A Study on Iranian EFL Learners' Writing Errors in English Collocations

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The purpose of this study was to investigate Iranian EFL learners' writing errors in English collocations. The participants of this study were 78 EFL learners who were majoring in English translation at Abadan University in Iran. Seventy one writing samples done by the participants were used to collect the data. Three dictionaries of collocations were used to identify the collocations. Then, collocational errors and correct collocations were identified and classified into a framework proposed by Benson, et al (1986). Regarding collocational error types, lexical collocational errors occurred in all of the 6 types. Most of errors occurred in L1 and L2 categories with 70.09 and 18.13 respectively. Out of 415 lexical collocations 204 were errors. The total percentage of lexical errors was 48.62. The grammatical collocational errors occurred in 11 types of errors. Out of 838 grammatical collocations 113 errors were found. Most of errors occurred in G8 (D), G4 and G1 types with 34.51, 16.81 and 12.38 respectively. The total percentage of grammatical collocational errors was 13.61. The results revealed that the participants made more lexical collocational errors than grammatical collocational errors and it was also revealed that there was a significant difference between lexical collocational errors and grammatical collocational errors. Considering the main sources of the collocational errors and according to Liu's (1999) classification, the results revealed that collocational errors made by participants were due to the 6 major sources of errors including: overgeneralization; false concepts hypothesized; synonymy; negative transfer; ignorance of rule restrictions and approximation. Negative transfer and use of synonyms were the
most usual sources of collocational errors with 49.84 and 29.33 respectively. Based on the results, implications for English language teachers, EFL learners and material developers are discussed. Finally, some suggestions for further research will be presented. Key Words: Collocational Errors; Lexical Collocations; Grammatical Collocation