

## A comparative Study of the Use of Collocations by Anglophones and New Anglophones in Cameroon: The Case of First Year Students of the Department of English in the University of Maroua

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### Abstract

### Review Article

This paper compares the level of mastery of five collocational types by Anglophones and New Anglophones in the University of Maroua. The study also pinpoints the reasons behind the performance of the different informants in various collocational types and provides possible solutions to either maintain or improve the situation. The paper argues that the curricula for the teaching of 'Anglais' to Francophones (who some today are called New Anglophones) in the secondary and high school is more inclusive as opposed to that of the teaching of English Language to Anglophones. A written test administered to first year students of the Departments of English in the Higher Teachers' Training College and the Faculty of Letters and Social sciences (FALSH) of the target University based on a stratified sampling technique serves as the main strategy of eliciting data. While an observation of schemes of work of 'Anglais' and English of the two subsystems of some Secondary and High schools also serves as complementary data gathering strategy. Error analysis proposed by Corder (1967) is used as framework for this paper. Results reveal that New Anglophones score higher in the written test than Anglophones thanks to their background in collocation acquired from Secondary and High school.

**Keywords:** Comparison, Use, Collocations, Anglophones, New Anglophones.

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## INTRODUCTION

This paper titled- *A comparative Study of the Use of Collocations by Anglophones and New Anglophones in Cameroon: The Case of First Year Students of the Department of English in the University of Maroua* is divided into four sections: general introduction, material and methodology, results and discussions and general conclusion. The general introductory part of this paper opens with the background to the study wherein it reviews the role of lexis in second language mastery, the definition of key concepts like collocation, Anglophone and New Anglophone. It brings to the limelight the controversies in the views of collocation by linguist and the debate as to who an Anglophone is in Cameroon. It ends with the scope of the study. This is closely followed by the objectives of the study, research questions and hypothesis. The second section focus on material and methodology adopted for the study which content carries the main instrument of data collection and strategies employed by the researchers to collect data. The next is the results and discussion portion which presents and analyses the data collected. It ends with a general conclusion which carries the major findings and recommendations.

The study and mastery of every language automatically entails the mastery of the words of the target language because without vocabulary, communication will be an illusion and impossibility. Several linguists such as Sinclair [1], Brashi, [2] and many others are of the above opinion. To Milton [3], vocabulary is a compulsory, an indispensable and an important cornerstone in the acquisition of a language. He considers it as "... the building blocks of language and without them there is no language" (p. 3). The misuse of commonly associated words may at times create a situation of miscommunication in the sense that the desired feeling and expression turn out not to be understood by interlocutors. Other linguist like Mel'cuk [5], Conklin and Schmitt [4] holds that, words or lexical combinations are not just linked randomly; they have to be carefully put together following their affinity to each other. Conklin and Schmitt (op: cit) affirm the constant and frequent use of lexical combinations in language discourse as well as its discrimination between the speech of native and non-native speakers. Non-native speakers bring to mind the role of exposure through second

language classroom instruction as a key to the enhancement of acquisition and mastery of English and collocations in particular.

In Cameroon, English is being taught and used as a second language having the status of an official language. The fact that the said country is pluralistic linguistically conjures the fact that there is contact that can either impede or promote the acquisition of lexis in English.

Before getting into the nitty-gritty of the paper, it is normal to look at the key terms of this paper (collocation and New Anglophones) which is the focus of the next part.

There is a controversy among linguists about the exact definition of the term “*collocation*” while Sinclair (op:cit:121) looks at collocations as “the concept of word-co-occurrence, where certain words appear predictably next to or within a certain number of words, Brashi (op:cit: 13) defines collocations as “a lexical relationship between words”. For Baker [6] it has to do with “the lexical relationship that is largely arbitrary and independent of meaning” whereas according to Kjellmer [7] collocations is “a sequence of words that occurs more than once in identical form ... and which is grammatically well structured”. Lewis [8] and Hill [9] on their parts consider collocation as “a recurrent co-occurrence of words”, “the way individual words co-occur with others” and “the way in which words occur together in predictable ways” respectively. As working definition for this paper, collocations refer to words that keep company with one another. The works of Firth [10], Halliday [11] Sinclair [12], Lehrer, [13], Lyons [14], Mitchell [15] and Greenbaum [16] have brought forward different approaches to the notion of collocation but as regards this study, the lexico-semantic approach to collocation will be the focus.

After looking at collocation as one of the key concept of this paper, it is time to determine *Who an Anglophone and a New Anglophone is in this study?* The debate as to who an Anglophone is in Cameroon is controversial. It is so because linguistic identity in Cameroon encompasses ethnicity, regionalism and educational linguistic background which has given rise to linguistic identity allegations and semantic expansion [17] thus the above debate. No doubt in Cameroon today, it is normal to hear a francophone parent introducing some of his/her siblings as Anglophones and others francophones to reflect the sub system of education in which the child follow in education be it at the basic, secondary and University levels of education. It is also currently in vogue that some Francophone parents who are anglophiles send their sibling to read English and consider them Anglophones while others who are anglophobias do not consider their siblings as Anglophones even when they study English or study in the said sub system because of the instrumental and integrative motives that go with the acquisition of the English language and culture. Also, some Cameroonians consider any one who can speak or write English as an Anglophone and vice versa. This mixed view of who an Anglophone is or should be has captured the interest of Ngwane [18], Simo Bobda, and Mbouya [19] and Agbor Tabe (op:cit).

According to Agbor Tabe (op:cit), some Cameroonians of the state University of the country have taken advantage of the confusion of who an Anglophone is and should be to open another dimensions to the on-going question. She further explains that in the University of Maroua, Cameroonians who are not Anglophones by either ethnicity or educational linguistic background (That is, even Francophone holders of the Bacalauréat) are admitted to study English be it at the FALSH of Letters and Social Sciences and in the Higher Teachers’ Training College (HTTC). Here, the admission of these students is simply determined by their willingness to read English and to be admitted in FALSH or pass the entrance into the HTTC which contradicts what is practiced in the other state Universities. This makes the notion of which an Anglophone is more complex which explains why she uses the terms Anglophones and New Anglophones, Real Anglophones and the Other Anglophones to distinguish between Anglophones from a geo-historical perspective and the others who do not fall under this category respectively.

The scope of this study is limited to only five categories of collocation and to Anglophone and New Anglophone level one students of the Departments of English in the HTTC and FALSH of the University of Maroua.

The main objective of this paper is to compare the level of mastery of five collocational types (Noun-Noun collocation, Verb-Preposition collocation, Verb-Noun collocation, Preposition-Noun collocation and Verb-Adverb collocation) between Anglophones and New Anglophones students of the University of Maroua. As subsidiary objectives, the paper:

- Identify problems of Anglophones and New Anglophones.
- Compare the performance of Anglophones and New Anglophones in the target collocational types under study.
- Seek reasons responsible for the lapses exercised by the target students in collocation.
- Provides possible solutions to the worrying situation.

By so doing, this study will open a new trend in the study of language in Cameroon which focuses on Anglophones and New Anglophones, a virgin area for other researchers to explore. It equally brings to the lamp light the

variation in the English language curricula for English and French Cameroon despite the fact that the country falls within English as a second language community.

During this research, some relevant questions guided the data collection and discussions such as:

- Do both Anglophones and new Anglophones have problems in their association of lexemes in the course of their written productions?
- If yes, what are the differences in the performance of the both groups in terms of percentage scores?
- What are these problems and what accounts of these lapses?
- What can be a possible solution to remedy or to maintain the level of mastery of collocations by both groups?

The paper argues that comparatively, new Anglophones perform better than Anglophones because the English language curricula for the teaching of 'Anglais' to francophones (who some today are called New Anglophones) in the secondary and high school is more inclusive as opposed to that of the teaching of English language to Anglophone and thus may be responsible for the poor performance of the Anglophones among other factors.

## MATERIALS AND METHODOLOGY

Data for this paper was collected through a written test administered through a stratified sampling technique to the target population in order to illustrate the score of each variable in different collocational types and also to see the instances in which the tested populations falter in their use of collocation. Thanks to the written test, the researcher was able to compare the use of collocation by Anglophones and New Anglophones in the University of Maroua. The written test is presented below:

### Collocations test

Collocations are particular word combinations that exist in English. Test your understanding of collocations with this vocabulary exercise.

#### Underline the collocations in this text

When I obtained my Bachelor degree, I made a decision to take up a job in which I could be creative. On the contrary, my brother, Paul was desperately worried about his line of specialisation. I could play musical instruments, but I had never sung before. So I decided to venture into the singer-song writer world. A year after, I gave a ring to a music producer and after a long chat, he willingly accepted to be my producer. Paul on the other hand would have loved to study medicine, but he did not meet the requirements for the entry. He finally went into Management. It was not a matter of choice reaching this decision.

#### Circle the correct word to complete the blanks

1. The bully is a ..... Smoker, so it will not be surprising if he suffers from lung cancer.  
(a) serial                                      (b) heavy                                      (c) big
2. It is important to get a new site with ..... access to the Mamfe-Ekok highway.  
(a) Ready      (b) outright      (c) widespread      (d) pronounced      (e) wholehearted
3. There are various ways of serving God. It is a.....of opinion which is best or easiest."  
(a) matter                      (b) subject                      (c) thing                      (d) topic
4. I ..... into Paul in church today?  
(a) Knocked                      (b) Bumped                      (c) banged                      (d) Hit
5. Mary is a / an ..... wife who loves her husband and children dearly.  
(a) Devoted                      (b) sincere                      (c) intelligent
6. Please take this address ..... for me, in your diary?  
(a) Up                                      (b) in                                      (c) down
7. the most interesting holiday exercise I ever had was giving ..... tickets at the bus stops.  
(a) Out                                      (b) up                                      (c) into

8. "The..... of living in Cameroon will improve come 2035."
- a) Criterion (b) set (c) standard (d) sample
9. I was a bit ..... when I went to bet after watching the horror film.  
 (a) Terrified (b) petrified (c) scared (d) horrifie d
10. The meal Sarah cooked for us was absolutely .....  
 (a) Delicious (b) tasty (c) nice (d) good
11. The fire extinguisher is only used in.....of a fire incident.  
 (a) Instances (b) samples (c) an occasion (d) case
12. I'm .....sleepy. I'm going to bed.  
 (a) Incredibly (b) absolutely (c) totally (d) utterly
13. I was ..... disappointed by the food in the new restaurant.  
 (a) Utterly (b) terribly (c) completely (d) totally
14. This perfume has a nice .....  
 (a) Smell (b) odour (c) fragrance (d) aroma

**Choose the best adverb from the table below to go with the verbs and complete the sentences**

**Heavily, openly, perfectly, prematurely, barely**

- The accident victims bled .....after the incident.
- The quarrel started after Mary.....challenged Georgia.
- He.....recognised the letters of the alphabet until a series of classes.

**Choose the correct word in brackets to complete the following expressions**

- (To speak, to say, to tell, to do) the time.
- To perform (live, life, lively, living).
- (To make, to set, to put, to let)a date.
- (To be out, behind, under, below) pressure.
- (The late, the final, the last, the end) minutes.

**Choose the best word to complete the following sentences.**

- I think you behaved very ----- . (Selfish/ selfishly / selfishness)
- I don't know him very well. He's just a .....acquaintance. (Casual/ uncanny/ grudging/ )
- There was a ----- change in the weather. (Sudden / suddenly/ )
- The rate at which you eat is -----unhealthy. (Climbing increasingly /augmenting highly/ becoming increasingly)
- We decided to-----our votes in the ballot box. (Drop/ distribute /cast/ advocate)

**Match the beginning of each sentence on the left with its ending on the right**

- |                 |                   |
|-----------------|-------------------|
| 1. She's having | a. her duty.      |
| 2. She's taking | b. a lecture.     |
| 3. She's giving | c. a party.       |
| 4. She's making | d. an exam.       |
| 5. She's doing  | e. good progress. |

Given that the target students population were freshmen from secondary schools, interviews were also conducted with some randomly selected 'Anglais' and English language teachers who have had at least three years of teaching experience in secondary school to elicit data as to why students perform poorly and vice versa in the various collocational types. Observation of the secondary school programmes of the both subsystems of education was done to see how present the said notion is in them comparatively. Corders' [20] error analysis is used as theoretical framework for data processing and analysis.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This section presents the results from the test and generates discussions from the results. It equally complements the talks with findings from the interviews and observation of the English language curricula of the two subsystems of the secondary education in Cameroon.

### Results

Results from the test administered to the target groups base on the collocational types is first of all presented according to percentage scores of only one dependent variable (correct answers) and later based on the two dependent variables (correct and wrong answers). Each of them will be presented in two tables below.

#### Statistical presentation of scores based on one dependent variable for both institutions

The table below presents statistical results from the test showing only the percentage passed of each institution, each group and each type of collocation.

**Table-1: Statistical representation of collocational scores of both institutions based on percentage passed**

Types of collocation	FALSH percentage passed		HTTC percentage passed	
	Anglophones	New Anglophones	Anglophones	New Anglophones
N+N	69,7	82,6	88,9	88,9
V+P	72,9	79,1	87,7	87,7
V+N	61,4	78,5	81,5	81,5
Prep+N	29,9	78,4	81,5	81,5
V+Adv	42,2	58,3	62	62
Gen %	55,22	75,38	80,32	80,32

#### Statistical presentation of scores of collocations of both institutions base on two dependent variables

The forthcoming table shows statistical data collected through the test showing both the percentage passed and percentage failed based on each institution and each type of collocation.

**Table-2: Statistical representation of Anglophones and new Anglophones base on two variables**

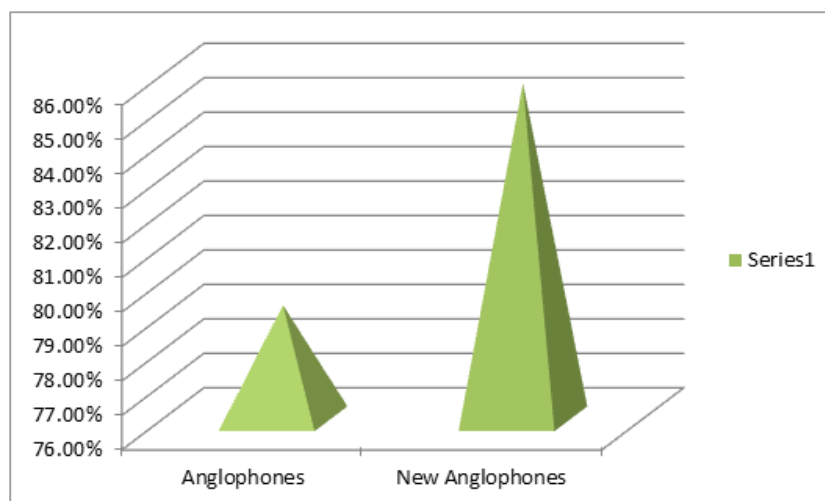
Types of collocation	Anglophones		New Anglophones	
	% passed	% failed	% passed	% failed
N+N	79,3	20,7	85,75	14,25
V+Prep	80,4	19,6	83,4	16,6
V+N	71,45	28,25	80	20
Prep+N	55,5	44,5	79,95	20,05
V+Adv	52,1	47,9	60,15	29,85
Gen %	67,75	38,6	77,85	20,15

### Discussions

The discussions in this part of the paper focuses on a comparative analysis and interpretation of the scores of various collocational types base on the two variables. In comparing the scores of the two groups, the positive scores of the two groups per institution will first be compared base on each type of collocation, then followed by juxtaposing the general score reflecting the Anglophones and New Anglophones and finally possible reasons will be advanced as to why some students had the wrong answers as a way of raising awareness of the cause of the problem for subsequent remedy by the various stake holders involved. The interviews conducted with some randomly selected secondary school teachers who have taught English language for at least three years and the observation of the different English language schemes of the both subsystems of education also complemented the test in interpretation of the data and reasons responsible for the wrong answers chosen by the informants.

#### Noun +Noun Collocation

Noun +Noun are one of the types of collocation that was investigated. At the HTTC, Anglophones respondents had 88.9% passed whereas New-Anglophones of the HTTC on their part registered 75.6% of right answers. This is slightly the case with the Anglophones of the FALSH who scored a percentage of 69.7 % of passes as compared to New-Anglophones of the FALSH score which stood at 82.6% of right answers. In terms of the general score of the two variables in the two schools, the forthcoming chart depicts the situation.



**Chart-1: Comparative score in Noun +Noun collocation**

Anglophones scored 79.3 % meanwhile the other variable recorded an 85.75% pass which is higher than that of the former. Despite the fact that both variables scored above average because of their familiarity with collective nouns in their frequent exchanges in English, there still existed some wrong answers. As for Anglophones, this may be due to the influence of Pidgin English and the wrong Noun+Noun collocations in the oral productions of some individuals. For example, in Pidgin English, it is said that ‘referee don blow final whistle’ and the fact that the students may often hear the sentence from the journalist “the referee has blown the final whistle”, they transpose it to the expression “*the final minutes*” instead of “*the last minutes*”, which is the correct option. The fact that this item was not taught separately seem to be a primary factor that accounts for the errors they commit. Never the less, the reason behind their correct answers may be their knowledge of composite nouns. In opposition to the former, the Bacalauréat holders who did not give the correct answer, were impeded by their first language in their use of English. For example, they talked of “*the final minutes*”, probably due to the French expression “*les dernières minutes*”. Again, the problem of over generalisation is eminent in this context.

### Verb + Preposition Collocations

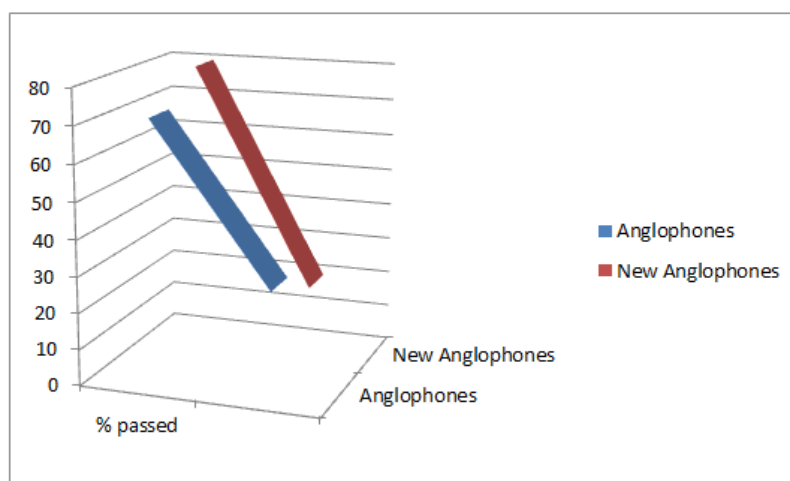
With reference to the Verb + Preposition (V+Prep) collocations in HTTC while Anglophones respondents registered a percentage of 87.7% of right answers, the New Anglophones scored an 80.7% mastery of V+Prep collocations. The Anglophones of the FALSH on their part recorded a success rate of 72.9% while the New Anglophones of the FALSH had a pass score of 79.1% closely similar to that of the Anglophones of the same FALSH. Looking at the overall scores, one will notice that the New Anglophones scored an 83.4% pass slightly higher than that of the Anglophones which stood at 80.4%.

One could say at this juncture that, the high percentage of the correct answers could be based on the fact that the students had been exposed to the expressions although not under collocations but through phrasal verbs. Thus, their knowledge on the already mentioned type of collocation is great as a result of their mastery of phrasal verbs. The wrong answers could be as a result of the respondents’ limited knowledge of phrasal verbs and worst still; they have some problems with the use of prepositions. It is also important to say that observation of the schemes of works of English in the two subsystems of education indicated that this aspect of collocation is more present in the French subsystem ‘Anglais’ scheme of work as opposed to the other that is mostly focus on the examination programme of the GCE board.

### Verb + Noun Collocations

In this category, while Anglophones of the HTTC registered an 81.5% pass score, the new Anglophones had 70.1%. Anglophones of the FALSH on their part scored 61.4% as concerns correct answers while new Anglophones recorded 70.1% score higher than that of the previous group. Chart two presents the overall performance of the populations in Verb + Noun collocation.





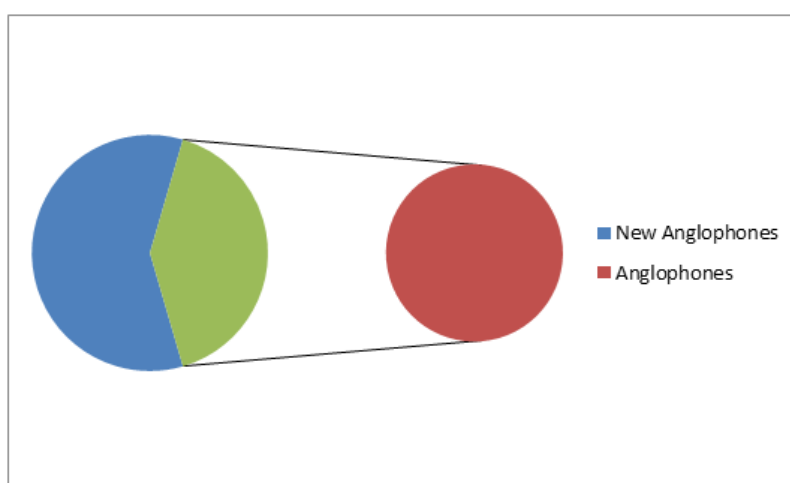
**Chart-2: Comparative score in Verb +Noun collocation**

Generally, while Anglophone had a pass percentage of 71.45, New Anglophone had 80% pass which is relatively higher.

Here, it could be said that some students had a shallow knowledge of this collocational type. As such, this exercise seemed a little cumbersome for them. The Anglophones students may encounter difficulties in combining words, the issue of uneasy collocational predictability and low generalizability which may be explanations for the wrong answers that were identified. Contrary to this is the influence of French into English exercised by new Anglophones. Consider the case of “time” attached to a verb; in fact, many of the respondents opted for the verb “say” instead of “tell”. Therefore they propose the combination “say the time” instead of “tell the time”. They were influenced by their first official language in which it is said “dire l’heure”. This one also poses the problem of intelligibility for, the words “say” and “tell” mean the same in French: “dire”. It is equally as a result of the inability of getting an exact equivalent in the second language. Here, there is interference of the first language. Another problematic point is with the word “date”. In fact, instead of choosing the expression “set a date” which is the right answer, most of the students picked “put the date” and “let the date”. Again, they must have been influenced by the French expression “fixer une date”.

### Preposition + Noun Collocations

Looking at the results of the test, Anglophones of HTTC registered 81.5% of right answers as Prep+N collocation are concerned while the New Anglophones had only 34.8% pass. As for Anglophones of the FALSH, they marked a poor percentage of success of only 29.9% whereas the New Anglophones of the FALSH had a percentage score of 78.4%. The summative picture of the situation is indicated in the forthcoming chart 3.



**Chart-3: Comparative score in Preposition +Noun collocation**

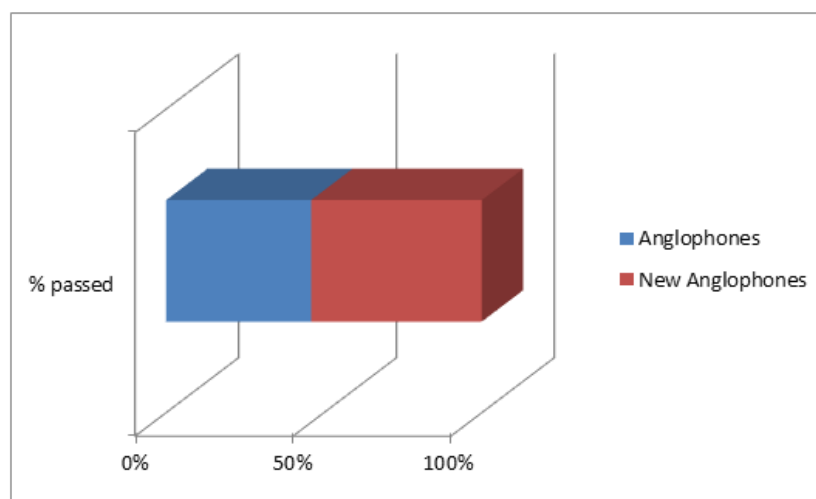
In summary, the New Anglophones had a good score of 79.95%. contrary to that of Anglophones who had only an average pass of 55.5%. Here, a slight and technical difficulty encountered by the students is realised. Some wrong collocations such as “below pressure” instead of “under pressure” could be identified. The Students who provided these

false responses certainly thought of the expression “*below stairs*”, which means at a lower level or lower position; while the correct answer was “*under pressure*”, meaning “to force or try to persuade somebody to do something” (OALD, 1158). The result demonstrates that some students really have difficulties combining some words together to convey a correct meaning. This seems to be a major problem that English learners may face in dealing with collocations because of the collocations’ arbitrariness and the fact that word collocation is by linguistic conventions. It is also important to note here that the limited knowledge on the use of prepositions by the students is first and foremost a disturbing factor, talk less of its association with other words.

### Verb + Adverb Collocation

A look at the performance of the respondents of the HTTC in Verb+ Adverb (V+Adv) collocation in the test shows Anglophones had a 62% pass while the new Anglophones in the same school had a 62% pass. In the FALSH, Anglophones scored a 42.2% as against 58.3% of the New Anglophones. From a cumulative perspective, though the both population scored above average pass, the Anglophones had a lower score of 52.1% as opposed to the other with 60.15%. The performance of the respondents which stood at below average particularly for the Bacalauréat and average for the G.C.E holders was a cause for alarm. The students showed proof of limited knowledge of this type of collocation. This may be as a result of the fact that a majority of them did not understand the meaning of some words. In the exercise where they were asked to choose the best adverb to go with the verb, some chose “*bled prematurely or openly*” in place of “*bled heavily*”. Another V-Adv collocation that many of them missed was to select between “*utterly, absolutely, incredibly, totally*” to be attached to the word “*sleepy*”. Some chose “*utterly sleepy*” and others “*totally and completely sleepy*” instead of “*incredibly sleepy*”. A great problem also lies in the expression “*perform live*”; but most of the respondents gave as answer “*perform lively*” that is naturally wrong view of the context. They surely don’t know that when “*live*” is used after a verb, it acts as an “adverb”. A “live performance” is given in front of an audience, rather than being recorded and then broadcast or shown in a film. This is a case of confusable where some respondents were tricked. The semantic and the phonological impact here is a major concern. The term *live* may serve as a verb [*liv*], as an adverb [*laiv*] (as is the case of the target question here). One would have imagined that the students’ knowledge of the positioning of verbs and adverbs in sentences would guide them. Thus, the issue of tension between achieving accuracy and naturalness could be another barrier in dealing with collocations. They might have also been deceived by the French term “*j’ai omplètement / totalement sommeil*” or may be the order of words in their mother tongues. This is the situation of negative transfer.

Given that this study is a comparative study, it is important to show the general score per population. Chart 4 illustrates it better.



**Chart-4: General passed scores based on Anglophones and New Anglophones**

The above chart depicts the general score of the two target populations of the study. The general score here is the sum total of all the scores in the different five collocational types. The Anglophones score a general pass of 67.75 % against 77.85% passed score of New Anglophones.

## CONCLUSION

This conclusive section summary findings, justifies the hypothesis of the study and make recommendations. This study that comparatively investigated the challenges some Anglophones and New Anglophones encountered in the use of collocations as far as their written productions are concerned has endeavoured to justify the following:



Some Anglophones and new Anglophones have problems in their association of lexemes in the course of their written productions though comparatively, New Anglophones scored a slightly higher percentage pass as opposed to Anglophones probably because the concept of collocation is absent in the curricula of the Anglophone Secondary and High schools subsystem of education as opposed to the other where the notion is more present. Other reasons accountable for some faulty answers chosen by the New Anglophones were influenced by their official linguistic background (French) whereas the wrong options made by the other were their poor background of the notion from secondary school. Mis-learning and under-learning of some collocational expressions by some students from the both populations was another cause of the wrong options made by the students.

There are some recommendations which if applied could remedy or maintain the level of mastery of collocations by Anglophones and New Anglophones in general. It is important that the educational authorities include the notion of “collocation” as a distinct and pertinent subsection of lexical choices represented in the English language curricula at various levels. Teachers can create a variety of exercises, design instructional materials and use a variety of strategies to make the students internalize appropriate collocational expressions. Examples of these exercises are word-building, gap-filling, matching words, odd one out, multiple choices, translation tasks and others. The advent of the World Wide Web, teachers have at their disposal a large amount of collocation exercises to benefit from. The students should systematically use modern software or hardware collocation dictionaries such as The BBI Combinatory Dictionary of English [21] Oxford Collocations Dictionary for Students of English and COBUILD respectively that give attention to collocations because such dictionaries are efficient tools that allow the students to build up their own collocational competence.

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