

CLEC-based Error Analysis of Collocations of Chinese English Learners

--Taking the Noun-Noun Structure as an Example

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Abstract. China's voice in the international arena is gradually increasing in the present era of economic globalization. In order to further strengthen the multifaceted communication with the world, Chinese students must improve their English learning and application skills. However, due to the distinct difference between Chinese and English, and the lack of an authentic communication environment, English collocation has always been a significant difficulty for Chinese students in the process of learning English. As a result, pragmatic errors frequently occur in their usage. Aimed to address Chinese students' difficulties in applying collocation, this article takes the Chinese Learner English Corpus (CLEC) as the research object and AntConc as the retrieval tool to collect the noun-noun collocation errors (CC1) in CLEC, then further analyses and interprets the data obtained. It's discovered that learners' usage errors in noun-noun collocation are mainly divided into the following three categories: grammar error, Chinese English expression, and overgeneralization. By further interpretation and analysis, it is reckoned that negative transfer of native language, interlanguage fossilization, second-language teaching methods, negligence of collocation structure, and semantic constraints are the main reasons for noun-noun collocation errors. In terms of the above situation, this article proposes corresponding countermeasures for second-language teaching methods and English learning to enrich the current research on English collocations, seeking to provide a reference for the use and teaching of noun-noun collocations.

Keywords: CLEC, AntConc, Noun-Noun Collocations, Error Analysis, Second-language Teaching Methods

1. Introduction

1.1 Research Background

In recent years, China has become more and more internationally connected in terms of politics, economy, and cultural spheres, which has made English proficiency an integral part of cultivating Chinese students' overall ability. However, Chinese students often make frequent mistakes in applying English expressions, and the status of English mastery is not optimistic. Most Chinese students rely on classroom teaching due to the long-term lack of language environment and the significant language differences between Chinese and English. As a result, a large majority of them tend to do simple translations of English based on their current understanding of the Chinese language. One of the most common specific manifestations lies in the irregular use of collocations. Even for English majors who have studied English for a long time and have a good range of vocabulary, the level of mastery of collocations is not proportional to the amount of vocabulary they've accumulated. Moreover, grammar errors occur from time to time. Some studies have shown that Chinese learners' knowledge of English collocations lags far behind their total vocabulary volume. (Tang Wenli, 04(2005):45-488)

Based on this situation, the study of English collocation errors plays a crucial role in the process of improving Chinese learners' English proficiency. Therefore, the study of collocation is significant and necessary to enhance Chinese learners' usage of English. Among the studies of English collocation, the error analysis of English collocation is an essential breakthrough in studying English learners' learning process. The analysis of the causes of errors, the generalization of different types of errors, and the strategies to reduce the error rate can help teachers and learners improve their

understanding of English learning, reduce the occurrence of similar errors and, to a certain extent, help find more effective methods of English teaching and English learning.

In the study of collocation of words, noun-noun collocation bears certain representativeness and significance. First and foremost, nouns contain various categories and are widely and frequently used in daily communication. Moreover, English and Chinese language forms are very different as they belong to two completely different language systems: In Chinese, language users tend to use more verbs, and narrative is dynamic. In English, users tend to use more static parts of speech, such as nouns, prepositions, and adjectives (Liu Linghui, 2010:71-76). Compared to that of Chinese, the use of English noun collocation is more frequent, and the rules of use are relatively more complicated. Thus, Chinese students present a high error rate when using English noun-noun collocations, which affects the output of correct English to a large extent. Therefore, in this article, noun-noun collocation errors are selected for targeted analysis and in-depth discussion in order to improve the current situation.

1.2 Literature Review

Many scholars in China have conducted studies on English word collocation errors based on the CLEC. There are two main types of studies among the existing studies on noun-noun collocation errors. One type of study compares the characteristics of noun-noun collocations between different corpora by taking representative words as examples, e.g., Zhang Yi's "A corpus-based study on the characteristics of Chinese students' English noun-noun collocations." "In this article, the author selects eight representative nouns, characterizes their collocation errors, and compares them with the frequency and similarity of the exact words in the corpora of native English speakers such as BNC or FLOB to identify the corresponding causes of errors. These causes include the negative transfer of native language, different learning strategies, and teaching and learning environments. Another type of study analyzes the causes of noun-noun collocation errors using some groups of students as examples, such as Zuo Shangjun's "A Study of English Learners' Noun-Noun Collocation Errors." The article takes the noun-noun collocation errors of English majors as the main object of study, which deals with the analysis with the concepts of lexical node, semantic prosody, and psychological vocabulary in psycholinguistics. Learning English is analyzed at a psychological level, and the causes of errors are looked into through the "source language shining-through effect," leading to appropriate teaching and learning strategies. Both studies have explored the causes of noun-noun collocation errors from the perspective of corpus comparison and psychological analysis of the learning process and have provided specific strategies for improvement.

However, there is a lack of overall cross-sectional research, i.e., the study of different types of the majority of students and as many types of noun-noun collocations as possible, analysis of the causes, and specific learning methods and possible teaching strategies.

1.3 Research Content

1.3.1 Research objective

In the existing corpus-based studies of noun-noun collocation errors, there is still a lack of complete cross-sectional comparative studies for the general English learner population. Based on this, this article will collect and analyze different noun-noun collocations according to the causes, finding out the similarities and differences of noun-noun collocation errors for all Chinese English learners at all levels in the CLEC. The study also identified the reasons behind different types of errors led by the second language acquisition and second-language teaching method theories. Finally, strategies are provided to help Chinese English teachers and learners to develop a clearer understanding of different noun-noun collocation errors and a more effective way of mastery.

1.3.2 Methodology

CLEC is used as a corpus in this article, which covers a variety of marked errors in English compositions of five levels of student groups, including high school students (ST2), freshman and

sophomore of non-English majors (ST3), junior and senior of non-English majors (ST4), freshman and sophomore of English majors (ST5) and junior and senior of English majors (ST6). This corpus of more than one million words provides a good collection of the characteristics of English expressions and linguistic errors of students of five levels. Most of the research so far has focused on the use of verb-noun collocations, which are the most frequent in CLEC collocation errors (65.18%), and adjective-noun collocations, which are the second most frequent in CLEC collocation errors (16%). The study of noun-noun collocation errors, which accounts for 12.71% of the total number of collocation errors, is not extensive and in-depth enough. Therefore, this article chooses to study the noun-noun collocation in the CLEC corpus to get a more accurate and objective picture of the mastery of noun-noun collocation in different levels of Chinese English learners, categorizing the characteristics of the errors and analyzing their causes in different contexts.

AntConc 3.5.8 is a full-featured corpus retrieval software that can support a variety of data collection operations such as concordance, cluster extraction, word list generation, file view, word distribution, word collocation, and so on. It can retrieve data from the CLEC in different directions and enhance the efficiency and accuracy of the overall research data. In this article, AntConc 3.5.8 was chosen as the retrieval tool. Its functions, such as error code retrieval, word retrieval, collocation, and cluster, were mainly used to collect noun-noun collocation errors. The article also compares different student groups' errors and error characteristics, carrying out error cause analysis concerning the context of the incorrect collocations.

In the process of analyzing the causes of errors and exploring the feasible strategies, this article combined the interlanguage theory, language fossilization theory, and the second-language teaching methods in the second language acquisition to analyze the fundamental causes of errors and put forward corresponding teaching strategies.

2. Data Analysis and Interpretation

2.1 General Discourse

The 374 noun-noun collocation errors retrieved from CLEC were analyzed for the high-frequency errors made in this study. The comparative analysis revealed that the use of interlanguage in noun-noun collocation was common among learners of different levels and that language fossilization occurred as English learning time increased. Of the total number of all noun-noun collocation errors, the number of errors caused by the negative transfer of native language due to the influence of Chinese accounted for more than 80%.

Selinker holds that language fossilization begins with the phenomenon that a second language learner can use the target language correctly in one context but not in another. Such linguistic fluctuation can be defined as language fossilization if it lasts for a long period (probably at least 2-5 years). (Selinker, L. 1972: 209-231) The concept of interlanguage, also proposed by Selinker, refers to the transitional language between the native language and the target language that second language learners construct when they learn the target language and is a psycholinguistic system belonging to second language learners. The linguistic features of the interlanguage lie between the first language and the target language and are constantly approaching from the first language to the second language during the language learning process. The process is characterized by the disappearance of the lower level of the interlanguage and the emergence of the higher level. At a certain point, the learner develops language fossilization of the interlanguage. Among the language fossilizations exhibited by Chinese English learners, interlanguage fossilization is very common.

The interlanguage fossilization in this corpus of noun-noun collocation errors is manifested in the following ways.

(1) Errors affected by the negative transfer of native language frequently occur in each learner group. For example, in the collocation errors, the learners do not fully understand the meaning of the words and the context in which they are used but instead follow the Chinese word-for-word translation. This phenomenon does not diminish as their mastery of English increases or as their

learning time increases. However, it is more prevalent among intermediate and high-level (ST4-ST6) learners, involving more words and a higher error rate.

(2) The expressions of interlanguage are similar and less varied. ST4-ST6 show more similarities in the use of the interlanguage, the types of errors are more similar, and new forms of interlanguage rarely develop.

(3) The fossilization of interlanguage is not only reflected in the degree of collocation but also grammar and vocabulary. Both interlanguage fossilization and interlanguage convergence in noun-noun collocation indicate that collocation is a significant obstacle for Chinese learners to break through the progress bottleneck. Therefore, it is necessary to understand the underlying causes and mechanisms of noun-noun collocation errors and propose different teaching and learning strategies according to different types of errors.

After screening, this article excludes a small number of invalid data that do not meet the standard of noun-noun collocation errors, resulting in a total of 345 valid errors. The 345 noun-noun collocation errors were divided into three main categories:

(1) Chinglish expressions such as “today morning”, “singers match”, “a good matter”;

(2) Grammar errors, such as “people computer”, “everything time”, “freedom life” and other basic grammar errors;

(3) Overgeneralization, such as “the test in the middle of the term”.

All three types above can be classified as interlanguage, an intermediate language between Chinese and English created by Chinese learners of English in the process of learning English. Specifically, grammar errors are divided into two types: part-of-speech errors and spelling errors; Chinglish expression is divided into three types according to the characteristics and causes of errors: (1) Word-for-word translation; (2) the order of Chinese expression; (3) semantic repetition.

2.2 Percentage of Three Types of Errors Among Chinese English Learners

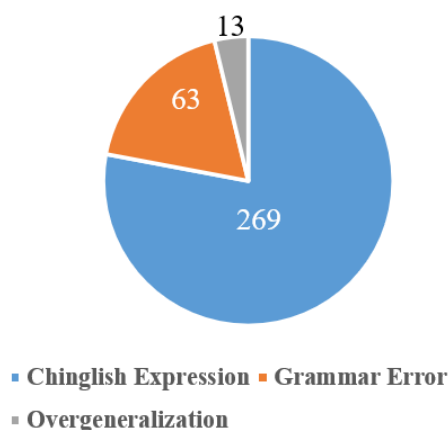


Fig.1 The Proportion of Three Types of Errors

Among the 345 noun-noun collocation errors, Chinglish expressions ranked first with 269, taking up 77.9% of the total. Grammar errors ranked second with 63, taking up 18.26% of the total overgeneralization ranked third with only 13 and 3.76%. It can be concluded that Chinglish expressions are the primary source of noun-noun collocation errors.

From a maximum of 95 and 78 errors in ST2 and 3 to 38 and 47 errors in ST5 and 6, the frequency of this error was highest in the lower grades of learning and lowest in the English major learners, and there was a decreasing trend of noun-noun collocation errors for learners at each stage. According to the proportion of noun-noun collocation errors committed by Chinese English learners at each level, Chinglish expressions accounted for 69% or more of the noun-noun collocation errors for learners at each level, even 94.7% for ST5. Grammar errors were the second most common. In contrast, overgeneralization accounted for a minor proportion, decreasing as learners' levels increased.

Table 1.The Number and Percentage of Errors in the Total Number of Errors in Each Level of Chinese English Learners

	ST2		ST3		ST4		ST5		ST6	
	number	percentage	number	percentage	number	percentage	number	percentage	number	percentage
Chinglish Expression	66	69.40%	66	84.60%	68	78.10%	36	94.70%	33	70.20%
Grammar Error	21	22.10%	10	12.80%	16	18.30%	2	5.20%	14	29.00%
Overgeneralization	8	8.40%	2	2.50%	3	3.40%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%
Total	95		78		87		38		47	

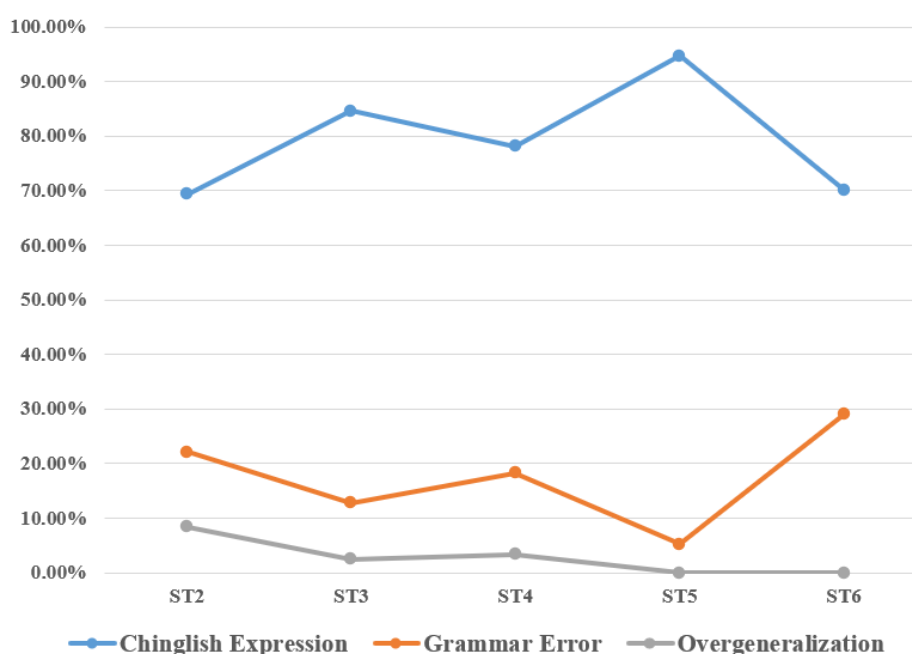


Fig.2 Percentage of Each Type of Errors in the Total Number of Errors in Each Level of Chinese English Learners

By comparing the percentage of noun-noun collocation errors of each group of students, it is evident that the frequency of Chinglish expression is the highest in both lower and higher levels of learners. There is also a clear rising tendency at increasing stages of English learning, such as ST2 to ST3, suggesting to some extent that negative transfer of native language has dramatically affected the formation of interlanguage. Grammatical errors are present at every stage of English learning, with a tendency to decrease during the period of learning ST2-ST4, but account for the most significant proportion of errors in ST6, as much as 29%. This indicates that English learners' grasp of grammar gradually increases, and the rate of grammar errors in noun-noun collocations decreases after a long period of English learning. However, a higher proportion of grammar errors in noun-noun collocations are found among learners of ST6 who have passed the test for English majors band 8. Moreover, the level of mastery of basic grammar is neglected even though the vocabulary of the English majors' compositions in the corpus is large, and many grammar errors occur where the distinction between phrases and words, their specific usage, and the part of speech is not yet clearly understood. As to the last type, overgeneralization accounts for a low percentage of the three errors and tends to decline significantly as English is learned and mastered throughout the time, suggesting that overgeneralization does not play as much of a role in the formation of interlanguage in noun-noun collocation as negative transfer of native language and has a relatively small impact. This type

of error is more likely to occur among ST2-4, who have learned specific usage rules but have not fully mastered the use of context and phrases. Overgeneralization is, therefore, more likely to occur for lower and intermediate learners but is less common among higher-level learners and professional learners of English.

2.3 Chinglish Expression

Chinglish refers to the fact that when Chinese people learn and use English, they apply Chinese language rules to English language rules and speak or write abnormal language that is not in accordance with English cultural habits due to the interference and influence of the Chinese way of thinking and corresponding cultural background knowledge. (Ma Qinglin & Ji Jianfen, 2003:158-160) This is mainly due to the negative transfer of native language and the dominance of Chinese over students' language thinking skills. Students tend to use translation as the primary understanding tool for learning English in the first place, making English an equivalence to the current Chinese expressions rather than a separate language with distinct differences. In the analysis of noun-noun collocation errors, most of the errors were caused by the native language interference. Therefore, in the error analysis, this article will focus on collating the relationship between the negative transfer of native language and interlanguage, as well as the causes of interlanguage fossilization, finding appropriate strategies to reduce the occurrence of such errors.

According to the characters and causes, Chinglish expressions are mainly divided into three categories according to the expression characteristics of different errors: word-for-word translation, the order of Chinglish expressions, and semantic repetition.

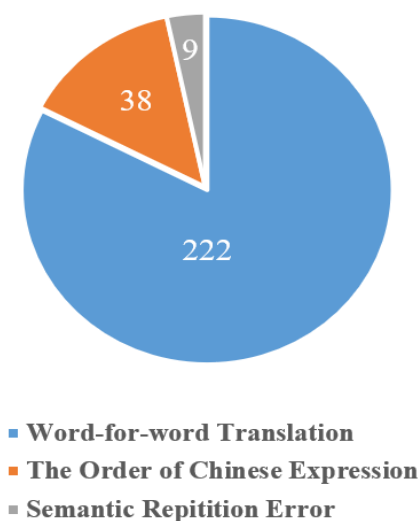


Fig.3 The Proportion of Three Types of Chinglish Expressions

The highest proportion of all Chinglish expressions is dominated by the wrong thinking pattern of direct translation, i.e., word-for-word translation, at 82.52%, and is consistently present in ST2 - ST6. The order of Chinese expression, on the other hand, accounts for 14.12% of Chinglish expression and is more common in ST4-6. The last type of Chinglish expression is defined as “redundant twins” in the “The Translator’s Guide to Chinglish”. More specifically speaking, it is shown as semantic repetition and redundant expressions in the CLEC’s noun-noun collocation errors, accounting for 3.34% of all Chinglish expressions.

2.3.1 Word-for-word Translation

Word-for-word translation accounted for the most significant proportion of Chinglish expression. The errors can be divided into two forms, with a few of them being the translation of keywords into English after removing some of the information expressed in Chinese. For example, in the case of “spirit story”, the student wanted to tell the meaning of “a story that shows a great spirit”, but he

directly combined the word “spirit” with the word “story”. For another example, the student wanted to express the meaning of “a teacher who helps to practice the language”, but only the three words “practice”, “language” and “teacher” were converted into the corresponding English words, leaving the rest of the meanings behind. This kind of mistake mainly exists in ST2 middle school students, because some students have only been introduced to English in the third grade of primary school. Even in junior high school, these students have just started to systematically learn English. They do not have enough ability to master English expression as a whole and its expression grammar and rules. As a result, they can only use keywords to express the overall meaning.

Table 2. Word -for-word Translation

ST2		ST3	
Error	Correction	Error	Correction
spirits story	story of great spirit	lecture method	teaching method
practice Chinses teacher	A teacher who teaches Chinese exercises	house teacher	private tutor
trains chance	Training opportunities	neighbour boy	the boy next door
warning clock	alarm bell	living level	living standard
book-table	desk	economy system	economic system
today morning	this morning	the science technics	science and technology
select beauty match	beauty contest	ST5	
high tide part	climax	Error	Correction
mother school	Alma Mater	university entering	university entrance
middle night	the middle of the night	money burning	costly
second half of the study	half way through the study	computer line	computer cable
a good matter	a good thing	resistance spirit	resistant spirit
ST4		a piece of dark	pitch black
Error	Correction	ST6	
disease life	a life of illness	Error	Correction
knowledge aspect	scope of knowledge	realization of ego	self-realization
a suit of clothes	a set of clothes	reform knowledge	innocation of knowledge
study performance	academic performance	struggle history	the struggling history
job chance	job opportunities	science workers	scientific worker

A more significant part of the errors is manifested in the direct and rigid combination of English words that correspond to Chinese equivalent words in the dictionary, such as “today morning”, “trains chance”, “select beauty match”, and “mother school”, “English study life”, “knowledge aspect”, “job chance”, “money-burning”, “society work”, “struggle history” and so on. Furthermore, when students use noun-noun collocation expressions, they first generate the meaning they want to express in Chinese and then convert such Chinese words into English equivalences in the dictionary, forming a very rigid word-for-word translation error. This type of error is evident at all levels of students, for ST5-6, where the errors show a more rigid translation of a richer vocabulary. Such word-for-word translation results from students’ lack of suitability in collocations and their lack of enough memory to use them in the correct context. As a result of accumulating an extensive base of vocabulary and memorizing words based on vocabulary books for a long period, the memory of word use is only at the most superficial level. Their brain only contains the literal meaning of words translated into Chinese in the dictionary, and they can hardly integrate fragmented words, semantic units, or meaning groups to memorize them, let alone appreciate the possible meanings and contexts of use of English words beyond the mere Chinese translation in the dictionary.

2.3.2 The Order of Chinese Expression

The main feature of this type of error lies in expressing the meaning of English in the corresponding Chinese word order. Two categories can be concluded for this type of error: the improper use and confusion of the possessive nouns, e.g., “labor’s fruit”, “country’s people”, “the subject’s teacher”, “the old’s authority”, “the freedom of life” etc. Taking the first case as an example, the student wanted to express the meaning of “the fruit that belongs to the labor” but expressed it directly in Chinese order, without understanding the usage of the subordinate preposition “of” in “the fruit of labors”. This error was caused by students’ confusion about the difference between the English

and Chinese languages. There are very few clear rules and usage of subordinate prepositions in Chinese. The most common preposition in Chinese indicating subordinate relations between nouns is “de”, so it is easy for students to convert Chinese into English by directly using “s” in English to replace “de”, resulting in the improper use and collocation of the possessive nouns.

Table 3. The Order of Chinglish Expression

ST2		ST3	
Error	Correction	Error	Correction
term end	end of the term	old people life	old people's life
nation's people	people of the nation	labour's fruit	the fruit of labours
ST4		United States Soldiers	soldiers of the United States
Error	Correction	patient's life or death	The life or death of a patient
country economy	the economy of the country	delevoping speed	speed of development
fake commodities' quality	quality of the fake commodities	ST6	
commodities producers	Producers of commodities	Error	Correction
ST5		the old's authority	authority of the old
Error	Correction	life's freedom	freedom of life
tomorrow train tickets	train tickets for tomorrow	success road	the road to success
bike's security	security of the bike	China government policies	policies of Chinese government
fire sea	a sea of fire	majority poor	the majority of the poor

The main feature of this error is to use of Chinese grammatical order to express the meaning of English, which can be divided into two categories: the improper use and confusion of the possessive case of nouns, e.g., “labors’ fruit”, “country’s people”, “the subject’s teacher”, “the old’s authority”, “the freedom of life” etc. Taking the first case as an example, the student wanted to express the meaning of “the fruit that belongs to the labor” but expressed it directly in Chinese order, without understanding the usage of the subordinate preposition “of” in “the fruit of labors”. This error was caused by the difference between the English and Chinese languages. There are very few clear rules and usage of subordinating prepositions in Chinese. The most common preposition in Chinese indicating subordinating relations between nouns is “de”, so it is easy for students to convert Chinese into English by directly using “s” in English to replace “de”, resulting in the improper use and collocation of the possessive nouns.

2.3.3 Semantic repetition

Table 4. Semantic Repetition

ST2		ST4	
Error	Correction	Error	Correction
athletic sports	sports	sunshine beam	sunshine/ a beam of sunshine
ST3		ST5	
Error	Correction	Error	Correction
entertainment activity	entertainment	wit person	wit
life health	health	night evening	night/evening
body exercise	exercise	cigarette smoking	smoking

Semantic repetition refers to the lack of clear understanding of the meaning of words, so that words with similar meanings are stacked together according to Chinese expressions or cause semantic redundancy. For instance, “wit person”, “sunshine beam”, “the sound of laugh”, “activity movements”, “body health”, etc. The first two examples were caused by students not fully grasping all the meanings and parts of speech of a word. In the first example, due to not being fully aware that “wit” not only has the adjectival lexical form but can also directly mean “an intelligent person”. The student mistakenly assumes that the word “wit” can only appear as an adjective, so he/she “wit” and “person” together, constituting a semantic repetition in English. The fourth example is influenced by the Chinese category words, as there are more category words in Chinese, such as “problem”, “status”, “situation”, and so on. Students can easily translate the category words into English directly, which leads to many unnecessary words in the English expression. The fifth error is caused under the

influence of the customary Chinese phrase “shentijiankang”, which means “body health” in literal translation, whereas, in English, the word “health” itself means “health of the human body”, there is no need to add the word “body” to the English expression. In a nutshell, it can be concluded that the negative transfer of native language mainly causes such semantic repetition.

2.4 Grammar Errors

English grammar is the study of the inflection of “parts of speech” and “words” used according to specific usages or other means of expressing their mutual relations as well as the functions and relations of words in sentences. English grammar errors are common among Chinese English learners in English expressions. Studies have shown that English expression, noun, subject-verb agreement, word spelling, prepositions, tense, sentence pattern, numerals, and articles are common grammar errors made by Chinese English learners.(Wen Yaguang,04(2003):41-46) According to different expression characteristics, this article divides the grammar errors in noun-noun collocation errors into two major categories: part-of-speech errors and spelling errors.

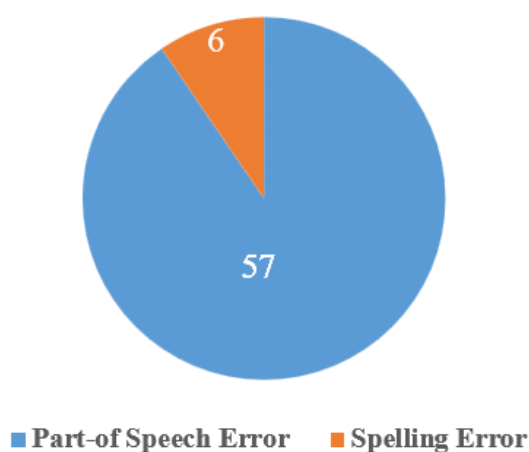


Fig.4 The Proportion of Two Types of GrammarErrors

The part-of-speech error was the most common of all grammar errors and was present in ST2-6, accounting for 90.47% of all grammar errors; the spelling error accounted for a minor proportion of all grammar errors at 9.52% and was more prevalent in the lower levels of students in ST2-4.

2.4.1 Part-of Speech Errors

Part-of-speech error is the largest type of syntax error, which is mainly manifested as the confusion of the part of speech and its usage. These errors can be divided into four categories, depending on the characteristics of the error.

One is the lack of ability to master the part of speech of a word or words containing multiple parts of speech, which accounts for a proportion in all groups of ST2-ST6. For example, “people computer”, “freedom life”, “color fish”, “doom day”, “society service” and so on. When students make this mistake, they often mistakenly believe that an attributive collocation can be simply formed by just putting two nouns in English together. Such misunderstanding and the subjective assumption are also influenced to some extent by the negative transfer of native language and the fact that Chinese has fewer variations in word forms. In contrast, English has many variations in words, tenses, lexis, and tone. The lack of clarity and proficiency in their application, coupled with the differences between English and Chinese in the meaning of words, leads students to make mistakes easily when applying English. (Wang Ying: 2010: 88-89) In Chinese collocations, the distinction between word tenses is not as strict as in English, and the boundaries between different parts of speech are not as straightforward as in English. For example, the word “ziyou” in Chinses, which is literally translated as “freedom” or “free” in English, can be used as both a noun and an adjective, while in English, “free” can only be used as an adjective or an adverb, and “freedom” is the noun form. The lower level of English learners tends to ignore the word family composed by adding the derivational affix behind

a stem and instead memorize only the English word corresponding to the Chinese word, resulting in an indistinguishable word. Another type of error is caused by mistaking the word as an adjective and forgetting to add an inflectional affix such as “-ed” or “-ing” after the word, e.g., “colored fish” is miswritten as “color fish” because the students haven’t fully grasped by adding “-ed” after the noun “color” to make it an adjective modifying the noun.

Table 5. Part-of Speech Errors

ST2		ST3	
Error	Correction	Error	Correction
people computer	personal computer	a good health body	a healthy body
freedom life	free life	productivity force	productive force
six or seven rains	six or seven frops of rain	everybody duty	everybody's duty
true man	a true man	opinion each other	opinion of eachother
the basketball court	a basketball court	mistake medicine	wrong medicine
color fish	colored fish	a great number of water	a lot of water
everything time	every time	industry product	industrial product
centigrade 30	30 degrees centigrade	ST5	
ST4		Errors	Correction
Errors	Correction	foreign fund company	foerign funded company
industry alcohol	industrial alcohol	frequency life	fast-paced life
interest job	interesting job	ST6	
joy atmosphere	joyful atmosphere	Grammar Errors	Correct form
doom day	doomed day	peace time	peacetime
customers interest	costomer's interest	from the health/time point of view	in terms of heal/htime
knowledge man	knowledgeable man	crinimal rate	crime rate
society service	social service	science way	scientific way
detail fact	detailed fact	secretary assistant	assistant secretary

The second type is the misuse of determiners and errors in the singular and plural of words, such as “true man” without adding “a” or “the” before it and taking “water” as a countable noun with the wrong quantifier. This is also partly due to the negative interference of the mother tongue due to the difference between the English and Chinese languages. There are no strict rules for determiners in Chinese, but in English, there are determiners such as “a”, “an” and “the”; singular and plural and countability are another grammatical rule that distinguishes English from Chinese. Therefore, for new or recently exposed learners of English, finite and singular plural is an unfamiliar concept. As a result, they are often overused, underused, or misused by lower levels of learners and even by English majors with a high mastery level.

The third category is the misuse of the preposition, such as the omission of “of” in the phrase “opinion each other” in ST3, where “of” plays a subordinate role, and the omission of “a” and “of” in the phrase “series law” in ST4.

The fourth category is a lack of familiarity with how particular noun phrases are used, and this type of error is more common in ST5-6. For example, in the phrase “from the health/time point of view”, which appears in ST6, the student does not clearly recognize that “point of view” is a noun and that “the point of view” needs to be preceded by an adjective or a possessive noun to modify it and cannot add a noun directly.

In short, the part-of-speech error in the Chinglish expression can be boiled down into four categories: the lack of knowledge of different parts of speech, the misuse of determiners, the misuse of prepositions, and the misuse of set expressions.

2.4.2 Spelling Errors

There are few spelling errors in the noun-noun collocation errors and mostly appear in ST2-3. Spelling errors in CLEC are often found between two words with similar word forms, such as “word” and “work”, or between two words with similar pronunciations, such as “hill” and “heal”. Chinese is a hieroglyphic script, while English is an acrophonic script. Chinese learners who are accustomed to the memory of their mother tongue are very unaccustomed to the English model, which favors memorization through pronunciation, and are often disturbed by their mother tongue’s memory mode, subconsciously memorizing through the “shape” of words and then making spelling mistakes. (Wu Hui, 2015(6):54-55) Students may rely on the Chinese pinyin rules for words with similar pronunciation to spell English, resulting in spelling errors. Students intentionally combine word form and pronunciation when memorizing words but lack the awareness to integrate similar words and remember them as a whole. This also suggests that negative native language transfer is a significant cause of spelling errors for Chinese learners of English.

Table 6. Spelling Errors

ST2	
Error	Correction
home words	home work
hill-medicine	healing medicine
Saterday afternoon	Saturday afternoon
ST3	
Error	Correction
helpnesses of society	helpful tools in the society

2.5 Overgeneralization

Overgeneralization refers to the overuse and generalization of a certain grammar, voice and word meaning by English learners in the process of English expression, that is, the grammar and forms that are only applicable to one kind are naturally imposed on another kind of English expression that is not suitable for this kind of grammar and forms, so as to form a language that does not conform to the rules of English. This type of error occurs more frequently among lower and intermediate learners in ST2-4. It is similar in character to the Chinese word order error mentioned above in that it is an incorrect use of the preposition “of” and the possessive nouns to express subordination. However, in overgeneralization, the learner is reinforcing the use of “of” and the possessive nouns, not because of the influence of the negative transfer of the native language. For example, in the expression “the test of the middle of the term”, “the history’s test”, and “the technology of science”. Students making such errors have acquired a certain amount of the usage of the preposition “of” and possessive nouns in their previous English courses but are indiscriminately using the preposition “of” and the possessive nouns by imposing them on the English expressions that do not fit into the usage.

Table 7. Overgeneralization

ST2		ST3	
Errors	Correction	Errors	Correction
summer's holiday	summer holiday	ability of social life	ability to live in the society
the test of the middle of the term	mid-term examination	ST4	
a part of people	some people	Errors	Correction
the match of the Art Festival	Art Festival competition	years of age	years old
history's test	History test	the technology of science	science and technology
tense of mind	tensed mind		

For example, in the case of “the test of the middle of the term”, the English expression “mid-term examination” is more commonly used. However, the student mistakenly believes that it is necessary to show all the semantic meanings of “semester”, “middle” and “exam” in the English by using the subordination “of” to connect them. For another example, in the case of “ability of social life” the student confused the relationship between “social life” and “ability”, misunderstanding “ability” and “social life” as a subordinative relationship. However, in fact, the student wanted to express the ability to live independently in society, not “social ability”. In this type of error, the student’s overgeneralization is manifested by confusing the relationship between nouns, misusing subordination or coordination, and thus using “of” and possessive nouns incorrectly. Over generalization of noun-noun collocation tends to occur in ST2-4 because lower and intermediate English learners are more likely to confuse the relationship between different nouns in a phrase and meaning group. While, English majors have a higher mastery of subordination and coordination in noun-noun collocations, thus making fewer errors in overgeneralization.

2.6 Strategies of Teaching-Based Method

2.6.1 Focus on the Development of Students’ English Thinking Ability

A longitudinal comparison of the data reveals that Chinglish errors and grammar errors account for the largest proportion, and are the most common errors in noun-noun collocation by English learners, among which negative transfer of mother tongue has a significant impact. Furthermore, students rely excessively on their mother tongue for thinking and expressing meaning in English and then translate their mother tongue expressions rigidly into the Chinese equivalent of dictionary interpretations. Therefore, in the teaching process, the grammar-translation method should be reduced. Instead, English communication and situational teaching should be the primary teaching methods, focusing on the students’ mastery of the overall grammar and the cultivation of their English thinking ability so that students can enhance their grasp of grammar in the process of daily use instead of mere rote memorization.

The development of English thinking ability, in short, is to make students reduce the step of translation into native expressions in the middle from the expressed meaning to the output content, thus avoiding the Chinglish expressions when translating from Chinese to English. For ST2 students, when teaching the word usage, teachers should emphasize the meaning of the word in English and use English to paraphrase the meaning of the word, the context, and the collocation in different contexts, instead of just asking students to explain the meaning of the word in translation methods. For ST3-4 students, teachers should focus on students’ English input and output, enhance the English context in the classroom and students’ interactivity, and present the daily use of collocation in a way that students can efficiently output English expressions. For example, teachers ought to explain how noun-noun collocation is used in a specific context. Then students will be asked to make sentences or simulate the specific usage of this noun-noun collocation in the same way to deepen their impression. For ST5-6 students, the effectual output is an area that should be emphasized and reinforced. In both speaking and writing, teachers should include more assessment of English output skills in assignments and classroom instructions and strengthen students’ ability to describe and summarize specific situations and conditions in English.

2.6.2 The Teaching of Words Should Pay More Attention to the Context, Scope, and Parts of Speech of the Words Used

Since word-for-word translation accounts for the most significant proportion of Chinglish expressions, teachers should emphasize the differences between the Chinese and English languages when teaching vocabulary so that students can learn to tell the differences and convert between Chinese and English expressions. For errors in the suitability of collocations, students ignore the word’s derivation, the context in which it is used, and its suitability for other words but simply translate the Chinese equivalent into the meaning of the word they have memorized in their vocabulary. Accordingly, teachers should also focus on the use of the word in the entire context,

explaining the meaning of the word in English, or expanding the use of the word from the very beginning, using example sentences and conversational situations to enhance students' familiarity with the phrase and their awareness of its suitability when using it together with other words and phrases. For Chinese word order errors, the ST4-6 student group was more likely to be less rigorous in ordering words to express subordination and coordination by relying excessively on the order of the native language. This indicates that students do not have a good grasp of the possessive nouns and the use of the preposition "of" to imply subordination. Therefore, teachers should focus on teaching the expressions that indicate subordination, using different examples and contexts to make students aware of the differences between Chinese and English in terms of subordination and to avoid such errors in practice.

Among the part of speech errors, ST2-3 learners are primarily unaware of the original lexical nature of words and the most commonly used parts of speech, thus confusing the parts of speech of nouns, verbs, and adjectives. The ST4-6 learners were more likely to poorly understand word morphing and the creative use of specific noun phrases that did not fit the usage pattern. The second-language teaching method to the errors of different groups of learners should be reinforced. For a small number of spelling errors, teachers should integrate three different categories of errors, pronunciation, morphemes, and morphology into their teaching methods for memorizing words that are likely to be confused and strengthen students' awareness of the distinction to avoid spelling errors.

2.6.3 Enhancing the Teaching of the Differences Between Chinese and English

In elementary English teaching, teachers often use the grammar-translation method and the audio-lingual method, which favor a one-sided description of the grammatical features of English but ignore the contrastive teaching from both sides of the language. Only for English majors can students get some systematic knowledge of the differences between Chinese and English. However, as Chinese students grow up in the Chinese context, although they are proficient in using Chinese, they do not have a macroscopic understanding of the grammatical and expressive features of Chinese. In the absence of systematic knowledge of the linguistic features of Chinese and English and their differences, learners often mix up the linguistic expressions of both, thus tend to use Chinese expression habits to output English, or even worse, to use English expression habits to express Chinese meanings. Therefore, in order to address a series of collocation problems and interlanguage fossilization brought about by the negative transfer of native language, teachers should keep converting clearly to students the differences between Chinese and English in their daily lectures and that there are, in fact, different collocations and ways of presenting seemingly similar expressions, so as to improve students' awareness of the differences between Chinese and English languages, and thus consciously and effectively avoiding similar mistakes when converting between Chinese and English. For ST2 students, basic knowledge about the part of speech differences, word order differences, and sentence pattern differences should be emphasized in daily instructions. For ST3-4 students, more specific knowledge about typical Chinglish expressions and grammar errors caused by the negative transfer of native language should be taught to students, with aimed lessons about the specific noun-noun collocation errors committed by students. As to the English major students, systematic lectures about the differences between English and Chinese should be continuously given to students, with further instructions on avoiding errors caused by the negative transfer of native language.

3. Conclusion

This article searched the CLEC for noun-noun collocation errors and combined second-language teaching methods, negative transfer of native language, interlanguage and language fossilization theories to focus on the noun-noun collocation errors of ST2-6 learners, compare the data, summarize the characteristics and analyze the causes, then propose complementary teaching strategies based on the findings.

It's found that negative transfer of native language played a role in the formation of collocation errors among ST2-6 learners and had a more significant impact on the correct usage of English expressions. The overgeneralization of noun-noun collocations is shown as incomplete mastery of noun phrases and possessive nouns, which occurred mainly in the lower and intermedium students of ST2-4. The overgeneralization of ST4-6 was primarily due to over-memorization of dictionary definitions of words and neglect of collocations, contexts of use, and transformation of parts of speech, which was evident in the low collocation degree, Chinese word order an incorrect part of speech despite the rich vocabulary.

Based on these findings, this article concludes with the following teaching strategies for improvement. First, due to a lack of systematic knowledge of the differences between English and Chinese, a sufficiently natural and authentic language environment, and the influence of negative native language transfer, students rely too much on their native language knowledge for simple translation of English learning. In this regard, teachers should first focus on developing students' English thinking ability when and reduce the use of the grammar-translation teaching method. By increasing the frequency and variety of language input and using words and phrases in context rather than in isolation, learners can actively transform language material into memory when they receive it, deepening their impressions and memories of a range of word families and phrases. In this case, they can find more accurate expressions from their existing memories regarding language output. The second is to focus more on the use of the words. Secondly, more attention should be paid to the use of word collocations in a variety of contexts, scopes, and parts of speech so that students' superficial understanding of dictionary interpretations can be expanded to include a broader range of uses and students' awareness of the suitability of noun-noun collocations can be developed. Teaching strategies and key knowledge points should be changed flexibly according to the characteristics and reasons for different learners' mistakes in various stages of English learning. Finally, teachers should include more systematic teaching of the differences between Chinese and English in teaching English grammar and expressions to develop students' awareness of the differences in the use of English and enable them to think more fluently and accurately in the conversion between English and Chinese.

Through the analysis above, this article summarizes the above teaching methods for reference in different stages of English teaching in the hope that Chinese English learners can use noun-noun collocation more naturally and accurately. However, the major limitations of this study are as follows: Firstly, the existence of subjective judgments cannot be avoided due to the manual screening, judgments, and analysis after the corpus is retrieved and initially processed through the tools. Secondly, in the analysis of the causes, there may be an incomplete summary of the reasons. The attribution of some language errors is not limited to the reasons summarized in this article but may have more fundamental and deep-seated reasons. Furthermore, the attribution of some language errors is not only limited to the cases outlined in this article. However, the noun-noun collocation errors may have more diverse and more profound causes. Finally, despite the comprehensiveness of the data, CLEC is a fixed corpus established in 2003, and being unable to update the data exert some influence on the findings of this article. It is hoped that experts and scholars of noun-noun collocation can make up for and improve the above deficiencies and further study noun-noun collocation.

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