

Abstract

Due to the important function of collocations in language learning, it has aroused the interest of researchers in the last half century, and it is now becoming one of the main focuses of modern linguistic research. In China, although it is generally accepted that collocations are both indispensable and the same time problematic for foreign language learners, the teaching of collocations is a relatively recent area of study.

The main aim of this research is to identify and categorize collocational errors in the writing of Chinese students studying English as their major subject. The data of this study is in the form of 120 English majors' writing at Honghe University and the classification is based on the categorization of collocations by Benson et al (1997). The causes of collocational errors are analyzed based on a framework adapted from Richard's categorization of sources of errors (1974) and Liu's (1999).

The findings indicate that 15 types of collocational errors were made by the participants, among which 6 are lexical collocational errors and 9 are grammatical collocational errors. L1 (*Verb+Noun*) and G8 (4) (*Verb+Preposition+Object*) errors occurred most frequently in the participants' writings. The result also shows that participants from both Year One and Year Two made similar types of collocational errors. In addition, Year One students made more collocational errors than that of Year Two. The analysis shows a lack of understanding of rule restrictions which is the main cause of many collocational errors. It is hoped this study will yield a more precise picture of English teaching in terms of the features of collocational usages that are used by students. Some

recommendations are made for future research which may in turn have a backwash effect on the teaching of English collocations in the context of China.

