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Diplomski studij engleskog jezika i književnosti i njemačkog jezika i književnosti

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Errors in EFL Learners' Written Production: Analysis of Prepositional Collocations

Diplomski rad

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Summary

The thesis ‘Errors in EFL Learners' Written Production: Analysis of Prepositional Collocations’ consists of a theoretical and practical part. The theoretical part defines the phenomenon of collocations, collocation classification and collocational competence. Next, the treatment of collocations in EFL is described and advice about its improvement is given. Finally, the errors, their classification and factors influencing them are dealt with, and error analysis (EA), its roots and error types are defined.

The practical part deals with the error analysis of prepositional collocations. The analysis concentrates only on four grammatical collocation types related to prepositional collocations: G1, G4, G5, and G8-d. For the purpose of it, 300 essays written as part of the state school-leaving exam (A level) by EFL high school learners in two generations (2009/2010 and 2010/2011) were examined. The aims of the error analysis and research questions are given and the sample together with the procedure is described. After that, the results of the analysis of errors in prepositional collocations are listed in tables according to the error categories. Each example of the error is corrected and its type is defined. After that, the results are discussed and a possible solution to the problems is suggested. Finally, the conclusion is made and methodological implications are outlined.

Key words: Collocations, EFL, error analysis, prepositional collocations

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Summary

1. Introduction

The thesis deals with prepositional collocation errors in written production of EFL high school learners.

According to Phoocharoensil (2011), EFL learners are often unable to put words together in a way native speakers do although they have a sufficient L2 vocabulary size. The aim of this thesis is to look under the surface of this problem and explore the causes of the errors in prepositional collocations. Another reason that woke the interest for this topic is frequency of collocations in the English language and their phenomenon of being a central feature of lexis, as given by Hill (2000).

Brashi (2009) claims that collocations are situated between lexis and syntax, which can be seen as important because language competence is referred to as an interactional process between lexis and syntax. Furthermore, collocations as such are evident in most text types and they occur in languages in different degrees of restrictedness. Linguists have made a guess about collocations as fixed forms of expression. Collocations have a specific form in the minds of native speakers: being made of whole chunks they are stored and used as such both in speech and writing. Due to this fact the notion of collocation became significantly important in the language research field.

Theoretical part

2. Collocations

2.1. Definition of collocations

Firth (1957, as cited in Martynska, 2004) initially defined collocations as a combination of words connected with each other. The word 'collocation' comes from the Latin verb 'collocare' ('to set in order/to arrange'). As Darvishi (2011) states, the term 'collocation' sets focus on the co-occurrence of the words and the most popular classification of these is made by Benson et al. (1986).

For Lewis (1994) collocation is a subcategory of multi-word items built from words co-occurring individually and found within the free-fixed collocational continuum. As suggested by the same author (Lewis, 1997), a collocation depends on linguist convention and not on logic or frequency. Furthermore, Dzierżanowska (1988, as cited in Martyńska, 2004) comments that there is not a random combination of words making a collocation. The fact is that a native speaker produces collocations instinctively and a second language learner is not able to produce them in that way. The reason for this is that every language has characteristic collocations which adhere to the rules of that language and learners and translators have problems with these. All things considered, the learner has to memorize a specific collocation or look it up in an adequate dictionary.

Carter (1987) connects the term 'collocations' with a group of words that appears together in a language. He is of the same opinion as Benson et al. (1986) that grammatical collocations are the outcome of grammatical relationship between the words and lexical collocations which are a product of a specific lexical units' concomitance. Oxford Collocations Dictionary (2002) defines collocation as a medium of word combining in a language through which natural-sounding speech and writing are produced.

2.2. Classification of collocations

According to Martyńska (2004), Firth as the father of collocation is also the developer of a lexical approach to collocation phenomenon. According to this phenomenon, co-occurring words determine the meaning of a word which results in lexis being dissociable from grammar. Lexical relations were to be understood as syntagmatic and not paradigmatic. Firth's followers, Sinclair and Halliday (1966, as cited in Martyńska, 2004) gave their opinion about the same topic: The former claimed that a 'node' is a unit whose collocations are studied and a 'span' refers to the number of relevant lexical items of each side of a node. 'Collocates' are the units within the 'span'. However, the latter suggests that collocations can be seen as examples of word combinations and therefore they traverse grammar boundaries.

Sinclair (1991, as cited in Martyńska, 2004) changed his mind and formed the so called integrated approach by which the idea of lexis separated from grammar was dismissed. Now the lexical and grammatical aspects of collocation were taken into consideration and they were divided into two categories: the 'upward' and 'downward' collocations. The group of 'upward' collocations included words which normally collocate with the words more frequently used in English than they are themselves, e.g. *back* with *at, down, from, into, on,* all of these are more frequent words than *back*. In contrast to 'upward' collocations, 'downward' collocations collocate with words that are less frequent than they are, e.g. *arrive, bring* are less frequently occurring collocates of *back*. Prepositions, adverbs, conjunctions, pronouns are mostly the elements of the 'upward' collocations and they usually form grammatical frames, while the 'downward' collocation elements (nouns and verbs) enable a semantic analysis of a word.

Yunus and Su'ad Awab (2011) claim that collocations are studied by several approaches: the lexical, semanticist, and structural approach. Benson et al. together with Schmitt and Hoey (1997, 2000, 2004a, as cited in Yunus and Su'ad Awab, 2011) made categorisation of these into lexical and grammatical collocations (colligations), e.g. prepositional collocations. The semantic approach is trying to determine the specific shape of collocations. The collocations are examined from the semantic point of view in order to find out why words collocate with certain words. The third, structural approach is based on the fact that a collocation occurs in patterns and determines structure. Due to this fact, Gitsaki (1996, as cited in Martyńska, 2004) claims that the study of collocation should include grammar which is different from the two mentioned approaches (the

lexical and semantic). Due to the fact that lexis and grammar cannot be separated, collocations can be either lexical or grammatical as two different aspects of one phenomenon.

Van der Wouden (1997) puts collocations between free lexical items and fixed combinations, idioms. This is done on the basis of Transformational Generative Grammar (TGG), a theory about syntax where syntactic structures are used as models for descriptions and explanations of phenomena of natural language. It can be seen clearly in Chomsky's example (1965, as cited in Mohammed and Mustafa, 2012) where the expression "decide on the boat" has two kinds of meaning: the first meaning of 'decide on' is 'choose to buy a boat', and it is called 'close construction' according to Chomsky's terminology. Here, the phrase 'decide on' is a semantic unit with the meaning 'choose' and the preposition is obligatory. The phrase 'decide on a boat' means 'to make a decision while on a boat' and it is a free combination or, according to Chomsky's terminology, a 'loose association' where 'on the boat' is an adverbial phrase with a location meaning and the preposition 'on' can be replaced by any other e.g. in, near, etc. Chomsky was one of the first researchers to suggest the treatment of word combinations by semantics and syntax through assigning a contextual feature to the verb. This means that the verbs in close construction are different from those in loose construction i.e. in close construction, the choice of verb constrains the choice of preposition (e.g. argue with X about Y).

The two groups (lexical and grammatical collocations) distinguished by Benson et al. (1986) have got the following characteristics: the former are built from nouns, adjectives, verbs, and adverbs and the latter, which are a part of the topic of this thesis, consist of phrases built from a dominant word (a noun, an adjective, a verb) and a preposition or grammatical structure (a clause or an infinitive).

2.3. Grammatical collocations (Prepositional collocations)

Table 1: Grammatical collocation types according to Benson et al. (1986)

Type	Structure	Example
G1	noun+ preposition	Apathy towards
G2	noun+to +infinitive	A pleasure to do
G3	noun+ that clause	We reached an agreement that she would represent us in the court.
G4	preposition+ noun combinations	by accident, in advance, to somebody's advantage, in agony
G5	adjective + preposition combinations	They were angry at everyone.
G6	predicate adjective+to+ infinitive	It was necessary to work., She was ready to go.
G7	adjective+that clause	She was afraid that she would fail the examination.
G8	19 verb patterns: pattern D: verb+ preposition	To act as, to interpret as,

According to Benson et al. (1986) there are eight major types of grammatical collocations marked G1 to G8. As can be seen in Table 1, G1 consists of 'noun and preposition'. 'Noun + *of*/*by* combinations' are not included here because of their predictability. Derived prepositions such as *concerning, regarding, in regard to, with regard to* fall out of this category due to the fact that these prepositions are synonymous with *about*, e.g. an *argument about*= an *argument regarding/ concerning.*

The second type, G2, consists of five syntactic patterns, e.g.: It was *a problem/struggle to do it.; They had the foresight/instructions/an obligation/permission/the right to do it.; They felt a compulsion/an impulse/ a need to do it.; They made an attempt/an effort/a promise/a vow to do it.; He as a fool/a genius/an idiot to do it.* Some nouns can also be used with 'verb in –ing form', e.g. *it's a pleasure to work there= it's a pleasure working there.* The nouns followed by the infinitives relating to whole sentence e.g. the ones expressing the purpose (*in order* can be placed between the noun and the infinitive) and the constructions where the infinitive can be replaced by a relative clause (e.g. *a procedure to follow= a procedure that is to be followed*) are not included in G2 type. Furthermore, colloquial phrases such as *a computer to satisfy all needs* often found in advertisements and nouns preceded by descriptive adjectives (*a clever thing to say)* are also not the part of this type. Nouns in G3 type relating to emotions (surprise, astonishment) often come with "putative" should, e.g. *She expressed surprise that he should be thinking of changing jobs*. Collocations of G5 type come as set-off attributives (verbless clauses) or in the predicate. Some adjectives have to be followed by a prepositional phrase, e.g. *fond of, deaf to*. Derived prepositions usually synonymous with *about* (*concerning, regarding, in regard to, with regard to*) and past participles formed from transitive verbs and followed by the preposition *by* are not a part of this type. However, *adjective + of* when the subject of construction is animate is included in this type, e.g. *They are afraid of him*. There are two basic constructions in G6 type: one with so called *dummy it* (e.g. *It was necessary to work.*) and the other with real, animate subject (e.g. *She was ready to go.*) There are still some exceptions to the rule, for example predicate adjective *supposed*: *It was supposed to rain. She was supposed to work today*, *and* some adjectives have the same meaning in both constructions: *It was difficult to convince him. He was difficult to convince.* Pattern D in G8 type does not include free combinations such as *to walk in the park* or combinations *verb+ by/with* when the preposition refers to means or instrument, e.g. *They came by train. We cut bread with a knife.* Compound verbs followed by a preposition are not included, e.g. *break in on, catch up to.*

2.4. Collocational Competence

According to Mohammed and Mustafa (2012) the term ‘competence’ refers to various types of knowledge. The term collocational competence, as stated by Pavičić Takač and Lukač (2013), stands for an ability of an individual to access phrasal mental lexicon readily and quickly.

Lewis (2000) states that students tend to make longer utterances and therefore grammatical mistakes because they lack collocational competence i.e. they do not know collocation which expresses what they want to say.

Xuefrei and Junying (2009) claim that knowledge of collocational appropriacy is a segment of native speakers’ competence. Still, a foreign learner is faced with problems in achieving the ‘natural’ language use of native speaker. This comes from the appropriate selection of conventional collocations.

According to Valentić (2005) even if an individual has perfect grammar knowledge, the item they produce will sound strange if they do not know a specific number of key collocations. Due to this fact, collocational competence should be expanded by learning collocations of already known words or learning new words/expressions and their collocations. It can be said that the communication of a person whose vocabulary consists of 2000 words will be pretty limited. However, if a person knows 2000 words and has got a good level of collocational competence, they will be more communicatively competent. This can be seen in the case of native speakers who communicate well using limited vocabulary because they are collocationally competent, e.g. if one knows 2 000 words and 6 collocations for each word, there are 12 000 available expressions all together.

Hill (2000) states that students who have collocational competence have already reached an advanced or higher level of communicative competence. Furthermore, Howarth (1998) argues that knowledge of collocations is the determinant factor for success of students in their professional and academic careers.

Mohammed and Mustafa (2012) claim that although the importance of collocations as arbitrarily restricted lexeme combinations in foreign language learning has been ignored by many researchers, they have been recognized recently. Brashi (2009) confirms that the linguists,

lexicographers and language pedagogues have been concerned recently with collocability topic and adds that the linguistic aspect of collocation is interesting for them because words are not isolated from other words in a language. Collocations are an important factor in the coherence and cohesion of language which lead to the mastery of L2. Due to this fact, it is more than necessary to better understand the problem of collocations in EFL/ESL learning.

3. Collocations in EFL

3.1. The status of collocations in the language learning process

Brown (1974, as cited in Darvishi, 2011) was the first one to claim that learning collocations does not only increase ESL/EFL learners' knowledge of collocations, but it also improves their oral fluency, reading speed and listening skills. Furthermore, it also makes it easier for learners to realize language chunks used by native speakers of English in speech and writing and use the words in natural combinations with other words. Brown and Smith (1974, 1983, as cited in Darvishi, 2011) claim that the knowledge of collocations is important for EFL learners who should be taught predictable collocations.

Valentić (2005) states that collocations should be given the same status as other language aspects in order to be examined. They should be looked at as a central part or considered as an important element of language acquisition because collocation is not the additional element to which the meaning is given when the language is acquired. Collocation should play an important role from the very beginning, which means from lesson one. Phythian-Sence & Wagner (2007) claim that collocations are important in the process of language learning because words are used in context. To know a word is actually to know how and where to use it. Boers et al. (2006, as cited in Sadeghi, 2009) state that the importance of collocation was recognized long time ago by Palmer (1925). Firth (1957, as cited in Sadeghi, 2009) stated that one knew a word by the company it kept, i.e. if one knows the words with which a specific word (lexical item) can be used, then one really knows that word.

Li (2005) states that when it comes to the amount of time spent in EFL classroom for learning of collocations, it can be seen from the investigation findings that EFL learners generally lack collocational knowledge and the reason why this is so lies in the fact that collocations have been

ignored in EFL classroom and consequently by EFL learners. Collocations as "the most needed and useful genre of prefabricated speech" (Li, 2005:18) should be emphasized and new collocations linguistically and culturally different from L1 should be introduced with new words in EFL classroom.

Halliday (1992b, as cited in Yunus and Su'ad Awab, 2011) explains that collocations are the basic building blocks of the expressions and specialised language and in this way they are dominant in academic texts of specialized disciplines (medicine, law, biology). However, the collocations are considered to be one of the main "error inducing factors" and together with it "one of the strongest signs of foreignlanguageness" (Pavičić Takač and Lukač, 2013).

3.2. Strategies used by learners in collocation learning process

Nation (2001) states that EFL learners in the process of learning of collocations sometimes tend to use an analogy strategy, also known as synonymy strategy. Learners usually use it if their L2 proficiency is limited and by using this strategy they substitute a synonym for a word in L2. In this way learners violate collocations due to the fact that a very limited number of synonyms can come in the same grammatical pattern in English. This means that words close in meaning do not share the same grammatical collocation every time. This can be seen in the following example given by Phoocharoensil (2010): the verbs *ask* and *plead* are similar in meaning, however, the former verb can be used in the pattern *ask someone + infinitive with to* and the latter verb entails the preposition *with*, e.g. *plead with someone + infinitive with to*. In case that *plead* is substituted by *ask*, i.e. if it is used without *with*, it comes to ungrammaticality.

Howarth (1998) emphasizes that repetition is another strategy employed by EFL learners with a low level of L2 collocation knowledge. As the name of this strategy suggests, learners here rely on the repeated use of familiar collocations. The strategy may also be used by learners due to the lack of confidence to create new collocations through analogy.

The third strategy, overgeneralization, defined by Zughol & Abdul-Fattah (2001, as cited in Phoocharoensil, 2010) refers to the use of a certain L2 feature to another one. Moreover, Chomsky (1959, as cited in Phoocharoensil, 2010) states that learners also often creatively formulate L2 rules unaware of certain exceptions.

3.3. How to deal with collocations in EFL?

Brashi (2009) gives advice to teachers about dealing with collocations in EFL classroom. It is evident that more attention should be paid to the productive use of collocations in research and teaching. Teachers should encourage students to identify collocations in texts as they identify difficult words and make them aware of the fact that L1 collocations can influence L2 collocations (there is not always word-for-word equivalent) and that general-purpose dictionaries are limited in terms of dealing with collocations so for this purpose they should use collocational dictionaries. Students should also understand that it is often risky to create new collocations because it can result in unacceptable word combinations. Furthermore, they should try to expand their repertoire of L2 collocations e.g. by listening to and reading L2 texts.

Hill (2000) claims that a receptive knowledge of EFL/ESL learners may be of a wider range i.e. they recognize collocations and their meanings when listening and reading (receptive skills), while the productive use of collocations (speaking, writing) is limited. Due to these facts, it is important to not only teach the learners how to understand the meanings of collocations, but to make them able to use these productively, in writing and speaking. When it comes to reading, teachers should enable students to recognize chunks in text. Students consider unseen reading difficult because they cannot recognize the chunks, i.e. they read every word separately from every other word, or it comes to some cases of mischunking. Due to this fact, teachers should read texts aloud so that students can identify and store the chunks correctly, and later on, use them.

Darvishi (2011) claims that collocation is one of the main concerns in EFL teaching and, according to Howarth (1998), its significance can be seen in numerous benefits brought by learning of collocations: from increasing language competence together with communicative competence to being close to native-like fluency. The results of some previous studies (Channell, 1981; Aghbar, 1990; Bahns & Eldaw, 1993; Farghal & Obiedat, 1995; Gitsaki, 1997; Liu, 1999a; Lien, 2003; Hsu, 2004, all cited in Howarth, 1998) indicated that the collocational errors in writing were caused by the insufficient collocational competence. The teacher's role is very important in this case, e.g. according to Woolard (2000, as cited in Darvishi, 2011) it is important that the teacher raises the students' awareness of collocations in order to help them pay more attention to their errors in production. In this way, the learners will gradually become aware of the fact that it is important to learn word combinations and not just new words. The

learners' awareness of their collocational errors can also be raised in the following way proposed by Lewis (2000): The teachers should point out the errors to the learners. In this way the learners will know what is right and what is wrong. Studying of students' collocational errors can also help teachers understand which collocations learners find difficult so that they can pay more attention to what should be emphasized in EFL classes. Darvishi (2011) suggests that teachers should make their students aware of collocations in a way that they increase their collocational competence in L2. They should also avoid literal translation or in case of its usage use it with great caution. This will help students produce collocations in written production more accurately and effectively. Furthermore, the amount of quality input should be maximized for students.

Hill (2000) names some reasons why collocations should be important for teachers to pay attention to them in English classes: they are fundamental, not arbitrary; they are made of predictable patterns; they form a big part of lexicon, and they enable quick and fluent communication.

4. Errors

Since this paper deals with error analysis, some theoretical aspects will be looked into in this chapter.

4.1. The significance of learners' errors

Some applied linguists have suggested the way to distinguish between errors and mistakes (cf. Richards 1974) by explaining that it would be useful to use the term 'mistake' for errors of performance and the term 'error' should be reserved for the systematic error of the learner from which the knowledge of the language can be reconstructed, i.e. the transitional competence can be seen. It is important to mention that mistakes are not significant for the process of language learning. However, it is a big task to determine what a mistake is and what is an error made by a learner. This all requires a more detailed study and error analysis than usually. Errors as such provide evidence of the language system of the learner at a particular point. There are three reasons why it is said that the errors are significant: they tell a teacher, i.e. provide them with the information, how much progress a learner has made and what remains for them to learn; they give information to a researcher about the process of language learning or acquisition and the

strategies employed by the learner in this process; and at the end the errors are indispensable to learners themselves because by making errors they also learn.

Jain (1969) emphasizes that the realizations about the importance of errors for understanding of the second language acquisition process, and planning of the courses accordingly, are the main focus in the literature on modern language teaching. However, it is still not clear how to find more principled means for accounting of errors and in this way fully determine their source and cause than it is done by contrastive study. Furthermore, it is necessary to find out how to make the interpretation of significance of the errors in a meaningful conceptual framework and come to conclusion about the possibility of error evidence usage in learning theory based programme of language teaching.

5. On the way to the error analysis: The beginning of contrastive study

Corder (1967) claims that the new dimension to the discussion of errors was added by the application of linguistic and psychological theory to the study of language learning. Based on this fact, people believed that errors were result of interference in L2 learning from the habits of the L1. The contrastive study of the systems of L2 and L1 was started and this was also seen as the major contribution of the linguist to the language teaching. The main purpose was to make an inventory of the areas of difficulty specific for the learner and to enable the teacher to pay special attention to these areas and organize the teaching process accordingly.

The Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis (The CA Hypothesis), according to Dulay et.al (1982), ruled the field of applied linguistics for over 20 years. Ellis (1985, as cited in Phoocharoensil, 2010) says that although the CA Hypothesis was popular in 1970s, there has been some criticism due to its often fallible predictions. Furthermore, Corder (1967) claims that the inventory had not brought anything new to teachers because they have already learned through their practical experience what the difficulties are. It was also noted that the linguists did not predict many errors usually made by the learners. Dulay et al. (1982) argue that this theory appealed to the common sense and due to this fact large body of data was ignored for years. Therefore, according to Corder (1967), the main problem was not the identification of the areas of difficulty, but how to deal with them. Concerning the methodology, there were two different schools of thought: the first one which claims that if there were a perfect teaching method, there would be no errors and their occurrence would be a sign of the its inadequacy, and the second

one suggesting that we live in an imperfect world and we cannot escape the errors. All we have to do is to deal with them the best we can.

5.1. The role of the first language

As Dulay et al. (1982) suggest, the first language was believed to be the enemy of the second language learning process. However, this statement is no longer considered true and it is claimed that when an individual finally learns the second language, the so called 'enemy' becomes a friend because it enriches the communicative repertoire. The discussion about this topic has its roots in terms known as 'interference' and 'transfer' and there are different opinions on the role of the first language in second language acquisition. Although the first language was believed to have the major impact on the second language, according to the recent research results the impact refers to accent and not to grammar or syntax.

5.2. Transfer

Dulay et al. (1982) claim that transfer is connected to the learner's performance and not to any underlying process. There are two phenomena which occur within this hypothesis: positive and negative transfer. Positive transfer takes place when the individual uses the L1 structure in L2 performance automatically. This occurs when the structures in both languages are the same. On the contrary, negative transfer occurs when the L1 structures differ from the L2 structures, the individual produces the errors which reflect the structure of L1. The cause of this kind of errors is seen in the influence of L1 habits in L2 production. Errors that reflect the structure of L1 are called "transfer errors" no matter what their real source may be. These errors might be the result of the negative transfer process, some other internal process, or some other factor in the language environment of the learner.

Gass & Selinker (2008) suggest that if learners want to escape error production in L2, they have to learn the L1-L2 differences. Dulay et al. (1982) add that with an examination of empirical data, the conclusion was that L1 is not reflected in the majority of grammatical errors and that L2 learners make errors comparable in both L1 and L2 i.e. those which should not be made if positive transfer were operating.

5.3. Interference

According to Dulay et al. (1982) interference is the term used for two similar phenomena in psychology and sociolinguistics. It is described in psychological context as "the influence of old habits when new ones are being learned." (Dulay et al., 1982: 98), whereas in sociolinguistic context it is described as language interaction. Weinreich (as cited in Dulay et al., 1982) adds that interference as a deviance from the norm of either language is a result of the familiarity of bilinguals with more than one language or languages in contact. However, the genetic question i.e. the question of which language is learned first does not play any significant role. According to Dulay et al. (1982) and the CA hypothesis, interference occurs because of unfamiliarity with the L2, which means that the learner has not learned yet the target patterns and it can be spotted in the language the learner learns, not their first language.

As suggested by Corder (1967) the second language learner has to test only two hypotheses- whether the systems of the new language are the same or different from L1, and if they are different, what their nature is. The evidence for this are the errors connected to the system of L1 caused by the interference from L1 habits. However, in the light of the new hypotheses, these errors should not be regarded as the persistence of old habits, but as signs of learner's exploring of the new language. Saporta (1966, as cited in Corder, 1967) claims that the effect of this has been inhibitory, not facilitative, which means that the errors are evidence of learning strategies and not signs of inhibition.

Richards (1971) came to conclusion that interference of L1 is a major source of difficulty in L2 learning and contrastive analysis has located areas of language interference. However, not all errors are caused by interference. There are also some which appear due to some strategies used by the learner in the process of language acquisition or due to mutual interference of L2 items, but these cannot be explained by contrastive analysis. It is important to mention that teaching procedures and techniques should take into consideration these conflicts that can appear in the process of language learning.

5.4. Interference analysis vs. Contrastive analysis

According to Richards (1971) interference analysis goes from the deviant sentence back to the L1 and CA goes the other way - it predicts error by comparing the linguistic systems of L1 and L2. It can be said that the CA hypothesis can be seen at the product level as a weak predicator of learner performance, but the positive and negative transfer constructs should be seriously questioned at the level of process.

5.5. Error Analysis

According to Phoocharoensil (2011) the inability of the Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis to predict the errors resulted in a new kind of analysis, the so called Error Analysis (EA). Gass & Selinker (2008) explain that EA focuses on the actual errors made by learners in the target language (L2) and compares them, whereas the CA compares the errors with L1. EA researches collect language data containing either written or oral errors and identify them. After that, the errors are classified into different types, qualified and the possible causes of the errors are explained.

There are also some limitations of EA. Bley-Vroman (1983, as cited in Phoocharoensil, 2011) claims that EA aims at comparing L1 and L2 and that is the reason why it is guilty of comparative fallacy. It can be said that EA accounts for learner language only in terms of L2 norms. Ellis (2008) argues that EA does not give a complete picture of learner language and only an examination of learners' errors change from one stage to another can explain the process of L2 acquisition. In this way the whole linguistic system of learners and not only the produced errors in L2 learning would be examined. EA studies are generally focused on a single point in time and due to this fact it can be said that EA did not enable the pure understanding of learners' development of L2 knowledge over time.

Selinker (1972) states that learners create their own rule system in L2 learning process, called interlanguage, and this fact is ignored by EA. All things considered, more and more interest has been shown for the development of linguistic competence in L2 of the learners as the interlanguage (the own unique system).

5.6. Error types

5.6.1. Interlingual errors

Dulay et al. (1982) define the term "interlingual errors" as those in which the structure of L1 is reflected. Studies conducted on the speech and writing of adults learning English as L2 have come to conclusions that the proportion of errors that reflect the L1 (8-23%) is larger than that which has been observed for children. However, this amount still represents a minority of the errors which adults make.

There are few studies which have shown the apparent influence of L1 on L2. Biskup (1992, as cited in Les´niewska, 2006) is one of few researchers who came to conclusion that L1 influences the learners' use of L2 collocations. When it comes to collocational competence, it can be the same as of native speakers or different at any level because of L1 influence whose existence disables the L2 usage in monolingual mode. The example of Granger's study (1998, as cited in Les´niewska, 2006) shows that advanced learners used mostly the collocations congruent with L1 collocations.

According to Dulay et al. (1982) the amount of interlingual errors changes with the type of elicitation task i.e. the task referring to the manner in which spoken or written performance is elicited from the L2 learner. Such task could be the translation task in which the one should translate a paragraph written in L1, or the one in which the student should describe something, e.g. a picture. It can be seen that translation tasks increase the L2 learners' reliance on L1 structures, in which the processes the learner uses for natural communication are masked. Due to this fact, relying only on translation and strict linguistic manipulation to elicit language cannot be accounted for in L2 acquisition of communicative skills. Another cause of interlingual errors can be found in conditions that result in premature L2 use, especially when one is forced to communicate in L2 before they have been exposed to enough of it for meaningful purposes. This kind of pressure in foreign language situations to produce the new language comes from requirements of classroom performance which can be seen in form of writing compositions, oral classroom exchanges and taking tests. Furthermore, artificial conditions in which the learners often learn and have to acquire L2 are limited and short, e.g. two hours a week are largely spent memorizing vocabulary, doing drills, answering unreal questions, etc. These conditions are often inevitable due to the fact that the target language (L2) is not a language used for natural

communication is such situations. At the end, the total burden falls on the teacher who has to provide L2 environment in as useful, interesting, creative and interchangeable way as possible. Unless this is done, learners have little to choose but to fill the vacuum of their L2 knowledge with the L1 structures.

5.6.2. Intralingual errors

Richards (1971) states that intralingual errors reflect the learner's competence at a particular stage and are not a sign of inability of the learner to separate two languages. These errors are generalizations based on only partial exposure to the L2 and illustrate some general features of language acquisition. Their origins are found within the structure of English language and they reflect the general rule learning characteristics, e.g. faulty generalization, incomplete application of rules, failure to learn condition under which the same apply.

The learners often develop hypotheses that correspond neither to the mother tongue nor L2. This can be described as a rule restriction- a type of generalization or transfer when the learner is using already acquired rule in a new situation. Some rule restrictions often stem from analogy or they are a result of rote learning of rules.

Intralingual errors cannot be referred to as failures to memorize a segment of language or lapse in performance due to memory limitation. By some learners they are indications of transitional competence, while by others they represent final grammatical competence. This kind of errors, together with language transfer, confirms the traditional notion of transfer of learning according to which previous learning influences later learning.

5.7. Error classification and source

Corder (1973, as cited in Mohammed and Mustafa, 2012) divides errors in five types according to linguistic categories: omission of some required elements, addition of some unnecessary or incorrect elements, selection of an incorrect element, substitution of elements, and disordering of elements. However, this error classification proved to be insufficient to describe errors. Therefore, the sources of errors have been identified: language transfer, overgeneralization/analogy, and methods/materials used in learning. Mohammed and Mustafa (2012) also name these sources of errors and claim that recent experimental studies have shown several other influential factors while learning collocations: interlingual or intralingual interference by language transfer, fossilization by analogy, ignorance of rule restrictions,

paraphrase, shortage of collocational knowledge, context of learning, and incomplete application of rules.

5.8. Collocational errors in written production: The difficulty with prepositional collocations

Darvishi (2011) argues that EFL students make collocational errors in written production because of the interference of their mother tongue, the interlingual or intralingual transfer, lack of the collocational concept paraphrase and the shortage of their collocational knowledge.

Jain (1969) states that due to the fact that there is an apparent copious opposition between rules and arbitrariness in the surface structure of English, certain areas within the structure are harder to determine than others. Prepositions belong to this area. The major difficulty lies in the fact that they cannot be generalized on the basis of some regularity and the system of the second language demands here a combination of decisions at several syntax levels. Learning occurs hopefully only through the learner's experience and practice because teaching techniques and materials do not offer any systematic rule for this. However, quite often this does not happen because the indeterminacy detracts the learners from inferring linguistic forms and rules from new linguistic contexts. Prepositions in English do not weaken the areas of indeterminacy and although the surface structure of English may not virtually seem to be able to carry it for the learner, and they might hardly accept the rule or induce it, the teaching strategy may transfer the opposition between arbitrariness and rules to other areas.

According to Richards (1971) the major factor in the misuse of prepositions is analogy. It occurs when the learner encounters a particular preposition with one type of verb and tries to use the same preposition with similar verbs by analogy, e.g. *He said to me* - **He asked to me*; *We talked about it* - **We discussed about it*, etc.

Mohammed and Mustafa (2012) explain that researchers wanted to conclude about the difficulties in collocation use so they analyzed collocational knowledge. Lennon (1996, as cited in Mohammed and Mustafa, 2012) suggests that the lack of collocational knowledge appears to be a common problem. Furthermore, Flowerdew and Mahlberg (2009) came to the conclusion that grammatical collocation (colligation) is the most frequent collocational error category. The problems could be found primarily with prepositions in case of nouns, verbs and adjectives where there is no apparent systematicity in use. There are different types of preposition errors:

“incorrect preposition selection (*They are good in swimming), use of a preposition in a context where it is prohibited (*They came to inside), or failure to use a preposition in a context where it is obligatory (*He is fond this book). “ (Flowerdew and Mahlberg, 2009:90)

5.9. Research studies of (prepositional) collocation errors

Les´niewska (2006) claims that advanced learners differ from native speakers by the fact that they produce so called ‘visible’ errors, deviant collocations apparent in the pattern studies of over- or underuse of these. The distributional differences became visible in corpus analyses of word combinations in learner texts. There is very little information about the extent of cross-linguistic influence on the collocations use. However, L1 influence has been tentatively considered as the potential cause of some learner’s language characteristics.

A few past studies of second language acquisition of English collocations, e.g. the study by Fan and Huang (2009, 2011, as cited in Phoocharoensil, 2011) gave the results that EFL learners’ problems with collocations are caused by different factors. The influence of native language can still be found as one of the main reasons for the errors (as it can be seen in the works of Bahns, 1993; Bahns & Eldaw, 1993; Fan, 2009; Koya, 2003; Nesselhauf, 2003, 2005; Ying, 2009, all cited in Phoocharoensil, 2011). Learners also tend to rely on specific learning strategies, e.g. synonymy (Boonyasaquan, 2006; Farghal & Obiedat, 1995; Mongkolchai, 2008, all cited in Phoocharoensil, 2011), or repetition and overgeneralization (Fan, 2009; Granger, 1998; Howarth, 1998; Shih, 2000, all cited in Phoocharoensil, 2011).

According to Liu (1999b, as cited in Darvishi, 2011) the most noticeable pattern when it comes to grammatical collocations was ‘verb + noun + preposition’ and the most noticed source of errors was negative transfer. Another research made by Chen (2002), was conducted among Chinese high school students with the aim of investigating the errors in written production in English. The errors were classified according to the Benson et al. (1986) classification. The results indicated that 147 of 272 errors were of the grammatical type with the emphasis on ‘preposition-noun and verb collocations’ as the most frequent grammatical collocational error types.

Practical part

6. Analysis of prepositional collocations - Grammatical Collocations of the type: G1, G4, G5, G8-d

6.1. Aims and research questions

The analysis is focused on the following type of grammatical collocations: prepositional collocations, that is on the collocations consisting of preposition and lexical element (noun, verb or adjective): G1 (noun + preposition), G4 (preposition + noun combination), G5 (adjective + preposition in predicative and non-verbal sentence), G8-d (verb + adjective + object).

The descriptive analysis of gathered data aims at showing what kinds of errors in prepositional collocations occur in the written production and what causes them, i.e. whether they are interlingual or intralingual. It is also necessary to obtain information about the quantity of each error type and to see which type prevails in each generation.

The analysis is based on error categories made by Flowerdew and Mahlberg (2009):

- "incorrect preposition selection (*They are good in swimming),
- use of a preposition in a context where it is prohibited (*They came to inside), or
- failure to use a preposition in a context where it is obligatory (*He is fond this book). " (Flowerdew and Mahlberg, 2009:90)

The research questions are: 1) What are the most frequent errors in prepositional collocations? 2) Is there a difference between generations of learners in the number and type of collocational errors?

6.2. Sample

300 essays written as part of the state school-leaving exam (A level) by EFL high school learners served as the sample for the analysis. The essays were chosen randomly from 10 counties of Republic of Croatia (15 essays per county) and incorporate two EFL learners generations (2009/2010, 2010/2011). The topic of the essays was different for each generation: the first

generation of learners had to give their opinion about the international sports events and their advantages and disadvantages while the second generation had to comment on the limits to what students can wear at school.

6.3. Data analysis procedure

The method used for written data collection and analysis was the same as in EA. 300 essays were read and the errors in the use of prepositional collocations were noted. The errors were analyzed and compared on the basis of literature inspection. The following dictionaries were used: Benson et al. (1986) *The BBI Combinatory Dictionary of English*; Hill, Jimmie and Lewis, Michael (1997) *LTP Dictionary of Selected Collocation,* and *Oxford Collocations. Dictionary for Students of English* (2002).

The analysis was done according to the following criteria:
On the basis of analyzed errors of prepositional collocation, the appropriate error classification was selected, i.e. the errors were classified into categories made by Flowerdew and Mahlberg (2009). After that, the cause of errors was determined (interlingual or intralingual errors). CA was applied to the errors in prepositional collocations, i.e. errors were compared with learners' mother tongue. This is also suggested by Dulay et al. (1982) who say that error identification should be done in the way that the grammatical form of the learner's phrase is translated into the learner's first language, in this case Croatian, in order to see what type of error occurs in the specific example.

The total number of errors per each error category and generation was counted and the results were compared.

6.4. Results

The tables 1 and 2 show the results of error analysis of prepositional collocations according to the following categories: omission of the preposition, addition of preposition and incorrect preposition selection, and error type. In cases where it was not possible to decide whether the error is inter- or intralingual, a question mark (?) is put.

As can be seen from Table 1, the most frequent errors in prepositional collocations in generation 2009/2010 are those caused by incorrect preposition selection. The subcategory that causes most problems in this area is preposition ‘on’ used instead of preposition ‘in’. Concerning the error type, interlingual errors are more frequent than intralingual errors.

Table 2 suggests that the error category ‘Incorrect preposition selection’ also prevails in generation 2010/2011. Most errors are found in the subcategory ‘on→ in’, as it is the case with the previous generation, and the category ‘about→ on/to', precisely said, with the collocation ‘a limit on/to.’

Table 1: Errors in prepositional collocations in generation 2009/2010

1. Omission of preposition	Error type
1. To listen other people's problems → To listen to other people's problems	1. interlingual error
2. (If) somebody's different colour or religion →(If) somebody's of different colour or religion .	2. interlingual error
3. To stand up (their countries) → to stand up for (their countries)	3. intralingual error
4. This way you can also develop your skills... → In this way you can also develop your skills	4. interlingual error
5. ...telling bad things each other. → telling bad things to each other.	5. interlingual error
6. ...people who belong other region. → ...people who belong to other religion	6. interlingual error
7. whenever they have a reason or not.→ ... whenever they have a reason for it or not.	7. interlingual error

2. Addition of preposition	Error type
1. Before twenty years ago → Twenty years ago	1. interlingual error
2. Since centuries **before** → since centuries/ centuries ago	2. interlingual error
3. Win in the match → win the match	3. interlingual error

3. Incorrect preposition selection	Error type
ABOUT→ OF	
1. (a good) impression about → (a good) impression of	1. interlingual error
ABOUT→ ON	
1. (it all) depends about → (it all) depends on x2	1. interlingual error
ABOUT → TO	
1. give *attencion about politics → pay attention to	1. intralingual error
AT → IN	
1. ...be treated at the same way... → be treated in the same way	1. intralingual error

AT → IN/ON	
1**...** (people) walking at the streets... → ... (people) walking in/on the streets...	1. interlingual error
AT→ ON	
1. At today's world→ In today's world	1. intralingual error
FOR → OF	
1. No matter for a praise* (price) → no matter of price	1. ?
FROM → BY	
1. ...to be judged from (the other countries or people). → to be judged by (the other countries or people).	1. intralingual error
IN → AT	
1. ...they can be in war... → they can be at war	1. interlingual error

IN; AT → AT; IN	
1. In the same time, at the same place... → At the same time, in the same place.	1. interlingual error
IN → OF	
1. ...(create) chances in (sharing interests)... → (create) chances of (sharing interests)	1. interlingual error
IN→ ON	
1. In the other side → on the other side x2	1. intralingual error
2. In the other hand→ on the other hand x9	2. interlingual error
3. (It has been claimed that the international sports events) have a good influence in relations between countries... → It has been claimed that the international sports events) have a good influence on relations between countries...	3. ?

4. On the other hand, sports events bring around big responsibility in the issue of security. → On the other hand, sports events bring around big responsibility on the issue of security	4. intralingual error
5. ...we are not alone in the planet Earth. → ...we are not alone on the planet Earth	5. ?
IN → TO	
1. They could transport their products in the other country. → They could transport their products to the other country**.**	1. interlingual error
IN ORDER TO → ACCORDING	
1. We all should act in order to that "rule". → We all should act according to that "rule".	1. intralingual error
LIKE → AS	
1. ...have sport players like their idols. → have sport players as their idols	1. intralingual error

OF→ FOR	
1. (the main) reason of (many fights)→ (the main) reason for (many fights)	1. interlingual error
ON→ ABOUT	
1. Forget on (wars) x2 → Forget about wars	1. interlingual error
ON→ AT	
1. On (previous winter) Olympic games → at (previous) Olympic games	1. interlingual error
2. On (such) matches → at (such) matches	2. interlingual error
3. We shouldn't look on it so seriously... → We shouldn't look at it so seriously...	3. interlingual error
ON → AT/WITH	
1. ...be so mad on winning club... → ...be so mad at/with winning club... x2	1. interlingual error
ON → FOR	
1. ...go together on a beer... → go together for a beer	1. interlingual error

ON → FROM	
1. (...country that organise the event would) earn more money on tourism... → (...country that organise the event would) earn more money from tourism...	1. interlingual error
ON→ IN	
1. On that way → in that way x7	1. interlingual error
2. On that kind of competition → in that kind of competition	2. interlingual error
3. On (big) events → in (big) events x24	3. interlingual error
4. On the free time → in the free time	4. intralingual error
5. On the world → in the world x3	5.interlingual error
6. On competition → in competition	6. interlingual error
7. On their sight → In their sight	7. interlingual error
8. (fans fight) on football games → (fans fight) in football games x2	8. interlingual error
9. ...putting their nation on the first place→ putting their nation in the first place x2	9. interlingual error
10. on every field of human life → in every field of human life	10. intralingual error

11. (...some countries are too poor so they can't) participate on events like this. → (...some countries are too poor so they can't) participate in events like these	11. interlingual errors
12. That couldn't be bad thing because in that way they could make positive changes on their relations with other countries. → That couldn't be a bad thing because in that way they could make positive changes in their relationships with other countries.	12. ?
13. Good side of the international sports events is that it brings people on one place. → Good side of the international sports events is that it brings people in one place.	13. interlingual error
14.(...people who) participate on this event... → (...people who) participate in this event...	14. interlingual error
15. ...on lots of very bad ways... → in lots of very bad ways	15. interlingual error
16. ...on the end... → in the end	16. interlingual error
ON → IN/AT	
1. ...arrive on competition. → arrive in/at competition	1. interlingual error
ON → OF	
1. (we must) think on our health and happiness → (we must) think of our health and happiness	1. interlingual error
2. Jealous on → jealous of x4	2. interlingual error

3. .... (in the all sides) on the world. →... (in all sides) of the world x4	3. interlingual error
4. ...be shamed* on international sports events... → be ashamed of international sports events	4. intralingual error
ON → OF/ABOUT	
1. (..., so the countries which are not so developed) complain on the big price of tickets and trips. → (..., so the countries which are not so developed) complain of/about the big price of tickets and trips.	1. interlingual errors
ON → TO	
1. Be applied on (international) relationships → be applied to (international) relationships	1. interlingual error
2. That especially) refers on (some undeveloped countries). → (This especially) refers to (some undeveloped countries).	2. interlingual error
3. ...cause a deep damage on... → cause a deep damage to...	3. interlingual error
4. ...come on that* events... → come to those events...	4. interlingual error
TO → ABOUT	
1. ...they might be reason to start bad opinions to other countries. → they might be reason to start bad opinions about other countries.	1. ?

TO → FOR	
1. (International sports events are the perfect) way to countries... → (International sports events are the perfect) way for countries	1. ?
2. ...a cause to faith*→ cause for fight	2. ?
3. (It could) be a problem to (teams; some countries)... x2 → (It could) be a problem for (teams; some countries)	3. intralingual error
TO → OF	
1. ...people are capable to do anything... → people are capable of doing anything.	1. intralingual error
TO → ON	
1. ... (it is better) to concentrate to advantage... → ...(it is better) to concentrate on advantage...	1. ?
TO → TOWARDS	
1. ...hatred to some countries → hatred towards some countries	1. intralingual error
TO → WITH	
1. ...angry to whole nation. → angry with whole nation	1. ?

WITH → BY	
1. Caused with → caused by	1. interlingual error
2. Some people in the country where the events* is happening are often annoyed with so many strangers cheering. → Some people in the country where the event is happening are often annoyed by so many strangers cheering.	2. interlingual error
3. ... country are* blinded with sport... → countries are blinded by sport.	3. interlingual error
WITH → OF/TO	
1. (...fans will) be respectful with fans (of opposing team) → (...fans will) be respectful of/to fans (of opposing team)	1. ?

Table 2: Errors in prepositional collocations in generation 2010/2011

1. Omission of preposition	Error type
1. ...genre of music which they listen... → genre of music which they listen to x3	1. interlingual error
2. ...people don't have limits what to wear...→ ...people don't have limits to/on what to wear... x6	2. ?
3. (...that we should) wear something to the law... → (...that we should) wear something according to the law...	3. intralingual error

2. Addition of preposition	Error type
1. ...the students couldn't affect on them... → the students couldn't affect them	1. intralingual error
2. ...it affects to (the teenagers...) → it affects (the teenagers)	2. intralingual error
3. (People) discuss about school uniforms... → (People) discuss school uniforms.	3. interlingual error
4. ...teach them to some good manners. → teach them some good manners	4. intralingual error

3. Incorrect preposition selection	Error type
ABOUT → AGAINST	
1. ...nobody could protest about anything. → nobody could protest against anything	1. interlingual error
ABOUT → BY	
1. No one can judge us about what we wear... → No one can judge us by what we wear.	1. ?
ABOUT → OF	
1. ...advantages and disadvantages about limits... → advantages and disadvantages of limits	1. ?
ABOUT → ON	
1. It depends a lot about society... → It depends a lot on society	1. interlingual error
2. ...it is about them to decide... → it is on them to decide	2. ?
ABOUT → ON/TO	
1. ...limits about what to wear... → limits on/to what to wear x13	1. interlingual error
AT → BY	
1. (...to see any) different* at students. → (to see any) difference by students.	1. intralingual error

AT →ON	
1. (they wear what like and thinks*) that is good at them. → (they wear what they like and think) that looks good on them.	1. intralingual error
AT → ON/TO	
1. (...students should) have limits at wearing. → (...students should) have limits on/to wearing.	1. interlingual error
AT → TO	
1. They come/go at school... → They come/go to school... x5	1. interlingual error
FOR → OF	
1. ...people have freedom for wearing anything... → people have freedom of wearing anything	1. ?
2. (...there are a lot of) advantages and disadvantages for this subject. → (...there are a lot of) advantages and disadvantages of this subject	2. ?
FOR → ON/TO	
1. ...some schools have a strict limit for wearing at school → some schools have a strict limit on/to wearing x6	1. interlingual error

FOR → TO	
1. ...a good solution for this problem... → a good solution to this problem	1. interlingual error
FROM → BY	
1. (Nobody can) judge them from their appearance. →(Nobody can) judge them by their appearance.	1. interlingual error
IN → AT	
1. ...in that age. → at that age	1. interlingual error
2. In these times... → At these times	2. interlingual error
IN → BY	
1. ...creating wrong life values in some students... → creating wrong values by some students x2	1. intralingual error
IN → FOR	
1. ...in purpose to express their styles. → for the purpose of expressing	1. interlingual error
IN → OF	
1. They have freedom in choice. → They have freedom of choice.	1. interlingual error

2. I sure that I will shame* in that. → I'm sure that I will be ashamed of that.	2. ?
IN → TO	
1. ... taking it back in (school system) → taking it back to (school system)	1. interlingual error
2. which leads in that* boys... → which leads to those boys....	2. ?
IN → ON	
1. In one hand... → On one hand x4	1. interlingual error
IN → ON/TO	
1. ...put limits in clothing... → put limits to/on clothing x5	1. interlingual error
OF → FOR	
1. There are certain arguments of having limits... → There are certain arguments for having limits.	1. ?
OF → ON/TO	
1. elements of limits of wearing at school... → elements of limits on/to wearing at school x4	1. interlingual error

ON → AT	
1. (..., I) look on it like student and maybe not on appropriate way. → (..., I) look at it like student and maybe not in appropriate way.	1. interlingual error
ON → FOR	
1. On example... → For example	1. interlingual error
2. ...they aren't prepare* on this... → they aren't prepared for this	2. interlingual error
OF → FROM	
1. ...in order to get more attention of their teachers. → ...in order to get more attention from their teachers.	1. interlingual error
ON → IN	
1. ...special on their individual way. → special in their individual way	1. interlingual error
2. ...on (financial) way → in (financial) way x8	2. interlingual error
3. ...on (the first) place... → in (the first) place x3	3. interlingual error
4. ...on hot summer time... → in hot some time	4. intraligual error
ON → OF	
1. ...express their view on the world... → express their view of the world	1. interlingual error

ON → TO	
1. ...have different aspects on life. → have different aspects to life	1. interlingual error
2. (Everybody) have a right on.... → (Everybody) has right to...	2. interlingual error
3. ...people are very sensitive on weather... → ...people are very sensitive to weather	3. interlingual error
4. ...draw attention on us. → draw attention to us.	4. interlingual error
5. (...they are) going on some party. → (...they are) going to some party	5. interlingual error
6. ...to come on class... → to come to class	6. interlingual error
ON → UP TO	
1. Everything is on students' own culture. → Everything is up to students' own culture.	1. interlingual error
ON → WITH	
1. ...be angry on us. → be angry with us x2	1. interlingual error

OVER → BY	
1. ...people can judge you over your looks and clothes. → people can judge you by your looks and clothes.	1. interligual error
THROUGH → IN	
1. (...express their opinions) through different ways... → (...express their opinions) in different ways...	1. interlingual error
TO → IN	
1. To my opinion... → In my opinion	1. ?
TO → FROM	
1. With your style you are different to others. → With your style you are different from others.	1. ?
TO → ON	
1. ...give guidelines to (what is appropriate...) → give guidelines on (what is appropriate...)	1. ?
TO → OF	
1. (There are some) pros and cons to both opinions. → (There are some) pros and cons of both opinions.	1. ?

WITH → ABOUT	
1. ...to brag with (new clothes...) →... to brag about (new clothes)	1. interlingual error
WITH → OF	
1. This is a big plus/minus with limits. → This is a big plus/minus of limits.	1. interlingual error
WITH → ON/TO	
1. ...be limit with (their wearing)... → be limit on/to (their wearing)	1. interlingual error
WITH → TO	
1. (...there are somkind* of rules for everything so we must) stick with that. → (...there is some kind of rules for everything so we must) stick to that.	1. intralingual error

Table 3: The comparison of two generations of EFL learners in number of errors in prepositional collocations per error category

	Generation 2009/2010	Generation 2010/2011
Omission of preposition	7	10
Addition of preposition	3	4
Incorrect preposition selection	116	96
Total	126	110

Concerning two generations of EFL learners, as it can be seen from Table 3, there are more errors in general in the first generation (2009/2010) than in the second one (2010/2011). It is important to mention that the error number also depends on the given topic of the essay because students usually have more knowledge about or interest for some topic than the other.

When it comes to each error category, it can be seen that the first generation has fewer errors in the first two categories (‘omission of preposition’ and ‘addition of preposition’). However, the main problem with incorrect selection of preposition is slightly smaller in the second generation. The reason for this can be the fact that learners have either paid more attention to prepositions (prepositional collocations) in contrast to the previous generation or they had a more appropriate range of vocabulary and grammar knowledge about the given topic.

Table 4: The comparison of interlinguistic, intralinguistic and undecided errors in each generation

Generation	2009/ 2010	2010/ 2011
Interlinguistic errors	100	83
Intralinguistic errors	16	10
?	10	17

As it can be seen from Table 4, there are more interliguistic and intralinguistic errors in generation 2009/2010 than in the next generation. However, generation 2010/2011 has a bigger number of 'undecided (?)' errors than the previous generation.

6.5. Discussion

The aim of the research and analysis of collected data was to see what problems connected to prepositional collocations errors EFL high school students have. The sample for the analysis (essays written at state school-leaving exam) was good because it is the crown of their EFL learning in high school.

Although there are different opinions about the reason why the prepositional errors occur, it can be seen from the analysis that the first language (Croatian) still plays the main role since interlingual errors are dominant in both generations (2009/2010, 2010/2011). According to Les´niewska's (2006) explanation, the learners have a tendency to function in terms of Sinclair's 'open-choice' principle. This suggests that they do not rely on ready-made combinations, but use words as the 'language building bricks' which results in the fact that collocations are semantically appropriate and not collocationally correct.

The error examples give a clear picture of the problem. It is important to note that a few examples are occurring repeatedly in each generation, such as: on the world*, in school*, in one hand...in the other hand*, etc.

The solution to the problem of errors in prepositional collocations caused mainly by the first language could be the change of elicitation task used by teachers. As already mentioned, Les´niewska (2006) claims that this type of a task refers to the manner in which spoken or written performance is elicited from the L2 learner, e.g. the translation task which demands translation of a paragraph written in L1 or the task in which the student is supposed to describe something. It is evident that the translation tasks as such cause the students to rely on L1. During this the processes which the learner uses for natural communication are masked. Furthermore, natural communication is limited by artificial, often short conditions of learning. However, these conditions are mostly inevitable because the target language (L2) is not a language used for natural communication in such situations.

Concerning future research of this topic, it could be useful to use the analyzed data for the next research to see whether the specific errors in prepositional collocations are repeating and to compare the results of the following generations with the former ones.

7. Conclusion

The aim of the thesis was to come to the conclusion about the reason why EFL high school students have problems with prepositional collocations i.e. to identify types of errors and their causes, and compare their occurrence in two generations (2009/2010 and 2010/2011).

Although the opinions about the cause of prepositional collocation errors have changed over time, the gathered data show that the first language (Croatian) still is the main reason why the errors occur i.e. interlingual errors are still dominant. These can be explicitly seen in the category 'incorrect preposition selection'.

Despite the fact that there are fewer errors in the first two categories ('omission/ addition of preposition') of the first generation, the second generation has fewer errors in general. This implies that the generations that come are making good progress in their knowledge of prepositional collocations in EFL.

The suggested solution by Les´niewska (2006) to the problem of errors in prepositional collocations relies totally on the teacher's role. As already mentioned, teachers should choose tasks in which students do not and cannot rely on L1, but they should think in L2 and use natural communication. Furthermore, teachers should adapt to the given and often limited time and create an atmosphere that is as natural as possible in order for learners to learn L2 as naturally as possible. Brashi (2009) suggests that teachers should make students aware of the fact that when it comes to collocations, there is not always a word-for-word equivalent. Students should also be instructed that general-purpose dictionaries should be replaced here with collocational dictionaries. Finally, it is useful to expand L2 collocations repertoire by listening to and reading L2 texts.

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Sažetak

Diplomski rad ‘Pogreške u pisanoj proizvodnji učenika engleskoga kao stranoga jezika: analiza prijedložnih kolokacija’ u svome teorijskom dijelu daje pregled i objašnjenje pojmova potrebnih za razumijevanje fenomena povezanih s pogreškama u prijedložnim kolokacijama. Praktični dio analizira prikupljene podatke iz pisane proizvodnje učenika engleskog kao stranog jezika srednje škole na državnoj maturi u dvije generacije (2009./2010. i 2010./2011.). Cilj je rada doći do zaključka o uzroku problema u uporabi prijedložnih kolokacija, tj. saznati koje vrste pogrešaka se pojavljuju i što ih uzrokuje. Na kraju, rješenje problema je predloženo prema proučenoj literaturi.