

Teaching Collocations to Foreign Language Learners through Listening to Podcasts Using an Interactive Website

تدريس المتلازمات اللفظية لمتعلمي اللغة الأجنبية من خلال الاستماع للتدوينات الصوتية باستعمال موقع تفاعلي

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ABSTRACT:

The importance of incorporating collocations in EFL syllabi cannot be overstated. Although collocations could massively contribute to EFL learners' fluent written and spoken production, they are seldom taught in any principled manner in classrooms. Thus, using collocations correctly and appropriately remains a particular challenge even to advanced EFL learners. A pilot study is conducted to explore the role of an interactive website aimed at improving the collocational competence of 25 third-year EFL students from the Department of English at Oum El Bouaghi University (Algeria) through listening to podcasts. Pre-tests and post-tests were selected as research tools. The study is mainly quantitative, in which the primary aim is to draw comparisons between students' results and performance on collocations before and after listening to podcasts using an interactive website. The results of the study have revealed that participants' scores after listening to the podcasts were significantly higher than their scores before interacting with the podcasts. In the light of their overall scores, the use of an interactive website to teach collocations through listening to podcasts has immensely contributed to EFL learners' rate of learning the target collocations.

Keywords: Collocations, interactive website, collocational competence, EFL learners, podcasts.

الملخص:

لا يمكن المبالغة في التأكيد على أهمية دمج المتلازمات اللفظية في مناهج تعليم اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية. فعلى الرغم من أن المتلازمات اللفظية يمكن أن تساهم بشكل كبير في تحسين الإنتاج الكتابي والشفوي لمتعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية، إلا أنه نادراً ما يتم تدريسها بطريقة أساسية في الفصول الدراسية. وبالتالي، يظل استخدام المتلازمات اللفظية بشكل صحيح ومناسب تحدياً كبيراً حتى للمتعلمين المتقدمين في المستوى. أجريت دراسة تجريبية لاستكشاف دور موقع تفاعلي يهدف إلى تحسين الكفاءة الخاصة بالمتلازمات اللفظية لـ 25 طالباً للغة الإنجليزية في السنة الثالثة من قسم اللغة الإنجليزية في جامعة أم البواقي (الجزائر) من خلال الاستماع إلى التدوينات الصوتية. تم استعمال الاختبارات القبليّة والبعدية كأدوات بحث. الدراسة كمية بشكل أساسي، حيث يتمثل الهدف الأساسي في إجراء مقارنات بين نتائج وأداء ونتائج الطلاب في تعلم المتلازمات اللفظية قبل وبعد الاستماع إلى التدوينات الصوتية باستخدام موقع تفاعلي. كشفت نتائج الدراسة أن درجات المشاركين بعد الاستماع إلى التدوينات الصوتية كانت أعلى بكثير من درجاتهم قبل التفاعل مع التدوينات الصوتية. في ضوء الدرجات الإجمالية، ساهم استخدام الموقع التفاعلي الذي استخدم في تعليم المتلازمات اللفظية من خلال الاستماع إلى التدوينات الصوتية بشكل كبير في معدل تعلم المتلازمات اللفظية المستهدفة لدى متعلمين اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية. كلمات مفتاحية: المتلازمات اللفظية، موقع تفاعلي، الكفاءة الخاصة بالمتلازمات اللفظية، متعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية، التدوينات الصوتية.

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1- Introduction:

Learning collocations is considered as one of the biggest challenges that EFL learners still face when writing and speaking. Students who have a higher proficiency in the various aspects of the language such as grammar may find difficulties when communicating without knowledge of words and the meanings they convey (McCarthy, 1990). There is no language without these words, which they build chunks of language which carry meaning (Milton, 2009). Collocation as an essential part of 'formulaic language' has received considerable attention in the field of language learning during the last few decades (Gitsaki, 1999, Webb & Kagimoto, 2009). Learning collocations is regarded as an important and crucial part in ESL/EFL acquisition because the meaning of a lexical item has much to do with other lexical items that are combined with it. "Not only do these associations assist the learner in committing these words to memory, they also aid in defining the semantic area of a word" (Nattinger, 1988).

The main aim of this research paper is to tackle the concept of collocation, which is an indispensable part in formulaic language and vocabulary learning. The literature to come cast some light on other researchers and linguists' contributions in this field of study, attaching importance to teaching and learning collocation, especially in EFL classes. Furthermore, raising EFL learners' awareness of the importance of learning collocations is another major aim why the present study was conducted in the first place.

1-2- Background of the Study

Collocation has recently become a flourishing field of enquiry ever since research studies on this concept in foreign language learning increased in number. Various researchers and linguists attempted to investigate this linguistic phenomenon (Brown, 1974; Nattinger, 1980, 1988; Bahns & Eldaw, 1993; Howarth, 1998), and Firth's theory on syntagmatic relations between words and lexicality is certainly one of the chief reasons why more investigations about collocation have been pursued in the last decades (Firth, 1957; Halliday, 1966; Sinclair, 1966). Many linguists such as (Lewis, 2001), (Lin, 2002), (Fan, 2009), and (Mahvelati & Mukundan, 2012), not to mention but a few, saw the vital necessity to incorporate collocation in EFL syllabi. Yan (2010) and Saudin (2014), on the other hand, further stressed the importance and the need for integrating collocation vis-a-vis the common errors made by EFL and ESL learners when using collocation.

Linguistic investigations have revealed that native-speaker productions are virtually formulaic (Cowie, 1991, 1992; Howarth, 1998; Altenberg, 1998; Biber et al., 1999). That is to say, natural and ready-made word combinations proved to be pervasive in their productions, and the propensity for using such blocks of words entails a good command of collocations in order for EFL learners to attain high linguistic proficiency. This is often a challenging task as this requires delicate use of authentic and culturally-loaded expressions that are natural to native speakers; even EFL advanced users of English are still grappling with the appropriate use of collocations in their spoken and written productions.

Studies, which attempted to highlight the importance of teaching words in chunks, hence collocations, faced several problems due to the vagueness of this concept itself since there was no clear and specific definition provided in order for experiments to be conducted easily (Husein, 1990; Farghal & Obiedat, 1995). More requisite studies must be therefore conducted to further clarify the concept and offer more useful insights into this phenomenon, starting from proposing clear and comprehensive definitions to pioneering different and innovative approaches to teaching and learning collocations in EFL classrooms.

This empirical study sets out to investigate the significance of learning collocations through listening and interacting with podcasts using an interactive website. The latter was designed to test EFL students' collocational competence. It examines the extent to which listening to interactive podcasts can help participants learn, memorize and retrieve collocations, and whether the incorporation of interactive websites as an ICT tool can be useful to teach collocations in modern EFL classrooms. Twenty-five (25) third-year EFL students from the Department of English at Oum El Bouaghi University (Algeria) were invited to take a series of pre-tests and post-tests before and after interacting with thematic podcasts. The results helped to draw a comparison and to see to what extent listening to interactive podcasts improved their scores. These two key questions are raised:

- To what extent can interactive websites improve third-year EFL students' collocational competence?
- To what extent can listening to podcasts help third-year EFL students memorize and retrieve collocations?

Based on the research questions stated above, the following hypotheses are formulated:

- Interactive websites can immensely contribute to third-year EFL students' collocational competence.
- Listening to podcasts plays an essential role in third-year EFL students' learning, memorization and retention of the target collocations.

In the light of these questions and hypotheses, the present study attempts to investigate the effectiveness of an interactive website in teaching collocations to EFL learners through listening to podcasts.

2- Literature Review

A substantial part of native-speakers' communicative competence is composed of idioms and collocations (Howarth, 1998; Nesselhauf, 2003; Keshavarz & Salimi, 2007). These combinations are considered as multi-word sequences in which a large part of any discourse, whether spoken or written, is made up of these sequences (Conklin & Schmitt, 2008). The extensive use of collocations, for instance, indicates how crucial these sequences are since they enhance accuracy and fluency as well (Nesselhauf, 2003). The inaccurate use of collocations, however, leads to the speaker noticeably sounding foreign (Hsu & Chiu, 2008). This is yet a major hindrance for EFL learners and even for proficient users of language. Additionally, multi-

word sequences are regarded as high-frequency words; they are semantically opaque with restricted collocability. As an example, the verbs 'have', 'make' and 'do' are used delexically and their uses occur mainly in phraseological patterns. These verbs are troublesome, especially in production (de Cock & Granger 2004; Gouverneur, 2008). Learners tend to use these verbs randomly with no consideration, and this is often occurring due to the passive transfer from their mother tongue. This is a quintessential example of how delicate phraseology as an area of study can be. More insights into the use of words in blocks are much needed.

Despite the fact that collocations are widely acknowledged for their importance, and particularly in EFL learning, there have not been many studies conducted which analyze the use of collocations by EFL learners, and it is due to the vague definition of collocation that these studies are unsatisfactory and rare (Nesselhauf, 2003). Various studies, on the other hand, have attempted to break the barriers and revealed key findings that a significant positive correlation exists between learners' knowledge of lexical collocations and their language proficiency (Zhang, 1993; Sung, 2003; Keshavarz & Salimi, 2007). The outcomes of learning more collocations will certainly lead to higher language proficiency and authenticity. To put it simply, the more collocations to be learnt, the higher linguistic proficiency will be achieved.

The concept of collocation is often studied within 'formulaic language', and it is by all means important to establish some foundations such as the terminology that is used to refer to 'formulaic language' first. There has been a plethora of terms given to it ever since it was investigated, but this term alongside with 'formulaic sequences' are widely common in the field of linguistics and applied linguistics. The notion of 'formulaicity' has long been a subject of investigation and there have been many debates on it; however, there is a consensus that this term represents a huge number of linguistic multi-word units that learners store in long-term memory the way they memorize separate lexical items (Wood, 2002). This means that words are stored in the brain and retained as a part of a block rather than being generated as separate items and grammar rules each time they are being used. This process is known as 'fusion' and it allows these sequences to be sometimes analyzable and compositional as some of them can be composed out of individual items and grammar rules, and therefore become formulaic sequences (Wray, 2002). The term is so broad that it covers many other terms such as idioms, proverbs, lexical bundles, collocations, etc. (Schmitt & Carter, 2004).

Those formulaic sequences constitute a substantial part in spoken and written language. Pawley and Syder (1983) posited that a mature native speaker's repertoire of these multi-word units at their disposal can be up to hundreds of thousands. It is found that 58.6% and 52.3% of spoken and written discourse are made up of these, respectively (Erman & Warren, 2000). Several researchers (Nattinger & DeCarrico, 1992; Lewis, 1993, 1997, 2000) attached significance to the inclusion of formulaic sequences in English Language Teaching Methodology since they are fully present in native speakers' language use.

Since the present study focuses solely on the concept of collocation, it is also well worth mentioning that the term 'collocational competence' is, by far, an essential component in learning English as it helps reduce the cognitive challenge EFL learners might confront during

the production and processing of a language (Conklin & Schmitt, 2008), i.e., the process of using combinations in speaking and writing will be almost natural and effortless as these multi-word sequences are stored in the mind; they can be retrieved at a later stage more easily without having to wade through deeper, older memories. The term 'collocation', on the other hand, is often used as a separate concept or as another term to refer to 'formulaic language' itself. Collocation is 'the grammar of words' and it has to do with the occurrence of words and how words often go with other words. It indicates which words can come before or after other words (Woolard, 2005).

There have been numerous and multifarious definitions of the concept. It was first introduced by Firth (1957) as a combination of words being associated with each other. According to him, the word collocation refers to the way words used in the same context are being associated with each other, and that the use of one word makes the occurrence of another predictable. Firth (1957) also claims that "the collocation of a word or a 'piece' is not to be regarded as mere juxtaposition; it is an order of mutual expectancy" (181), and he believes that the meaning of a word can be easily understood from other words collocating with it. Palmer (1933) defines the term as "a succession of two or more words that must be learned as an integral whole and not pieced together from its components parts" (title page). According to McCarthy and Felicity (2017), collocation is "a pairing or a grouping of words that are often used together" (6). However, if these combinations are misused, they will sound wrong, unnatural and inappropriate. For instance, the adjective 'quick' collocates with 'glance' and 'shower'; but not with 'food' and 'car'. The adjective 'fast' collocates with 'food' and 'car' instead.

The categorization of collocation is a contentious subject, for different researchers proposed various classifications such as Bahns (1993), Lewis (1997), Wood (2002), Chia-Chuan (2005) and Boussalia (2010). Perhaps the most common classification was proposed by Benson et al. (1997) who divided collocation into lexical and grammatical collocation. The type that deals with phrases containing syntagmatic combinations of content words such as nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs is known as lexical collocation. Grammatical collocation, however, deals with word combinations between content words (a noun, a verb or an adjective) and grammatical word (a preposition or a particle), and between content words (a noun or an adjective) and grammatical structures (infinitive or 'that' clause) (as cited in Saudin, 2014). Yan (2010), Mahvelati & Mukundan (2012) and Saudin (2014) listed some of these two syntagmatic types: verb+noun (make mistakes), adjective+noun (strong tea), noun+noun (human resources) and so forth. These fall under lexical collocation. As for the grammatical types, they can be preposition+noun (on tv), noun+preposition (love for), preposition+preposition (apart from) and so on.

As a matter of fact, collocation is not characterized by merely syntagmatic combination of words. Most linguists such as Howarth (1998) suggest that collocation is determined by not only its lexical combinations it is composed of but also by its restrictedness, semantic transparency and particular position, which is situated between idioms on one end and free

combinations on the other (as cited in Miyakoshi, 2009). The best examples of restricted combinations are 'break promises' or 'break news'. They are restricted because no other collocates can replace 'break' to have the same meaning of each combination. They can also be semantically transparent collocations as the meaning of the two combinations can be deduced from their lexical constituents unlike idioms such as 'break a leg', whose meaning cannot be guessed from the individual words in it. Groupings of words in which a word like 'break' can be used with a great number of other lexical words such as 'vase' and 'glass'. These are not, in fact, collocations, but rather free word combinations. Miyakoshi (2009) sees that these groupings of words are just bound to follow syntactical rules only. He adds that the collocation is positioned just between idioms and free word combinations on each end, but, nevertheless, the boundaries between these three types of word combinations cannot be easily seen or identified.

It is well established that teaching collocations to EFL learners is increasingly gaining more importance, especially during the last decades. Traditional approaches, whose main focus was to accumulate and memorize lists of word definitions, are becoming obsolete (Robinson, 1989; Gitsaki, 1992). The concept of collocation, as a new vocabulary learning approach, according to applied linguists, involves more than defining and learning words. It discards all the old previous theories on learning words in isolation and also examines the syntagmatic relations between lexical items, which is regarded as a skill in itself, evident in adult native speakers of a language (McCarthy, 1984; Carter, 1987; Sinclair, 1991). Lewis (1993) is one of the doyens and advocates who outlined the lexical approach, and who considers the language as grammaticalized lexis. He furthers the way words combine from a theoretical perspective (Hewitson & Steele, 1993). These collocations according to his lexical perspective are vital in generating syllabi.

Not only does teaching collocations help EFL learners develop their vocabulary and communicative competence, but it also leads to a manipulative grasp of words (Bolinger, 1976). He argues that learning words in chunks instead of learning individual words is the most effective way to learn vocabulary; language learning can be described as a cline, starting from the smallest units of words to the creation of complete words, then phrases governed by certain rules, and people usually store phrases rather than morphemes in the process of learning a language. Brown (1974) is considered as one of the early advocates for the significance of collocations in EFL learning and teaching. He believes that there is a close-knit relationship between the improvement of oral/listening comprehension, reading speed and the knowledge of collocations. He also outlined a variety of exercises to make it possible for advanced students to get to a point where they can recognize what is both acceptable and appropriate.

It has been noted by Korosadowicz-Struzynska (1980) that lexical items pose an insurmountable obstacle to EFL learners. He stressed the importance of teaching collocations at the very first stages of foreign language learning. According to him, the best way to learn these effectively is by selecting the most essential, useful and frequent words, highlighting the most frequent collocations of those words, presenting these collocations in the most typical contexts, and drawing a comparison between collocations that are selected and the ones that

are equivalent in the native-language. The teaching of collocations in the classroom could provide EFL learners with help to overcome problems of vocabulary, style and usage (Leed & Nakhimovsky, 1979). In this case, a well-structured lexical analysis is requisite to the designing of vocabulary exercises. Such an approach would help foreign language learners with the aforementioned problems, and give teachers a method to produce and carry out lexical exercises in the classroom, as well as concentrate on the teaching of restricted collocations such as “heavy drinker”, “heavy smoker”, “deep trouble”, etc. (Leed & Nakhimovsky, 1979, p. 109).

It is often believed that current generation is more familiar and competent than previous generations when it comes to the use of technology. Learners are more inclined to use it whether in formal or informal learning. Although the term ‘Web 2.0 Technology’ is used in many ways, most researchers agree that this technology include blogs, podcasts, wikis, social networking sites and etc.; it is a set of second-generation web-based technologies and services that are often designed for having access to a wealth of information easily. Among a myriad of ICT tools that can be used in education, interactive websites come to serve as an essential means that most current generations can use. They are an embodiment of effective learning tool that “can stimulate intellectual curiosity and offer a sense of enjoyment that is necessary to move learners from the passive role of recipients of information to the active role of builders of knowledge” (Hfaiedh, 2015). They contain engaging means of presenting information such as videos, audio technology, and computer animations, which bring sound and movement to static lessons and enliven learners’ classes.

The adoption of new teaching/learning theories using technological innovation requires that all teachers should modify their role, and introduce new contents, tools and methods. Interactive websites have the potential to enhance access, efficiency and quality of acquiring and disseminating knowledge. The mechanisms used in these interactive websites and the engaging educational content through various types of stimuli (images, sounds and movements) can also boost learners’ memory to retrieve information efficiently through teaching and testing. They address all the needs of different types of learning (visual, effective and psychomotor). The need for adopting this effective tool is becoming absolutely necessary in modern education more than ever (Hfaiedh, 2015).

In light of what has been stated above, it is evident that teaching/learning collocations in EFL classes is becoming a necessity, and teachers should therefore raise their learners’ awareness to acquire them. Following the right teaching methods as well as tools like interactive websites will help them commit collocations to their memory.

3- Methodology

Twenty-five (25) third-year EFL students from the Department of English at Oum El Bouaghi University (Algeria) took part in the current study. Students were randomly selected for the current study. The reason behind choosing the third level is that students are required to write at least several pages about a topic in research methodology. This level is also a bridge

between two different academic phrases. Therefore, raising their awareness of the importance of learning collocations is needed, especially that they will be writing a research dissertation in the next coming years. All students received an introductory lesson about collocation with the necessary examples and explanations as to make them more familiar with the concept.

This empirical study, which is mainly quantitative in its nature, sought to investigate the collocational competence of EFL learners through listening to interactive podcasts, in which a number of collocations related to each topic were presented and explained. The study sets out to collect, calculate, analyze and compare students' scores before and after listening. This would not have been achieved easily without the use of an interactive website, Collopedia (<https://www.collopedia.com>). See the interface of the interactive website in Figure (1) below:

Fig 1. A Screenshot Showing the Interface of the Interactive Website (Collopedia)



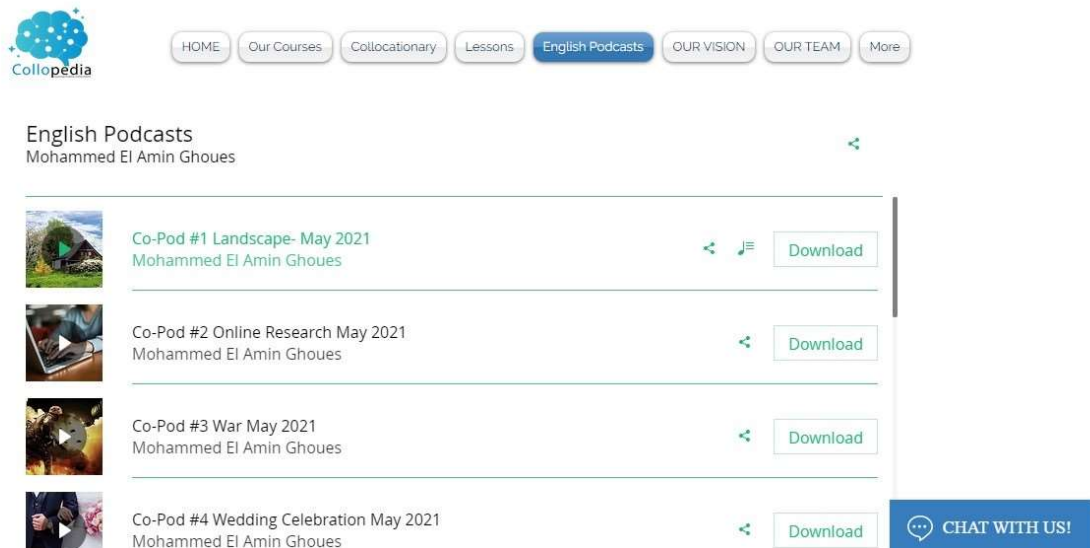
This interactive website was mainly designed to teach students the target collocations in a more engaging way and to help learn and retrieve these combinations. Multimedia was incorporated while using an easy-to-navigate interface as well as engaging topics. Two key variables can be highlighted in this study: teaching collocations through listening to podcasts by means of an interactive website and third-year EFL students' performance in learning these collocations before and after listening. It is believed that a correlation exists between the aforementioned variables, i.e., the more one listens to these thematic podcasts in which collocations are explicitly presented and explained through an interactive website, the better one's proficiency and knowledge of these collocations will become. Figure (2) shows a short list of some of the podcasts that can be found and listened to on the website.

As can be seen, students can scroll up and down to listen to many other podcasts. The study, however, focused on the first three podcasts only.

Participants had to take online pre-tests and post-tests, which were designed and related to the content of each podcast. Undoubtedly, the majority of students are more familiar with technology and this type of assessment as many websites offer online English proficiency tests

nowadays. A good testing platform was used in this case to design the pre and post-tests. This made gathering data more efficient and much easier.

Fig 2. A Screenshot Showing a List of Some English Podcasts



It is highly likely that students' results in the pre-tests would be no better than their results after listening to the podcasts and taking the post-tests. This is the main aim why pre and post-tests were selected as a tool in the first place. This method of assessment and gathering data was to effectively measure participants' knowledge and performance in the light of the scores obtained as well as the number of correct and incorrect answers received. Fewer mistakes made in the post-tests compared to the pre-tests can only indicate that learners have really grasped the concept of collocation and memorized more natural expressions. The figure to come clearly shows the interface of the platform, Quizizz (<https://www.quizizz.com>), used to test students, gather and calculate their results.

The process of gathering and calculating students' scores was done automatically using the platform's algorithms, providing a final, detailed report of their performance. To make things clearer, using pre-tests was meant to form an opinion about their knowledge of certain collocations, whereas the purpose of post-tests is to reinforce and deepen their knowledge of the target collocations and to test their memory as well. This kind of testing is the most suitable method, which can be used to measure learners' growth in knowledge of a particular topic (collocation in this case); it is also a valuable diagnostic tool for more effective teaching as well.

By providing participants with instant feedback about their overall performance in each pre-test, learners will be able to learn and memorize the right combinations and avoid making more mistakes later in the post-tests. Three pre-tests and three post-tests were administered in total (two tests: a pre-test and a post-test for each thematic podcast). Each two tests differ in terms of instructions and order of questions while focusing on the same target collocations to ensure that students have really learnt and memorized these expressions without resorting to

memorizing questions and their answers. The platform also comes with an option to randomize questions and their answers. Students are required to deal with the different types of instructions: cloze tasks, multiple-choice and checking boxes. The two figures below show a good example of two sample questions targeting the same collocation. However, a different instruction was given in the pre and post-test.

Fig 3. A Screenshot Showing the Interface of the Testing Platform (Quizizz)

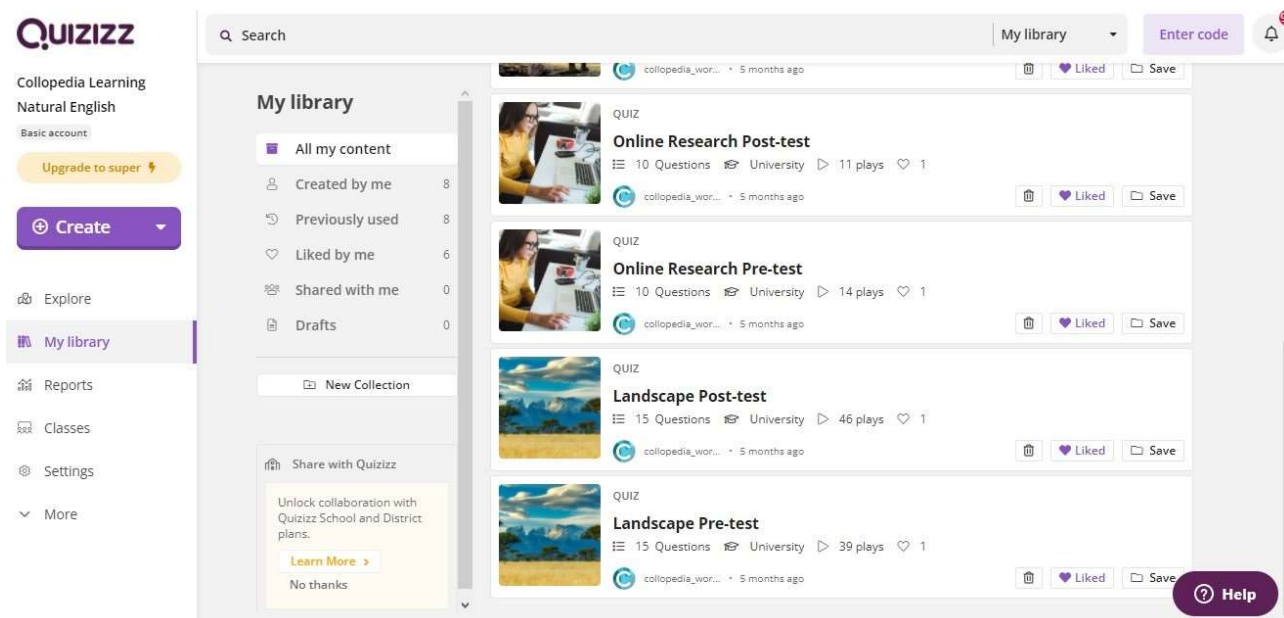
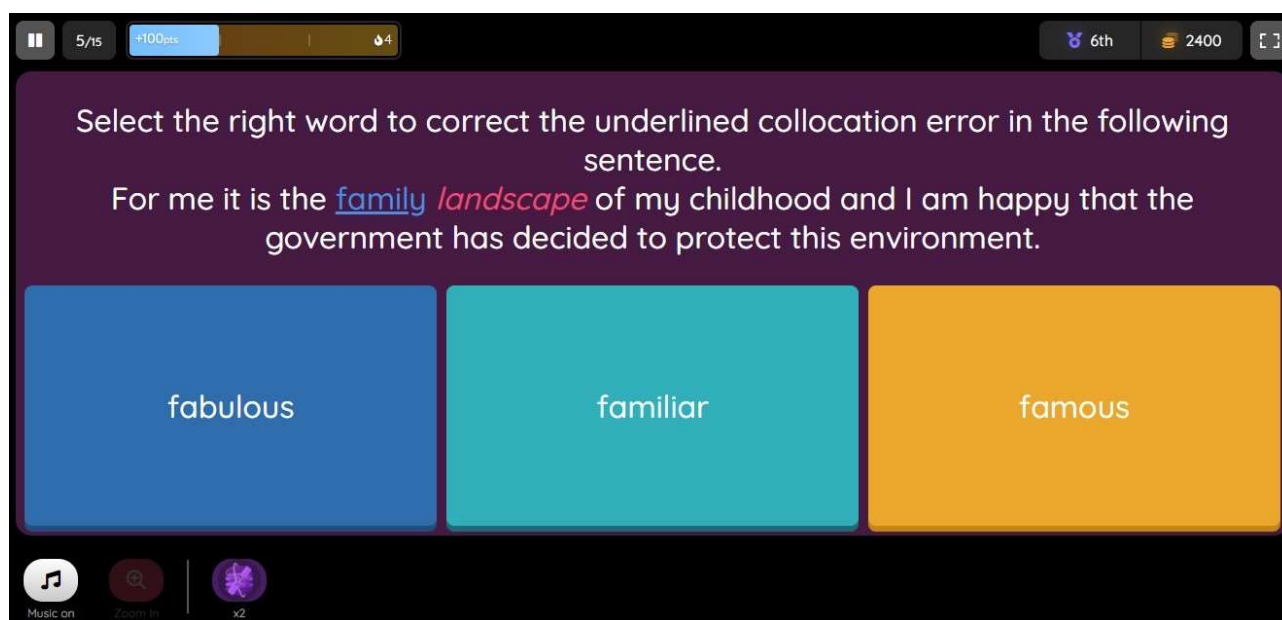


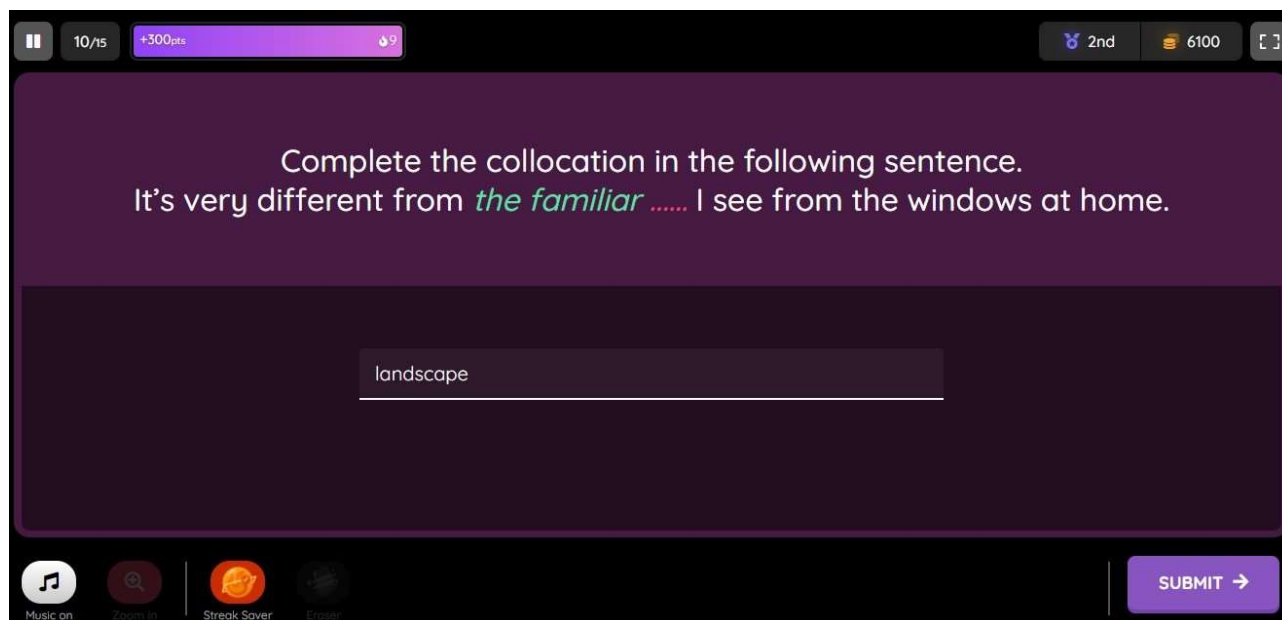
Fig 4. A Sample Question Given in a Pre-test about Landscape



This question was related to landscape. Students were asked to select the right word to correct a collocation error in the sentence. The correct answer is 'familiar', hence 'familiar landscape'. A different instruction was given in the post-test, just after listening to a podcast

related to the same topic. The same collocation is highlighted here, which is 'familiar landscape', as shown in Figure (5).

Fig 5. A Sample Question Given in a Post-test about Landscape



Again, the target collocation to learn here is 'familiar landscape', but students were asked to type the missing word to complete the collocation learnt in the pre-test as well as the podcast. The answer to this question is 'landscape'. Students in this case are required to be more careful when typing the answer as spelling mistakes are not accepted, or these will be therefore considered as wrong answers.

The podcasts were recorded based on topics that are familiar to students. This means that they, presumably, possess the appropriate vocabulary and ideas about each topic. Participants were first tested on a topic related to 'landscape', prior to listening to an interactive podcast, which is again designed to teach them some collocations related to the same topic. Some collocations were presented such as 'a gentle landscape', 'the surrounding countryside', 'dense forest', 'open fields', and so forth. Links with passwords were sent to small groups and even individuals. The passwords were different for the links being sent for the sake of credibility and originality. Participants' names must be provided to be able to identify each one with their score. A screen is displayed showing all the names of participants taking the tests in addition to their answers and final scores. No second attempt was available; a detailed report of each participant is stored in the database of the platform to help analyze their answers afterwards. This test was designed to have an idea about their knowledge of the target collocations.

The second step was to listen to an interactive podcast highlighting all the target collocations with some explanations given at the end. The aim here was to help visual learners reinforce their memory of these collocations. As for the last step, links to the second post-test were given to each individual or group following the same method used with the first pr-test.

Different passwords for access were given and a full report of their performance is made and stored after submitting their answers. This was the method followed each time a new podcast with a new topic was presented, which means students had to take a pre-test related to the same topic of a podcast to listen afterwards. Listening to the podcast will reinforce their memory and teach learners new collocations they did not know about before taking the post-test. Students are required to rely on their memory when answering the questions in each post-test.

The second topic was mainly about 'online research' with some collocations to learn like 'to do a web search', 'to make a note', 'online resources' and so forth. The third topic, however, was about 'war', highlighting some collocations such as 'to join the army', 'to go to war', 'fierce fighting', etc. Several people from the UK, the US, Canada, Algeria and other countries contributed to these podcasts using their voices. Some of them were even podcasters. The aim was to bring a variety of exciting topics with different English accents.

Finally, the platform used for testing can store participants' attempts in the database with all details needed for data analysis such as participants' names, the date and the time, correct and incorrect answers, unanswered questions and the overall scores. The reports can be even downloaded and printed. It is also impossible to see their performance in the form of bar or pie charts. In addition to these features, there was an option to bring these challenges live, in which a group of participants can receive the same link with the same password to watch them competing one another and observing their performance.

4- Results and Discussions

All participants were tested before and after listening to each podcast. Topics were about 'landscape', 'online research' and 'war'. Figure (6) shows the steps followed in their assessment for each topic.

Fig 6. The Steps Followed in the Assessment of Students for Each Topic



Students were first introduced to a lesson about collocation to make sure that they are aware of the concept and how these words work in combinations with examples given. The lesson also provided the most common types of collocation and what advantages learners can get when learning collocations. The three topics mentioned earlier are selected because learners are familiar with them.

The following table below shows participants' scores of each pre and post-test before and after interacting with each podcast.

In the pre-tests for every assessment (topic), the discrepancy in scores is clearly noticeable in Table (1). Students' scores were ranging from %10 to %90 in all tests. These scores provided a clear idea about their different collocational competence as well as their knowledge of these combinations. In addition to this, all students made collocational errors (mis-

collocations) when answering as in ‘destroy the landscape’ instead of ‘destroy the countryside’ and many other mis-collocations. These wrong answers are rather unnatural combinations and are not used by native speakers or even proficient users of the language. The tiny minority, however, managed to make as few errors as possible. This indicates that these learners have some knowledge or they are quite familiar with these expressions, with no reference to the name of the concept itself since it was new to them. According to the results obtained, students either do not pay too much attention to these frequent combinations or they have never encountered them whatsoever. Some of the them were even surprised that such combinations do really exist, after a short discussion with them just right after the experiment.

Table 1. Results of Participants Before and After Listening to Podcasts

Participants	Landscape		Online Research		War	
	Pre-test	Post-test	Pre-test	Post-test	Pre-test	Post-test
1	40%	80%	30%	60%	40%	70%
2	87%	100%	70%	80%	30%	90%
3	60%	86%	30%	90%	10%	70%
4	60%	63%	30%	90%	20%	70%
5	80%	80%	60%	70%	70%	80%
6	60%	80%	30%	70%	50%	70%
7	73%	93%	70%	100%	60%	100%
8	86%	100%	50%	90%	80%	80%
9	80%	80%	40%	50%	30%	70%
10	60%	73%	50%	60%	40%	50%
11	53%	73%	80%	90%	90%	100%
12	47%	60%	40%	60%	10%	90%
13	53%	67%	60%	90%	20%	80%
14	73%	100%	50%	70%	70%	90%
15	66%	93%	40%	100%	50%	90%
16	73%	93%	70%	80%	70%	90%
17	40%	80%	50%	90%	60%	70%
18	87%	100%	70%	90%	50%	80%
19	47%	63%	60%	70%	30%	70%
20	53%	67%	20%	60%	30%	60%
21	60%	67%	50%	70%	40%	80%
22	40%	73%	40%	70%	70%	100%
23	73%	100%	70%	80%	20%	70%
24	60%	73%	80%	80%	50%	90%
25	53%	60%	30%	70%	50%	70%

Some of the participants managed to get full scores, and some of them almost got them. That was due to their spelling mistakes such as ‘surroundid’ instead of ‘surrounded’, or grammatical mistakes such as ‘to subscribe’ instead of ‘subscribe’ in the following example:

Many university libraries ... to online journals so that students can access them for free. The subject was already stated and it requires a verb in the present simple, not in the infinitive. The number of questions in each pair of tests for each podcast is the same, however different ways of using the target collocations: selecting a word or words to complete the target collocations or cloze tasks. The same target collocations to be completed are the same in each pair of tests again, but not necessarily the same missing parts to complete. This is to make students more familiar with the target collocations and to reinforce their memory of the constituents of every collocation. The reason why wording was also different in instructions and examples given is to make answering the questions in the second tests quite challenging and to give no room to rote learning.

The arithmetic means of all tests were calculated before and after listening to each podcast. This will help draw a comparison between all participants' performance in the two tests related to every topic. Table (2) displays the following results:

Table 2. Arithmetic Means for the Pre and Post-test Related to Podcast 1 (Landscape)

Arithmetic Mean (Landscape)	
Pre-test	Post-test
62.56	80.16

Clearly, there is a huge improvement in the scores of participants after listening to the podcast with a mean of (80.16) compared to (62.56) in the pre-test. This indicates that listening and interacting with the podcast helped learners memorize more collocations so that they could use them correctly and accurately later in the post-test.

Table (3) was again to compare between the means for each test before and after listening to a podcast about online research. Details are shown below:

Table 3. Arithmetic Means for the Pre and Post-test Related to Podcast 2 (Online Research)

Arithmetic Mean (Online Research)	
Pre-test	Post-test
50.8	77.2

The results show an increase with a mean of (77.2) in the post-test. This means that the results in the post-test were even higher compared to the pre-test (50.8). Again, interacting with the podcast with the help of some explanations helped them achieve higher scores and avoid making mistakes (mis-collocations or typos) while taking the second test. Learners could even get full scores. That is a good a sign that some of them were responding quickly to the method followed to help memorize the target collocations. This certainly requires too much focus to get higher scores.

Table (4) shows the means for the pre and post-test. This was the third and the last podcast; it was mainly about war with target collocations to be learnt in relation to the topic.

Table 4. Arithmetic Means for the Pre and Post-test Related to Podcast 3 (War)

Arithmetic Mean (War)	
Pre-test	Post-test
45.6	79.2

There is a huge difference between participants' results in the pre and post-test, hence (45.6) and (79.2), respectively. It is clear that listening to this podcast massively contributed to their rate of learning the target collocations and to their accurate and correct use of them since they were used in a specific context.

Now, in terms of higher scores, students performed well in the first assessment (podcast 1) in which they were tested on their knowledge of collocations related to landscape. Their results in both the pre and post-test were higher than the other two assessments (podcasts 2 and 3). This might have to do with the level of difficulty of expressions presented in each, but, overall, their results after listening to each podcast were by all means impressive. The means of every test before and after listening put each topic in order in terms of the higher scores received. Figure (7) below clearly shows that:

Fig 7. Participants' Performance in the Pre and Post-tests

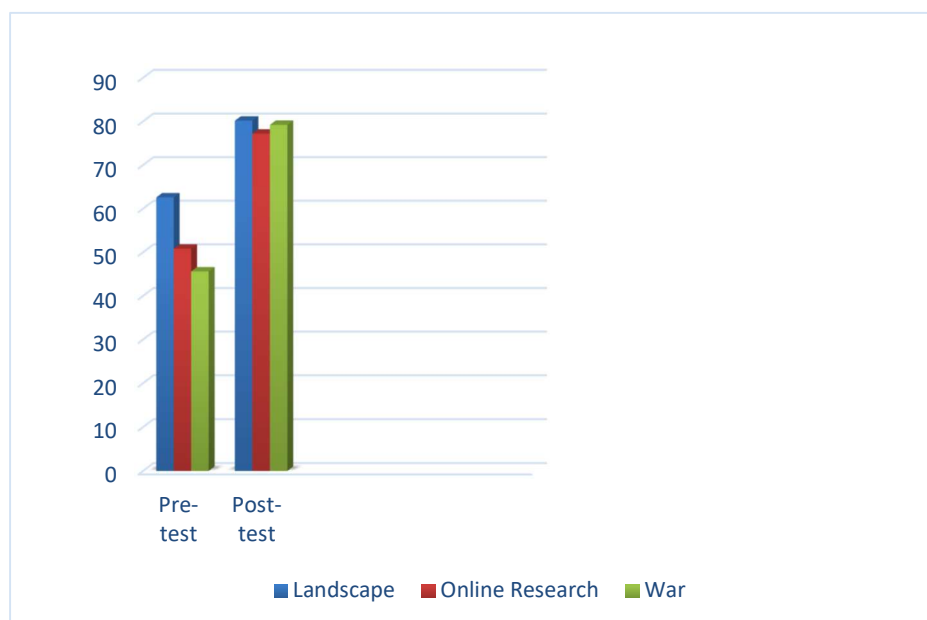


Figure (7) shows that participants' performance in the pre-tests were quite different. They achieved higher scores in the first topic 'Landscape' and lower scores in the third topic, which was about 'War'. This has to do with the level of difficulty and the complexity of collocations presented in each topic. As for post-tests, there were slight differences among the three topics while topic 1 is always in the leading position with higher scores obtained by participants. Overall, their performance improved after listening to the podcasts and the results prove the effectiveness of this method to teaching collocations to EFL learners.

5- Conclusion

This study addressed the vital role of using interactive websites to teach collocations in EFL classrooms. More specifically, students were tested on their collocational competence before and after listening to thematic podcasts using an interactive website. Pre and post-tests

were administered to investigate students' knowledge of such combinations and to see the extent to which their memorization of collocations after listening to podcasts can help them achieve better results. Surprisingly, their results improved after listening to each podcast; their attitudes were all positive as they have found the experience of learning new expressions and expanding their vocabulary quite amazing and interesting. They could even use these combinations effortlessly and naturally since they have been committed to their memory in a more fun and engaging way. The fact why students were really amazed by their performance is that all participants who were selected have never been introduced to the concept of collocation, especially in such a more engaging way using an interactive website.

Consequently, the above results of the study lead us to stress the importance of incorporating interactive websites to teach collocations in EFL classes as well as the teaching of these combinations through listening to podcasts, for they help EFL learners improve their collocational competence and memorization of collocations. The results are also considered the best answers to the previous research questions; these results confirm the hypotheses that the importance of incorporating interactive websites can never be overstated. The interactive website massively contributed to students' overall performance in the process of learning, memorizing and retrieving the target collocations. Listening to these collocations through podcasts has also proved effective, especially when they were clearly and explicitly presented in more engaging topics to foster learning them. It is therefore worth mentioning that teachers should raise their learners' awareness to the significance of collocations and help them acquire and memorize them to achieve the proficiency level they aspire to in speaking and writing. Teachers should also start implementing interactive websites in their EFL classes, for they offer more top-notch features as well as multimedia contents to make learning easier and more exciting.

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- Appendices

Appendix A: A Sample of a Pre-test (Excerpt)

8/29/22, 2:56 PM


Landscape Pre-test

	NAME : _____
Landscape Pre-test	CLASS : _____
15 Questions	DATE : _____

- Select the *adjective* that collocates with *countryside* and which means *beautiful because it has not been changed or damaged by people*.

<input type="checkbox"/> A undamaged	<input type="checkbox"/> B undestroyed
<input type="checkbox"/> C unspoilt	
- Select the right word to complete the collocation which means *fields that are uninterrupted by woods or houses*. The old house stands in a lovely landscape, surrounded by *fields*.

<input type="checkbox"/> A unobstructed	<input type="checkbox"/> B large
<input type="checkbox"/> C vast	<input type="checkbox"/> D open
- Select the best answer to complete the statement.
To turn a corner and to a bend have the same meaning.

<input type="checkbox"/> A round	<input type="checkbox"/> B have
<input type="checkbox"/> C make	<input type="checkbox"/> D do
-  Tick the right words to complete the collocation to fit the picture.
A chain of-..... *mountains* runs down the east of the country.

<input type="checkbox"/> A covered	<input type="checkbox"/> B blocked
<input type="checkbox"/> C fog	<input type="checkbox"/> D snow
<input type="checkbox"/> E blanketed	

Appendix B: A Sample of a Post-test (Excerpt)


8/29/22, 3:17 PM


Landscape Post-test

QUIZIZZ	NAME : _____
Landscape Post-test	CLASS : _____
15 Questions	DATE : _____

1. Fill in the blank with the right word to complete the collocation in the following sentence.
Unfortunately the trees block the view of the *snow-..... mountains*.

2. Select the right words to complete the collocation which means *to round a bend*.

<input type="checkbox"/> A	a	<input type="checkbox"/> B	to take
<input type="checkbox"/> C	bend	<input type="checkbox"/> D	to turn
<input type="checkbox"/> E	corner		
3.  Type the right word to complete the collocation.
Yesterday we *followed a* down to the lake.

4.  Type the right word to complete the collocation to mean that the stream makes lots of bends and doesn't flow in a straight line.
It has a little garden with a stream at the end of it. *The stream* through the forest.

5. Complete the collocation with the right word to mean
beautiful because it has not been changed or damaged by people.
The cottage is in some wonderful *unspoilt* on the edge of a dense forest.
