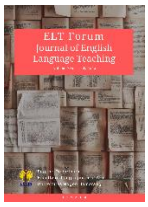
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# Cross-linguistic influence on English collocational use among Tunisian EFL students

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## Abstract

Research into collocation learning in second and foreign language environments has gained significant scholarly attention. Yet, cross-linguistic influence (CLI) on the use of collocations has received little attention from researchers, especially in the Tunisian context. Therefore, this study investigates how L1 Arabic influences the production of English lexical collocations among 50 third-year Tunisian EFL undergraduates at the Higher Institute of Human Sciences of Medenine. It also examines the relationship between learners' vocabulary level and collocational errors. Data was gathered using a Vocabulary Levels Test (VLT), a collocation test, and semi-structured interviews. The results showed that the participants' L1 Arabic exerted a negative influence on their use of collocations, leading them to produce erroneous collocations. Moreover, the inferential statistics yielded no significant relationship between learners' vocabulary levels and collocational errors. By demonstrating that larger vocabulary size is not sufficient for mastering multi-word expressions in this specific learner profile, these results refine existing CLI models by emphasizing the dominant role of L1 transfer over lexical knowledge in collocation production. The findings suggest that EFL pedagogy in the Tunisian system must shift from isolated word learning to explicit, collocation-focused instruction.

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## INTRODUCTION

### Background

Acquiring a rich vocabulary in English has always been a challenging issue for EFL learners, because knowing individual words and their meanings is not sufficient for effective communication. Learners also need to understand how words conventionally combine with one another. These patterned word combinations are generally referred to as collocations (Firth, 1957).

English collocations, as a subtype of phraseological units, have been addressed in second language acquisition (SLA) contexts and teaching methodology, because they contribute to natural and fluent language use. Knowledge of formulaic sequences can enable learners to express ideas more efficiently and appropriately (Wray, 2002). Hill (2000) maintained that collocational competence can facilitate language processing and contribute to more fluent and successful communication. More recent research provides empirical support for this relationship. For example, Li et al. (2022) showed that the strength and familiarity of collocational associations can influence the efficiency with which EFL learners process collocations, while Jeong and DeKeyser (2023) found that repeated practice can promote faster and more automatic processing of L2 collocations. Consequently, accurate knowledge and use of collocations may facilitate more efficient processing of the target language, as recent research has shown that the strength and predictability of collocational associations influence how EFL learners process collocations during L2 reading (Li et al., 2022).

Yet, although research emphasized the necessity of collocation instruction, learners continue to learn vocabulary in isolation rather than learning word co-occurrence. This tendency toward single-word vocabulary acquisition is generally attributed to the neglection of formulaic language in classrooms, particularly across Arab-speaking learners and more specifically within the Tunisian system. Consequently, Tunisian learners, acquiring English as L3, frequently rely on their native language collocational structures to mitigate collocation production deficits.

Therefore, the present study focuses on the role of L1 Arabic in the production of English lexical collocations by Tunisian EFL learners. It specifically examines third-year students and determines whether their vocabulary level is related to their ability to produce appropriate English collocations.

### Statement of the problem

Given their specific features, collocations enhance more expressive and natural communication. However, they remain challenging even for advanced EFL learners because collocations often lack semantic predictability, despite being grammatically flawless. (Yamashita & Jiang 2010, p. 652). Besides, collocations also differ from freely constructed combinations by their semi-transparent nature; one of the collocates sheds its primary meaning, rendering the overall phrase semantically implicit (Yigit, 2021, p. 2).

When learners are unable to retrieve an appropriate English collocation, they may rely on their native language. Previous research has provided evidence that L1 knowledge can influence both the learning and production of English collocations (e.g., Cao & Badger, 2021; Almaktary 2017; Boonraksa & Naisena 2021; Alshaikhi, 2026). Within Second Language Acquisition (SLA) and Third Language Acquisition (TLA), this phenomenon is commonly conceptualized as cross-linguistic influence (CLI), whereby similarities and differences between previously acquired languages and the target language may facilitate or hinder learning (Shehata, 2008, p. 100).

Yet, despite the considerable body of research on collocations, evidence from Tunisian EFL settings remains limited. This is particularly relevant because Tunisian learners operate within a multilingual environment in which Arabic and French are part of their linguistic repertoire. To bridge this gap, the present study examines the extent to which Arabic influences the production of English lexical collocations among third-year Tunisian EFL students at the Higher Institute of Human Sciences of Medenine. It also aims to determine whether a statistically significant correlation exists between the learners' vocabulary level and their collocational competence.

### Research aims

The aims of this study are twofold:

1. To investigate the extent to which L1 Arabic influences Tunisian EFL students' production of English lexical collocations
2. To examine whether learners' vocabulary level is significantly related to their production of non-target English lexical collocations.

**Research questions**

1. To what extent does L1 Arabic influence Tunisian EFL students' production of English lexical collocations?
2. Is there a significant relationship between learners' vocabulary level and their production of non-target English lexical collocations?

**Literature review**

***Definition of collocations***

Although the use of collocations in ESL contexts has been extensively researched, there is no universally accepted definition of the term collocation. One reason for this lack of consensus is that collocations have been examined from two main perspectives: the frequency-based approach and the phraseological approach. These perspectives emphasize different properties of word combinations and consequently lead to different definitions.

The frequency-based perspective is associated with Firth (1957), who emphasized the importance of examining words in relation to the words that regularly occur with them. From this perspective, collocations are identified through the tendency of particular lexical items to co-occur more frequently than would be expected by chance. Thus, the frequency and proximity of co-occurrence are central to determining whether a particular combination can be regarded as a collocation (Firth, 1957, p. 183).

The phraseological perspective, in contrast, focuses more on the relationship between the constituent words of a combination, particularly their semantic and syntactic properties. Researchers adopting this perspective have considered factors such as semantic transparency and restrictions on the possible combinations of words (Nesselhauf, 2003; Gyllstad & Wolter, 2016). From this viewpoint, word combinations can be situated along a continuum extending from relatively free combinations to more restricted expressions (Shehata, 2008, p. 14). For example, expressions such as *fall asleep* and *fall apart* illustrate combinations in which the verb *fall* occurs with different lexical partners, whereas more fixed expressions allow considerably less variation (Yigit, 2021, p. 2).

In the light of the aforementioned approaches, various definitions of collocations were put forward. Baker (1992), for example, associates collocations with the frequent co-occurrence of words, while Lewis (1997) emphasizes their natural occurrence in language and points out that not every combination of words should necessarily be considered a collocation. The *Oxford Collocations Dictionary* (2009) similarly describes collocations in terms of combinations that contribute to natural-sounding language. This distinction can be illustrated by pairs such as *heavy rain* and *strong wind,* which are conventional combinations in English, in contrast to less acceptable combinations such as *heavy wind* and *strong rain* (McIntosh et al., 2009, p. vii). Likewise, O'Dell and McCarthy (2017) view collocations as combinations of words that are considered natural by proficient or native speakers. Earlier definitions, such as those offered by Cruse (1986) and Hadi (2014), also emphasize the habitual relationship between words.

As for the current study, it endorses a phraseological approach and considers collocations as a type of combinations rather than the frequency of co-occurrence of words in a certain distance.

***Classification of lexical collocations***

Lexical collocations are combinations formed by content words, including nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs. Depending on the grammatical relationship between their constituents, they may occur in patterns such as noun + verb (e.g., *war breaks out*), verb + noun (e.g., *launch a war*), adjective + noun (e.g., *a ferocious war*), and verb + adverb (e.g., *fight furiously*) (Ghazala, 2007, pp. 17–18).

Since scholars addressed collocations from different approaches, there is still disagreement regarding the classification of the term. Some scholars (e.g. Benson et al., 1986; Hill, 2000; Lewis, 2000) embrace a phraseological approach in their classifications, while others (e.g. Halliday, 1966) adopt a frequency-based classification. However, authors such as Nation (2001) and Herbst (1996) incorporate elements of both in their classifications. Yet, most researchers adopt criteria such as semantic transparency, degree of substitutability and the degree of productivity (Howarth, 1998; Nattinger & DeCarrico, 1992). Accordingly, word combinations are placed on a continuum in the light of the above-mentioned criteria where on one extreme of the collocational continuum would be free combinations, which are highly productive, semantically transparent and easily substitutable, whilst idioms would be on the other edge, as they meet the aforementioned criteria to

a much lesser extent. As for restricted collocations, they fall somewhere between these two extremes (Huang, 2001).

Howarth (1998, p. 28), for example, distinguishes four categories of lexical combinations. The first category consists of free combinations, in which the constituents can be substituted relatively freely and the overall meaning can be derived from their individual meanings, as in *blow a trumpet.* The second category comprises restricted combinations, whose constituents have more limited possibilities of combination, as in *blow a fuse.* The third category is made up of figurative idioms, such as *blow your own trumpet,* whose meaning involves a figurative interpretation. The final category includes pure idioms, such as *blow the gaff,* whose meanings cannot readily be predicted from their individual components.

Another distinction relevant to the present study is that between congruent and non-congruent collocations. Congruent collocations have a relatively direct translation equivalent in the learner's first language, whereas non-congruent collocations lack such a literal equivalent (Shehata, 2008, p. 22). This distinction is particularly relevant when investigating cross-linguistic influence because differences between the collocational patterns of the first and target languages may encourage learners to rely on L1-based combination.

For the purposes of the present study, the classification proposed by Benson et al. (1986) and Howarth (1998) is adopted because it is compatible with a phraseological view of collocations. The study focuses on combinations that are relatively restricted but whose constituents retain at least some of their literal meaning. Idioms are therefore excluded. More specifically, the analysis concentrates on non-congruent lexical collocations that do not have direct literal equivalents in Arabic, as these combinations provide an appropriate basis for examining possible negative transfer from L1 Arabic.

***Cross-linguistic influence on collocations***

Recent research has consistently demonstrated that L1 influence represents a main source of difficulty in the production of lexical collocations among EFL students.

In the Tunisian context, for example, Almaktary (2017) found substantial L1 transfer in the production of English lexical collocations among second and third-year Tunisian EFL students, with their scores remaining below 50 out of 100. Using a collocation test, focus-group discussions, and analysis of students' diaries, Almaktary's study indicated that L1 Arabic transfer accounted for 27% of the identified sources of deviations. Limited knowledge was identified as another important source of difficulty, accounting for 38% of the responses.

The author reported a significant positive relationship between collocational competence and learners' spoken and written performance. On the basis of these findings, Almaktary recommended moving beyond the teaching of individual lexical items and directing learners' attention towards combinations of words. Greater exposure to authentic spoken and written English was also recommended as a means of helping learners develop more natural collocational usage (ibid, p. 16).

However, Almaktary's study examined several aspects of phraseological knowledge and different possible sources of collocational violations.

Consequently, the study provides a broad picture of collocational competence rather than an extremely detailed investigation of one particular dimension of collocational learning. Further research involving more focused investigation of specific dimensions of collocational use could therefore extend these findings.

Boukhalfa and Zaouia (2019) examined negative Arabic transfer in the production of lexical collocation errors among Algerian third-year EFL students. Their research employed several instruments, including gap filling, matching, multiple-choice questions, translation, and a teacher questionnaire. Both student performance and teacher responses indicated that Arabic transfer led to inappropriate use of English lexical collocations. The researchers consequently recommended that classroom instruction should draw learners' attention to the ways in which English words combine with one another and should present collocations within meaningful contexts.

More recently, Boonraksa and Naisena (2021) investigated L1 influence on collocational errors displayed by Thai EFL students at three different levels: proficient students, medium and low proficient students. The participants were tested on a multiple-choice collocation proficient test as well as on 18 Thai- to- English translation questions. The data demonstrated a high rate of lexical collocational errors across all three groups, mainly attributed to L1 transfer and lack of collocational competence.

Based on the obtained results, the authors suggested that teachers should regularly help students recognize collocations in actual English. The authors also noted that students can have access to additional exercises and tasks for improving collocation recognition in a variety of newspapers and other authentic resources (ibid, p. 173). The authors also recommended that English teachers should stress collocational competence and structures of lexical collocations rather than teaching particular words. For example, instead of teaching individual items such as focus (verb), mistake (noun), or heavy (adjective), teachers can present them in common combinations like focus on, make a mistake, and heavy rain (ibid, p. 174).

Similarly, a study by Cao and Badger (2021) reported a high rate of L1 transfer in the use of English lexical collocations by Vietnamese EFL learners; the analysis of the participants' essays indicated that 40% of inappropriate collocations were L1-influenced. However, although the authors provide evidence of cross-linguistic influence on L2 collocation use, their findings are situated within a Vietnamese EFL context and therefore may not be directly generalizable to Arabic-speaking learners.

Recent research has also provided evidence that adjective–noun (Adj+N) collocations pose greater difficulties for EFL learners than verb–noun (V+N) combinations. For instance, Shiha and Lacsina (2025), in a study of Arab EFL learners, reported that participants were more familiar with V+N collocations and experienced greater difficulty with Adj+N combinations. Similarly, Marrium et al. (2025) found that Pakistani learners performed better on V+N than on Adj+N collocations, although noun–noun combinations were found to be the most problematic category overall. Further evidence is provided by Lee (2025), whose analysis of learners' productive collocational knowledge revealed higher proportions of errors in responses for Adj+N than V+N combinations in most of the learner groups examined.

These findings suggest that Adj+N collocations can constitute a particularly challenging category for EFL learners, although the relative difficulty of different collocation types may vary according to learners' proficiency levels, first-language backgrounds, and the characteristics of the collocations examined.

Conversely, another line of recent research reported that V+N collocations are highly problematic, though they did not necessarily compare them statistically with Adj+N. For example, Aybek (2025) investigated Turkish EFL learners and found that V+N collocations are particularly challenging even for learners at higher proficiency levels, including incorrect verb selection and verb-form errors. Similarly, Alraddadi et al. (2024) identified V+N collocations as extremely difficult L2 Saudi learners.

However, the rate of L1 transfer errors may not be consistent across different levels of vocabulary knowledge and proficiency. Some research provided evidence that L1-based errors decrease as learners' proficiency level increases. For example, Kazazoğlu (2022) reported that lower-proficiency Turkish learners produced more collocational errors than higher-proficiency learners. Similarly, Alshaikhi (2026) found that L1-based collocational errors declined as proficiency increased among Saudi EFL learners.

Yet; evidence regarding vocabulary level is relatively limited and the studies reported convergent findings. Barzanji (2021), for instance, investigated the relationship between collocational competence and vocabulary level, exposure to English outside classrooms and motivation among Saudi university students. Using the Updated Vocabulary Level test and collocation tests, the study demonstrated that only vocabulary level and exposure correlated with collocational competence. The statistical analysis revealed a positive significant correlation between the participants' vocabulary level and their scores in the collocation test; an increase in vocabulary level corresponds to an increase in collocation scores (ibid, p. 137).

Nevertheless, Barzanji's study focused on overall collocational knowledge rather than specifically identifying L1-transfer errors or examining the relationship between vocabulary level and the frequency of transfer-related errors in productive lexical collocation use. Consequently, it remains unclear whether learners with different vocabulary levels differ in the frequency of L1-transfer errors when producing English lexical collocations.

In another context, Park and Uhm (2022) studied 163 Korean EFL learners using both a receptive test and a gap-filling productive collocation test, together with a Vocabulary Level Test. They found a significant positive correlation between vocabulary level and collocation knowledge. Although their findings provide useful evidence concerning the role of vocabulary knowledge and L1–L2 congruency in collocational performance, the study focused specifically on verb–noun

collocations and did not directly examine L1-transfer error rates. Moreover, the Korean EFL context limits the direct applicability of the findings to Arabic-speaking learners.

Along the same line, Sonbul et al. (2023) investigated the association between learners' vocabulary knowledge and their ability to produce English collocations among 55 Arabic-speaking learners of English. The researchers employed measures of productive vocabulary and productive collocational knowledge to examine whether knowledge of individual words was related to learners' ability to produce appropriate word combinations. The findings showed that productive vocabulary knowledge significantly contributed to productive collocational knowledge, though the strength of the effect was limited.

Although Sonbul et al. (2023) provided recent evidence of a significant relationship between productive vocabulary knowledge and productive collocational knowledge among Arabic-speaking learners of English, their study leaves several issues open for further investigation. First, the study focused on the relationship between vocabulary knowledge and collocational performance rather than directly examining L1-transfer errors. Thus, it remains unclear whether learners with different vocabulary levels differ in the frequency of errors attributable specifically to Arabic–English transfer. Second, the assessment targeted relatively frequent vocabulary items within the first 3,000 frequency bands, which may limit the extent to which the findings can be generalized to less frequent or more advanced collocations. Additionally, although productive vocabulary knowledge was found to be a significant predictor of productive collocational knowledge, the effect was relatively small, suggesting that other factors may also contribute to learners' collocational performance. These issues highlight the need for further research examining the relationship between vocabulary level and L1-transfer errors in the production of English lexical collocations.

To sum up, previous research has established relationships between vocabulary size and collocational knowledge, and has provided evidence of the substantial influence of L1 in collocational competence. However, it remains unclear whether vocabulary level itself is systematically related to the frequency of L1-transfer errors. Consequently, further research is needed to clarify the relationship between learners' vocabulary level and L1-transfer errors in the use of English lexical collocations. Moreover, few studies have directly examined this relationship, particularly in the Tunisian EFL context.

Therefore, the present study addresses this underexplored area by investigating whether learners' vocabulary level is associated with the frequency of l1-transfer errors in their use of English lexical collocations.

## METHODS

### Research design

This study adopts an explanatory sequential mixed-methods design to examine the influence of L1 Arabic on English lexical collocation production and investigate the relationship between learners' vocabulary levels and collocational errors. The quantitative method utilizes descriptive statistics to calculate transfer error rates and inferential statistics, based on the use of Chi-square test, to test for correlations between vocabulary levels and transfer error rates. Pearson Chi-Square test of independence was supplemented by Fisher's Exact Test to ensure maximum analytical rigor for the small sample size (N = 50), while the qualitative phase employs semi-structured interviews to explain and contextualize those statistical results.

The interviews were intended to provide additional information about the learners' perceptions of collocations, the difficulties they experienced when producing them, their exposure to English, and the ways in which they normally learned vocabulary. Combining the two forms of evidence made it possible to consider not only the numerical patterns in the test results but also possible explanations for the learners' performance.

### Respondents

Fifty third-year Tunisian EFL students from the Higher Institute of Human Sciences of Medenine, Tunisia participated in the current study. The cohort consisted of 40 female and 10 male students, with an average age of 22 years. The participants were all English majors who shared relatively homogeneous socio-cultural and linguistic backgrounds, speaking Arabic as their first language (L1) and English as their third language (L3). Additionally, they had acquired French as a second language (L2) throughout primary and secondary education, continuing with it during their first year at university.

To ensure a homogeneous sample in terms of proficiency, the participants completed the Outcomes Placement Test. Only students scoring within the 26–32 range, corresponding to the Outcomes Intermediate level, were selected for the study.

A convenience sampling strategy based on voluntary participation was employed. Third-year English majors at the Higher Institute of Human Sciences of Medenine were approached during their regular class hours, informed about the nature of the study, and invited to participate. The final sample consisted of the 50 students who volunteered and gave informed consent to complete the research instruments.

Third-year students were selected because they had received approximately eleven years of English instruction and were therefore expected to possess a sufficiently developed vocabulary to participate in the study.

**Instruments**

Three instruments were used to gather the data: a collocation test, the Updated Vocabulary Levels Test and a semi-structured interview. Each of these instruments is described below.

***Collocation test***

The participants' productive knowledge of English lexical collocations was assessed through a 16-item gap-filling test. The test was developed with reference to online collocation-test materials and was adapted from previous research, particularly Almaktary (2017) and Boukhalfa and Zaouia (2019).

The test was equally divided into two structural categories: 8 items targeted verb–noun combinations and another 8 assessed adjective–noun combinations. For each item, participants were presented with three alternatives: the target English collocation, a collocation reflecting transfer from Arabic, and an entirely incorrect distractor in the given context. Students were asked to select the option that best completed each sentence. The complete test is provided in Appendix A.

The target items were selected based on three criteria. First, the existing literature documented verb–noun (Aybek, 2025; Alraddadi et al., 2024) and adjective–noun combinations (Shiha & Lacsina, 2025; Marrium et al., 2025) as highly frequent and exceptionally problematic for EFL learners. Second, the collocations were initially drawn from Ghazala (1995) and Heliel (1990). To ensure strong content and construct validity, the initial pool of items and distractors were reviewed by two qualified colleagues with expertise in English language teaching to assess their naturalness, contextual appropriateness, and potential ambiguity. All items were checked using the BBI Combinatory Dictionary of English and the Oxford Collocations Dictionary for Students of English to guarantee that all distractors were indisputably incorrect in the given contexts. Third, only non-congruent collocations without literal Arabic equivalents were selected to specifically identify errors that could plausibly be associated with negative transfer from Arabic.

Furthermore, the internal consistency reliability of the instrument was computed for this sample, yielding a satisfactory Cronbach's alpha coefficient (alpha = .81), confirming the reliability of the test scores for this population.

***Vocabulary levels test***

Participants' vocabulary knowledge was measured using Form A of the Updated Vocabulary Levels Test developed by Webb, Sasao, and Ballance (2017). This instrument was selected because its vocabulary items were based on Nation's (2012) BNC/COCA word-family lists. Webb et al. (2017) also reported evidence supporting the validity and reliability of the test, based on data collected from 1,713 participants from several countries, including Japan, Vietnam, China, the United States, Turkey, Iraq, and Saudi Arabia. The reported Rasch reliability coefficient was .96 (ibid, p. 52).

The test measures recognition of word meanings. Each item contains six words and three definitions. Participants must identify the word corresponding to each definition by placing a check mark under the appropriate item. Only three of the six words correspond to the definitions provided (ibid, p. 36).

The version used in the present study covered five vocabulary-frequency levels: 1,000, 2,000, 3,000, 4,000, and 5,000 words. Each level contained 30 items. The score obtained at each level was used to determine the participants' vocabulary level.

Following the scoring guidelines proposed for the test, a criterion of 29 correct answers out of 30 was applied at the 1,000-, 2,000-, and 3,000-word levels. For the 4,000- and 5,000-word levels, the criterion was 24 out of 30, reflecting the distinction between higher-frequency and mid-frequency

vocabulary (ibid, p. 56). A participant was assigned to the highest level at which the relevant criterion was achieved. Thus, for example, a participant who obtained 29/30 at the 1,000-word level but failed to reach the required score at the 2,000-word level was classified at the 1,000-word level.

***Semi-structured interview***

After assessing the respondents' collocational competence, a semi-structured interview was conducted with 15 students to gather deeper insights into their perceptions about English collocations, the level of difficulties or challenges faced in the use of English lexical collocations, their exposure to English, the ways in which they learn vocabulary, and whether collocations had been explicitly taught in their English classes.

The interviews were carried out outside their class sessions on a voluntary basis, with each session lasting approximately 15 minutes. All interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim for analysis.

To guarantee transparency, the qualitative data were analyzed using a structured, step-by-step process. First, the recorded interviews were transcribed verbatim, and the transcripts were read carefully to gain an in-depth understanding of the participants' responses. Second, the text was organized in accordance with the main aims and questions of the interview (e.g., student perceptions, specific challenges, and vocabulary learning methods). The responses to each of these main categories were grouped to delineate the most common patterns, errors, and shared experiences among the students.

To ensure the trustworthiness of the interpretation, the final summaries and conclusion were reviewed and discussed with an academic colleague.

**Data collection procedures**

The first step in conducting this research was to get the official consent from the administration. Permission was also obtained from the students to take part in this study. None of the participants was coerced into participation, either in the tests or in the interview. They were assured that their participation would be confidential and that their scores in both tests would not affect their academic achievement. They were also assured that their identities would remain confidential.

The collocation test was administered after the participants had completed their regular classes. They were given 45 minutes to complete the 16 items. Their responses were then examined with particular attention to selections representing transfer from Arabic, and the results were converted into percentages for analysis.

The Vocabulary Levels Test was administered on the same day. Participants' answers were scored according to the test guidelines, and the resulting scores were used to determine their vocabulary levels.

On the following day, a group of 15 participants was interviewed. The interview aimed to explore their perceptions of English lexical collocations, the major problems they face in the use of collocations, whether they had been explicitly taught collocations, and the ways they learn vocabulary. Permission for recording was obtained from all interviewees.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### The influence of L1 Arabic on the use of lexical collocations

The first aim of the current study was to examine the extent to which L1 Arabic affects Tunisian EFL students' production of English lexical collocations. To address this objective, descriptive statistics in the SPSS package were used by measuring the mean (average) of transfer errors originating from the participants' L1 Arabic in their performance of the collocation test. Table 1 below outlines the obtained results:

Table 1. Descriptive statistics of the participants' collocation test

| | N | Minimum | Maximum | Sum | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Number of transfer errors | 50 | 2,00 | 13,00 | 327,00 | 6,5400 | 2,40925 |
| Valid N (listwise) | 50 | | | | | |

As shown in Table 1, a total of 327 transfer errors attributed to Arabic were identified in the participants' collocation test, with a mean of 6.5400 errors per participant. These findings indicate the

presence of Arabic-related transfer errors in the participants' production of English lexical collocations, but the descriptive results alone do not establish a causal influence of Arabic. A higher mean (29.30), however, was found in Almaktary's (2017) study conducted in the same context (Tunisian). A lower mean (2.75) was found in the Thai context in a study carried out by Boonraksa and Naisena (2021). Such differences should not necessarily be interpreted as contradictions. Variations in the results may stem from differences in the characteristics of the participants, the difficulty and design of the instruments, the types of collocations selected, and the learners' previous exposure to English collocational patterns.

The participants' collocation performance in the collocation test also varied considerably across collocation types. Table 2 below summarizes their performance in both adjective–noun and verb–noun collocations:

Table 2. Participants' performance across collocational patterns

| | N | Minimum | Maximum | Sum | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Adjective + noun collocations | 50 | 1,00 | 7,00 | 195,00 | 3,9000 | 1,72910 |
| Verb + noun collocations | 50 | 1,00 | 6,00 | 128,00 | 2,5600 | 1,21487 |
| Valid N (listwise) | 50 | | | | | |

The figures in Table 2 indicate a clear difference between the two categories. Participants produced 195 errors involving adjective–noun combinations, compared with 128 errors involving verb–noun combinations. The mean error rate was consequently higher for adjective–noun collocations (3.9000) than for verb–noun collocations (2.5600). Thus, within the present sample adjective–noun combinations constitute the more difficult category.

This finding aligns with some previous studies (e.g. Almaktary, 2017; Shiha & Lacsina, 2025; Marrium et al., 2025; Lee, 2025). However, it contrasts with other studies which reported that verb–noun combinations are problematic (e.g. Aybek, 2025; Alraddadi et al., 2024). The difference may partly reflect variations in the participants, test design, proficiency levels, and specific collocations included in the respective studies.

Adjective + Noun collocations have been found as the most difficult combinations even in non-Arabic contexts, such as among Thai learners (Boonraksa & Naisena, 2021) and Pakistanian learners (Marrium et al., 2025).

The errors found in the present data reflect gaps in the learners' knowledge of English collocations, as illustrated in the following examples. For instance, 40% of the participants chose the collocation *hot welcome* instead of *warm welcome.* The incorrect expression corresponds closely to the Arabic combination استقبال حار, suggesting that the learners transferred the semantic choice of the Arabic adjective into English. The problem therefore appears not to concern the meaning of the individual words but rather the conventional way in which they are combined in English.

A similar pattern can be observed in the item involving *empty promises.* 60% of the participants selected *fake promises,* which corresponds more closely to the Arabic expression وعود زائفة. The learners appear to have transferred the semantic equivalent of the Arabic adjective instead of selecting the conventional English combination.

Another example concerns *heavy meal.* 60% selected the collocation *fat meal* instead of *heavy meal,* which is literally transferred from the Arabic collocation وجبة دسمة (Heliel, 1990, p. 34). These examples suggest that learners may know the meanings of the individual lexical items but still have difficulty determining which combinations are conventional in English. In such cases, Arabic appears to provide a readily accessible pattern that learners use when the appropriate English collocation is not sufficiently established in their mental lexicon.

The same problem occurs with verb + noun collocations. For example, 60% selected the collocation *hit the tent,* which is transferred from the Arabic collocation ضرب خيمة, while the target collocation is *pitch the tent.* Similarly, 28% of the participants produced the collocation *increase weigh,* which represents a direct transfer from Arabic يزيد وزن . In natural English, the standard target collocation is *gain weight.*

The frequency of these errors supports Ghazala's (1993, p. 9) observation that Arabic-English collocational equivalence does not necessarily involve direct lexical equivalence. A learner may therefore recognize a conceptual correspondence between two expressions while selecting an

inappropriate English word because the Arabic combination provides a more readily accessible pattern.

Nevertheless, not all combinations caused the same degree of difficulty. For instance, collocations like *deliver the news* (2%) and *pay a visit* (4%) seem to be less problematic to the participants, even though the verb in each collocation neither has a direct equivalent in Arabic nor collocates with the same noun. For example, the verb *pay* in *pay a visit* does not carry its literal sense and does not correspond to the Arabic verb يدفع. Similarly, *deliver* combines with a range of nouns in English that may require different verbal choices in Arabic (Alwazna, 2018, p. 55; Brashi, 2005, p. 62). The low error rates may therefore indicate that some collocations have become sufficiently familiar to learners through exposure or repeated use.

The present findings support previous findings that collocations pose a problem for advanced EFL learners in different contexts leading them to use L1 transfer as a major strategy in collocation production (e.g., Almaktary, 2017; Boukhelfa & Zaouia, 2019; Cao & Badger, 2021; Boonraksa & Naisena, 2021; Kazazoğlu, 2022; Alshaikhi, 2026; Lee, 2025).

One explanation for this difficulty is that collocations cannot always be predicted from grammatical rules or from the meanings of their individual components. Siengsanoh (2021), for example, notes that collocations pose difficulty for learners partly because of their arbitrary nature. Learners may consequently construct an expression that is meaningful and grammatically possible but inappropriate in English. The similarities and differences between English and Arabic collocations, including their unpredictability and variability, may also contribute to such difficulties.

The interpretation of collocations may be challenging for EFL learners because collocational combinations are often language-specific and may not correspond directly across languages. In the present study, the interview data provide direct evidence that the participants perceived collocations as difficult partly because they had received limited explicit instruction in this area. All the interviewees reported that collocations were not systematically included in their EFL instruction and that they had generally been encouraged to learn individual words rather than combinations of words. They also stated that, when they were unsure how to express a collocation in English, they sometimes relied on Arabic patterns or grammatical structures. These responses suggest that limited awareness of collocational patterns and reliance on previously acquired L1 knowledge may have contributed to some of the difficulties reported by the participants.

The interview findings further suggest that insufficient exposure to collocations may have restricted the participants' opportunities to develop knowledge of how English words conventionally combine. However, this interpretation should be treated cautiously, since the present interview data do not establish that limited exposure was the direct cause of the participants' collocational difficulties.

Other learner-related factors may also contribute to difficulty in collocation use. In particular, limited vocabulary knowledge may restrict learners' ability to retrieve and combine words appropriately, while incomplete knowledge of collocational restrictions may lead learners to produce combinations that are grammatically possible but not appropriate in English. Park and Uhm (2022), for example, examined Korean EFL learners' verb–noun collocations in relation to vocabulary knowledge, L2 proficiency, and L1–L2 congruency, highlighting the relevance of both lexical knowledge and cross-linguistic relationships to collocational knowledge. Likewise, Alshaikhi (2026) showed that the development of collocational knowledge was associated with learners' lexical knowledge, active participation in learning activities, guidance received during instruction, and the educational context in which learning took place.

Therefore, although the present interviews point particularly to limited instruction, limited exposure, and reliance on Arabic patterns, the participants' collocational difficulties should not be attributed to a single factor.

The participants' comments concerning limited exposure are also broadly consistent with recent research emphasizing the importance of meaningful exposure and opportunities for collocation learning. Barzanji (2021), for example, found that productive collocational knowledge developed as learners' incidental exposure to English increased, emphasizing that their limited exposure to the target language may affect their ability to recognize and access appropriate collocations. This finding provides a possible explanation for the participants' perception that their limited exposure to collocations made them more dependent on familiar lexical and L1-based patterns Nevertheless, this proposed relationship remains interpretive: the present interview data show that participants perceived limited instruction and exposure as problems, but they do not demonstrate that these factors directly caused their collocational errors.

Overall, the quantitative and qualitative data indicate that Arabic exerted a substantial influence on the participants' production of English lexical collocations. The pattern was particularly visible in non-congruent combinations, where the learners frequently selected expressions that were semantically understandable but inconsistent with conventional English usage. The findings support the view that cross-linguistic influence, particularly negative transfer from Arabic, represents an important source of collocational difficulty for Tunisian EFL learners as well. They also support Alshaikhi's (2026) observation that differences between learners' first language and English can create difficulties in producing conventional L2 collocations. Consequently, establishing precise cross-linguistic collocational equivalence is frequently deemed unrealistic and impractical.

**The relationship between learners' vocabulary level and collocation performance**

The second aim of this study was to examine whether learners' vocabulary level influences their performance in collocations. More specifically, the study examined whether differences in vocabulary knowledge were associated with differences in the number of transfer-related collocational errors. A Pearson Chi-Square test of independence was conducted, supplemented by Fisher's Exact Test to examine the relationship between the two variables. The results of this test are presented in Table 3 below:

Table 3. Relationship between transfer error rates and vocabulary level

| | Value | df | Asymp. Sig. (2-sided) | Exact Sig. (2-sided) | Exact Sig. (1-sided) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Pearson Chi-Square | 1,672a | 1 | ,196 | ,254 | ,158 |
| Continuity Correctionb | 1,009 | 1 | ,315 | | |
| Likelihood Ratio | 1,691 | 1 | ,193 | ,254 | ,158 |
| Fisher's Exact Test | | | | ,254 | ,158 |
| N of Valid Cases | 50 | | | | |

a. 0 cells (,0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 9,24.
b. Computed only for a 2x2 table

According to the Chi-square test, two hypotheses were formulated as follows:

H0= the two variables are independent (if $p \geq 0.05$)

Ha= the two variables are dependent (if $p \leq 0.05$)

As shown in Table 3, the Pearson Chi-square test indicated no statistically significant association between vocabulary proficiency level (high vs. low) and the frequency of L1 transfer errors since p = .196 which is higher than the conventional threshold.05. Fisher's exact test confirmed the lack of statistical significance (p= .254). Consequently, it can be deduced that the null hypothesis cannot be rejected, indicating that within this specific sample, a learner's general vocabulary level did not significantly influence their likelihood of committing L1 transfer errors.

The results suggest that, within this particular group of participants, learners with different vocabulary levels displayed broadly similar patterns of collocational difficulty. This implies that L1 transfer is a deeply fossilized cognitive phenomenon that endures across different stages of lexical development.

One plausible explanation concerns the learners' limited exposure to English. During the interviews, all participants reported that they had never lived in an English-speaking environment. Therefore, their opportunities to encounter naturally occurring English collocations were relatively restricted.

The participants also reported in the interviews similar vocabulary-learning practices. They stated that instead of learning words together with their common collocates, they generally memorized individual lexical items. In addition, they indicated that collocations had not been explicitly taught as a separate component of their English instruction. These shared learning experiences may help explain why differences in vocabulary level did not translate into significant differences in collocational performance.

Other studies, however, have reached different conclusions. Barzanji (2021), for example, found vocabulary size to be a significant predictor of collocational competence among Saudi university EFL learners. Learners with larger vocabularies tended to perform better on collocation measures. Similarly, Park and Uhm (2022) reported a positive relationship between vocabulary size

and productive collocational knowledge among Korean EFL learners. Nguyen and Webb (2017) also identified a significant relationship between single-word knowledge and collocational knowledge among Vietnamese university students. Similarly, Sonbul et al. (2023) provided evidence of significant relationship between vocabulary knowledge and collocational competence.

Although vocabulary plays a vital role in collocational competence, the current study revealed no meaningful relationship between learners' vocabulary levels and their collocational competence. This suggests that being familiar with single words does not necessarily help learners recognize word combinations as claimed by Barzanji (2021). The present finding conflicts with Barzanji's (2021) argument that "not knowing the word in the first place makes it impossible to know its collocates" (p.130).

The absence of a relationship between the participants' vocabulary level and their collocational use in the current study also undermines Barzanji's (2021, p. 130) assertion that that vocabulary size dictates L2 word combinations and serves as a primary determinant of collocational competence.

In summary, the present findings suggest that possessing a larger vocabulary may not be sufficient to prevent collocational errors. This means that, in order to improve collocational competence, learners should focus more on learning English collocations and their uses, rather than looking to increase their knowledge of isolated words. Yet, further research is needed to confirm this conclusion.

## CONCLUSION

The present study investigated the use of English lexical collocations among third-year Tunisian EFL students at the Higher Institute of Human Sciences of Medenine. It focused specifically on two issues: the influence of Arabic on learners' production of English adjective–noun and verb–noun collocations, and the possible relationship between learners' vocabulary level and their production of non-target collocations.

The findings provide evidence that Arabic influenced the participants' production of English lexical collocations. A substantial number of transfer-related errors were identified in the collocation test, and the qualitative data showed that learners regularly produced English combinations based on Arabic structures. This tendency was particularly apparent in non-congruent collocations, where literal translations from Arabic led to unnatural English phrasings.

The second major finding concerns the relationship between vocabulary level and collocational performance. The Pearson Chi-square test did not reveal a statistically significant association between the participants' vocabulary levels and their transfer-related collocation errors ($p = .196$). In other words, learners with higher vocabulary levels did not necessarily make fewer transfer-related collocational errors than those with lower vocabulary levels.

The findings of this study carry important implications for classroom practice and instructional design. First, the results suggest that lexical collocations could be given greater attention in vocabulary instruction and incorporated more systematically into language courses. The current results may also help raise learners' awareness of collocational patterns and contribute to the development of their lexical knowledge. To this end, teachers could encourage learners to learn words together with their common collocates rather than learning vocabulary primarily as isolated words. Providing repeated exposure to collocations in meaningful contexts and opportunities for productive practice may further help learners develop more accurate and appropriate collocational use.

The patterns identified in the present data also suggest that L1 influence may contribute to some collocational difficulties, particularly where English and Arabic differ in their preferred combinations and usage patterns. However, because the study design included L1-transfer distractors, the findings should not be interpreted as establishing L1 transfer as the sole or primary cause of collocational errors. Other factors, such as limited lexical knowledge, incomplete knowledge of collocational restrictions, overgeneralization, and insufficient exposure to English collocations, may also contribute to learners' difficulties. Therefore, rather than attempting to eliminate L1 influence altogether, teachers could help learners become aware of potential differences between Arabic and English collocations in terms of usage, range, and restrictions.

One practical approach would be to design activities around collocations that are particularly difficult for learners and to explicitly compare English collocational patterns with their Arabic counterparts where relevant. Teachers could use contrastive examples, contextualized exercises, and productive activities to draw learners' attention to cases in which direct translation may result in an unconventional English collocation. Similarly, lists of frequent English collocations that differ from

their Arabic equivalents could be used selectively as an awareness-raising tool. Such activities may help learners recognize cross-linguistic differences while also developing their knowledge of English collocations through contextualized exposure and practice.

Yet, despite the aforementioned implications, this study is constrained by certain limitations. One limitation is that it shed light on non-congruent collocations and did not take congruent collocations into account. Another limitation is that it examined only negative transfer as a process in the production of English collocations, while positive transfer is worth investigating as a process. Besides, this study focused on the production of collocations and ignored their reception, which warrants investigation.

Therefore, future research should address these limitations by investigating both congruent and non-congruent collocations and by examining positive as well as negative forms of cross-linguistic influence. Further studies could also compare learners' receptive and productive collocational knowledge. A larger sample involving students from different Tunisian universities would provide a broader basis for evaluating the role of Arabic in English collocational learning. Comparative research could additionally examine whether L1 transfer affects lexical and grammatical collocations in similar ways.

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## APPENDIX

### Appendix A: The collocation test

Dear students,

You are kindly invited to complete this test using your own background knowledge. This test is designed for the sake of scientific research. Your cooperation will be greatly welcomed.

Thank you in advance

Name: …….

| **Definition of collocation**:<br>Collocations are combinations of two or more words that occur together frequently.<br>Examples: short cut; brain drain; take actions, etc. |
|---|

Complete each sentence by selecting the collocation that best fits the context. **Choose one answer only for each item.**

**A. Adjective + noun collocation**: choose the appropriate collocation for each sentence (only one option is correct)

1. I would like to give a …… to our guests this evening
   - Warm welcome
   - Hot welcome
   - Strong welcome
2. He has to stop drinking, not just making ……..
   - Empty promises
   - Fake promises
   - Null promises
3. We had …… all day
   - Heavy rain
   - Abundant rain
   - Strong rain
4. If you have a ……., you won't be able to exercise as soon as you would with a lighter meal
   - Heavy meal
   - Fat meal
   - Strong meal
5. Several train passengers received/sustained …… in the crash
   - Serious injury
   - Dangerous injury
   - Strong injury
6. And yesterday was a really …….
   - Good day
   - Happy day
   - Beautiful day
7. I went to see the sales manager but got a rather …….
   - Chilly reception
   - Lukewarm reception
   - Cold reception

8. A distant relative of the elephant, it spends its life in the sea, its slow progress grazing sea grass making it an …….
   - Easy prey
   - Cold prey
   - Ready-made prey

**B. Verb+noun collocations**:

Choose the collocation that best completes each sentence. Choose **one answer only for each item**.

1. He plans to meet the departments and employees throughout the day to ……
   - Deliver the news
   - Transfer the news
   - Give the news
2. The president is scheduled to …….. on foreign policy
   - Deliver a speech
   - Cast a speech
   - Give a speech
3. He always gets to work late and ……. About being stuck in traffic
   - Makes excuse
   - Feigns excuse
   - Presents excuse
4. He usually ……. to his grandparents on the weekend
   - Pays a visit
   - Does a visit
   - Makes a visit
5. The jury …….. of unlawful killing
   - Delivered a verdict
   - Issued a verdict
   - Set a verdict
6. They ……. by the river
   - Pitched the tent
   - Hit the tent
   - Set the tent
7. Now you trust in your own ideas, you …… real …….
   - Make progress
   - Achieve progress
   - Do progress
8. If you eat too much and you don't burn off, you will ……..
   - Gain weight
   - Increase weight
   - Win weight

**Appendix B: The updated vocabulary levels test (Webb, Sasao, & Ballance, 2017)**

**The Updated Vocabulary Levels Test (VLT), Form A,** developed by Webb, Sasao, and Ballance (2017), is reproduced/attached here as the vocabulary assessment used in the study.

This is test that looks at how well you know useful English words. Put a check under the word goes with each meaning. Here is an example.

| | game | island | mouth | movie | song | yard |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| land with water all around it | | | | | | |
| part of your body used for eating and talking | | | | | | |
| piece of music | | | | | | |

It should be answered in the following way.

| | game | island | mouth | movie | song | yard |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| land with water all around it | | ✓ | | | | |
| part of your body used for eating and talking | | | ✓ | | | |
| piece of music | | | | | ✓ | |

**1,000 Word Level**

| | choice | computer | garden | photograph | price | week |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| cost | | | | | | |
| picture | | | | | | |
| place where things grow outside | | | | | | |

| | eye | father | night | van | voice | year |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| body part that sees | | | | | | |
| parent who is a man | | | | | | |
| part of the day with no sun | | | | | | |

| | center | note | state | tomorrow | uncle | winter |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| brother of your mother or father | | | | | | |
| middle | | | | | | |
| short piece of writing | | | | | | |

| | box | brother | horse | hour | house | plan |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| family member | | | | | | |
| sixty minutes | | | | | | |
| way of doing things | | | | | | |

| | animal | bath | crime | grass | law | shoulder |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| green leaves that cover the ground | | | | | | |
| place to wash | | | | | | |
| top end of your arm | | | | | | |

| | drink | educate | forget | laugh | prepare | suit |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| get ready | | | | | | |
| make a happy sound | | | | | | |
| not remember | | | | | | |

| | check | fight | return | tell | work | write |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| do things to get money | | | | | | |
| go back again | | | | | | |
| make sure | | | | | | |

| | bring | can | reply | stare | understand | wish |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| say or write an answer to somebody | | | | | | |
| carry to another place | | | | | | |
| look at for a long time | | | | | | |

| | alone | bad | cold | green | loud | main |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| most important | | | | | | |
| not good | | | | | | |
| not hot | | | | | | |

| | awful | definite | exciting | general | mad | sweet |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| certain | | | | | | |
| usual | | | | | | |
| very bad | | | | | | |

**2,000 Word Level**

| | coach | customer | feature | pie | vehicle | weed |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| important part of something | | | | | | |
| person who trains members of sports teams | | | | | | |
| unwanted plant | | | | | | |

| | average | discipline | knowledge | pocket | trap | vegetable |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| food grown in gardens | | | | | | |
| information which a person has | | | | | | |
| middle number | | | | | | |

| | circle | justice | knife | onion | partner | pension |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| round shape | | | | | | |
| something used to cut food | | | | | | |
| using laws fairly | | | | | | |

| | cable | section | sheet | site | staff | tank |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| part | | | | | | |
| place | | | | | | |
| something to cover a bed | | | | | | |

| | apartment | cap | envelope | lawyer | speed | union |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| cover for letters | | | | | | |
| kind of hat | | | | | | |
| place to live inside a tall building | | | | | | |

| | argue | contribute | quit | seek | vote | wrap |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| cover tightly and completely | | | | | | |
| give to | | | | | | |
| look for | | | | | | |

| | avoid | contain | murder | search | switch | trade |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| have something inside | | | | | | |
| look for | | | | | | |
| try not to do | | | | | | |

| | bump | complicate | include | organize | receive | warn |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| get something | | | | | | |
| hit gently | | | | | | |
| have as part of something | | | | | | |

| | available | constant | electrical | medical | proud | super |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| feeling good about what you have done | | | | | | |
| great | | | | | | |
| happening all the time | | | | | | |

| | environmental | junior | pure | rotten | smooth | wise |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| bad | | | | | | |
| not rough | | | | | | |
| younger in position | | | | | | |

**3,000 Word Level**

| | angle | apology | behavior | bible | celebration | portion |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| actions | | | | | | |
| happy occasion | | | | | | |
| statement saying you are sorry | | | | | | |

| | anxiety | athlete | counsel | foundation | phrase | wealth |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| combination of words | | | | | | |
| guidance | | | | | | |
| large amount of money | | | | | | |

| | agriculture | conference | frequency | liquid | regime | volunteer |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| farming | | | | | | |
| government | | | | | | |
| person who helps without payment | | | | | | |

| | asset | heritage | novel | poverty | prosecution | suburb |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| having little money | | | | | | |
| history | | | | | | |
| useful thing | | | | | | |

| | audience | crystal | intelligence | outcome | pit | welfare |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ability to learn | | | | | | |
| deep place | | | | | | |
| people who watch and listen | | | | | | |

| | consent | enforce | exhibit | retain | specify | target |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| agree | | | | | | |
| say clearly | | | | | | |
| show in public | | | | | | |

| | accomplish | capture | debate | impose | proceed | prohibit |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| catch | | | | | | |
| go on | | | | | | |
| talk about what is correct | | | | | | |

| | absorb | decline | exceed | link | nod | persist |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| continue to happen | | | | | | |
| goes beyond the limit | | | | | | |
| take in | | | | | | |

| | approximate | frequent | graphic | pale | prior | vital |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| almost exact | | | | | | |
| earlier | | | | | | |
| happening often | | | | | | |

| | consistent | enthusiastic | former | logical | marginal | mutual |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| not changing | | | | | | |
| occurring earlier in time | | | | | | |
| shared | | | | | | |

**4,000 Word Level**

| | cave | scenario | sergeant | stitch | vitamin | wax |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| healthy supplement | | | | | | |
| opening in the ground or in the side of a hill | | | | | | |
| situation | | | | | | |

| | candle | diamond | gulf | salmon | soap | tutor |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| something used for cleaning | | | | | | |
| teacher | | | | | | |
| valuable stone | | | | | | |

| | agony | kilogram | orchestra | scrap | slot | soccer |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| group of people who play music | | | | | | |
| long, thin opening | | | | | | |
| small unwanted piece | | | | | | |

| | crust | incidence | ram | senator | venue | verdict |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| hard outside part | | | | | | |
| judgment | | | | | | |
| place | | | | | | |

| | alley | embassy | hardware | nutrition | threshold | tobacco |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| government building | | | | | | |
| plant that is smoked in cigarettes | | | | | | |
| small street between buildings | | | | | | |

| | fling | forbid | harvest | shrink | simulate | vibrate |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| do not allow | | | | | | |
| make smaller | | | | | | |
| throw | | | | | | |

| | activate | disclose | hug | intimidate | plunge | weep |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| cry | | | | | | |
| tell | | | | | | |
| turn on | | | | | | |

| | diminish | exaggerate | explode | penetrate | transplant | verify |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| break into pieces violently | | | | | | |
| get smaller | | | | | | |
| move something to another place | | | | | | |

| | adjacent | crude | fond | sane | spherical | swift |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| beside | | | | | | |
| not crazy | | | | | | |
| quick | | | | | | |

| | abnormal | bulky | credible | greasy | magnificent | optical |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| believable | | | | | | |
| oily | | | | | | |
| unusual | | | | | | |

**5,000 Word Level**

| | gown | maid | mustache | paradise | pastry | vinegar |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| hair on your upper lip | | | | | | |
| perfect place | | | | | | |
| small baked food | | | | | | |

| | asthma | chord | jockey | monk | rectangle | vase |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| container for cut flowers | | | | | | |
| group of musical notes that are played at the same time | | | | | | |
| shape with two long and two short sides | | | | | | |

| | batch | dentist | hum | lime | pork | scripture |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| green fruit | | | | | | |
| low, constant sound | | | | | | |
| meat from pigs | | | | | | |

| | amnesty | claw | earthquake | perfume | sanctuary | wizard |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| liquid that is made to smell nice | | | | | | |
| man who has magical powers | | | | | | |
| safe place | | | | | | |

| | altitude | diversion | hemisphere | pirate | robe | socket |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| height | | | | | | |
| kind of clothing | | | | | | |
| person who attacks ships | | | | | | |

| | applaud | erase | jog | intrude | notify | wrestle |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| announce | | | | | | |
| enter without permission | | | | | | |
| remove | | | | | | |

| | bribe | expire | immerse | meditate | persecute | shred |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| cut or tear into small pieces | | | | | | |
| end | | | | | | |
| think deeply | | | | | | |

| | commemorate | growl | ignite | pierce | renovate | swap |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| catch fire | | | | | | |
| exchange | | | | | | |
| go into or through something | | | | | | |

| | bald | eternal | imperative | lavish | moist | tranquil |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| calm and quiet | | | | | | |
| having no hair | | | | | | |
| slightly wet | | | | | | |

| | diesel | incidental | mandatory | prudent | superficial | tame |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| not dangerous | | | | | | |
| required | | | | | | |
| using good judgment | | | | | | |