THE USE OF ENGLISH COLLOCATIONS
IN READER'S DIGEST

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ABSTRACT

This descriptive qualitative study is aimed at identifying and describing the types of free collocations found in the articles of Reader's Digest. By taking a sample of ten articles from different months for each year since 2003 up to 2012, it was found all the four productive free collocations were in the data. Type 4 (Determiner + Adjective + Noun) was the dominant type (53.92 %). This was possible because the adjective in the pattern included the present participle and past participle of verb as adjectives. The other types have the following percentages (in order of the highest level to the lowest level): Type 1 (33.40 %), Type 2 (10.06 %), and Type 3 (2.62 %). The largest number of free collocations was found in the book of *Feeding My Fashion* (13.48 %). The data analysis also indicates that all the articles contain free collocations. As free collocations are abundant in text, it is suggested that this grammatical construction be introduced as part of strategy to master English.

Keywords: *Semantics, Collocations, Reader's Digest*

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INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

English as an international language has a large vocabulary which often confuses students or readers in understanding the language. The size of the vocabulary in this language is larger than that of Indonesian language. As a result, those who want to study or master English should be familiar with the thousands of words available in its stock of lexicon. This is then a big challenge for students to understand the various texts written in English.

It is clear from the linguistic point of view that when the vocabulary of the English language is familiar to the students, then, the problems of comprehending the written texts will be solved to some extent. In addition to mastering the grammar which includes the sentence structures and pronunciation, the students are supposed to understand the various and rich meanings of words in the language. In its real number, there are over four million words in English as compared with the one hundred thousand words in Indonesian. The difference in the lexical number can cause many problems in understanding texts in English.

Part of the vocabulary in English is found in the formation of collocations. In fact, collocations have created confusion for Indonesian students because their meanings are not achieved through translation. It is obvious that many students love translating words from English into Indonesian and vice versa. The results of the translation are not satisfactory and even funny in the sense that native speakers of English will not understand the translation of the collocations. For example, the collocation "take medicine" is equal to "minum obat" which, if translated into English, will produce "drink medicine". This collocation is not acceptable because there is no such collocation in English. In other words, there are acceptable collocations in terms of the cultural understanding of the language.

The acceptable collocations can be found in various texts in English such as a magazine and books. Reader's Digest is a popular, international magazine that can

provide the rich texts with collocations. If the students can understand the feature stories and articles written in this magazine, it is obvious that they have grasped some understanding of the language. There can be many unfamiliar words or collocations that they should read in the process of understanding the texts. This magazine can be an ideal source of information for students who one day will read many kinds of texts in their university studies. Therefore, it is good for them to be familiar with the many collocations available in the magazine.

Collocation is a common term in linguistics and translation. It refers to a group of words whose meaning is unified. For instance, "to break a promise' consists of a word 'break' and its collocate "a promise". The phrase "break a promise" is acceptable in English. The total meaning of the phrase is sensible to the speakers of English and so itcan be regarded as a collocation. The verb *break* can be matched with *a promise* because the meaning is acceptable to the speakers of English. The collocate *of a promise* completes the combination and the meaning has its acceptability to the speakers of the language. Certainly, there can be combinations of words which are not acceptable, and if that is the case, these collocations are strange in another language.

According to Larson (1984:141), "collocation is concerned with how words go together, i.e. which words may occur in constructions with other words". Certain words occur together often while other words may never occur together, and some combinations of words are not likely to occur. For example, the following verb phrases "to break the door, to break one's heart, to break the news, to break a record" are possible in English. In the dictionary, these combinations are listed as the extra uses of the verb "to break".

A collocation, therefore, is a combination of words with a specific meaning. It is important to know which words can go along with which words. Such knowledge can be derived through reading various authentic materials such as found in magazines and books written by native speakers of English. In fact, there are no fixed rules on how to form a collocation. The formation is based on the convention of the language users. When one collocation is introduced to the public and then it is accepted by the users, then, it can be accepted as a collocation as a general phrase. However, there is a

restriction on how words are put together to produce acceptable collocations in English. The restriction means that the meaning of each component influences another.

According to Richards, Platt and Weber (1989:46), the restriction of the collocations is in the following quotation, "collocation refers to the restrictions on how words can be used together, for example which prepositions are used with particular verbs, or which verbs and nouns are used together". The adjective *high* collocates with *probability (high probability)*, but not with *chance (a high chance)*. The acceptable or correct collocation is *a good chance*.

Collocations produce confusion on the part of Indonesian students who may translate a collocation from Indonesian into English or vice versa. When this is done, there will be funny or strange collocations in a target language. The collocation "pay full attention" is often translated as "give full attention". The mistake is in the use of the verb "give". The problems arise when the students have to choose the right or appropriate collocations, if any. In other words, they should be able to find an acceptable collocation even though it does not exist in the target language. The best way to do this is consulting a complete dictionary which lists the various collocations in English.

Grammatical rules are not enough in understanding the formation of collocations. In English, it is known that an adjective can be followed by a noun as in *beautiful flower*. But then, there is a collocation of "notary public" which exists and is acceptable in English. The violation of grammatical rules does not mean that the formation of such collocation is impossible. Again, according to the culture of the language, collocations are also conventional. The acceptance of a collocation is determined by the majority of the language users. When it is used very often in texts, then, it is said to be acceptable.

To test the acceptability of a collocation, its meaning must be unified in the sense that there is no confusion on the part of the language users. It should not be ambiguous or have more than one meaning. Therefore, the accessibility of collocations is very much influenced by the presence of more reading materials that are used for the analysis.

The phrase *tall car* is grammatically correct as it follows the rule of "adjective + noun", but this is not an acceptable collocation as it has no unified meaning. Its meaning does not exist in the culture of the language. Thus, collocation is also concerned with the componential meaning of the collocates. This is difficult when the students are not familiar with the nature of the components. Thus, there is a question of how to find out if such a collocation is acceptable or not. To do this, the students should know the range and variety of collocations as explained by Bolinger (1975:102) in the following:"The range and variety of collocations is enormous. Not all persons will agree with every judgment of acceptability that is marked here with. It is obvious that expressions that are repeated over and over in given circumstances make for collocations, and it would be remarkable indeed if that experience of language users were uniform all over the English-speaking world."

Collocations are divided into two types according to the addition of the collocates (the word added to the head word). The first type of collocation is called a free collocation which is the combination of two or more words in which the collocate is free to be chosen. In other words, a free collocation has a possible range of having more collocates to be mixed with the head words. The number of such free collocations is of course large. The language users are very creative in producing new or different collocations in their writing or speaking. They can even create new collocations out of the given stock of vocabulary. If a new collocation is accepted, then, it is used in different texts. The frequency of the usage of new collocations will be higher as a consequence. Thus, free collocations may number hundreds or even thousands depending on the language users' creativity.

The combinations of free collocations can be in the following forms or patterns:

1) *Verb + Noun* = e.g. take medicine, pay a visit, run a test, kill the time, hold a party, answer the call, ring the bell, etc.

2) *(Determiner) + Adjective + Noun* = e.g. a beautiful woman, high cost, hot passage, a difficult test, green grass, positive effects, rich family, etc.

3) *Adverb + Adjective* = e.g. physically impossible, reasonably fluent, increasingly popular, perfectly round, slightly different, completely uniform, etc.

4) *Verb + Adverb (Adjective)* = e.g. work hard, feel well, shine brightly, smell sweet, live long, sleep soundly, etc.

5) *Subject +Verb* = e.g. the bell sings, the dog barks, the cat purrs, the car miaows, the lion roars, the wind whistles, the sky thunders, the wall cracks, etc.

6) *Count Noun + of + Mass Noun* = e.g. a loaf of bread, a pinch of salt, a bar of soap, a piece of information, a piece of music, a can of oil, a bottle of perfume, a jar strawberry jam, a glass of milk, etc.

7) *Collective Noun + of + Count Noun* = e.g. a bunch of keys, a bunch of bananas, a flock of geese, a pack of cigarettes, a crowd of people, a school of fish, a team of players, a band of robbers, a fleet of ships, etc.

The second type of collocation is called a fixed collocation which is the combination of words in which the collocating word is fixed, that is, it cannot be changed with another word. For example, the collocation "to kick the bucket" is meaningful when it stands alone. If the collocate "bucket" is replaced by a "pail", the meaning is lost. This is called a fixed collocation because no component or collocate is replaceable.

A fixed collocation is also called an *idiom*. An idiom can stand a long time as its meaning is fixed. It colors language through its rich meaning. The meaning has nuances, that is, it is impossible to translate this collocation word for word. The meaning is the totality of the sense that the collocation contains.

It is not easy to form idioms or idiomatic expressions. An idiom may have existed in the language for a long time and so the language users have adopted it as a lexical item. Due to its sublime meanings, idioms are not always used in scientific

writings. The nuances of meaning are not very important in scientific writings. Therefore, idiomatic expressions are commonly found in literary texts because the meanings are more concerned with the feelings of human beings.

A text is a place where the collocations are found. It consists of words and paragraphs which carry certain meanings. In other words, a text refers to reading materials which contain elements of language with various meanings. According to Stubbs (1983:9), a text is an abstract theoretical construct which is realized in discourse. This means that a text is the result of the thinking of an author. Ideas and thoughts should be understood to make the text intelligible. The author has to choose a certain style depending on the purpose of the text. Any style is possible as long as the content is clearly expressed.

There are two types of text in general. A scientific text is more focused on scientific information such as inventions and discoveries. Facts and truths are the main element in this type of text. Scientists can express their expertise in the scientific texts.

The second type is the literary text (non-technical text). This is the general purpose texts in which scientific facts are not the main content. Novels, narratives, news, contracts are some of the literary texts.

In terms of linguistic analysis, a text may be a vehicle of information (TAVI – Text As a Vehicle of Information). This means that the text has the main purpose of conveying as much information as possible. The other type is a text for a linguistic object for analysis (TALO – Text As a Linguistic Object). This type of text is used for analysis like in a philosophical interpretation. Verses in a holy book, for instance, is more toward an analysis rather than the dissemination of information.

Reader's Digest is a general interest family magazine which contains different feature stories, human interest articles , advertisements and other interesting reports. Formerly based in Chappaqua, New York, its headquarters is now in New York City. It was founded in 1922, by DeWitt Wallace and Lila Bell Wallace. For many years, *Reader's Digest* was the best-selling consumer magazine in the United States, losing the distinction in 2009 to *Better Homes and Gardens*. According to Mediamark Research, it

reaches more readers with household incomes of $100,000+ than *Fortune*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *Business Week* and *Inc.* combined.

Global editions of *Reader's Digest* reach an additional 40 million people in more than 70 countries, with 49 editions in 21 languages. It has a global circulation of 10.5 million, making it the largest paid circulation magazine in the world. It is also published in Braille, digital, audio, and a version in large type called *Reader's Digest Large Print*. The magazine is compact, with its pages roughly half the size of most American magazines.

The first "Word Power" column of the magazine was published in the January 1945 edition. The author's name, Wilfred J. Funk, was disclosed in the February 1945 issue. In December 1952 the magazine published "Cancer by the Carton", a series of articles that linked smoking with lung cancer. This first brought the dangers of smoking to public attention which, up to then, had ignored the health threats.

The term " use" in this study refers to the contextual background of the collocations being used in a given text in the magazine of Reader's Digest (Mish,1994: 1029). This means that the position of the collocation can be identified and explained. For instance, if there is a collocation in a certain paragraph, then, the meaning of the collocation is analyzed in terms of the context (any information related to the story).

Thus, the use of a collocation is related to how and where the collocation is placed in the text. There can be any connection between the formation of the collocation and the total meaning of a text or a paragraph where the collocation is identified.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study is a descriptive quantitative research. Descriptive research involves collecting data in order to test hypotheses or to answer questions concerning the current status of the subject of the study (Gay, 1987:220). In this study, the

formation and number of collocations as found in Reader's Digest are analyzed to find out the dominant pattern or form based on the given data.

Subject

The source of the data is the text where a collocation in found. Reader's Digest is the magazine that provides the texts to identify the given collocations. The sample consists of 10 articles of human interest in 10 magazines ranging from the year 2003 up to 2012.

Data Collection

The data are obtained from the 10 articles chosen as the source of data. Each collocation is first identified and then tabulated according to the categories of patterns.

Technique for Analyzing Data

After the data have been collected, they are analyzed as follows: determine the pattern of each collocation (4 patterns), list all the collocations collected from the given texts, determine the frequency of use to find out the dominant pattern, explain the use of the collocations in relation to their context of the meanings, and finally explore the potential of forming collocations in texts of different purpose.

RESULTANDDISCUSSION
Qualitative Method

Data

      There are 10 articles taken from different month and year of Reader's Digest as the data for analysis. The following is the number of productive free collocations as found in all texts (see Appendix 1 for further information):

No.	Title of Article	Month/Year	Number of Free Collocations	Percentage
1	Santa's Babies	December 2012	53	10.66 %
2	"Where's The Light?"	June 2011	47	9.47 %
3	The Raging River	November 2010	51	10.26 %
4	Feeding My Fashion	July 2009	67	13.48 %
5	Plane Rides Make Fathers Cry	April 2008	58	11.67 %
6	My Mother's Hands	May 2007	55	11.07 %
7	The New Parent Trap	September 2006	62	12.47 %
8	Gran's Canyon	October 2005	49	9.86 %
9	Surf's Up	August 2004	20	4.02 %
10	Trading Places	January 2003	35	7.04 %
Total			497	100 %

The 497 free collocations are then analyzed according to the types of free collocations.

The result is as follows:

No.	Title of Article	Types of Free Collocations				Total
		Type 1	Type 2	Type 3	Type 4	
1	Santa's Babies	27	6	4	16	53
2	"Where's The Light?"	13	2	-	32	47
3	The Raging River	10	4	-	37	51
4	Feeding My Fashion	19	5	-	43	67
5	Plane Rides Make Fathers Cry	24	8	1	25	58
6	My Mother's Hands	24	7	3	21	55
7	The New Parent Trap	15	4	3	40	62
8	Gran's Canyon	18	7	2	22	49
9	Surf's Up	7	1	-	12	20
10	Trading Places	9	6	-	20	35
Total		166	50	13	268	497
	%	33.40	10.06	2.62	53.92	100 %

Table above shows that there are 497 collocations in all the 10 articles as the source of data. The percentage of each type of collocation can be found out as follows:

1. Type 1 (Verb + Noun)   : (166 : 497) x 100 % = 33.40%

2. Type 2 (Verb + Adverb/Adjective)   : (50 : 497) x 100 % = 10.06 %

3. Type 3 (Adverb + Adjective)   : (13 : 497) x 100 % = 2.62 %

4. Type 4 (Adjective + Noun)   : (268 : 497) x 100 % = 53.92 %

Type 1 (Verb + Noun) dominates the percentages in the article of *Santa's Babies* (27 : 166 x 100 %) = 16.27 %. The examples are : *freak snowstorm, miss the family Christmas, miss our Santa photo, made a pilgrimage,* and so on. It is important to note

that the Noun in this type refers to the noun which can also function as a verb. This type takes 16.27% of the total number of the free collocations in all the articles.

Type 2 (Verb + Adverb/Adjective) dominates the percentages in the article of *Plane Rides Make Fathers Cry* (8 : 50 x 100 %) = 16 %. The examples are : *know very well, started again, became less frequent, fell asleep,* and so on. It is important to note that the verb in this type belongs to the Linking Verbs as in the grammar of English (there are a certain number of verbs which can be directly followed by adjective). This type takes 16 % of the total number of free collocations in all the articles.

Type 3 (Adverb + Adjective) dominates the percentage in the article of *Santa's Babies* (4 : 13 x 100 %) = 30.8 %. The examples are : *notably absent, truly atrocious, fully responsible, sartorially trendy,* and so on. It is important to note that the adjective here can a derived form (past participles of a verb), and the adverb can be an intensifier. This type takes 30.8 % of the total number of free collocations in all the articles.

Type 4 (Determiner + Adjective + Noun) dominates the percentages in the article of *Feeding My Fashion* (43 : 268 x 100 %) = 16 %. The examples are : *tall crystal glass, empty plate, a delicate saffron risotto, truffle sauce,* and so on. It is important to note that the determiner can be optional (especially when the noun is in the plural form). This type takes 16 % of the total number of free collocations in all the articles.

The dominance of the type can be summarized as follows:

1. The dominant type found in all articles in Reader's Digest is Type 4 (Determiner + Adjective + Noun). It seems that this dominant type of the free collocation is very easy to form because an Adjective modified a Noun to produce a richer meaning. Therefore, the author of a text tends to concentrate on the power of the description of an adjective.

About the high percentage of Type 4, there are several factors that produce such a result:

        a. The *Adjective* includes the present participle (verb-ing), past participles of a verb, and polysyllabic adjectives.

      b. Adjective are very important in describing the quality and quantity of nouns.

2. The presence of all 4 types of free collocations in the articles shows that the free collocations are productive.

The free collocations are actually important and abundant. From the total number of the collocations in comparison to the number of sample texts, there are over 10 collocations in every article on the average.

CONCLUSIONSAND SUGGESTIONS

Conclusions

The study has identified the types of free collocations in Reader's Digest. From the 10 articles in different month and year, there are 497 free collocations identified. All the types are the four productive free collocations. Type 4 (Determiner + Adjective + Noun) is the dominant type of free collocations. The percentages of the types are as follows (from the highest to the lowest) : Type 4 (53,92 %), Type 1 (33.40 %), Type 2 (10.06 %), and Type 3 (2.62 %). The largest number of free collocations are in the article of *Feeding My Fashion* (13.48 %).

Suggestions

Free collocations seem to be abundant in texts. Based on the findings in this study, it is suggested that: firstly, the readers should be master all types and how to use all of The Collocation in order easier to understand an articles. Secondly, in mastering The Collocation should be often read various of articles continuously. The thirdly, the article in Reader's Digest should contain all the seven types of free collocations and fixed collocations to make the articles more interesting. Fourthly, the type of free collocations should be evenly distributed in the articles in Reader's Digest. Fifthly, the number of articles in this study should be increased for a more detailed result of the analysis on collocations.

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