F1 Impact on Reception and Production of Delexical Verbs Collocations by Arabic EFL Learners

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Abstract: *The importance of collocating delexical verbs and their role in conveying meaning enables EFL learners to achieve native-like communication accuracy. The purpose of this study is to investigate the types and sources of delexical collocation errors and to determine the extent L1 interference affects the reception and production of English delexical verb collocation. This study focuses on four semantically similar delexical verbs: do, make, take, and have, which often cause confusion for EFL learners when collocated with head nouns. The results of the study show a strong influence of the L1 on the perception and production of the collocation of delexical verbs. The article concludes with some pedagogical implications and recommendations that could improve the quality of teaching, learning, and comprehension of collocations with delexical verbs.*

Keywords: delexical verbs, collocation, EFL learners, vocabulary knowledge, semantic errors, F1 interference

1. Introduction

Delexical verbs collocations, as parts of linguistic formulaic sequence, playa very significant role in comprehending and producing language. English Native speakers frequently use delexical collocations in their everyday conversations, and these collocations are widely used in all types of thier discourse. Philip (2007) stated that the everyday language of the native speakers is " delexicalized to a considerable extent", which make their production look natural(p. 3). EFL learners' inadequate knowledge of collocational rules and insufficient exposure to native language productions lead learners to produce unacceptable collocations(Noor & Adubaib, 2011)), as well as inaccurate and awkward speech (El-Dakhs, 2015).

For EFL learners, especially Arabs, the collocations of delexical verbs + nouns are constant source of confusion and extreme difficulty because the delexical verbs have similar meanings.As a result, students frequently produce awkward combinations that sound unnatural and not native-like speech. The delexical verbs, '*do*,*make*,*take* and *have*, frequently co-occur in different collocations with deverbal nouns, but EFL learners may not differentiate between the phrases*make a bath* and *have a bath*, or between *do good* and *make good*. Therefore, they often commit semantic errors in their oral and written productions by replacing adelexical verb in a collocation with a synonym which result in an unacceptable structure.

The present study focusses on the delexical verbs *do*, *make*, *take*, and *have*collocations. It aims to examine the knowledge of Saudi EFL students of delexical verbs collocationand the errors they make when producing English utterances. More precisely, the study attempts to find out to what extend does F1 influences delexical collocation learning and the relationship between learners' knowledge and delexical verbs collocational competency.

2. Research Problem

The researcher has noted that Saudi EFL learners frequently make errors in collocating delexical verbs with nouns. Such errors can be attributed to different factors such as the lack of learners' F1 with similar collocations in the target language. To fill the gap, learners may try to apply F1 rules to the target language, which consequently lead them to fall into the trap of collocation errors. In addition to, the arbitrary nature ofdelexical verb+noun collocations and the similarity of theirmeanings oftendistractstudents in choosing the correct delexical verb to collocate with specific noun.Moreover, EFL learners' inadequate knowledge of collocation rules and little exposure to the target language lead them to put words together in ways that sound strange to native speakers. Finally, asEl-Dakhs (2015)noted "the lack of fixed collocation rules that can be learned", force EFL learners to make errors in collocating delexical verbs.

EFL learners constantlystruggle to be fluent and competent users of English language. Therefore, they must learn the vocabulary of the target language perfectly and know how English words are related in natural utterances. No doubt, collocational competence contributes to learners' vocabulary knowledge and to their language proficiency. Nation (2001)believed that a "fluent and appropriate language use requires collocational knowledge," (p. 318). Accordingly, EFL learners, who want to be native-like speakers should learn how English words collocate in general and delexical verbs in particular**.**

The present study attempts to investigate the main causes ofdelexical verbscollocation errors among Saudi EFL learners who study for associate diploma in English. The study also sheds light on learners' knowledge of English collocations with special emphasis on F1 interference in collocating the delexical verbs (*do, have, make, and take)* with the nouns. In addition to, the study tries to evaluate the learners' knowledge of delexical verbs collocations and their ability to produce collocations with delexical verbs. The study also tries to identify the most common collocational errors and their causes with the propose to find solutions that could help learners deal with delexical verbs collocations.

3. Importance of the study

The importance of this study arises from the importance of delexicalverbs collocations to EFL learners. In recent years, collocation has received much consideration from scholars in the area of vocabulary acquisition, as producing the correct collocations can help EFL learner's utterance look more natural and fluent. Collocations, in general, often present a constant source of problem to EFL learners, particularly when it comes to collocations of high frequency verbs such as *do*, *make*, *take*, and *have*. Although the production of correct collocation is an important factor in EFL learner's linguistic competency and academic success, still EFL leaners err when they deal with this area of language. Kovács (2013)claimed that knowing the collocational patterns is a fundamental process of word knowledge; it increases learners' collocational competence and improves their linguistic competence in general. In contrast,the deficiency in mastering collocations patterns leads to odd language production and incomprehensible utterances. The study will also be of a great useto EFL instructors andcurriculum designers as well.

4. Literature Review

Several researches have recently focused on the importance of collocation in language learning. Among these works is Lewis (1993) work '*The Semantic Approach',* which is considered as the most important work in this area. Lewis (1993)examined the nature of lexis in second language acquisition, and its contribution to learner's vocabulary repertoire and language proficiency. He stated that "language is grammaticalised lexis, not lexicalised grammar"(Lewis, 1993, p. vi), i.e. lexis plays a central role in the production of meaning; whereas grammar just plays a subservient managerial role. When an EFL learner's written and oral productionsarecompared to a native English speaker's, they sound unnatural and may even be confusing. Therefore, EFL learners need to be familiar with English collocations in order to speak and write English in a natural way as native speakers do (Kovács, 2013).

Other studies such as (Al-Zahrani, 1998; Attar & Allami, 2013; Liao, 2010); Phoocharoensil (2011), (Ebrahimi-Bazzaz et al., 2014) and (Wray, 2000), have investigated and compared different EFL learners' proficiency levels and their collocational performance.These studies found that a learner's level of proficiency is an important factor that influences collocational competence. EFL Learners who have a lot of exposure to chunks or prefabricated patterns can easily recognize and eventually produce such combinations (Hill, 2000; Liao, 2010; Wray, 2000). Low exposure, on the other hand, leads to a lack of adequate collocation knowledge and to prefabricated or formulaic language, which negatively affects learners' ability to master the target language.

Al-Zahrani (1998), who investigated the differences in the knowledge of English lexical collocations among Saudi EFL learners, the relationship between their knowledge of collocations and their general language proficiency found that there was strong relationship between learners' knowledge of collocations and their language proficiency. Furthermore, Ebrahimi-Bazzaz et al. (2014)claimed that EFL learners need to study the target language for at least two years to achieve significant development in verb-noun collocation mastery. These findings suggest that learners' difficulties in expressing themselves well orally and in writing are not only related to their grammatical or lexical knowledge, but also to not knowing how English words are collocated (Koosha & Jafarpour, 2006; Shammas, 2013). However,Makinina (2018) attributed EFL learners collocation errors to other factors such as: vocabulary learning strategies, the focus on sentence structure and the form and meaning of word combinations. Shitu (2015) and Fan (2009)also believed that students' collocation errors were due to poor pedagogical methods and learning strategies that lead to incorrect generalization of rules. On the other hand, Gaballa and Al-Khayri (2014)claimed that learning environment affects the acquisition of target language collocations. They added that Arabic-speaking learners of English show poorknowledgeof English collocations.

One of the interesting studies on delexical verbs is the study by Eisouh (2012)which investigated Jordanian university students' performance on do and make. The aim of the study was to find out whether students are aware of the differences in the use of the delexical verbs do and make, and to identify the difficulties that students encounter in using these verbs.The results of the study revealed that students tended to overuse *make* and underuse '*do'*. Similarly,Laufer and Waldman (2011)found that learners overuse collocations of light verbs such as be, have, make, etc. with core words, but their collocations do not appear native-like. They added that EFL Learners frequently fail to produce correct collocations; alternatively, they use other inappropriate expressions as a result of incorrect L1 transfer. This can also be attributed to the similarity in the meanings of delexical verbs.

There is also research evidence that L1 interference plays a negative role on target language collocational competence(Altenberg & Granger, 2001; Duan & Qin, 2012; Nesselhauf, 2003; Phoocharoensil, 2012; Yamashita & Jiang, 2010).Nesselhauf (2003), who studied the use of collocations by advanced learners of English, found that " there was not a single type of error in which the L1 did not seem to play a role"(p. 235). EFL Learners rely on F1 rules as the primary learning strategy that causes the transfer of F1 rules to the target language. Such transfer results in learners committing a number of collocation errors in the target language, such as: "preposition omission, preposition

insertion, non-target like word choice, and collocate redundancy" (Phoocharoensil, 2012, p. 2543).

In invistigating the effect of learners knowledge and collocation competence, Juknevičienė (2008)attributed the delexical v+n collocation errors of Lithuanian EFL learners to their deficient vocabulary repertoire, which forces learners to resort to translations from the L1 when forming collocations to compensate for their linguistic deficitsthat leadto creation of word combinations that are not English. In support of Juknevičienė (2008), Vedder and Benigno (2016),who investigated the relationship between lexical richness and collocation competence in second language writing, argued that "there is a close relationship between target language learner's lexical richness, collocational competence, and general language proficiency" (p. 23).

Mahmoud (2005) found that Arab EFL learners' errors in producing V+N collocation were due to negative transfer of F1 rules into the target language. In a similar study conducted in Petra University in Jordon, Shammas (2013) demonstrated thatthe reasons behind learners' errors in collocations can be attributed to the "lack of knowledge of the collocations", "scarcity of Arabic English or English-Arabic collocation dictionaries", "lack of consciousness of the role of collocation in expressing 'meaning' as intended in context", and the "Lack of concentration on collocation in EFL or translation classes at Arab universities or schools" (p. 115).

In a study conducted on Thai University EFL Students, Meechai and Chumworathayee (2015) disclosed thatthe main source of learners' errors in verb + noun collocations was learners' lack of knowledge of collocations in addition to transferring L1 collocations to the target language. Wang (2013) stated that L1 influence is not just restricted to linguistic errors but italso affects the conceptual and discourse levels and the culture-specific values.

In a study investigates delexical verb+noun collocation errors,Sanguannam (2017) found that Thai EFL learners made "significantly more on non-congruent than on congruent" collocations. In other words, the English delexical collocations which have equivalent in learners F1 are easier for EFL learners than those which have no equivalents.Pawley and Syder (1983) and Wray (2002)found that learners tend to use 'self-created' collocations that are not often used in the target language communities because L2 learners rely heavily on using learned rules to create new expressions rather than resorting to lexicalized routines.On the other hand , other studies such as Laufer and Waldman (2011); (Nesselhauf, 2003; Nizonkiza, 2011)showed that advanced learners'perform extremely well in comprehension tasks, but they still find difficulties in producing correct collocations.

Research Questions
The objective of the current study is to examine the delexical collocation errors Saudi EFL college students make while producing English utterances.More specifically, the study attempts to answer the following research questions:
1) What are the sources of errors EFL learnersmakewhen collocating delexical verbs?

2) Which collocational errors are produced due to the influence of F1 interference?

5. Methodology

Participants
The paticipants in this were 48 university students Studying English at Al-Kharj Community College, whose first language is Arabic. The participants were randomly selected fromadvanced level students. All the participants were male Arab learners whom age ranges between 17 and 24. At the community college, where the study took place, students who will join the English department will sit for admissiontest that assesses their competence in English language. The admission test classifies students into different levels: beginners, elementary and pre-intermediate. The test consists of three major sub-tests: English grammar, vocabulary usage, and reading comprehension. Only student who are classified as pre-intermediate will join the English department, others are either to join computer or business adminstration departments. The students will study four levels: a level per each semester. After completing the last level, thegraduates will be offered an Associate Diploma Degree in EnglishLangauge.

Instrument and data collection
The data for this study was collected from two tests. The firstwas a 24 items multiple choice test for the respondents to elicit the best delexical verb that complete the meaning of the sentence.The second test asked the students to translate14 delexical verb+nounscollocations into Arabic equivalents.The first test was designed to measure the students' ability to produce and collocate delexical verb correctly with the target nouns. The second test was designed to measure participants ability to comprehend delexical verbs collocations by giving F1equivalents to English delexical collocations. Besides, investigatingtheinfluence of F1 in the formation of the target language delexical collocation.

6. Procedures

The study assessed the students' receptive and productive knowledge of English collocations through two tests: fill-in-the-gap and translation. The first exercise consisted of 24 sentences, each of which with a missing delexicalverb. The participants were asked to fill in the missing delexical verb per sentence relying on their understanding of the sentence. The second test, which wasadminsteredtwo weeks later,was consisted of 14 sentences, each with a underlinedcollocated delexical verb. The participants were asked to provided the F1-*here Arabic*- equivalents of delexical collocations.

7. Results

Production of Delexical verbs collocation
The results of Test 1, shown in Figure 1, show that the percentage of errors was higher than the percentage of correct answers. Surprisingly, participants performed relatively well when collocating the delexical verb do with a base noun. The highest percentage of acceptable collocations was obtained when collocating the delexical verb 'do'

(76.47%), while the lowest percentage was obtained when collocating other delexical verbs with base nouns (less than 50%).

The results also show that few errors were made in collocating the delexical verb 'do' (23.52%), while the percentage of errors obtained in collocating the verb 'have'

was the highest (64.7%); and the percentage of errors obtained in collocating the delexical verbs 'take' and 'make' was 61.76% each (see Fig. 1). Apparently, the production of delexical verbs have, make, and take s with the deverbal nouns are more problematic for EFL learners than that of the delexical verb do.
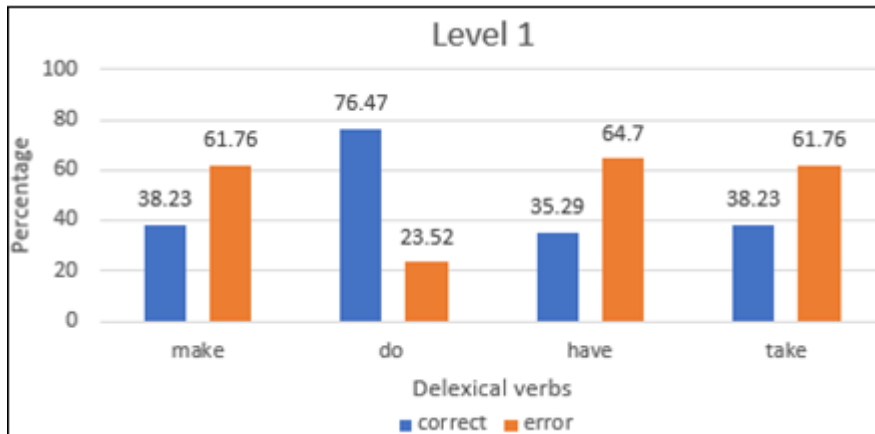

Figure 1: Participants' correct and error production in delexical verbs collocation

Reception of Delexical Verbs Collocations
With regards to reception of delexical verbs collocation, the results of Test 2, which asked participants to translate delexical verbs collocation phrases into their native langaue -here Arabic language, show that thetranslation of participants varies from a one acceptaleF1 verb to anunaccptable verb + noun (see Table 1). 68.5% of the participants translated the phrase 'makean appointment' literally into verb + noun '/ˈjæʔxUðʊ ˈmaʊʕɪdən/ يأخذ موعدا /ˈjæʕməlu ˈmaʊʕɪdən/ يعمل موعدا. Only, 31.5% ofthe participants translated it into one verb equivalent jʊˈwæʕɪdʊ/ يواعد.

The one wordtranslation seems to be more accurate while a verb + noun translations are more literal.The meaning of the collocation "make an attempt", for instance, can be predicated from the single verb means "/jʊˈħwɪlu يحاول".

Some participants took the literal meaning of the both component of delexiacal collocation as /ˈjaʔxʊðu ˈfʊrsɤɑtən/ يأخذ فرصة, or /ɪstəˈɣalləl ˈfʊrsɤətə/ استغل الفرص. The delexical verb 'have' has been literaly translated inot the Arabic verb 'يأخذ' meaning "take".

Results in Table.1 also show that most participants translated both components of the target phrases: the delexical verb and the head noun. Regardless the delexical verbs collocations 'make sure' , 'take a bath', 'take a nap', 'take a picture' and 'have a class' which were translated in a single Arabic verb equivalent with the percentages of (97.8%), (72%), (68.2%) (96.8%), and (81%) respectively, the majority of the assigned delexical verbs collocations were literally translated in a verb+a noun Arabic equivalents (see Table 1).

Table 1: Participants translation of delexical vebs collocations

Delexical Collocation	Participants Translation				
	Verb+nountranslatin	%	Single verb Translation	%	Missing %
makan appointment	/ˈjæʔxUðʊ ˈmaʊʕɪdən/ يأخذ موعدا /ˈjæʕməlu ˈmaʊʕɪdən/ يعمل موعدا	37.1 31.4	يواعد /jʊˈwæʕɪdʊ	31.5	0
make an attempt	يسوي محاولة /jʊˈsaʊwwimʊˈħawalə/ يعمل محاولة /ˈjæʕmˈlumʊˈħawalə/	39 28	يحاول /jʊˈħwɪlu/	33	0
make sure		0	يتأكد /jətəˈʔækkədʊ/	97.8	2.2
Makea complaint	يقدم شكوى/jʊˈqæddɪmʊ ˈʃækwa/	56	يشتكي/jəʃˈtæki/ يحتج/jæħˈtædʒʊʤ/	23 21	
take a bath	أخذ حماما /ˈaxəðəhəˈmmamən/	26	يستحم /jəstəˈħɪm/ يتروش* /jətərawwaʃʊ/	39 33	2
take care	يأخذ حذره /jaʔxʊðʊ ˈħɪðrəhu/ اعتن بنفسك /ɪʕˈtænibɪˈnæfsɪkə/	22 39	إحذر /ˈɪħðər/	39	0
take an exam	يأخذ اختبار /ˈjaʔxʊðʊɪxtɪˈbær/	31.8	يختبر/jaʔxʊðʊ/	68.2	0
Take a nap		0	ينام* /jæˈnæmʊ/ غفوة /*ˈɣæfwə/ يغفو/jæɣfu/	81 04.8 11	3.2
take a picture	يأخذ صورة /ˈjaʔxʊðʊ ˈsɤurətən/ يلتقط صورة /jəlˈtæqɪtʊ ˈsɤurətən/	33 12	يصور /jʊˈsɤawwɪrʊ/	55	0

have a class	/ لَه فصل /ˈlæhufæsˤl/ / له درس /ˈlæhudars/	06 13	يدرس / /ˈjædrʊsʊ/	81	0
have an appointment	لديه موعد /ləˈdajhi ˈmaʊʕɪdʊn/ / عنده موعد /ˈʕndəhu ˈmaʊʕɪdʊn/	36 61		0	3
have/make/take an opportunity	يغتنم الفرصة /jəɣˈtænimʊl ˈfʊrsɤˈtə/ / أخذ الفرصة ˈæxəðəl ˈfʊrsə/ /təˈ	29 64		0	7
do well	يعمل جيدا /ˈjæʕməlʊ ˈdʒæjjɪdən/	81	يحسن/ˈjʊħsɪnʊ/	14	5
do one's best	يسوي الاحسن /jʊˈsaʊwwɪl ˈaħsan/ / يعمل الأفضل /ˈjæʕməlʊl ˈafdˤəl/	28 61		0	1

8. Discussion

The most obvious finding of this study is the EFL learners' poor command of English delexical collocations. The deficiency is not only in producing the correct delexical collocations, but also in receiving their meanings which could be referred to many factors.One possible explanation is that EFL learners underestimate the importance of delexical verbs because of their semantic weakness. This peculiarity of delexical verbs leads EFL learners to undervalue delexical verbs and pay more attention to action verbs and content lexical vocabulary in general. A similar conclusion was also reached by (Philip, 2007), who argued that learners pay more attention to one aspect of language definitely neglect the others. Moreover, L2 learners often rely on bilingual dictionaries, which do not provide prefabricated chunks and usages as monolingual dictionaries do. Not only low proficiency EFL learners but also those with high proficiency levels overuse single verbs in their production at the expense of delexical verbs collocations they are not familiar with.

Another possible explanation could be that EFL leaners are not able to disambiguate the meanings of delexical verbs because they have similar meanings. The multiplicity and similarity of delexical verbs meanings make them difficult for EFL learners to grasp the meaning of sentences consisting of such verbs. In addition, EFL learners abandon collocations because most delexical verbs are used idiomatically or in ways that do not exist in L1 (Laufer, 1990). For example, EFL may confuse the meaning of the delexical verbs do and make because of partial overlap in their meanings (Laufer, 1990). Thus, it can be argued that EFL learners' deficits in understanding and producing delexical verbs collocations is not due to a lack of vocabulary knowledge, but rather to insufficient attention to mastering the prefabricated chunks. Furthermore, learners lack sufficient knowledge of delexical verbs collocation rules and rarely have contact with native speakers' production.

Above all, L1 interference is considered to be the main source of errors in L2 collocations because of the differences between the two languages. In this respect it could be claimed that the use of bilingual dictionaries and less exposure to native language productions increase F1 interference in the reception and production of delexical verbs collocations. This finding is also confirmed by Juknevičienė (2008) and Phoocharoensil (2012), who found that EFL learners tend to translate directly from L1 when creating collocations. EFL learners may use the delexical verbs do and make interchangeably due to the similarity of their meanings and the "differences in lexical gridding between L1 and L2" (Laufer, 1990). This appears clearly in the respondents' translations of the expressions "make an appointment," "do well," and "do one's best," where respondents give the same meaning to the two verbs do and make; /jʊ'saʊwwimʊ'ħawalə/ يسوي محاولة, /'jæʕm'lumʊ'ħawalə/ يعمل محاولة and /'jæʕmʊlʊ 'dʒæjjɪdən/ يعمل جيدا. It seems that respondents have difficulty in using the appropriate verb - whether do or make - with the appropriate head, since both verbs have the same meaning in the learners' F1. Therefore, when collocating the verbs do and make, EFL learners replace the verb make in make a mistake with the verb do in *do a mistake.

9. Conclusion

The main goal of this study was to assess learners' knowledge of delexical verbs collocations and their ability to produce collocations with delexical verbs. Participants' weak performance in Test 1 as well as the misinterpretation of delexical verbs collocations in Test 2 reflect their poor knowledge of delexical verbs collocation. Although delexical verbs seem to be transparent in their meanings, errors occur when they have to be used in collocations or interpreted in F1. This could be an indicator of low proficiency levels of participants for many errors were made due F1 interference, a lack of collocation concept, and misunderstanding of the meaning of delexical verbs.

Negative transfer of L1 collocation rules and inability to guess the meaning of delexical verbs collocations cause both receptive and productive errors. Therefore, learning multi-word units, prefabricated chunks such as collocations are very important for EFL learners instead of learning single words. Although EFL learners' ability to comprehend and produce this particular type of collocations varies depending on the language proficiency of the learner. It could be argued that the learner's language proficiency is not only a representation of a good command of collocation knowledge and production, but also other factors such as L1 interference.

As mentioned earlier, learners can understand and produce delexical collocations depending on their proficiency level and F1 rules interference. The findings of this study are consistent with Laybutt (2009: 94), who suggests that functional and contextual factors must also be considered. Martyńska M. (2004: 11) believes that knowing how to put words together into chunks helps EL learners to acquire real fluency rather than learning individual words along with their meaning.

Teaching EFL learners delexical verbs collocation in contextual patterns strengthen their receptive and productive language skills. In addition, by exposing learners to the everyday productions of native speakers, they would become aware of the use and meaning of delexical verbs combination in everyday speech and thus improve their language proficiency. It is very important to draw learners' attention to the great importance of collocation in expressing meaning and they should practice it consciously and explicitly in their everyday language.

Pedagogical Implications and Recommendations

Delexical verbs collocational knowledge is very important for the developing of L2 competence . Researchers and language teachers should pay special attention to this kind of vocabulary. The results of this study suggest some pedagogical implications and suggestions for further studies.

EFL learners need to deepen their knowledge on how to use delexical verbs collocations and build a concrete knowledge of English collocations in general. In order to improve learners' competence in delexical verbs collocation, it is important to increase their knowledge of the limitations of using synonyms with delexical verbs. Learners' knowledge of the correct use of synonyms is crucial. This can be achieved by learning delexical collocations in contextual word combinations and through sufficient exposure to native speaker productions. Learners should keep in mind that learning a larger number of single words does not equate to language mastery. Rather, it is crucial that they learn words in context and pay attention to language usage, particularly with highly frequent words such as delexical verbs. Learning junk and pre-fabricated combinations could also help learners develop their language skills. To improve learners' language skills and usage in general, and delexical verbs in particular, the study delexical verbs collocation. It is strongly recommended that learners should use monolingual dictionaries and limit the use of bilingual dictionaries.

As for language teachers, this study recommends teachers to adopt different teaching techniques and methods for teaching delexical verbs collocation. The study also suggests that EFL teachers should have thorough knowledge of how to teach English delexical verbs collocations. Teachers should raise learners' awareness of the synonymous delexical verbs such as the acceptable make a mistake, 'to take notice' and the unacceptable collocations such as '*to take observation' and *do a mistake. Exposing learners to delexical verbs collocations within meaningful contexts and encouraging them to interact with native speakers and raise learners' awareness of the perceptions and limitations of using delexical verbs. It is important for teachers to draw learners' attention to the differences and similarities between F1 and F2 rules by comparing and contrasting the two languages.

Curriculum designers should take delexical verbs collocations into consideration by proposing appropriate learning materials for schools and universities. EFL curriculum should not only focus on single words, but also on pre-fabricated combinations to deepen the understanding of English word collocations. Neglecting this area in the classroom and textbooks could lead learners to produce inaccurate, awkward and strange language.

This study focused on accuracy in the use and knowledge of delexical verbs collocations and the possible causes that lead to collocation errors. However, future studies could investigate how to address these errors. A thorough analysis of collocation errors would be helpful on this issue. It would also be interesting to investigate the use of monolingual dictionaries in developing the comprehension and production of delexical verbs collocations.

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