

A STUDY OF VERB - NOUN COLLOCATION  
AMONG UCSI CHINESE NATIONALS

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### Abstract

Collocation competence is an important aspect in the evaluation of learners' English proficiency. However, for Chinese learners, collocation has always been an area of difficulty. Therefore, this study on the Chinese learners' verb-noun collocation is conducted to find out the characteristics of their collocation behavior, to explain the factors affecting the learnability of verb-noun collocation, and to make suggestions in English language learning. The participants of this study are twenty Chinese students who are majoring in Business Administration, Finance Accounting, English Language and Communication, Business Information System, and Mass Communication at UCSI University. The students' ability in collocation is evaluated through a simple test composed of ten items containing verb-noun collocation. Since the items in the test are isolated instances, a follow-up evaluation is conducted. The activity requires the participants to write a short paragraph on Chinese New Year. The findings show that ninety-four collocation errors are found in the simple test while in the paragraph writing, most of the participants use the same verb-noun collocation. There are three distinct characteristics of their collocation behavior through the test and paragraph writing. Firstly, the students tend to use more general words rather than concrete words. Secondly, they are more likely to show confusion of synonymous verbs. Thirdly, most of the participants use identical verb-noun collocation pattern. Moreover, factors affecting the learnability of verb-noun collocation include demographics, collocation background, complexity of collocation, complexity of synonyms, and similarity and differences between mother tongue and target language.