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# Collocational Differences in Persian and English and Their Effect on Learners Production

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***Abstract***

Collocations are one of the most problematic and challenging areas of foreign language learning. Although learners have serious problems with producing or comprehending collocations, collocations have not been the major focus of research and teaching. This study aims to investigate collocational differences between English and Persian to see whether differences in Persian & English languages may lead to learners inaccurate production or not. 47 students took part in this study, 23 advanced students and 23 elementary students. They were given two tests, a test of proficiency (Oxford Quick Placement Test) and 42 item multiple choice collocation test. The results showed that advanced students outperformed elementary students and they produced more accurate collocations.

***Keywords***: collocations, L1 transfer, English proficiency, English & Persian

## I. INTRODUCTION

Second language acquisition researchers believe that vocabulary learning is the most important aspect of second language learning (Knight, 1994) and "an essential part of mastering a second language" (Schmitt, 2008, p.329). "While without grammar very little can be conveyed, without vocabulary nothing can be conveyed" (Wilkins, 1972, p.111).

English language native speakers have thousands of words at their disposal. Theoretically, by using their knowledge of grammar, they are able to use the words to produce and understand an unlimited number of sentences that they have never heard or said before. They use a large number of ready-made chunks of words by putting them together in different ways according to their communication needs.

The majority of Iranian EFL learners have knowledge of English grammar and vocabulary to some extent; however, they seem to have serious problems with the use of collocations. For instance; 'make a mistake' is an acceptable collocation in the English

language. Iranian learners who speak Persian say "*Eshtebah Kardan"* which literally means "*do a mistake"* and when it comes to English they think in their first language and instead of *"make a mistake"* they write or say "*do a mistake."* Literally, Iranians say "*Do a mistake*" while English speakers say "*Make a mistake*". Differences in the structures of first and second languages may produce interference problems for L2 learners like the one mentioned above, and the similarities between them will probably (but not always) contribute to facilitation of learning (Corder, 1981).

Learners' problem with L2 collocational use has been repeatedly reported (Biskup, 1992; Farghal & Obiedat, 1995; Zareie & Koosha, 2002; Koosha & Jafarpour, 2006 among others). Biskup (1992, cited in Shokouhi and Mirsalari (2010) focused on finding the main causes of collocational errors in advanced learners. To that end, she conducted a comparative study to observe learners of English whose L1 was either 'genetically' close (German) or more distant (Polish) from English, in order to determine whether that distance would influence performance on L2 collocations. The participants, who were advanced students from both language groups, were asked to render native language collocations into English. After analyzing the data, Biskup observed that Polish language students relied more on their L1 but produced fewer incorrect variants than the German language participants. Whereas Polish learners of English appeared to rely on transfer, German learners of English seemed to look for more 'creative' strategies. She found that as the semantic field of a given L1 lexical item was wider, the interference was more. She also found that as the more synonyms an item had, the more difficulties learners encountered in producing a restricted collocation, and her last result was that learners were reluctant to transfer where L2 collocation was a word for word equivalent of L1 collocation. Her study showed that even L2 advanced learners have difficulties using collocations.

Gyllstad (2005) mentioned another study by Farghal and Obiedat (1995) on university students. A total of 57 Arab university students of English were tested for their knowledge of English collocations. Two groups were used, A and B. The aim of the study was to test knowledge of 22 common English collocations. The two groups were given separate tasks. Group A took an English fill-in-the-blank test with 11 items in which one member of a collocation pair was given, and one was missed, which meant to be supplied. Group B took a test in which Arabic sentences were meant to be translated into English. This test was based on the same target collocation material as the fill-in-the-blank test. Farghal and Obiedat found that 4 lexical simplification strategies were used. The use of synonymy was the most frequently used strategy by both groups when a correct collocation was not produced, followed by that of avoidance. The two other strategies identified were transfer and paraphrasing, used to varying extent by the two groups. The conclusion drawn in the study was that L2 learners could not cope easily with collocations.

Zareie and Koosha (2002) found that Iranian EFL learners have problems with the production of English collocations. The study had two phases. In phase I, about 2400 pages of materials produced in English by 27 subjects were carefully studied and a list of collocational errors was extracted. The list was then analyzed and five patterns were found. In phase II, six cued production tasks were developed which were given to 64 subjects. They

classified these collocational patterns into ten categories of which the collocations of prepositions are among the most problematic, and 'adjective + adverbs' and 'fixed expressions' rank among the least problematic for Iranian EFL students. Results showed that Iranian advanced learners of English have serious problems with English collocations (about 55 percent of the time). They concluded that knowledge of collocations was an essential part of achieving native like competence in English.

Another study that showed the difficulties language learners encounter learning English collocations is Koosha and Jafarpour's (2006) study. The research was done on 200 Iranian university students (in three Universities in Shahrekord) majoring in English. The subjects were then randomly divided into two groups. One group underwent the conventional treatment on prepositions and their collocational patterns in which prepositions and their collocational patterns were explicitly taught to the participants in English or Farsi. The second group (experimental group) received a data driven-based instruction (treatment) that was based on concordancing lines presented in KWIC format. The concordances were taken from the Brown Corpus Online (2005) which was searched by the Web Concordancer. Two completion tests on collocation of prepositions were administered as the pre-test and post-test to check the effects of the treatments. The results of the study showed the following results. First, the data driven learning approach proved to be highly effective in the teaching and learning of collocation of prepositions. Second, learners' performance on collocation of prepositions was shown to be positively related to their level of proficiency. Third, the analysis of errors of collocations indicated that Iranian EFL learners tended to carry over their L1 collocational patterns to their L2 production. Generally the results revealed that the Iranian students lacked collocation knowledge. Therefore it seems that collocations are L2 learners' serious problem and this problem needs to be solved.

Several researches have explored EFL learners' knowledge of collocations (Bahns & Eldaw, 1993; Shei & Pain, 2000; Koya, 2005; Shehata, 2008). Many of them have reported insufficient collocation knowledge among EFL learners and confirmed that collocations create a challenge to language learners in EFL settings. But only few studies focused on contrastive analysis of collocations between some languages (Bartning & Hammarberg, 2007, between Swedish and French; Xiao & McEnery, 2006, between Chinese and English; Wolter, 2006, between English and Japanese; Nesselhauf, 2003, between German and English).

This study aims to investigate collocational differences between English and Persian to see whether differences in Persian & English may lead to interferences or not.Moreover this paper intends to answer other questions such as the relationship between Iranian EFL students' knowledge of collocations and their general proficiency in English. More precisely, this paper try to provide answer the following research questions:

1. Do collocational differences between Persian and English lead to inaccuracies in the production of the learners?
2. Is there any significant difference between elementary and advanced students' knowledge of collocations?

Before presenting method and results of the study I would like to define the meaning and different classifications of collocation.

*A. Meaning of the collocations*

Defining *collocation* is a challenge, even though a number of definitions of collocations have been offered in the literature. *Collocation* is an expression consisting of two or more words that correspond to some conventional way of saying things, or in the words of Firth (1951): "collocations of a given word are statements of the habitual or customary places of that word" (p. 194). A collocation is often defined as either a recurring combination of words that is often arbitrary, or just a recurring combination of a few words without emphasizing its arbitrariness (Sinclair, 1991, p. 123).

*B. Classification of collocations*

According to Benson, M., Benson, E., & Ilson (1986), collocation can be sorted systematically into two major groups – lexical collocations and grammatical collocations. A lexical collocation could be made up of nouns, adjectives, verbs, or adverbs, like "*warmest regards*", "*strictly accurate*", etc. There are seven types of lexical collocations, labeled from **a** to**g**, whose structures and examples are given below:

**Lexical Collocations Adopted from Benson *et al.* (1986)**

**A**. verb (donating creation or activation) + noun (pronoun or prep. phrase): compose music; make an impression;

**B**. verb (meaning eradication or nullification) + noun:revoke a license; demolish a house

**C.** adjective + noun: strong tea; a rough estimate

**D**. noun + verb: bees buzz; bombs explode

**e**. noun1 of noun2:a pack of dogs; a herd of buffalo

**F**. adjective + adverb/ adverb + adjective: sound asleep; hopelessly addicted

**G**. verb + adverb: anchor firmly; argue heatedly

On the other hand, a grammatical collocation is made up of a dominant word, such as a noun, an adjective, or a verb, and a preposition or grammatical structure like an infinitive or a clause. Benson et al. (1986) further categorized the grammatical collocations into eight small groups, marked as **G1** to **G8**, among which, **G8** collocations contained nineteen English verb patterns.

**Grammatical Collocations Adopted from Benson *et al.* (1986)**

| | |
|---|---|
| **G1** noun + preposition; | Apathy toward |
| **G2** noun + to INF. | He was a fool to do it. |
| **G3** noun + that clause | He took an oath that he would do his duty. |
| **G4** preposition + noun | In advance, at anchor |
| **G5** adjective + preposition | They are afraid of him. |
| **G6** predicate adjective +to INF. | It was stupid for them to go. |
| **G7** adjective + that clause | She was afraid that she would fail the exam. |
| **G8**There are 19 patterns in G8: | |
| **1. Svo to o (or) svoo**: | He sent a book to his brother. |
| **2. Svo to o**: | They described the book to her. |
| **3. Svo for o (or) svoo**: | She bought a shirt for her husband. |
| **4. Sv prep. O (or) svo prep. O** | He came by train. |
| **5. Sv to inf.**: | They began to speak |
| **6. Sv inf**.: | He had better go. |
| **7. svv-ing**: | They enjoy watching television. |
| **8. Svo to INF.** | She asks me to come. |
| **9. SvoINF**. | She heard them leave. |
| **10. svov-ing** | I caught them stealing apples. |
| **11. Sv possessive v-ing** | Please excuses my waking you so early. |
| **12. Sv (o) that-clause** | They admitted that they were wrong. |
| **13. Svo to be c** | We consider her to be very capable. |
| **14. Svoc** | She dyed her hair red. |
| **15. Svoo** | We bet her ten pounds. |
| **16.Sv (o) adverbial** | He carried himself well. |
| **17. Sv (o) wh-word** | He wants what I want. |
| **18. S (it) VO to inf. (or) s (it) VO that-clause** | It surprised me to learn of her decision. |
| **19. Svc (adjective or noun)** | The flowers smell nice. |

Similar to Benson *et al.* (1986), Lewis (2000) listed different types of collocations. More types beyond Benson et al.'s classification are seen in his list.

**The classification of collocations Adopted from Lewis (2000)**

1. Adjective + noun: a difficult decision
2. Verb + noun: submit a report
3. Noun + noun: radio station
4. Verb + adjective + noun: revise the original plan
5. Compound noun: fire escape
6. Binomial: backwards and forwards

7. Trinomial: hook, line and sinker
8. Noun + verb: the fog closed in
9. Verb + adverb: examine thoroughly
10. Adverb + adjective: extremely inconvenient
11. Discourse marker: To put it another way
12. Multi-word prepositional phrase a few years ago
13. Phrasal verb: turn in
14. Adjective + preposition: aware of....
15. Fixed phrase: On the other hand....
16. Incomplete fixed phrase: A sort of....
17. fixed expression: Not half!
18. Semi-fixed expression: See you later/tomorrow/on Monday.
19. Part of a proverb: Too many cooks....
20. Part of a quotation: To be or not to be.... (Lewis, 2000, pp. 133-134)

Moreover, Lewis (1997) claims that generally, collocations can be classified into four groups: strong, weak, frequent, and infrequent. The distinction between strong and weak collocations is based on their fixedness and restriction; whereas the distinctions between frequent and infrequent ones are on the basis of their frequency of co-occurrence in a corpus. The strong collocations such as *drink beer*, *drug addict*, are recognized as tightly linked phrases which function like single word. While weak ones like *a nice day* or a *good chance* are combined with two common words, and each of this may occur with other words. Collocations furthermore can be any combination of strong and frequent, strong and infrequent, weak and frequent or infrequent (ibid).

**Classification of collocations in this study according to Lewis**

| Category | Example | F |
|---|---|---|
| adjective + noun | Weak tea/Strong tea/Heavy rain/ Nine-to-five job | 5 |
| verb + noun | Have a guess/ Put on brakes/ Make a mistake/ Dress a salad/ Take a nap /Give an exam/ Go on a diet/ Leave a message/ Wear perfume/ Take medicine/ Put on weight/ Tell the truth/ Start the car/ Have a dream/ Miss the bus/ Grow a beard/ Take an exam/ Have a shower | 18 |
| compound noun | Speed limit/ Traffic light/ Brain drain/ Boarding card/ civil war | 5 |
| binomial | Brother and sister/ Ladies and gentlemen | 2 |
| verb + adverb | Go on foot | 1 |
| adjective + preposition | Surprised at | 1 |
| fixed phrase | Have a look at something/Shake hands with somebody/ Keep one's promise | 3 |
| multi-word prepositional phrase | In a hurry | 1 |

Some of the words mentioned in this study cannot be categorized under Lewis classification for example "*sooner or later' "more or less*" which are *adverb+ adverb*. "*Broad shouldered", "broad-minded*" which are adjective+ past participle, *Go bankrupt= verb+ adjective*, *by mistake* which based on Benson et al can be categorized as *preposition + noun*. None of the categories mentioned above can classify the collocations in this study completely, but Lewis categorizations is most comprehensive one among the two mentioned.

## II. METHODOLOGY

### *A. Participants*

The first groups of participants, Group A, were native Persian-speaking students of general English class studying different academic majors such as art and engineering at Yazd University. There were 12 male and 12 female students almost of the same age.

The second group of subjects, Group B, were native Persian-speaking M.A students majoring in English Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) at Yazd university. It consisted of 3 male and 20 female students (usually fewer male students study in this major). Although the group consists of BA holders of English translation, TEFL and English literature, majority of them were BA holders of English literature and they were not of the same age. Both group proficiency levels were assessed prior to the main experiment using Oxford Quick Placement Test (2001).

### *B. Materials*

Two types of materials were used in this study: A collocation test and test of proficiency (Oxford Quick Placement Test, 2001). In order to test the participants' knowledge of English collocation, the researcher used collocation test devised by Karim Sadeghi (2009) which was available in the appendix of his published article called "*Collocational Differences Between L1 and L2: Implications for EFL Learners and Teachers*". The original questionnaire had 60 items and it was in the multiple choice format. Some subtle changes to the questionnaire were made and some new items were added by referring some books including *Common Mistakes in English (Fitikides 1936), Idioms and Metaphorical Expressions in Translation (GhaffarTajali 2009)* The items added to the questionnaire are marked by asterisk in the appendix. Six new items were added to the test. The researcher also omitted some items and modified some of them. The reason for omission was that the correct answer for those items was not recognized. Some of the items had more than one correct answer in the original questionnaire, for example question number 34 (doosh gereftan) دوش گرفتن had the following options available, *take a shower* and *have a shower*, both of which were correct. The only difference they have is that *take a shower* is mainly used by Americans but *have a shower* is used by British people. So instead of *take a shower* the researcher preferred to select *turn a shower* to have only one correct answer. The final version of the new questionnaire had 42 items all in multiple choice format. One of the items was repeated twice and it happened after the test had been administered. While administering

the test one of the students attracted the researcher's attention to items number 24 and 12. In number 12 none of the items were totally correct. The correct equivalent for آدم چهارشانه(Adam –e-charshane) is broad shouldered which does not exist in the choices. *Broad shoulder* and *broad shoulders* were only available in the options. *Shane(شانه)* is equal to *Shoulder* in English and it is common in all the choices, only (char چهار) has different equivalent is English (in this collocation *char چهار* is not equal to four but broad) so either options A and C were considered as a correct choice. Item number 24 had two correct answers. Both *by mistake* and *mistakenly* are correct equivalent for Persian *اشتباها (eshtebahan).*Although at first sight it may seem that *mistakenly* is more equal for the Persian one, since it is an adverb like its Persian equivalent.

In order to determine subjects proficiency level, Oxford Quick Placement Test (OQPT, 2001) was administered. The Quick Placement Test is a flexible test of English language proficiency. It is quick and easy to administer and is ideal for placement testing and examination screening. There are two versions available, a computer-based version (CBT) and a paper and pencil version. In this study paper and pencil version of the test was used. The key features of this version of the test are as follows. The test takers are given 30 minutes to answer 60 multiple-choice items. The test consists of two parts: Part1contains 40 test items are taken by all students. Part 2 is for higher proficiency students who can score at least 35 in the first section. In this experiment both groups were asked to answer all the 60 questions.

The procedure for setting equivalent levels produced by the test designer is as follows: Beginner (0 correct answers), Breakthrough (0-17), Waystage (Elementary 18-29), Threshold (Lower Intermediate 30-39), Vantage (Upper Intermediate 40-47), Effective Proficiency (Lower Advanced 48-54), Mastery (Upper Advanced 55-60)

In this study Group A , students of general English class studying different academic majors (except TEFL and English literature) were of different proficiency level but majority of them were at elementary level only a few of them were at advanced level. Group B, M.A students majoring in English teaching (TEFL) were considered as advanced students.

### *C. Procedure*

Two questionnaires including Oxford Quick Placement test as well as 42 multiple-choice collocation test items were administered to Group A, native Persian-speaking students of general English studying different academic majors (mainly art and engineering) at Yazd University in two different sessions during their normal classroom hours. In the first session they took Oxford Quick Placement Test, in order to find out their proficiency level. 32 students completed the questionnaire. Students were told that their participation in the test was part of their class activity. They were not told that it was part of an experiment. The second test (collocation test) was administered a week later. Unfortunately some of the students who did the first test were absent for the second one; therefore, only 26 were available. And some who were absent for the first test, took the second one. All in all 24 students took both tests. Group B was given only the 42 items collocation-test, since their Oxford Quick Placement Test results were already available. Since they were my students

and due to lack of time (it was not possible to administer the test during normal class time). For the collocation test, students were ask to read Persian translation and choose the best English equivalent.

The procedure for correcting the collocation questionnaire was as follows: First of all three values were defined 1(L1 transfer) 2(Target) 3(Neither). Then students' answers were judged based on the defined values. Correct answers were given 2 and wrong answers were given either 1 or 3. For example, for the first question (hads zadan حدس زدن) there are four options available *give a guess/ guess a guess / hit a guess/have a guess*. Those students who chose *have a guess* which is the correct equivalent for the Persian one, were given 2. Those who chose hit a guess which is the literal translation for حدس زدن were given 1 and those who chose either *guess a guess or give a guess* were given 3 that is they did not transfer from their L1 nor did they chose the correct option. In the following table the options L1 transfer, target and neither are tabulated. It is worth mentioning that some students did not answer to all questions in the collocation questionnaire.

| Neither | L1 Transfer | Target | Persian Translation |
|---|---|---|---|
| a. Give a guess<br>b. Guess a guess | Hit a guess | Have a guess | حدس زدن |
| a. Get a brakes<br>b. Do brakes | Catch brakes | Put on brakes | ترمز گرفتن |
| a. Allowed speed<br>b. Limit speed | Speed allowed | Speed limit | سرعت مجاز |
| a. Sister Brother<br>b. Brother Sister | Sister and Brother | Brother and Sister | خواهرو برادر |
| Make wrong | a. Do a mistake<br>b. Do wrong | Make a mistake | اشتباه کردن |
| | a. Internal war<br>b. Inner war<br>c. Internal fight | Civil war | جنگ داخلی |
| Light tea | a. Pale tea<br>b. Colorless tea | Weak tea | چای کم رنگ |
| a. Cover a salad<br>b. Make a salad | Decorate a salad | Dress a salad | سالاد تزیین کردن |
| a. Soon or late<br>b. Sooner or later | Late or Soon | Sooner or later | دیر یا زود |
| a. Eight –to-four job<br>b. Seven-to-three job | Morning to afternoon job | Nine-to-five job | کار تمام وقت |
| Apply one's promise | a. Operate one's promise<br>b. Do one's promise | Keep one's promise | به قول خود عمل کردن |
| | a. Four shoulders<br>b. Four shoulder | | آدم چهار شانه |
| a. Get nap<br>b. Catch nap | Hit a nap | Take a nap | چرت زدن |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| a. Sit an exam<br>b. Do an exam | Take an exam | Give an exam | امتحان گرفتن |
| Get a diet | a. Catch a diet<br>b. Take a diet | Go on a diet | رژیم گرفتن |
| a. Place a message<br>b. Lay a message | Put a message | Leave a message | پیام گذاشتن |
| Fall bankrupt | a. Become bankrupt<br>b. Get bankrupt | Go bankrupt | ورشکست شدن |
| Have perfume | a. Hit perfume<br>b. Beat perfume | Wear perfume | عطر زدن |
| Take drugs | a. Have medicine<br>b. Have drugs | Take medicine | داروی طبی مصرف کردن |
| Shake a hand with sb | a. Give hands with sb<br>b. Give a hand with sb | Shake hands with sb | با کسی دست دادن |
| Grow weight | a. Add weight<br>b. Increase weight | Put on weight | وزن اضافه کردن |
| a. Red light<br>b. Green light | Guide light | Traffic lights | چراغ راهنما |
| Neither | L1 Transfer | Target | Persian Translation |
| a. Brain death<br>b. Brainwash | Brainrun | Brain drain | فرار مغزها |
| a. With mistake<br>b. By wrong | | a. By mistake<br>b. Mistakenly | اشتباها |
| a. Tell right<br>b. Say right | Say the truth | Tell the truth | حقیقت را گفتن |
| Much or little | a. Less or more<br>b. Little or much | More or less | کم و بیش |
| a. Serious rain<br>b. Great rain | Hard rain | Heavy rain | باران شدید |
| a. Light the car<br>b. Begin the car | Turn on the car | Start the car | ماشین روشن کردن |
| Go by foot | a. Go with foot<br>b. Go with feet | Go on foot | پیاده رفتن |
| Dream a sleep | a. See a sleep<br>b. See a dream | Have a dream | خواب دیدن |
| Broad-mind | a. Light-mind<br>b. light-minded | Broad-minded | روشن فکر |
| a. Sit the exam<br>b. Took exam | Give an exam | Take an exam | امتحان دادن |
| a. bold tea<br>b. colourful tea | Dark tea | Strong tea | چای پررنگ |
| a. Turn shower<br>b. Get a shower | Catch a shower | Have a shower | دوش گرفتن |
| a. Airplane card<br>b. Airport card | Flight card | Boarding card | کارت پرواز |
| a. Sirs and Madams<br>b. Gentlemen and Ladies | Madams and Sirs | Ladies and Gentlemen | خانم ها و آقایان |
| a. With a hurry<br>b. In hurry | with hurry | In a hurry | با عجله |
| Surprised with | a. Surprised from | Surprised at | متعجب شدن از |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | b. Surprised of | | |
| Give a look at sth | a. Throw a look at sth<br>b. drop a look at sth | Have a look at sth | به چیزی نگاهی انداختن |
| a. Lose the bus<br>b. Catch the bus<br>c. Give the bus | | Miss the bus | به اتوبوس نرسیدن |
| a. Grow beard<br>b. Put a beard | Put beard | Grow a beard | ریش گذاشتن |

## III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

In order to answer the first research question "*Do collocational differences between Persian and English lead to inaccuracies in the production of the learners?"* Both Persian and English collocations were analyzed to see whether differences in the form of the collocation will lead to inaccuracy. In most cases there was no significant difference between the collocations form in two languages. In some items differences in forms of collocations in two languages led the students to inaccurate production. for example question 41 (rish gozashtan,ریش گذاشتن) is made up of *noun +infinitive (forming a noun phrase)* whereas in English *grow a beard* is made up *verb+ a+ noun* forming a verb phrase so some students chose *grow beard* instead of *grow a beard* in which they transfer their L1 form. In most cases students transferred meaning instead of the form from their L1.There are many examples but due to lack of space some of them are discussed. For instance many students chose *decorate a salad, put beard* (which are the literal translation of the collocation) instead of the *dress a salad* and *grow a beard*. To account for the reasons whether the learners transfer form L1 into L2 some descriptive statistics were carried out (table 2). The mean of total percent of incorrect responses for the Elementary group equals 52,86 and that of total percent of incorrect responses for the lower Advanced group is 17.79 which shows that the elementary group produced more inaccurate collocations than the other group. Thus the low proficient the students are the less knowledge they have of collocation. The table 2 shows the frequency of correct and incorrect answer for each question of the groups. It also shows which collocations were the most difficult and which ones were the easiest ones for each group. For instance for elementary group question number 2 was the most difficult one all the students answered it incorrectly and question number 5 was the easiest one for elementary group, since only one student answered incorrectly. For advanced students question number 7 and 41 were the most difficult ones and questions numbers 5, 6, 13, 16, 22, 24, 25, 27, 30, 36 were answered by all the students correctly. Table 1 shows the first three questions ranked the most difficult for both groups. They included question items 2, 10 and 41and the easiest collocations for both groups were items 5, 13, 36 and 34.

Table 1: The Rank of Collocations in Elementary & Advanced Groups

| Rank | Most difficult | | | the easiest | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | ***1rank*** | ***2rank*** | ***3rank*** | ***1rank*** | ***2rank*** | ***3rank*** |
| Elementary | 2 | 3 | 4,9,10,17,35,38,42 | 5 | 13,36 | 12 |
| Advanced | 7,41 | 10 | 2 | 5,6,13,16,22,24,25,27,30,36 | 1,15 | 17 |

Table 2: Frequency, Percentage and Rank of collocations

| **Items** | **PL** | **FREQUENCY** | | | %of incorrect responses(L 1 Transfer) | %of incorrect responses(other factors) | Total %of incorrect responses | Rank of INCR | Total rank of INCR |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1 / 2 | L1 Transfer | Target | Neither | | | | | |
| Q1 | 1 | 2 | 15 | 7 | 8.3 | 29.2 | 37.5 | 15 | 28 |
| | 2 | 0 | 23 | 1 | 0 | 4.3 | 4.3 | 12 | |
| Q2 | 1 | 3 | 0 | 21 | 12.5 | 87.5 | 100 | 1 | ١ |
| | 2 | 1 | 12 | 10 | 4.3 | 43.5 | 47.8 | 3 | |
| Q3 | 1 | 17 | 3 | 4 | 70.8 | 16.4 | 87.5 | 3 | 10 |
| | 2 | 1 | 20 | 2 | 4.3 | 8.7 | 13 | 9 | |
| Q4 | 1 | 20 | 4 | 0 | 83.3 | 0 | 83.3 | 3 | 12 |
| | 2 | 5 | 18 | 0 | 21.7 | 0 | 21.7 | 7 | |
| Q5 | 1 | 1 | 23 | 0 | 4.2 | 0 | 4.2 | 22 | 38 |
| | 2 | 0 | 23 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 13 | |
| Q6 | 1 | 18 | 6 | 0 | 75 | 0 | 75 | 5 | 19 |
| | 2 | 0 | 23 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 13 | |
| Q7 | 1 | 6 | 7 | 11 | 25 | 45.8 | 54.2 | 10 | 5 |
| | 2 | 2 | 9 | 12 | 8.7 | 39.1 | 60.9 | 1 | |
| Q8 | 1 | 18 | 5 | 1 | 75 | 4.2 | 79.2 | 4 | 8 |
| | 2 | 5 | 17 | 1 | 21.7 | 4.3 | 26.1 | 6 | |
| Q9 | 1 | 16 | 4 | 4 | 66.7 | 16.7 | 83.3 | 3 | 7 |
| | 2 | 2 | 17 | 4 | 8.7 | 17.4 | 26.1 | 6 | |
| Q10 | 1 | 15 | 4 | 5 | 62.5 | 20.8 | 83.3 | 3 | 2 |
| | 2 | 5 | 10 | 8 | 21.7 | 34.8 | 56.5 | 2 | |
| Q11 | 1 | 10 | 13 | 1 | 41.7 | 4.2 | 45.9 | 12 | 23 |
| | 2 | 3 | 20 | 0 | 13 | 0 | 13 | 9 | |
| Q12 | 1 | 2 | 20 | 2 | 8.3 | 8.3 | 16.6 | 20 | 32 |
| | 2 | 2 | 20 | 22 | 8.7 | 95.7 | 13 | 9 | |
| Q13 | 1 | 1 | 21 | 2 | 4.2 | 8.3 | 12.5 | 21 | 37 |
| | 2 | 0 | 23 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 13 | |
| Q14 | 1 | 12 | 11 | 1 | 50 | 4.2 | 54.2 | 10 | 21 |
| | 2 | 4 | 19 | 0 | 17.4 | 0 | 17.4 | 8 | |
| Q15 | 1 | 4 | 16 | 4 | 16.7 | 16.7 | 33.3 | 16 | 30 |
| | 2 | 1 | 22 | 0 | 4.3 | 0 | 4.3 | 12 | |
| Q16 | 1 | 9 | 14 | 1 | 37.5 | 4.2 | 41.7 | 14 | 29 |
| | 2 | 0 | 23 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 13 | |
| Q17 | 1 | 16 | 4 | 4 | 66.7 | 16.7 | 83.3 | 3 | 13 |
| | 2 | 1 | 20 | 1 | 4.3 | 4.3 | 8.6 | 11 | |
| Q18 | 1 | 7 | 11 | 6 | 29.2 | 25 | 54.2 | 10 | 21 |
| | 2 | 0 | 19 | 4 | 0 | 17.4 | 17.4 | 8 | |
| Q19 | 1 | 10 | 9 | 5 | 41.7 | 20.8 | 62.5 | 9 | 11 |
| | 2 | 3 | 15 | 5 | 13 | 21.7 | 34.8 | 5 | |
| Q20 | 1 | 9 | 13 | 2 | 37.5 | 8.3 | 45.8 | 13 | 16 |
| | 2 | 2 | 15 | 6 | 8.7 | 26.1 | 34.8 | 5 | |
| Q21 | 1 | 10 | 12 | 2 | 41.7 | 8.3 | 50 | 11 | 20 |
| | 2 | 2 | 15 | 6 | 13 | 8.7 | 21.7 | 7 | |
| **Items** | **PL** | **FREQUENCY** | | | %of incorrect responses(L 1 Transfer) | %of incorrect responses(other factors) | Total %of incorrect responses | Rank of INCR | Total rank of INCR |
| | 1 / 2 | L1 Transfer | Target | Neither | | | | | |
| Q22 | 1 | 9 | 15 | 0 | 37.5 | 0 | 37.5 | 15 | 31 |

| | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 2 | 0 | ۲۳ | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 13 | |
| Q23 | 1 | 13 | 8 | 3 | 54.2 | 12.5 | 66.7 | 7 | 14 |
| | 2 | 1 | 18 | 4 | 4.3 | 17.4 | 21.7 | 7 | |
| Q24 | 1 | 0 | 20 | 4 | 0 | 16.7 | 16.7 | 19 | 36 |
| | 2 | 0 | 23 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 13 | |
| Q25 | 1 | 4 | 17 | 3 | 16.7 | 12.5 | 29.2 | 17 | 33 |
| | 2 | 0 | 23 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 13 | |
| Q26 | 1 | 17 | 7 | 0 | 70.8 | 0 | 70.8 | 6 | 18 |
| | 2 | 2 | 21 | 0 | 8.7 | 0 | 8.7 | 10 | |
| Q27 | 1 | 5 | 19 | 0 | 20.8 | 0 | 20.8 | 18 | 35 |
| | 2 | 0 | 23 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 13 | |
| Q28 | 1 | 8 | 15 | 1 | 33.3 | 4.2 | 37.5 | 15 | 25 |
| | 2 | 3 | 19 | 1 | 13 | 4.3 | 17.4 | 8 | |
| Q29 | 1 | 2 | 16 | 6 | 8.3 | 25 | 33.3 | 16 | 26 |
| | 2 | 1 | 19 | 3 | 4.3 | 13 | 17.4 | 8 | |
| Q30 | 1 | 3 | 19 | 2 | 12.5 | 8.3 | 20.8 | 18 | 35 |
| | 2 | 0 | 23 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 13 | |
| Q31 | 1 | 8 | 8 | 8 | 33.3 | 33.3 | 66.6 | 8 | 15 |
| | 2 | 4 | 19 | 0 | 17.4 | 0 | 17.4 | 8 | |
| Q32 | 1 | 10 | 13 | 1 | 41.7 | 4.2 | 45.8 | 13 | 24 |
| | 2 | 2 | 20 | 1 | 8.7 | 4.3 | 13 | 9 | |
| Q33 | 1 | 13 | 8 | 3 | 54.2 | 12.5 | 66.6 | 8 | 6 |
| | 2 | 10 | 13 | 0 | 43.5 | 0 | 43.5 | 4 | |
| Q34 | 1 | 2 | 8 | 14 | 8.3 | 58.3 | 66.6 | 8 | 17 |
| | 2 | 0 | 19 | 3 | 0 | 13 | 13 | 9 | |
| Q35 | 1 | 17 | 4 | 2 | 76.8 | 8.3 | 83.3 | 3 | 4 |
| | 2 | 8 | 15 | 0 | 34.8 | 0 | 34.8 | 5 | |
| Q36 | 1 | 2 | 21 | 1 | 8.3 | 4.2 | 12.5 | 21 | 37 |
| | 2 | 0 | 23 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 13 | |
| Q37 | 1 | 4 | 9 | 11 | 16.7 | 45.8 | 62.5 | 9 | 22 |
| | 2 | 0 | 21 | 2 | 0 | 8.7 | 8.7 | 10 | |
| Q38 | 1 | 13 | 4 | 7 | 54.2 | 29.2 | 83.3 | 3 | 7 |
| | 2 | 2 | 17 | 4 | 8.7 | 17.4 | 26.1 | 6 | |
| Q39 | 1 | 6 | 15 | 3 | 25 | 12.5 | 37.5 | 15 | 27 |
| | 2 | 2 | 20 | 1 | 8.7 | 4.3 | 13 | 9 | |
| Q40 | 1 | 0 | 20 | 4 | 0 | 16.7 | 16.7 | 19 | 34 |
| | 2 | 0 | 21 | 2 | 0 | 8.7 | 8.7 | 10 | |
| Q41 | 1 | 11 | 6 | 7 | 45.8 | 29.2 | 75 | 5 | 3 |
| | 2 | 1 | 9 | 13 | 4.3 | 56.5 | 60.9 | 1 | |
| Q42 | 1 | 19 | 4 | 1 | 79.2 | 4.2 | 83.3 | 3 | 9 |
| | 2 | 5 | 18 | 0 | 21.7 | 0 | 21.7 | 7 | |

In order to answer second research question "Is there any significant different between elementary and advanced students knowledge of collocation?" Since there were two independent groups, Mann-Whitney U Test was carried out.

The results showed a significant difference between two groups $p<0.05$ test items 2, 3, 4, 6, 8, 9, 10, 16, 17, 20, 22, 23, 24, 26, 27, 32, 34, 35, 41, 42 that is to say advanced students performance was much more better than Elementary students only for half of the test items. Although the descriptive statistics in most cases show advanced students outperformed

elementary students, the inferential statistics, however, indicated the degree of significance was just applicable to just half of the questions not all of them.

| Items | Mann-Whitney U | Wilcoxon W | Z | Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Q1 | 229.500 | 505.50 | -1.389 | .165 |
| Q2 | 172.500 | 448.500 | -2.640 | .008 |
| Q3 | 129.500 | 429.500 | -3.433 | .001 |
| Q4 | 106.000 | 406.000 | -4.185 | .000 |
| Q5 | 264.500 | 564.500 | -.979 | .328 |
| Q6 | 69.000 | 369.000 | -5.231 | .000 |
| Q7 | 238.500 | 538.500 | -.871 | .384 |
| Q8 | 142.000 | 435.000 | -3.396 | .001 |
| Q9 | 142.000 | 442.000 | -3.093 | .002 |
| Q10 | 172.500 | 472.500 | -2.354 | .019 |
| Q11 | 207.000 | 507.000 | -1.846 | .065 |
| Q12 | 242.000 | 495.000 | -.827 | .408 |
| Q13 | 264.500 | 540.500 | -.578 | .564 |
| Q14 | 195.500 | 495.500 | -2.046 | .041 |
| Q15 | 266.000 | 542.000 | -.310 | .756 |
| Q16 | 184.000 | 484.000 | -2.754 | .006 |
| Q17 | 138.000 | 438.000 | -3.085 | .002 |
| Q18 | 230.500 | 530.500 | -1.135 | .256 |
| Q19 | 212.000 | 512.000 | -1.489 | .136 |
| Q20 | 172.500 | 472.500 | -2.508 | .012 |
| Q21 | 203.000 | 503.000 | -1.833 | .067 |
| Q22 | 172.500 | 472.500 | -3.231 | .001 |
| Q23 | 149.500 | 449.500 | -3.007 | .003 |
| Q24 | 230.000 | 506.000 | -2.025 | .043 |
| Q25 | 264.500 | 564.500 | -.396 | .692 |
| Q26 | 104.500 | 404.500 | -4.293 | .000 |
| Q27 | 218.500 | 518.500 | -2.291 | .022 |
| Q28 | 222.000 | 522.000 | -1.473 | .141 |
| Q29 | 254.000 | 530.000 | -.615 | .539 |
| Q30 | 264.500 | 564.500 | -.457 | .647 |
| Q31 | 244.000 | 520.000 | -.767 | .443 |
| Q32 | 188.500 | 488.500 | -2.332 | .020 |
| Q33 | 266.000 | 566.000 | -.239 | .811 |
| Q34 | 165.000 | 418.000 | -2.518 | .012 |
| Q35 | 176.000 | 452.000 | -2.217 | .027 |
| Q36 | 264.500 | 564.500 | -.578 | .564 |
| Q37 | 215.500 | 491.500 | -1.519 | .129 |
| Q38 | 202.000 | 502.000 | -1.692 | .091 |
| Q39 | 253.500 | 553.500 | -.628 | .530 |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Q40 | 254.000 | 530.000 | -.810 | .418 |
| Q41 | 154.000 | 454.000 | -2.777 | .005 |
| Q42 | 126.500 | 426.500 | -3.638 | .000 |

## IV. CONCLUSION

This study aims to investigate collocational differences between English and Persian to see whether differences Persian & English may lead to transfer from L1 into L2 in elementary and advanced students' production. The major findings showed that collocational differences between the L1 and the L2 were affected by the students' proficiency level but mainly low proficient students had problem with collocations. This study also showed that l2 learners mainly transfer meaning not form in their use of collocation. In Persian one word is used for different things but in English it is not the case. For instance, in Persian one *decorates salad, cakes* etc.; however, In English one *dresses salads* rather than *decorating cakes*. So usually learners who start learning the collocations in English do not pay attentions to these minor differences in source and target languages, so they produce collocations that are similar to their first language. In order for learners to learn the English collocations better, teachers should teach their students collocations by comparing collocations in two languages. In this way learners can understand the differences much better and it may lead to less interference.

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## *Appendix: The Test of Collocations*

Choose the best English equivalent for the Farsi phrase.

1. حدس زدن
a. give a guess b. guess a guess c. hit a guess d. have a guess

2. ترمز گرفتن
a. get a brake b. put on brakes c. catch brakes d. do brakes

3.سرعت مجاز
a. speed limit b. allowed speed c. limit speed d. speed allowed

4.خواهر و برادر
a. sister brother b. brother and sister c. sister and brother d. brother sister

5. اشتباه کردن
a. do a mistake b. do wrong c. make a mistake d. make wrong

6. جنگ داخلی
a. civil war b. inner war c. internal war d. internal fight

*7. چای کم رنگ
a. weak tea b. pale tea c. light tea d. colorless tea

8. سالاد تزیین کردن
a. dress a salad b. decorate a salad c. cover a salad d. make a salad

9. دیر یا زود
a. late or soon b. soon or late c. sooner or later d. later or sooner

10. کار تمام وقت
a. nine-to-five job b. eight-to-four job c. morning to afternoon job d. seven-to-three job

11.به قول خود عمل کردن
a. keep one’s promise b. do one’s promise
c. operate one’s promise d. apply one’s promise

12. آدم چهار شانه
a. broad shoulders b. four shoulders c. broad shoulder d. four shoulder

*13.چرت زدن
a. take a nap b. hit a nap c .get nap d. catch nap

14.امتحان گرفتن
a. take an exam b. give an exam c. sit an exam d. do an exam

15. رژیم گرفتن
a. get a diet b. take a diet c. go on a diet d. catch a diet

16.پیام گذاشتن
a. leave a message b. put a message c. lay a message d. place a message

17.ورشکست شدن
a. go bankrupt b. become bankrupt c. get bankrupt d. fall bankrupt

18.عطر زدن
a. wear perfume b. hit perfume c. have perfume d. beat perfume

19. داروی طبی مصرف کردن
a. take drugs b. have medicine c. take medicine d. have drugs

20. با کسی دست دادن
a. shake hands with sb b. give hands with sb
c. give a hand with sb c. shake a hand with sb

21.وزن اضافه کردن
a. put on weight b. grow weight c. add weight d. increase weight

22.چراغ راهنما
a. traffic lights b. red light c. guide light d. green light

*23.فرار مغزها
a. brain death b. brainwash c. brain drain d. brainrun

24.اشتباها
a. by mistake b. with mistake c. mistakenly d. by wrong

25. حقیقت را گفتن
* a. say the truth b. tell the truth c. tell right d. say right

26. کم و بیش
a. more or less b. less or more c. little or much d. much or little

27.باران شدید
a. serious rain b. hard rain c. great rain d. heavy rain

28.ماشین روشن کردن
a. turn on the car b. light the car c. begin the car d. start the car

29.پیاده رفتن
a. go on foot b. go with foot c. go by foot d. go with feet

* 30. خواب دیدن
a. see a dream b. have a dream c. see a sleep d. dream a sleep

31.روشن فکر
a. broad-minded b. broad-mind c. light-minded d. light-mind

* 32. امتحان دادن
a. take an exam b. give an exam c. sit the exam d. took exam

33. چای پررنگ
a. strong tea b. bold tea c. colourful tea d. dark tea

34.دوش گرفتن
a. turn shower b. have a shower c. get a shower d. catch a shower

35.کارت پرواز
a. boarding card b. flight card c. airplane card d. airport card

36. خانم ها و آقایان
a. Ladies and Gentlemen b. Gentlemen and Ladies
c. Sirs and Madams d. Madams and Sirs

37.با عجله
a. in a hurry b. with a hurry c. in hurry d. with hurry

38.متعجب شدن از
a. surprised at b. surprised with c. surprised from d. surprised of

39.به چیزی نگاهی انداختن
a. throw a look at sth b. drop a look at sth
c. give a look at sth d. have a look at sth

40.به اتوبوس نرسیدن
a. lose the bus b. miss the bus c. give the bus d. catch the bus

41.ریش گذاشتن
a. put beard b. grow beard
c. put a beard d. grow a beard

42.خواهر و برادر
a. sister brother b. brother and sister c. sister and brother d. brother sister