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JACEnta Krisztina*

# The effectiveness of studying collocations by the Form 5 and 6 learners in Transcarpathian Hungarian schools in the English Lessons 


#### Abstract

Rezümé Az idegen nyelvek tanítása kapcsán nagyon fontos hangsúly esik a szókincsfejlesztésre. Megtanulni beszélni egy idegen nyelven sokkal többet jelent attól, hogy tudjuk az adott nyelv összes nyelvtani és szemantikai szabályit. Fontos a tanulók szókincsének tudatos és folyamatos bővítése, ezen belül is a szókapcsolatok tanítása. Ebben a munkában a tanulók szó-kapcsolat-tanulásának hatékonyságát vizsgáltam.


#### Abstract

Резюме У процесі вивчення іноземної мови у початковій школі велику увагу звертають на розвиток словникового запасу учнів. Збагачення лексики традиційно вважається одним із найефективніших методів розвитку мовлення.

Знання іноземної мови - це щось більше ніж знання граматичних і семантичних правил. Дуже важливо розвивати словниковий запас у початковій школі Використовуючи різні форми навчання можна збагачувати його і досягти високих результатів у вивченні іноземної мови. У цій роботі я досліджувала як ефективно вивчаються словосполучення у школах.


Effective vocabulary acquisition in a foreign language is particularly important for English Foreign Language learners who frequently acquire poor knowledge of the lexis despite the years of formal study.

The last decades have produced significant research in the field of second and foreign language vocabulary acquisition (Wesche \& Parabut 1996; Singleton 1999; Nation 2001, 2005).

Sinclair (1991), Ellis (1997), Zimmerman (1997) and Lewis (2000) were the ones who made significant contribution into the study of word chunks in English.

Moreover, as teachers and researchers have come to understand the role of lexicon in language learning, the increased attention to vocabulary teaching has become more important.

Based on the research of prominent linguists, I dealt with the problem of vocabulary learning and focused on collocations.

I have carried out research in the Secondary School of Shalank and in School №3 in Nagyszőlős in Forms 5 and 6.

The aim of my work was to find answers to the following questions:

1. Do the learners study the English language effectively?
2. Are the pupils motivated to study the English language?
3. Do the pupils study the collocations effectively?

## Methodology of the research

I have looked through all the important academic literature related to second or foreign language acquisition, teaching vocabulary, and collocations.

[^0]I have made comprehensive research to get answers to these questions. Forty questionnaires have been filled in. Mainly closed format questions were used.

The questionnaires consisted of two parts. The first part contained questions in both forms, which focused on pupils' studying habits, while the second part was a multiple choice test for the $5^{\text {th }}$ class pupils (to recognize collocations). (See the questionnaires in the Appendices).

The second part in the $6^{\text {th }}$ form contained a cloze test; the research participants had to recognize the collocations (these collocations were the same, as in the $5^{\text {th }}$ form, but the task was more difficult for them). The second task was matching, where pupils had to match collocations. The third task focused on phrasal verbs. It contained three sentences, where pupils had to choose the correct answer. It was a multiple choice test with four options as answers.

## Participants

The questionnaires were filled in the Secondary School of Shalank and in School №3 in Nagyszőlős by the Form 5 and 6 pupils. To my mind these are the basic forms, where they can study the most important collocations and here they can also expand their vocabulary effectively. Moreover, they are able to realize the importance of learning languages. They have been studying English for 4-5 years.

The questionnaires were originally completed in Hungarian, the pupils' mother tongue. I have chosen these schools because they are not language or specialized ${ }^{1}$ ones, and I wanted to know how pupils studied the English language and collocations in particular.

There were 20 pupils in both forms.

## Procedure

I asked the English teacher to give the questionnaires to the Form 5 and 6 pupils. Forty pupils participated in this research which was carried out in autumn in 2009. During one English lesson were the questionnaires done. It took nearly 20 minutes for both forms.

After collecting the questionnaires I analysed them.

## Results and discussion

The first question was 'Why do you think it is important to know a foreign language nowadays?' Pupils' answers were grouped in the following way: education, to communicate, to achieve our purpose and to make new friends (See Figure 1)

[^1]According to the pupils' answers it is essential to know foreign language, because:

- it is helpful when we are travelling. We can communicate with other people if we know a foreign or international language such as English;
- we can understand foreign people as well;
- it is necessary to know a foreign language not only our mother tongue, and the national language, if we would like to reach something really important in our lives;
- through studying and knowing a foreign language we can achieve our purpose easier;
- We can make friends easier around the world, if we can speak a foreign language.


Figure 1. The answers to the 1 st question in the 5 th and in the $\mathbf{6 t h}$ forms
Nobody in the Form 5 highlighted that in order to get a better education/to go to a higher educational establishment is essential know foreign languages. At the same time 1 pupil in the Form 6 stated this.

In the opinion of 9 pupils (Form 6) the importance of foreign language in the process of communication is one of the most crucial things according to their answers, and this answer was mentioned by 3 participants in the Form 5.

A majority ( 15 participants) of the pupils in the Form 5 answered that it is of utmost importance to know a foreign language when you are travelling somewhere. Two pupils in Form 6 answered the same.

Four pupils in Form 6 answered that through knowing a foreign language you can achieve your purposes, while 2 pupils in the Form 5 stated the same.

The knowledge of foreign langue on the process of making new friends was mentioned by nobody in the Form 5, and was drawn attention by 4 pupils in the Form 6.

In the opinion of the major participants it is essential to know a foreign language when we are travelling, while the least of the pupils highlighted the importance of foreign language in the education (See Figure 2).


Figure 2. The answers to the 1st question
The second question was 'How much time do you spend studying the English language?' (See Figure 3) Pupils’ answers were different. Two participants in the Form 5 spend 1 or 2 hours studying English, 7 of them devote 1 hour, 7 - 30 minutes, 2 less than 30 minutes, 2 of them stated 'it is changeable, because it depends on the amount of homework', but everybody studies English and prepare the home tasks.

Three of the respondents in the Form 6 spend 1 or 2 hours studying English, 2 of them devote 1 hour, $9-30$ minutes, 3 less than 30 minutes studying English, while 2 do not study English. One participant answered that 'it is changeable, because it depends on the amount of homework'.


Figure 3. The answers to the 2nd question in the 5th and in the 6th forms
The third question focused on motivation. The term motivation in a second language learning context is seen according to Gardner (1985) as "referring to the extent to which the individual works or strives to learn the language because of a desire to do so and the satisfaction experienced in this activity" (Gardner, 1985 p.10). This is a factor, which helps language learners to achieve results in learning. Gardner and Lambert (1972) highlight two different types of motivation:

Instrumental motivation: the desire to learn a language because it would fulfill certain utilitarian goals, such as getting a job, passing an examination, etc.

Integrative motivation: the desire to learn a language in order to communicate with people from another culture that speak that language; the desire is also there to identify closely with the target language group.

Intrinsic and extrinsic motivation is another well-known and general distinction in motivation theories. "Extrinsically motivated behaviours are the ones that the individual performs to receive some extrinsic reward (e.g., good grades) or to avoid punishment. With intrinsically motivated behaviours the rewards are internal (e.g., the joy of doing a particular activity or satisfying one's curiosity)." (Dörnyei, 1994, p. 275)
'Why do you study the English language?' Different options were given to them:

- you can get money if you get a good mark
- you can spend more time with your friends
- you like it
- you would like to get an excellent mark (See Figure 4)


Figure 4. The answers to the 3rd question in the 5th and in the 6th forms
The first, the second and the fourth options are referred to instrumental and extrinsic motivations, while the third is referred to intrinsic motivation. Seven pupils in the $5^{\text {th }}$ form learn English because they like it and 7 learn it, because they can spend more time with their friends. 4 participants in the Form 5 learn English because they get charity from their parents, and the inspiration of getting excellent mark influences 2 respondents. In the Form 6 pupils learn English mainly because they have a desire to get an excellent mark ( 8 P ), or can spend more time with their friends ( 7 participants). Three participants like it, while 2 of them get money if they get a good mark.


Figure 5. The answers to the 3rd question
Figure 5 shows that participants in these forms are motivated mainly instrumentally and extrinsically (3/4). The quarter of the participants are motivated intrinsically.

The numbers in the following tables and figures mean the numbers of the participants who took part in this research programme.

Table 1. The answers to the $4^{\text {th }}, 5^{\text {th }}, 6^{\text {th }}, 7^{\text {th }}$ and $8^{\text {th }}$ questions in the $5^{\text {th }}$ form

| $5^{\text {th }}$ form |  |  |  |  |
| :---: | :--- | :---: | :---: | :---: |
|  | Questions | Yes | No | Sometimes |
| 4. | Do you regularly study the new words given by the teacher? | 4 | 1 | 4 |
| 5. | Do you write the unknown words and expressions into your <br> vocabulary notebook in the lessons? | 11 | 2 | 7 |
| 6. | Have you got English-Hungarian Hungarian-English dictionaries <br> at home? | 11 | 9 | - |
| 7. | Do you often use these kinds of dictionaries? | 4 | 9 | 7 |
| 8. | If you read a text at home, and there is an unknown word in it, do <br> you look up the meaning of the word in the dictionary? | 7 | 0 | 9 |

Table 2. The answers to the $4^{\text {th }}, 5^{\text {th }}, 6^{\text {th }}, 7^{\text {th }}$ and $8^{\text {th }}$ questions in the $6^{\text {th }}$ form

| $6^{\text {th }}$ form |  |  | Questions | Yes |
| :--- | :--- | :--- | :--- | :--- |
|  | No | Sometimes |  |  |
| 4. | Do you regularly study the new words given by the teacher? | 4 | 2 | 14 |
| 5. | Do you write the unknown words and expressions into your <br> vocabulary notebook in the lessons? | 10 | 1 | 9 |
| 6 | Have you got English-Hungarian Hungarian-English dictionaries <br> at home? | 14 | 6 | - |
| 7. | Do you often use these kinds of dictionaries? | 3 | 9 | 8 |
| 8. | If you read a text at home, and there is an unknown word in it, do <br> you look up the meaning of the word in the dictionary? | 10 | 9 | 1 |

Table 3. The answers to the $9^{\text {th }}$ question in the $5^{\text {th }}$ form

| 9. | How can you study expressions <br> or new words more easily? | from text | from vocabulary <br> notebook | I never study new words or <br> expressions |
| :--- | :--- | :---: | :---: | :---: |
|  | 2 | 18 | 0 |  |

Table 4. The answers to the $9^{\text {th }}$ question in the $6^{\text {th }}$ form

| 11.How can you study expressions <br> or new words easier? | from text | from vocabulary | I never study new words or <br> expressions |
| :--- | :--- | :---: | :---: | :---: |
|  | 9 | 10 | 1 |

In both forms the pupils do not study the new words regularly which are given by the teacher. In the $6^{\text {th }}$ form and in the $5^{\text {th }}$ form only 4 pupils study the new words and expressions regularly at home. (11 participants in the Form 5 did not answer to the first question.)

Pupils have vocabulary notebooks. They usually, but not regularly write the new words and expressions into this notebook. (In the $5^{\text {th }}$ form 11 use their vocabulary notebooks, while in the $6^{\text {th }}$ form 10 pupils do it.)

Learning to speak a foreign language without an English-Hungarian, Hun-garian-English dictionary is difficult in primary classes, because pupils' knowledge of the language is not so deep. One can always come across unknown words which one should know how to pronounce and translate properly. In the $5^{\text {th }}$ form 11 pupils have dictionaries at home but not all of them use it regularly. In the $6^{\text {th }}$ form 14 pupils have a dictionary at home, but not all of them use it.

Only a small number of pupils can learn the words or expressions from a text easily, in the $5^{\text {th }}$ form, while in the $6^{\text {th }}$ form 9 pupils can learn easier the new words from a text, 10 pupils from vocabulary and 1 pupil never study new words or expressions. However, it is easier to remember new words or structures that are mentioned in a context, or in a text.

In the second part of the questionnaires I wrote down 5 sentences, and the pupils had to think about which was the correct collocation. It was a multiple choice test for Form 5 pupils and a cloze test for Form 6 pupils. Only those words and expressions were used which have already been studied by them. (See Figure 6)


Figure 6. Collocations

For example: to go to school was known by 18 pupils in the $5^{\text {th }}$ form, and only 16 in the $6^{\text {th }}$ form.

The second one was to speak English. This collocation is familiar, because the teacher should use this word-chunk during the lessons. In the $5^{\text {th }}$ form it was known by only 9 pupils, while in the $6^{\text {th }}$ form 7 pupils could recognize it.

The third one was to play games. Most of the pupils recognized it. In the $5^{\text {th }}$ form 13 participants did it correctly while in the $6^{\text {th }}$ form 10 did so.

The fourth was to make friends around the world. In the $5^{\text {th }}$ form 13 pupils knew it, while in the $6^{\text {th }}$ form 10 pupils could recognize it.

The last collocation was to have a good time. In the $5^{\text {th }}$ form 9 pupils knew this structure; in the $6^{\text {th }}$ form only 4 pupils were aware of it.

For the Form 5 pupils I prepared only one task, but for the $6^{\text {th }}$ class pupils three.

The second task for the $6^{\text {th }}$ form was matching. Pupils had to match the collocations. Among these collocations the most popular ones were to listen to music and to watch TV (17 pupils knew these collocations), then come to play football and to grow flowers (in both cases 13 pupils knew these collocations), then comes to collect stamps (12 recognized it). (See Table 5)

Table 5. Collocations in the $6^{\text {th }}$ form

|  | Collocations | Correct answers in the $6^{\text {th }}$ form |
| :---: | :--- | :---: |
| 1. | to play football | 13 |
| 2. | higher education | 2 |
| 3. | fast food | 1 |
| 4. | to listen to music | 17 |
| 5. | to watch TV | 17 |
| 6. | to gather in the harvest | 3 |
| 7. | to take part in a competition | 2 |
| 8. | to collect stamps | 12 |
| 9. | to grow flowers | 13 |

The $3^{\text {rd }}$ task focused on the use of phrasal verbs. The learners had to choose the correct answer. There were only three sentences here. This was a multiple choice test with 4 options. With these questions I wanted to find out how correctly pupils can use different prepositions. (in one case a phrasal verb). Pupils had to choose the proper one. (See the results in Table 6)

## Table 6. Phrasal verbs in the $\mathbf{6}^{\text {th }}$ form

| Phrasal verbs | Correct answers in the $6^{\text {th }}$ form |
| :--- | :---: |
| border on | 2 |
| consist of | 13 |
| washed by | 3 |

"Consist of" was used by 13 pupils. 3 participants chose washed by and 2 wrote "border on". According to this test I can say that in fact, the learners do not know the phrasal verbs they were asked about.

## Conclusions

In conclusion I can say that learning to speak a foreign language requires more than knowing its grammatical and semantic rules. A learner needs to understand the new language to be able to communicate. Moreover, language learners have to study new words and expressions.

It is really important to study collocations. They are crucial to language learners. When learners use collocations, they will be better understood (Deveci, 2004). In addition Hill (1999) contends that 'collocation is the key to fluency' both in written and oral language. According to The Centre For Instructional Development And Research (2000), our brain tends to store language in chunks, rather than individual words.

According to the present study I can say that pupils in these forms do not study the new words and expressions regularly, although it is an important factor in the foreign language learning process. It is really important to make the pupils use the new words during the lesson, to practise new words and structures; it can help to learn the English language effectively. They should be good learners if they and the teacher want to reach the best results.

To conclude, pupils in the $5^{\text {th }}$ and in the $6^{\text {th }}$ forms are not really aware of collocations (See Figure 6, Table 5). Pupils in the $6^{\text {th }}$ form do not know phrasal verbs (See Table 6).

No far-going conclusion can be drawn from this research, but it was not my aim either. In order to get a better picture from studying collocations we should use not only quantitative, but qualitative methods as well. The results show that studying the selected collocations by the pupils in these schools is not effective.

## Pedagogical implications

In my opinion, the teacher should help pupils to learn collocations. There may be several ways. The teacher can show students examples of Hungarian collocations and help them realize the importance of collocations in languages. Then, teachers can help students find English collocations, possibly through the use of authentic materials. While teaching collocations, teachers need to remember to introduce them along with grammar. It may also be valuable to encourage students to use good dictionaries rich in collocations.

One of the most important things is the book, because it should contain exercises and various texts to practise and learn collocations. Without the so called "good" book a teacher cannot teach pupils a foreign language effectively.

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## Appendices Questionnaire for the $\mathbf{5}^{\text {th }}$ forms

Why do you think it is important to know a foreign language nowadays?
How much time do you spend studying the English language?
Why do you study the English language?
© you can get money if you get a good mark
© you can spend more time with your friends
(-) you simply like it
© © you would like to get an excellent mark
Do you regularly study the new words given by the teacher?
A) Yes
B) No
C) Sometimes

Do you write the unknown words and expressions into your vocabulary notebook in the lessons?
A) Yes
B) No
C) Sometimes

Have you got English-Hungarian Hungarian-English dictionaries at home?
A) Yes
B) No

Do you often use these kinds of dictionaries?
A) Yes
B) No
C) Sometimes

If you read a text at home, and there is an unknown word in it, do you look up the meaning of the word in the dictionary?
A) Yes
B) No
C) Sometimes

How can you study expressions or new words more easily?
A) I never study new words or expressions
B) From vocabulary notebook
C) From text

Choose the correct answer!
Underline the proper answer
I...to school every day.
A) go; B) come; C) walk

I can...English.
A) talk; B) speak; C) play I usually...games.
A) act; B) play; C) do

I can...friends around the world.
A) act; B) make; C) do;

I usually... a good time.
A) make; B) have; C) do;


## Questionnaire for the $\mathbf{6}^{\text {th }}$ forms

Why do you think it is important to know a foreign language nowadays?
How much time do you spend studying the English language?
Why do you study the English language?
you can get money if you get a good mark
© you can spend more time with your friends
() you simply like it
() you would like to get an excellent mark

Do you regularly study the new words given by the teacher?
A) Yes
B) No
C) Sometimes

Do you write the unknown words and expressions into your vocabulary notebook in the lessons?
A) Yes
B) No
C) Sometimes

Have you got English-Hungarian Hungarian-English dictionaries at home?
A) Yes
B) No

Do you often use these kinds of dictionaries?
A) Yes
B) No
C) Sometimes

If you read a text at home, and there is an unknown word in it, do you look up the meaning of the word in the dictionary?
A) Yes
B) No
C) Sometimes

How can you study expressions or new words more easily?
A) I never study new words or expressions
B) From vocabulary notebook
C) From text

## Test

## Can you fill the blank?

- I...to school every day.
- I can...English.
- I usually...games.
- I can...friends around the world.
- I usually... a good time.


## Match the words

a) to play

1) the harvest
b) higher
2) a competition
c) to take part in
3) flowers
d) to collect
4) food
e) fast
5) stamps
f) to listen to
6) football
g) to watch
7) music
h) to gather in
8) TV
i) to grow
9) education

## Choose the correct answer

Ukraine borders Slovakia and Hungary in the west.
a) by
b) on
c) in
d) with

The United Kingdom consists ... Great Britain and Northern Ireland.
a) On
b) with
c) of
d) at

Great Britain is washed ... the Atlantic Ocean.
a) For
b) up
c) between
d) by

Thank you!

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[^0]:    * A II. Rákóczi Ferenc Kárpátaljai Magyar Főiskola volt angol-magyar szakos hallgatója. A tanulmányt dr. Huszti Ilona lektorálta.

[^1]:    ${ }^{1}$ I mean high schools, where pupils can learn either languages, or science subjects in greater numbers of lesson and at a higher level

