thus, I met the directors to present and discuss my research and the motivation behind it. Some directors gave me permission to conduct the study in their centres.

¹¹ Genres are forms of “communicative events” where participants share a set of communicative purposes. These purposes are recognized and accepted by the “expert members of the parent discourse community”, and therefore make up the conventions of the genre. These conventions shape the overall structure of the discourse and have an impact on the choice of content and language (Swales: 1990:58).

4.3.2 Data Collection Procedure

A copy of the writing task with the consent form along with my email address was given to the directors so that they could email them to their teachers to participate in the study. The study was conducted at the end of March, 2013; involving nine English Language teachers who were native-speakers in five different language centres (see 4.2.3, for participants' details). The teachers were asked to write an academic essay of 250 words with a 40-minute time limit on the following topic:

“Some people think that universities should provide graduates with the knowledge and skills needed in the workplace. Others think that the true function of a university should be to provide an education for its own sake, regardless of whether it is useful to an employer. What, in your opinion, should the main function of a university be?”

4.3.3 Data Analysis Procedure

In this section, I present and explain the various steps of analysis conducted in order to determine the two most frequent types of lexical collocations and the most frequent collocates within those two types in the native speaker's formal essays. Gass and Selinker's (2008) error analysis framework was adopted to analyse the native speakers' written data. Table 4.1 illustrates the six main steps conducted in the procedure of generating and analysing the data.

Table 4-1 Procedure for identifying the two most frequent types of lexical collocations in the native speaker English teachers' corpus

No.	Procedure of the analysis
1.	Data generation
2.	Identification of collocations: extracting native speakers' collocations

3.	Classification of collocations
4.	Quantification of collocations
5.	Identifying the two most frequent types of lexical collocations
6.	Identifying the most frequent collocates (i.e. lexical items) within those two types of lexical collocations

The procedure for analyzing the native speakers' essays consisted of the following stages:

After collecting the essays from the teachers by email, they were then coded and converted to plain text in order to be analyzed using Antconc 3.2.1w (Anthony, 2007) to indicate the frequency and the location of the collocations (see appendix 14 for a sample of the NS corpus). The code used at this stage was 01-13 where 01 refers to the number of the participant and 13 refer to the year in which the study was conducted. This was done in order to reserve the anonymity of the participants.

Concordance lines were then generated for every noun, verb, adjective and adverb appearing in the word list of the native speakers' academic written data (see appendix 14 for a sample), using the AntConc Concordance Tool. The following is an illustrative example of the concordance lines of the noun knowledge which I checked in order to identify its appearance in various types of lexical collocations.

1	as valued perhaps more than the fruit of	knowledge	Sadly, I recognize that this possibility gro
2	of physics, for example, this would entail	knowledge	knowledge and understanding of quantu
3	as an honorary institution, providing the	knowledge	of different religions, cultures and undisc
4	rent techniques and enhance theoretical	knowledge	Moreover, studying at a university shap
5	to advance in their chosen path, transfer	knowledge	from academic courses to relevant caree
6	nal, independent thought and lacks world	knowledge	he or she is unlikely to be a long-term as
7	e abilities to graduate with the breadth of	knowledge	knowledge needed to advance in their ch

All the concordance lines were analysed and checked manually line by line and all instances of lexical collocations were extracted from the native speakers' corpus. I used a) the online British

National Corpus (BNC) and b) the Oxford Collocations Dictionary (2009) to determine the identified collocations. They were then classified according to their types as proposed by Benson et al.'s (1997) classification of various types of lexical collocations, e.g. verb-noun, adverb-verb and so on.

I followed a similar procedure for extracting collocation patterns from the concordance lines throughout my research (for more details on this procedure, see section 4.7.1 and in particular points 3 and 4; and section 4.7.2).

The use of different types of lexical collocations was then recorded based on the raw count of lexical collocations from the participants' written data. This raw quantity of lexical collocations was further broken down into two sub-groups: the tokens of lexical collocations (i.e. frequency) and the types of lexical collocations (i.e. variety). 'Token' comprised all the collocations in the NS teachers' corpus whereas 'type' included every new lexical collocation without a repetition. It is worth mentioning that the concept of differentiating frequency/token from variety/type is not new (Stubbs, 2001; Hunston, 2002; Fox, 2003).

The next phase of the investigation entailed finding out the most frequent collocates (i.e. lexical items), after discovering the two most frequent types of lexical collocations. The frequency of all the collocating words, i.e. verbs and adjectives occurring as part of verb-noun and adjective-noun collocations was extracted, calculated and tabulated in a descending order according to their frequency in order to select some key words to be the focus in the main study.

Being a learner and a teacher of English Language in the Libyan educational system, I was able to make a judgment regarding which verbs and adjectives to use based on my own personal experience. However, to be more objective in my decision, the list was presented to three Libyan lecturers, two of whom were doing their PhD at Manchester Metropolitan University; indeed, one of these was doing her PhD on vocabulary. The third lecturer was in Libya and had been teaching in the English department at Tripoli University for more than 20 years. It is worth mentioning that the other lecturers had been teaching for more than fifteen years. They were asked to make a judgment on which verbs/adjectives were likely to be known to university year-four Libyan learners of English and which verbs/adjectives they were unlikely to be familiar with. The following section introduces the results.

4.3.4 Results from the Native Speaker English Teachers' Corpus

The size of the native speaker corpus was 3,428 words of varied essay length ranging from 250 to 539 words. Detailed information about the corpus written by English teachers is summarized in Table 4.2 below.

Table 4-2 Basic component data extracted from corpus of academic essays provided by native speaker English teachers

Components of NS corpus	Description
No. of writers	9
No. of essays	9
The range of essay length	250 to 539
Word tokens	3,428
Word Types	1,265
No. of nouns	343

No. of verbs ¹²	273
No. of adjectives	140
No. of adverbs	42

It was revealed that NS teachers used five types of lexical collocations as indicated in Table 4.3 below. The most frequent lexical collocation type was adjective-noun collocations. This is followed by verb-noun. Lewis (2000) refers to this particular combination as one of the most important types of lexical collocations. Table 4.3 below presents the findings of investigating the most frequent types of lexical collocation.

Table 4-3 The most frequent types of lexical collocation in native speaker English teachers' corpus

Type of lexical collocation	Examples	Raw frequency
Adjective-noun	higher education	155
Verb-noun	gain their qualifications	130
Adverb-adjective	highly successful	25
Noun-verb	research shows	10
Adverb-verb	deliberately teach	7
Total number of lexical collocations appearing in the corpus		327

Regarding the most frequent collocates (i.e. lexical items), there was a consensus that the most frequent top twelve verbs and adjectives were likely to be familiar to year-four Libyan students which agreed with my decision. The twelve highest frequency verbs were: *do, provide, acquire, gain, enhance, make, offer, take, give, get, have, require*; and the twelve highest frequency adjectives were: *good, academic, high, higher, modern, current, practical, specific, basic, general, great, special*. The verb shape, for instance, was in fifteenth place, which in my view these students may not be able to use as a collocational unit in their writing. Another example was

¹² 273 instances of main verbs appeared in the native speaker English teachers' corpus apart from be and modal auxiliary.

the adjective well-rounded which was one of the least frequent adjectives in the native speakers' list and they and I doubted whether the Libyan students would be familiar with this adjective. These findings are supported by Suwaed (2011) who investigated writing teachers' thoughts on teaching writing to Libyan students. Among the skills which the teachers found lacking in the students was the ability to convey meaning and use vocabulary. Therefore, the study will focus on investigating in depth these top twelve verbs and twelve adjectives as part of their verb-noun and adjective-noun collocations. Tables 4.4 and 4.5 indicate the frequency of the top twelve verbs (apart from BE and modal auxiliaries) and adjectives respectively in the native-speaker teachers' corpus.

Table 4-4 Overall frequencies of the top twelve verbs in verb-noun collocations in the native speaker English teachers' corpus

No.	Verbs	No. of occurrences
1.	Have	22
2.	Provide	18
3.	Make	15
4.	Do	13
5.	Require	11
6.	Take	10
7.	Give	7
8.	Offer	7
9.	Acquire	5
10.	Gain	4
11.	Enhance	3
12.	Get	2

Table 4-5 Overall frequencies of the top twelve adjectives in adjective-noun collocations in the native speaker English teachers' corpus

No.	Adjective	No. of occurrences
1.	Good	20
2.	High	18
3.	Practical	17
4.	Current	15
5.	Academic	13
6.	Specific	11
7.	Higher	10
8.	Modern	9
9.	Special	8
10.	Basic	7
11.	Great	5
12.	General	3

4.3.5 Summary

This section has presented and explained the procedure followed for selecting the two types of lexical collocation that I investigated. The analysis of the native speakers' academic written corpus revealed that NS teachers used five types of lexical collocation. The most frequent lexical collocation type was adjective-noun collocations, followed by verb-noun collocations. Concerning the most frequent collocates (i.e. lexical items), the results also showed that there was a consensus among the Libyan lecturers and this researcher that the most frequent top twelve verbs and adjectives were likely to be familiar to year-four Libyan students. The twelve highest frequency verbs were: *do, provide, acquire, gain, enhance, make, offer, take, give, get, have, require*; and the twelve highest frequency adjectives were: *good, academic, high, higher, modern, current, practical, specific, basic, general, great, special*. Therefore, the focus of this research is on the learners' (i.e. Libyan students) use of verb-noun and adjective-noun collocations in their academic written English. Additionally, the analysis is limited to their use of the above-

mentioned twelve highest frequency verbs and adjectives as part of verb-noun and adjective-noun collocations respectively.

4.4 Data Collection Methods

Crotty (2003:3) defines data collection methods as “the techniques or procedures used to gather and collect data related to some research questions or hypotheses”. A description of the various methods used to collect data is presented in the following section.

4.4.1 The Written Task

The written task is aimed at assessing the Libyan learners’ competence at producing English lexical collocations in naturally occurring discourse in order to gain insights into the difficulties they encountered when using them. The task is a formal written essay on the theme of education with a topic selected from the International English Language Testing System (hereafter IELTS) test. The topic was taken from the IELTS (Cambridge ESOL, 2009:102) exam for a number of reasons: a) it is considered by British universities to be reliable as a standard international proficiency test and is a requirement for entry to most UK universities; b) the writing tasks are of a reasonable level of difficulty as the students’ English proficiency level is intermediate to lower-advanced; and c) no specific knowledge is needed by students to write about the topic. On this note, Namvar et al. (2012) state that an important consideration in choosing a topic is the degree to which the topic is anticipated to stimulate learners to produce collocations. To achieve this aim, Namvar et al, (2012:15) selected a topic which was related to the students’ cultural background and appealed to their personal experiences, obviating the need for specific knowledge of the topic. Hence, my topic was specifically chosen for its strong association with the students

as they are university students. For this reason, I hoped that they would be able to perform to the best of their ability. The topic was:

How do you think universities should educate their students? Should they provide knowledge and skills that students will need to use when they start work OR should they simply aim to make students more knowledgeable regardless of whether it is useful for their future careers?

To reiterate, the essay was set to enable me to measure the frequency of collocations and collocational errors made by EFL learners in a piece of formal academic writing and to investigate collocational patterns in their written production in order to determine their difficulties in using English collocations.

4.4.2 The Acceptability (of Collocations) Survey

The purposes of constructing and designing the survey were: a) to triangulate the three methods used to evaluate and determine the acceptability of learners' collocational patterns and to confirm the judgments made, and b) to answer the following research question (RQ4): Is there a significant difference between native speaker ratings of English language learner collocations in academic as opposed to non-academic contexts? Native speaker differences in their assessment of collocations produced by English language learners were evaluated according to their impressions of acceptability in either an academic or non-academic context.

The survey included 80 extracts taken from the learners' erroneous use of both verb-noun and adjective-noun collocations. The assessment of these collocational patterns as erroneous was made in reference to the Oxford Collocational Dictionary, the BNC and consultations with two

native speakers. There were 72 extracts containing approximately three examples of each investigated word (verbs and adjectives). In addition, the remaining eight extracts contained learners' acceptable collocational patterns. They were:

item 8 - *acquire knowledge*,

item 10 - *general information*,

item 25 - *offer good information and higher education*,

item 46 - *good students*,

item 51 - *provide only theoretical general courses*,

item – 65 *has a strong and special effect*,

item 67 - *specific skills*

and item 69 - *take an intensive course*.

The procedure for taking three examples of each search word was deemed feasible since the learner corpus was coded and the concordance lines of each investigated word were grouped. For example, I grouped the concordance lines of the verb provide under the title results of the verb provide (see point 2 in section 4.7.1 for details). The learners' collocational patterns were presented in the survey in their actual concordance lines after modifying them (see pilot study). The collocational patterns were underlined so that the participants could focus on rating them. A six-point scale survey was used for rating the learners' collocational patterns. Furthermore, the survey was divided into two versions: the first version had an introduction which indicated that the learners' phrases should be rated 'according to what you feel a native speaker would use in an academic essay'. However, in the second version no statement was given in regard to rating the

learners' phrases according to academic English (see appendix 12 and 13 for the academic and non-academic rating surveys). A short introduction, including instructions, was placed at the beginning of the survey.

4.4.3 The Rationale for Using Questionnaires in the Study

In addition to the survey, two supportive research instruments were employed: a) a students' questionnaire and b) a lecturers' questionnaire. The aim of using questionnaires was to use them to help interpret, explain and discuss the findings obtained from the writing task. In addition, they could potentially shed light on how collocations are taught in Libyan classrooms, since there is a scarcity of research in the Libyan context investigating this linguistic phenomenon. Furthermore, it was felt that questionnaires were an effective means of enhancing the discussion of the writing task results because they could potentially provide hypotheses to explain the learners' difficulties with English lexical collocations (Abdaoui, 2010; Ahmed, 2011; Tsai, 2011). However, they could not be used linguistically to assess the students' collocational knowledge.

Dörnyei (2003:8-9) states that questionnaires can yield three types of data about their respondents: factual information, such as age and gender, behavioural information such as personal history, and attitudinal information such as beliefs and opinion. More importantly, Dörnyei (2007:103) argues that "questionnaire items do not have good or bad answers: they elicit information about the respondents in a non-evaluative manner, without gauging their performance against a set of criteria".

However, there are also disadvantages of using questionnaires as a means of compiling data in research studies. As Gillham (2000:9) argues, “a fundamental problem is that questionnaires are often completed hastily and carelessly”. As a result the quality of the data can be inaccurate.

Dörnyei goes on to suggest some different sources of problems. Firstly, the subjects may have difficulty in understanding the questions. Secondly, the ‘halo effect’ may come into play. Dörnyei (2003:13) explains the halo effect viz: “[t]he halo effect concerns the tendency to overgeneralize. If your overall impression of a person or a topic is positive, we may be disinclined to say anything less than positive about them even if it comes to specific details”. Thirdly, the length of the questionnaire can be problematic as filling in a long questionnaire can cause the respondents to become fatigued and bored; the quality of the data can also be affected.

Taking the above issues into account, I piloted my questionnaires before using them in the main study (see section 4.10.2 and 4.10.3). While conducting the main study, I translated the unclear questions into Arabic in order to avoid the confusion of using a non-native language. This enabled the students to gain sufficient understanding of the questions. In terms of avoiding the halo effect in the main study, I informed the participants that their answers are important to my research and that they have to answer every single question as accurately, honestly and precisely as possible. Taking all the above into consideration, I believe that the questionnaires are appropriate, and valuable research methods for data collection in the current study.

4.4.4 The Students’ Questionnaire

The students’ questionnaire was designed to gain information about the participants’ knowledge and learning of collocations. Closed and open-ended questions are the two major kinds of

questionnaire questions (Dörnyei, 2007, 2010; Ruane, 2005). I used these two question types in conjunction with multiple-choice questions in composing the questionnaire (see appendix 8), which consisted of two sections. The first section was designed to elicit background information on the students such as age and years of studying English. In the second section, eight questions were designed to discover the participants' collocational knowledge from different angles. A variety of closed-ended questions were used where the respondents had to tick a box (choosing the most appropriate answer) such as 'Which type of dictionary do you use?'

An English-English dictionary	<input type="checkbox"/>
An English- Arabic dictionary	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other (please specify)	<input type="checkbox"/>

In addition, some open-ended-questions were also composed and used as follow-up questions, e.g. which one of the above dictionaries do you prefer to use and why? This question was designed to discover whether students were aware of the importance of using a collocational dictionary beside other types of dictionaries. It is worth mentioning that the selection of questions in this questionnaire was based on the assumption that these questions could elicit information about the participants' backgrounds, i.e. how they had been learning vocabulary and collocations in particular and also how they had been taught these.

4.4.5 The Lecturers' Questionnaire

The teachers' questionnaire consists of two sections. The first part aims to elicit background information on the lecturers, such as the degree or other qualifications they possess. The second part aims to elicit information about learners' knowledge of collocations and the teaching methods adopted by lecturers in teaching collocations (see appendix 9). Closed-ended, open-

ended and multiple-choice questions are the main types of question in this questionnaire (see appendix 9 for the complete version of the questionnaire). The closed-ended questions contain two types: yes-no questions and multiple-choice items where the respondents can tick more than one option. In many instances, the open-ended question was designed to complement the yes/no question to elicit elaborated answers and gain an in-depth understanding of the lecturers' awareness of this linguistic phenomenon.

It is important to mention that the questionnaires' design and construction went through several phases of editing and revising to ensure that every question served a specific aim to enable me to gain a greater understanding of the phenomenon under investigation.

To sum up, the concept and format underlying the questions in the questionnaire were adopted from a previous study which examined the role of teaching collocations in raising foreign language writing proficiency. Abdaoui (2010) utilized questionnaires to elicit information regarding the respondents' use of lexical collocation. It should be noted that the questions in this study were not exactly the same as those used in my research, which was conducted in a different teaching context with considerably different purposes. Information regarding the piloting of the questionnaires and their final versions will be presented in section 4.10.

4.5 Implementation and Procedure for Conducting the Study

My study was conducted in two stages; 1) making preparations and gaining permission for data collection, and 2) the actual data collection stage. I will now discuss the steps and procedures involved in organising and conducting this research.

4.5.1 Preparations and Permission for Collecting the Data

In order to conduct the research at Tripoli University, I met the head of the English department to present and discuss the research and asked for all the schedules of the lecturers who were teaching writing, conversation, comprehension and composition for fourth year student classes. Having discussed my research with the writing professor and showed him the writing task, he allowed me to take a lecture period in order to conduct my study. In addition, I asked him whether the task was appropriate for the level of participants and obtained a positive answer. However, the professor cautioned that in general the writing level of fourth year students was not high enough to suit this stage of education (final year English students) due to many reasons. One reason was that the students in general do not do extensive reading and this can affect their background knowledge. Also students are not given the opportunity to develop their writing skills through long essay assignments, as they are only tested through exams. Finally, the recent political situation in the country has obviously had a negative effect on the continuity of the learning process (El-Aswad, 2014; personal communication).

4.5.2 Data Collection Procedure: The Actual Data Collection Stage

The data were collected during the first semester of the academic year 2013-2014 at Tripoli University, Libya.

The first set of data was collected on 17th December 2013 from a written task. Both I and a lecturer were present at the time of conducting the study. The participants were informed of the purpose behind the written tasks, that they would be part of my ongoing PhD research and that their participation carried no risk to their academic aspirations. The participants were also

informed that an information participant sheet would be distributed after they had finished (see appendix 6). After asking the participants to sign a consent form to show approval of their agreement (see appendix 5), they were told that they had the right to withdraw at any time. They were then instructed to write an essay of 250 words within 45 minutes (see appendix 7). The participants had no prior preparation time to perform the writing task. Each student was given instructions to write the essay individually, without any further discussion and without dictionaries. They were also asked to retain anonymity by not writing their names on the task sheets. Instead they were asked to write the allocated codes that were already prepared on individual desks. While the students were performing the writing task, I checked whether they were sitting at the desk with the right code, with 1 being the code for males and 2 for females. The whole code set was, for example, 1.055, in which 1 refers to male participant and 055 refers to the number of the participant. Furthermore, I explained the topic to the students in both English and Arabic as some students were not clear on how carry out the task.

The second set of data was taken from the students' questionnaires. The questionnaire was administered on the same day as the writing task due to time restrictions. The participants were asked to complete the questionnaire in class following the end of the writing task. They were given ten minutes to rest while I distributed the questionnaires. They were informed that the time allowed to fill in the questionnaire was 15 minutes and that they had to do it individually. In addition, they were asked to complete the questionnaire anonymously as it was felt that they would be honest in their answers if they did not have to divulge their names. The participants were asked to reflect on their own experiences and give their opinions without fear or

embarrassment clouding their response. It is important to indicate that of the 186 participants only 155 completed the questionnaires. Additionally, although the consent forms, information participant sheet and questionnaires were not presented to informants in an Arabic version, I made sure that I explained them in Arabic after the participants had an opportunity to read them. Also, before the students started filling in the questionnaires I explained what is meant by collocations and gave them some examples. I asked them in Arabic to look at the questions and if they did not understand, I could answer their queries in order to consolidate their understanding.

The third set of data was from the lecturers' questionnaire. The questionnaire was distributed to 20 lecturers in the English department at Tripoli University. They were asked to answer the questionnaires in their spare time and return it the following day. Of the 20 lecturers given a questionnaire only 12 responded.

The final set of data was from the survey administered to 100 native speakers of English. The first step in conducting the survey was to obtain permission from the lecturers to perform the study during their lectures and schedule the times with them. The survey was conducted on 23rd and 25th February and 5th March, 2015 in the participants' regular scheduled classrooms during lecture times. The first data collection was conducted with first year university students, the second collection with second years, and the third with third years. Each group was divided into two groups randomly¹³: the first group was assigned to the survey that required them to indicate their ratings according to the demands of academic writing, while the second group was given the

¹³ The random procedure was done with RANDOM.ORG – True Random Service at <http://www.random.org>

same survey but without the instructions concerning academic writing. This two-version survey was conducted to discover whether academic writing has an influence over native speakers' judgment. The survey was administered at the beginning of the participants' lectures in the presence of their lecturers. They were asked for their consent to take part in the study. Similar instructions and information were given to them regarding their anonymity, purpose of the survey, the right to withdraw, timing and instructions for rating (for details, please see section 4.10.2 piloting the survey). Since the classes were a mix of native and non-native students, it was explained that the survey was only aimed at native speakers and was not discriminatory. In addition, the last collection was conducted with MMU students in the library on 6th March 2015. I followed the same procedure and explained the above when conducting the study.

4.6 Ethical Issues

Simons (1995: 436 cited in Pring, 2000:142) defines ethics as the “search for rules of conduct that enable us to operate defensibly in the political contexts in which we have to conduct educational research”. Chilisa (2005:675) emphasizes the importance of anonymity for respondents to ease any feelings of anxiety which requires researchers to protect “the researched from physical, mental, and/or psychological harm”. Thus, as Robson (2006) argues, it is incumbent on the researcher to ensure that all ethical issues are addressed. “Control over what people do obviously has a moral dimension. Ethical dilemmas lurk in any research involving people” (Robson, 2006:66).

I considered several issues while conducting my research according to the ethical guidelines recommended by the British Association for Applied Linguistics (BAAL). For example, I

informed the participants of the aim of my study, their right to withdraw at any time, the purpose of the consent form, the fact that their anonymity would be protected, the reason behind their selection and the fact that their data would be used for research purposes only. I also made clear that some of their data would be used anonymously in discussing and presenting the results in the thesis. It should be noted that the anonymity of participants was preserved at every stage of the research to avoid any stress or worry that disclosure might cause them.

As for storage and use of data, to comply with the legalities, participants were informed that their data would be stored securely and could only be accessed by myself and my supervisors. Furthermore, they were informed that the data would be disposed of on completion of the thesis.

4.7 Analytical Framework for the Writing Task

This section presents and describes in detail the various steps of this phase of analysis conducted in order to extract the learners' collocational patterns to be investigated to achieve the aims of the study. In this study, Gass and Selinker's (2008) error analysis framework was adopted to analyse the learners' collocational patterns. Table 4.6 illustrates the main steps conducted in the procedure of generating and analysing the data.

Table 4-6 Procedure for error analysis in the present study

No.	Procedure of the analysis
1.	Data generation
2.	Identification of collocations: extracting learners' collocational patterns
3.	Classification of collocations and collocational errors
4.	Quantification of collocations and collocational errors

5.	Triangulation methods used to judge the acceptability of the participants' collocational patterns
6.	Conducting inferential statistics (independent samples t-test)
7.	Analysis of sources of collocational errors
8.	Pedagogical implications

4.7.1 Data Generation

1. After collecting the handwritten essays from the participants, they were then coded (see table 4.7 for an example of the used code), word processed and converted to plain text. While typing out the essays, I corrected only the spelling mistakes in order to ensure that all the investigated words appeared when searching for them. I analyzed them using AntConc 3.2.1w (Anthony, 2007) to identify the location and frequency of the collocations.

Table 4-7 Example of the coding applied to the participants' essays

Code	Explanation
Code of first essay: 01-02-13	01 refers to the number of the participant
	02 refers to gender (1 being for male and 2 for female)
	13 refers to the year in which the study was conducted

2. Concordance lines were then generated with each selected verb and adjective as the key words through the use of the AntConc Concordance Tool. Since each verb has different forms (the grammatical inflections of the same verb), it was necessary to search for and generate concordance lines for each one of these inflected forms for each one of the twelve investigated

verbs, e.g. the lemma¹⁴ of the verb provide has the following forms provide, provides, provided and providing. The next step was to save and lemmatize the results for these concordance lines under the title results of the verb provide.

3. The concordance lines were generated for each investigated adjective (i.e. only the lemma, e.g. good or academic and not the comparative and superlative forms). Then, the raw frequency of the investigated verbs and adjectives was calculated and tabulated in descending ranking order.

4. Regarding the employed span width, I used ± 5 span to take account of any cases where there might be pre-modification patterns (including articles, prepositions, and so on) of the collocating nouns, which may occur either after or before the key-word (i.e. verb/adjective). On this note, Groom (2009:26) points out that the proponents of the category-based approach proposed by Nesselhauf (2005) criticized the frequency-based approach (using span) because it confined its analysis to a small range of text. For example, this will result in overlooking cases featuring long-range dependencies (Howarth, 1996). Groom (2009:26) goes on to argue that these criticisms have not demonstrated that “such long-range dependencies” are typical. Neither have they shown that they appear in large enough cases to raise valid questions concerning research findings based on shorter spans. However, since I conducted manual analysis in extracting collocations, it was possible to search for the collocates in case they did not appear in the searching span.

¹⁴ A lemma is the base form of a word. Many words in English have a number of different word-forms, for instance, “the verb to give has the forms give, gives, given, gave, giving and to give. So ‘the word give’ can mean either (i) the four letters g, i, v, e or (ii) the six forms listed above” (Sinclair, 1991:173).

5. The distribution of all the searched words (i.e. number of texts containing each search verb and adjective) were examined by using the AntConc Concordance Plot Tool¹⁵ as can be seen in the figure (4-1) below. Since frequencies of (co-)occurrences “in isolation may sometimes be misleading since they do not take into consideration the degree of dispersion of the relevant linguistic variable” (Gries, 2008:403), I set a limit of 20 students using each search verb and adjective in their essays to be included in the analysis to ensure that different students were using them. The results were calculated and tabulated.

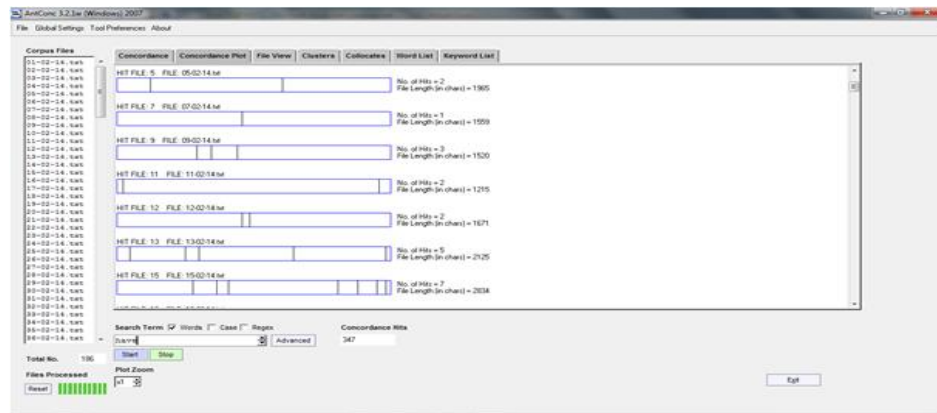


Figure 4-1 Sample of the concordance plot of the verb ‘provide’ in the LLC

¹⁵ This tool offers the same search characteristics to the Concordance Tool. However, the results are presented slightly different. In addition, it gives a clear idea of the distribution of the investigated word within and across the files (Anthony, 2014).

4.7.2 Identification of Learners' Collocations: Extracting Learners' Collocational Patterns

This step of the analysis included going through the concordance lines; all the verbs and adjectives not occurring in verb-noun and adjective-noun collocations were excluded from the study and highlighted in yellow¹⁶. The following are illustrative examples:

The verb 'do' was excluded from the analysis if it was used as an auxiliary verb as in the following:

In this study we are going to talk about how do we think university should educate their student?
Arabic, Spanish and French. These subjects does not have academic library to provide the student
to change in our study programme. That 6.nts did not acquire for some skills. The teachers did

Or if 'do' is not part of verb-noun collocation as in the following:

for giving awareness to our theme. If we did it this way at learning and provides it
. In my opinion universities should do more than just educate students, it is key that

'Have' was excluded because it was used as an auxiliary or modal auxiliary verb as follows:

increase his practical side of the knowledge he has learnt throughout the university years. This i
me summarize what I have written. First, I have had written about how universities must great

'Get' was excluded as it was part of an idiom as in the following:

¹⁶ The method of coding was done to aid recognition of the verbs /adjectives which are and are not part of the investigation, e.g. the items coded in yellow are judged as being not part of the collocations, in addition, to make the calculation stage easier. It is worth noting that more codes will be introduced in the following sections, for example, the collocations coded in green are judged as acceptable, the ones in blue as partially acceptable and the ones in red as unacceptable.

in our country our education does not get it either, neither our schools nor our
 need on their work help them to get ready for work without facing many problems

Similarly, ‘take’ was excluded as it was followed by a pronoun (no clear noun collocates) such as in the following:

in the school and lovely the students “children” takes what they dream job in the future, then
 b work in my college if we have of course we will take it. Another thing in general we haven’t

The verbs ‘require’ and ‘offer’ in the following concordance lines were excluded because they were used as an adjective and a noun respectively:

colleges in Libya don’t have the required skills that make the able or ready to
 choose the most appropriate place to give the required knowledge and skills. Many students go to
 general points to choose a special and specific offer .We one using general way at education for
 First of all the universities should give induced offer that students get it to prove and enhance their s

The adjective ‘general’ was excluded from the analysis when learners used it in the idiomatic expression ‘in general’ as in the following:

about it, also it is a modern way in writing. In general it is considered to be the first thing the w
 theory subject helps to gain more vocabulary. In general the education in the universities is improve
 universities is improve the top and teaches in general . English education in general is not difficult
 top and teaches in general. English education in general is not difficult but in university the doctors hav

Adjectives were excluded from the investigation when they were used in other different types of collocations, e.g. using ‘good’ in grammatical collocation such as adjective-preposition or in other cases when there was no noun collocates. The following are illustrative examples:

very good doctors and all things is not good for me. I look like we should learning
come to the school and this is very good because after day this foreign language will

Some instances of the adjective ‘modern’ were also excluded since there was no modifying noun in the searched span as in the following:

odel which we see today is not that great neither modern and it should be changed in ways that meets ou

I then counted these occurrences and subtracted them from the raw frequency. By doing so I had the overall frequency of the collocations in the learner corpus which were double checked later. Consequently, the focus of the next stage of analysis was on the concordance lines containing learners’ collocations only.

4.7.3 Classification of Collocations and Collocational Errors

The criteria and steps used in this analytical phase of classification will be introduced and explained in the two following sections. A sample of illustrative examples will then be given to show how these criteria were applied to the participants’ collocational patterns.

The assessment of the participants’ collocations was executed in relation to native speakers’ production and use (naturalness), particularly in an academic context as this study was mainly focused on analysing the participants’ (Libyan EFL learners) collocations in academic written English. In addition, the term erroneous collocation refers not only to the wrong production of collocation i.e. where the two components of collocation do not go together (which can be comprehensible, yet, still not comply with native speaker convention), but also refers to the

inappropriate usage of collocation in this particular context (i.e. academic register) as some of the participants' collocational patterns were deemed fairly acceptable in spoken language. In this vein, McCarthy and O'Dell (2005:4) point out that learners can sound strange to the native speaker when they say, for instance, “‘making your homework’ or ‘my uncle is a very high man’”. Both of these phrases can be partially understood in context but they represent the kind of language which sounds “unnatural and might perhaps confuse”.

1. Methods and Criteria Used to Judge the Acceptability of Learners' Collocational Patterns

it is important to highlight that the analysis was restricted to the academic register on the basis of native speaker (NS) production and use (naturalness) in this particular context, thus, some of the collocation patterns which were rated as academically unacceptable (i.e. too informal) might be viewed as acceptable in spoken language.

Four methods were used to evaluate and determine the acceptability of the collocations: a) the online British National Corpus (BNC), b) the Oxford Collocations Dictionary (2009)¹⁷, c) consultations with two native speakers (a senior English Language teacher¹⁸ and an ordinary native speaker - for detailed information about the use of these methods, see point 3 below concerning the sample of the analysis and applying the criteria to the learners' collocational

¹⁷ For more information on the BNC and the Oxford Collocations Dictionary please see glossary.

¹⁸ The teacher was a senior language tutor at the University of Manchester. He had more than 40 years teaching experience in the fields of TEFL and TESL. He possessed a Masters degree in Applied Linguistics from the University of Wales and also an RSA Diploma in TESL. He has taught in Malaysia at both secondary and tertiary levels and in the UAE (Zayed University). At Manchester, he currently works on various programmes such as teacher training (Trinity Certificate), Erasmus, Gateway (General English), and pre-Sessional courses (EAP).

patterns), and d) the acceptability-of-collocations survey which was administered to native speakers of English in order to triangulate the judgements made according to the three methods.

The BNC was used in this study as a reference source for a number of reasons: The BNC is a wide-ranging and representative reference corpus of modern British English (Hoffmann et al., 2008: 27-45). Additionally, it is “the best corpus of general English currently freely accessible to researchers” (Siyanova and Schmitt, 2008:235). However, for the purposes of this study, the BNC harbours a particular weakness as it poses difficulties when searching for collocations in terms of extracting variations in inflections, changes in the organisation of some constituents, as well as in types of determiner, or in terms of inserting modifiers (Wang and Shaw, 2000:209). Therefore, this weakness was overcome by employing the above-mentioned methods (i.e. the OCD [2009], consultations with two native speakers and the acceptability survey). Furthermore, the choice of using the Oxford Collocational Dictionary was based on the fact that it is a prominent collocational dictionary which consists of 250,000 collocations of 9000 headwords (nouns, verbs and adjectives) (Francis and Poole, 2009). However, a drawback of collocational dictionaries is that they are incomprehensive in the sense that they do not list every possible collocate of a certain word. Finally, the decision to consult native speakers was based on their ability to analyse and assess contemporary language structure and to evaluate any collocations which might have escaped detection by means of the other two methods. Furthermore, native speakers’ intuition is the only up-to-date source, which can evaluate the acceptability of learners’ collocations according to the conventions of their contemporary speech community. The native speakers’

intuition refers to conventionality as a component in defining collocations in this study (for further details on these components, see section 2.5).

The use of the OCD (2009) and the BNC was as follows: the learners' collocational patterns were first sought in the OCD by looking up the entries for each investigated verb and adjective. This was done in order to examine whether the collocating word appearing in the participants' collocational pattern was listed among the options combined with this specific verb / adjective in the dictionary. If this search failed, then I looked up the entries for the noun used in the learners' collocation to search the options listed in the verb / adjective entries; this was done in order to check whether the investigated verb / adjective was included. In addition, the search in the BNC was confined to the academic prose (written restrictions). Again, this was done by going through the concordance lines and exploring the collocations and collocates of every searched verb / adjective in order to check whether the learners' used collocational patterns or similar collocations (i.e. considering the use of different determiners or modifiers) were listed.

Nesselhauf (2003:230) uses the following ratings "C (correct), W (wrong), or CW for 'not sure' or 'ok', but not the best way to say it", when asking the native speakers to judge the acceptability of learners' combination. This stage of analysis has two weaknesses: First, by constructing a scale based on correct and wrong concepts, this application clearly disregards interpreting collocations according to their 'degree of likelihood' (Lewis, 1997) which means that native speaker intuition is key in judging whether a certain collocation is likely to be common in English. According to Lewis, there exists "a spectrum between pairs of words which we expect to find together and words which we are surprised to find together" (1997:29). In short, collocation is not a logical or

rule-based phenomenon but occurs through ‘linguistic convention’ (for a detailed discussion on this see Chapter 2). Second, she does not define clear criteria for each option on her scale to place and classify learners’ collocational patterns accordingly. The “C (correct)” clearly refers to native speaker usage, however, for the scale rating “W (wrong)” and “CW for ‘not sure’ or ‘ok’” the criteria are not defined and distinguished for the collocations to be classified. In addition, “CW for ‘not sure’ or ‘ok’” is vague; that is to say, no clear distinction is found in CW as the expression ‘not sure’ cannot be equated with ‘OK’. Finally and most importantly, since the scope of the investigation is English written production by advanced learners of English, clear and rigid criteria should be set for judgment in terms of academic Standard English. Therefore, I devised an improved version of the scale with clearly defined criteria for each degree of acceptability. This will be discussed and explained in great detail in the following part.

I further decided to classify verb-noun collocations and adjective-noun collocations according to certain criteria which were based on native-like use of language and in particular academic written English, which I have devised and subsumed under what I term the ‘scale of acceptability’¹⁹. On this note, Lewis (1997:29) indicates that collocation is ‘arbitrary’ as indicated in Chapter 2. The following table illustrates the criteria which represent three degrees of acceptability:

¹⁹ According to Howarth (1998) and Nesselhauf (2003), the term acceptability was adopted to indicate the degree to which a collocation conforms to native speaker usage, taking into account the context in which it occurs. In my view, this term is more suitable than others used in earlier research (e.g. commonness) to illustrate EFL learners’ production which is often relatively uncommon in English language.

Table 4-8 The scale of acceptability

Degree of acceptability	Example	Error type
Acceptable	make a big difference	N/A
partially acceptable	make big difference	grammatical error: determiner (a)
Unacceptable	do a difference	lexical errors: verb (do)

As can be seen from the above table, acceptable refers to native-like use. Native-like use was assessed by using the above-mentioned methods to judge the acceptability of collocations extracted from the learner corpus in context, taking into consideration the four components, i.e. grammaticality, substitutability, semantics and conventionality, which join to form collocations (see section 2.5 for detailed information). The decision is based on whether a given collocation is a) acceptable, b) partially acceptable or c) unacceptable (for further information on how those terms are used in the current research please see section 1.8). In addition, judgments of degrees of acceptability of collocations were based on viewing them as a whole, i.e. by examining the complementation pattern of the noun or the ways in which it was pre-modified (Nesselhauf, 2003:230) (see section 2.5 for detailed information). The collocations were evaluated as acceptable if they were found in the OCD dictionary and / or if they occurred not less than five times in different texts in the BNC, and if they were identical (including articles and prepositions) to native speakers' use as assessed by the two consulted native speakers. Lyons (1968:137) asserts that they are "[acceptable if] produced by a native speaker in some appropriate context and is or would be accepted by other native speakers as belonging to the language in question". 'Partially acceptable' means that the components of a given collocation (i.e. node and collocate) are acceptable and collocate within a span which is deemed acceptable, but the grammatical structure in which it is encased is incorrect. The partially acceptable scale option ignores the

possibility of perfect grammar yet the combination is still unusual according to the acceptable scale option. For example, **take a part in something* is only partially acceptable as there is a grammatical error, which is a superfluous determiner. Another example would be **my general knowing is poor*, which shows that the correct root word has been selected (know) but the wrong word form is used which also constitutes a grammatical error (use of participle instead of noun). Unacceptable means non-native-like use such as **high man*. It is worth mentioning that this area is different from partially acceptable in that the conventions of combining the words in a certain way are not used, e.g. **strong smoker* instead of *heavy smoker*. The native speaker may understand it but would not use it.

It is worth mentioning that the collocations which were judged as not acceptable on the basis of the first two criteria were introduced with enough context (i.e. co-text, and paragraph) in which they occurred to native speakers. Providing enough contexts for learners' collocational patterns for native-speakers was actually important in the analysis for many reasons: 1) to ascertain the intended meaning which the learners wanted to express, 2) to help provide the suggested acceptable combinations, and 3) to enable identification of the types of errors within the erroneous collocation. On this note, Corder (1973a:273) explains that “[a]ny identification of error necessarily involves interpretation in the context”.

The area of partial acceptability is related to grammar deviation, whereas the area of acceptability and unacceptability is related mainly to lexical accuracy where the learner can show whether or not s/he has learned the collocation as a semantic unit which contains the acceptable combination

of words. This was done in an effort to gain a better understanding of the learners' verb-noun and adjective-noun collocational patterns.

2. Criteria for Classifying Learners' Collocational Errors

According to Brown (2000:222), a way to describe errors would be “errors of addition, omission, substitution and ordering, following standard mathematical categories”. Thus, I used the following criteria to classify each error type:

1. missing entity, which refers to the absence of an item that must appear in a well-formed utterance;
2. superfluous word (addition), as in the presence of an item that does not appear to be needed in a well-formed utterance;
3. wrong word (substitution), which refers to the use of a wrong item where another one should be used; or
4. wrong word order, as is the case when items are put in the wrong sequence.

In addition, it is necessary to distinguish between these error types and further classify them as lexical errors in terms of wrong choice of the verb, e.g. **got awareness* instead of *have an awareness of*, or grammatical errors as in missing qualifier, e.g. **get rain* instead of *get enough rain* respectively. On this note, Brown (2000:222) explains that “within each category, levels of language can be considered: phonology, orthography, the lexicon, grammar and discourse”. The error-type classification framework was originally adopted from Nesselhauf's study (2003) to be used as a guide for analysing the collocational errors and also to familiarize myself with the

nature of the collocational errors committed by EFL learners. The following table (4.9) presents Nesselhauf's error analysis framework.

Table 4-9 Nesselhauf's error analysis framework (2003)

Type of mistake
Verb: Wrong choice of verb (or non-existent verb)
Noun: Wrong choice of noun (or non-existent noun)
Preposition (verb): Preposition of a prepositional verb missing, or present albeit unacceptable, or wrong
Preposition (noun): Preposition of a noun missing, present albeit unacceptable, or wrong
Determiner: Article or pronoun missing, present albeit unacceptable or wrong
Number: Noun used in the singular instead of the plural or vice versa
Structure: Syntactic structure wrong
Usage1: Combination exists but is not used correctly
Usage2: Combination does not exist and cannot be corrected by exchanging single elements

In addition, regarding stylistic error (register), Balhouq (1982:132-133) argues that in terms of register, we may treat lexical words which do not suit “the criteria of field of discourse, mode of discourse and style of discourse as inappropriate”. Therefore, collocations which did not comply with the formal register of academic writing were classified as partially acceptable. Although they are acceptable in the sense that they do collocate, they are erroneous as they “... are not appropriate in the context in which they occur” (Corder, 1973a: 272-273).

3. Sample Analysis Applying the Above-mentioned Criteria to the Learners' Collocational Patterns

Here, examples are introduced that demonstrate how I applied the above-mentioned criteria to classifying and judging the acceptability of collocations and classifying the collocational errors occurring in the LLC.

The verb-noun collocational pattern *acquire knowledge and skills* was judged as acceptable since the verb 'acquire' was said to be acceptable when combining with 'knowledge' and 'skills' in the Oxford Collocational Dictionary and also in the BNC.

ds can make teachers' job easier to make students **acquire knowledge and skills**. The importance of education

In the collocational pattern *gets a good marks*, 'get' and 'marks' do collocate, however, in this instance there was a grammatical error which was classified as superfluous determiner (indefinite article). Accordingly, this collocation was judged as partially acceptable.

important role and gives a higher rank when a learner **gets a good marks** and in which gives hints on how much

The collocation *take information* in the following concordance line was judged as unacceptable, because no indication was found in the two searched sources that 'take' goes with 'information'. In addition, the collocation appeared not to express the intended meaning in this context. Thus the suggested acceptable collocation which would have conveyed the precise meaning was *obtain*

information. Therefore, the collocational error in this pattern was classified as lexical error: wrong choice of verb.

work because students study in the university to **take information** help them in their works in the futur

After finishing this stage, the native speakers were consulted. They were asked to evaluate the acceptability of all the combinations in the LLC. They were provided with enough context to aid their deliberations, according to the scale of acceptability above. In addition, they were also asked to double check the work done on the basis of the collocational dictionary and BNC. They were asked if they agreed with the judgement to put 'yes' and in the case of disagreement to write their suggestions. The next phase of examination entailed comparing the similarity and differences between native speakers' judgements and the work done on the basis of the two searched sources and making some modifications accordingly.

4.7.4 Quantification of Collocations and Collocational Errors

There were some further considerations to take into account when identifying verb-noun collocations and adjective-noun collocations. First, in terms of frequency, adjectives in adjective-noun combinations were treated as separate entities. Each one is different even when several are used together to modify a noun; for example, the frequency of good, practical skills is calculated as two occurrences; once for the adjective 'good' and second for 'practical'. On the other hand, with regard to verb-noun collocations, verbs are treated as separate but when several nouns go with the verb they can be joined up as joint semantic entities i.e. count as one occurrence as in to

have time and money. It should be explained here that if an error occurs in such a pattern, then the analysis is limited to the erroneous part.

Second, the lemmas of the verb were treated as collocational variations of the verb since I am investigating collocations at the lexical level. For example, if different inflected forms of a verb occurred with the same noun they were counted as re-occurrences, e.g. make, makes, made, and be + making+ a fortune. Similarly, if they occurred with different nouns they were treated as different collocations and counted also as re-occurrences. The frequency of every searched verb and adjective was then tabulated. Furthermore, the occurrences of the identified verb-noun and adjective-noun collocational error types were then counted.

Furthermore, I decided to conduct a further manual quantitative analysis to examine the extent of the influence of the topic on the participants' use of the verbs 'provide' and 'make' in verb-noun collocations apart from the other investigated verbs for two reasons: 1) these two verbs appeared in verb-noun collocations in the rubric of the writing task; 2) the results revealed that they had high collocational frequency in the students' written essays (i.e. 'provide' was placed in the second rank and 'make' was placed in fourth position). I went through the concordance lines of these two verbs and extracted and tabulated all the instances which were identical or similar to the collocations used in the rubric. Finally, the occurrences of these patterns were counted.

4.7.5 Triangulating the Methods Used to Judge the Acceptability of the Participants' Collocational Patterns

As explained earlier, the acceptability survey was used to triangulate the three methods used to assess and determine the acceptability of learners' collocational patterns, and to answer the fourth research question. The participants' collocations were judged differently in the academic rating survey (i.e. acceptable) as opposed to the main study; those were to be amended in the main study as acceptable. Accordingly, the frequencies of the verbs and adjectives were then amended and the accuracy percentages were calculated. Similarly, the occurrences of the collocational error types were amended and their percentages were calculated.

4.7.6 Generating Inferential Statistics

In order to answer my first and second research questions, the amended results of the written task were further analysed by using different descriptive statistics and with independent sample t-test using SPSS software. The significance level used was the 0.05 probability value, which is the threshold for determining whether the results are significant or not. It reflects the probability of the results being down to chance (5%), and it is generally agreed in the social sciences that a result needs to be below 5% to be statistically significant; i.e. there is more than 95% chance of the results being down to the independent variable (the two conditions) (Bryman and Cramer, 2009: 127-139).

The following statistical techniques were employed:

Descriptive analysis of actual outcomes such as mean, median and standard deviation. The mean is “the most commonly used measure of central tendency” (Cramer, 1994:19) and is used to represent a middle of data set. The equation of the mean is “the sum of the measurements divided by their number” (Johnson and Bhattacharyya, 2001:46). According to Johnson and Bhattacharyya, the median is “the value that divides the data into two equal halves” and is calculated by arranging the measurements from smallest to largest (2001:49). The standard deviation is a measure of variability which indicates how far the scores are from the mean (Dörnyei, 2007:213).

Inferential statistics were generated by running an independent samples t-test which is used to compare “two means, when those means have come from different groups of entities” to determine whether there is a significant difference (Field, 2013:377). The independent samples t-test was performed to answer the first and fourth question (see below for detailed discussion).

The descriptive statistics of the two investigated types of lexical collocations were conducted to calculate and compare which category, (i.e. verb-noun or adjective-noun) is more problematic for the participants (RQ1). In addition, a further stage of investigation was conducted to discover if there were outliers of the investigated verbs and adjectives which might affect the results. Outliers are scores “very different from the rest of the data” (Field 2013:165). Thus, the boxplot was used to “provide a graphical display of the centre and variation of a data set” (Weiss, 2008:127), i.e. to detect extreme scores. Finally, an independent samples t-test was performed by comparing the accuracy percentages of the investigated verbs with the exception of the two

outliers (i.e. gain and acquire) in verb-noun collocations with that of the twelve investigated adjectives in adjective-noun collocations in order to answer RQ1.1.

To answer my second research question concerning whether there is any significant difference in learners' performance when using the 24 verbs and adjectives identified in this research in verb-noun and adjective-noun collocations, an independent samples t-test was performed by comparing the accuracy percentages of the twelve verbs in verb-noun collocations with that of the twelve adjectives in adjective-noun collocations.

4.7.7 Analysis of Sources of Collocational Errors

After identifying and classifying the types of errors made by the participants in their written production, it was important to identify the difficulties and suggest reasons behind their collocational errors in order to inform the Libyan EFL teachers of the problems the students have when they use English lexical collocations. This is with a view to the results from this study enabling Libyan EFL teachers to amend the focus of their teaching to tackle such problems. The framework 'sources of collocational errors' developed by Liu (1999b) was used as a guide for investigating the participants' sources of collocational errors (for details on these sources, see 3.2.2).

This phase of investigation entailed extracting all unacceptable collocations from the LLC for every searched verb and adjective. Then, these collocations with their suggested acceptable patterns were tabulated. In the process of identifying the error sources, I went through these tables and scrutinised learners' collocational patterns one by one, identifying and marking the problems causing these errors using my knowledge of both the L₁ (Arabic) and target language in order to

determine whether, for example, they could be categorised as L₁ interference, the use of synonymy or overgeneralization.

Regarding the errors related to L₁ interference, the erroneous collocational patterns which had equivalents in the participants' L₁ (Arabic language) were adjudged to be as a result of L₁ interference. These were double checked by presenting the tables to a native speaker of Arabic who was doing her PhD at Birmingham University on writing to identify and mark the patterns she considered to be produced as a consequence of L₁ interference. This was done to avoid subjectivity in this process. Next, we compared our results to check similarities, of which there were many.

This method of checking learners' collocations by consulting a bilingual speaker (L₁ and TL) was adapted from Laufer and Waldman's (2011) study, which examined the use of English verb-noun collocations in the written production of Hebrew learners at three proficiency levels.

4.7.8 Pedagogical Implications

Pedagogical implications constitute the last phase of procedure of analyzing the misuse of collocations in the Libyan learner corpus (LLC) where the appropriate suggestions and recommendations were made based on the obtained results.

4.8 Analytical Framework for the Students' and Lecturers' Questionnaires

The questionnaires were coded after being collected from the participants. The same coding procedure used for the writing task in terms of coding the participants was conducted for the questionnaires (see Table 4.7 above for details). The questions were also coded to be uploaded to

the SPSS software (as illustrated in appendix 10 and 11, for the students' and lecturers' questionnaire code sheets). In the coding sheet, each question was given numerical values in order to classify the answers. This included the question number on the questionnaires, the variable name and variable code. The questionnaires were analysed employing both manual and automatic analysis since they contained two types of questions, open-ended and close-ended. Furthermore, a descriptive analysis was conducted including both frequency and percentage of responses.

As for the close-ended questions, the students' questionnaire data were analysed using the SPSS software. Regarding the lecturers' questionnaire, the answers to all questions were typed out and tabulated separately to facilitate the analysis. Manual quantitative analysis was conducted to analyse their data rather than using SPSS since the sample was small thereby facilitating manual analysis. Concerning the questionnaires' open-ended questions, after typing out the responses in an electronic format, manual analysis was conducted to analyse their data quantitatively and qualitatively, going through the responses line by line. I identified common themes within their answers and then counted the number of responses that belonged to each of these themes.

4.9 Analytical Framework for the Acceptability (of Collocations) Survey

After the survey was collected, the data were then coded in order to be submitted to statistical analysis (the SPSS software). The coding was done in the following manner: 01-2015 (01 refers to the number of the participant, and 2015 refers to the year of the study). The investigation included:

A descriptive analysis of all survey variables examining frequency, percentage, mean and standard deviation (see 4.7.6 for details). The mean along with the percentages were used to determine whether the collocations could be judged as acceptable or unacceptable.

An independent sample t-test was conducted to produce inferential statistics showing (in answer to RQ4) whether there was a significant difference between the academic rating and non-academic rating surveys. In other words, the t-test allows the researcher to examine whether or not the group type (academic vs. non-academic) has a significant effect on rating the participants' collocational patterns. Furthermore, a qualitative approach was employed to examine whether there were any similarities or differences in the native speakers' ratings in both surveys and possible explanations were provided accordingly. The last question survey was also analyzed using both approaches.

4.10 The Pilot Study

As Dörnyei (2007:75) explains, it is essential to pre-test the research method “to ensure the high quality (in terms of reliability and validity) of the outcomes in the specific context”. The pilot study was conducted before the main study at the end of June, 2013. This was intended to reveal any deficiencies in my research methods. Problems found in the methods were improved for later deployment in the main study.

4.10.1 Piloting the Writing Task

The subjects of the piloted writing task were nine Libyan students. Three of them had an overall IELTS score of 5.5 while the remaining students had not been formally assessed. They were closely matched to the participants of the main study in that Arabic was their mother tongue. The

participants were English majors at Tripoli University. They were in their fourth year and had just finished their final year exams when the pilot study was conducted.

On 22nd June 2013, the participants were asked to write an essay of 250 words with a 40-minute time limit. Similar instructions and information were given to them as to those participants in the main study (see 4.2.1). Within three minutes of distributing the task the participants reported that the topic was difficult and asked me to explain it again as they were uncertain as to what they had to write about. I responded by taking about two to three minutes to explain what the topic was about in Arabic. I also explained that the task was to write an opinion essay, that they had to write and express their own opinions and views and that no specific knowledge was needed to cover the topic. I then checked whether they had grasped the essay topic. They confirmed this and were then allowed to start writing.

The results of the pilot study revealed that the students performed poorly in the use of verb-noun collocations as the total percentage of acceptable verb-noun collocations was 48.5%. Conversely, the respondents produced a higher percentage of acceptable adjective-noun collocations (77.5%), constituting 31 acceptable adjective-noun collocations in their written work. Regarding the different types of error committed by the students when producing verb-noun collocations, seven types were identified as occurring in their writing samples. Of the seven types, five were grammatical, such as parts of speech errors (word form), missing determiners, missing prepositions and wrong use of prepositions. Wrong choice of verb and adjective constituted the lexical error types.

In terms of the types of errors committed when producing adjective-noun collocations, four error types were identified which were all related to grammar. These were 1) missing article, 2) missing preposition, 3) word order and 4) wrong structure.

In conclusion, the pilot study revealed two limitations, which needed to be addressed for the main study. The first drawback was related to the writing task as the question was not entirely clear. The original question is shown below:

“Some people think that universities should provide graduates with the knowledge and skills needed in the workplace. Others think that the true function of a university should be to provide an education for its own sake, regardless of whether it is useful to an employer. What, in your opinion, should the main function of a university be?”

As a result, the question was reworded (see appendix 7). The second limitation was related to the time allowed to write the essay which was not long enough. Consequently, the time limit was amended to 45 minutes to enable completion of the task.

4.10.2 Piloting the Students’ Questionnaire

The questionnaire was tested on three volunteer Libyan students who took part in the writing task and had an IELTS score of 5.5. It was administered on 28th June 2013 and was given to the participants to be filled in within ten minutes. After they finished, I asked them to go through it again and discussed with them in Arabic in greater detail what they thought about it. I took notes during the discussion as I did not record it. The questionnaire contained three limitations which

were improved in the main study. The first drawback was related to question structure. An example of how a question was restructured to gain greater clarity is given below.

Original Question

In your opinion, which way do you prefer to learn a new word?

- a) By learning its *meaning, form* and *sound*?

Example: The word ‘*make*’. (Meaning: *to create something*; Form: *made, makes, making*;

Sound: */meik/*)

Yes No

OR

- b) By learning its *meaning, form, sound* and other words that may go with it

Other words that may go with it: e.g. *make a mistake, make a difference, make the bed.*

Yes No

As a result, the question was restructured as follows:

Which way do you prefer to learn a new word (more than one answer can be chosen)?

By learning its meaning, such as ‘*make*’ means ‘*to create something*’.

By learning its forms of writing, such as ‘*make, made makes*’.

By learning its pronunciation, such as ‘*make*’ pronounced */meik/*.

By learning it with other words that may go with it, such as
make a mistake, make a difference, make the bed.

The second limitation was that the students judged the length of the questionnaire to be too long.

Thus, the number of the questions was reduced to the eight most relevant questions. The third

limitation was time as the students could not finish the questionnaire in ten minutes and asked me for another two minutes. Consequently, the time limit for the main study was increased to fifteen minutes.

4.10.3 Piloting the Lecturers' Questionnaire

The pilot study took place on 30th June 2013. The questionnaire was tried out on two colleagues who were doing PhD degrees at Birmingham University and Manchester Metropolitan University. They were lecturers at Zawya University and Tripoli University in Libya. They were given the questionnaire and asked to read it carefully before answering. They were then asked to comment on the design of the questions, their clarity, and whether the questionnaire was of appropriate length. In addition, they were asked to provide feedback if they noticed any other issues.

The discussion revealed that the participants clearly understood the entire questionnaire and the number of questions was appropriate. However, minor modifications were made to some questions based on the feedback. For instance, the following question, Do you encourage students to use reference sources to increase students' collocational sensitivity such as the Oxford Collocations Dictionary? was included again, minus the example, in order to elicit the kind of references requested later. Also, some open-ended questions which were in the format If no, why? were modified. For example, the complementary question to the above question if no, why? was changed to If yes, what reference sources? This enabled me to compare the reference sources used by Libyan lecturers with those mentioned in the literature.

4.10.4 Piloting the Acceptability-of-Collocations Survey

An 80-item pilot version of the survey was conducted on 21st and 23rd January with 20 native speakers of English who were students at Manchester University and Manchester Metropolitan University. The purpose was to explore which rating scale would be the best for the main study and how many items the participants could rate in 15 minutes. The participants were informed that this survey was part of my ongoing PhD research which aimed to investigate the competence of University students learning English as a foreign language. The participants were told that an information participant sheet would be distributed after they had finished the survey (see appendix 6). The procedure as stated in section 4.5.2 was followed. The participants were given fifteen minutes to rate the underlined phrases individually and to read the survey introduction for detailed instructions. Three different scale surveys were administered which contained the same 80 items. Six native speaker students rated a three-point scale, seven students rated a five-point scale and seven rated a seven-point scale on the survey. A quick discussion was held after filling in the survey regarding timing, the rating and the clarity of the instructions. They were asked the following questions: Was 15 minutes enough for rating all the phrases in question? Were the instructions clear? Do you think the scale was appropriate to define your opinion?

The pilot study revealed that the timing of 15 minutes was sufficient for completing all survey items. However, there were two issues raised by all the participants who did the seven-point scale survey.

The scale was too vague, making it difficult to define their point of view. In relation to this point, the participants were asked about the scales they did, and were shown the other two scales. They

all agreed that the seven-point scale is vague, that the five-point scale was okay, and that the three-point scale was precise, however, some participants disagreed and viewed the three-point scale as having limited choices for rating.

The provision of scale quantifiers attached to each point needed greater clarity since only two labels were provided for both ends of the spectrum, e.g. 1 being acceptable (native-like usage) and 3 unacceptable (native speaker would not produce). In addition, some suggestions for modifying some parts in the introduction were provided to achieve more clarity such as the phrase native-like production. Furthermore, the parts of the concordance lines representing parts of missing letters of words and missing parts of sentences caused confusion such as those words written in italics below:

Item 47: *hould give it in a good way*’. The turners should provide knowledge and foreign language, special to use it in our life.

Item 63: *h place in that job*. It’s better for students to gain an academic knowledge and skills, especially in

Thus, some modifications were made in response to all the above raised issues to improve the format of the main study. In terms of the type of scale, I decided to use the six-point Likert scale as it has no neutral or mid-point (Garland, 1991). Since the aim of the survey was to triangulate the other methods used to judge the learners’ collocations, I needed the participants to give clear decisions on which side of the scale (acceptable versus unacceptable) they preferred. According to Garland (1991:1), “the purpose of a rating scale is to allow respondents to express both the

direction and strength of their opinion about a topic”. He further states that removing the mid-point (e.g. ‘neither... nor’ or ‘uncertain’) option from the Likert scale can decrease the “social desirability bias” (1991:4). Regarding labelling the scale points, each point was given a specific quantifier. They had the following descriptions: 1 (completely unacceptable), 2 (unacceptable), 3 (somewhat unacceptable), 4 (somewhat acceptable), 5 (acceptable), and 6 (completely acceptable). Other amendments were made in response to the suggestions such as rewording the phrase according to native-like production. Consequently, an updated introduction was presented. The concordance lines were amended by removing all the irrelevant parts. For example, the first parts of the above-mentioned survey items 47 and 63 ‘*hould give it in a good way*’ and ‘*h place in that job*’ were omitted. Additionally, dots were used to indicate to the rest of the sentence.

4.11 Difficulties in Collecting the Data for the Study

I faced many difficulties in collecting the data in the Libyan context. They are outlined below:

1. The reaction of the participants against the research methods.
 - Negative attitude towards participating in the study. Some of the participants (students and lecturers) refused to participate in the study without giving any reason. On the other hand, others were quite happy to take part.
 - Some were afraid that a copy would be given to their lecturers, while others did not take it seriously. Therefore, I had to assure them by informing them that the task was set only for research purposes.
 - Others were not interested as they thought it was not related to their field of study.

- Some of the participants were intent on criticising the study. They set out to uncover any possible mistakes or simply wanted to flaunt their own knowledge.
 - Time-consuming: some of them thought that they needed more time in answering the writing task and asked to take it home. They said it was too difficult for them to write 250 words in such a short time. Therefore, I had to explain and convince them that the time given was enough to write about the topic. Furthermore, I had to motivate them by telling them that they were considered to be advanced students in their final year at university, to help them overcome their lack of self-confidence when writing complex essays, which they were not used to.
2. Political issues and the current situation in Libya.
 - There were strikes in all educational institutions in Tripoli. Thus, students did not attend lectures for two weeks.
 3. Environmental issues.
 - There was flooding which caused closure of the university for more than a week.
 4. Transport issues.
 - There was no petrol in Tripoli for nearly a week. Therefore, the students as well as the lecturers were not able to attend their lectures for this reason.
 5. Participant involvement in data collection:
 - One of the major difficulties in collecting the data was getting people to take part in the study. Consequently, this resulted in small samples of the different data sets of this research. For example, only nine native speaker English teachers

participated in writing the essays for the purposes of narrowing down the study.

Clearly, this constitutes a limitation of the study.

6. In addition to the above, it was impossible for me to obtain data from the other universities because of the ongoing conflict in other cities.

4.12 Difficulties Encountered in Analyzing my Data

The following are some of the difficulties I encountered when analysing the data:

1. In general, the learners' essays were poorly written, as they were full of spelling mistakes and were also badly structured, resulting in my having difficulty in typing out the essays. Therefore, I focused on correcting only the spelling mistakes to guarantee that all the searched verbs and adjectives would appear when searching for them using the software.

2. Suggesting the acceptable pattern (making corrections): it is important to note that the language in the students' essays was poorly structured. Thus, on many occasions I had to resort to reading the whole paragraph or essay to determine the intended meaning and then make the corrections. Similarly, the native speaker consultant faced the same problem when rating these patterns according to the scale of acceptability even after checking the whole concordance lines and in some cases the whole paragraph in which the collocation occurred.

3. Challenges faced in interpreting and categorizing errors in the learners' collocations: in some cases, grammatical errors may have more than one interpretation in terms of tagging the errors with particular error categories. Each error type label reflects to some degree the way in which the misused collocation is associated with its correction; for example, instances in which there is

more than one suggested explanation for an error as in the following erroneous collocation pattern **very higher levels* can be interpreted and corrected either as the collocation *higher levels* or as *much higher levels*. In the first case, the error should be described and classified as superfluous intensifier whereas in the second case, it should be described and classified as the use of the wrong adverb (the use of *very* instead of *much*). Therefore, in such instances, in order to achieve a high level of accuracy in correction, the concordance lines were checked to get the intended meaning to correct the collocational pattern accordingly and if this was not sufficient then I checked the whole paragraph.

4. Relating the errors to their intended meaning: this is open to interpretation as it is difficult to enter the student's mind. However, a potential means of extracting the intended meaning is, as referred to in the above paragraph, to read the co-text in which the collocation appeared.

5. Native speaker inconsistencies: on many occasions the native speaker consultants varied in their suggestions of the acceptable pattern. This demonstrates that collocations are idiosyncratic as they are subject to native speaker interpretation. To illustrate this point, the adjectives *great*, *beneficial*, *valuable*, *up-to-date*, and *useful* were variously suggested as possible collocates of the noun *knowledge* to replace the learners' unacceptable collocation pattern **a high knowledge*.

6. Setting collocational parameters: since there is variation between NS assessment of collocational acceptability, there may be alternative collocational patterns besides the suggested acceptable collocations in this thesis.

4.13 Conclusion

This chapter has provided a detailed description of the methodology applied in the current study. The procedure used for selecting the two investigated types of lexical collocation in the native speakers' academic written corpus was explained in detail in 4.3. The analysis of the data revealed that adjective-noun collocations were the most frequent types, followed by verb-noun collocations. Concerning the most frequent collocates (i.e. lexical items) within the two types selected to be the focus of this research investigation, the results also showed that there was a consensus between the Libyan lecturers and the researcher that the most frequent top twelve verbs and adjectives were likely to be familiar to year-four Libyan students. The twelve highest frequency verbs were: *do, provide, acquire, gain, enhance, make, offer, take, give, get, have, require*; and the twelve highest frequency adjectives were: *good, academic, high, higher, modern, current, practical, specific, basic, general, great, special*. Therefore, this study analysis is limited to the learners' (i.e. Libyan students) use of those verbs and adjectives as part of verb-noun and adjective-noun collocations in their academic written English respectively. Piloting the various research methods was explained in section 4.10. This was done in order to reveal any deficiencies in these methods; consequently, problems found in the methods were addressed in order to enable more improved methods to be deployed later in the main study. Both qualitative and quantitative research methods and data analysis procedures have been presented and discussed in detail. Nevertheless, while it can be said that the choice of analysis and collection techniques has been justified, a perfect study can never exist. In light of the above discussion on methodology, the next chapter will discuss the results of the study from both qualitative and quantitative perspectives.

Chapter 5

Results and Discussion of the Acceptability Survey

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the results of the acceptability survey which was described in Chapter Four, incorporating the academic rating and non-academic rating surveys. The results were analysed using both quantitative and qualitative analytical methods. The purpose of this chapter is to provide answers to the fourth research question introduced in Chapter One. It is reiterated as follows:

RQ4. Is there a significant difference between native speaker ratings of English language learner collocations in academic as opposed to non-academic contexts?

This chapter is divided into two main sections: section 5.2 introduces the findings of the academic rating and non-academic rating surveys; section 5.3 discusses these findings in full.

5.2 The Results of the Acceptability Survey

The purpose of this survey was to: (1) triangulate the three methods used to evaluate the acceptability of learners' collocational patterns, and (2) to answer the fourth research question concerning whether there is a significant difference between native speaker ratings of English language learner collocations in academic as opposed to non-academic contexts. The survey was given to 100 native speakers of English and the survey data were analysed using SPSS. This section includes three main parts. Part 5.2.1 introduces the results of the academic rating survey

while the results of the non-academic rating survey are presented in part 5.2.2. Part 5.2.3 describes the independent sample t-test results.

5.2.1 Results of the Academic Rating Survey

Table 5.1 shows the frequency, percentage, mean and standard deviation of the participants' rating for each survey item of native speaker assessment of learners' collocations according to native speaker use in academic writing (for details on mean and standard deviation, see 4.7.6). The numbers 1 to 6 refer to the points on the Likert scale, having the following descriptions: 1 completely unacceptable, 2 unacceptable, 3 somewhat unacceptable, 4 somewhat acceptable, 5 acceptable and 6 completely acceptable. Some of the table's cells contain a dash and are highlighted in a different colour as no responses were provided for them. In addition, the percentage and mean were used as indicators to show whether this academic group survey considered the collocational patterns as acceptable (i.e. common collocations in English language) or unacceptable (i.e. odd). For example, if more than 50% of the responses were given to the Likert scale points 1, 2 and 3 then the collocation was assessed as being unacceptable in academic written English. However, the learners' collocational patterns were judged as acceptable when more than 50% of native speakers gave their answers to the acceptable scale points 4, 5 and 6.

According to the methods used to evaluate learners' collocation patterns in the main study (writing task), it was revealed that these collocations were judged as erroneous. However, the results of the academic rating survey revealed that some of these patterns are acceptable.

Consequently, I will use the results (only acceptable rated collocations) from this academic rating survey to inform the judgments made in the written task.

The results of the survey are introduced on the basis of how learners' collocational patterns were judged in the main study (i.e. acceptable collocations and erroneous collocations which include partially acceptable and unacceptable collocations). This was done in order to enable differences to be compared and to gain a clear picture of the varied judgments obtained according to different methods.

Therefore, the results from Table 5.1 will be divided into three parts as follows:

Table 5.2: results of control items (acceptable collocations);

Table 5.3: results of unacceptable implausible collocations;

Table 5.4: results of learners' collocations which were adjudged differently in the academic rating survey as opposed to the main study.

Table 5-1 Descriptive statistics of the native speakers' performance in academic rating survey

No.	Learners' collocations	1	2	3	4	5	6	M.	SD	Overall result
1.	provide their abilities	6	12	24	7	1	-	2.70	0.93	Unacceptable (84%)
		12.0%	24.0%	48.0%	14.0%	2.0%	-			
2.	a basic grammatical	14	14	12	6	4	-	2.44	1.24	Unacceptable (80%)
		28.0%	28.0%	24.0%	12.0%	8.0%	-			
3.	good substances	14	15	15	5	1	-	2.28	1.05	Unacceptable (88%)
		28.0%	30.0%	30.0%	10.0%	2.0%	-			
4.	give a great curriculum	3	10	22	15	-	-	2.98	0.86	Unacceptable (70%)
		6.0%	20.0%	44.0%	30.0%	-	-			
5.	modern knowledge	6	7	13	24	-	-	3.10	1.05	Unacceptable (52%)
		12.0%	14.0%	26.0%	48.0%	-	-			
6.	do a presentation	9	10	20	8	3	-	2.72	1.12	Unacceptable (78%)
		18.0%	20.0%	40.0%	16.0%	6.0%	-			
7.	have many styles	12	10	19	6	3	-	2.56	1.16	Unacceptable (82%)
		24.0%	20.0%	38.0%	12.0%	6.0%	-			
8.	acquire knowledge	-	-	-	4	23	23	5.42	0.60	Acceptable (100%)
		-	-	-	8.0%	46.0%	46.0%			
9.	take more information	10	17	15	6	2	-	2.46	1.07	Unacceptable (84%)
		20.0%	34.0%	30.0%	12.0%	4.0%	-			
10.	general information	-	-	-	6	19	25	5.38	0.69	Acceptable (100%)
		-	-	-	12.0%	38.0%	50.0%			
11.	take the importance or specific background	10	7	13	10	8	2	3.10	1.47	Unacceptable (60%)
		20.0%	14.0%	26.0%	20.0%	16.0%	4.0%			
12.	have many knowledge	35	9	3	1	2	-	1.52	0.99	Unacceptable (94%)
		70.0%	18.0%	6.0%	2.0%	4.0%	-			
13.	the current time	2	9	11	19	9	-	3.48	1.11	Acceptable (56%)

		4.0%	18.0%	22.0%	38.0%	18.0%	-			
14.	get the language	10	18	12	8	2	-	2.48	1.11	Unacceptable (80%)
		20.0%	36.0%	24.0%	16.0%	4.0%	-			
15.	a higher chance	4	10	18	13	4	1	3.12	1.13	Unacceptable (64%)
		8.0%	20.0%	36.0%	26.0%	8.0%	2.0%			
16.	enhance the right equipments	8	8	15	12	7	-	3.04	1.27	Unacceptable (62%)
		16.0%	16.0%	30.0%	24.0%	14.0%	-			
17.	great cause	13	13	12	7	4	1	2.58	1.34	Unacceptable (76%)
		26.0%	26.0%	24.0%	14.0%	8.0%	2.0%			
18.	good building space	7	13	14	11	3	2	2.92	1.29	Unacceptable (68%)
		14.0%	26.0%	28.0%	22.0%	6.0%	4.0%			
19.	offer the large information	19	14	10	4	3	-	2.16	1.20	Unacceptable (86%)
		38.0%	28.0%	20.0%	8.0%	6.0%	-			
20.	a higher educator	9	13	14	7	6	1	2.82	1.33	Unacceptable (72%)
		18.0%	26.0%	28.0%	14.0%	12.0%	2.0%			
21.	a higher material	10	15	14	7	4	-	2.60	1.19	Unacceptable (78%)
		20.0%	30.0%	28.0%	14.0%	8.0%	-			
22.	give and have high education	13	21	9	3	4	-	2.28	1.16	Unacceptable (86%)
		26.0%	42.0%	18.0%	6.0%	8.0%	-			
23.	special practical	14	13	11	6	6	-	2.54	1.34	Unacceptable (76%)
		28.0%	26.0%	22.0%	12.0%	12.0%	-			
24.	do a great search	14	12	17	6	-	1	2.38	1.14	Unacceptable (86%)
		28.0%	24.0%	34.0%	12.0%	-	2.0%			
25.	good information and higher education	-	-	-	5	33	12	5.14	0.57	Acceptable (100%)
		-	-	-	10.0%	66.0%	24.0%			
26.	the modern time	4	8	10	12	11	5	3.66	1.45	Acceptable (56%)
		8.0%	16.0%	20.0%	24.0%	22.0%	10.0%			
27.	make labs	14	19	6	6	3	2	2.42	1.38	Unacceptable (78%)
		28.0%	38.0%	12.0%	12.0%	6.0%	4.0%			

28.	the basic of the way	17	14	10	8	-	1	2.26	1.20	Unacceptable (82%)
		34.0%	28.0%	20.0%	16.0%	-	2.0%			
29.	make benefit	15	18	13	3	1	-	2.14	0.98	Unacceptable (92%)
		30.0%	36.0%	26.0%	6.0%	2.0%	-			
30.	have a good knowledges	26	18	4	1	1	-	1.66	0.87	Unacceptable (96%)
		52.0%	36.0%	8.0%	2.0%	2.0%	-			
31.	good educate	30	15	2	1	1	1	1.62	1.04	Unacceptable (94%)
		60.0%	30.0%	4.0%	2.0%	2.0%	2.0%			
32.	to modern language	6	4	10	9	10	11	3.92	1.65	Acceptable (60%)
		12.0%	8.0%	20.0%	18.0%	20.0%	22.0%			
33.	getting more knowledge and skills	2	12	10	8	10	8	3.72	1.52	Acceptable (52%)
		4.0%	24.0%	20.0%	16.0%	20.0%	16.0%			
34.	current time	5	6	17	10	9	3	3.42	1.35	Unacceptable (56%)
		10.0%	12.0%	34.0%	20.0%	18.0%	6.0%			
35.	a great generation	3	8	10	11	11	7	3.80	1.47	Acceptable (58%)
		6.0%	16.0%	20.0%	22.0%	22.0%	14.0%			
36.	take some ways and skills	11	15	15	5	3	1	2.54	1.23	Unacceptable (82%)
		22.0%	30.0%	30.0%	10.0%	6.0%	2.0%			
37.	high information	14	18	13	2	3	-	2.24	1.09	Unacceptable (90%)
		28.0%	36.0%	26.0%	4.0%	6.0%	-			
38.	a special specialty	28	12	5	3	2	-	1.78	1.11	Unacceptable (90%)
		56.0%	24.0%	10.0%	6.0%	4.0%	-			
39.	offer to student the year style of education	24	18	5	3	-	-	1.74	0.87	Unacceptable (94%)
		48.0%	36.0%	10.0%	6.0%	-	-			
40.	great options	16	16	14	-	3	1	2.22	1.20	Unacceptable (92%)
		32.0%	32.0%	28.0%	-	6.0%	2.0%			
41.	get works and variety skills	12	18	12	6	2	-	2.36	1.10	Unacceptable (84%)
		24.0%	36.0%	24.0%	12.0%	4.0%	-			
42.	basic accountant stock	8	10	15	9	6	2	3.02	1.37	Unacceptable (66%)

		16.0%	20.0%	30.0%	18.0%	12.0%	4.0%			
43.	have a nice education	4	8	17	13	4	4	3.34	1.30	Unacceptable (58%)
		8.0%	16.0%	34.0%	26.0%	8.0%	8.0%			
44.	get new words	8	17	10	10	4	1	2.76	1.28	Unacceptable (70%)
		16.0%	34.0%	20.0%	20.0%	8.0%	2.0%			
45.	acquire the knowledge skills	9	6	8	12	9	6	3.48	1.64	Acceptable (54%)
		18.0%	12.0%	16.0%	24.0%	18.0%	12.0%			
46.	good students	-	-	-	11	24	15	5.08	0.72	Acceptable (100%)
		-	-	-	22.0%	48.0%	30.0%			
47.	provide knowledge and foreign language	5	5	19	9	9	3	3.42	1.34	Unacceptable (58%)
		10.0%	10.0%	38.0%	18.0%	18.0%	6.0%			
48.	Current ages	8	11	9	6	9	7	3.36	1.69	Unacceptable (56%)
		16.0%	22.0%	18.0%	12.0%	18.0%	14.0%			
49.	do a questionnaire	2	12	4	14	11	7	3.82	1.48	Acceptable (64%)
		4.0%	24.0%	8.0%	28.0%	22.0%	14.0%			
50.	a high and good situation	11	17	16	5	1	-	2.36	1.00	Unacceptable (88%)
		22.0%	34.0%	32.0%	10.0%	2.0%	-			
51.	provide only theoretical general courses	-	-	1	7	27	15	5.12	0.71	Acceptable (98%)
		-	-	2.0%	14.0%	54.0%	30.0%			
52.	take a field	9	14	11	8	6	2	2.88	1.42	Unacceptable (68%)
		18.0%	28.0%	22.0%	16.0%	12.0%	4.0%			
53.	a great part	2	8	14	15	3	8	3.66	1.37	Acceptable (52%)
		4.0%	16.0%	28.0%	30.0%	6.0%	16.0%			
54.	a specific books	4	5	4	9	15	13	4.30	1.58	Acceptable (74%)
		8.0%	10.0%	8.0%	18.0%	30.0%	26.0%			
55.	make a discussion	9	10	18	8	4	1	2.82	1.25	Unacceptable (74%)
		18.0%	20.0%	36.0%	16.0%	8.0%	2.0%			
56.	the topic special	25	11	8	4	2	-	1.94	1.16	Unacceptable (88%)
		50.0%	22.0%	16.0%	8.0%	4.0%	-			

57.	make knowledge or departments	16	15	13	5	1	-	2.20	1.06	Unacceptable (88%)
		32.0%	30.0%	26.0%	10.0%	2.0%	-			
58.	give a complete attention	21	15	6	5	3	-	2.08	1.22	Unacceptable (84%)
		42.0%	30.0%	12.0%	10.0%	6.0%	-			
59.	get the stages	12	15	10	7	5	1	2.62	1.36	Unacceptable (74%)
		24.0%	30.0%	20.0%	14.0%	10.0%	2.0%			
60.	high way of thinking	6	15	15	11	2	1	2.82	1.15	Unacceptable (72%)
		12.0%	30.0%	30.0%	22.0%	4.0%	2.0%			
61.	acquire for some skills	17	14	9	8	1	1	2.30	1.26	Unacceptable (80%)
		34.0%	28.0%	18.0%	16.0%	2.0%	2.0%			
62.	require to a skill	23	9	7	7	1	3	2.26	1.50	Unacceptable (78%)
		46.0%	18.0%	14.0%	14.0%	2.0%	6.0%			
63.	gain an academic knowledge and skills	4	10	10	12	10	4	3.50	1.43	Acceptable (52%)
		8.0%	20.0%	20.0%	24.0%	20.0%	8.0%			
64.	specific offer	5	5	10	12	12	6	3.78	1.48	Acceptable (60%)
		10.0%	10.0%	20.0%	24.0%	24.0%	12.0%			
65.	has a strong and special effect	-	-	-	9	21	20	5.22	0.73	Acceptable (100%)
		-	-	-	18.0%	42.0%	40.0%			
66.	offer high level education	2	2	9	10	14	13	4.42	1.37	Acceptable (74%)
		4.0%	4.0%	18.0%	20.0%	28.0%	26.0%			
67.	specific skills	-	-	-	5	14	31	5.52	0.67	Acceptable (100%)
		-	-	-	10.0%	28.0%	62.0%			
68.	acquire more time	3	9	13	14	6	5	3.52	1.35	Unacceptable (50%)
		6.0%	18.0%	26.0%	28.0%	12.0%	10.0%			
69.	take an intensive course	-	-	-	1	31	18	5.34	0.51	Acceptable (100%)
		-	-	-	2.0%	62.0%	36.0%			
70.	get a best learning	24	10	12	4	-	-	1.92	1.02	Unacceptable (92%)
		48.0%	20.0%	24.0%	8.0%	-	-			
71.	enhance a great opportunities	23	11	10	5	1	-	2.00	1.12	Unacceptable (88%)

		46.0%	22.0%	20.0%	10.0%	2.0%	-			
72.	an academic knowledge and skills	7	14	8	9	9	3	3.16	1.51	Unacceptable (58%)
		14.0%	28.0%	16.0%	18.0%	18.0%	6.0%			
73.	gain more higher education	9	11	11	6	9	4	3.14	1.59	Unacceptable (62%)
		18.0%	22.0%	22.0%	12.0%	18.0%	8.0%			
74.	high ideas	15	23	9	3	-	-	2.00	0.85	Unacceptable (94%)
		30.0%	46.0%	18.0%	6.0%	-	-			
75.	make an academic, modern education	13	17	14	4	1	1	2.32	1.13	Unacceptable (88%)
		26.0%	34.0%	28.0%	8.0%	2.0%	2.0%			
76.	in general or in a modern way	5	14	18	10	2	1	2.86	1.10	Unacceptable (74%)
		10.0%	28.0%	36.0%	20.0%	4.0%	2.0%			
77.	require researches and knowledge	12	14	9	11	3	1	2.64	1.33	Unacceptable (70%)
		24.0%	28.0%	18.0%	22.0%	6.0%	2.0%			
78.	the general and the academic information	5	9	14	13	8	1	3.26	1.27	Unacceptable (56%)
		10.0%	18.0%	28.0%	26.0%	16.0%	2.0%			
79.	acquire the other work	14	10	10	14	-	1	2.57	1.29	Unacceptable (69.4%)
		28.6%	20.4%	20.4%	28.6%	-	2.0%			
80.	acquire the knowledge skills	8	7	11	14	5	4	3.26	1.48	Unacceptable (53%)
		16.3%	14.3%	22.4%	28.6%	10.2%	8.2%			

In terms of acceptable collocations, Table 5.2 reveals that the eight control items were judged as acceptable which agrees with the findings obtained using the other methods in the main study (writing task). The percentages and the means of all these collocations were very high which indicates that there is a consensus among native speakers that these collocational patterns are common in English language. Scores of 100% indicate that all the native speakers provided their responses on the acceptable side of the Likert scale (4-6 options) and in some cases the majority opted for the scale points 5 (acceptable) and 6 (completely acceptable) for their assessments (see Table 5.1 above for details). Furthermore, it is important to note that the high percentage reflects the high mean. However, the greater the responses towards the end of the scale (i.e. option 6), the higher the mean score. For example, the highest mean was for item 67 – specific skills with a mean of 5.52, since 28% of the answers were given to option 5 and 62% given to option 6. This shows strong agreement among this group of native speakers. The lowest mean was for item 46 – good students with 5.08, given that 22% of the responses were provided for option 3, 48% for option 5 and 30% for option 6.

Table 5-2 Results of control items (acceptable collocations) in academic rating survey

Item no.	Control items	The percentage of responses to 4-6 options	Mean	SD.
8.	acquire knowledge	100	5.42	0.60
10.	general information	100	5.38	0.69
25.	offer good information and higher education	100	5.14	0.57
46.	good students	100	5.08	0.72
51.	provide only theoretical general courses.	98	5.12	0.71
65.	has a strong and special effect	100	5.22	0.73

67.	specific skills	100	5.52	0.67
69.	take an intensive course	100	5.34	0.51

With regard to the learners' collocational patterns which were judged as unacceptable collocations and further classified as implausible collocations in the main study, there were 12 items in the survey. In Table 5.3, all native speakers rated these collocations as unacceptable apart from the collocational pattern: current time with 70% and a mean of 4.22. The native speakers' rejection of learners' collocational patterns as common is shown through the high percentage of their responses which are centred at the unacceptable side of the scale (options 1-3). For example, 90% of native speakers ranked item 38 - a special specialty - as unacceptable with a mean of 1.78, as 56% of them provided their responses for option 1 (completely unacceptable), 24% for option 2 (unacceptable) and 10% for option 3 (somewhat unacceptable).

Table 5-3 Results of unacceptable implausible collocations in academic rating survey

Item no.	unacceptable collocation	The percentage of responses to 1-3 options	Mean	SD.
3.	good substances	88 (unacceptable)	2.28	1.05
7.	have many styles	82 (unacceptable)	2.56	1.16
11.	take the importance or specific background	60 (unacceptable)	3.10	1.47
18.	good building space	68 (unacceptable)	2.92	1.29
22.	give and have high education	86 (unacceptable)	2.28	1.16
34.	current time	70 (acceptable)	4.22	1.47
38.	a special specialty	90 (unacceptable)	1.78	1.11
41.	get works and variety skills	78 (unacceptable)	2.52	1.32
48.	Current ages	56 (unacceptable)	3.36	1.69
57.	make knowledge or departments	88 (unacceptable)	2.20	1.06
59.	get the stages	74 (unacceptable)	2.62	1.36

79.	acquire the other work	69.4 (unacceptable)	2.57	1.29
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The survey also included another 35 collocations which were judged as unacceptable in which the deviation was related to lexical errors in the main study. Five collocational patterns were judged as acceptable collocations. They are item 33 - getting more knowledge and skills (3.72), item 35 - a great generation (3.80), item 53 - a great part (3.66), item 49 - do a questionnaire (3.82) and item 68 - acquire more time (3.52). In addition, the other 25 learners' collocations in which the errors were related to the grammatical category according to main study criteria, eight of these items were judged and rated as acceptable by native speakers. They are:

item 32 - modern language (3.92),

item 45 acquire the knowledge skills (3.48),

item 47 - provide knowledge and foreign language(3.42),

item 54 - a specific books (4.30),

item 64 - specific offer (3.78),

item 66 - offer high level education (4.42),

item 72 - an academic knowledge and skills (3.16), and

item 78 - the general and the academic information (3.26).

It is important to note that all these collocations had high percentages. For example, item 78 - the general and academic information - had 54% of acceptable responses. However, the mean is low (3.26) because most of responses are centred on option 4 (somewhat acceptable) with a score of 36%. On the other hand, lower responses were given to the Likert scale points 5 and 6 with 12%

and 6.0% respectively. Table 5.4 below presents the learners' collocations which were judged and evaluated differently from the methods used in the main study. The percentage of subjects' responses on the acceptable side of the scale options (4-6) are introduced in table 5.4 as well as overall mean and standard deviations. The mean of most of these collocation patterns was higher than 3.50 which indicates that these collocations were assessed by native speakers as usual combinations in English.

Table 5-4 Learners' collocations which were adjudged differently in the academic rating survey as opposed to the main study

Item no.	Collocation in question	The percentage of responses to 4-6 options	Mean	SD.
32.	modern language	74	3.92	1.65
33.	getting more knowledge and skills	64	3.72	1.52
34.	current time	70	3.42	1.35
35.	a great generation	60	3.80	1.47
45.	acquire the knowledge skills	56	3.48	1.64
47.	provide knowledge and foreign language	70	3.42	1.34
49.	do a questionnaire	68	3.82	1.48
53.	a great part	58	3.66	1.37
54.	a specific books	80	4.30	1.58
64.	specific offer	72	3.78	1.48
66.	offer high level education	68	4.42	1.37
68.	acquire more time	50	3.52	1.35
72.	an academic knowledge and skills	54	3.16	1.51
78.	the general and the academic information	54	3.26	1.27

This section presented and explained the results gained from the academic rating survey. The results revealed that there was agreement among native speakers that some of the learners'

collocational patterns were acceptable according to their use in academic written English. The following section is concerned with introducing the results of the non-academic rating survey.

5.2.2 Results of the Non-Academic Rating Survey

Table 5.5 presents the frequencies, percentages, the means, and standard deviations of the native speakers' evaluation of learners' collocational patterns according to native speaker use in every day context. It is important to note that blank cells which contain a dash and are highlighted in a different colour refer to those scale points which had no responses. As indicated earlier, the percentage and mean were used to show whether this non-academic group survey rated the learners' collocational patterns as acceptable (i.e. common collocations in English language) or unacceptable (i.e. odd). Overall, the results of the survey showed that native speakers were less strict in their judgments as this was shown by the higher percentage and mean scores.

The results from Table 5.5 will be divided and discussed into sections as follows: (1) results of control items (acceptable collocations) in non-academic rating survey; (2) results of unacceptable implausible collocations; and (3) learners' collocations which were adjudged differently in the non-academic rating survey as opposed to the main study.

Table 5-5 Descriptive statistics of the native speakers' performance in non-academic rating survey

No.	Learners' collocations	1	2	3	4	5	6	M.	SD	Overall result
1.	provide their abilities	8	11	15	12	3	1	2.88	1.23	Unacceptable (68%)
		16.0%	22.0%	30.0%	24.0%	6.0%	2.0%			
2.	a basic grammatical	15	14	9	7	4	1	2.48	1.37	Unacceptable (76%)
		30.0%	28.0%	18.0%	14.0%	8.0%	2.0%			
3.	good substances	10	13	10	6	11	-	2.90	1.44	Unacceptable (66%)
		20.0%	26.0%	20.0%	12.0%	22.0%	-			
4.	give a great curriculum	4	7	18	15	5	1	3.26	1.13	Unacceptable (58%)
		8.0%	14.0%	36.0%	30.0%	10.0%	2.0%			
5.	modern knowledge	1	3	8	10	17	11	4.44	1.28	Acceptable (76%)
		2.0%	6.0%	16.0%	20.0%	34.0%	22.0%			
6.	do a presentation	4	-	32	7	7	-	3.26	0.98	Unacceptable (86%)
		8.0%	-	64.0%	14.0%	14.0%	-			
7.	have many styles	4	11	16	12	3	4	3.22	1.31	Unacceptable (62%)
		8.0%	22.0%	32.0%	24.0%	6.0%	8.0%			
8.	acquire knowledge	-	1	-	5	21	23	5.30	0.81	Acceptable (88%)
		-	2.0%	-	10.0%	42.0%	46.0%			
9.	take more information	2	14	16	16	2	-	3.04	0.96	Unacceptable (64%)
		4.0%	28.0%	32.0%	32.0%	4.0%	-			
10.	general information	-	-	-	4	20	26	5.44	0.64	Acceptable (100%)
		-	-	-	8.0%	40.0%	52.0%			
11.	take the importance or specific background	6	7	13	13	8	3	3.38	1.39	Unacceptable (52%)
		12.0%	14.0%	26.0%	26.0%	16.0%	6.0%			
12.	have many knowledge	27	10	5	5	2	1	1.96	1.32	Unacceptable (84%)
		54.0%	20.0%	10.0%	10.0%	4.0%	2.0%			

13.	the current time	4	5	10	12	7	12	3.98	1.57	Acceptable (52%)
		8.0%	10.0%	20.0%	24.0%	14.0%	14.0%			
14.	get the language	3	16	11	12	5	3	3.18	1.32	Unacceptable (60%)
		6.0%	32.0%	22.0%	24.0%	10.0%	6.0%			
15.	a higher chance	3	3	5	10	11	18	4.54	1.51	Acceptable (78%)
		6.0%	6.0%	10.0%	20.0%	22.0%	36.0%			
16.	enhance the right equipments	8	11	12	10	6	3	3.08	1.45	Unacceptable (72%)
		16.0%	22.0%	24.0%	20.0%	12.0%	6.0%			
17.	great cause	14	15	6	2	7	6	2.82	1.76	Unacceptable (70%)
		28.0%	30.0%	12.0%	4.0%	14.0%	12.0%			
18.	good building space	7	13	20	4	6	-	2.78	1.16	Unacceptable (80%)
		14.0%	26.0%	40.0%	8.0%	12.0%	-			
19.	offer the large information	12	14	13	8	3	-	2.52	1.19	Unacceptable (78%)
		24.0%	28.0%	26.0%	16.0%	6.0%	-			
20.	a higher educator	8	14	9	10	4	5	3.06	1.54	Unacceptable (62%)
		16.0%	28.0%	18.0%	20.0%	8.0%	10.0%			
21.	a higher material	8	13	8	9	9	3	3.14	1.53	Unacceptable (58%)
		16.0%	26.0%	16.0%	18.0%	18.0%	6.0%			
22.	give and have high education	12	16	12	6	3	1	2.50	1.26	Unacceptable (80%)
		24.0%	32.0%	24.0%	12.0%	6.0%	2.0%			
23.	special practical	14	14	11	5	4	2	2.54	1.41	Unacceptable (78%)
		28.0%	28.0%	22.0%	10.0%	8.0%	4.0%			
24.	do a great search	4	14	13	9	8	2	3.18	1.33	Unacceptable (62%)
		8.0%	28.0%	26.0%	18.0%	16.0%	4.0%			
25.	good information and higher education	-	-	-	10	21	19	5.18	0.74	Acceptable (100%)
		-	-	-	20.0%	42.0%	38.0%			
26.	the modern time	6	3	16	8	8	9	3.72	1.57	Unacceptable (50%)

		12.0%	6.0%	32.0%	16.0%	16.0%	18.0%			
27.	make labs	11	16	14	4	3	2	2.56	1.31	Unacceptable (82%)
		22.0%	32.0%	28.0%	8.0%	6.0%	4.0%			
28.	the basic of the way	12	17	7	8	1	5	2.68	1.54	Unacceptable (72%)
		24.0%	34.0%	14.0%	16.0%	2.0%	10.0%			
29.	make benefit	14	18	8	1	9	-	2.46	1.40	Unacceptable (80%)
		28.0%	36.0%	16.0%	2.0%	18.0%	-			
30.	have a good knowledges	27	10	5	6	2	-	1.92	1.22	Unacceptable (84%)
		54.0%	20.0%	10.0%	12.0%	4.0%	-			
31.	good educate	30	10	7	1	1	1	1.72	1.12	Unacceptable (94%)
		60.0%	20.0%	14.0%	2.0%	2.0%	2.0%			
32.	to modern language	4	5	4	11	11	15	4.30	1.60	Acceptable (74%)
		8.0%	10.0%	8.0%	22.0%	22.0%	30.0%			
33.	getting more knowledge and skills	2	6	10	16	8	8	3.92	1.36	Acceptable (64%)
		4.0%	12.0%	20.0%	32.0%	16.0%	16.0%			
34.	current time	2	6	7	11	12	12	4.22	1.47	Acceptable (70%)
		4.0%	12.0%	14.0%	22.0%	24.0%	24.0%			
35.	a great generation	5	2	13	8	7	15	4.10	1.64	Acceptable (60%)
		10.0%	4.0%	26.0%	16.0%	14.0%	30.0%			
36.	take some ways and skills	7	17	14	11	1	-	2.64	1.04	Unacceptable (76%)
		14.0%	34.0%	28.0%	22.0%	2.0%	-			
37.	high information	12	14	12	6	3	3	2.66	1.43	Unacceptable (76%)
		24.0%	28.0%	24.0%	12.0%	6.0%	6.0%			
38.	a special specialty	23	15	8	3	1	-	1.88	1.02	Unacceptable (92%)
		46.0%	30.0%	16.0%	6.0%	2.0%	-			
39.	offer to student the year style of education	18	17	12	2	1	-	2.04	1.04	Unacceptable (94%)
		36.0%	34.0%	24.0%	4.0%	2.0%	-			

40.	great options	9	13	19	3	4	2	2.72	1.29	Unacceptable (82%)
		18.0%	26.0%	38.0%	6.0%	8.0%	4.0%			
41.	get works and variety skills	14	12	13	8	1	2	2.52	1.32	Unacceptable (78%)
		28.0%	24.0%	26.0%	16.0%	2.0%	4.0%			
42.	basic accountant stock	9	5	12	15	7	2	3.24	1.42	Unacceptable (52%)
		18.0%	10.0%	24.0%	30.0%	14.0%	4.0%			
43.	have a nice education	4	10	15	11	8	2	3.30	1.29	Unacceptable (58%)
		8.0%	20.0%	30.0%	22.0%	16.0%	4.0%			
44.	get new words	11	8	15	10	3	3	2.90	1.43	Unacceptable (68%)
		22.0%	16.0%	30.0%	20.0%	6.0%	6.0%			
45.	acquire the knowledge skills	6	7	8	14	7	7	3.61	1.56	Acceptable (56%)
		12.0%	14.0%	16.0%	28.0%	14.0%	14.0%			
46.	good students	-	-	-	11	23	16	5.10	0.73	Acceptable (100%)
		-	-	-	22.0%	46.0%	32.0%			
47.	provide knowledge and foreign language	3	7	5	17	9	9	3.98	1.46	Acceptable (70%)
		6.0%	14.0%	10.0%	34.0%	18.0%	18.0%			
48.	Current ages	5	10	8	8	9	10	3.72	1.67	Acceptable (54%)
		10.0%	20.0%	16.0%	16.0%	18.0%	20.0%			
49.	do a questionnaire	7	3	6	11	12	11	4.02	1.67	Acceptable (68%)
		14.0%	6.0%	12.0%	22.0%	24.0%	22.0%			
50.	a high and good situation	11	12	10	10	6	1	2.82	1.40	Unacceptable (66%)
		22.0%	24.0%	20.0%	20.0%	12.0%	2.0%			
51.	provide only theoretical general courses	1	1	2	6	27	13	4.92	1.02	Acceptable (92%)
		2.0%	2.0%	4.0%	12.0%	54.0%	26.0%			
52.	take a field	6	8	11	11	7	7	3.52	1.56	Unacceptable (50%)
		12.0%	16.0%	22.0%	22.0%	14.0%	14.0%			
53.	a great part	2	8	11	5	10	14	4.10	1.60	Acceptable (58%)
		4.0%	16.0%	22.0%	10.0%	20.0%	28.0%			
54.	a specific books	-	5	5	8	11	21	4.76	1.36	

		-	10.0%	10.0%	16.0%	22.0%	42.0%			
55.	make a discussion	7	9	12	13	4	5	3.26	1.48	Unacceptable (56%)
		14.0%	18.0%	24.0%	26.0%	8.0%	10.0%			
56.	the topic special	16	17	11	3	3	-	2.20	1.14	Unacceptable (88%)
		32.0%	34.0%	22.0%	6.0%	6.0%	-			
57.	make knowledge or departments	18	16	8	4	2	2	2.54	2.93	Unacceptable (84%)
		36.0%	32.0%	16.0%	8.0%	4.0%	4.0%			
58.	give a complete attention	16	18	9	3	1	3	2.28	1.35	Unacceptable (86%)
		32.0%	36.0%	18.0%	6.0%	2.0%	6.0%			
59.	get the stages	11	11	11	8	8	1	2.88	1.45	Unacceptable (66%)
		22.0%	22.0%	22.0%	16.0%	16.0%	2.0%			
60.	high way of thinking	10	11	7	12	8	2	3.06	1.51	Unacceptable (56%)
		20.0%	22.0%	14.0%	24.0%	16.0%	4.0%			
61.	acquire for some skills	10	10	10	13	4	3	3.00	1.47	Unacceptable (60%)
		20.0%	20.0%	20.0%	26.0%	8.0%	6.0%			
62.	require to a skill	17	9	10	9	4	1	2.54	1.43	Unacceptable (72%)
		34.0%	18.0%	20.0%	18.0%	8.0%	2.0%			
63.	gain an academic knowledge and skills	8	8	9	14	8	3	3.30	1.48	Unacceptable (50%)
		16.0%	16.0%	18.0%	28.0%	16.0%	6.0%			
64.	specific offer	1	9	4	8	13	15	4.36	1.53	Acceptable (72%)
		2.0%	18.0%	8.0%	16.0%	26.0%	30.0%			
65.	has a strong and special effect	-	-	-	11	27	12	5.02	0.68	Acceptable (100%)
		-	-	-	22.0%	54.0%	24.0%			
66.	offer high level education	1	1	4	13	12	19	4.82	1.20	Acceptable (88%)
		2.0%	2.0%	8.0%	26.0%	24.0%	38.0%			
67.	specific skills	-	-	-	9	14	27	5.36	0.77	Acceptable (100%)
		-	-	-	18.0%	28.0%	54.0%			
68.	acquire more time	3	5	7	13	7	15	4.22	1.55	Acceptable (70%)
		6.0%	10.0%	14.0%	26.0%	14.0%	30.0%			

69.	take an intensive course	-	-	-	7	14	29	5.44	0.73	Acceptable (100%)
		-	-	-	14.0%	28.0%	58.0%			
70.	get a best learning	19	13	9	5	2	2	2.28	1.38	Unacceptable (82%)
		38.0%	26.0%	18.0%	10.0%	4.0%	4.0%			
71.	enhance a great opportunities	18	11	14	3	1	3	2.34	1.39	Unacceptable (86%)
		36.0%	22.0%	28.0%	6.0%	2.0%	6.0%			
72.	an academic knowledge and skills	8	4	15	12	8	3	3.34	1.43	Unacceptable (54%)
		16.0%	8.0%	30.0%	24.0%	16.0%	6.0%			
73.	gain more higher education	10	8	19	9	1	3	2.84	1.33	Unacceptable (74%)
		20.0%	16.0%	38.0%	18.0%	2.0%	6.0%			
74.	high ideas	15	8	13	10	3	1	2.62	1.36	Unacceptable (72%)
		30.0%	16.0%	26.0%	20.0%	6.0%	2.0%			
75.	make an academic, modern education	8	17	11	6	5	3	2.84	1.43	Unacceptable (72%)
		16.0%	34.0%	22.0%	12.0%	10.0%	6.0%			
76.	in general or in a modern way	3	12	13	12	8	2	3.32	1.28	Unacceptable (56%)
		6.0%	24.0%	26.0%	24.0%	16.0%	4.0%			
77.	require researches and knowledge	8	10	12	7	12	1	3.16	1.46	Unacceptable (60%)
		16.0%	20.0%	24.0%	14.0%	24.0%	2.0%			
78.	the general and the academic information.	5	8	10	18	6	3	3.42	1.34	Acceptable (54%)
		10.0%	16.0%	20.0%	36.0%	12.0%	6.0%			
79.	acquire the other work	9	10	12	12	5	2	3.00	1.39	Unacceptable (62%)
		18.0%	20.0%	24.0%	24.0%	10.0%	4.0%			
80.	acquire the knowledge skills	7	6	9	14	8	6	3.56	1.55	Acceptable (56%)
		14.0%	12.0%	18.0%	28.0%	16.0%	12.0%			

The results of the non-academic rating survey showed that similar results were obtained to those in the academic rating survey, and in the main study in terms of acceptable collocations (control items). All of the eight control items were assessed as acceptable to native like use in every day context with very high percentages and means as shown in Table 5.6 below. The 100% responses reveal the strength of the native speakers' assertions that the learners' collocational patterns were usual combinations in English. This also indicates that all the native speakers gave their answers on the acceptable side of the Likert scale (4-6 options). This is also shown through their high means which is used to indicate the central tendency of the data. For example, the highest mean was 5.44 which was for two items: item 10 – general information (100%) and item 69 – take an intensive course (100%), since 52% and 58% of the answers were given to option 6, 40% and 28% to option 5 and 8% and 14% given to option 4 respectively. Most of the responses were centred on option 6 (completely acceptable) which reflects the commonality of those two collocational patterns produced by the learners. Furthermore, the 98% and 92% which were for the two items: item 8 – acquire knowledge and item 51 – provide only theoretical general courses respectively, indicating that a small number (2% and 8%) of the native speakers put forward their responses on the unacceptable side of the scale (options 1-3). It is likely that this was as a result of carelessness in filling in the survey.

Table 5-6 Results of control items (acceptable collocations) in non-academic rating survey

Item no.	Control items	The percentage of responses to 4-6 options	Mean	SD.
8.	acquire knowledge	98	5.30	0.81
10.	general information	100	5.44	0.64
25.	offer good information and higher	100	5.18	0.74

	education			
46.	good students	100	5.10	0.73
51.	provide only theoretical general courses	92	4.92	1.02
65.	has a strong and special effect	100	5.02	0.68
67.	specific skills	100	5.36	0.77
69.	take an intensive course	100	5.44	0.73

Table 5.7 below illustrates the results of the learners' unacceptable collocations which were classified as implausible as indicated earlier in the main study. The results revealed that native speakers of English assessed nearly all the implausible collocations as unacceptable except two. They are: item 34 - current time with a mean of 4.22 and item 48 - current ages with a mean of 3.72. The percentages of these unacceptable rated collocations were not as high as those of the academic rating group, since the non-academic rating group provided their responses in most of the cases for all the Likert scale options. However, the majority of the answers were placed on the unacceptable side of the scale. For example, item 38 - a special specialty had the highest percentage of responses with 92% and a mean of (1.88), given that 46% of the answers were given to option 1, 30% to option 2, 16% to option 3, 6% to option 4 and 2% to option 5. Overall, these results show that native speakers agreed with their peers in the academic rating survey in their judgments of these collocations.

Table 5-7 Results of unacceptable implausible collocations in non-academic rating survey

Item no.	Unacceptable collocation	The percentage of responses	Mean	SD.
3.	good substances	66 (unacceptable)	2.90	1.44
7.	have many styles	62 (unacceptable)	3.22	1.31
11.	take the importance or specific background	52 (unacceptable)	3.38	1.39
18.	good building space	80 (unacceptable)	2.78	1.16

22.	give and have high education	80 (unacceptable)	2.50	1.26
34.	current time.	70 (acceptable)	4.22	1.47
38.	a special specialty	92 (unacceptable)	1.88	1.02
41.	get works and variety skills	78 (unacceptable)	2.52	1.32
48.	current ages	54 (acceptable)	3.72	1.67
57.	make knowledge or departments	84 (unacceptable)	2.54	2.93
59.	get the stages	66 (unacceptable)	2.88	1.45
79.	acquire the other work	62 (unacceptable)	3.00	1.39

With regard to erroneous collocations in which the deviation was related to lexical errors, 8 patterns were evaluated as acceptable by the native speakers with the highest percentage response, 78% (mean = 4.54), being given to the collocation a higher chance (item 15). This was followed by 76% given to item 5 - modern knowledge (mean = 4.44). Among 25 erroneous collocations which contained only grammatical errors and were classified in the main study as partially acceptable, only 8 collocations were evaluated by 50 native speakers as acceptable; for example, item 32 - modern language with a mean of 4.30, item 54 - a specific books with 4.76, item 66 - offer high level education with 4.82 and item 78 - the general and the academic information with 3.42. The percentage and mean of most of these collocational patterns were high as the majority of the responses were provided for the acceptable side of the scale (options 4-6). Table 5.8 presents all the collocations judged as acceptable by native speakers in the non-academic rating survey. In addition, the percentage of subjects' responses to the acceptable side of the scale options as well as overall mean and standard deviations are also introduced in this table.

Table 5-8 Learners' collocations which were judged differently in the non-academic rating survey as opposed to the main study

Item no.	Collocation in question	The percentage of responses to 4-6 options	Mean	SD.
5.	modern knowledge	76	4.44	1.28
13.	the current time	52	3.98	1.57
15.	a higher chance	78	4.54	1.51
32.	modern language	74	4.30	1.60
33.	getting more knowledge and skills	64	3.92	1.36
34.	current time	70	4.22	1.47
35.	a great generation	60	4.10	1.64
45.	acquire the knowledge skills	56	3.61	1.56
47.	provide knowledge and foreign language	70	3.98	1.46
48.	current ages	88	3.72	1.67
49.	do a questionnaire	68	4.02	1.67
53.	a great part	58	4.10	1.60
54.	a specific books	80	4.76	1.36
64.	specific offer	78	4.36	1.53
66.	offer high level education	88	4.82	1.20
78.	the general and the academic information	54	3.42	1.34
80.	acquire the knowledge skills	56	3.56	1.55

This section presented and explained the results gained from the non-academic rating survey. The results revealed that the non-academic rating group of native speakers rated some of the learners' collocational patterns as being acceptable as native like use in everyday contexts. In the following section, the results of the independent sample t-test is introduced and explained. I conducted this test to explore whether there is a significant difference between native speaker ratings of English language learner collocations in academic as opposed to non-academic contexts. The results of the last question in the acceptability survey are presented at the end of this section.

5.2.3 Results of the Independent Sample T-Test

An independent sample t-test was conducted to measure the difference in the rating between the academic and the non-academic rating groups (see 4.9 for details on analytical framework for the survey). It was performed by comparing and testing the mean of the native speakers' rating done according to academic English with that of the native speakers' rating done according to non-academic English. Table 5.9 below presents the results of the t-test. Overall, as can be seen from the table below, the results of the t-test show that the mean of the native speakers' judgments in the academic rating survey (M=3.02, Sd=0.49) was significantly lower than that of the non-academic rating survey (M=3.33, Sd=0.49) which suggests that the academic rating group were more critical than their non-academic rating peers. This difference in judgment was significant $t(98) = 3.21, p=0.002$.

Table 5-9 Results of the independent sample t-test

The independent sample t-test			
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Mean for all survey items	-3.21	98	0.002
Mean for all survey items without control items	-3.29	98	0.001
Mean for the control items	0.641	98	0.523

In addition, by investigating the means of all judgments for both surveys, it was revealed that both groups of native speakers showed the tendency to rate learners' collocations as unacceptable since the overall mean of all items was less than 3.50. However, figure 5.1 below shows that the native speakers who did the non-academic rating survey had a higher mean (3.33) than their peers for the academic rating one (3.02). This was also the case for the mean of all items without the control items (acceptable collocations) where native speakers of the non-academic rating survey

were less strict in their rating. This is likely to be because there is a level of flexibility when communicating with non-academic native speakers as opposed to native-speaking academics. This was shown by the mean (3.12) which was higher than that of the other group (2.77). Finally, there were no significant differences in the means of the control items in the surveys, 5.27 for the academic rating survey and 5.22 for the non-academic rating one. This shows that those collocations are common in English language.

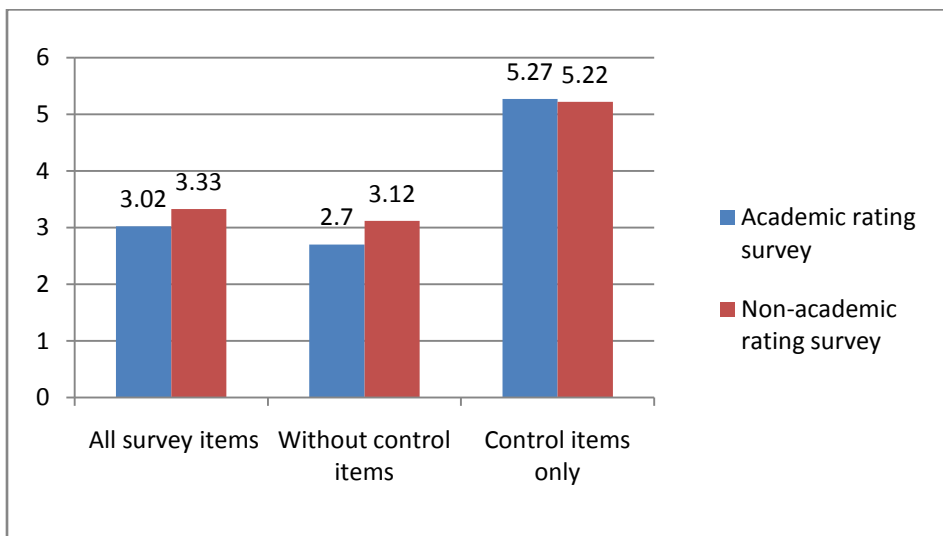


Figure 5-1 The averages of academic and non-academic rating surveys

The analysis of the results of the last question in the acceptability survey (would your answers be different if the extracts were from conversations rather than written essays?) revealed that only 30 subjects responded to it. Of these, twenty six participants answered ‘yes’ and stated their reasons ‘why’ whereas the other four answered ‘no’ without indicating why. The following examples demonstrate the twenty six participants’ responses to this question:

[Respondent a]: “because some conversations are not as formal as academic essays (slang / different phrases are used in spoken language)”

[Respondent b]: “essays require language at academic level”

[Respondent c]: “Speech does not have to be grammatically correct for people to comprehend”

[Respondent d]: “conversations are more spontaneous whereas essays are formal”

[Respondent e]: “I would not be as critical”

[Respondent f]: “Spontaneous speech is often non-standard anyway”, and

[Respondent g]: If the extracts were from conversation, I would rate them differently because spoken language is much more informal than written essays, meaning errors in language are much more common and more widely accepted in spoken language.

5.2.4 Summary

In the previous sections, I introduced and explained the results gained from the academic rating survey, the non-academic rating survey and the independent sample t-test. The following points can be summarized:

1. Generally, the results show that the non-academic rating group were similar to their peers in the academic rating survey in some cases when judging some of the learners’ collocational patterns as being acceptable, e.g., a great generation, do a questionnaire, acquire more time,

getting more knowledge and skills and a great part. However, they were less critical in their judgment.

2. The eight control items (acceptable collocations) were judged as acceptable by both academic rating and non-academic rating groups which agrees with the findings obtained using the other methods in the main study (writing task).

3. The collocational pattern (i.e. current time) which was classified as unacceptable implausible collocations in the main study, was rated by both groups survey as being acceptable.

4. The learners' collocations were judged differently in the academic rating survey (i.e. acceptable) as opposed to the main study, these were to be amended in the main study as acceptable (see Table 5.4 above for full list).

5. The results of the independent sample t-test showed that there were significant differences in the native speakers' judgments in the academic rating survey ($M=3.02$, $Sd=0.49$) and the non-academic rating survey ($M=3.33$, $Sd=0.49$), $t(98)=3.21$, $p=0.002$.

The following section (5.3) is concerned with providing a full discussion of the obtained results introduced and analyzed in the previous sections.

5.3 Discussion of the Results of the Survey

This section discusses and interprets the results of both the academic and non-academic rating surveys presented in section 5.2 above.

5.3.1 Discussion of the Fourth Research Question

RQ4 was as follows: Is there a significant difference between native speaker ratings of English language learner collocations in academic as opposed to non-academic contexts?

The results of the survey showed that there were more varied opinions as to what was deemed acceptable in the non-academic instruction survey as opposed to the academic one. This was shown by the fact that the non-academic rating group of native speakers chose widely across the section options. This was in contrast to their peers when judging the acceptability of the collocation patterns according to their use in academic writing, i.e. their opinions were confined to a more narrow range.

Native speakers rated the learners' collocations in item 4 and item 5 from points 1 to 4 on the Likert scale according to their use in academic writing. For example, item 4 - give a great curriculum was given a percentage of 70% (2.98) of unacceptable responses. Furthermore, the result for item – 5 modern knowledge was 52% (3.10) of unacceptable responses. In contrast, these two collocation patterns were less strictly rated and various assessments exhibited throughout the 6-points of Likert scale in the non-academic rating survey. In this survey, unacceptable responses to 1-3 options were given to item 4 - give a great curriculum with 58% (3.26) and item 5 – modern knowledge 24% (4.44). Such varied opinions were also shown by the

number of acceptable responses in the non-academic rating survey (see results Chapter five - Table 5.9 learners' collocations which were judged differently in the non-academic rating survey as opposed to the main study).

In terms of the eight control items (acceptable collocations), the results of the non-academic rating survey showed that similar results were obtained to those in the academic one. These results agree with the results obtained in the main study. The percentages and the means of all those acceptable collocations were very high as indicated in table 5.2 and 5.7 shown in the previous section. For example, almost all the control items had 100% agreement that they are acceptable in English language, e.g., item 10 – general information, item 25 - offer good information and higher education, item 46 - good students, item 65 - has a strong and special effect, item 67 - specific skills and item 69 - take an intensive course. The 100% consensus shows native speakers' strong assessment of collocation acceptability. In addition, this result also reflects those collocations that are common in English.

With regard to the learners' collocational patterns which were judged as unacceptable collocations and further classified as implausible collocations in the main study, there were 12 items in the survey. They are: item 3 - good substances, item 7 - have many styles, item 11 - take the importance or specific background, item 18 - good building space, item 22 - give and have high education, item 34 - current time, item 38 - a special specialty, item 41 - get works and variety skills, item 48 - current ages, item 57 - make knowledge or departments, item 59 - get the stages and item 79 - acquire the other work. The results revealed that both academic rating and non-academic rating groups of native speakers rated these collocations as unacceptable apart from

the collocational pattern: item 34- current time which was assessed as being acceptable by both groups. Tables 5.3 and 5.8 present the results (i.e. the percentages, means and standard deviations) of those 10 unacceptable collocations in the academic rating and non-academic rating surveys respectively. For example, 90% of native speakers who did the academic rating survey and 92% of the other group who did the non-academic rating survey ranked item 38 - a special specialty as unacceptable with a mean of 1.78 and 1.88 respectively. This high percentage mirrors English native speakers' critical judgment when rejecting this collocation pattern. The native speakers encountered difficulty in inferring the intended meaning. Their assessment indicates that all the above-mentioned collocations (except item 34, judged as acceptable) are odd / unusual combinations in the English language. A possible explanation for both groups of native speakers rating item 34- current time as being acceptable in contrast to the main study could be that they could communicate the intended meaning. In both surveys, this collocation had the same percentage and mean, item 34- current time 70% (4.22).

In addition, useful insights were gained from these survey results into native speakers' assessment of learners' collocation patterns. Both academic and non-academic rating groups of native speakers showed agreement on rating the following collocation patterns as acceptable: a great generation, do a questionnaire, acquire more time, getting more knowledge and skills and a great part. In contrast these collocations were judged as unacceptable in the main study according to the three methodological instruments used, i.e. Oxford Collocational Dictionary, the BNC and consultations with two native speakers. A possible explanation of such a finding is that although these combinations are unusual or odd, both academic and non-academic rating groups of native

speakers (i.e. not the main study) assessed and rated them as acceptable, possibly because they were able to infer the intended meaning. Alternatively, another plausible interpretation might be that since this particular sample of the study was confined to university students in their twenties, it could be argued that this age group tends to be more tolerant in using language in general, and academic language in particular.

However, the means of the above-mentioned learners' collocations in the academic rating survey were much lower than that in the non-academic rating survey (for their means and standard deviation, see Tables 5.4 and 5.9 above). This suggests that native speakers have a tendency to be more critical and rigid in their assessment when it is concerned with academic writing rather than with non-academic English.

In contrast, the native speakers showed different opinions regarding the acceptability of other collocations in LLC in which the deviation was related to lexical errors. There were 35 items including those collocations in the survey. For instance, the non-academic rating group survey classified the following as acceptable: item 5 - modern knowledge with a mean of 4.44 (76%) and item 15 - a higher chance with 4.54 (78%). The high means and percentages show that the majority of native speakers' responses were inclined towards the acceptable side of the Likert scale.

However, the academic group survey assessed them as being academically unacceptable: item 5 - modern knowledge with a mean of 3.10 (52%) and item 15 - a higher chance with 3.12 (64%). The academic group judgments are in line with the results obtained in the main study.

Other useful results revealed that native speakers within each cohort showed disagreement of what is acceptable. For example, in the non-academic rating survey 50% of the subjects judged the following collocation patterns as acceptable: the modern time (item 26), take a field (item 52) and gain an academic knowledge and skills (item 63). Meanwhile, 50% of the academic rating group rated the collocation pattern acquire more time (item 68) as acceptable. Generally, the diversity of adult English native speakers' opinion and assessment of learners' collocations shown throughout both surveys demonstrate that gaining a unanimous consensus of collocational acceptability is highly unlikely. According to Gairns and Redman (1986:37) "[t]here are inevitably differences of opinion as to what represents an acceptable collocation in English". They further explain that context is very important when dealing with English word combinations as unusual combinations might be judged to be acceptable in certain genres e.g., spoken language and literature (poetry). Indeed, this awareness of such constraints on the part of native speakers is identified by McCarthy (1990:14) as an important part of their knowledge of the language: "[s]tatements about collocation can never be absolute, specifically, common patterns of co-occurrence of lexemes".

Regarding the collocation do a questionnaire (item 49), looking up the entries of verb + questionnaire in the Oxford Collocations Dictionary for students of English and the BBI Dictionary of English Word Combinations, the verb do does not appear as a collocate of questionnaire. However, native speakers (from both academic rating and non-academic rating groups) judged this pattern to be acceptable. A possible interpretation could be that in spoken language, one might say 'I did a questionnaire yesterday', meaning 'fill in or complete'. Thus, the

verb do can be said to act as another collocate of questionnaire. This result indicates that a collocational dictionary cannot possibly list all alternative collocates of a lexical item. Therefore, it could be argued that collocation dictionaries need to take more account of informal register since spoken expressions are becoming more used in academic writing. Indeed, they seem to be particularly more prevalent in young language users' academic writing (essays), simply because they do not know any better, although with time, they will probably eradicate many spoken expressions from their written work. Consequently, this finding could suggest that English academic writing is changing slowly and becoming more flexible in accepting less formal (informal) expressions, of which collocations are a part.

In terms of erroneous collocations in which the errors were related to the grammatical category, both groups of native speakers agreed on rating the same 7 collocation patterns as acceptable, for example, modern language (item 32) and offer high level education (item 66). In all these patterns the error types were omissions, additions and substitutions of articles, prepositions, conjunctions and number (plural 's'). Native speakers in rating these collocations seemed to be focusing on the message / meaning rather than grammatical accuracy of the language. This is borne out by the native speakers' answers provided for the last question survey, viz: "essays require language at academic level" and "speech does not have to be grammatically correct for people to comprehend" (see below for a detailed discussion on this). Therefore, it is apparent that such types of errors do not affect the meaning or hinder communication. In this vein, Haworth (1998b:173) points out that grammatical errors such as small omissions or additions "cause little disruption to comprehension". It is worth noting that these errors were also found in native

speakers' academic writing which was investigated by Haworth (1998b). This indicates that there appears to be some variation in how native speakers view the acceptability of the ways in which words are arranged in various combinations within a sentence. In other words, educated native speakers are less tolerant in accepting questionable word combinations whereas less-experienced readers are more liberal or forgiving in their assessment. McCarthy supports this point by indicating that more mature native speakers have had more exposure to language data than their younger counterparts and are therefore more critical (1990:15).

Based on the results of the t-test (table 5.10), another insight gained from the results of the survey is that there were significant differences in the native speakers' judgments in the academic rating survey ($M=3.02$, $Sd=0.49$) and the non-academic rating survey ($M=3.33$, $Sd=0.49$), $t(98)=3.21$, $p=0.002$. It is clear that the native speakers who did the non-academic rating survey had a higher mean than their peers doing the academic rating one. Furthermore, after investigating these means, it could be seen that all judgments on both surveys revealed that both groups of native speakers showed the tendency to rate learners' collocations as unacceptable since the overall mean of all items was less than 3.50. In addition, the mean of all items without the fillers was higher for the native speakers doing the non-academic rating survey than that of the other group doing the academic rating survey. (3.12 versus 2.77). This indicates that there is a significant difference between what native speakers view as acceptable in academic writing and what they view as acceptable in spoken language. For example, modern knowledge and the current time appeared to be acceptable only in the non-academic rating survey. Hence, it can be concluded that native speaker judgment of collocations occurring in an academic context, tend to be stricter and

less tolerant than when assessing collocations which appear in less formal contexts. Furthermore, it shows that judgments about academic writing are more uniform than judgments about non-academic writing.

It is worth noting that the results of the last question in the survey (would your answers be different if the extracts were from conversations rather than written essays?) are in line with the above findings. All the subjects who answered ‘yes’ to this question, agreed that their rating would be done differently if the extracts were taken from conversation due to the differences in both registers (please see section 5.2.3 for some illustrative examples of the participants’ responses to this question).

Needless to say, these native speakers view academic writing as a mode requiring the need to use what they would see as Standard English, which would necessarily be free of deviations and informal collocations.

Thus, overall, the participants’ responses indicated that register was a very important factor in the process of judging learners’ collocational patterns. Therefore, it is important for researchers to indicate the register of their corpus when asking native speakers to evaluate and judge learners’ collocation patterns as this could affect their findings. Generally, the above discussion of results reveals a tendency for variation in native speaker responses when judging the acceptability of learners’ collocations.

Finally, the participants’ collocations were judged differently in the academic rating survey (i.e. acceptable) as opposed to the main study. These were amended in the main study as acceptable,

for example, item 33 - getting more knowledge and skills, item 35 - a great generation and item 53 - a great part, as explained in table 5.4 (learners' collocations which were adjudged differently in the academic rating survey as opposed to the main study).

5.4 Conclusion

This chapter has introduced the statistical data and the results of the surveys (academic and non-academic rating surveys). Various statistical analyses were conducted and presented in order to triangulate the three methods (i.e. Oxford Collocational Dictionary, the BNC and consultations with two native speakers), which were used to evaluate the acceptability of learners' collocational patterns and to answer the fourth research question presented in Chapter One. Means, percentages, and standard deviations of 80-item extracts taken from the learners' erroneous use of both verb-noun and adjective-noun collocations were calculated and presented in a number of tables and figures. Generally, the results showed that there was a consensus among both groups of native speakers to rate the learners' collocational patterns as acceptable. Most importantly, the learners' collocational patterns were judged differently in the academic rating survey (i.e. acceptable) as opposed to the main study; these were to be amended in the main study as acceptable. Furthermore, an independent sample t-test was used to discover whether there was a significant difference between native speaker ratings of English language learner collocations in academic as opposed to non-academic contexts (RQ4). The results of this test revealed that there were significant differences in the native speakers' judgments in the academic rating survey ($M=3.02$, $Sd=0.49$) and the non-academic rating survey ($M=3.33$, $Sd=0.49$), $t(98)=3.21$, $p=0.002$. This significant finding shows that register is a very important factor in the process of judging

learners' collocational patterns. Therefore, it is important for researchers to indicate the register of their corpus when asking native speakers to evaluate and judge learners' collocation patterns as this could affect their findings.

Chapter 6

The Results of the Written Task

6.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the results of the learners' academic writing task which was described in Chapter Four. The analysis employed both quantitative and qualitative methods. The purpose of this chapter is to provide answers to the research questions introduced in Chapter One. They are reiterated as follows:

RQ1. Which type of collocation (verb-noun or adjective-noun) is more problematic for Libyan learners?

RQ1.1. Is there any significant difference in learners' performance when using the 24 verbs and adjectives²⁰ identified in this research in verb-noun and adjective-noun collocations?

RQ2. What types of errors do Libyan learners make when producing verb-noun and adjective-noun collocations?

RQ3: Do these errors allow us to infer any possible reasons for their presence?

This chapter is divided into five sections: section 6.2 is concerned with presenting results for the verb-noun collocations. These include: (1) the overall raw frequency of the investigated verbs in the LLC; (2) the results of the participants' overall performance of verb-noun collocations; and (3) types of errors identified in verb-noun collocations produced in the LLC. This section ends

²⁰ The twelve identified verbs are *do, provide, acquire, gain, enhance, make, offer, take, give, get, have* and *require*. The twelve identified adjectives are *good, academic, high, higher, modern, current, practical, specific, basic, general, great* and *special*.

with a summary of the findings. Similarly, section 6.3 introduces the results for adjective-noun collocations using a similar sequence as above. Section 6.4 deals with presenting the statistical results of participants' performance when using the investigated verbs and adjectives. These include: (1) descriptive statistics of verb-noun and adjective-noun collocations; (2) the boxplot of the accuracy percentages of the investigated verbs and adjectives in verb-noun and adjective-noun collocations; and (3) the results of an independent sample t-test after removing the outliers.

6.2 The Results for the Verb-Noun Collocations

6.2.1 The Overall Raw Frequency of the Investigated Verbs in the Libyan Learner Corpus

Table 6.1 shows the overall raw frequency (including the occurrences of collocational and non-collocational use) of the twelve selected verbs in the LLC. In addition, their rank and distribution in 186 essays are included.

As can be seen from Table 6.1 below, the verbs 'have', 'make', 'provide', 'give', 'do', 'get' and 'take' were of higher frequency and more well-distributed than other academic verbs such as the verbs 'gain', 'acquire', 'offer', 'require' and 'enhance'. The verb 'have' was ranked in first position in terms of frequency and distribution with 410 occurrences in 164 essays. This high frequency is due to the fact that they are used in all kinds of contexts in language, (they are classified among the common verbs by Biber et al., (1999:367)). However, their high frequency does not mean that the participants (Libyan learners) used these verbs correctly in their writing, because there were many instances of them using them inappropriately, as revealed by their occurrences in erroneous verb-noun collocations (this will be discussed in greater detail in the following section).

Not all occurrences of these verbs as shown in Table 6.1 included collocations. For example, the verb ‘have’ was used as an auxiliary verb in several sentences and as a modal in others, e.g. *has been achieved, have to focus on, have recently noticed* and *have to be eligible*. Judging by my own experience as a learner and a teacher in the Libyan educational system, this suggests that Libyan teachers appear to be more successful in teaching grammar rather than vocabulary. Similarly, most of the examples of the verb ‘do’ illustrate its use as an auxiliary verb with a total number of occurrences of 137 out of 195 (70.2 %), e.g., *I do believe, do not care, How do we study, does not have, did you learn* and so on. Furthermore, *the required level of knowledge* and *the required knowledge and skills* are examples of ‘require’ being used as an adjective whilst *get to know themselves, get it* and *get ready for work* are instances of ‘get’ being used as part of idioms.

Table 6-1 Overall raw frequency of the investigated verbs in the LLC

Verb	Total number of occurrences	Rank	Distribution
Have	410	1	164
Make	259	2	118
Provide	253	3	148
Give	209	4	112
Do	195	5	108
Get	169	6	95
Take	80	7	62
Gain	76	8	55
Acquire	49	9	46
Offer	49	10	39
Require	47	11	41
Enhance	46	12	39

6.2.2 The Results of the Libyan Students' Overall Performance of Verb-Noun Collocations

In the quantitative analysis of Libyan students' production of verb-noun collocations, the number of acceptable collocations as well as erroneous collocations was counted. Table 6.2 presents information about the learners' overall performance in producing verb-noun collocations for the twelve verbs under investigation in terms of their frequency of acceptable collocations and erroneous (partially acceptable and unacceptable) collocations, their ranking of frequency of use and their accuracy percentages. Table 6.2 shows that a total of 1369 collocational patterns were produced by the participants of the study. Of these, 686 (50.1%) were acceptable collocations whereas 683 (49.8%) were unacceptable collocations.

Table 6-2 The participants' overall production of acceptable and erroneous verb-noun collocations

Frequency ranking	Verb	Overall frequency of collocations	No. of acceptable collocations	No. of erroneous collocations	No. of students	Accuracy percentage
1.	Have	278	131	147	144	47.12
2.	Provide	213	117	96	128	54.9
3.	Give	190	100	90	110	52.6
4.	Make	181	73	108	105	40.3
5.	Get	152	53	99	96	34.8
6.	Gain	71	55	16	54	77.4
7.	Take	67	30	37	57	44.7
8.	Do	58	33	25	50	56.8
9.	Acquire	47	35	12	44	74.4
10.	Enhance	42	23	19	38	54.7
11.	Require	37	20	17	31	54
12.	Offer	32	16	17	26	48.4
Totals		1369	686	683		50.1

It is clear from the above table that the participants used five high-frequency verbs, i.e., ‘have’, ‘provide’, ‘give’, ‘make’, and ‘get’ in verb-noun collocations more frequently than the other seven verbs. They had an overall high collocational frequency, at more than 150 occurrences in every instance by more than half of the participants and were ranked from the first to the fifth position respectively. However, I discarded proportions in determining the ranking of collocational use since proportionally the most frequently used verb appeared in less than a quarter of the LLC. For example, the verb ‘acquire’ is used more in collocations than in other contexts (47 instances of collocational use out of 49 instances of overall raw frequency) by 44 students and ‘enhance’ (42 out of 46) by 38 students.

The verb ‘have’ was placed in the first rank according to the frequency of collocational use, with a total of 278 times. Of these, 131 were acceptable collocations and 147 were erroneous collocations produced by 144 students. The participants’ acceptable use of ‘have’ in verb-noun collocations appeared in examples such as *has many problems*, *have fun*, and *had a chance* whereas other examples of collocations were erroneous, such as **have not very good doctors*, **have a basic grammatical*, and **have a responsible*. However, it did not record a high accuracy percentage (47.12%).

Table 6.2 shows that the verb ‘provide’ has an overall frequency of 213 and is the second most frequent verb. The 213 occasions were located within 128 essays in the LLC. More than half of the overall collocational frequency, (117 instances) was made up of acceptable collocations, e.g. *provide knowledge and skills* (x66), *provide computer labs* and *provide higher education*. The

number of erroneous collocations was 96 instances, for example, **provide (our, their) skills* (x3), **provide the writing* (x4) and **provide our knowledge*.

The verb 'give' occurred 190 times as part of verb-noun collocations in the students' essays and was used by 110 participants. These 190 occurrences were divided into 100 acceptable collocations such as *give the answer*, *give more details* and *give marks* and *giving advice.*, whilst 90 examples were erroneous collocations as in **give a great curriculum*, **give good implication* and **give a complete attention*.

105 out of 186 participants used the verb 'make' in 181 instances of verb-noun collocations. This verb was ranked fourth in terms of overall collocational frequency. The number of acceptable collocations recorded was 73, for example, *make notes*, *make some changes* and *make a successful career*. However, the number of erroneous collocations was 108, constituting 59.6%, for example, **make many examples*, **make discussion* and **make huge modification*.

I decided to examine the effects of the writing task rubric on students' use of the verbs 'provide' and 'make' in verb-noun collocations apart from the other investigated verbs for two reasons: (1) these two verbs appeared in verb-noun collocations in the essay question (see appendix 7); and (2) the results show that these two verbs had high collocational frequency in the students' written essays. The results reveal that 91 (42.7%) out of 213 occurrences of the verb 'provide' in verb-noun collocations were similar to the collocation *provide knowledge and skills* given in the topic, in that the participants used the verb with the same nouns repeatedly. Sixty-six of these occurrences were deemed acceptable collocations while 25 were erroneous. However, the participants sometimes slightly changed this collocation pattern, for example, *provide knowledge*

and learning and *provide skills and information*. **Provide many skills to students* and **provide the basic of knowledge and skills* are instances of erroneous collocations.

With regard to the verb ‘make’, the causative ‘make’ collocation pattern *make students more knowledgeable* also appeared in the task topic. The occurrences of this pattern were counted, in spite of the fact that this pattern has a more complex grammatical structure (verb + noun + complement construction) than the verb-noun collocation types proposed by Benson et al (1997) which I have adopted in my study. Typical structures conforming to verb-noun types found in Benson et al (ibid) are: (1) verb (which connotes eradication/cancellation) + noun e.g. *withdraw an offer, demolish a house*; and (2) verb (which connotes creation, action) + noun / pronoun / prepositional phrase e.g. *come to an agreement, launch a missile*. Since the causative ‘make’ structure does not fit Benson et al.’s framework, another (causative) category needed to be added to verb-noun collocation types to account for this. There are also other verbs that fit this causative category.

The results revealed that 37 instances of the participants’ ‘make’ verb-noun collocations were identical to its collocational pattern used in the task topic. In addition, the Libyan students produced 17 instances of causative ‘make’ in other similar patterns such as *make students understand, make the students professional, make students better, make study easier* and *make students very successful and professional*. The above 54 causative ‘make’ patterns were mainly adjectival structures (make something possible), whereas only a few cases were verbal structures (make somebody realize something). Therefore, only 19 out of 73 overall instances of acceptable ‘make’ collocational patterns were of the verb-noun collocation types adopted in the study.

Clearly, the Libyan participants were proficient at using 'make' in causative structures. From my experience both as a learner and a teacher in the Libyan context, the teachers' emphasis is on teaching and introducing different grammatical structures, thus, there might perhaps be a connection between the participants' use of causative 'make' and the teaching of English grammar. According to Altenberg and Granger (2001:184) most English language coursebooks draw attention to causative structures involving the verb 'make' which ensure that this particular area of grammar is addressed.

In conclusion, it seems that the high collocational frequency for 'provide' and 'make' were due to the participants' tendency to copy the collocational patterns which appeared in the rubric task, however, different interpretations could be proffered for such findings. The topic itself (education) possibly predisposed the students to use the verbs 'provide' and 'make' in various collocations and such verbs would be expected to be used in this context. However, the students appeared to limit the number of noun collocates complementing the two verbs 'provide' and 'make' to 'knowledge and skills' and '(make) ... more knowledgeable' to the virtual exclusion of other possible noun collocates. This can be attributed to the students' unfamiliarity with a wide range of collocating nouns for the verbs 'provide' and 'make'.

The verb 'get' also had a high overall collocational frequency appearing 152 times in verb-noun collocations in 96 essays. Of these occurrences, 53 examples were an acceptable use of 'get' in verb-noun collocations such as *get (a, the, a good, another) job(s)* (x11), *get (some, more, new, the basic, a lot of) information* x9 and *get enough time*. In contrast, 99 cases, constituting about 65%, were erroneous uses of 'get' in verb-noun collocations. Examples of these are: **get a*

knowledge, **get master degree* and **got awareness*. Accordingly, it was ranked as the lowest accuracy verb with an accuracy percentage of 34.8%.

The results in Table 6.2 also reveal that the other seven verbs from ‘gain’ to ‘offer’ had an overall low raw collocational frequency of less than 100 occurrences each in the LLC. In addition, they appear in less than a third (31%) of the students’ essays, 62 in total, and were ranked in the lowest seven positions respectively. These included the top two most accurately used verbs ‘gain’ and ‘acquire’. For example, 54 participants used the verb ‘gain’ in verb-noun collocations 71 times. Of these, 55 examples were used in acceptable verb-noun collocations, e.g., *gain experience*, *gain knowledge* and *gain practical skills*. However, only 16 (22.5%) were used inappropriately in verb-noun collocations, e.g. **gain more vocabulary*, **gain perfect job* and **gain good accent*. Thus, ‘gain’ was the most accurately used verb in the LLC with an accuracy percentage of 77.4%.

Table 6.2 shows that the verb ‘take’ was used 67 times by 57 students. The number of acceptable collocations was 30, and included, for example, *take advantage of* and *take a closer look at*. However, the number of erroneous collocations was 37, for example, **take these tasks*, **take the higher information* and **take a good educate*.

50 out of 186 students used the verb ‘do’ as part of verb-noun collocation in their essays, a total of 58 times, placing it in sixth position. A total of 33 occurrences were adjudged to be acceptable uses of ‘do’ in verb-noun collocations. Examples of these are: *do all their best* x10, *do activities* and *doing the exams*. 25 instances were inappropriate use of ‘do’ in verb-noun collocations such as **do researches*, **do and make labs* and **do many kind of skills*.

The results revealed that the verb 'acquire' had an overall low collocational frequency, appearing 47 times in 44 students' essays. Thirty-five instances, constituting 74.4%, were acceptable uses of this verb in verb-noun collocations. The following are illustrative examples: *acquire knowledge and skills* and *acquire a lot of experience*. Only 12 instances of its overall occurrences were erroneous collocations such as **acquire more time*, **acquire the knowledge skills* and **acquire a great modern education*.

Table 6.2 shows that the verb 'enhance' had an overall low frequency of 42. This frequency was located within a range of 38 essays. Within this, the number of acceptable collocations was 23, e.g., *enhance the skills* and *enhance their knowledge*. The number of erroneous collocations was 19 cases, constituting about 45%, for example, **enhance the educate*, **enhance from their ability* and **enhances the levels of workers*.

Approximately 16.6% (31) of the overall participants used the verb 'require' in 37 occurrences of verb-noun collocations as indicated in Table 6.2. Moreover, the results reveal that 'require' was the second lowest used verb in the LLC. These divided into 20 acceptable collocations, e.g., *require special skills and training* and *academic qualifications are required*, whereas 17 collocations were erroneous, e.g., **requires a special care, and a great attention*, **require researches and knowledge* and **require to a skill*.

Table 6.2 reveals that the least used verb was 'offer' used by 31 (16.6%) students with 32 occurrences of verb-noun collocations. The students' use of this verb in both acceptable and erroneous collocations occurred a similar number of times, i.e. 16 and 17, respectively. Examples of the 16 acceptable collocations are: *offer special labs* and *offer good information and higher*

education to. Examples of the 17 instances ones are: **offer the large information*, **offer high level education* and **offered a general learning for*.

6.2.3 Types of Errors Identified in Verb-Noun Collocations Produced in the LLC

This section is concerned with introducing the results of the second research questions (RQ2) regarding the types of errors Libyan learners make when producing verb-noun collocations.

As can be seen from Table 6.3 below, three broad categories of errors were identified when analyzing errors made by the participants when using verb-noun collocations in their written essays. These are (1) grammatical errors, (2) lexical errors and (3) errors related to usage (i.e. in this study, usage errors refer to any collocation which does not exist in English). My analysis revealed that a total of 907 errors occurred in 683 learners' erroneous collocational patterns. The most frequent errors were related to grammar, with a frequency of 537 (59.5%), while lexical errors totalled 342 (37.7%) and errors associated with usage occurred at a very low frequency of 28, constituting 3% only. Furthermore, those categories were then classified and divided into sixteen error types which related to different parts of speech, e.g., verb, noun and adjective, and varied in their degree of difficulty for learners.

In addition, the proportion of errors per pattern was 1.328. The equation used to calculate the proportion of errors simply divides the frequency of errors (907) by the frequency of the erroneous collocations (683) (i.e. $907 \div 683 = 1.328$). This result reveals that on average more than one error occurred in every collocation of the participants' erroneously produced verb-noun collocations in their academic written essays.

Table 6.3 presents the various error types according to a hierarchy of difficulty (i.e. according to their frequency in the learners' erroneous collocations from the most to the least frequent errors). The examples provided in the table below illustrate the different kinds of errors. However, this does not mean that other types of errors do not occur in these collocational patterns as these are covered in other sections. For example, in the erroneous collocation **have a good knowledges* (acceptable collocation: *have good knowledge of*), two types of errors were identified, namely, (a) superfluous determiner and (b) number problems.

In suggesting the acceptable collocation and correcting the different types of errors, the co-text in which the collocation was placed was taken into consideration. For instance, from the wider co-text, the learners' collocation **takes the lectures* is unacceptable from the students' perspective. Furthermore, the analysis is restricted to the more formal register of academic discourse on the basis of native speaker production and use (naturalness) in this particular context, thus, some of the collocation patterns which were rated as academically unacceptable (i.e. too informal) might be viewed as acceptable in spoken language. Examples are: *get knowledge, do a presentation and give great education*.

Table 6-3 Types of errors in verb-noun collocations used in the LLC

No.	Error type in the learner corpus	Example of error	Frequency of errors
1.	Lexical error: Verb (wrong choice of verb)	<i>*give their best (do ...)</i>	260
2.	Grammatical error: Determiner (missing, or present albeit unacceptable or wrong)	<i>*gets a good marks (... good marks)</i>	203
3.	Grammatical error: Preposition (preposition is missing, superfluous or is present albeit unacceptable, or wrong)	<i>*provide students opportunities (provide students with ...)</i>	107
4.	Grammatical error: Number (noun used in	<i>*have a good knowledges (...)</i>	80

	the singular instead of the plural or vice versa)	<i>good knowledge)</i>	
5.	Lexical error: Adjective (wrong choice of adjective owing to: 1) wrong register or 2) adjective and noun do not collocate)	*offer the large information (<i>provide 'valuable'</i>) *have a higher chance (... <i>a better chance</i>)	66
6.	Grammatical error: Wrong word order	*have many doctors good (<i>have many good doctors</i>)	50
7.	Grammatical error: Parts of speech (word form)	*have enough qualified (... <i>enough qualifications</i>)	39
8.	Usage: Implausible and irreparable combination	* get the stages	28
9.	Grammatical error: Verb (superfluous verb)	*provide develop students' ability (<i>improve</i>), *make enhance our society (<i>enhance</i>)	19
10.	Grammatical error: Conjunction (missing, or superfluous)	*have provide education (<i>have or provide</i>)	18
11.	Lexical error: Noun (wrong choice of noun)	*give the right lines (<i>give the right guidance or guidelines</i>)	16
12.	Grammatical error: Noun (superfluous noun)	*provided with modern way of technology (<i>provided with modern technology</i>)	5
13.	Grammatical error: Adverb (superfluous, missing modifying adverb)	*provide the knowledge, the skills and also more and more information (<i>provide the knowledge, skills and more information</i>)	5
14.	Grammatical error: Possessive 's (missing)	*get master degree (... <i>a master's degree</i>)	5
15.	Grammatical error: Intensifier (superfluous or wrong intensifier)	*have so low level education (<i>have such a low level of education</i>)	3
16.	Grammatical error: Adjective (superfluous adjective)	*have a good marks, good knowledge, great information (<i>have good marks, knowledge and good information</i>)	3
Total of error types			907

6.2.3.1 Lexical Collocational Errors: Wrong Choice of Verb

In terms of a hierarchy of difficulty, the results revealed that the most frequent error type occurring in the participants' verb-noun collocations were related to the lexical category (wrong choice of verb) with 260 occurrences. These occurrences constitute 28.7% of the overall frequency of errors rated as unacceptable according to the scale of acceptability used in this study (see 4.7.3) such as **take a good educate* instead of *have a good enough education*. Below are some examples of these collocations derived from the students' data:

- r it is harder. I guess in modern countries they got awareness to these points and they start to make (78-02-13.txt)
- university should educate their students, how to get language and how acquire the knowledge by give go (80-01-13.txt)
- ersity must help the students and enhance the right equipments for each subject to make the (21-02-13.txt)

Furthermore, the results revealed that the majority of learners' unacceptable verb-noun collocational patterns were formed by combining high-frequency verbs with various noun collocates; for example apart from the verb 'have', the verbs 'get', 'make', 'give', 'take', 'provide', and 'do' were placed as the most frequent verbs in unacceptable verb-noun collocations with 69, 68, 41, 32, 24 and 20 occurrences respectively.

On the other hand, the verbs 'gain', 'acquire', and 'offer' occurred only one or two times in unacceptable collocations where they were used instead of other verbs, e.g. **gain the techniques* instead of *learn the techniques* and **offer the large information* instead of *provide 'valuable' or*

'useful' information. In contrast, there were no instances of using 'enhance' and 'require' in unacceptable collocations.

6.2.3.2 Grammatical Collocational Errors: Determiners

Determiners, especially definite and indefinite articles, were the second most frequent problematic error type recording 203 (22.3%) occurrences in the students' erroneous verb-noun collocations. The following illustrative examples demonstrate cases of: 1) redundancy as in **acquire the knowledge skills* instead of *acquire knowledge and skills*, 2) omission as in **had basics* instead of *had the basics*, and 3) substitution such as **gives an opportunity for students* instead of *gives students the opportunity*. The following concordance lines present two of the above collocations in the context in which they occurred:

- now the life skills. University can make students acquire the knowledge skills.
University should be a mode (150-02-13.txt)
- because should students have a social field because already that they had basics
before. (53-02-13.txt)

6.2.3.3 Grammatical Collocational Errors: Prepositions

According to the hierarchy of difficulty, 'preposition error type' within the verb-noun collocations was placed in third position recording 107 (11.8%) erroneous instances. The following examples **provide to a specific book* instead of *provide a specific book* and **gives enhance of teaching language* instead of *enhance language teaching* illustrate cases where the preposition is superfluous whereas **provide the student knowledge and their skills* instead of *provide the students with knowledge and skills* and **have a higher material* instead of *have a high*

quality of material represent the omission of prepositions, while **take responsibility to* instead of *take responsibility for*, **provides students by information and skills* instead of *provides students with ...* exemplify the wrong use of prepositions. Below are some examples of these collocations derived from the students' data:

- my university. In modern academic universities we provide to give a specific book to increase their faculty (169-02-13.txt)
- udents special educate, and the universities must have a higher material and specific offer for students (157-02-13.txt)
- e educate in universities use practical way so it provides students by information and skills for future job (20-02-13.txt)

6.2.3.4 Grammatical Collocational Errors: Number

There were 80 instances, constituting 8.8% of the 'number error type' where the participants used singular instead of plural and vice versa. Some examples are: **have qualification* instead of *have the qualifications* and **make their researches* instead of '*conduct*' or '*do*' *their research*. Below are concordances of the above collocations derived from the students' written essays:

- udent don't want become in future teacher maybe want work in company but don't have qualification computer with English (99-01-13.txt)
- should be full of books that help the students to make their researches and all what they need could fou (21-02-13.txt)

6.2.3.5 Lexical Collocational Errors: Wrong Choice of Adjective

The third identified lexical error type was ‘the wrong choice of adjective’ with 66 (7.3%) occurrences, placed in fifth position in the above table. This error type can be further classified into two types:

Wrong choice of adjective where the adjective is not used appropriately to modify the head nouns (i.e. cannot be collocated). Examples of this error are: **have a high education* instead of *have a ‘good’, ‘appropriate’, ‘high-quality’, worthwhile’, ‘effective’ or outstanding’ education*, and **have great information* instead of *have good information*. The following concordance line presents one of the above collocations in the context in which it occurred:

- n't have a good education and some doctors didn't have a high education for teaching English language fo (179-02-13.txt)

Wrong choice of adjective owing to using the wrong register: the adjectives are considered to be inappropriate in the academic context while the collocation as it occurs may be acceptable in other contexts, e.g., spoken language. There were only six instances of this error in the entire corpus of learners’ verb-noun collocations such as **having great and perfect materials* instead of *accessing effective and high-quality materials*, and **gain a great education* instead of ‘*acquire*’, ‘*get*’, ‘*obtain*’, ‘*have*’ a *high-quality education*. * Below is an example of the above collocations derived from the students’ written essays:

- how students could get all of that? It's easy by having great and perfect materials in their universities (15-01-13.txt)
- tools to the students because directly they will gain a great education. Students in this situation oug (17-02-13.txt)

6.2.3.6 Grammatical Collocational Errors: Wrong Word Order

'Wrong word order' was another error type related to grammar, occurring 50 (5.5%) times in verb-noun collocations as in **doing the education step by step* instead of *doing step by step education* and **offer from English department good and academic teacher* instead of *the English department offers good, academic teaching*.

It is worth noting that wrong word order includes instances of wrong syntax when using negative connotation where the learners use *not only* and omit the auxiliary verb (to do) due to the fact that the negative in Arabic language is formed only by using *not*. The following examples illustrate this point: **have not very good doctors* instead of *do not have very good doctors* and **have not any skills* instead of *do not have any skills*.

6.2.3.7 Grammatical Collocational Errors: Parts of Speech (Word Form)

In the case of errors related to word form, the participants committed 39 (4.2%) errors when producing verb-noun collocations such as **get more knowledgeable²¹* instead of 'gain', 'acquire', or 'develop' more knowledge, **enhance the educate* instead of *enhance the education* and **have a good basic* instead of *have a good basis*.

²¹ It important to mention here that the co-text in which the collocation appeared was taken into consideration in providing and determining the correct collocation pattern.

6.2.3.8 Usage Collocational Errors: Implausible and Irreparable Combinations

There were 28 (3%) instances of errors connected with the usage category where the erroneous collocational patterns were classified as implausible and irreparable combinations when both the researcher and the consulted native speakers failed to suggest the acceptable collocations, even after looking at the whole paragraph in which the collocation occurred to recover the intended meaning but could not, e.g., **get the stages*, and **have many styles*. The following concordance lines present some of the above collocations in the context in which they occurred:

- because I'm not that good at it, also I have to get the stages those I have to depend on in my resear (48-02-13.txt)
- knowledge. When students work in any careers you have many styles about to discuss and talking for any one. (181-01-13.txt)

6.2.3.9 Grammatical Collocational Errors: Superfluous Verb

There were 19 (2%) instances of verbs identified as superfluous and classified as the ninth occurring grammatical error. Examples are: **provide and develop students' ability* instead of *develop students' ability*, **make have the best of* instead of *have the best of* and **get or take the higher information* instead of *get 'useful', 'beneficial', 'valuable' information*. The following statements include some of the collocations within the context in which they were written:

- we need in our learning. I hope that universities provide and develop students' ability and help them to ta (174-02-13.txt)

- to a level allows student to make have the best of both so they can be ready to choose at the end of their educati (104-02-13.txt)

6.2.3.10 Grammatical Collocational Errors: Conjunction

The tenth position of the grammatical error types was related to the use of conjunctions. The students made 18 errors when producing verb-noun collocations. These contained instances of 1) omission of conjunction such as **have a good marks, good knowledge great information* instead of *have good marks and knowledge and useful information*, and **acquire the knowledge skills* instead of *acquire knowledge and skills*, and 2) redundancy as in **make a good, a great and general students* instead of *make good, general students*. Below are some of these collocations derived from the students' written essays:

- think to study in universities and study hard to have a good marks, good knowledge great information. L (32-02-13.txt)
- At the university the education should be aim to make a good, a great and general students. (144-02-13.txt)

6.2.3.11 Lexical Collocational Errors: Wrong Choice of Noun

The 'wrong choice of noun' lexical error type was of low frequency, being placed in eleventh position with 16 (1.8%) occurrences only. Examples are: **do a great search* instead of *do thorough research*, **give good implication* instead of *make a good impression* and **give the right lines for* instead of *give the right guidance or guidelines*. This error type results in unacceptable

collocations. The following concordance lines present some of the above collocations in the context in which they occurred:

- es highly more than before and give modern way to give good implication
People took idea that is last 1 (35-01-13.txt)
- the knowledge in universities. Universities must give the right lines for the work
and training the students (111-01-13.txt)

6.2.3.12 Grammatical Collocational Errors: Superfluous Noun

The grammatical error known as superfluous noun was the second lowest frequent error types along with superfluous or missing adverb and missing possessive (_ 's) error types, occurring only 5 times each in the students' verb-noun collocational patterns. The following are illustrative examples of the superfluous noun error type: **have many kinds of ways* instead of *have many ways*, **provided with modern way of technology* instead of *provided with modern technology*, **provide enough technology methods* instead of *provide enough technology* and **have a special kind of educators* instead of *have good educators*.

6.2.3.13 Grammatical Collocational Errors: Superfluous or Missing Adverb

The following examples illustrate the participants' use of superfluous adverbs as part of verb-noun collocations: **provide the knowledge, the skills and also more and more information* instead of *provide the knowledge, skills and increasingly more information* and **do many kind of skills* instead of *perform different skills* **gain more higher education* instead of *gain higher education*.

Furthermore, the adverb in the collocation: **provide the knowledge, the skills and also more and more information* can also be classified as the use of wrong register.

6.2.3.14 Grammatical Collocational Errors: Missing Possessive (_ 's)

Similar to the two above errors, the missing possessive (_ 's) error was ranked as the second lowest error type with 5 occurrences. The following instances illustrate this point: **get master degree* instead of *get a master's degree*, **get student attention* instead of *get the student's attention*.

6.2.3.15 Grammatical Collocational Errors: Intensifier

The intensifier was the lowest frequent error type in the students' erroneous verb-noun collocations with only 3 (0.3%) occurrences, e.g., 1) wrong intensifier as in: **have so low level education* instead of *have such a low level of education*, 2) missing intensifier as in: **have that more knowledge* instead of *have much more knowledge*.

6.2.3.16 Grammatical Collocational Errors: Superfluous Adjective

Finally, the superfluous adjective error type was also ranked as the lowest frequent error with 3 instances in the students' verb-noun collocations such as: **have good marks, good knowledge, great information* instead of *have good marks and knowledge and 'useful' or 'beneficial' information*, **make a good, a great and general students* instead of *produce good, general students*.

6.2.4 Summary

In this section, I introduced and explained the results of the participants' performance when using the twelve verbs in verb-noun collocations. The following points can be summarized:

1. In terms of the overall raw frequency of the investigated verbs, the results of my analysis reveal that the verbs 'have', 'make', 'provide', 'give', 'do', and 'get' were of high frequency and well-distributed rather than other academic verbs such as the verbs: 'gain', 'acquire', 'offer', 'require' and 'enhance'. However, not all occurrences of these verbs include collocations.
2. Concerning their overall performance of verb-noun collocations, the participants produced 1369 verb-noun collocational patterns. Of these, 686 (50.1%) were acceptable collocations whereas 683 (49.8%) were erroneous collocations. For instance, the verb 'have' was placed in the first rank according to the frequency of collocational use with 278 times. 131 were acceptable collocations and 147 were erroneous collocations made by 144 students. Concerning the accuracy percentage of collocational use, 'gain' was the most accurately used verb with of 77.4%, while 'get' was the least accurately used verb with 34.8%.
3. The results of the investigation of the effects of the writing task rubric on students' use of the verbs 'provide' and 'make' showed that the high collocational frequency for 'provide' and 'make' were due to the participants' tendency to copy the collocational patterns which appeared in the rubric task.

4. Three broad categories of errors were identified in the participants' erroneous verb-noun collocations. These are (1) grammatical errors, (2) lexical errors and (3) errors related to usage. The most frequent errors were related to grammar, with a percentage of 59.5%.
5. These categories contained sixteen error types which related to different part of speech, e.g., verb, noun and so on and varied in their degrees of difficulty for learners.
6. Finally, the result of error proportion reveals that more than one error occurred in every collocation of the participants' erroneous verb-noun collocations with 1.328 errors per pattern.

The following section (6.3) will introduce the results of participants' performance in using the investigated adjectives as part of adjective-noun collocations in their academic essays. This is done in order to answer the first and second research questions (RQ1 and RQ2) concerning whether verb-noun or adjective-noun collocations are more problematic for the participants and to identify the types of errors Libyan learners make when producing adjective-noun collocations.

6.3 The Results for Adjective-noun Collocations

6.3.1 The Overall Raw Frequency of the Investigated Adjectives in the LLC

Table 6.4 presents the total occurrences for each adjective of the twelve selected in the LLC. The results of my analysis show that the most frequent adjective used was 'good', with 273 occurrences, followed by the adjective 'modern' with 97 occurrences. 'High' and 'practical' had almost the same frequency with 59 and 58 respectively, placing them in eighth and ninth

positions. The two adjectives with the lowest frequency were ‘special’ and ‘current’ with 40 and 20 occurrences respectively. However, not all occurrences of these adjectives included adjective-noun collocations. The following are illustrative examples:

- orking something, with the time they will be very good in it, and they might reach a high place in that (50-02-13.txt)
- ents should review his information. I wanna to be specific and talk about our department, it is not bad , bu (30-02-13.txt)

Table 6-4 Overall raw frequencies of the selected adjectives in the Libyan learner corpus

Adjective	Total number of occurrences	Rank	Distribution
Good	273	1	124
Modern	97	2	69
Academic	90	3	71
Great	86	4	61
General	84	5	65
Higher	65	6	49
Specific	62	7	47
High	59	8	49
Practical	58	9	44
Basic	47	10	40
Special	40	11	33
Current	20	12	20

6.3.2 The Results of the Libyan Students’ Overall Performance of Adjective-Noun Collocations

The results revealed that a total of 793 adjective-noun collocational patterns were produced by participants. Of these, 491 (61.9%) were acceptable collocations whereas 302 (38%) were unacceptable or questionable collocations. Table 6.5 below presents detailed information of the participants’ overall performance in producing adjective-noun collocations for the twelve

adjectives in terms of frequency of acceptable and erroneous collocations, their ranking of frequency of use and their accuracy percentage.

Table 6-5 Learners' overall production of acceptable and erroneous adjective-noun collocations

Frequency ranking	Adjective	Overall frequency of collocations	No. of acceptable collocations	No. of erroneous collocations	No. of students	Accuracy percentage
1.	Good	200	124	76	103	62
2.	Modern	89	63	26	64	70.7
3.	Academic	87	58	29	69	66.6
4.	Great	65	14	51	54	21.5
5.	Higher	57	27	30	48	47.3
6.	High	53	27	26	45	50.9
7.	Specific	51	39	12	36	76.4
8.	General	47	40	7	37	85
9.	Practical	45	32	13	38	71.1
10.	Basic	44	30	14	33	68.1
11.	Special	36	19	17	31	52.7
12.	Current	19	18	1	18	94.7
Totals		793	491	302		61.9

As can be seen from the table above, the adjective 'good' was placed in the first rank according to collocational frequency of use with 200 occurrences. It was also the most well-distributed adjective in the LLC as it appeared in 103 essays out of 186. However, it did not record the highest accuracy percentage in the LLC. It was used in 124 instances of acceptable adjective-noun collocations such as *a good way*, *a good basis* and *good information*, whilst 76 of its occurrences were erroneous, e.g., **a good teachers*, **a good information*, and **a good educate*.

The results show a steep drop in the collocational frequency for all other adjectives, at less than 100 occurrences in every instance, down to a score of 19 occurrences for the adjective 'current'.

For example, the adjectives ‘modern’, ‘academic’, ‘great’, ‘higher’ and ‘high’ had an overall collocational frequency of 89, 87, 65, 57 and 53 occurrences and were ranked from the second to the fifth position respectively. For instance, 64 out of 186 of the participants used the adjective ‘modern’ with 62 instances of acceptable adjective-noun collocations, e.g., *modern techniques* and *modern strategies* and 27 instances of erroneous collocations, e.g., **the modern time*, **special and modern knowledge* and **a modern classrooms*.

The adjective ‘academic’ was used in 87 acceptable collocations, e.g., *academic qualifications*, *academic knowledge* and *these academic methods*, while 31 of its occurrences were erroneous, e.g. **the academic educating*, **academic teach* and **an academic knowledge and skills* with an overall number of 69 students using ‘academic’ in adjective-noun collocations.

Table 6.5 shows that 54 participants used the adjective ‘great’ with only 12 instances of acceptable collocations, e.g. *great importance*, *a great deal of* and *a great focus on*. However, 53 of its occurrences were erroneous collocations such as **great cause*, **great information* and **great marks*. Consequently, ‘great’ was the most inaccurately used adjective in the LLC with an accuracy percentage of 21.5%.

48 participants constituting 25% included the adjective ‘higher’ in adjective-noun collocations with 27 instances of acceptable collocations, e.g., *a higher degree*, *a higher level of education* and *a higher rank*, whereas 30 instances were erroneously used collocations, e.g., **a higher chance*, **higher way* and **higher educator*.

Similar to the adjective ‘higher’, the adjective ‘high’ was used by 45 participants (24.1%) and had nearly the same frequency of acceptable and erroneous collocations. For example, 27 instances were acceptable collocations such as *a high level*, *a high standard of knowledge* and *high school* while 26 were erroneous collocations as in **high education*, **high way of thinking* and **high ideas*.

Approximately 19.3% of the overall participants used the adjective ‘specific’ in 51 occurrences of adjective-noun collocations. These divided into 37 acceptable collocations, e.g., *specific skills*, *specific machines* and *specific steps and plans*, whereas 14 collocations were erroneous, e.g., **a specific knowledge*, **a specific information* and **specific intensive academic course*.

In general, the results illustrated that the rest of the adjectives, i.e. ‘general’, ‘practical’, ‘basic’, ‘special’ and ‘current’ had an overall very low collocational frequency, below 50 occurrences each in the LLC. Furthermore, these adjectives were used by a small percentage of the students, below 20% each, and also were ranked in the lowest five positions respectively.

37 participants used the adjective ‘general’ in 47 adjective-noun collocations. These included 39 acceptable collocations, e.g., *general knowledge* and *general idea* while only 8 collocations were erroneous, e.g., **in general or in a modern way* and **the general and the academic information*.

As indicated in Table 6.5, 38 participants constituting around 20.4% used the adjective ‘practical’ in 45 adjective-noun collocations. Of these, 32 collocations were acceptable as in the examples *practical courses*, *practical activities* and *these practical ways and method*. However, less than a

third (13) of the collocations were erroneous as in **a practical skills*, **a practical sections* and **a practical and modern skills*.

The adjective ‘basic’ appeared in 44 adjective-noun collocations in 33 essays. More than half of these occurrences were acceptable constituting 30 collocations as in the examples *basic rules* and *a basic form*, whereas 14 were erroneous collocations as in **the basic of the way*, **basic accountant stock* and **a basic grammatical*.

Approximately 16.6% of the overall participants used the adjective ‘special’ in 36 occurrences of adjective-noun collocations. These divided into 19 acceptable collocations, e.g. *special skills and training*, *special books* and *special effect* whereas 17 collocations were erroneous, e.g., **special practical*, **special educate* and **the topic special*.

The least used adjective was ‘current’, used by 18 (9.6%) students in 19 occurrences of adjective-noun collocations. 18 collocations were acceptable; for example, *the current methods* and *the current educational system*. In contrast, *only* 1 instance was an erroneous collocation, e.g., **the current time*. Thus, ‘current’ was the most accurately used adjective in the LLC with an accuracy percentage of 94.7%.

The following section is concerned with introducing the results of the second research question (RQ2) regarding the types of error identified in the learners’ adjective-noun collocations.

6.3.3 Types of Error Identified in Adjective-Noun Collocations Produced in the LLC

As was the case with verb-noun collocations, the analysis identified three broad categories of error in the learners’ adjective-noun collocations. These are: (1) grammatical errors, (2) lexical

errors, and (3) errors related to usage. These contained twelve error types which were ranked from the most frequent to the least frequent collocational errors as shown in Table 6.6 below. The results also indicated that errors related to grammar were the most frequent constituting 275 (70.1%) out of an overall total of 390 errors, occurring in a total of 302 learners' erroneous collocational patterns whereas a mere 112 (28.7%) were lexical errors. On the other hand, errors linked with usage had very low frequency with only six occurrences, constituting 1.5%.

Furthermore, the proportion of errors per erroneous adjective-noun pattern was 1.291 errors per pattern. As stated earlier, this was calculated by dividing the frequency of errors by the frequency of the erroneous adjective-noun collocations (i.e. $390 \div 302 = 1.291$). This result shows that the participants erroneously produced adjective-noun collocations containing more than one error. However, it is essential to note that the proportion of errors per adjective-noun collocation is less than that (1.328) of the verb-noun collocations in the LLC. All these error types will be discussed and presented individually below. The identification of the error types was made on the basis of the acceptable patterns as judged by the two native speakers.

Table 6-6 Frequency of adjective-noun error types in the learner corpus

No.	Error type in the learner corpus	Example of error	Frequency of the errors
1.	Grammatical error: Determiner (article missing or present, albeit unacceptable or wrong)	*a specific information (<i>specific information</i>)	130
2.	Lexical error: Adjective (wrong choice of adjective)	*modern knowledge (<i>recent</i>)	108
3.	Grammatical error: Number (noun used in the singular instead of the plural or vice versa)	*good personality (<i>..... personalities</i>)	53
4.	Grammatical error: Parts of speech (word form)	*academic educate (... <i>education</i>)	46
5.	Grammatical error: Preposition (preposition is	*academic to modern	23

	missing or superfluous)	language (<i>academic modern</i>)	
6.	Grammatical error: Wrong word order	*basic accountant stock (<i>basic stock accountancy</i>)	16
7.	Usage: Implausible and irreparable combination	*current ages	6
8.	Lexical error: Noun (wrong choice of noun)	*practical life (... <i>skills</i>)	4
9.	Grammatical error: Conjunction (conjunction is missing or wrong)	* a good marks, good knowledge (<i>good marks and knowledge</i>)	3
10.	Grammatical error: Adjective (superfluous demonstrative adjective)	*an academic and modern of this way (<i>an academic and modern way</i>)	2
11.	Grammatical error: Adverb (superfluous modifying adverb)	*more higher education (<i>higher education</i>)	1
12.	Grammatical error: Intensifier (superfluous or wrong intensifier)	*very higher levels (<i>much</i>)	1
Total of error types			390

6.3.3.1 Grammatical Collocational Errors: Determiners

According to the hierarchy of difficulty, the results showed that the most frequent error type occurred when the students erroneously produced adjective-noun collocations, namely, determiners (i.e. definite and indefinite articles) with 130 occurrences. This error-type constitutes 33.3% of the overall frequency of errors in the LLC. The determiner errors included cases where the articles were missing or present, albeit wrong or superfluous. The following examples illustrate the point: 1) article missing as in **academic aim* instead of *an academic aim* and **good place* instead of *a good place*; 2) wrong choice of article such as **the good university* instead of *a good university* and **the specific subject* instead of *a specific subject*, and 3) superfluous article such as **a good experience* instead of *good experience* and **a good careers* instead of *good careers*. Below are some examples of these collocations derived from the students' data:

- example we have 4 Arabic. Third the building isn't good place for study. The class isn't large because th (64-02-13.txt)
- n from anything faced him/her from my opinion the good university that one which deal with a second choi (11-02-13.txt)
- Universities should use modern techniques with a good experience to provide more knowledge for students (03-02-13.txt)

6.3.3.2 Lexical Collocational Errors: Adjective

The 'wrong choice of adjective' lexical error type was the second most frequent error type in the students' written essays with 108 (27.7%) occurrences. This error type can be further classified into two types:

- 1) Wrong choice of adjective, where the students opted for using the wrong adjective (adjective cannot be used to modify the head nouns), resulting in unacceptable collocations according to the study's scale of acceptability (see 3.6.1.2) with 83 occurrences. Examples of this error are: **modern knowledge*²² instead of '*recent*'/'*up-to-date*' *knowledge*, **a higher experience* instead of '*better*'/'*first-hand*' *experience* and **high way of thinking* instead of *a sophisticated way*.... The following is an illustrative example:

- teach. But here in Libya teachers do not have a higher experience to provide the students. If the studen (139-02-13.txt)

²² It important to mention here that the co-text in which the collocation appeared was taken into consideration in providing and determining the correct collocation pattern.

2) 25 instances of using the wrong adjective were errors linked with using the wrong register. In all these instances, the students opted for using adjectives to modify the collocating nouns which are acceptable to use in spoken language rather than in academic written English, e.g., **great education* in place of 'good'/'*excellent*' *education*, **a great generation* in place of *successful generation* and **a great attention* instead of *considerable attention*. The following is an illustrative example:

- vice the managements of the universities to pay a great attention for improving the education systems in (17-02-13.txt)

6.3.3.3 Grammatical Collocational Errors: Number

The 'number errors' were the second most frequently identified grammatical error type with 53 cases (13.4%) in 302 erroneous adjective-noun collocations. In addition, they were placed in the third position according to the hierarchy of difficulty. The following are examples where the students used the singular instead of the plural or vice versa: **modern language* instead of *modern languages*, **the modern time* instead of *modern times* and **practical way* instead of *practical ways*. Below are some examples of these collocations derived from the participants' data:

- teacher's use with the student especially in the modern time, because we have a lot of technical material (55-02-13.txt)
- nt ways of teach. The educate in universities use practical way so it provides students by information and sk (20-02-13.txt)

6.3.3.4 Grammatical Collocational Errors: Parts of Speech

Word form errors were the third most frequent identified errors, being placed in fourth position in terms of the most difficult error type for the students with 46 (11.6%) instances. Illustrative examples are: **special practical* instead of *special practice*, **academic educating* instead of *academic education* and **a good basic for* instead of *a good basis for*. Below are some examples of these collocations derived from the students' data:

- agraph to use to academic to modern language from special practical to learn higher language and uses to an (66-01-13.txt)
- n my opinion, these universities must have a good basic for educating their students. As department that (74-02-13.txt)

6.3.3.5 Grammatical Collocational Errors: Preposition

The 'preposition' grammatical error type was placed in fifth position according to the hierarchy of difficulty with 23 (5.8%) occurrences. For example, **high level education* instead of *high standards of education* and **a higher knowledge and skills* instead of *a higher level of knowledge and skills* demonstrate cases of omission of the preposition. Meanwhile, **academic and modern of this way* instead of *academic and modern way*, and **academic to modern language* instead of *academic modern language* exemplify instances where the preposition is superfluous. 'Missing' as opposed to superfluous preposition errors were more frequent in the students' erroneous adjective-noun collocations. Below are examples of these collocations derived from the students' data:

- ents in primary school or in universities even in academic and modern of this way they should do and make it (97-02-13.txt)
- here after secondary we get academic lectures and high level education, I suggest offer to educate ourselves h (35-02-13.txt)

6.3.3.6 Grammatical Collocational Errors: Wrong Word Order

The ‘wrong word order’ errors appeared 16 times in the students’ erroneous adjective-noun collocations, being ranked in sixth position according to hierarchy of difficulty. The following are illustrative examples: **new skills modern* instead of *new modern skills*, **basic accountant stock* instead of *basic stock accountancy* and **the topic special* instead of *a special topic*. The following concordance line is an illustrative example derived from the participants’ data:

- I ideas and give some information about the topic special in the first semi star and give new skills modern (180-02-13.txt)

6.3.3.7 Usage Collocational Errors: Implausible and Irreparable Combination

Six examples of errors were related to the usage category where the erroneous collocational patterns were classified as implausible and irreparable combinations. As in the case with implausible verb-noun collocations, acceptable collocations cannot be surmised due to difficulty inferring the intended meaning, e.g., **a special specialty*, **good building space* and **good writer and aspects*. Below are examples of these collocations derived from the students’ data:

- The students also should fox with a special specialty and they could plan to be successful students (21-02-13.txt)

- ng all important things that help to learning and good building space. The university should educate t (80-02-13.txt)

6.3.3.8 Lexical Collocational Errors: Noun (Wrong Choice of Noun)

The ‘wrong choice of noun’ lexical error type was placed in eighth position according to the hierarchy of difficulty for students with 4 (1%) occurrences as shown in Table 6.6, e.g. **a special work for* instead of *a special course or training*, **a good behaviour* instead of *good attitude* and **practical life* instead of *practical skills*. The following concordance lines are illustrative examples derived from the participants’ data:

- mportant thing in the universities have to give a special work for educating students, help them to be perf (42-02-13.txt)
- Knowledge and skills are nothing without having a good behaviour towards learning. Our tasks and respo (73-01-13.txt)

6.3.3.9 Grammatical Collocational Errors: Conjunction

The ‘conjunction’ grammatical errors constituted 0.7% of the overall frequency of error types. They were ranked as the ninth most occurring error in the students’ erroneous adjective-noun collocations. The following examples demonstrate cases of: 1) omission as in **good marks, good knowledge* instead of *good marks and good knowledge*, and 2) substitution (wrong use) such as **the higher level from* instead of *higher levels than*. The following concordance lines present these collocations in the context in which they occurred:

- to study in universities and study hard to have a good marks, good knowledge.
Large id (32-02-13.txt)
- s half of them is broken. Some teachers have the higher level from the foreign teachers. In our college t (69-02-13.txt)

6.3.3.10 Grammatical Collocational Errors: Superfluous Demonstrative Adjective

The ‘superfluous demonstrative adjective’ was the second least frequently identified collocational error with only two occurrences, constituting 0.5% of the overall error frequency in the LLC, e.g., **an academic and modern of this way* instead of *an academic and modern way*.

6.3.3.11 Grammatical Collocational Errors: Adverb

The ‘adverb’ grammatical error was the least frequent error type appearing in the students’ erroneous adjective-noun collocations with one occurrence (0.2%). This error type was classified as superfluous modifying adverb, e.g. **more higher education* instead of *higher education*.

- y, and many of them would be looking to gain more higher education and conduct extra researches which requ (104-02-13.txt)

6.3.3.12 Grammatical Collocational Errors: Intensifier

The second least frequent error type was in the use of an intensifier as part of adjective-noun collocation with one occurrence (0.2%) which was **very higher levels*. After analysing the collocation, two acceptable versions were suggested and accordingly, two error types were identified. For example, the first suggested collocation correction was *much higher levels*, and the

error type was identified as wrong intensifier. However, the second suggested one was *higher levels*, and consequently the error type was superfluous intensifier.

- improve ourselves and most of substances are very higher levels now can find them to study but in our univ (80-02-13.txt)

6.3.4 Summary

This section has presented and illustrated the results related to the first and second research questions (RQ1 and RQ2) concerning whether verb-noun or adjective-noun collocations were more problematic for the participants. The types of errors Libyan learners make when producing adjective-noun collocations were also examined. The results can be summarized as follows:

1. In terms of the overall raw frequency of the investigated adjectives, the results revealed that the most frequent adjective used was ‘good’, with 273 occurrences, followed by the adjective ‘modern’ with 97 occurrences whilst ‘special’ and ‘current’ were the two lowest ranked adjectives with 40 and 20 occurrences respectively. However, not all occurrences of these adjectives occurred within adjective-noun collocations.
2. The results revealed that a total of 793 adjective-noun collocational patterns were produced by Libyan students. Among these, 491 (61.9%) were acceptable collocations whereas 302 (38%) were erroneous collocations. For example, the adjective ‘good’ was placed in the first rank according to collocational frequency of use with 200 occurrences. It was also the most well-distributed adjective in the LLC appearing in 103 essays. In terms of accuracy percentages, ‘current’ was the most accurately used adjective in the

LLC with an accuracy percentage of 94.7%, whilst 'great' had the lowest accuracy rating with 21.5%.

3. Three broad categories of errors were identified within the participants' erroneous adjective-noun collocations. These were (1) grammatical errors, (2) lexical errors and (3) errors related to usage. Among these, grammatical errors were the most frequent with 275 (70.1%) out of an overall 390 errors.
4. These categories contained twelve error types which varied in their degree of difficulty for learners.
5. Also, the proportion of errors per erroneous adjective-noun pattern was 1.291 errors per pattern. It is clear that the proportion of errors per adjective-noun collocations was less than that (1.328) of the verb-noun collocations in the LLC.
6. Finally, the results revealed that the overall accuracy percentage (50.1%) of verb-noun collocations was less than that of the adjective-noun collocations with (61.9%). Based on this finding, it is possible to claim that verb-noun collocations were more problematic for the participants than adjective-noun collocations. However, relying only on the accuracy of the percentage outcomes in reaching this conclusion could be considered dubious. Therefore, further stages of statistical investigations (both descriptive and inferential) of the obtained results were conducted in order to validate it. To achieve this aim, the independent sample t-test was performed to answer RQ1.1.

The following section introduces the statistical results, both inferential and descriptive, conducted to further analyse the above results in order to verify the answer to the first research question, RQ1 and to answer its subsidiary research question, RQ1.1.

6.4 Statistical analysis of participants' performance

I analysed the results statistically using means and standard deviations and with the independent sample t-test. I conducted this further stage of investigation to: (1) verify the claim that verb-noun collocations were more problematic for the participants than adjective-noun collocations based on their overall percentage of accuracy; and (2) discover if there were outliers which could affect the results (i.e. whether or not there was a difference between the overall percentage of accuracy of the verb-noun collocations and that of adjective-noun collocations). These statistical data were calculated and compared in order to answer the first research question, RQ1, which was concerned with whether verb-noun or adjective-noun collocations were more problematic for the participants.

6.4.1 Descriptive Statistics for Verb-Noun and Adjective-Noun Collocations

Table 6.7 shows the descriptive statistics for the two investigated types of lexical collocation.

Table 6-7 Descriptive statistics for verb-noun and adjective-noun collocations

Types of collocation		
Accuracy of verb-noun collocations	Mean	53.34
	Median	53.30
	Std. Deviation	12.39
	Minimum	34.80
	Maximum	77.40
	Skewness	0.78
	Kurtosis	0.54
Accuracy of adjective-noun collocations	Mean	63.91
	Median	67.35
	Std. Deviation	19.17
	Minimum	21.50
	Maximum	94.70
	Skewness	-0.66
	Kurtosis	1.19

The statistics reveal that the participants performed better when producing adjective-noun collocations rather than verb-noun collocations. This was shown by the participants' accuracy mean of producing adjective-noun collocations (M=63.91) which was higher than that of using verb-noun collocations (M=53.57). The difference between both groups was also reflected in the median scores, since the median score of adjective-noun collocations (67.35) was higher than that of verb-noun collocations (53.3). Furthermore, the skewness shows that the data are normally distributed (value between ± 2)²³ and so is Kurtosis (± 2). Therefore it can be concluded that the

²³ The values of skewness and kurtosis are used to check whether the data are normally distributed (Field, 2013:185). Skewness is “a measure of the extent to which the distribution is not symmetrical” and kurtosis is defined as “an index of the degree to which there are either too many or too few cases in the middle of the distribution” (Cramer, 1994:59).

data are normally distributed, which also confirms minimal outliers (i.e. the data contained very few extreme scores). Normal distribution often follows a Bell-shaped Histogram.

6.4.2 The Boxplot of the Accuracy Percentages of the investigated Verbs and Adjectives in Verb-Noun and Adjective-Noun Collocations

The boxplot was used to discover and indicate whether there were extreme scores of the accuracy percentages of the participants' use of the twelve verbs in verb-noun collocations. The boxplot revealed that there are mainly two outliers: the verbs *gain* and *acquire* in verb-noun collocations.

Figure 6.1 presents the boxplot of the twelve verbs in verb-noun collocations.

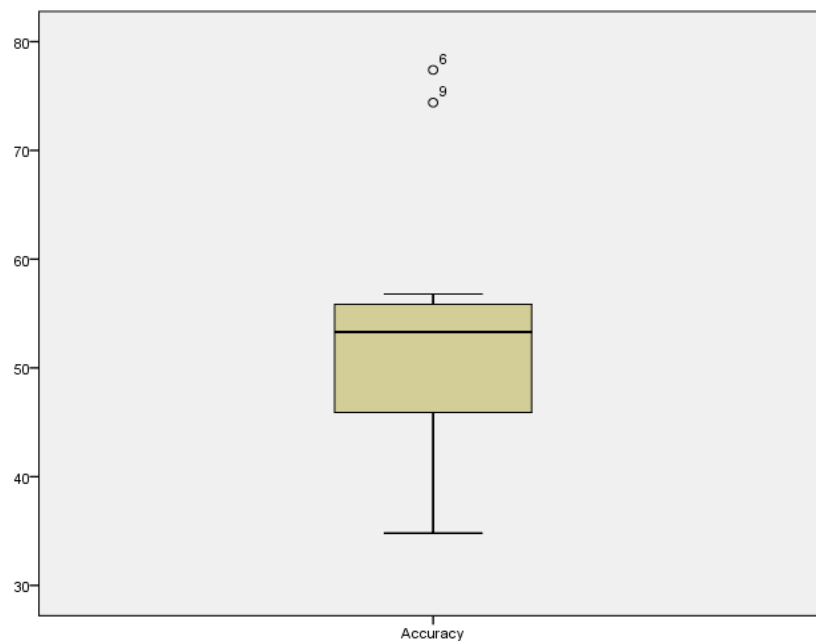


Figure 6-1 Boxplot showing the accuracy percentages of the twelve investigated verbs in verb-noun collocations

Figure 6.2 presents the boxplot of the twelve adjectives in adjective-noun collocations. The boxplot indicates that there are no outliers in the use of the adjective in adjective-noun collocations.

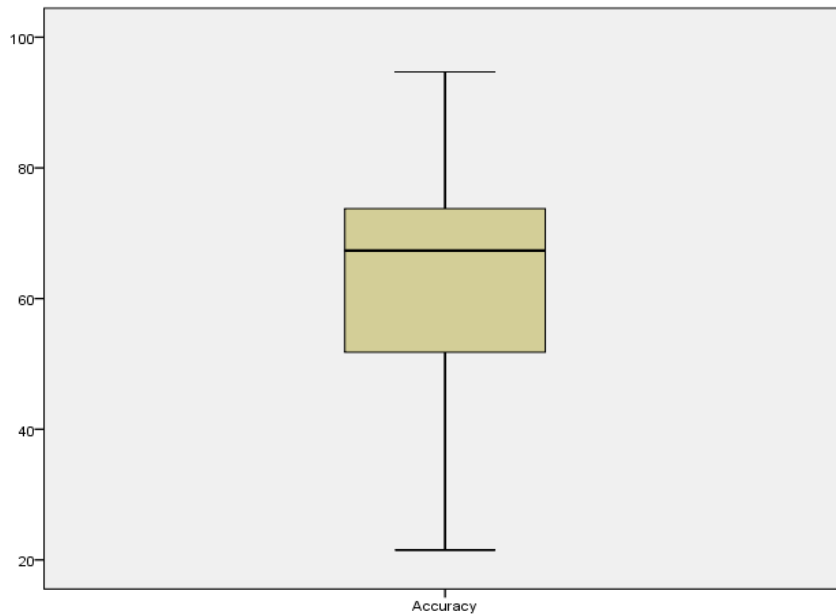


Figure 6-2 Boxplot of the accuracy percentages of the twelve investigated adjectives in adjective-noun collocations

6.4.3 Independent Sample T-Test after Removing the Two Outliers ('Gain' and 'Acquire')

This section will present and illustrate the results of the research question (RQ1.1) concerning whether there is any significant difference in participants' performance when using the 24 verbs and adjectives in verb-noun and adjective-noun collocations.

Table 6.8 shows the statistical group data of the 10 verbs without the outliers and the 12 adjectives in the two types of the lexical collocations. The mean accuracy of the adjective-noun

collocations (63.91) was higher than that of the verb-noun collocations (48.83). Furthermore, the standard deviation of adjective-noun collocations was larger than that of the verb-noun collocations. Large SD indicates that the data are spread wide from the mean (i.e. many high and low scores and the middle is relatively less) whereas small SD shows that the data are clustered around the mean.

Table 6-8 The participants' mean scores of the two types of lexical collocations

Types of collocation	No. of variables	Mean	Std. Deviation
Accuracy of verbs in v-n collocations	10	48.83	7.19
Accuracy of adjectives in adj-n collocations	12	63.91	19.17

The boxplot indicates that there are mainly two outliers: the verbs (*gain* and *acquire*) in verb-noun collocations, therefore, I conducted an independent sample t-test after removing these outliers to answer the RQ1.1 concerning whether there is a significant difference in learners' performance when using the 24 verbs and adjectives²⁴ identified in this research in verb-noun and adjective-noun collocations; and to investigate whether they affected the results. In other words, this was done in order to examine whether or not there was a significant difference between accuracy levels in verb-noun collocations and adjective-noun collocations.

It was performed by comparing and testing the accuracy percentages of the investigated verbs (with the exception of the two outliers, i.e. *gain* and *acquire*) in verb-noun collocations with that

²⁴ The twelve identified verbs are *do, provide, acquire, gain, enhance, make, offer, take, give, get, have* and *require*. The twelve identified adjectives are *good, academic, high, higher, modern, current, practical, specific, basic, general, great* and *special* (for details, see section 3.3).

of the twelve investigated adjectives in adjective-noun collocations. Table 6.9 provides the results of the independent sample t-test. The results reveal that the type of verb has an effect on the accuracy level $T(14.52) = 2.52, p=0.024 (p<0.05)$. The participants' use of the twelve adjectives in adjective-noun collocations showed significantly more accuracy level compared to their use of the twelve verbs in verb-noun collocations.

Table 6-9 The independent sample t-test after removing the two outliers

The independent sample t-test			
Accuracy of responses	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		2.52	14.52	0.024

6.5 Conclusion

This chapter has introduced the results and the statistical data of the writing task derived from the main method used for this body of research. Various Quantitative statistics along with a qualitative analysis were conducted and presented in order to answer the research questions presented in Chapter One. Means, percentages, standard deviations, medians and frequencies of both types of collocation were calculated and presented in a number of tables and figures. Finally, an independent sample t-test was used to discover the differences in participants' performance in terms of collocational use. The results revealed that the participants produced 1369 verb-noun collocational patterns. Of these, 686 (50.1%) were acceptable collocations whereas 683 (49.8%) were erroneous collocations. The verb 'have' was placed in the first rank in terms of frequency of collocational use with 278 occurrences. Concerning accuracy percentage of collocational use, 'gain' was the most accurately used verb with of 77.4%, while 'get' was the least accurately used verb with 34.8%. Furthermore, the results of the investigation regarding the effects of the writing

task rubric on students' use of the verbs 'provide' and 'make' showed that the high collocational frequency for 'provide' and 'make' were due to the participants' tendency to copy the collocational patterns which appeared in the rubric task.

With regard to adjective-noun collocations, the results revealed that 793 collocational patterns were produced by the Libyan students, among which, 491 (61.9%) were acceptable collocations whereas 302 (38%) were erroneous. For example, the adjective 'good' was placed in the first rank according to collocational frequency of use with 200 occurrences. The word 'current' was the most accurately used adjective in the LLC with an accuracy percentage of 94.7%, whilst 'great' was the least accurately used adjective with 21.5%.

Additionally, three broad categories of error were identified in the participants' erroneous verb-noun and adjective-noun collocations. These are (1) grammatical errors, (2) lexical errors and (3) errors related to usage. Among these, grammatical errors were the most frequent with 59.5% and 70.1% in verb-noun and adjective-noun collocations correspondingly. These categories contained sixteen and twelve error types in verb-noun and adjective-noun collocations respectively which related to different parts of speech and varied in their degree of difficulty for learners. It was shown that the proportion of errors per adjective-noun collocations (1.291) was less than that (1.328) of verb-noun collocations in the LLC.

The results of statistical investigations conducted in order to verify the claim that verb-noun collocations were more problematic for the participants than adjective-noun collocations based on the accuracy percentage outcomes (i.e. the overall accuracy percentage (50.1%) of verb-noun collocations was less than that of adjective-noun collocations with (61.9%)) were as follows: the

boxplot showed that there were mainly two outliers, the verbs *gain* and *acquire*, in verb-noun collocations, whereas no outliers in the adjective-noun collocations. Also, the statistical group data of the 10 verbs without the outliers and the 12 adjectives in the two types of lexical collocations shows that the mean accuracy of the adjective-noun collocations (63.91) was significantly higher than that of verb-noun collocations (48.83). Consequently, the results of the independent sample t-test after removing the two outliers revealed that the type of verb has an effect on the accuracy level $T(14.52) = 2.52, p=0.024$. The participants' use of the twelve adjectives in adjective-noun collocations showed significantly more accuracy compared to their use of the twelve verbs in verb-noun collocations. Therefore, it can be concluded that verb-noun collocations were more problematic for the participants than adjective-noun collocations.

The next chapter will discuss and interpret the results obtained from the students' and lecturers' questionnaires. The results presented in this chapter will be discussed and interpreted in chapter 8.

Chapter 7

Results and Discussion of the Questionnaires

7.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the results of data collected from the students' and lecturers' questionnaires. I decided to distribute questionnaires (self-reporting) as a supplementary method to this research because they can further interpret, explain and discuss the findings obtained from the writing task. The lecturers' views are necessary and useful for the current study as they provide a means of generating hypotheses about the reasons for the learners' difficulties with English lexical collocations. In addition, they have the potential to contribute to our understanding of how participants think collocations are taught and learned in the Libyan educational system. It should be noted that using other objective data sources such as exam papers is impossible to obtain from the English department. In addition, there is a scarcity of research in the Libyan context investigating this linguistic phenomenon. Barfield and Gyllstad (2009:12) state that the "[a]ssessment of learners' acquisition, knowledge and use of L2 collocations forms an essential part of furthering our understanding of how learners cope with these challenges". However, this method (the questionnaire) is limited as it only reveals the participants' views and insights rather than facts. In this vein, McDonough (1995) (cited in Takač 2008:87) points out that "[d]ata gathered by means of questionnaires reveal what learners think or believe they do and not what they really do". Therefore, the obtained results from questionnaires cannot be taken at face value as the participants' opinions and views are necessarily partial.

This chapter is divided into six main sections: Section 7.2 deals with presenting the results of the students' questionnaire. This section is sub-divided into two sub-sections according to the questionnaire design and in the same order as the questions. This section ends with a summary of the findings. Section 7.3 provides a discussion of the obtained results. Similarly, section 7.4 introduces the results obtained from the lecturers' questionnaire using a similar sequence as above. Then, the lecturers' questionnaire findings are discussed and explained in section 7.5. Finally, an overall conclusion is given at the end of this chapter to summarise the findings of both questionnaires.

7.2 The Results of the Students' Questionnaire

The students' questionnaire was administered to gather information about students' knowledge of English collocations. The participants were English majors and in their final year of a four-year university programme. Consequently, at this stage, it is assumed that the learners are likely to have the ability to reflect on their experience of learning English, evaluate it and specify the difficulties that they face when learning English.

This section is divided into two parts: part 7.2.1 introduces the profiles of the students whilst section 7.2.2 presents the findings of their answers to questions related to writing proficiency and collocational knowledge.

7.2.1 Student Information

Table 7.1 below introduces the personal information of the participants with regard to gender, age, year of study and year of studying English.

Table 7-1 Results of the participants' demographic information

No.	Demographic information	Total no. of students	Current study results	Percentages
1.	Gender	155	Males = 70 Females = 85	45.20 54.8
2.	Age	155	21 years old = 76 22 years old = 66 23 years old = 13	49 42.6 8.4
3.	Year of study	155	4 th year = 155	100
4.	Years of studying English	155	10 years = 13 11 years = 142	8.4 91.6

The above table shows that all the students were in their fourth and final year of study, most of whom having studied English for a total of 11 years. A slight majority of them were female (just under 55%) while the ages of all the students ranged from 21 to 23 years old, most of them being 21.

7.2.2 Results of Data Concerning Writing Proficiency and General Knowledge of Collocation

Q1 - How would you assess your level in writing?

Poor (4 and below)

Average (5-6 out of 10)

Good (7 out of 10)

Very good (8 out of 10)

Table 7.2 below shows participants' evaluation of their English writing levels. The results illustrate that the students appeared to have a fairly good opinion of their writing ability with just over half of all the students evaluating it as being average and 41.3% viewing their writing as above average. It is important to mention that grade levels were included along with the marks

awarded to enable students to have the same conception of what is meant by poor, average, good and very good.

Table 7-2 Students' evaluation of their writing Levels

Assessment	No. of students	Percentage
Poor	11	7.1%
Average	80	51.6%
Good	47	30.3%
Very good	17	11.0%
Total	155	100%

Q2 - If your writing is poor or average, what makes it difficult for you?

Grammar Vocabulary Both Other (please specify)

Table 7.3 below presents the participants' perceived sources of difficulty when writing in English. The statistics indicate that 39.4% of the students reported that vocabulary was the major source of difficulty in writing. However, as stated earlier, these results are not a 100% reflection of reality.

Table 7-3 Perceived sources of difficulty in writing

Difficulties	No. of students	Percentage
Grammar	49	31.6%
Vocabulary	61	39.4%
Both	38	24.5%
Other	7	4.5%
Total	155	100%

Q3 - How did you find out about collocations?

Taught by your lecturer Others (Please state what the source is)

Regarding the source of their knowledge of collocations, Table 7.4 reveals that more than a third of the students (37.4%) claimed that they gained their knowledge of collocations from various

sources, specifying them in the following terms: ‘my previous knowledge’, ‘from books and sometimes from movies and news’, ‘I read about collocations in Oxford dictionary’, ‘from English programs’, ‘movies and music’, ‘internet’ and ‘I just heard about it’. Ninety-seven students reported their teachers taught them collocations.

Table 7-4 Students’ source of collocation knowledge

Source	No. of students	Percentage
Taught by your lecturer	97	62.6%
Others	58	37.4%
Total	155	100%

Q4 - Select from the following, the strategy that you use when learning a new word (more than one answer can be chosen if needed):

As an individual word (words in a list)

By memorizing the word with its Arabic meaning

In short phrases (e.g., heavy rain, strong tea)

By memorizing the word with its definition in English

Table 7.5 shows that slightly more than half of them memorized the words with their Arabic meanings.

Table 7-5 Learners’ strategy of learning new vocabulary

Strategy	No. of students	Percentage
As an individual word	21	13.5%
By memorizing the word with its Arabic meaning	78	50.3%
In short phrases	21	13.5%
By memorizing the word with its definition in English	35	22.6%
Total	155	100%

Q5 - According to your experience as a student, which method of the following is the easiest to learn new words?

Individually (words in lists) In combinations (words in phrases) Both of the above

17.4% of students considered that they found it easier to learn words in combination. However, the results of the previous questions which investigated students' methods of learning new lexical items showed that only 13.5% of them reported that they learned words in phrases. Thus, there is a discrepancy between these figures. It is clear that these figures reveal subjective thinking on the part of the participants, thus they cannot be taken at face value. Therefore, a further triangulated investigation will be discussed below to compare students' answers in order to find a more reliable answer (please see section 7.2.2.8 for details).

Table 7-6 Students' views of the easiest way to learn new words

Method	No. of students	Percentage
Individually	48	30.9%
In combinations	27	17.4%
Both of the above	80	51.6%
Total	155	100%

Q6 - Which type of dictionary do you use?

An English-English dictionary An English-Arabic Dictionary Other (please specify)

The most commonly-owned dictionary was an English-Arabic dictionary as 78 students had one. These results concur with those in table 7.5, discussed earlier, as the same percentage of students stated they learned words with their Arabic meanings. Those who opted for 'other' (i.e. another dictionary) specified their choice as English-English-Arabic dictionaries and electronic dictionaries. No indication of using collocational dictionaries was given.

Table 7-7 Type of dictionary used

Dictionary type	No. of students	Percentage
An English-English dictionary	63	40.6%
An English-Arabic dictionary	78	50.4%
Other	14	9.0%
Total	155	100%

Q7 - Which one of the above dictionaries do you prefer to use and why?

The results in table 7.8 indicate a slight preference for English-English over English-Arabic dictionaries and there was no mention of collocational dictionary usage. Explaining why they preferred an English-English dictionary, the following suggestions, *inter alia*, were made: 'explains the meaning and gives the definition of the word', 'consists of many different meanings and examples of a word', and 'I can learn the word with different English words'. As to those who preferred to use an English-Arabic dictionary, they reasoned as follows (*verbatim*): 'find words in easy way', 'it is easy to me to understand a meaning of words', and 'because sometimes can't understand the meaning in English, I need to make sure from Arabic dictionaries'.

Table 7-8 Students' preferred dictionary

Dictionary type	No. of students
An English-English dictionary	47
An English-Arabic dictionary	45
Not given	33
Both	30
Total	155

Q8 - Which way do you prefer to learn a new word (more than one answer can be chosen):

By learning its meaning, such as „make“ means „to create something“.

By learning its forms of writing, such as „make, made makes“.

By learning its pronunciation, such as „make“ pronounced /meik/.

By learning it with other words that may go with it, such as

make a mistake, make a difference, make the bed.

Previously, the results showed that only 13.5% of students preferred learning new words in phrase form. This figure rose to 17.4% when the students claimed that learning words in combinations was the easiest way. However, the current result reveals that 36.8% of students thought that they prefer to learn lexical items with other words that may go with them as shown in Table 7.9. This would suggest the potential correct answer lies somewhere between these figures, possibly around 17.4%. Furthermore, the same percentage of responses, about 14.8%, was given to the preference for learning the written forms of lexical items as well as their pronunciation. It would appear that these answers of the participants contradict each other, reflecting merely their beliefs rather than reality; therefore, they cannot be fully depended on.

Table 7-9 Learners' preferred method for learning a new word

Learning preference	No. of students	Percentage
Learning its meaning	52	33.5%
Learning its forms of writing	23	14.8%
Learning its pronunciation	23	14.8%
Learning it with other words that may go with it	57	36.8%
Total	155	100%

7.2.3 Summary

The following points emerge from the discussion above:

1. Learning words in combinations and individually were considered to be the easiest method to learn new lexical items by 80 students.
2. Learners use many strategies to learn new vocabulary. In the current results 50.3% of the students indicated that they memorise words with their Arabic meaning.

3. The most commonly used dictionary was the English-Arabic dictionary.
4. It is interesting to find that no indication is given regarding the use of collocational dictionaries.
5. The results of the triangulations concerning whether students were learning new lexical items in collocations showed that 17.4% of study participants (155) are aware of the importance of learning words in chunks in general and collocations in particular.

The following section is concerned with introducing the results of the lecturers' questionnaire.

7.3 Discussing the students' Questionnaire Results

In this section, the analysis will be limited to a discussion of the data from the second part. This consists of the eight questions which focus on discovering the students' writing proficiency and general knowledge of collocation will be discussed and explained. It is worth noting that apart from the third question, 'short phrases' were used instead of 'collocations' in order to avoid problems which might have arisen because of the students not being familiar with this term. As Frazer and Lawley (2000) explain, in order to increase the rate of response to questions, they should be designed in a way that makes them easier to answer.

In the first question, the students assessed their level in writing. The rationale behind including this question was that it is invaluable to see how students evaluate their English writing, bearing in mind the aims of this research, which is to investigate the students' use of English lexical collocations in academic writing. Table 7.2 indicated that more than half of the students (51.6%) evaluated their writing as average.

Indeed, while I was typing out the learners' written work, I noticed that only a few written essays were of a high enough standard to be given an IELTS score of 6.5 or even 7. Furthermore, most of the essays contained collocational errors (discussed in Chapter 6) and grammatical errors such as subject-verb agreement, errors related to tenses and determiners, punctuation and capitalization errors, parts-of-speech errors, and so on. The following extract taken from the learner corpus illustrates some of these errors: *'one of the main reasons is teaching sources for example if you want to improve student skill in speaking you should provide labs and here I'm talking about listing and speaking labs...'*

From my experience as a teacher and learner in the Libyan educational system, Libyan students of English face considerable difficulties in English writing, particularly academic writing, in spite of the fact that their spoken English can be very good. This may be due to not enough attention being paid to the teaching of writing by most Libyan teachers, since they tend to adopt the product-based approach which entails focusing on the students' end written product to the teaching of writing (Yang, 2005); instead of the process-based approach involving "multiple stages: prewriting, drafting, revising and editing" (Deqi, 2005:67).

The results showed that the students seemed to be aware of the problems they were having, since they were able to identify certain difficulties with vocabulary and grammar in their English writing. According to Lewis (2000:8), "[t]he single most important task facing language learners is acquiring a sufficiently large vocabulary... much of our 'vocabulary' consists of prefabricated chunks of different kinds. The single most important kind of chunk is collocation". Judging by my own experience, the students' difficulty with vocabulary is twofold, the first being that they

do not know how to increase and enrich their lexical repertoire whilst the second relates to not knowing how to combine words together to produce native-like utterances. In addition, students' limited collocational knowledge is possibly one reason for their difficulty with grammar. In this vein, Hill (2000:49) states that "a lack of this collocational competence [...] forces students into grammatical mistakes because they create longer utterances because they do not know the collocations which express precisely what they want to say". Another reason for the students' grammatical difficulty is the differences between the Arabic and English grammatical systems, for example, Arabic does not have an indefinite article. Overall, these two difficulties are responsible for the participants' inability to produce native-like collocations as shown by the number and types of grammatical and lexical errors in the LLC presented in the previous chapter.

Taking into account the drawback to questionnaire design referred to previously, I designed three questions asking whether students were learning new lexical items in collocations. They are: a) method used to learn new words, b) the easiest way to learn new words and c) the preferred method of learning a new word. These questions yielded vastly different answers. The results related to the strategies that the students use when learning new words show that 50.3% of the students reported that they learn new words by memorizing them with their Arabic meaning. Hence, it is clear that this method alone will not enable the students to improve their overall English proficiency level or help them gain native-like collocational knowledge. On this note, Duan and Qin (2012:1890) explained that "the traditional way of memorizing the meaning and pronunciation of a new word is far from meeting the need of the learner". Furthermore, it seems that these learners are strongly affected by the nature of the teaching approach adopted by most

Libyan teachers. To confirm this, in terms of my own previous experience, the common method of teaching vocabulary is to give lists of words (usually accompanied by their Arabic equivalents) to learn and memorize and then to have a dictation test in the next class, especially at primary and preparatory schools. This experience is extremely important as it has given me a revealing insight into how students learn vocabulary in the Libyan English classes. It shows that little emphasis is placed on the teaching of collocations.

The results related to the easiest way to learn new words reveal that the percentage of students who thought they found it easy learning words in combination rose to 17.4% from 13.5% in the fourth question. This inconsistency in the responses obtained from questionnaires suggests that opinions were being formulated extemporaneously rather than coming from firm and consistently held beliefs or views. Therefore, they cannot be 100% reliable. However, the results of the last triangulated question show that the students (36.8%) felt that they preferred to learn new words in phrase form. This would imply that the possible correct answer is around 17.4%. Thus, the results of the triangulations show that the median (17.4%) is not high enough in comparison with the total number of study participants (155) to demonstrate that these learners are aware of the importance of learning words in chunks in general and collocations in particular. In this vein, Nation (2001:56) argues that “knowing a word involves knowing what words it typically occurs with” (see Nation: 2001, chapter 2, pp. 23-58, for an extended discussion on ‘knowing a word’).

The results showed that no students used collocational dictionaries. It is evident from looking at the results of the questionnaire in its entirety that the participants were not aware of collocational dictionaries nor had they been advised by their tutors of their value. Table 7.7 indicated that the

most commonly used dictionaries were English-Arabic. Obviously, the participants were concerned merely with knowing and discovering the meaning of new lexical items rather than exploring their usage. In responding to the follow-up (seventh) question, the students gave various reasons for preferring to use English-Arabic dictionaries. The students' answers reflect their unawareness of the significance of learning the various collocates of lexical items (see 7.2.2.7 for illustrative examples).

The emphasis students gave to the meaning of words rather than their usage is in all probability due to the fact that the only context in which they learn English is usually the classroom. Lack of exposure to authentic English constitutes a major difficulty for Libyan learners when trying to improve their English proficiency (see 3.2.4 for my discussion on 'lack of exposure to the English language'). Students opted for English-Arabic dictionaries only in order to help them pass their examinations and not to achieve a high level of English. In addition, this result is in line with the previous finding presented in table 7.5 concerning learners' strategies for learning new vocabulary.

Overall, the obtained results show that there is an urgent need to raise students' awareness of: a) the significant role that collocations play in learning English language; b) the benefits of using a collocational dictionary besides other types of dictionaries; c) the importance of knowing various collocates of a lexical item in order to achieve native-like production and selection; and d) the drawback of learning lexical items individually and confining their meaning without considering learning other aspects of word knowledge, e.g. collocation use.

The following section is concerned with introducing the results of the lecturers' questionnaire.

7.4 The Results of the Lecturers' Questionnaire

This section discusses the data obtained from the lecturers' answers to the questionnaire (see appendix 9). It was administered at the English Department of the University of Tripoli and distributed to lecturers who were teaching composition, reading comprehension and / or conversation.

The teachers' data will be presented in two parts according to the design of the questionnaire and in the same order as the questions. Part one (7.4.1) introduces the results of background information about the lecturers whilst part two (7.4.2) presents the findings of their answers to questions associated with knowledge of collocations and teaching methods.

7.4.1 Background Information about the Lecturers

Table 7.10 below introduces the personal information of the participants with regard to nationality, lecturers' qualifications, their work situation and their teaching experience.

Table 7-10 Results of the Lecturers' Demographic Information

No.	Demographic information	Total no. of lecturers	Current study results
1.	Nationality	12	Libyan = 9 Filipino = 3
2.	Lecturers' qualifications	12	MA = 7 PhD = 5
3.	Lecturers' Work Situation	12	Full-time = 12
4.	Lecturers' teaching experience	12	From 1 year to 5 years= 5 5+ years = 7

The above table shows that three lecturers were Filipinos because of the chronic shortage of qualified lecturers needed to teach the huge number of students in the largest English Department. The question about nationality was originally not included in the questionnaire as I had planned to distribute it to Libyan lecturers only. However, when the foreign lecturers agreed to participate in the study, I decided to include the question as it would be interesting to see if they shared similar views and observations with their Libyan colleagues in terms of their adopted teaching methods, their perceptions of Libyan learners' collocational knowledge and their ability to identify the learners' difficulties in using collocations. Furthermore, among the five lecturers who held a PhD, two were professors who had had a long teaching career. One professor had forty-three years teaching experience and twelve years of teaching writing and another had a similar amount of teaching experience.

7.4.2 Results of Data Concerning Knowledge of Collocations and the Teaching Methods

Q1 - In your experience, what are the students' main problems in producing and using lexical collocations:

- Limited lexical repertoire
- Do not know how to combine words
- Ignorance of rule restrictions
- Other (please specify)

Table 7.11 shows the results of the lecturers' views about the Libyan students' main problems in producing and using lexical collocations. Almost all the lecturers agreed that limited range of vocabulary was the Libyan learners' main problem in producing lexical collocations. In addition,

7 lecturers reported that the students had difficulty with lexical collocations because they did not know how to combine words.

Table 7-11 Participants' difficulties with lexical collocations

Problems	No. of lecturers
Limited lexical repertoire	11
Do not know how to combine words	7
Ignorance of rule restrictions	3
Other (please specify)	Nil

Q2 - From your experience, do students record vocabulary in their notebooks?

Yes No Some do

All lecturers stated that only a limited number of students recorded vocabulary in their notebooks. Some of them did not even attend lectures and only attended mid-term and final exams. This may be because the English department does not assess students during term time, preferring to give marks only for the mid-term test (40%) and for the final exam (60%).

Table 7-12 Learners' recording of new vocabulary in their notebooks

Response	No. of lecturers
Yes	Nil
No	Nil
Some do	12
Total	12

Q3 - Generally, what is the most common method the students use to record a new word?

A total of 8 lecturers gave the same responses, stating that the most common method of recording a new word was with its meaning. However, some of them gave elaborate answers. The following are some examples (*verbatim*):

1. *They do not write them in chunks so that they know what they collocate with;*

2. *Three ways: a) They write the definitions, b) They write meaning in Arabic, c) They write meaning in English;*
3. *Listing down words with their meaning.*

Q4 - When you teach new words, do you teach them (tick whichever apply):

In isolation (as separate words)? In word combinations?

As shown in Table 7.13, lecturers' answers were varied in their approach to teaching new lexical items. For example, all of the foreign lecturers and two other Libyan professors reported that they employed both methods (i.e. teaching words individually and in combination) to teach new vocabulary, reflecting their experience and flexibility in dealing with teaching vocabulary.

Table 7-13 Lecturers' adopted method of teaching new words

Method	No. of lecturers
In isolation (as separate words)	2
In word combinations	5
Both	5
Total	12

Q5 - What, in your opinion, is the best approach to teach vocabulary?

Lecturers' views regarding the best approach to teaching vocabulary were demonstrated by giving various answers which exemplify the activities they conducted. The results showed that only four mentioned context as the best approach to teaching lexical items. One of them gave an elaborate answer as follows: *'in context: using examples from daily real life, [and] putting words in sentences.*

The majority of them gave activities which mainly focus on meaning and form; for instance, one lecturer wrote *'presenting the form (phonological and grammar)'* and *'Explaining meaning in*

context'. Two other lecturers advocated the rather old-fashioned teaching method, The Grammar Translation approach, which focuses on teaching lists of discrete lexical items.

Q6 - What is the best method of teaching collocations?

The lecturers' answers varied according to their knowledge and awareness of the importance of including collocations in their teaching. For instance, four lecturers mentioned that context was the best approach to teaching collocations, e.g., *presenting and explaining them as independent lexemes in specific contexts and through reading, then underlining and highlighting the collocations*. Others gave answers which were vague, impracticable or which simply demonstrated their unawareness of collocations; for example, *'giving enough texts that attract the students' attention and interests'*; and *'there is no subject named vocabulary or collocation'*.

Q7 - Do you encourage students to learn collocations on their own (autonomous learning)?

Yes No If no, why?

It is important to mention that although all the lecturers claimed that they do encourage their students to learn collocations as indicated in Table 7.14 below; two of them gave conflicting answers to those of an earlier question when responding to question four (*approach to teaching new words*). At first they said that they taught new words in isolation and later they responded to this question by selecting yes. With regard to the no answer, the writing professor opted for both yes and no commenting that *because the students' levels are different, so not only need help (sic) but also they need guidance and encouragement*.

Table 7-14 Lecturers' responses regarding encouraging the learning of collocations

Response	No. of lecturers
Yes	12
No	1

Q8 - If your answer is yes, do you show them how to do so?

Only 7 lecturers gave illustrative examples. They gave varied answers such as ‘I usually advise them to use collocational dictionaries and text books in addition to reading a lot’, and ‘During my lecture, I show them commonly used combined words on the whiteboard and have them do some research on them and then let them construct them into sentences’. The remaining five Libyan lecturers did not provide any responses.

9. In your teaching, do you conduct classroom activities which focus on collocation?

Yes No

Table 7.15 shows that seven lecturers gave an affirmative answer.

Table 7-15 Lecturers’ responses regarding conducting collocational activities

Response	No. of lecturers
Yes	7
No	5
Total	12

Q10 - If yes, what are these activities and how can this help you?

Five lecturers, including the three Filipinos, gave various answers to illustrate their adopted activities focusing on collocation, *viz (verbatim)*:

1. By giving some words and asking students to search for possible collocations as well as providing some reading texts and identifying different types of them.

2. I always ask them what or which are the words that go together and have them write on a piece of paper. We read a couple of short stories and ask them to underline the words that are collocated and let them explain their meaning.
3. Matching.

The two Libyan lecturers who earlier claimed that they did give collocational activities did not give examples of these.

Q11 - Do you encourage students to use reference sources to increase students' collocational sensitivity? Yes No

In Table 7.16, almost all of the lecturers claimed that they *did* encourage students to use reference sources to expand their collocational knowledge.

The results of the second part of the question (*if yes, what reference sources?*) revealed that whereas two lecturers did mention that they recommended their students to use collocational dictionaries, five lecturers promoted dictionaries which were not particularly collocational ones. Others recommended different reference sources such as videos, newspapers, magazines and fiction books.

Table 7-16 Encouraging the use of reference sources

Response	No. of lecturers
Yes	11
No	1
Total	12

Q12 - In your experience, are the students aware of the importance of knowing the collocates of certain common words? Yes No

Nearly all the lecturers answered ‘no’ to this question. Several interpretations will be given for such an interesting finding in the discussion section.

Table 7-17 Learners’ awareness of the significance of knowing collocating words

Response	No. of lecturers
Yes	1
No	11
Total	12

Q13 - In your opinion, what are the sources of students’ collocational errors?

- Overgeneralization
- Ignorance of rule restrictions
- The use of synonym
- Negative transfer
- Paraphrase

Table 7.18 below summarises the sources of the students’ collocational errors according to their lecturers’ views. Among the sources listed, negative transfer, which is defined by Gass (2013: 528) as “[t]he use of the first language (or other languages known) in a second-language context, resulting in a nontarget-like second-language form” was the most commonly identified source of Libyan students’ collocational errors by all lecturers.

Table 7-18 Perceived sources of students’ collocational errors

Source of collocational error	No. of lecturers
Paraphrase	0
Ignorance of rule restrictions	5
Overgeneralization	7
The use of synonyms	10
Negative transfer	12

7.4.3 Summary

This section has illustrated the results of the data obtained from lecturers' answers to the questionnaire. The results revealed that:

1. Nearly all the lecturers agreed that learners are not aware of the importance of knowing words which collocate with other words.
2. The answers provided to various questionnaire questions revealed that the lecturers' teaching method is not effective in passing on collocational knowledge to their students since it lacked specific focus on teaching vocabulary, particularly in regard to phrases and collocations.
3. They all agreed that negative transfer is the major cause of learners' collocational errors.

The following section (7.4) is concerned with providing a full discussion of the obtained results introduced and analyzed in the previous two sections.

7.5 Discussing the Lecturers' Questionnaire Results

In this section, the analysis will be limited to presenting a discussion on the data from the second part. This part focuses on exploring the lecturers' views about their students' knowledge of collocations and their adopted teaching methods.

The results in the previous section revealed that the majority of lecturers reported that limited lexical repertoire is the major problem for students in using lexical collocations, while 7 of them were of the view that students do not know how to combine words together. This may be due to two reasons: the first is the limited exposure to English language. While conducting my study in the English department, I noticed that everything was written in Arabic, for example, the

timetable for lecturers, examination announcements and changes to lecture rooms. Sufficient exposure to authentic language can play a significant role in enriching and expanding the learners' vocabulary and improving their overall English proficiency level. On this note, Takač (2008:17) argued that "learners can learn lexical items if they are exposed to sufficient amounts of comprehensible input". The second reason, according to the writing professor's opinion, could be that most Libyan learners do not do extra reading apart from their course work. He confirmed this in a short discussion about learners' difficulties with writing, particularly collocations (personal communication, El-Aswad, 2014). However, it should be pointed out that this information is anecdotal. Nevertheless a study by Hussein (1990) supports El-Aswad (op.cit.) by claiming that learners' problems with collocations were due to, *inter alia*, learners' insufficient reading.

In question two, the lecturers were asked about whether their students record vocabulary in some way. The results showed that only a limited number of students did. This suggests that lecturers were not doing enough to encourage their students in this area. On this note, Woolard (2008: 28) explains that words should not be listed and left. Students should revisit and expand them on the basis of their increased exposure to the English language. Thus, there is a need for EFL teachers to encourage their students to use lexical notebooks as a technique for learning collocations.

The results reveal that the most common method of recording a new word is with its meaning. This clearly indicates that these students have not been advised and encouraged to learn and record new words in phrases with their collocates throughout the different stages of their educational learning. In her study, Martyńska (2004:11) concluded that "[l]earning individual

words and their meaning do not suffice to achieve great fluency in a second language. Knowing the way words combine into chunks characteristic of the language is imperative". Furthermore, Nation (2001:321) explained that "the strongest position taken on the importance of collocational knowledge is that it is essential because the stored sequence of words is the basis of learning, knowledge and use".

The results revealed that teaching lexical items individually is still a common practice in the Libyan educational system. A number of reasonable interpretations for such finding could be as follows: 1) It is obvious that some Libyan EFL teachers are not fully aware of the importance of teaching lexical items in phrases with common collocates. 2) It could be that not all lecturers think it is necessary to draw conscious attention to the phenomenon in general; and 3) Furthermore, it seems that lecturers are clearly still influenced by their own previous learning experiences and the way they have been taught. It should be noted that this was also indicted from the student' questionnaire findings as Table 7.4 revealed that not all students reported that they gained their collocational knowledge from their teachers.

Concerning the best method to teach vocabulary, the results showed that only 4 lecturers reported that they explained meaning in context rather than in isolation. In addition, there was no indication of using authentic material in the teaching of vocabulary to increase learners' collocational sensitivity and knowledge, e.g. concordance lines. No responses were provided to show that collocation was used in teaching vocabulary in Libyan classrooms. This indicates that lecturers do not consider using collocations to be one of the best methods for teaching vocabulary. On this note, Lewis (2000:142) argues that teachers must not merely teach individual

words, but also combinations of words, i.e. collocations, because learners need to increase “the phrasal element” of their lexical repertoire through the acquisition of a variety of useful combinations of known words”. He further goes on to explain that an “adequate lexicon, in addition to individual words, involves large numbers of adverbial and prepositional phrases, idiomatic expressions, collocations and colligational patterns”. Thus, it can be concluded that in general EFL Libyan lecturers’ approaches to teaching vocabulary need to be updated.

In addition, the results concerning the lecturers’ best method of teaching collocations, revealed that 4 lecturers advocated context as the best method or approach. On the other hand, others gave answers which were vague and impracticable (see 7.4.2.6 for details) or which simply demonstrated their ignorance of collocations, for example, ‘*vocabulary is usually taught in comprehension classes*’ and ‘*there is no subject named vocabulary or collocation*’. It is clear that some Libyan lecturers are not fully aware of, or familiar with, the idea of word combinations, particularly collocations. This suggests an inability to provide activities that focus on teaching collocations, e.g., the use of grids, word analysis, or semantic mapping (for a comprehensive discussion and presentation of a wide range of classroom strategies, activities and exercises focusing on collocations, see Lewis (2000) chapter 5, pages 88-116). Therefore, it can be said that the learners’ limited collocational knowledge can be attributed to teaching approaches which lack a range of collocational activities. In this vein, Hill et al (2000:88) state that it is vital for teachers to “introduce the idea of multi-word units to their learners, and then adopt classroom strategies which constantly remind learners of the importance of these multi-word items”.

Furthermore, the results show that five Libyan lecturers responded in the negative to the question about conducting classroom activities which focus on collocation in teaching. Hence, it can be said that these lecturers are not fully aware of the important role of collocations in gaining native-likeness and improving their students' overall English language proficiency. Additionally, the lack of teaching of collocational activities may well be the reason for students' insufficient collocational knowledge. Thus, it can be argued that Libyan teachers' lack of awareness and knowledge of the significant role of collocations in language learning and teaching needs to be addressed (section 2.6, for my discussion on the importance of collocation in FL vocabulary learning).

The results revealed that collocational activities are not commonly taught in the Libyan educational system. Seven Libyan lecturers did not respond to the question concerning reporting their collocational activities adopted in the classroom, and in the previous question, five of them claimed that they did not conduct collocational activities, showing they were not aware of various collocational activities. A possible explanation for this is that the lack of attention paid to collocation activities in the Libyan curriculum has perpetuated the Libyan teachers' ignorance of the subject. On this point, a review of any evidence to be found relating to collocation within the EFL Libyan education curriculum shows that there is *only* one textbook containing one lesson about collocations at basic and intermediate levels. At the higher education level, there is no direct indication of teaching collocation to Libyan students, as there are no separate vocabulary lessons. Hence, it can be said that the lack of inclusion of collocations in the curriculum is a key reason for students' insufficient knowledge of this linguistic phenomenon.

Conducting classroom collocational activities can play a key role in improving learners' overall language proficiency. Hill et al. (2000) proposed a wide range of activities and exercises which focus on collocations. They have two aims: the first aim is "the immediate one of practicing new collocations and building learners' mental lexicons". The second has a "more long-term purpose [...] to make learners aware of collocation as a powerful way of improving their ability to write precisely and well" (2000:88). In conclusion, there is a need to include collocations in the curriculum and teaching particularly in the EFL context.

This raises the question of how EFL teachers can go about teaching collocations. Woolard (2000: 33-34) suggests that teachers can help students to find ways of acquiring collocations for themselves.

What is essential is that the teacher equips the students with search skills which will enable them to discover significant collocations for themselves, in both the language they meet in the classroom and, more importantly, in the language they meet outside the classroom.

Hence, the seventh question was concerned with whether the lecturers should encourage their students to learn collocations autonomously. The results revealed that all the lecturers claimed that they did encourage their students to learn collocations. However, some of their answers contradicted each other (as in question four) since two lecturers reported that they taught words individually. There are two possible explanations for this finding. Either the term collocation may not be familiar to these two lecturers or they selected yes to give good impressions about themselves. Indeed, "[n]ative-like proficiency in a language depends crucially on a stock of prefabricated units" (Cowie, 1998c:1). Consequently, it is the task of EFL teachers to increase their students' awareness of the benefits of learning collocations.

Responses to question 11 about whether lecturers encouraged their students to use reference sources to increase their collocational knowledge and sensitivity showed 91.6% of them reported that they did encourage their students. With regard to the lecturers who had given conflicting answers when responding to questions 4 and 7, they now responded to this question by selecting yes. Yet again, this indicated that the lecturers' opinions regarding their teaching conflicted with their reported teaching practice. Possible explanations for this finding could be: 1) these lecturers were confused; 2) they were not aware of the latest ideas concerning the teaching of vocabulary (collocation); 3) the idea of encouraging students to use reference sources to increase their collocational knowledge may not have been familiar to them; and 4) they taught individual words in the classroom.

The purpose of the follow-up question (*if yes, what reference sources?*) was to discover whether the lecturers advised their students to use specialized sources in order to learn collocations autonomously. The results reveal that only two lecturers recommended their students to use collocational dictionaries, and that five promoted dictionaries which were not specified as collocational ones. General dictionaries provide the learners with a better description of English words and are excellent at helping them in de-coding meaning. However, these dictionaries are very limited for the purposes of helping learners to produce appropriate collocations. According to Lewis (1997:209), "the problems are intrinsic to the nature of current dictionaries" (see 3.2.7 for focus on individual words); he further argues that "[u]ntil the dictionaries include lists of collocates to supplement the traditional definition, they will be of limited use for productive purposes" (1997:209). Furthermore, Duan and Qin (2012:1890) explain that "[c]ollocation is one

of the most important aspects of knowing a word [and] in order to deepen the understanding of a word, students of English must know its collocation". Therefore, it is evident that EFL Libyan lecturers should encourage their students to use different types of dictionaries including collocational ones.

Other lecturers recommended different authentic reference sources, such as newspapers. Such sources alone without the use of specialized ones, e.g., collocational dictionaries, would not greatly increase learners' collocational production since the learners can deduce the meaning from the context in many instances. Furthermore, students may not notice words in combinations. Indeed, learners may struggle to actualise their collocational competence when it comes to performance (see 3.2.6, for my discussion on the influence of collocations on comprehension and understanding). It can be concluded, therefore, that only a small number of Libyan lecturers are aware of the importance of recommending specialized sources for learning collocations. It is vital for Libyan lecturers to recommend specialized sources which focus mainly on collocations such as collocational dictionaries and specialized books (for example, McCarthy and O'Dell, 2005 and 2008). By doing so, this will help students improve their collocational knowledge.

The results showed that students were unaware of how important this knowledge is according to lecturers' experience. This can be attributed to many reasons such as the possibility that students are strongly affected by the habit of learning individual words. In addition, some Libyan students merely aim to pass the exam and gain a certificate rather than gain native-like competence. Another possibility as stated earlier is the limited use of English in Libya which is mainly

confined to the classroom. All these factors can contribute negatively to the students' potential acquisition of useful collocations.

The results show that negative transfer was a major source of the students' collocational errors according to their lecturers' opinion (see 7.4.2.13 for details). However, it is important to highlight that such evidence as in many other instances cannot be 100% guaranteed since the respondents' opinions may be inevitably biased. This finding can be attributed to the students' tendency to resort to their mother tongue to express and convey the intended meaning in English. This happens mainly due to their limited exposure to the English language. In this vein, Shalbag and Belhaj's (2012:3) study concluded that "most of the students' problems are attributed to L₁ transfer and overgeneralization".

The use of synonyms was another perceived major cause of the students' collocational errors as indicated in Table 7.18. A possible interpretation is that students cannot distinguish the subtle differences between synonyms and near-synonyms and assume that they can be used interchangeably in a collocation; for instance, they may say **strong car* instead of *powerful car* and **beautiful man* instead of *handsome man*. This can stem from the habit of learning and teaching discrete vocabulary items since the results discussed earlier revealed that not all the students and teachers learn and teach words in combinations.

In my opinion, vocabulary should be taught as a separate but integrated component of any teaching/learning module as this is the best way to overcome the disadvantages of the traditional method of teaching in EFL Libyan classrooms. By this I mean that in any reading or listening

class, proper attention would be given to vocabulary (including collocation) in terms of both pre-text preparation and post-text analysis. There are four main reasons why this should be so:

1) More importance will be placed on vocabulary when it is taught as a separate module by both lecturers and students; 2) time constraints may prevent some lecturers from adopting a wide range of collocational activities as they have to finish their syllabus, therefore, having a separate vocabulary class would enable them to ring-fence some dedicated time to conduct various activities to raise students' awareness of collocations; 3) from my own experience as both a Libyan learner and teacher of English, Libyan learners have huge difficulties communicating effectively and expressing precise meaning owing to their lack of vocabulary and inability to combine words. This was also verified by the learners identifying vocabulary as their major problem in writing; 4) students will have more opportunity to become acquainted with more words, which in turn, can help them enrich and expand their lexical repertoire.

7.6 Conclusion

This chapter has presented, interpreted and discussed the results obtained from the participants' responses to both questionnaires. It is important to emphasize that the questionnaires used in this study provide *only* supplementary data since their data in many cases reflect the participants' views and beliefs rather than reality as indicated and discussed earlier.

Useful insights are gained from the data extracted from the questionnaires, for example, the results revealed that the students did not appear to use collocational dictionaries and English-Arabic dictionaries were the most commonly-used. The results of the triangulations concerning whether students were learning new lexical items in collocations showed that only 17.4% of the

study participants were aware of the importance of learning words in chunks in general and collocations in particular. Furthermore, the lecturers' teaching methods were not effective in passing collocational knowledge on to their students because of the lack of specific focus on teaching vocabulary, particularly in phrases and collocations. Valuable insights gained from the questionnaires' data will help in interpreting and discussing the results of the learners' use of verb-noun and adjective-noun collocations in the writing task in Chapter Six. Finally, the next chapter will discuss and interpret the results of the writing task.

Chapter 8

Discussion of the Written Task

8.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the results presented in Chapter Six. In this chapter I discuss in turn each of my research questions (with the exception of the fourth and the fifth questions) in relation to the results described in the previous chapter. The answers to the fourth research question were presented and discussed in Chapter Five, while the answers to the fifth research question will be presented in the next chapter.

The aim of this study is to provide a better understanding of the competence of EFL university students in terms of both verb-noun and adjective-noun lexical collocations. This has been achieved through studying their actual performance in an academic writing task in order to find and discover convincing answers according to the research questions (as indicated in Chapter One).

8.2 Discussion of the First Research Question:

RQ1 Which type of collocation (verb-noun or adjective-noun) is more problematic for Libyan learners?

According to the overall accuracy percentages, the results presented in Chapter Six suggested that verb-noun collocations were more problematic than adjective-noun collocations, since the overall accuracy percentages (50.1%) of verb-noun collocations was less than that of adjective-noun collocations (61.9%). A total of 1369 verb-noun collocations were recorded in the LLC. On the

other hand, the adjective-noun collocations had an overall frequency of 793. The results are shown again in Table 8.1 below.

Table 8-1 Summary of the results of the participants' overall performance of producing verb-noun and adjective-noun collocations

No.	Types of collocation	overall frequency	No. of acceptable collocations	Accuracy percentage
1.	Verb-noun collocations	1369	686	50.1%
2.	Adjective-noun collocations	793	491	61.9%

The results of statistical investigations were conducted in order to test the claim that verb-noun collocations were more problematic for the participants than adjective-noun collocations. Based on the accuracy percentage outcomes the boxplot showed that there were mainly two outliers: the verbs 'gain' and 'acquire' in verb-noun collocations, whereas there were no outliers in the adjective-noun collocations. Also, the statistical group data of the 10 verbs without the outliers and the 12 adjectives in the two types of the lexical collocations show that the mean accuracy of the adjective-noun collocations (63.91) was higher than that of verb-noun collocations (48.83).

Consequently, the independent sample t-test was performed after removing these outliers to answer the RQ1.1 concerning whether there was a significant difference in learners' performance when using the 24 verbs and adjectives²⁵ identified in this research in verb-noun and adjective-noun collocations; and to investigate whether the outliers affected the results. The results of the t-test revealed that certain types of verb had an effect on the accuracy level $T(14.52) = 2.52$,

²⁵ The twelve identified verbs are *do, provide, acquire, gain, enhance, make, offer, take, give, get, have* and *require*. The twelve identified adjectives are *good, academic, high, higher, modern, current, practical, specific, basic, general, great* and *special* (for details, see section 3.3).

$p=0.024$. The participants' use of the twelve adjectives in adjective-noun collocations showed a significantly higher accuracy level compared to their use of the twelve verbs in verb-noun collocations. One possible interpretation is that the verb component in verb-noun collocation is more difficult to master than the adjective constituent in adjective-noun collocation since the most frequently occurring error in the LLC was related to the lexical category (wrong choice of verb) in producing verb-noun collocations on 260 occasions. This difficulty could be attributed to the participants' lack of awareness of the semantic compatibility between the verb and the noun within the collocational patterns. Another interpretation is that the majority of the unacceptable collocational patterns in the LLC were formed by combining high frequency verbs such as 'have', 'get' and 'make'. Furthermore, the overextension of these polysemous verbs which can act as a substitute for other English verbs is another plausible reason for the above results. The participants used high frequency verbs in their delexicalised senses interchangeably. Finally, there may be cases when there is an L_1 , L_2 mismatch. This practice was shown in the participants' use of the two verbs 'make' and 'do' interchangeably to the elimination of other potential English verbs, owing to their unawareness of the differences between these verbs and their possible assumption that they were alike (see section 8.3.1 for full discussion on those points). Concerning the 'adjective' lexical error, this was the second most frequent error in the participants' production of adjective-noun collocations with 108 (27.7%) occurrences; it also recorded 66 (7.3%) occurrences in the participants' erroneous verb-noun collocations (for a detailed discussion, see section 8.3 below). Therefore, it can be concluded that verb-noun collocations are more problematic for the participants than adjective-noun collocations.

Generally, the results for the first research question of this current study are similar to the results of other studies such as Bahns and Eldaw, 1993; Al-Zahrani, 1998; Liu, 1999; Wang and Shaw, 2000; Kuo, 2009; Miyakoshi, 2009; Bazzaz and Abd Samad, 2011; and Phoocharoensil, 2011. In his study, Kuo (2009:145) investigated verb-noun and adjective-noun collocations as “they are typical errors occurring frequently in learners’ production”. Kuo’s results reveal that students made more mistakes with verb-noun types of collocations than with the adjective-noun type of collocations. Therefore, he claimed that verb-noun collocations are more difficult for students to control.

Similarly, Phoocharoensil (2011:110-111) found that with regard to lexical collocations, verb-noun collocations were more problematic than adjective-noun collocations for both high-proficiency and low-proficiency learners with 25.28% and 40.54% of errors in their produced verb-noun collocations respectively.

It should be noted that Kuo and Phoocharoensil relied on the frequency and percentage of errors in making the claim that verb-noun collocations were more problematic than adjective-noun collocations. Their results were not subjected to more rigorous statistical testing as was the case in this study. In the event, results from this study generally uphold Kuo’s and Phoocharoensil’s but are deemed more reliable by virtue of the statistical tests I carried out.

In summary, the results of this study are in line with the results of most of the studies introduced in the literature review in Chapter Three. They revealed that EFL learners have inadequate knowledge of English lexical collocations. For example, Mahmoud, (2005:121) investigated errors of collocations produced by 42 students in their essay writing. The results showed that

there were 224 (83.27%) erroneous lexical collocations, and 210 (94%) of these errors were verb + noun combinations. The remaining 14 (6%) were adjective + noun combinations. In addition, the current study's findings support Nesselhauf's (2003:237-238) study which indicates that the learners have difficulty in producing acceptable verb-noun collocations in their written essays. She explains that "even advanced learners have considerable difficulties in the production of collocations ... because the elements cannot be combined freely".

My study results, however, contradict some of the previously mentioned studies on collocation which posited that adjective–noun collocations are more problematic than verb-noun collocations, (e.g. Shehata, 2008; Alsakran, 2011). Both these studies investigated the collocational knowledge of ESL and EFL Arabic-speaking students of English. Shehata's results revealed that all students performed better on the verb-noun collocation test than on the adjective-noun collocations and Alsakran obtained similar results. Differences between the findings of the current study and those of the other two studies can be attributed to the following reasons: 1) the methods used by the two studies for investigation (i.e. gap-filling test) focused on sentence completion (i.e. providing only one lexical element of the collocation); 2) linguistic differences between participants; 3) the size of the samples were small in these two studies compared to the number of participants (186 students) in the current study; 4) the current study focused only on Arabic students in an EFL (Libyan) context whereas the previous two studies included Arab students from both EFL and ESL contexts.

In reference to the type of method used for investigation, the methods of the previous two studies were different because they did not test free language production but instead concentrated more

on language competence (recognition). The participants were at upper-intermediate to lower-advanced level in the current study whereas in the other two the participants were at advanced level. The fact that the sizes of the samples were smaller also makes their findings less generalisable and therefore less reliable. Concerning the context, learners in an ESL context may have better collocational knowledge due to the larger amount of direct exposure to the English language. Shehata's study revealed that the learners' collocational knowledge and their amount of exposure to the language had a positive correlation.

8.3 Discussion of the Second Research Question

RQ2 stated: What types of errors do Libyan learners make when producing verb-noun and adjective-noun collocations?

The results in Chapter Six showed that three broad categories of errors were identified when analyzing errors made by the learners when using verb-noun collocations and adjective-noun collocations in their written essays. These are: (1) grammatical errors, (2) lexical errors and (3) errors related to usage. Overall, grammatical errors in both collocational types were the most frequent in the participants' erroneous collocational patterns. In addition, the results revealed that the participants made more errors when using verb-noun collocations than when producing adjective-noun collocations in their academic written essays. As the proportion of errors per pattern in verb-noun collocations (1.328) was higher than that of adjective-noun collocations with (1.291), this further confirms that verb-noun collocations are more problematic for the participants than the adjective-noun collocations. In addition, these three categories contained seventeen and thirteen error types belonging to different parts of speech such as verb, noun and

adjective in the participants' verb-noun and adjective-noun collocational patterns respectively. Table 8.2 below provides a summary of the results of the errors occurring in both types of collocations in the Libyan learner corpus, which varied in their degrees of difficulty for learners (see tables 6.4 and 6.7, for detailed information on the 17 error types).

Table 8-2 Errors that occurred in the production of verb-noun and adjective-noun collocations in the LLC

No.	Categories of errors	Verb-noun collocations	Adjective-noun collocations
1.	Grammatical error	537 (59.2%)	275 (70.1%)
2.	Lexical error	342 (37.7%)	112 (28.7%)
3.	Usage error	28 (3.1%)	6 (1.5%)
4.	Proportion of errors / pattern	1.328	1.291

The results obtained in my study support other investigations of collocational errors produced by learners from a number of different countries such as: Wang and Shaw, 2008; Nesselhauf, 2003; Li, 2005; Mahmoud, 2005; Kuo, 2009; Miyakoshi, 2009; Darvishi, 2011 and Huang, 2001. However, these researchers varied in the ways in which they identified errors in terms of different types and number. The results of the current study are consistent with the results of Li (2005:46) which revealed that grammatical errors were more frequent in the learners' erroneous collocations with 64.4% than lexical errors (35.6%).

As indicated in the literature review studies and similar to the results of the present study, Wang and Shaw (2008:215) reported that the Chinese students committed different types of errors in using verb-noun collocations. Examples of such errors are given below:

- a) Lexical errors: (1) verb choice, e.g., **take the problem*; (2) noun choice, e.g., **make benefit*, (3) adjective such as **do some protecting work*.
- b) Grammatical errors: (1) noun plurality, e.g., **have troubles with*; (2) determiner, e.g., *have the duty*; (3) preposition, e.g., **do harm of*; (4) syntactic structure, e.g., **do favor to*; (5) adverb form, e.g., **have a full functional sanitation*.
- c) Semantic error (where the correct collocation does not make sense) e.g., **take care of the problem*.

It is clear that these error types are a persistent problem in learning English as a foreign language as they were also found and identified in the current study which means that many EFL learners, whether Arab or others, commit the same collocational error types in their writing e.g., preposition errors and noun choice errors.

Furthermore, the results of the current study confirm the results of previous research such as Mahmoud's (2005) study which demonstrated that Arabic learners of English have particular difficulties in using collocations. Mahmoud identified three types of errors in the 42 students' written essays such as: (1) word choice (where the choice of one word or both words is unacceptable), e.g., **repair his mistake* and **hurts the mind*, (2) word form (where the form of a word is erroneous), e.g., **a famous musician band* and **wants to get marriage*, and (3) contextual errors (linguistically correct but contextually unacceptable), e.g., **bring a boy* instead of (*give birth to a boy*). He claimed that the identified errors in the learners' erroneous collocations show that "EFL students depend on interlingual and intralingual strategies to facilitate learning" (p.124). The same errors found by Mahmoud's study were also identified in the current study,

although several other error types were identified in the collocations produced by the Libyan participants. This further indicates that Arab EFL learners commit many of the same collocational errors. Kuo (2009:149-150) also identified three major types of collocational errors in 17.63% of inappropriate collocations, used in the written work of intermediate level EFL students in Taiwan. These were: (1) approximation, which was the most frequent error type (49%), (2) synonym errors, which constituted 31% of the overall frequency of errors, and (3) negative transfer errors with 20%.

Finally, Darvishi (2011:56) concluded that EFL students make collocational errors in their writing due to interference from their mother tongue, lack of the collocational concept, interlingual or intralingual transfer, and limited collocational knowledge. These are possible reasons for explaining why EFL students frequently make unacceptable collocations in their writing.

Particularly in the case of the Libyan students of the current study, different explanations can be provided to interpret the various types of errors committed by the participants in producing verb-noun and adjective-noun collocations.

8.3.1 Wrong Choice of Verb

As the data in Table 6.3 in the previous chapter illustrated, the most frequently occurring error was related to the lexical category (wrong choice of verb) in producing verb-noun collocations on 260 occasions in the LLC. According to Wang and Shaw (2008:218), this difficulty could be due to the participants' unawareness of the semantic compatibility between the verb and the noun.

In addition, the results of the current study revealed that the majority of learners' unacceptable collocational patterns were formed by combining high-frequency verbs, for example, the verbs 'have', 'get', 'make', 'give', 'take', 'provide', and 'do' were placed as the most frequent verbs in unacceptable verb-noun collocations with 69, 68, 41, 32, 24 and 20 occurrences respectively. A possible explanation for such a finding is that highly frequent verbs such as 'have', 'make', 'do', 'take' and 'get' are polysemous and can be used instead of other verbs.

Thus, the students' tendency to use high-frequency verbs as a substitute for other English verbs is an important finding. This was illustrated by learners' over-use of some of these verbs to convey and communicate the intended meaning and to compensate for their lack of academic vocabulary use. For example, the verb 'get' was over-extended as participants used it 23 times instead of verbs such as 'gain', 'acquire' and 'develop' by combining it with the nouns 'knowledge' and 'skills' to construct various verb-noun collocational patterns. The following combinations illustrate the point: **get (the) knowledge x4*, **get higher level of knowledge* and **get special and modern knowledge*. Other instances of over-extension were **get new words* instead of *learn new words* and **get benefits* instead of *gain or derive benefit*. Correspondingly, the verb 'take' was also over-extended and was used 11 times instead of 'obtain' as in **take information* instead of *obtain information* and **take a good skills* instead of *obtain good skills*. In the same way, 'provide' was over-extended as students used it 10 times instead of 'improve' as in the following erroneous pattern **provide the students* instead of *improve the students*. These results are consistent with Dukali (2010), who found that the participants used the wrong verb in many

instances due to overextending certain verbs such as ‘make’ “to cover a more appropriate or concise word which may or may not have been known by the students” (p.78).

Moreover, the participants produced high frequency verbs in their delexicalized sense interchangeably, e.g. they used **doing the exams* instead of ‘take’ or ‘sit’ the exam, **give their best* instead of *do their best* and **do their efforts* instead of *make an effort*. It is apparent that the participants’ awareness of collocational restrictions and use is very limited. Also, judging by my own experience as a Libyan teacher, this reflects the practice of teaching and learning lexical items in isolation rather than in their various collocational patterns.

Additionally, the participants’ (Libyan learners’) used these two verbs (i.e. ‘do’ and ‘make’) interchangeably to the exclusion of other potential English verbs as shown in the following examples: **make special research* instead of *do special research*, **make modern activities* instead of *do modern activities* and **do their efforts* instead of *make an effort*. This practice was also discovered in previous research such as in Dukali (2010) and Ahmed (2012). Ahmed discovered that “many students were unaware of the distinctions between *make* and *do* and assumed that they were similar” (p.160). Consequently, they sometimes use the verb ‘do’ where the verb ‘make’ should be used as in: **do attempts* and **make most of the cooking*. She mentioned that this could be related to the translation of the two verbs into their core or original meaning in the subjects’ mother tongue (Arabic). Consequently, the students produced collocations based on the semantic meaning of single lexical items. Moreover, they wrongly “equated the verb يقوم بي /yaqum bi/ with *to do* or *to make* because in Arabic, the verb ‘yaqum bi’ enters into a variety of combinations meaning roughly to *perform*” (2012:160-161). In this vein

Balhouq (1982: 297-298) states that these two verbs overlap together in their meaning in the sense of ‘carry out’ which is equivalent to Libyan colloquial Arabic (LCA) /da:r/. Therefore, they used them instead of other verbs to convey this meaning as in **make a party* instead of *have a party*, **make a bath* instead of *have, take a bath*, and **do an accident* instead of *have an accident*. He further argued that this type of error is related to the mismatch between L₁ usage and L₂ use.

Unless the learner has acquired the L2 habitual collocation in question, he is more likely to produce a deviant collocation because neither *make* nor *do* which have been acquired as the equivalents of /da:r/ (or MSA /ʕamila/, /faʕala/ or /sanaʕa/) will be acceptable (1982: 297-298).

The above findings (i.e. 8.3.1 summarised as (1) unawareness of semantic compatibility of verb-noun, (2) polysemous verbs, (3) overextension, (4) interchangeable delexicalisation, and (5) L₁, L₂ mismatch) can also be further explained from the results obtained from the questionnaire completed by the university lecturers and the students (see 8.5 below, for detailed discussion).

The verbs ‘gain’, ‘acquire’ and ‘offer’ occurred only once or twice in unacceptable collocations as mentioned in Chapter 6, e.g., **gain us many things* instead of *provide us with many things*. In contrast, there were no instances of unacceptable collocations used with ‘enhance’ and ‘require’. Libyan learners used them accurately. These findings invite different interpretations, viz: (1) the semantic nature of these verbs is such that ‘enhance’ and ‘require’ have limited meanings in contrast to delexicalized verbs such as ‘have’ which has many meanings according to context, e.g. *have a shower* (take); *have a headache* (suffer); *have a car* (possess); *have a party* (arrange) and *have an argument* (experience); (2) their teachers may have taught them the meaning of these verbs; (3) their teachers may have paid considerable attention to these verbs in particular; or (4)

these verbs may have already been encountered by the students in their extensive reading. Thus, they stand out which gives the students more opportunity to notice them.

8.3.2 The Wrong Choice of Adjective

This was the second most frequent error in the current study; showing participants' production of adjective-noun collocations with 108 (27.7%) occurrences; it also recorded 66 (7.3%) occurrences in the participants' erroneous verb-noun collocations. Examples of this error are: **a higher experience* instead of 'better'/'first-hand' experience, **high way of thinking* instead of *a sophisticated way...* and **offer the large information* instead of *provide 'good', 'valuable' or 'beneficial' information*. In many instances, the participants opted for using the synonym or near-synonym of the adjective, as in **a great attention* instead of *considerable attention* and **modern knowledge* instead of 'recent'/'up-to-date' knowledge. This result is in line with Farghal and Obiedant's (1995) study which demonstrated that the use of synonyms was the main error type in the informants' adjective-noun collocations. Farghal and Obiedant explained that the learners' selection of a synonym or near-synonym for a lexical constituent in a collocation can be viewed as "a straightforward application of the open choice principle" (p.321). They also suggested that this type of error was due to their teachers' "tendency to teach words individually rather than collocationally" (p.321). This is reflected in the Libyan classrooms. To conclude, it seems that Arab EFL teachers are not aware of the importance of introducing collocates of lexical items, furthermore, they do not reinforce the notion that not all synonyms are valid alternatives in certain collocations.

8.3.3 The Wrong Choice of Noun

This lexical error type occurred on 16 occasions in the participants' verb-noun collocations and four times in adjective-noun collocations. The following examples illustrate the point: **give the right lines for* instead of *give the right guidance or guidelines*, and **a special work for* instead of *a special course or training*. The participants' unacceptable production of English collocations may be due to the fact that they tend to produce messages by combining individual lexical items rather than taking them from prefabricated patterns (Kjellmer, 1991; Wray, 2002). In Sinclair's (1991) study, EFL learners have the tendency to function more on the open choice principle rather than on the idiom principle.

8.3.4 Determiner Errors

The data in Table 6.3 and 6.6 in the previous chapter demonstrates that grammatical errors in both collocational types were the most frequent in the participants' erroneous collocational patterns. Such a finding indicates that applying the correct and acceptable choice of a lexical component in a collocation does not inevitably mean that the participants had no difficulties in producing correct and appropriate English lexical collocations. In this connection, Nessulhauf explained that mistakes in non-lexical constituents shows that "it is not sufficient for the learner to know which lexical items collocate (such as get + permission, fail + exam), but rather in order to produce an acceptable combination, it is essential to know the whole combination (e.g. get permission (to), fail an exam)" (2003:231-32). It should be noted that in the previous chapters, I highlighted that too much emphasis is put on teaching grammatical rules and explaining them in the learners' L₁ in the Libyan educational system while collocation is neglected and that the Grammar-Translation method is still widely used by a number of Libyan teachers (Saaid, 2010; Emhamed and

Krishnan, 2011). However, the above finding shows that the participants still encounter difficulties with various aspects of English grammar. A shift in focus is therefore required by Libyan EFL teachers to bring forth a more modern approach to teaching grammar in order to help their students to produce more native-like utterances of English language and overcome their difficulties with basic grammar. One way of doing this is by teaching grammar in context through teaching collocational patterns as indicated and explained by Nessulhauf above. For example, when teaching collocational patterns in context, e.g., within a reading text, the teacher can draw his/her students' attention to the pre-modification and post-modification of the noun in the form of, e.g. articles, prepositions and intensifiers. The following examples show how teachers might go about it:

1. *pass my/your driving test* instead of *pass + driving test*,
2. *take-responsibility for* instead of *take + responsibility*,
3. *take care of* instead of *take + care*
4. *good level of* instead of *good + level*.

By so doing, the students' overall grammatical and collocational knowledge will be improved.

For instance, determiners especially definite and indefinite articles were the first and second most frequent problematic errors recording 130 (33.3%) and 203 occasions in the participants' adjective-noun and verb-noun collocations respectively. Determiner errors include cases where the articles are missing, incorrectly selected or superfluous, e.g. **academic aim* instead of *an academic aim*, **has an attitude* instead of *has the attitude*, and **a specific information* instead of

specific information. This could be because of the differences between the Arabic and English grammatical systems. On this note, Tengler et al. (2013:72) explained that Arabic learners encounter difficulties in the use of English articles due to the fact that “there is no indefinite article in Arabic, and the use of the definite article different from the use in English, the indefinite article is routinely omitted or used incorrectly”.

8.3.5 Preposition Errors

Similarly, in my study the results revealed that preposition errors occurred frequently in the participants’ verb-noun collocations and adjective-noun collocations. These were placed in the third and sixth position according to the hierarchy of difficulty respectively. The following are illustrative examples of superfluous prepositions: **provide to a specific book* instead of *provide a specific book* and **academic to modern language* instead of *academic modern language*. Omission of prepositions is shown in the following examples: **Higher knowledge* instead of *a higher level of knowledge* and **have a higher material* instead of *have a high quality of material* while **take responsibility to* instead of *take the responsibility for*, **provide the basic of knowledge and skills to* instead of *provide the basic knowledge and skills for* and **take the knowledge in universities* instead of *obtain the knowledge from the universities* exemplify the wrong selection of prepositions.

Those examples indicate that Libyan learners encounter various difficulties in the use of English propositions, which are similar to other Arab EFL learners as confirmed by a number of Arab researchers (e.g. Al-Khataybeh, 1992; Zughoul, 1991, 2003; Rababah, 2001, 2003 and Tahaine, 2010). In this vein, Tengler et al. (2013:1) state that “Arabic has a great number of fixed

prepositions and particles that are used with verbs as well as adjectives”. Many of these do not coincide with their direct English translation. For example, Tahaineh (2010) investigated types of errors made by Arab EFL learners when they use prepositions in their free writing. The participants of the study were 162 Jordanian university learners. The results showed that Arab EFL Jordanian university learners encountered huge problems when using prepositions in their English writing. In addition, mother tongue interference was identified as the major source of prepositional errors since 1323 errors constituting 58% out of 2290 errors were attributed to the influence of the mother tongue. Tahaineh goes on to explain that “mother tongue interference (MTI) is a learning strategy that most foreign-language learners fall back on, especially in acquisition-poor classroom situations where exposure to the language is confined to a few hours per week of formal instruction” (p.98).

8.3.6 Number Errors

Number errors (i.e. nouns used in the singular instead of the plural or vice versa) also occurred frequently in the participants’ erroneous verb-noun and adjective-noun collocations with 68 and 43 instances respectively. Some examples are: **have a good knowledges* instead of *have good knowledge*; **make their researches* instead of *‘conduct’ or ‘do’ their research*, **higher educations* instead of *higher education* and **modern language* instead of *modern languages*.

A number of reasonable interpretations for such errors being committed could be as follows: 1) the negative transfer from the L₁ as in Arabic the nouns *research* and *knowledge* have the plural form, therefore, the learners were confused when trying to distinguish between countable and uncountable nouns in English. 2) The participants’ limited awareness of the syntactic restrictions

of some English collocations as illustrated by the students' erroneous collocation: **modern language instead of modern languages*. The same problem seems to exist in some other previous studies. For example, Wang and Shaw (2008) reported that the learners in their study encountered difficulties in producing verb-noun collocations related to the misuse of plurals, such as in the following examples: **have more equipments* and **have troubles with*. Wang and Shaw concluded that the learners' difficulty regarding number errors may not be "a reflection of the learners' unawareness of the syntactic restrictions of certain collocations, but rather of general grammatical/lexical problems". Similarly, Nesselhauf (2005) identified this error type in her study such as **give children a sound knowledge* and **put an enormous pressure on* in the category of 'article superfluous'. Hong et al. (2011) also identified this type of error in their study. Their results revealed that 17 (5.63%) instances of errors were related to the noun being used in the singular instead of the plural as in **saw two girl* instead of *saw two girls*. On the other hand, only 2 (0.66%) occurrences were related to the noun being used in the plural instead of the singular as in **take this flowers* instead of *take this flower* (p.39). In summary, the findings reveal that EFL learners have difficulties in mastering this aspect of English syntax.

8.3.7 Wrong Word Order Errors

The results revealed that wrong word order was another problem for learners in their attempts to produce acceptable collocations in their academic written essays. They committed 50 and 16 errors in verb-noun and adjective-noun collocations respectively as in **offer from English department good and academic teacher* instead of *the English department offers good, academic teaching* and **get a good level and high education* instead of *get a good and high level of*

education. This type of error is another problematic aspect of English syntax for Arab learners mainly caused by mother tongue interference (Tengler et al., 2013:61). In addition, according to Smith (2001), one of the commonest mistakes made by Arabic learners of English in terms of word order problems is to mix up the position of words in a sentence. It is also well-known that adjectives in Arabic agree and follow the noun in its number and gender while in English the adjectives precede the noun and they do not agree with its number or gender such as the participants' use of **make a student good* instead of *make a good student*.

Furthermore, it is worth noting that wrong word order often incorporates instances of wrong syntax in terms of the negative where the learners use 'not only' and omit the auxiliary verb ('do') due to the fact that the negative in Arabic language is formed by using 'not' only. The following examples illustrate the point: **have not very good doctors* instead of *do not have very good doctors*, **have not a competent teacher* instead of *do not have competent teachers* and **have not any skills* instead of *do not have any skills*. This is evidence that participants are affected by their mother tongue (Arabic) when writing in English.

8.3.8 Word Form Errors

The errors of this type are related to word form. The participants committed 42 and 39 errors when producing adjective-noun and verb-noun collocations respectively such as **special practical* instead of *special practice*, **enhance the educate* instead of *enhance the education* and **have a good basic* instead of *have a good basis*. These erroneous collocations illustrate the participants' inability to distinguish between different parts of speech. This problem has nothing

to do with the syntactic restrictions and knowledge of collocations; however, it is connected with the participants' lexical and grammatical difficulties in English language.

8.3.9 Usage Category Errors

The results revealed that a total number of 28 and 6 instances occurred in verb-noun and adjective-noun collocations. Those erroneous collocational patterns were classified as implausible and irreparable combinations, when both I and the consulted native speakers failed to suggest the acceptable collocations and even after looking at the whole paragraph in which the collocation occurred to recover the intended meaning, for instance, **get take different way*, **have many styles*, **make knowledge or departments*, **a special speciality*, and **good substances*. It is worth mentioning that the rationale for including these patterns instead of excluding them from the study is that they provide an insight into the difficulties encountered by Libyan learners in conveying intended meaning in their writing and using lexical verb-noun collocations in particular. As indicated earlier, the participants clearly tend to express meaning from individual words (i.e. operate on the open choice principle) rather than collocate lexical items. Therefore, it is necessary to demonstrate the importance and the need to teach formulaic language including collocations.

8.3.10 Intensifier Errors

These are the lowest and second lowest frequency errors with only 3 and 2 occurrences in verb-noun and adjective-noun collocations, e.g., **has a very big role* instead of *has a(n) vital/key/important role*, **have so low level education* instead of *have such a low level of education* and **very higher levels* instead of *much higher levels*. The low frequency of intensifiers was due

to the fact that learners, in general, did not use intensifiers extensively in their verb-noun collocations. A possible explanation is learners are not confident in using intensifiers, thus, they avoid using them and tend to produce simple verb-noun collocational patterns in the form of either verb + noun collocations or verb + adjective + noun collocations.

8.3.11 Wrong Register Errors

These errors were the least frequent as indicated previously in Table 8.2. They occurred only six times in the whole learners' verb-noun collocations such as **having great and perfect materials* instead of *accessing effective and high-quality materials* and **have 30% knowledge, 30% skills and 40% of kick-ass...* instead of *... 40% supreme confidence*. On the other hand, 25 instances were recorded in adjective-noun collocations as in **a great generation* instead of *successful generation*, and **great education* instead of *'good'/'excellent' education*. This showed that the participants did not comply with the requirements of the task of writing a formal, academic essay. This finding confirms the results of Dukali's (2010) study. She explained that the participants' use of wrong register when producing verb-noun collocations was because "the learners were not aware of the distinction between formal and informal writing" (p.78). Another explanation is the lack of attention paid to teaching academic writing in Libyan classrooms. Furthermore, this result signifies that the participants lack the academic demands made on their mastery of English language.

In summary, in comparing the results of this current study with other studies, comparable results were obtained by Nesselhauf (2003). She identified similar error types: 1) the wrong choice of verb which was the most frequently occurring error, 2) the wrong choice of noun, 3) usage (a

combination exists but is not used correctly), 4) usage (a combination does not exist and cannot be corrected by exchanging single elements), 5) preposition (verb), 6) preposition (noun), 7) determiner, 8) number and 9) structure. However, other types of errors do not exist in her study and were identified in the current study such as wrong register errors and intensifiers.

Different explanations can be provided in light of the literature review in Chapter Three for the learners' inability to produce acceptable English lexical collocations: 1) the negative influence of the mother tongue, 2) lack of exposure to the English language, 3) learners' lack of awareness of collocations as lexical entities, 4) focus on individual words and 5) arbitrariness and unpredictability of collocations (for detailed information about these difficulties see section 3.2).

8.4 Discussion of the Third Research Question:

RQ3 stated: Do these errors allow us to infer any possible reasons for their presence?

The purpose of this question is to identify the difficulties that Libyan learners encountered when producing the two types of English collocation in the writing task. After discussing the types of errors committed by Libyan learners of English in their written production, it is important to identify the reasons behind the participants' collocational errors. The previous results show that the participants had an inadequate knowledge of English lexical collocations as revealed by the number of erroneous collocations as well as the different types of collocational errors. Based on the analysis, these errors can be interpreted and explained according to various reasons. Different researchers have suggested various difficulties to account for the collocational errors committed by the participants in their studies (Liu, 1999b; Zughoul and Abdul-Fattah, 2003; Nessaulhauf, 2003; Li, 2005; Kuo, 2009; Dukali, 2010; Darvish, 2011; Hong et al. 2011). A full discussion of

the difficulties encountered in collocational use was provided in sections 3.2 in Chapter Three. For example, Liu (1999b) listed four main sources of difficulties: intralingual transfer, interlingual transfer and paraphrase. Then, he further divided those sources into another seven sources: overgeneralization, ignorance of rule restrictions, false concept hypothesized, the use of synonym, negative transfer, word coinage and approximation (for a detailed description of these sources, see Chapter Three).

According to the results of the present study, though not definite, eight main types of sources of difficulty and error (i.e. those related to interlingual transfer, intralingual transfer and environmental factors) were identified and suggested below. Interlingual transfer involves L₁ interference while intralingual transfer includes overgeneralization, the use of synonymy and the use of de-lexicalized verbs. Finally, lack of exposure to authentic English and inadequate teaching methodology are classified as environmental factors. It is important to highlight that one error may be caused by multiple variables, as, for example, it cannot be confidently claimed that the participants erroneously produced **take information* instead of *obtain information* as a result of overgeneralization only. Thus, further studies need to be conducted to explore the specific reasons behind various errors.

1) L₁ interference – the Negative Influence of the Mother Tongue: It seems likely that some of the learners' collocational errors were due to the influence of their Libyan colloquial Arabic because some of their erroneous collocational patterns have equivalents in Libyan colloquial Arabic. Table 8.3 presents a list of examples of erroneous collocations (traced back to L₁

interference) identified in the participants' written essays in the current study in comparison with the acceptable standard collocations (i.e. in line with native speaker production).

Table 8-3 The participants' erroneous collocations traced back to L₁ interference

Learners' erroneous collocations	Target standard English collocation
*make (idier) the curriculum (LCA)	design the curriculum
*give (yaati) a great curriculum (LCA)	offer standard/ academic curriculum
*take (yakhud) new information (LCA)	obtain new information
*get (yahassul ala) knowledge (LCA)	acquire knowledge
*do (idier) a lot of activities (LCA)	conduct, carry out, participate in

Furthermore, there are other types of collocational errors which are related to this source of difficulty such as the omission of the indefinite article, preposition errors and the number errors (see the above section for more discussion) due to the fact that these errors are influenced by the participants' L₁. For example, the participants faced difficulties in the use of English articles as in **academic aim* instead of *an academic aim* owing to the fact that there is no indefinite article in Arabic.

This result is in line with earlier results that claimed that negative transfer is a major cause of learners' collocational errors such as Zughoul and Abdul-fattah, 2003; Mahmoud, 2005; Kuo, 2009; Dukali, 2010; and Ahmed, 2012. For example, some of the identified erroneous collocations in Mahmoud's (2005) study were also found in this current study, such as **gain language* instead of *acquire language*. He pointed out that the error could be attributed to the learners' problems within their L₁, and to their confusion in distinguishing between similar lexical items in Arabic, e.g., the learners were unable to differentiate between "yaksab (= gain/win) and yaktasib (=acquire) in Arabic" (2005:123).

2) Overgeneralization: This was another common source of difficulty for the Libyan learners. It is related to the use of certain structures of collocations on the basis of the learners' experience of L₂ or FL structures. According to Richards, Schmitt and Platt (2002:260), overgeneralization is a process in language learning where "a learner extends the use of a grammatical rule of a linguistic item beyond its accepted uses". Furthermore, it is also connected with the over-extension of certain lexical items instead of others. Phoocharoensil (2011:115) mentioned in his study that the learners "overgeneralized some words and formed L2 miscollocations".

The current study results showed that this was a common practice in producing English collocations. In the results discussed previously, the participants over-extended certain verbs such as 'get', 'take' and 'provide' (see 8.3.1, for details). Furthermore, it was noticeable that there was a common misuse of the verbs, 'gain', 'acquire', 'develop', 'obtain' and 'improve'. These verbs were often substituted by 'get', 'take' and 'provide'. It could be said that the students who committed such errors were not fully familiar with the meanings of either 'get', 'take' and 'provide', or 'gain', 'acquire', 'develop', 'obtain' and 'improve'. The participants were not aware of the various collocational patterns connected to these verbs. This reflects their limited collocational competence. Another reason for this difficulty was perhaps due to the Libyan students' limited vocabulary repertoire. There were other examples in the LLC which demonstrate this point as the verb 'do' was used to substitute for other verbs as in **do planning* instead of *'undertake', 'initiate', 'encourage', 'enable', or 'arrange' planning*.

Similar results are found in studies such as: Zughoul and Abdul-fattah, 2003; Kuo, 2009; Dukali, 2010; Darvish, 2011; Hong et al., 2011 and Phoocharoensil, 2011.

3) The Use of Synonymy: This type of difficulty is especially common in producing erroneous collocations related to the wrong choice of verb and adjective due to “the insufficient collocational information of the synonym they use” (Hsueh, 2005:197). Another plausible interpretation is that Libyan learners assume that synonyms such as ‘recent’ and ‘modern’ have the same range of collocates and therefore can be used interchangeably in a collocation. Table 8.4 provides examples of this type of difficulty identified in the participants’ erroneously produced collocations.

Table 8-4 Participants’ erroneous collocations traced back to the use of synonymy

Learners’ erroneous collocations	Standard English collocation
*a great attention	considerable attention
*modern knowledge	‘recent’ / ‘up-to-date’ knowledge
*take some ways and skills	obtain good skills
*get knowledge	acquire knowledge
*give modern way	provide a modern way
*give a complete attention	pay full attention

This was similarly confirmed in several studies: Farghal and Obiedat, 1995; Huang, 2001; Zughoul and Abdul Fattah, 2003; Hong et al., 2011 and Farrokh, 2012. In this vein Hong et al. (2011:41) explained that the learners use synonymous or “near-synonymous words to substitute each other without considering the collocability and contextual appropriateness of the substituting word with the neighbouring items”.

4) The Use of De-lexicalized Verbs: This source of difficulty was found in the participants’ unacceptable verb-noun collocations where they substituted semantically empty verbs, e.g. *do*, *give* and *make* for similar de-lexicalized verb types in their collocational patterns as in **give induced offers* instead of *make induced offers*, **got awareness* instead of *have an awareness of*

and **make modern activities* instead of *do modern activities*. Several reasons can be proposed for the participants' difficulties in the use of de-lexicalized verbs in collocations:

1. Although these verbs are considered common verbs, they can cause problems for foreign language learners due to "their lack of transparency" (Eftekhari and Rahimi, 2011:3942).
2. Altenberg and Granger (2001:174) noted that they are "characterized by a high degree of polysemy". These verbs can take on several meanings and this can create problems for the FLL.
3. These verbs are seen by learners as "arbitrary" in terms of use and choice (p. 174).
4. Hsueh (2005:178) and Farrokh (2012:64) reported that these verbs can cause difficulties for learners due to their "linguistic deficiencies".

Several researchers have highlighted this source of difficulty in their studies (e.g. Lennon, 1996; Altenberg and Granger, 2001; Yang, 2002; Hsueh, 2005; Eftekhari and Rahimi, 2011; Farrokh, 2012). Most of them agreed that the learners' awareness of the collocational use of these verbs is very limited; therefore, they commonly tend to be problematic for FLL. For example, in his study, Lennon (1996) discovered that learners have problems with the correct choice of high-frequency verbs such as 'make', 'get', 'take' and 'have' in verb-noun collocations.

These errors do not result from 'over-extension' of a common verb because a specialist or rare word is unavailable to the learner. Rather, these learners do not understand the meaning/usage boundaries obtaining among some very common verbs. In particular, they lack information as to the collocational possibilities of common verbs (1996:28).

5) Lack of Exposure to Authentic Use of English Language: Judging by my own experience as a Libyan learner and teacher in the Libyan context, this difficulty may be the case of the

participants' (Libyan learners) inadequate collocational knowledge. Fan (2009:111) pointed out that the learners' "biggest problem is the lack of exposure to the target language. Whereas native speakers acquire the knowledge of collocation subconsciously and gradually as they grow up in their speech community, most learners, especially those who learn the L2 only in the classroom environment, do not have this opportunity".

6) Inadequate Teaching Methodology: The adopted teaching method utilized by most Libyan teachers could be another major source of Libyan learners' very limited collocational knowledge which reflects the learners' enormous number of erroneous collocations discussed and presented throughout this study. According to Altenberg and Granger (2001:184), the learners' performance should be clarified and interpreted on account of a number of factors – "interlingual, intralingual, and inadequate teaching".

7) Time Pressure: Although the suitability of the assigned time to accomplish the essay was checked while piloting the written task (please see section 4.10.1 piloting the writing task), the allotted time-frame still seemed to be insufficient for those students who produced the following erroneous collocation patterns: **get to university* instead of *go to university*, **get language* instead of *learn or acquire language* and **get good culture* instead of *learn about good culture*.

8) Multiple Sources of Errors: Some erroneous collocations can be traced to more than one explanatory source. The following are illustrative examples: Libyan learners' use of **get language* instead of *learn or acquire language* can be due to 1) overgeneralization, 2) lack of collocational knowledge, 3) lack of vocabulary and, in this case, possibly the verb 'acquire', and 4) time pressure. Explanations such as the following: 1) L₁ interference, 2) the use of synonymy

and 3) lack of collocational knowledge are sources which may possibly justify Libyan learners' production and use of **get a reasonable career* instead of *'find', 'obtain', 'embark on', 'procure' or 'secure' a reasonable career*. The source of the collocational error in **give a holiday between* instead of *'allowing', 'permitting' or 'providing' a holiday* can be interpreted as 1) L₁ interference and 2) the use of synonymy. Finally, it is worth saying that the above sources are assumed to be the main causes of difficulty in the use of collocations by the Libyan students in this body of research.

8.5 Interpreting the Results of the Writing Task in Light of the Questionnaire Results

Overall, the obtained results from the LLC revealed that the participants have insufficient knowledge of the verb-noun and adjective-noun English lexical collocations. Various collocational error types occurred in the LLC such as wrong choice of verb, adjective and noun; and the findings in 8.3.1 (i.e. summarised as (1) unawareness of semantic compatibility of verb-noun, (2) polysemous verbs, (3) overextension, (4) interchangeable delexicalisation, and (5) L₁. L₂ mismatch) can be further explained and interpreted in light of the results obtained from the students' and lecturers' questionnaires as follows:

1. The answers provided by the university lecturers to various questions in the questionnaire appear to imply that their teaching methods may not be very effective in passing on collocational knowledge to their students. Some responses revealed that the lecturers' teaching approach lacked specific focus on teaching vocabulary particularly in phrases and collocations. The following findings illustrate this point:

1. The results of the question concerning the approach employed in teaching new words revealed that teaching lexical items individually is still a common practice in the Libyan educational system. This finding can explain the participants' tendency towards using the synonym or near-synonym of a lexical item in a collocation as in **a great attention* instead of *considerable attention* and **modern knowledge* instead of *'recent'/'up-to-date' knowledge*.
2. With regard to the question concerning the best method to teach vocabulary, no responses were provided to show that collocation was used in teaching vocabulary in Libyan classrooms. This indicates that lecturers do not consider including collocations as part of their approaches to teaching vocabulary. Some lecturers used the Grammar Translation Method which focuses on teaching lists of isolated words with their Arabic meaning. This demonstrates that there needs to be greater awareness on the part of the lecturers of the significance of collocations in FL vocabulary learning. In addition, there was no indication that authentic material and/or concordance lines were used in the teaching of vocabulary to increase learners' collocational sensitivity and knowledge.
3. Some Libyan lecturers are not fully aware of, or familiar with, the idea of word combinations, particularly collocations. This was shown from responses to the question concerning lecturers' best methods of teaching collocations. The answers were vague, impracticable or simply demonstrated the lecturers' ignorance of collocations, for example, *'there is no subject named vocabulary or collocation'*.
4. Classroom activities focusing on collocations are not commonly taught in the Libyan educational system. This was shown by the absence of responses from five Libyan

lecturers in regard to conducting classroom activities. Subsequently, seven Libyan lecturers did not respond to the follow-up question asking them to describe their collocational activities. Examples of the collocational activities such as those proposed by Hill et al., (2000: 98-106) are activities focus on using a collocational dictionary. Those include a wide range of ideas such as recording collocations, essay preparation, find a better word, near synonym (see section 9.3.1 and in particular point 3 for detailed information on this), collecting collocations and translating collocation. Hence, it can be said that the lack of specific focus on teaching collocational activities is one reason for students' insufficient knowledge.

2. Results gained from question 12 showed that 11 out of 12 lecturers considered their students to be unaware of the importance of knowing common collocates of words. Additionally, a result obtained from the students' questionnaire revealed that no students appeared to use collocational dictionaries. This demonstrates that these students were not familiar with or even aware of the collocational dictionaries' importance as a means of improving their language proficiency. The most commonly used dictionary was English-Arabic, thus signifying that the participants were concerned with knowing and discovering the meaning of new lexical items rather than exploring their usage. This result agrees with the previous finding concerning learners' strategies for learning new vocabulary. The same percentage (50.4%) of the students claimed that they memorized the words with their Arabic meanings (see Table 7.5).
3. The results of the triangulations concerning whether students were learning new lexical items in collocations showed that the median (17.4%) is not high enough in comparison with the

- total number of study participants (155). This demonstrates that the participants are unaware of the importance of learning words in chunks in general and collocations in particular.
4. The results showed that students did seem to be aware of the problems they were having. The majority admitted to having problems with vocabulary and grammar in their English writing (39.4% for vocabulary and 31.6% for grammar). However, the results of the writing task showed that according to the overall frequency of errors, the students committed more grammatical errors than lexical errors as indicated in Table 8.2, therefore, looking at the percentages of the students (39.4% vs. 31.6%), it can be concluded that the respondents have a misperception of their strengths and weaknesses in terms of grammar and vocabulary. However, this misperception may reflect the fact that the greatest number of errors according to error types were wrong choice of verb lexical error with 260 occasions in verb-noun collocations and wrong choice of adjective lexical error type, which was the second most frequent with 108 occurrences in the students' production of adjective-noun collocations (for details on error types, see Tables 6.3 and 6.6).
 5. With regard to the possible sources of Libyan learners' collocational errors, the results of lecturers' views about perceived sources of students' collocational errors confirmed that:
 1. Negative transfer was the major source of Libyan learners' collocational errors as divulged by all respondents. According to Shalbag and Belhaj's (2012:3) study, it can be concluded that "most of the students' problems are attributed to L₁ transfer and overgeneralization".
 2. The use of synonyms was another perceived cause of the students' collocational errors. This was followed by overgeneralization as illustrated in Table 7.18.

6. Inadequate teaching methodology was another major reason underpinning the participants' collocational errors as shown from the results of the questionnaires in their entirety.

8.6 Conclusion

This chapter has provided a discussion of the writing task results (the main research method). The results obtained from the participants' written essays were discussed in light of the literature reviewed earlier in the thesis (see Chapter Two and Three). Furthermore, these results were further explained and interpreted in light of the results obtained from the students' and lecturers' questionnaires. The research questions of this thesis have been answered with a full discussion and description of the results, which have been related to different potential interpretations.

The discussion of the findings shows that the results of this study are in line with the results of most of the studies introduced in the literature review in Chapter Three (e.g. Bahns and Eldaw, 1993; Al-Zahrani, 1998; Wang and Shaw, 2000; Nesselhauf, 2003; Mahmoud, 2005; Kuo, 2009; Miyakoshi, 2009; Bazzaz and Abd Samad, 2011; Phoocharoensil, 2011; Darvishi, 2011; Huang, 2001; Ahmed, 2012). They revealed that EFL learners of English have an inadequate knowledge of English lexical collocations. These EFL learners in question, whether Arab or others, tended to commit the same collocational error types in their writing e.g. preposition errors and noun choice errors which means these error types are a persistent problem in learning English as a foreign language. In addition, some of the learners' collocational errors, for example, determiner errors, number errors and word order errors occurred because of the differences between the Arabic and English grammatical systems. Eight main reasons connected with various sources of difficulty (i.e. interlingual transfer, intralingual transfer and environmental factors) underlying behind the participants' collocational errors were identified and suggested. They are: L₁ interference, overgeneralization, the use of synonymy, the use of de-lexicalized verbs, lack of exposure to

authentic English, inadequate teaching methodology, time pressure, and multiple sources of errors. Also, the questionnaires' findings suggested that the lecturers' teaching methods were not effective in passing collocational knowledge on to their students. It lacked specific focus in the teaching of vocabulary, particularly in phrases and collocations.

Finally, the conclusion and recommendations arising out of the obtained results will be presented and summarized in the next (final) chapter of this thesis aimed at Libyan English language instructors, course administrators and publishers of English language teaching materials in order to develop and improve their collocational use and knowledge of teaching English as a foreign language.

Chapter 9

Conclusions and Recommendations

9.1 Introduction

This chapter provides general conclusions based on the findings of this research. These conclusions entail a summary of the study, which is presented in section 9.2 followed by recommendations in 9.3. This section includes a wide range of suggestions made for Libyan EFL English language instructors and course administrators and publishers of English language teaching materials. Limitations of the study are presented in section 9.4 while suggestions for further research are introduced in 9.5.

9.2 Summary of the Study

The goal of this thesis was to provide an in-depth investigation of the difficulties faced by students when attempting to use two types of lexical collocations (i.e. verb-noun collocations and adjective-noun collocations) in academic written English. The students were Libyan undergraduates learning English as a foreign language. The task was a formal written essay on the theme of education with a topic selected from an IELTS test. Furthermore, an acceptability-of-collocations survey was used to triangulate the judgments arising from the three methods (see below for details). This survey was also used to achieve the secondary aim of the study which was to discover whether there is a significant difference between native speaker ratings of English language learner collocations in academic as opposed to non-academic contexts. As explained in Chapter 4, questionnaires were also used as a supportive method to collect data from students and university lecturers in order to further explain, interpret and discuss the obtained results from the writing task, and to suggest reasons why Libyan students have difficulty with collocations (see 4.4.3 for details). It needs to be

highlighted, however, that questionnaire responses are just a reflection of the participants' opinions and views rather than facts as indicated and discussed in Chapter 7.

Before going on to summarise the answers to my research questions, it is worth reiterating the various stages of analysis that I went through in order to analyze the participants' verb-noun and adjective-noun collocational patterns as they appeared in their academic written essays.

These were:

- a) **Data Generation:** This phase included generating the concordance lines for each investigated verb and adjective by using the AntConc Concordance Tool. I also investigated the distribution of the all searched words (see 4.7 for details).
- b) **Identification of Collocations: Extracting Learners' Collocational Patterns:** The concordance lines were checked line by line manually to search for the investigated words occurring as part of verb-noun and adjective-noun collocations. Thus, the focus of the next stage of analysis was on the concordance lines containing learners' collocations only.
- c) **Classification of Collocations and Collocational Errors:** The classification of collocations and their collocational errors were conducted at the same time to speed up the process of the analysis. I employed two criteria in this analytical phase of classification. They were: (1) Criteria for judging the acceptability of learners' collocational patterns. Verb-noun and adjective-noun collocations were classified according to certain criteria which were based on native-like use of language and in particular academic written English, which I devised and subsumed under what I termed the 'scale of acceptability' (i.e. **a) acceptable** refers to learners' collocational patterns which were evaluated as being native-like and common collocations in English

such as *take advantage of*; **b) partially acceptable** means that the components of a given collocation (i.e. node and collocate) are correct and collocate within a span which is deemed acceptable, but the grammatical structure in which it is encased is incorrect. The partially acceptable scale option ignores the possibility of perfect grammar yet the combination is still unusual according to the acceptable scale option. In most cases, those collocations can be easily understood and the hearer can, by extension and by considering the context, accurately guess the intended meaning. Consequently, they do not have a significantly negative effect on the communication process.; and **c) unacceptable** refer to the collocations which are assessed as non-native-like and not common collocations in English. The main components of the collocation (i.e. node and collocate) do not collocate such as **a higher experience*). The partially acceptable option focuses on the grammatical side of language whilst the unacceptable side targets lexis. As stated earlier, I used four methods to evaluate and determine the acceptability of the learners' collocational patterns. Secondly, criteria for classifying learners' collocational errors were used. They were as follows: a) missing, b) superfluous, c) wrong or d) wrong word order.

- d) Quantification of Collocations and Collocational Errors:** The occurrences of both acceptable collocations and erroneous collocations were counted. In addition, different types of collocational errors were counted. Then, the percentages and the frequency were calculated.
- e) Triangulation of the Methods Used to Judge the Acceptability of the Participants' Collocational Patterns:** The acceptability-of-collocation survey taken from the participants' erroneous use of both verb-noun and adjective-noun collocations was administered to 100 native-speakers of English in order to triangulate the acceptability

assessment of learners' collocational patterns. The participants' collocations were judged differently in the academic rating survey (i.e. acceptable) as opposed to the main study. These were to be amended in the main study as acceptable. Accordingly, the frequency of the verbs and adjectives were then amended and the accuracy percentages were calculated. Similarly, the occurrences of the collocational error types were amended and their percentages were calculated.

- f) **Conducting Inferential Statistics (Independent Sample T-Test):** This phase of the investigation included further analysis of the obtained results by using different descriptive statistics and an independent sample t-test (inferential statistics) in order to answer the first research question. The SPSS software was used in order to analyze the data.
- g) **Analysis of Sources of Collocational Errors:** The last stage of the analysis was to identify and suggest the difficulties that the participants (Libyan learners) encountered when producing the two types of English collocations in the writing task.

Based on the data and results obtained from the current study, the following research questions were answered as follows:

RQ1. Which type of collocation (verb-noun or adjective-noun) is more problematic for Libyan learners?

As indicated in Chapter 6, e.g. section 6.4, the results obtained from the LLC revealed that the overall accuracy percentage (50.1%) of verb-noun collocations was less than that of adjective-noun collocations with (61.9%). Based on this finding, it is possible to claim that verb-noun collocations were more problematic for the participants than adjective-noun collocations.

However, I conducted further statistical investigations to answer RQ1.1 in order to confirm such a claim derived from the accuracy of the percentage outcomes.

The boxplot (Figure 6.1) showed that there were mainly two outliers, the verbs *gain* and *acquire* in verb-noun collocations, whereas there were no outliers in the adjective-noun collocations. Also, the statistical group data of the 10 verbs without the outliers and the 12 adjectives in the two types of the lexical collocations shows that the mean accuracy of the adjective-noun collocations (63.91) was higher than that of the verb-noun collocations (48.83).

The results of the independent sample t-test after removing the two outliers revealed that this type of verb has an effect on the accuracy level $T(14.52) = 2.52, p=0.024$. The participants' use of the twelve adjectives in the adjective-noun collocations showed significantly more accuracy level compared to their use of the twelve verbs in the verb-noun collocations. Therefore, the statistical investigations confirm that verb-noun collocations posed more difficulties for the participants than adjective-noun collocations.

RQ2. What types of errors do Libyan learners make when producing verb-noun and adjective-noun collocations?

Based on the qualitative and quantitative analysis of the obtained data from the Libyan Learner Corpus, three broad categories of errors were identified in the learners' erroneous verb-noun and adjective-noun collocations. These were: (1) grammatical errors, (2) lexical errors and (3) errors related to usage. This current study result confirms the results of previous research investigating the errors in collocations produced by different participants all over the world (Wang and Shaw, 2000; Nesselhauf, 2003; Li, 2005; Mahmoud, 2005; Kuo, 2009; Miyakoshi, 2009; Darvishi, 2011; Huang, 2011).

Furthermore, these categories were classified into sixteen and twelve error types in verb-noun and adjective-noun collocations respectively such as wrong choice of verb, wrong choice of adjective, wrong choice of noun, determiner errors, preposition errors, number errors, wrong word order errors, word form errors, usage category errors, intensifier errors and wrong register errors (see Chapter 6 for details).

Generally, grammatical errors were more recurrent in the two investigated types of collocations than lexical errors. For instance, determiners especially definite and indefinite articles were the first and second most frequent problematic error recording 130 (33.3%) and 203 occasions in the participants' adjective-noun and verb-noun collocations respectively. This finding demonstrates that the correct and acceptable choice of the lexical components (i.e. node and collocate) in a collocation does not inevitably mean that the participants had no difficulties in producing native-like and grammatically well-formed English lexical collocations.

RQ3. Do these errors allow us to infer any possible reasons for their presence?

With regard to the difficulties that Libyan learners encountered when producing the two types of English collocations in the writing task, the results of the present study reveal that eight main sources of difficulty could be identified as outlined in Chapter 8. These are: (1) L₁ interference – the negative influence of the mother tongue, (2) overgeneralization, (3) the use of synonymy, (4) the use of de-lexicalized verbs, (5) lack of exposure to authentic use of English language, (6) inadequate teaching methodology, (7) time pressure and (8) multiple sources of errors. With regard to L₁ interference, it is important to mention that the learners' collocational errors were due to the influence of their Libyan colloquial Arabic rather than

standard Arabic since some of the errors indicated that the participants often opted to translate from their Libyan colloquial Arabic.

RQ4. Is there a significant difference between native speaker ratings of English language learner collocations in academic as opposed to non-academic contexts?

The independent sample t-test was conducted to measure the difference in the rating between the academic and the non-academic rating groups, based on the data obtained from an 80-item survey, made into two-versions, (i.e. academic-rating and non-academic-rating).

As shown in Chapter 5, e.g. section 5.2.3, the results reveal that there were significant differences in the native speakers' judgments in the academic rating survey ($M=3.02$, $Sd=0.49$) and the non-academic rating survey ($M=3.33$, $Sd=0.49$), $t(98)=3.21$, $p=0.002$). In addition, the mean of all items without the fillers was higher for the native speakers in the non-academic rating survey than that of the other group who did the academic rating survey (3.12 versus 2.77). This indicates that there is a statistically significant difference in what native speakers view as more acceptable in academic writing than in spoken language. For example, *modern knowledge* and *the current time* appeared to be acceptable only in the non-academic rating survey. Hence, it can be concluded that native speaker judgment of collocations occurring in an academic context tends to be stricter and less tolerant than assessment of collocations which appear in less formal contexts. Furthermore, it shows that judgments about academic writing are more uniform than judgments about non-academic writing.

In addition, the results of the last question in the survey (*would your answers be different if the extracts were from conversations rather than written essays?*) are in line with the above findings. All the subjects who answered 'yes' to this question, agreed that their rating would

be done differently, if the extracts were taken from conversation due to the differences in both registers.

9.3 Recommendations

Overall, the results from the current study indicate that the participants have limited knowledge of English lexical collocations as demonstrated by their inadequate performance and the number of erroneous collocations and various types of collocational errors (i.e. lexical errors and grammatical errors) in their academic written essays. Consequently, based on the obtained results of all research methods and the above conclusion, a number of recommendations have been suggested in order to answer the fifth research question:

RQ5: On the basis of the findings relating to the questions above, what methods can be suggested to help the teaching of collocations to students in a Libyan university context?

9.3.1 Recommendations for Libyan EFL English Language Instructors

In this section, a variety of recommendations are made, and suggestions given, for Libyan EFL English language instructors to take into consideration when teaching and introducing English collocations to their students.

- 1) While teaching lexical collocations, particular attention should be given to teaching verb-noun collocations as the results confirmed that this type was more problematic for the participants than adjective-noun collocations.
- 2) Furthermore, since wrong choice of verb recorded as the most frequently occurring error in producing verb-noun collocations on 260 occasions in the LLC, it is suggested that special attention should be paid to the verb in teaching verb-noun collocations. It is therefore recommended for Libyan EFL teachers to introduce the

various noun collocates of verbs to their students. For details of how this might be done, please see Lewis (2000:88-117) for a wide range of suggested activities and exercises. In this connection, Barnbrook et al. (2013:125) point out that these activities “can make it easier for learners to acquire a good grasp of collocations in their target language and so become more fluent speakers”.

- 3) The study reveals that the participants opted for using the synonym or near-synonym of some adjectives and verbs when producing adjective-noun and verb-noun collocations. Therefore, it is advised that Libyan EFL teachers should indicate to their students that when learning collocations they must be memorised in total and no other words (e.g. synonyms or near synonyms) can be used in their place. For example, the collocation “*heavy smoker*” cannot be replaced by, for example, “*overweight or strong or obese smoker*”. Exercises could be devised where the correct adjective or verb is given in the box which can be matched with the noun heads. The following is an example of how this might be done, which is proposed by Hill et al., (2000:102):

Near synonyms activity: In order to help the students build a solid understanding of English vocabulary, the instructor can take a minimum of two lexical items with similar meaning such as injury and wound. Then he/she encourages the students to take a closer look at their collocating adjective and verb of both words in a collocation dictionary. In addition, part of this activity can be to ask the learners to translate some of the collocations into their first language. Learners of a higher level could learn through larger groups of words, such as:

1. answer, conclusion, explanation, result, solution
2. mistake, error, fault, problem, defect

3. instructions, guidelines, rules, regulations, directives
 4. ability, talent, gift, skill, aptitude
 5. pattern, shape, form, design, structure
 6. document, report, file, article, story, account (Hill et al., 2000:102).
- 4) Special attention should be paid to teaching the verbs ‘make’ and ‘get’ along with the adjectives; ‘great’ and ‘higher’ by highlighting their various noun collocates in verb-noun and adjective-noun collocations respectively. Hence, these verbs and adjectives have the lowest accuracy percentages in the LLC, in spite of the fact that ‘make’ and ‘great’ were placed in the relatively high position of fourth and ‘get’ and ‘higher’ were ranked in the fifth position in terms of overall collocational frequency.
- 5) Particular focus should be given to the teaching of delexicalized verbs in collocations by introducing their different noun collocates since the results showed that the participants produced high frequency verbs in their delexicalized sense interchangeably. In addition, it is vital to attract students’ attention to the commonly mistaken collocations and in particular ‘make’ and ‘do’ such as “*make a mistake*” and not “*do a mistake*” and “*do research*” and not “*make a research*” as the participants (Libyan learners) used these two verbs (i.e. ‘do’ and ‘make’) interchangeably or similarly and instead of other English verbs. This can be done by making use of native speaker corpus data such as British National Corpus (BNC) and COBUILD Bank of English corpus which are excellent resources of common and typical English collocations. The teacher would need to identify appropriate collocations and then bring them to the attention of the students by means of concordance lines. Thornbury (2002:68) explained the benefits of recommending the use of corpus data to EFL teachers and learners as “it provides them with easily accessible information about

real language use, frequency and collocation”. In addition, those two corpora represent different types of English collocations in their most standard structures and offer a variety of collocations in both written and spoken language.

- 6) The study shows that the grammatical errors were more frequent than lexical errors in the participants’ collocational patterns when producing verb-noun and adjective-noun collocations. Therefore, introducing and teaching the whole collocational pattern (i.e. not only the node and the collocate, but also the pre-modification and post-modification of the noun - see 2.1.4 for further information) to the students is vitally important in order to overcome students’ difficulties in terms of the grammatical perspective of language. In addition, the students’ overall English language proficiency would be improved and they would be more capable of producing native-like utterances. This would also ease the process of communication in terms of communicating and conveying the intended meaning. This is particularly so when it comes to pre-modifiers of the noun such as articles, intensifiers and adjectives within the collocation and/or in some cases, a following preposition. On this note, I reiterate Nesselhauf’s (2003) call for a more comprehensive approach. She suggests that it is not enough to “merely teach the lexical elements that go together, but it is necessary to teach entire combinations including prepositions, articles, etc” (2003:238).
- 7) In respect of using a wrong register, the study revealed that the participants did not comply with the requirements of the task of writing an academic essay, since on many occasions they chose the wrong verb and adjective when producing verb-noun and adjective-noun collocations owing to wrong register although they may be considered acceptable in other contexts, e.g., spoken language. Thus, it is

recommended that teachers can raise awareness in students of how register affects choice of collocation.

- 8) The results revealed that some of the participants' collocational errors were, in my opinion, due to the influence of their mother tongue (Libyan colloquial Arabic) because some of their erroneous collocational patterns had equivalents in Libyan colloquial Arabic. It is therefore recommended that Libyan EFL instructors raise greater awareness in their students of such difficulty and point out that transferring language from their mother tongue does not always result in acceptable production of English collocations. This could be done by compiling a bilingual list of collocations and bringing it to their students' attention.
- 9) The current study results show that L₁ interference, overgeneralization, the use of synonymy and the use of de-lexicalized verbs were shown to be common difficulties for the participants in the production of English collocations. It is therefore strongly recommended that Libyan EFL teachers should design and use collocational activities which address these difficulties in order to raise awareness in their learners. The activities should particularly aim to draw attention to areas of difficulty described below.
 1. L₁ interference in collocation production, which includes coverage of: a) lexical confusion, for example, **make (idier) the curriculum* (LCA) instead of *design the curriculum*, and b) grammatical elements such as: (i) determiner errors as in **academic aim* instead of *an academic aim*, (ii) singular/plural errors as in **have a good knowledges* instead of *have good knowledge*, **make their researches* instead of *'conduct' their research* and (iii) wrong word order errors as in **make a student good* instead of *make a good student* (for more detailed information, see section 6.2.2.3).

These grammatical error types were identified as arising from the differences between the Arabic and English grammatical systems. Thus, it is also recommended that when teaching collocational patterns, emphasis should be given to the differences between the grammatical systems between the learners' L₁ (Arabic language) and L₂ (English language).

2. Synonym problems as in **get knowledge* in place of *acquire knowledge* and **modern knowledge* in place of *'recent' / 'up-to-date' knowledge*.
 3. The use of de-lexicalized verbs as in **got awareness* instead of *have an awareness of* and **make modern activities* instead of *do modern activities*.
 4. Overgeneralization, such as the verb 'take', which was over-extended 11 times, instead of using a verb such as 'obtain' as in **take information* instead of *obtain information* and **take a good skills* instead of *obtain good skills*.
- 10)** Based on the results of the survey which revealed that (1) the native speakers rated some erroneous collocations as acceptable, and (2) there were significant differences in the native speakers' judgments in the academic rating and the non-academic rating survey, it is strongly recommended that Libyan EFL teachers should pay attention to register (i.e. how native speakers use language in different social situations).
- 11)** In light of the lecturers' questionnaire results presented in Chapter Seven, it is strongly recommended that Libyan EFL instructors teach and introduce collocations in the earlier stages of language learning in order to give the students sufficient time to acquire them in order to enable them to enrich their acquisition.

9.3.2 Recommendations for Course Administrators and Publishers of English Language Teaching Materials

In this section, a variety of recommendations will be suggested to demonstrate ways in which collocations should be integrated into English language teaching materials.

- a) The review on the Libyan curriculum revealed that there is only one lesson about collocations in the whole series of textbooks in both basic and intermediate education. Therefore, it is strongly recommended for textbook writers and designers to include a variety of lessons on collocations which introduce various collocational patterns in textbooks for all learning stages. It is important to highlight here that for English major students, it is necessary to raise the students' awareness of collocation as a *linguistic phenomenon* as well as teach them a wide range of collocational patterns to help raise their proficiency levels. This would enable the students to understand the importance of collocations in both learning and teaching English.
- b) It is essential for Libyan EFL language instructors to be fully aware of the necessity of teaching various types of word combinations and collocations in particular and to highlight their importance in the English language. Therefore, it is recommended that the Libyan Ministry of Education offer teacher-training courses such as those offered by CELTA and TRINITY to Libyan EFL teachers to raise their awareness of how to teach English collocations. According to Barnbrook et al. (2013:128) "... a new emphasis in the training of language teachers in an awareness of the importance of collocation to learners and of the need to use teaching

methods which will allow learners to become more proficient in the use and understanding of collocations”.

- c) In teacher-training programmes, it is essential to draw Libyan EFL teachers' attention to the need to teach common high frequency verbs along with their most common collocates. In the most current study the findings showed that the majority of participants' unacceptable verb-noun collocational patterns were formed by combining high-frequency verbs, most notably 'get', 'make', 'give', 'take', 'provide', and 'do', with various noun collocates.
- d) Following on from the second recommendation, self-training courses using specific textbooks are also recommended for Libyan EFL teachers. This has a number of advantages, for example, teachers can learn in their free time, returning to the textbook whenever necessary throughout the year. *How to Teach Vocabulary* by Thornbury (2002) is a perfect example of a self-training resource book. Barnbrook et al. (2013:129) state that this book makes clear the significance of collocational patterns in teaching English language. A wide range of exercises within this book are designed to assist the learning of collocation. This consists of the use of language samples rich in lexical chunks, pairs of word cards, the construction of collocational grids and maps using dictionaries or corpus data. All those exercises intend to promote an awareness of phrases and collocations (Barnbrook et al. 2013:129).
- e) Based on the results of the survey which revealed that (1) the native speakers rated some erroneous collocations as acceptable, and (2) there

were significant differences in the native speakers' judgments in the academic rating and the non-academic rating survey, it is essential to draw course book writers' attention to collocations found in academic and spoken contexts to enable students to observe how native speakers use the language in different contexts.

9.4 Limitations of the Study

There are, of course, caveats and limitations to all research. There are several limitations to this particularly study and these are highlighted below to pinpoint areas where future research is required.

1. One limitation of the study was that the data was confined to one university in Libya (Tripoli University) and it was also collected from a relatively small number of participants (186 fourth year English major students). Therefore, due to these two limitations, marginally different results may have been obtained if the study had included English major students from other Libyan universities. However, I would argue that the results can be generalised to all Libyan EFL learners due to the following reasons. Libyan students majoring in English are all native speakers of Arabic and studying English as a foreign language. They all have a similar background (i.e. the same Libyan nationality and culture) and they learn English according to one curriculum which is the same for both private and state schools. However, it should be noted that in some cases there may be differences between the students such as their age and English proficiency level. As indicated in Chapter Four, these limitations arose out of difficulties encountered in collecting the data such as the ongoing conflict in other cities, political wrangling and the unstable situation in Libya arising from the recent revolution. For example, there were strikes in all

educational institutions in Tripoli; thus, the students did not attend lectures for two weeks (please see section 4.11 for detailed information). Therefore, there was restricted access and permission to visit other institutions in Tripoli. This limitation would have been overcome if it had been possible to collect data from various universities in Libya on a larger scale.

2. The sample of the native speaker English teachers who participated in the procedure of selecting the two investigated types of lexical collocation was very small (only nine participants). This was due to most of the teachers being busy with their courses when I contacted them. Additionally, other centres refused to give me permission to contact their staff saying that the teachers were quite busy with their lesson preparations and teaching and could not be asked to do extra voluntary work which results in a relatively small sample. The same situation happened when Libyan students were asked to participate in the study.
3. The focus of the investigation was on two types of English lexical collocations (verb–noun collocations and adjective–noun collocations). Furthermore within each type, the study examined a limited number of verbs and adjectives (twelve each). However, an in-depth investigation and analysis were conducted to determine the overall frequency of every investigated verb and adjective. The frequency of acceptable as well as erroneous occurrences in verb–noun and adjective–noun collocations were also identified and counted. In addition, the obtained results were further analysed by using different descriptive statistics (i.e. means and standard deviations) and an independent sample t-test (inferential statistics) in order to answer the first research questions.

4. The data obtained from the students' questionnaire and the lecturers' questionnaire was supportive and used to interpret, explain and discuss the findings obtained from the writing task. As explained in Chapter Seven, this method (the questionnaires) is limited as it only provides us with the participants' views and insights rather than facts. The results obtained from the questionnaires are useful as they can provide hypotheses of why Libyan students have difficulty with collocations. In addition, they can contribute to our understanding of how lecturers and students think collocations are taught and learned in the Libyan educational system. However, the two questionnaires were merely supportive methods for the purposes of this current study. An alternative means of providing support for the findings obtained from the essay data might have come from conducting a sentence completion writing task (i.e. an extended text of approximate 250 words) in which the head words were provided and respondents had to produce the collocates.
5. A fifth limitation of the study was related to the participants' English language proficiency level. As there was no standardised way of assessing the participants' level of English Language proficiency such as the TOFEL or IELTS tests due to financial and political constraints, there was a lack of distinction between the participants' level of proficiency. They were assessed according to their mid-term exams from the University. They were rated as intermediate to lower advanced as indicated by their writing professor. This application of less reliable means of testing language proficiency represents a limitation since more reliable testing services such as the IELTS proved too difficult to administer in terms of obtaining permission from the relevant authorities and funding.

In conclusion, it is important to point out that I anticipated some of the above-mentioned limitations. However, due to the instability of the political situation in Libya, I could not address them. Therefore, I decided that that the priority was to conduct the research in a stable situation, which, unfortunately, precluded the possibility of, for example, collecting data from various universities and including a larger number of students. However, the limitations of this study provide opportunities for improved future research. Suggestions for future research are introduced in the following section.

9.5 Suggestions for Further Research

In this section, a number of suggestions for future research are made which focus on English collocation as an area of investigation. Researching English collocations is still in its infancy particularly in the Arab context. Therefore, considerable attention is required from researchers and linguists to conduct more research to examine the nature of this linguistic phenomenon in-depth.

1. Future studies need to include a wide range of homogeneous participants from different universities and institutions in Libya in an attempt to enhance the reliability and validity of the findings.
2. It would also be of interest to assess the Libyan learners' knowledge of collocations at varied language proficiency levels along with a range of learning stages to further investigate their difficulties with different types of English collocation in written production.
3. Furthermore, more research is needed to investigate other types of lexical collocations. Further studies are needed to examine the learners' ability to use various types of grammatical collocations as well.

4. It would also be pertinent to investigate in-depth the influence of Learners' L₁ (Arabic) on their production of collocation, major causes of learners' collocational errors, the learners' strategies in using collocations and the effect of explicit and implicit instructions on collocation learning.
5. Further studies should be conducted to investigate why verb-noun collocations are more problematic than adjective-noun collocations. Furthermore, the investigations should entail considering which elements of the collocation (i.e. verb, noun or adjective) are more problematic for the learners.
6. Finally, it is vital to continue conducting research on the use of collocations by Arab learners. Such research will certainly lead to a better understanding of this linguistic phenomenon and contribute to language learning and teaching. This is needed to see whether any differences exist between English learners in various Arab EFL contexts in terms of the difficulties they face in using English collocations to enable comparison.

Two further recommendations for future researchers can be seen below which are based on the results of the acceptability (of collocations) survey. These recommendations concern some methodological issues which need to be taken into consideration which could affect the results.

7. Based on the results of the survey which revealed that the native speakers rated some erroneous collocations as acceptable, it is strongly recommended for future researchers to use consultations with native speakers (i.e. speakers of an up-to-date version of the English language) as an additional method of assessing the learners'

collocational patterns along with the use of collocational dictionaries and native speaker corpora such as the BNC.

8. Based on the survey results, which showed that there were significant differences in the native speakers' judgments in the academic rating survey and the non-academic rating survey, $t(98)=3.21$, $p=0.002$, it is strongly recommended for future researchers in the field of collocations to indicate the register of their corpus (i.e. academic or non-academic English) when requesting native speakers to evaluate and judge their learners' collocation patterns, as this could affect their findings.

9.6 Overall Conclusions

This body of research represents, to my knowledge, the first large-scale investigation of university learners' difficulties in the use of collocation in academic written English in the Arab world. Furthermore, it is the first large-scale exploratory study conducted in the Libyan EFL context. Thus, it is especially important to Libyan EFL teachers and learners in particular and English teachers and learners in the Arab speaking countries in general. It may provide some help in solving the problems that the learners encounter in the process of language acquisition and the learning of this linguistic phenomenon. In addition, this study contributes to the enrichment of collocational studies and the difficulties encountered in this area in the general context and Arab context in particular. The results of this current research confirm the findings of other studies in the area of the use of collocations in English language learning.

Furthermore, there have been many studies concerning the difficulties encountered by EFL learners in the use of English collocations. The review of these studies revealed a number of methodological issues; for example, some studies did not take into account the drawbacks of using only the BNC and/or collocational dictionaries, e.g. the OCD to judge learners'

collocations. Other studies did not consult native speakers of English to assess the acceptability of the collocations. Thus, this review has helped me to add to the different existing research methods (i.e. the BNC, collocational dictionaries and consultation with native speakers of English) used in various studies to assess the acceptability of learners' collocational patterns (i.e. the acceptability-of-collocations survey). Therefore, a particular innovative feature of the current study lies in the creation and utilisation of this survey. Several researchers incorporated consultations with native speakers into their methods to assess the learners' collocational patterns. However, they did not indicate the register (i.e. academic or spoken English) in which the collocations appeared to help the consulted native speakers to make more informed judgments. On the other hand, this research put in place specifically established rigid criteria for the consulted native speakers to enable them to be able to judge the acceptability of learners' collocations according to academic written English. Furthermore, I used specific rigid criteria to classify learners' collocational patterns, which I subsumed under what I term the 'scale of acceptability'. Other researchers failed to conduct in-depth statistical investigations to determine which types of lexical collocation were more problematic for the learners. I therefore performed inferential statistics (i.e. independent sample t-test) to answer RQ1 to verify which type was more problematic for the participants. In addition, this study is the first to investigate if there is a significant difference between native speaker ratings of English language learner collocations in academic as opposed to non-academic contexts.

In general, the obtained results from the current research support the claim that learners have insufficient knowledge of English lexical collocations as revealed by their error-strewn performance in producing them (see Bahns and Eldaw, 1993; Farghal and Obiedant, 1995;

Al-Zahrani, 1998; Liu, 1999; Wang and Shaw, 2000; Nesselhauf, 2003; zughou and Abdul-Fattah, 2003; Li, 2005; Mahmoud, 2005; Hsu, 2007; Kuo, 2009; Miyakoshi, 2009; Dukali, 2010; Bazzaz and Abd Samad, 2011; Darvishi, 2011; Hong et al., 2011; Phoocharoensil; 2011; Ahmed, 2012 and Farrokh, 2012). Furthermore, the results revealed that verb-noun collocations were more difficult for the participants than adjective-noun collocations; in other words, the participants made more errors when using verb-noun collocations than when producing adjective-noun collocations in their academic written essays. Three broad categories of errors were also identified in the learners' erroneous verb-noun and adjective-noun collocations in their written essays. This difficulty could be attributed to the participants' lack of awareness of the semantic compatibility between the verb and the noun within the collocational patterns. Another interpretation is that the majority of the unacceptable collocational patterns in the LLC were formed by combining high frequency verbs such as 'have', 'get' and 'make'. Furthermore, the overextension of these polysemous verbs which can act as a substitute for other English verbs is another plausible reason for the above results. The participants used high frequency verbs in their delexicalised senses interchangeably. Finally, there may be cases when there is an L₁, L₂ mismatch. This practice was shown in the participants' use of the two verbs 'make' and 'do' interchangeably to the elimination of other potential English verbs, owing to their unawareness of the differences between these verbs and their possible assumption that they were alike. These were: (1) grammatical errors, (2) lexical errors and (3) errors related to usage. Furthermore, the results of the acceptability survey showed that there were significant differences in the native speakers' judgments in the academic rating and the non-academic rating survey.

All in all, it is hoped that this research will contribute to a greater understanding of the difficulties the participants (Libyan learners) encountered when producing verb-noun and adjective-noun collocations as well as the various types of collocational errors made. Therefore, it is hoped that Libyan EFL language instructors will be informed of such difficulties and will then be more able to implement lessons centred on English collocations which address these difficulties and target their students' specific needs in order to improve their collocational knowledge to eventually achieve native-like competence. In addition, it is hoped that the obtained results from the current study will encourage language instructors to recognize the importance and the benefits of incorporating various types of English collocations into their teaching instructions in the classrooms.

Finally, it seems appropriate to end this chapter by reiterating the words of Barnbrook et al. on the importance of including collocation in the learning and teaching of the English language:

[e]ffective language teaching and learning depends crucially on the acquisition of proper collocational patterns, to the extent that the lexis of a language is as important as its grammar, and a proper grasp of collocation provides the key to native-like fluency and ease of production (Barnbrook et al., 2013:129).

Glossary

The open choice principle is an approach of viewing a language text which was created by making use of a wide range of word choices whose only constraint is the requirement of grammatical accuracy (Sinclair, 1991: 109).

RANDOM.ORG is software which generates accurate randomized numbers. It was built in Ireland by Dr Mads Haahr in 1998 and is currently managed by Randomness and Integrity Services Ltd. It is widely used to generate numbers randomly for various applications such as holding drawings, online games, scientific applications and for the Arts.

The British National Corpus encompasses a collection of 100 million words representing modern British English. Approximately 90 million words of the corpus belong to written language from eight genres whereas 10 million words are related to the spoken language from four social-class groupings. It has been collected from a wide variety of sources ranging from formal academic prose and popular fiction to transcribed radio shows and informal conversations. The corpus was built in 1990s and no updated texts have been conducted since the project was completed. Thus, using the BNC for an investigation of “the most recent lexical developments of the language” would fail (Hoffmann et. Al., 2008:45) particularly when searching for Internet-based lexis, which has enriched the English lexical repertoire. Available at: <http://www.natcorp.ox.ac.uk/corpus/index.xml>

Oxford Collocational Dictionary is a prominent collocational dictionary which consists of 250,000 collocations of 9000 headwords (nouns, verbs and adjectives). It provides 75,000 examples demonstrating how collocations are employed throughout its 963 pages. The dictionary deals with different types of word combinations such as adjective + noun, e.g., bright/harsh/intense/strong light, verb + noun collocations, e.g., cast/emit/give/provide/shed

light, and adverb + adjective e.g., perfectly/not entirely/environmentally safe (Francis and Poole, 2009).

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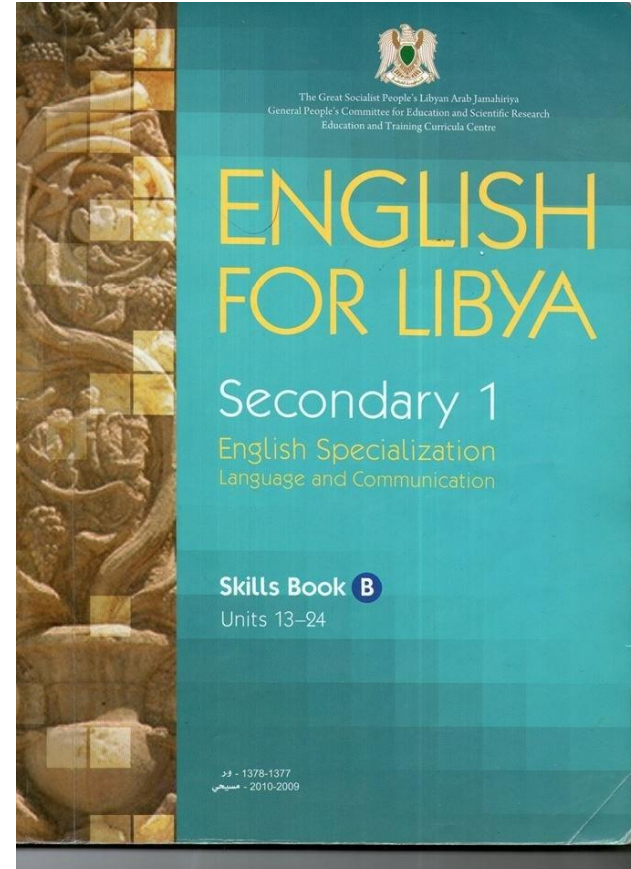
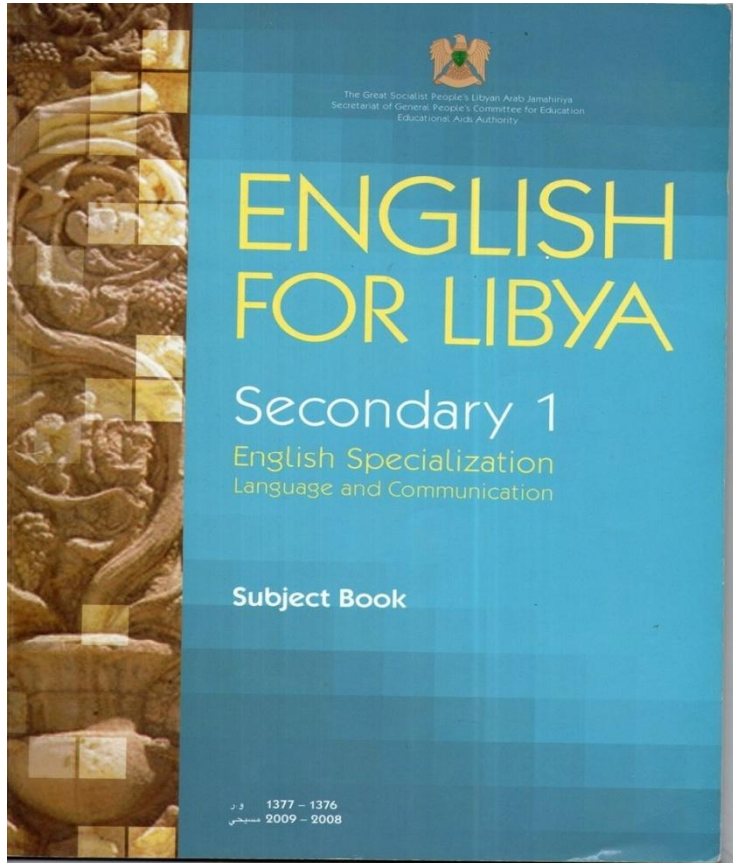
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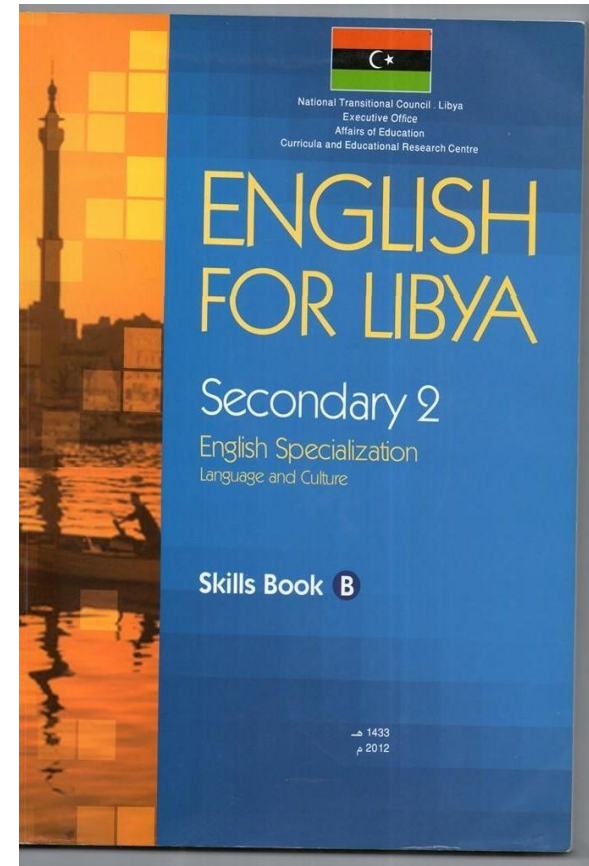
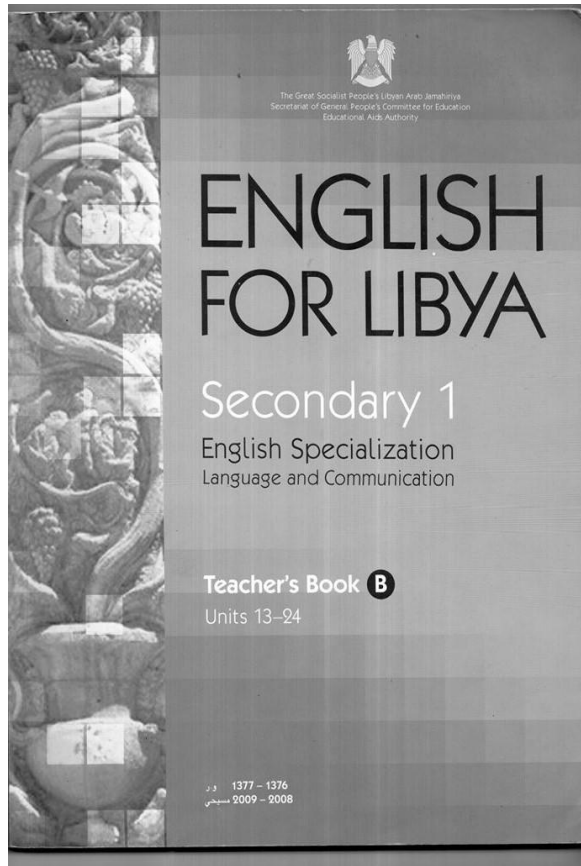
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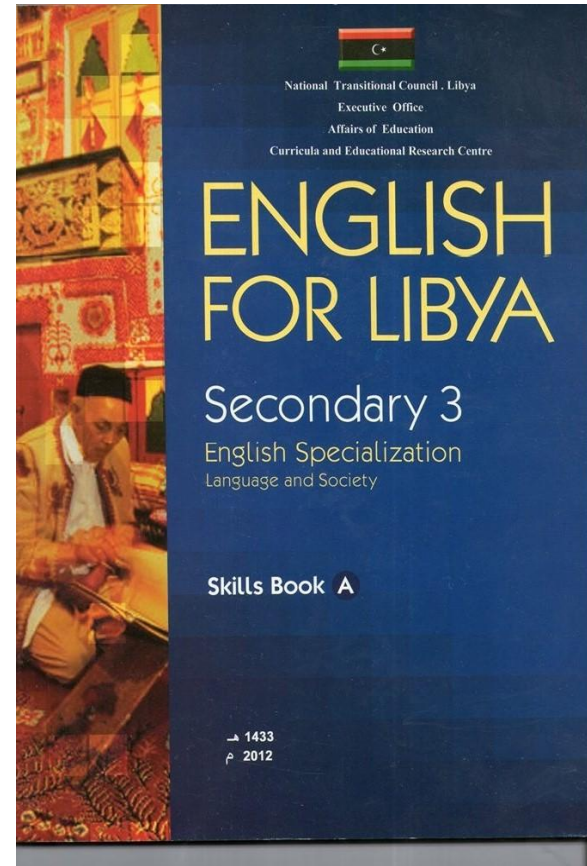
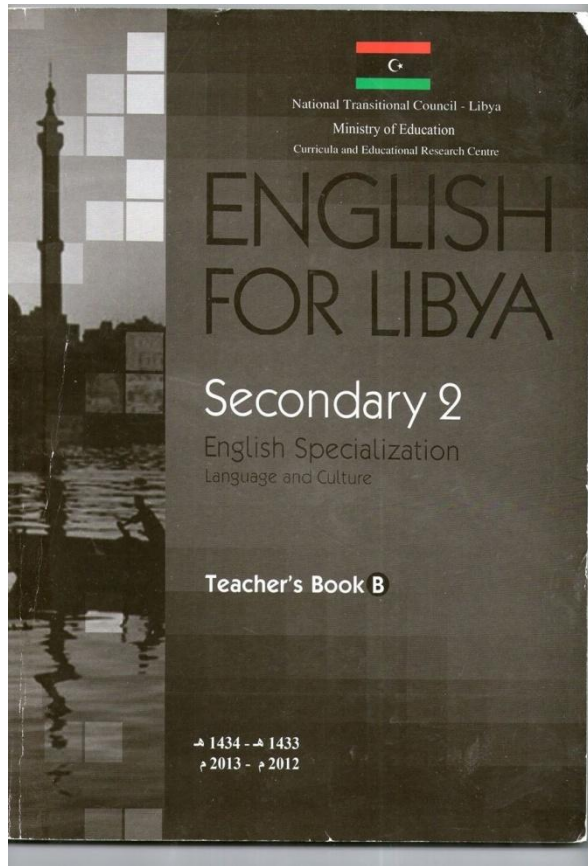
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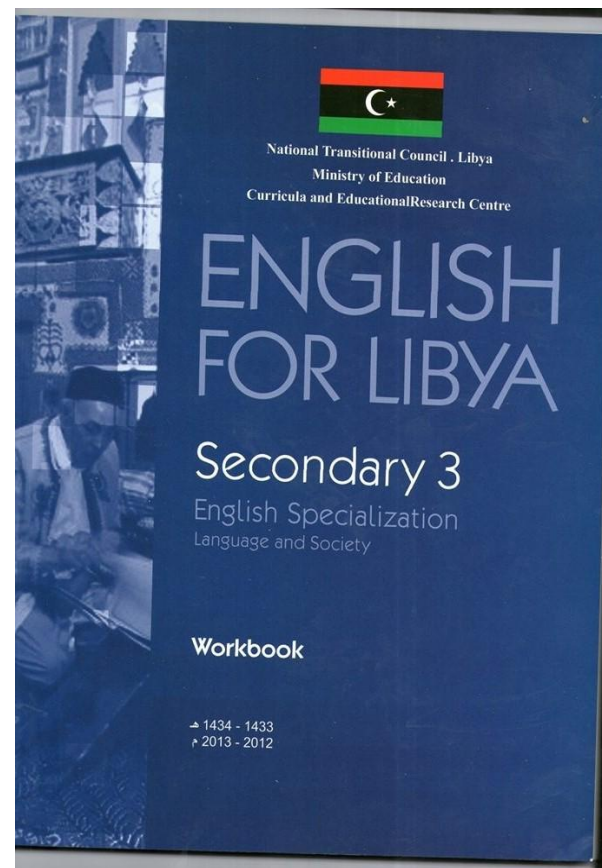
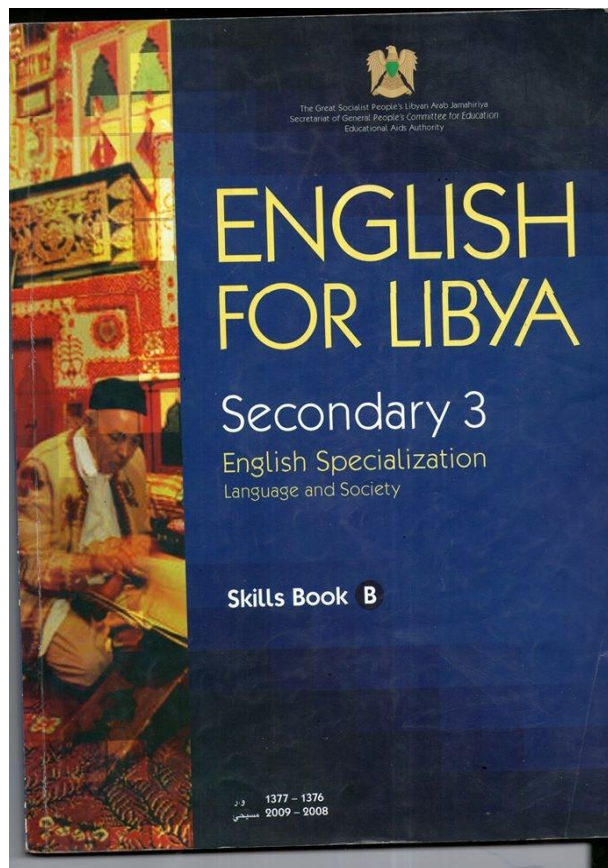
Appendices

Appendix1: 'English for Libya' Series of Textbooks









Appendix 2: Only lesson on Collocation in the 'English for Libya' Series of Textbooks

Listening development

LP10.1: Collocation

collocation /kɒləkeɪʃən/ *n* [count] words or phrases which are commonly used together to convey a meaning that might not be expected from the individual words.

A Before you listen

- Read the definition of *collocation*. What collocations do you know in Arabic?
- Read the sentences. Complete each one with words from the box. You can use some of the words more than once, and some gaps have more than one possible answer.

black blond brush catch clean
have home miss out put up
the house white wash

- Coffee can be _____ or _____.
- You _____ your face, _____ your teeth and _____ your hair.
- Hair can be red, black, brown or _____.
- You can _____ or _____ a bus.
- You get _____ in the morning, or get _____ of bed.
- You _____ on clothes.
- You _____ breakfast, lunch and dinner.
- You leave _____ to go to work, but in the evening you go _____.

B While you listen

- Listen to the conversation. Why doesn't John understand Peter at first?
- Listen again. Complete the table on the right with the wrong collocations and the right ones. Use words from the box.

Peter: Phew. I'm sorry I'm late, John.
John: Oh, hi, Peter. That's OK. What happened?
Peter: I lost the bus and then I couldn't discover a taxi.
John: Pardon?
Peter: My watch was early, so when I got to the bus end, it had already passed.
John: You've lost me, mate.
Peter: I said my watch was slow, so when I got to the bus stop it had already gone, and then I couldn't find a taxi.

John: No, you didn't. You said a load of rubbish before.
Peter: Well, it wasn't rubbish. It was just the wrong collocation.
John: There you go again! What are you talking about?
Peter: I've been reading this book about collocation. It's about the problem of putting words together. You've got to use the right words. You can't say, 'My watch was early'.
John: Yes, you can. You just said it.
Peter: Yes, but it's not English! You didn't understand me when I used the wrong collocations.
John: Oh, correct! I comprehend. I see what you are speaking.
Peter: Pardon?

comprehend correct discover early end
find gone lost missed passed right
saying slow speaking stop understand

	wrong	right	
I	<i>lost</i>	<i>missed</i>	the bus.
I couldn't			a taxi.
My watch was			
the bus			
The bus had already			
Oh,			
I			
I see what			
you are			

C After listening

Read the text. Underline any words and phrases that seem strange to you and replace them with more suitable words and phrases.

He got out late and walked downstairs. He prepared a cup of brown coffee for himself and a cup of red tea for his wife. He took a fast breakfast, then cleaned his face, washed his teeth and tidied his yellow hair. He placed on his clothes and left home. His car wouldn't begin. He read his watch. It spoke half past eight. He had lost the bus, so he had to catch a taxi. The taxi fee was very tall. It was a bad beginning to the day.

Appendix 3: Studies in the Use of Collocations in Various EFL Contexts

No.	Researcher	Year	Participants	Instrument	Results
1.	Bahns and Eldaw	1993	58 German advanced EFL students	A cloze test and a translation test.	The results revealed that the students' collocational performance was inadequate, and that it caused a major problem in the production of correct English.
2.	Wang and Shaw	2000	100 Swedish and 100 Chinese	A short essay of about 200 words	The results showed that the two groups of students encounter different problems in using those common verbs, and make similar types of errors. In addition, they reported that those errors are due to intralingual factors and negative transfer from their L ₁ as they stated that "the greater typological difference from the target language leads to more serious collocational errors" (p201).
3.	Huang	2001	60 Taiwanese EFL students	A completion test.	Generally, it was revealed that the students had limited collocational knowledge. He concluded that the source of EFL students' errors in collocations was due to L ₁ negative transfer.
4.	Zarei	2002	High proficiency level Iranian learners of English	Approximately 4000 pages of materials written in English (phase 1) and nine cued production tasks (phase 2).	The results in phase II showed that high proficiency level Iranian learners of English had some serious problems in the use of English collocations.
5.	Nesselhauf	2003	3 rd and 4 th year advanced German University students of English	32 argumentative, non-technical essays	The results revealed that "even advanced learners have considerable difficulties in the production of collocations" (p.237). Regarding collocational errors it was shown that a) nine types of mistakes appeared in learner corpus, b) among these, wrong choice of verb was the most frequent with 24 occurrences, and c) the greatest proportion of errors appeared in collocations followed by free combinations and idioms with 79%, 23%, 23% respectively.
6.	Koya	2005	130 first-year Japanese university students.	3 kinds of test were used: a vocabulary levels test, a receptive collocation test, and a productive collocation test.	The results showed that there is a strong link between learners' general vocabulary knowledge and their knowledge of collocation. There is also a strong connection between their receptive collocational knowledge and their productive knowledge.
7.	Li	2005	38 EFL learners in Taiwan	Two writing samples: An assignment and in-class activity and a questionnaire	The results showed that grammatical errors (64.4%) were more frequent than lexical errors (35.6%) in learners' erroneous collocations. Furthermore, L ₁ (V+N) and G8 (V+Prep+O/V+O+Prep+O) errors were the most frequent in learners' writing. In addition, the main source of learners' collocational errors was ignorance of rule restrictions.
8.	Kuo	2009	9 intermediate level EFL Taiwanese students.	Writing samples (two topics were written).	The results revealed that the students made more errors in the use of the V + N than in Adj. + N. It was also found that about 17.63% usage was inappropriate. In addition, three types of lexical collocational errors were identified: approximation, the use of synonym and negative transfer.

9.	Bazzaz and Abd Samad	2011	27 PhD Iranian students studying in a Malaysian university.	They used six writing tasks and a C-test.	The results revealed that there is a linear relationship between knowledge of collocations and the use of verb-noun collocations in writing stories.
10.	Darvishi	2011	68 EFL sophomore University students in Iran.	The data were collected from 38 assignments and 38 in-class practice tasks and a questionnaire.	It was proved that EFL students make collocational errors in their writing due to “the interference of their mother tongue, lack of the collocational concept, the interlingual or intralingual transfer, paraphrase and their shortage of their collocational knowledge (sic)”. The questionnaire’s results demonstrated that the students’ perceptions of collocational types and the collocational error types they made in their writing samples were different.
11.	Bahardoust	2012	200 Iranian EFL learners.	The data were collected from midterm, final tests, and assignments of the students.	The findings demonstrated that the frequency rates of verb-noun and adjective-noun were the highest while the rate of noun-verb was the lowest. In addition, there was both positive and negative influence from the learners’ L1 on the production of collocations.
12.	Hong et al.	2011	4 Malaysian learners of English	The data were collected from 130 written essays (a sub-corpus of EMAS)	The results reveal that seven types of collocational errors were identified in the written essays. Also, three main categories of sources of collocational errors were discovered: interlingual transfer, intralingual transfer, and paraphrase.

Appendix 4: Studies on the Use of Collocations in Arab Speaking Countries

No	Researcher	Year	Participants	Instrument	Results
1.	Elkhatib	1984	4 undergraduate Egyptian students	Learner written corpus.	The results showed eight main lexical errors, and the main reason was unfamiliarity with collocations. Also, he discovered that the students could not make appropriate lexical collocations such as <i>beautiful noise</i> .
2.	Farghal and Obiedant	1995	57 Jordanian advanced EFL students.	Fill in the blank test and an Arabic-English translation task.	The findings revealed that the learners had insufficient collocational knowledge as their performance was poor. Furthermore, the main type of errors was the use of synonym. The researchers proposed that this type of error is the result of their teachers' "tendency to teach words individually rather than collocationally" (321).
3.	Al-Zahrani	1998	81 EFL Saudi male university students.	A cloze test, a writing test and a paper-and-pencil TOEFL exam.	The results showed significant differences in the learners' knowledge of lexical collocations with regard to their academic levels. Also, he concluded that there is a strong relationship between the learners' knowledge of collocations and their overall language proficiency.
4.	Zughoul and Abdul-Fattah	2003	Two groups= 38 graduate + 32 undergraduate Jordanian students.	A two-form translation test.	The results confirmed that Arab learners of English in both groups encounter difficulty with the use of English collocations. In addition, the researchers identified the following communicative strategies used by Arab learners when producing English collocation: e.g. avoidance, paraphrasing and literal translation.
5.	Mahmoud	2005	42 Arabic speaking English-major university students.	Writing task	It was revealed that the learners had limited collocational competence. In addition, the findings showed that learners committed several errors. It was found that 64% of the collocations they used were erroneous, and 61% accounted for inappropriate word combinations. He reported that these collocational violations were caused by negative transfer from their L1.
6.	Al-Amro	2006	51 Saudi advanced English students	A cloze test, a Multiple choice test, and an essay writing task	Learners have limited collocational knowledge which was demonstrated by weak performance. Another interesting result was that there was no significant connection between the students' overall collocational knowledge and their actual collocational use.
7.	Shehata	2008	35 ESL Arabic-speaking learners of English and 62 Egyptian participants majoring in English	A questionnaire, two blank-filling tests, an appropriateness judgment test, and a vocabulary recognition test.	It was revealed that there was a positive correlation between the learners' collocational knowledge and their amount of exposure to the target language. In addition, the results showed that the acquisition of English collocations was strongly affected by the learners' L1 and their learning environment. Furthermore, she indicated that the learners' receptive knowledge of collocations was proved to be broader than that of their production.
8.	Dukali	2010	30 EFL Libyan university students.	Two written tasks(formal and informal essays).	The results indicated that Libyan learners performed poorly in producing verb-noun collocations because of their insufficient collocational knowledge. Furthermore, learners' collocational errors were due to the following factors: 1) L ₁ interference, 2) overgeneralization, 3) lack of exposure to the language and 4) lack of attention to teaching collocation in the classroom.
9.	Alsakran	2011	38 EFL Saudi students in Saudi	Three gap-filling tests	The results indicated that the learners' language learning environment influenced significantly

			Arabia and 30 ESL Arab students in the USA.		the acquisition of collocations. Another interesting result was that their receptive collocational knowledge far outstripped their productive collocational knowledge.
10.	Ahmed	2012	185 Libyan university students	A multiple-choice test, a translation task and self-reporting questionnaire.	The results revealed that "the level of Libyan EFL learners' lexical collocation knowledge was relatively low" (p174). In addition, they encounter problems with all types of English lexical collocations both reception and production. She concluded that negative transfer from the students' L ₁ and ignorance of restriction rules are two possible reasons could account for students' misuse of collocation.
11.	Shammas	2013	96 Arab MA postgraduate from 4 different countries.	Three questionnaires.	The findings generally showed that the students performed poorly in the three questionnaires. In addition, He concluded that many errors were unexpected and caused by literal transfer from their MT.

Appendix 5: The Consent Form

The Consent Form

Name of researcher: Aisha Dukali

Please initial box

1. I confirm that I have understood the information for the above study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily.
2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason.
3. I agree to take part in the study.

Name of participant

Date

Signature

When completed, 1 for participant; 1 for researcher site file

Appendix 6: Participant Information Sheet

Participant Information Sheet

Title of Study: Difficulties Encountered by Libyan EFL University Students of English in the Use of Lexical Collocations

Name of researcher: Aisha Ali Dukali

Email address: u1179134@hud.ac.uk

This study is being conducted as part of my PhD degree in the Department of Linguistics and Modern Languages, School of Music Humanities and Media, University of Huddersfield. The study has received ethical approval.

The purpose of this study is to collect data for my research which is aimed at providing a better understanding of the competence of university students who were studying English as a foreign language.

The analysis of the data will be written up in a thesis for my degree. You will be anonymous in the report or any publication which might follow.

This study is supervised by Prof. Dan McIntyre, who can be contacted at the address and telephone number below:

Professor Dan McIntyre

Department of Linguistics and Modern Languages

School of Music Humanities and Media

Tel: +44 (0) 1484 478444

Email: d.mcintyre@hud.ac.uk

Appendix 7: The Writing Task

Read the following quotation and then answer the question below:

“Some people think that universities should provide graduates with the knowledge and skills needed in the workplace. Others think that the true function of a university should be to provide an education for its own sake, regardless of whether it is useful to an employer.”

What, in your opinion, should the main function of a university be?

Write at least 250 words.

I would like to express my gratitude in advance to all students who might be kind enough to participate in this research. Without your help and participation, this study would be impossible to conduct.

Appendix 8: Students' Questionnaire

Students' Questionnaire

To the Student:

Please answer the following questions as thoughtfully and specifically as possible.

Section 2: Background information

Fill this table please:

Gender	Male
	Female
Age	
Year of study	
Years of studying English	

Section 1: Writing proficiency and general Knowledge of collocation, please select the appropriate answer of the following questions:

- How would you assess your level in writing?

Poor (4 and below)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Average (5-6 out of 10)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Good (7 out of 10)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Very good (8 out of 10)	<input type="checkbox"/>

- If your writing is poor or average, what makes it difficult for you?

Grammar	<input type="checkbox"/>
Vocabulary	<input type="checkbox"/>
Both	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other (please specify)	

- How did you find out about collocations?

Taught by your lecturer	<input type="checkbox"/>
Others (Please state what the source is)	

4. Select from the following, the strategy that you use when learning a new word. (more than one answer can be chosen if needed):

- As an individual word (words in a list)
- By memorizing the word with its Arabic meaning
- In short phrases (e.g., heavy rain, strong tea)
- By memorizing the word with its definition in English

5. According to your experience as a student, which method of the following is the easiest to learn new words:

- Individually (words in lists)
- In combinations (words in phrases)
- Both of the above

6. Which type of dictionary do you use?

- An English-English dictionary
- An English-Arabic Dictionary
- Other (please specify)

7. Which one of the above dictionaries do you prefer to use and why?

.....
.....

8. Which way do you prefer to learn a new word (more than one answer can be chosen):

- By learning its meaning, such as ‘make’ means ‘to create something’.
- By learning its forms of writing, such as ‘make, made makes’.
- By learning its pronunciation, such as ‘make’ pronounced /meik/.
- By learning it with other words that may go with it, such as
make a mistake, make a difference, make the bed.

Thank you for your time in completing this questionnaire.

Appendix 9: Lecturers' Questionnaire

Lecturers' Questionnaire

Dear colleagues,

This questionnaire is intended to collect information about the approach of teaching vocabulary and collocation in particular. In addition, it aimed to gather information about the learners' approach of learning collocation and their difficulty with collocations. The collected information will help to enrich my research which examines Libyan learners' knowledge of lexical collocations and their difficulties in the use of these collocations.

Please note that your responses will be strictly confidential and the data from this questionnaire will be reported in the dissertation anonymously.

I would be grateful if you could answer the questions below by providing a tick (✓) or by filling in the appropriate information as requested.

I would like to thank you in advance for your help, it is very much appreciated.

Part one: Background information about the lecturer

1. What degree or qualifications do you have?

Master's Degree / MA

Doctor of Philosophy Degree / PhD

2. You work at the English Department as:

Full-time teacher

Part-time teacher

3. How long have you been teaching in the English Language Department?

From one year to five years

More than five years

Part two: Knowledge of Collocations and the teaching method

1. In your experience, what are the students' main problems in producing and using lexical collocations:

Limited lexical repertoire

Do not know how to combine words

Ignorance of rule restrictions

Other (please specify)

2. From your experience, do students record vocabulary in their notebooks?

Yes

No

Some do

3. Generally, what is the most common method the students use to record a new word?

.....
.....

4. When you teach new words, do you teach them (tick whichever apply):

In isolation (as separate words)?

In word combinations?

5. What, in your opinion, is the best approach to teach vocabulary?

.....
.....

6. What is the best method of teaching collocations?

.....
.....

7. Do you encourage students to learn collocations on their own (autonomous learning)?

Yes

No

If no, why?

.....
.....

8. If your answer is yes, do you show them how to do so?

.....

9. In your teaching, do you conduct classroom activities which focus on collocation?

Yes

No

10. If yes, what are these activities and how can this help you?

.....
.....

11. Do you encourage students to use reference sources to increase students' collocational sensitivity?

- Yes
No

If yes, what reference sources?

.....

12. In your experience, are the students aware of the importance of knowing the collocates of certain common words?

- Yes
No

13. In your opinion, what are the sources of students' collocational errors?

- Overgeneralization
Ignorance of rule restrictions
The use of synonym
Negative transfer
Paraphrase

Thank you for your time in completing this questionnaire

Appendix 10: Students' Questionnaire Code Sheet

Section one: Background information	
Question number	Coding
Q1.	Male = 1
	Female = 2
	Missing = 8
Q2.	19 = 1
	20 = 2
	21 = 3
	22 = 4
	23 = 5
	24 = 6
	above 24 = 7
	Missing = 8
Q3.	Y4 = 1
	Missing = 8
Q4.	10 = 2
	11 = 3
	12 = 4
	13 = 5
	Above 13 = 6
Missing = 8	
Section two: Writing proficiency and general Knowledge of collocation	
Question number	Coding
Q1.	Poor = 1
	average = 2
	Good = 3
	Very good = 4
	Missing = 8
Q2.	Grammar = 1
	Vocabulary = 2
	Both = 3
	Other (please specify) = 4
Missing = 8	
Q3.	taught by your lecturer = 1
	Others (Please state what the source is) = 2
	Missing = 8
Q4.	As an individual word (words in a list) = 1
	By memorizing the word with its Arabic meaning = 2
	In short phrases (e.g., heavy rain, strong tea) = 3
	By memorizing the word with its definition in English = 4
Missing = 8	
Q5.	Individually (words in lists) = 1
	In combinations (words in phrases) = 2
	Both of the above = 3
	Missing = 8
Q6.	An English-English dictionary = 1
	An English-Arabic Dictionary = 2
	Other (please specify) = 3
	Missing = 8
Q8.	By learning its meaning, such as 'make' means 'to create something'. = 1
	By learning its forms of writing, such as 'make, made makes'. = 2
	By learning its pronunciation, such as 'make' pronounced /meik/. = 3
	By learning it with other words that may go with it, such as make a mistake, make a difference, make the bed. = 4
	Missing = 8

Appendix 11: Lecturers' Questionnaire Code Sheet

Part one: Background information about the lecturer	
Question number	Coding
Q1.	Master's Degree / MA = 1
	Doctor of Philosophy Degree / PhD = 2
	Missing = 8
Q2.	Full-time teacher = 1
	Part-time teacher = 2
	Missing = 8
Q3.	From one year to five years = 1
	More than five years = 2
	Missing = 8
Part two: Knowledge of Collocations and the teaching method	
Question number	Coding
Q1.	Limited lexical repertoire = 1
	Do not know how to combine words = 2
	Ignorance of rule restrictions = 3
	Other (please specify) = 4
	Missing = 8
Q2.	Yes = 1
	No = 2
	Some do = 3
	Missing = 8
Q4.	In isolation (as separate words)? = 1
	In word combinations? = 2
	Missing = 8
Q7.	Yes = 1
	No = 2
	Missing = 8
Q9.	Yes = 1
	No = 2
	Missing = 8
Q11.	Yes = 1
	No = 2
	Missing = 8
Q12.	Yes = 1
	No = 2
	Missing = 8
Q13.	Overgeneralization = 1
	Ignorance of rule restrictions = 2
	The use of synonyms = 3
	Negative transfer = 4
	Paraphrase = 5
Missing = 8	

Appendix 12: The Academic Rating Survey

Survey

Below are a number of sentences taken from essays written by learners of English.. Please read each one and rate the acceptability of the **underlined phrase only** according to what you feel a native speaker should use when writing an academic essay. On a scale of 1 to 6, judge the acceptability of these phrases, 1 being completely unacceptable (i.e. a phrase that a native speaker would not use) and 6 completely acceptable. See below for a detailed description of the 6-point scale.

Please note that the remaining co-text of each sentence is irrelevant for the purpose of the study. It is included to enable you to understand the intended meaning of the underlined phrases.

Note: You have 15 minutes to rate the following items. Please do not continue rating them after the time limit is over.

Detailed 6-point scale:

1= Completely unacceptable, 2= unacceptable, 3= Somewhat unacceptable, 4= Somewhat acceptable, 5= acceptable, 6= Completely acceptable.

No	Phrase in question	Rates					
		1	2	3	4	5	6
1.	how they make them love the subject, and how to <u>provide their abilities</u> in any skill, if the teacher have						
2.	Should have more or a lot of knowledge or have a <u>basic grammatical</u> to learn and take the information go						
3.	.... and how acquire the knowledge by <u>give good substances</u> to help us in the future.						
4.	the universities curriculum universities should <u>give a great curriculum</u> that fit academic standards,						
5.	..... teach the students and provide them with <u>modern knowledge</u> to be at a good level in the world and						
6.	it can improve your reading skills if I want to <u>do a presentation</u> in oral practice for example about						
7.	<u>When students work in any careers you have many styles</u> about to discuss and talking for any one.						
8.	...university should be to give students opportunities to <u>acquire knowledge</u> for their own sake,						
9.	information in university because of students do not <u>take more information</u> in the secondary school.						
10.	for the meaning of the new words also look for <u>general information</u> , I ...						
11.	The student should <u>take the importance or specific background</u> to provide her knowledge or skill.						
12.	Then student cannot work done because does not <u>have many knowledge</u> .						
13.	a developed society built by its people, in <u>the current time</u> our universities are not focus on teaching						
14.	we will just waste our time, because we can take a course and <u>get the language</u> without studying in university at all.						
15.	..... due to those knowledge, you will have a <u>higher chance</u> to find career and your promotion chance						
16.	the university should help the students and <u>enhance the right equipments</u> for each subject to make the students						
17.	Using iPod is really <u>great cause</u> for student to download the beneficial webs.						
18.	.... bring good teacher to teach the student and bring all important things that help to learning and <u>good building space</u> .						
19.	The university should educate their students, to do and make labs and give the dictionary to learn and <u>offer the large information</u>						
20.	..... gain from studying at universities are making them a <u>higher educator</u> , and the certificate that they are getting from ...						

21.	....., and the universities must have a <u>higher material</u> and specific offer for students.						
22.	.... they good but they are <u>give and have high education</u> not the same education special						
23.	... to use to academic to modern language from <u>special practical</u> to learn higher language and uses						
24.	..... to focus in learning the modern and basic language that help him to <u>do a great search</u> in his						
25.	and dreams in the future. University should <u>offer good information and higher education</u> to students						
26.	teacher's use with the student especially in <u>the modern time</u> , because we have a lot of technical material						
27.	university should educate their students, to do and <u>make labs</u> and give the dictionary to						
28.	Educate is <u>the basic of the way</u> to progress and success.						
29.	provide them knowledge and skills that they will <u>make benefit</u> from them in their ordinary life,						
30.	his university or any university in Libya do not <u>have a good knowledges</u> , and the college in the study n						
31.	we want and need more facility education, and <u>good educate</u> because not we more cultures.						
32.	.... to make general paragraph to use to academic to <u>modern language</u> from special practical to learn						
33.	..... in a specific job if they would life. That's why <u>getting more knowledge and skills</u> from university better						
34.	the teacher is teaching students in subjects which is not his specialization in <u>current time</u> .						
35.	...should be a useful and helpful for the world means "they should be a <u>great generation</u> ".						
36.	The <u>important thing</u> to study at the university is to take some ways and skills to use it directly.						
37.	To provide the skills i should read skills to get <u>high information</u> . If I study and know what I take from						
38.	The students also should fox with a <u>special specialty</u> and they could plan to be successful st						
39.	y in higher education, many universities in Libya <u>offer to student the year style of education</u> , that mean ..						
40.	the university we should have <u>great options</u> in a practical sections with higher knowledge and academic skill						
41.	....universities, you will be knowledgeable and you will <u>gain perfect job</u> .						
42.	will teach you many things such as higher maths, <u>basic accountant stock</u> after university years due to						
43.	In the beginning of the topic we do not <u>have a nice education</u> in Libya. May be because we do						
44.	... the university do you have skills. The students <u>get new words</u> in the universities.						
45.	University can make students <u>acquire the knowledge skills</u> . University should be a mode						
46.	..everything that is <u>going to help them to be good students</u> because ...						
47.	The turners should <u>provide knowledge and foreign language</u> , special to use it in our life.						
48.	<u>Current ages</u> all World interested in with the learning process and the environment around the academic student						
49.	First teachers should <u>do a questionnaire</u> for students to examine the best way they like to learn.						
50.	... the responsible for universities with a <u>high and good situation</u> to they can give and make all that opinion possible.						
51.	for their job, for example, some universities provide <u>only theoretical general courses</u> ,						
52.	... and gaps between each other, so everyone should <u>take a field</u> that she or he want and that						
53.	..... but the universities have a <u>great part</u> to make me acceptable and useful in my society.						
54.	modern academic universities we provide to give a <u>specific books</u> to increase their faculty and make them a						
55.	knowledge and skills like give us more courses and <u>make a discussion</u> between doctors and students or study						
56.	I ideas and give some information about <u>the topic special</u> in the first semi star and give new skills modern.						
57.	Maybe to provide knowledge but it's not <u>make knowledge or departments</u> to use in the future or work.						
58.	she answers the question without <u>give a complete attention</u> for the student and don't as.....						
59.	because I'm not that good at it, also I have to <u>get the stages</u> those I have to depend on in my research						
60.	.... to create a modern generation full of knowledge, skills, science, <u>high way of thinking</u> , but at the same time it						
61.	.... study not academics . The same students did not <u>acquire for some skills</u> . The teachers did not pay attention						
62.	..learn at these institutions, because everything <u>require</u> to a skill that make it more easily to do it.						
63.	It's better for students to <u>gain an academic knowledge and skills</u> , especially in						
64.	the universities must have a higher material and <u>specific offer</u> for students.						
65.	The university <u>has a strong and special effect</u> on students to help...						
66.	Finally the third function is to <u>offer high level education</u> to students wishing to carry						
67.	.. that universities which provide the student with <u>specific skills</u> that is complementary to the general						

68.	.... and they will be confused, because that <u>acquire more time</u> to concentrate about these huge number						
69.	In that case student should <u>take an intensive course</u> perhaps, I must say						
70.	Students in universities get a lot of information and <u>get a best learning</u> . The teachers in universities						
71.	... academic educate or knowledge that you will <u>enhance a great opportunities</u> to find a good job.						
72.	It's better for students to <u>gain an academic knowledge and skills</u> , specially in our current						
73.	immediately, and many of them would be looking to <u>gain more higher education</u> and conduct extra researche						
74.	the student to make job. Have great information, <u>high ideas</u> , more respect and can communicate with other						
75.	the universities, in my opinion, if we wishing to <u>make an academic, modern education</u> , you have to work						
76.	does not acquire any skills or knowledge. But <u>in general or in a modern way</u> to educate the teacher						
77.	e studying and go for a higher degree that mainly <u>require researches and knowledge</u> or choose to start their						
78.	he wasn't explain about the lesson only he was a perfect on giving <u>the general and the academic information</u> .						
79.	If the student does not understand or to have a topic in your mind that offer it in his teacher's , and then to <u>acquire the other work</u> .						
80.	University can make students <u>acquire the knowledge skills</u> . University should be a mode						

Would your answers be different if the extracts were from conversations rather than written essays?

Yes

No

If yes, why?

.....

Appendix 13: The Non-Academic Rating Survey

Survey

Below are a number of sentences taken from essays written by learners of English.. Please read each one and rate the acceptability of the **underlined phrase only** according to what you feel a native speaker should use. On a scale of 1 to 6, judge the acceptability of these phrases, 1 being completely unacceptable (i.e. a phrase that a native speaker would not use) and 6 completely acceptable. See below for a detailed description of the 6-point scale.

Please note that the remaining co-text of each sentence is irrelevant for the purpose of the study. It is included to enable you to understand the intended meaning of the underlined phrases.

Note: You have 15 minutes to rate the following items. Please do not continue rating them after the time limit is over.

Detailed 6-point scale:

1= Completely unacceptable, 2= unacceptable, 3= Somewhat unacceptable, 4= Somewhat acceptable, 5= acceptable, 6= Completely acceptable.

No	Phrase in question	Rates					
		1	2	3	4	5	6
1.	how they make them love the subject, and how to <u>provide their abilities</u> in any skill, if the teacher have						
2.	Should have more or a lot of knowledge or have a <u>basic grammatical</u> to learn and take the information go						
3.	.... and how acquire the knowledge by <u>give good substances</u> to help us in the future.						
4.	the universities curriculum universities should <u>give a great curriculum</u> that fit academic standards,						
5.	..... teach the students and provide them with <u>modern knowledge</u> to be at a good level in the world and						
6.	it can improve your reading skills if I want to do a <u>presentation</u> in oral practice for example about						
7.	When students work in any careers you <u>have many styles</u> about to discuss and talking for any one.						
8.	.. university should be to give students opportunities to <u>acquire knowledge</u> for their own sake,						
9.	information in university because of students do not <u>take more information</u> in the secondary school.						
10.	for the meaning of the new words also look for <u>general information</u> , I ...						
11.	The student should <u>take the importance or specific background</u> to provide her knowledge or skill.						
12.	Then student cannot work done because does not <u>have many knowledge</u> .						
13.	a developed society built by its people, in <u>the current time</u> our universities are not focus on teaching						
14.	we will just waste our time, because we can take a course and <u>get the language</u> without studying in university at all.						
15.	..... due to those knowledge, you will have a <u>higher chance</u> to find career and your promotion chance						
16.	the university must help the students and <u>enhance the right equipments</u> for each subject to make the students						
17.	Using iPod is really <u>great cause</u> for student to download the beneficial webs.						
18.	.... bring good teacher to teach the student and bring all important things that help to learning and <u>good building space</u> .						
19.	The university should educate their students, to do and make labs and give the dictionary to learn and <u>offer the large information</u>						
20.	..... gain from studying at universities are making them a <u>higher educator</u> , and the certificate that they are getting from ...						
21.	....., and the universities must have a <u>higher material</u> and specific offer for students.						
22.	.... they good but they are <u>give and have high education</u> not the same education special						

23.	... to use to academic to modern language from <u>special practical</u> to learn higher language and uses							
24.	..... to focus in learning the modern and basic language that help him to <u>do a great search</u> in his							
25.	and dreams in the future. University should <u>offer good information and higher education</u> to students							
26.	teacher's use with the student especially in <u>the modern time</u> , because we have a lot of technical material							
27.	university should educate their students, to do and <u>make labs and give</u> the dictionary to							
28.	Educate is <u>the basic of the way to progress</u> and success.							
29.	provide them knowledge and skills that they will <u>make benefit</u> from them in their ordinary life,							
30.	his university or any university in Libya do not <u>have a good knowledges</u> , and the college in the study n							
31.	we want and need more facility education, and <u>good educate</u> because not we more cultures.							
32.	..... to make general paragraph to use to academic to <u>modern language</u> from special practical to learn							
33.	..... in a specific job if they would life. That's why <u>getting more knowledge and skills</u> from university better							
34.	the teacher is teaching students in subjects which is not his specialization in <u>current time</u> .							
35.	...should be a useful and helpful for the world means "they should be <u>a great generation</u> ".							
36.	The <u>important thing to study</u> at the university is to <u>take some ways and skills</u> to use it directly.							
37.	To provide the skills i should read skills to get <u>high information</u> . If I study and know what I take from							
38.	The students also should fox with a <u>special specialty</u> and they could plan to be successful st							
39.	y in higher education, many universities in Libya <u>offer to student the year style of education</u> , that mean ..							
40.	the university we should have <u>great options</u> in a practical sections with higher knowledge and academic skill							
41.	.....universities, you will be knowledgeable and you will <u>gain perfect job</u> .							
42.	will teach you many things such as higher maths, <u>basic accountant stock</u> after university years due to							
43.	In the beginning of the topic we do not <u>have a nice education</u> in Libya. May be because we do							
44.	... the university do you have skills. The students <u>get new words</u> in the universities.							
45.	University can make students <u>acquire the knowledge skills</u> . University should be a mode							
46.	..everything that is going to help them to be <u>good students</u> because ...							
47.	The turners should <u>provide knowledge and foreign language</u> , special to use it in our life.							
48.	<u>Current ages</u> all World interested in with the learning process and the environment around the academic student							
49.	First teachers should <u>do a questionnaire</u> for students to examine the best way they like to learn.							
50.	... the responsible for universities with a <u>high and good situation</u> to they can give and make all that opinion possible.							
51.	for their job, for example, some universities <u>provide only theoretical general courses</u> .							
52.	... and gaps between each other, so everyone should take a field that she or he want and that							
53.	..... but the universities have a <u>great part</u> to make me acceptable and useful in my society.							
54.	modern academic universities we provide to give a <u>specific books</u> to increase their faculty and make them a							
55.	knowledge and skills like give us more courses and <u>make a discussion</u> between doctors and students or study							
56.	I ideas and give some information about <u>the topic special</u> in the first semi star and give new skills modern.							
57.	Maybe to provide knowledge but it's not <u>make knowledge or departments</u> to use in the future or work.							
58.	she answers the question without <u>give a complete attention</u> for the student and don't as.....							
59.	because I'm not that good at it, also I have to <u>get the stages</u> those I have to depend on in my research							
60.	.... to create a modern generation full of knowledge, skills, science, <u>high way of thinking</u> , but at the same time it							
61.	..... study not academics . The same students did not <u>acquire for some skills</u> . The teachers did not pay attention							
62.	..learn at these institutions, because everything <u>require to a skill</u> that make it more easily to do it.							
63.	It's better for students to <u>gain an academic knowledge and skills</u> , especially in							
64.	the universities must have a higher material and <u>specific offer</u> for students.							
65.	The university <u>has a strong and special effect</u> on students to help...							
66.	Finally the third function is to <u>offer high level education</u> to students wishing to carry							
67.	.. that universities which provide the student with <u>specific skills</u> that is complementary to the general							
68.	.... and they will be confused, because that <u>acquire more time</u> to concentrate about these huge							

	number						
69.	In that case student should take an <u>intensive course</u> perhaps, I must say						
70.	Students in universities get a lot of information and <u>get a best learning</u> . The teachers in universities						
71.	... academic educate or <u>knowledge that you will enhance a great opportunities</u> to find a good job.						
72.	It's better for students to <u>gain an academic knowledge and skills</u> , specially in our current						
73.	immediately, and many of them would be looking to <u>gain more higher education</u> and conduct extra researche						
74.	the student to make job. Have great information, <u>high ideas</u> , more respect and can communicate with other						
75.	the universities, in my opinion, if we wishing to <u>make an academic, modern education</u> , you have to work						
76.	does not acquire any skills or knowledge. But <u>in general or in a modern way</u> to educate the teacher						
77.	e studying and go for a higher degree that mainly <u>require researches and knowledge</u> or choose to start their						
78.	he wasn't explain about the lesson only he was a perfect on giving <u>the general and the academic information</u> .						
79.	If the student does not understand or to have a topic in your mind that offer it in his teacher's , and then to <u>acquire the other work</u> .						
80.	University can make students <u>acquire the knowledge skills</u> . University should be a mode						

Would your answers be different if the extracts were from conversations rather than written essays?

Yes

No

If yes, why?

.....

.....

Appendix 14: Sample of the Written Corpus by Native Speaker English Teachers

The statement suggests there are two sides to the debate; whether universities should provide a vocational role; giving graduates the essential skills to perform in a post education arena or whether education 'for its own sake' should be the ultimate goal. I feel that both functions should be combined in order to create a work ready adult who is well rounded and can bring level of maturity as well as knowledge to a role which should be almost ready made for them (Introduction, written by ALY, essay 2).

In my personal opinion, the function of all educational institutions should be to encourage people to explore their true potential and, in so doing, contribute to the general knowledge of the world. However, I acknowledge that this is a perhaps overly utopian view of such institutions and that in our modern society utilitarianism reigns supreme (Introduction, written by STM, essay 4).

The function of a university should be primarily to develop the intellectual faculties of the students under the supervision of experienced researchers and educators; it is to be hoped that this more general development will encourage the fostering of skills valued in the workplace, such as independence, creativity, emotional intelligence and initiative. It seems that employers do not expect institutions of Higher Education to deliberately teach their learners to be good workers, although future bosses often emphasis desirable attributes such as good spelling, basic numeracy and interpersonal skills as being key (Introduction, written by HXJ, essay 5).

In my opinion, universities should offer a holistic approach for students, in that, both education for its own sake and skills needed for life after university should be provided. In the past, universities, particularly those with high prestige, have been sought after for their reputation in terms of the quality of education that they offer; there's no doubt that this is still relevant in the today, but in times where 'financial crisis' is the buzz word of decade, students can't afford to choose universities, and further to that courses, that don't offer a stepping stone towards working life (Introduction, written by MAY, essay 8).