Anna Zagórska

Collocations in the eyes of a multilingual language learner

Anna ZAGÓRSKA
Uniwersytet Warszawski

Collocations in the Eyes of a Multilingual Language Learner

Abstract:
The aim of this article is to explore the approach of multilingual learners to foreign language collocations. Firstly, the article demonstrates the importance of collocations for foreign language learners. Secondly, it presents language learning strategies and teaching techniques which can be applied in the process of learning and teaching collocations. Subsequently, the article focuses on previous research on multilingual vocabulary learning. Furthermore, it is intended to present a study which attempts to discover whether multilingual language learners are aware of the need to learn collocations, whether they actually learn them and which vocabulary learning strategies they employ, or would employ, to this task. The study is conducted on Polish learners of English as the second language as well as on Polish learners of Italian and French as third languages. The main tool of the research is a questionnaire. Some attention is also devoted to collocational content of the learners' textbooks, in order to determine their influence on the learners' attitudes to learning collocations.

Numerous researchers and language teaching methodologists consider collocational knowledge to be vital for successful foreign language communication. Simultaneously, collocations are believed to be particularly problematic for both language learners and language teachers. Nonetheless, it seems that the notion of collocation is still not given enough attention in the course of language learning and teaching. This paper will present a study attempting to discover whether learners are aware of the need to learn collocations, whether they actually learn them and which vocabulary learning strategies they employ, or would employ, to this task. The study has been conducted on three groups of multilingual learners. Before the discussion of its results some attention will be devoted to the notion of collocations and its pedagogical implications as well as to the current state of knowledge on multilingual vocabulary learning and use.

1. Defining collocations

Although collocations have been examined and described by a significant number of researchers, the term itself remains a subject of considerable controversy.

Linguistic literature provides various definitions of collocations. For the sake of example, T. Odlin (1994: 318) defines collocation as "the tendency of a word or words to appear in the context of (…) another word significantly more often than would be expected on the basis of chance". Contrastingly, D. Cruse (1986: 40) assumes that collocations are "sequences of lexical items which habitually co-occur, but which are nonetheless fully transparent in the sense that each lexical constituent is also a semantic constituent". The definitions of collocations differ in respect of their scope. I.S.P. Nation (2001: 317) observes that it is so difficult to determine what should be classified as collocations, since collocations "occur in a variety of general forms and with a variety of relationships between the words". He claims that in the context of language learning, collocations are best defined as "items which frequently occur together and have some degree of semantic unpredictability" (ibid.). For the purpose of this paper I will assume the above-mentioned approach, which, admittedly, presumes that idioms, proverbs and clichés can also be a kind of collocation. Aside from the notion of collocation, researchers employ other terms of similar meaning, such as lexical phrases, fixed expressions, multi-word items or prefabricated phrases. The above-mentioned word combinations can also be regarded as collocations (J. Leśniewska 2002: 132).

2. Importance of collocations for foreign language learners

A number of researchers agree that collocational knowledge is a critical aspect of language knowledge. For the sake of example, P. Brown (1994: 27) states that collocations offer ample opportunities "as a means of accessibility to the multifarious uses of language". N. Ellis (1997: 129) observes that "speaking natively is speaking idiomatically using frequent and familiar collocations, and the job of a language learner is to learn these familiar word sequences". I.S.P. Nation (2001: 318) claims that a myriad of lexical items are employed in a restricted set of collocations, hence a significant part of vocabulary cannot be correctly used unless one learns or acquires their collocations. Furthermore, the importance of collocations for language learners has been confirmed by research on human mind. As it has demonstrated, recurring collocations are probably learnt, stored, and processed as wholes, which positively influences the speed and fluency of production and comprehension (J. Aitchison 1989, R. Moon 1997, J. Leśniewska 2002).

Notwithstanding the obvious importance of collocational knowledge, it seems that collocations are still not given enough attention by both language learners and teachers. It may be explained by the fact that this aspect of language knowledge is particularly difficult to learn and teach. C. Gough (1996) mentions that collocations

are "far too important a subject to ignore" and simultaneously "far too big a subject to teach explicitly in class" The researcher observes that language teachers are aware of the importance of collocations and notices that many learners' errors are due to lacks in collocational knowledge. Unfortunately, the teachers experience considerable difficulties when teaching and explaining collocations. They usually limit their explanation to remarks that are hardly helpful to learners, such as "you just can't say that". To make matters worse, the content of language textbooks demonstrates that the approach to teaching collocations is not very systematic. Exercises aiming at collocation practice are often test-like and are inappropriately introduced (C. Gough 1996: 32).

As for the learners' point of view, research formerly conducted implies that they are aware of the existence of collocations in their target language. For example, the study by L. Piasecka (2002), who explored sensitivity to fixed expressions of college and university students of English, demonstrated that language learners "are aware of a wide variety of fixed expressions in the language" (ibid. p. 68). Further example may be provided by the research by D. Gabryś-Barker (2005: 159), who investigated language awareness of multilingual language users. The informants, when asked to define the notion of foreign language lexical awareness, in their definitions mentioned collocational knowledge as well as knowledge of word spelling, meaning and derivation. Nevertheless, it should be mentioned that A. O'Keeffe et al. (2007: 53) observed that many language learners, even at a high proficiency level, limit their vocabulary learning to rote learning of word forms and meanings. Thus, they suggest that language teachers should introduce awareness-raising as a part of classes.

In consequence, it is beyond a shadow of doubt that collocations are an indispensable facet of linguistic competence. Therefore, they should be devoted assiduous attention by both language learners and language teachers, who apparently often neglected them. The process of learning and teaching collocations has aroused interest of numerous researchers. The following section will briefly summarise proposals of learning and teaching techniques by P. Brown (1994), I.S.P. Nation (2001), N. Nesselhauf (2003) and N. Schmitt (2007).

3. Learning and teaching collocations

It is not altogether clear whether collocations are deliberately learnt by language learners. P. Nation and P. Meara (2002: 42) observe that deliberate vocabulary learning usually does not encompass learning collocations, which are best learnt incidentally, when they are met in context. Accordingly, the researchers advise that the deliberate vocabulary learning should be supported by deliberate vocabulary teaching, which involves elaboration on various aspects of word knowledge,

such as word collocations. The deliberate vocabulary teaching should consist in presenting not only collocations of specific lexical items, but also systematic collocational patterns. Contrastingly, N. Nesselhauf (2003: 238–239) claims that collocations need to be deliberately learnt and taught. Besides, I.S.P. Nation (2001: 336) claims that "the memorization of unanalyzed chunks is an important learning strategy", which, admittedly, confirms that collocations should be subject to deliberate learning.

Let us now turn to specific learning strategies aimed at the development of collocational knowledge. For the purpose of this work, learning strategies will be defined as "specific actions taken by the learner to make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more directed, more effective, and more transferable to new situations" (R. Oxford 1990: 6). Attention will be limited to strategies aimed at learning vocabulary (cf. N. Schmitt 1997, L. Piasecka 1999, I.S.P. Nation 2001, E. Krawczyk-Neifar 2002).

First and foremost, learners can develop collocational knowledge using a reading strategy proposed by P. Brown (1994). He suggests practising collocations by means of analysis of the vocabulary which follows or precedes the words already known in texts. Later, it is advisable for the learners to search for collocational patterns, use worksheets and elaborate on word families in order to consolidate the gained knowledge. Admittedly, the described strategy could be presented by language teachers during classes.

Secondly, according to I.S.P. Nation (2001: 343), unanalysed word combinations should be memorized with the aid of strategies which are typically employed in the course of learning isolated lexical items. The strategies include oral repetition, mnemonic techniques such as imagery, creating sentences with new words and analysing the parts of a given chunk, and increasingly spaced retrieval, which involves regular reviewing of the previously learnt items.

Thirdly, both at home and in the classroom, collocations have been traditionally practiced with the use of grids. However, it is not clear whether the strategy is adequate to the task. On the one hand, I.S.P. Nation (2001: 342–343) recommends practicing collocations with the aid of grids. On the other hand, N. Nesselhauf (2003) points out that grids should not be viewed as a good way of learning and teaching collocations, since collocations should be learnt and taught together with their articles and prepositions. Furthermore, N. Schmitt (2007: 87–88) recommends completing grids in order to consolidate and broaden the previous knowledge, whereas in the case of new vocabulary, the researcher suggests learning and teaching with the aid of completed grids.

Besides, there are numerous ways of practicing collocations in the classroom. I.S.P. Nation (2001) points out that it could be useful for the learners to brainstorm collocations in groups. Additionally, language teachers should encourage chunking by means of activities aiming at fluency development (such as repeated reading

and listening to stories) as well as by means of language-focused attention (for instance by delayed repetition and observing collocational patterns). It is worth mentioning that I.S.P. Nation (1994) proposes various classroom activities and games aiming at the practice of collocations, such as collocation dominoes and bingos.

Furthermore, N. Nesselhauf (2003: 238–239) postulates that collocations should be presented to language learners by means of contrastive analysis. The contrastive analysis should focus on crosslinguistic differences not only in terms of combinations of lexical items, but also in terms of the use of articles and prepositions. Additionally, N. Nesselhauf (2003) suggests that the teaching of noun-verb collocations should be organized around verbs, since they seem to be highly problematic to language learners. Thus, target language verbs and their uses should be contrasted with the corresponding verbs from the learners' mother tongue. Besides, the collocations chosen for teaching should be not only fully acceptable and frequent, but also, preferably, medium-restricted and incongruent between the learners' first and target language. Nevertheless, N. Nesselhauf (2003) observes that congruent collocations also happen to be subject to learners' errors.

Undoubtedly, lacks in collocational knowledge result in errors in the course of foreign language production. The most common errors which are made by language learners on account of lacks in collocational knowledge include lexical calques and semantic extensions (D. Gabryś-Barker 2005: 102). Lexical calques occur when language learners transfer to the target language collocations that are unique to another language, usually their mother tongue. In the case of Polish learners of English, an example of lexical calque is saying *dense hair* instead of *thick hair*, *sincere field* instead of *open country*, or *white cheese* instead of *cottage cheese*. (J. Zybert 1999: 68–69). As for semantic extensions, they tend to occur when a target language word and its mother tongue translation are not exact synonyms. For instance, the French word *porte* is synonymous to the English word *door* as far as a door of a house or a room is concerned. However, the French word *porte* is not applied to describe a door of a car, which is denominated by the word *portière*. This and other similar cases of non-exact synonymy may trigger errors resulting from overgeneralizations or undergeneralizations (M. Swan 1997: 168).

4. Multilingual learners and foreign language vocabulary

The notion of multilingualism may be defined as "the ability to use or function in more than two languages" (D. Gabryś-Barker 2005: 17). This section will focus on some previous research regarding the multilingual learners' approach

to collocations and vocabulary learning. Special attention will be devoted to their vocabulary learning strategies.

Let us firstly turn to the research on multilingual vocabulary learning conducted by J. Arabski (2002). The research, which investigated vocabulary learning strategies of trilingual learners, was conducted on a group of Polish students, proficient in English and in majority studying German as their minor. It turned out that the students employed four types of strategies: (1) keyword technique; (2) imagery (3) creating new contexts and (4) representing sounds in memory. The keyword technique, however, was used the most often. In a nutshell, it consists in making association between the oral form of the word under study and another similarly sounding word. The association is followed by generation of a mental image, which becomes a key to remembering the word (cf. R. Gairns, S. Redman 1986: 92). The research by J. Arabski (2002) permitted to observe that the trilingual informants employed keywords from all the three languages. Neither of the languages seemed to dominate, but third language keywords were the least frequent.

Furthermore, it is important to refer to extensive research on multilingualism conducted by D. Gabryś-Barker (2005). Firstly, she made interesting observations concerning the role of the mother tongue in multilingual vocabulary learning. The informants were proficient university students of their second language (L2), whereas their mastery of the third language (L3) was more limited. Most of them agreed that the mother tongue was much more important in learning the third language than in learning the second language, since third language learning mostly involves translating lexical items to the mother tongue or, occasionally, to the second language. The significant role of the first language in learning the third language was attributed to the informants' low proficiency level. Among the strategies used for second language learning the students enumerated strategies involving the use of their second language, such as learning in context, elaboration, overgeneralization, as well as strategies involving the use of the mother tongue, such as translation, association, rote learning with the aid of bilingual lists, etymological comparison and memory strategies. The same strategies based on the first language were indicated as employed in the case of third language learning, as well as strategies such as auditory associations, using oral and written word similarities and code switching (D. Gabryś-Barker 2005: 181).

Additionally, D. Gabryś-Barker (2005: 185) observed that the trilingual learners applied a number of strategies based on their second language when learning their third language. The strategies included looking for second language equivalent words, making interlingual comparisons in terms of spelling and pronunciation, making overgeneralizations based on the second language, transferring words form the second to third language and relating new third language words to already known second language vocabulary. The strategies basing on the second

language seemed much more "differentiated and elaborate" than the strategies basing on the first language (ibid.).

Besides, some research by D. Gabryś-Barker (2005) was devoted to strategies for lexical search employed by multilinguals during a translation task. Some informants were demanded to translate a text from their second language to the third language, whereas others were supposed to translate the same text from their first language to the third. When demanded to translate the text from their first language to the third, the subjects tended to take a "word-for-word" approach to the translated text. The translation was done almost automatically, the only strategies employed being foreignizing and code-switching. Conversely, in the case of translation from the second to the third language, the informants tended to "process the text itself, not the individual items in question". Accordingly, some second language collocations were identified as lexical units and processed as wholes. Learners employed numerous retrieval strategies, such as using semantic field searches, synonyms or paraphrases (D. Gabryś-Barker 2005: 117). The above-mentioned findings imply that multilingual language learners may use collocations differently than bilingual learners. Most conspicuously, it seems that multilingual language users develop an ability of searching for creative linguistic solutions. Accordingly, it may be assumed that the knowledge of more than one language may have facilitative effects on the learners' use of collocations.

Last but not least, it is worthwhile to devote a thought to H. Ringbom's (2006) observation concerning multilingual learners' errors which stem from lacks in collocational knowledge. The researcher points out that third language calques and semantic extensions are in most cases committed on the basis of the first language, regardless of whether the second language is related to the third. Nonetheless, it is added that the observation is merely a trend. It cannot be assumed that third language production is altogether free from second language-based calques or semantic extensions, since individual language production is highly unpredictable (H. Ringbom 2006: 41–43). Contrastingly, S. Williams and B. Hammarberg (1998), who investigated the role of the first and the second language in third language production, observed that transfer to the third language is more often based on the second language than on the first language. The tendency probably results from the fact that the first and the second language are acquired in different ways. Third language learning is more similar to the mechanisms of second language learning than to the process of first language acquisition.

5. Collocations in the eyes of a multilingual language learner

The research presented in this article was conducted in October 2009 for the purpose of my MA thesis, entitled "Vocabulary learning strategies in acquiring

second and third language collocations". In this paper it is presented only partially. It is divided into three parts, which aim at answering the following questions: (1) Do multilingual learners consider collocations to be items that should be learnt? (2) Do multilingual learners learn collocations unintentionally or deliberately? (3) Which vocabulary learning strategies are typically applied by multilingual learners to learning collocations?

The above-mentioned questions were investigated with the aid of a questionnaire. Additionally, the study devoted attention to collocational content of the textbooks which had been used by the informants during the previous school year.

6. The design of the study

The subjects

The subjects of the present study were 30 trilingual learners, aged seventeen and eighteen, from a secondary school in Warsaw. Ten of them participated in research regarding their English language learning (L2), ten of them regarding their Italian language learning (L3) and ten of them regarding their French language learning (L3). All the informants were native speakers of Polish and learnt English as their second language. The English group learnt German as their third language. The English and French groups were third (matriculation) classes, whereas the Italian group was a second class.

As for the informants' level of language proficiency, the English group consisted of advanced and proficient learners of English. The majority of the learners had a certificate confirming knowledge of the language at the C1 level. As for the French and Italian groups, the French learners were at the intermediate level, whereas the Italian group were at the pre-intermediate level. The English group learnt German (L3) on the intermediate level, whereas the Italian and French learnt English (L2) on the upper-intermediate and the advanced level respectively.

The English group was considered by their language teacher to be generally disobedient and extremely difficult to work with. It was supervised by a third class teacher in turn, since the two former had resigned from their posts. Contrastingly, the Italian group enjoyed a very high opinion of their teacher, whereas the reputation of the French group can be described as good or neutral.

The instrument

The main research tool was a questionnaire. It was written in Polish, which is the informants' mother tongue and it was prepared in three different versions for the English, the French and the Italian group. The three versions differed in that each of the them contained examples of the target language collocations. It should be mentioned that one of the close-ended questions contained a list of aspects of

vocabulary knowledge which was created on the basis of the division by L. Taylor (1990). Another close-ended question comprised a list of vocabulary learning strategies compiled on the basis of works by several researchers, including P. Nation (1980), R. Gairns, S. Redman (1986), L. Piasecka (1999) N. Schmitt (1997) and I.S.P. Nation (2001). The list was limited to the strategies which are most likely to be often employed by language learners.

The methods

The informants were asked to fill in the questionnaire at school, during language lessons. Both the researcher and the language teachers were present in the classroom during the time devoted to filling in the questionnaire, which took about fifteen to twenty minutes. Before completing the questionnaire, the informants were explained the notion of collocation and presented its target language examples.

Additionally, some attention was devoted to the textbooks which had been used by the informants during the previous school year. They were analysed with respect to their approach to the notion of collocation in order to investigate the relationship between the learners' actual activity and the collocational content of their textbooks.

7. Discussion of the research results

7.1. The learners' awareness of the need to know target language collocations

In one of the tasks the informants were asked which aspects of vocabulary knowledge, and to what extent, should be subject to attention in the course of language learning. They were asked to rate the importance of aspects such as spelling, word meaning, pronunciation, collocations, register, word family and polysemy, using a scale from one to five, five meaning 'very important' and one meaning 'not important'. The means of ratings for collocations equalled 3.11 in the Italian group, 2.8 in the French group and 4 in the English group. Accordingly, it seems that all the three groups were to some extent aware of the need to know and learn collocations. However, the group of English learners attached definitely more importance to the subject than the French and Italian groups. Interestingly, they were more proficient target language users than the learners from French and Italian groups. Therefore, the appreciation of collocational knowledge may be growing with proficiency development. Nevertheless, it should be pointed out that the described trend may be also attributed other explanations.

Firstly, it is possible that in Poland learning collocations generally gains more attention in the case of learning English than in the case of other languages,

since learners of English more often aim at reaching high proficiency levels. The reason for this trend is that proficient English is often considered vital to one's professional life. Contrastingly, the knowledge of other languages seems to be often viewed as a hobby or as an additional skill.

Secondly, it may be the case that knowledge of English collocations is given more attention, since they are in a way particularly difficult to Polish learners of English due to the nature of the English language. Surprising as this claim may seem, it should be pointed out that a similar phenomenon might concern English pronunciation. Due to its irregularity, it may be more difficult to Polish learners than the Italian or even French pronunciation. Thus, generally, the pronunciation of a given language might be more difficult to a group of learners than the pronunciation of other languages. It seems feasible that teachers and learners of the languages with particularly difficult pronunciation may devote more attention to this aspect of vocabulary knowledge. A similar phenomenon may concern also other aspects of word knowledge, for instance collocational knowledge. Admittedly, the study under description does not provide decisive evidence for the claim that Polish learners find English collocations more difficult than other languages' collocations. Nonetheless, the idea should not be altogether neglected and is highly recommended for further research.

7.2. The learners' activities aiming at learning collocations

Let us now turn to the learners' activity aiming at learning collocations, which has been devoted attention in two tasks. In the first of the tasks the learners were asked how often they actually paid attention to particular aspects of vocabulary knowledge, including spelling, word meaning, pronunciation, collocations, register, word family and polysemy. The answers were presented on a Likert scale from one to five, five meaning 'always' and one meaning 'never'. The means of answers for collocations equalled 2.8 in the Italian group, 2.6 in the French group and 3.3 in the English group.

The second of the two tasks explored learners' specific activities performed in order to learn collocations. In total, the Italian group gave 53% of desirable answers to the above-mentioned question. Contrastingly, in the French and English group there were 32% and 48% of such answers respectively.

Generally, all the three groups declared to devote some attention to learning collocations. Nevertheless, the results of the two questions are in a way contradictory. The first demanded the informants to indicate aspects of word knowledge which they devote attention to in the course of learning vocabulary. The analysis of answers suggests that it is the English group who devoted most attention to learning collocations. As for the other question, which concerned specific activities aimed at learning collocations, it offers a different view on the

three groups. Its results permit to observe that it was the Italian group who put the most effort into learning collocations, with the English group in the second place and the French group in the third. However, the difference favouring the Italian group is relatively small.
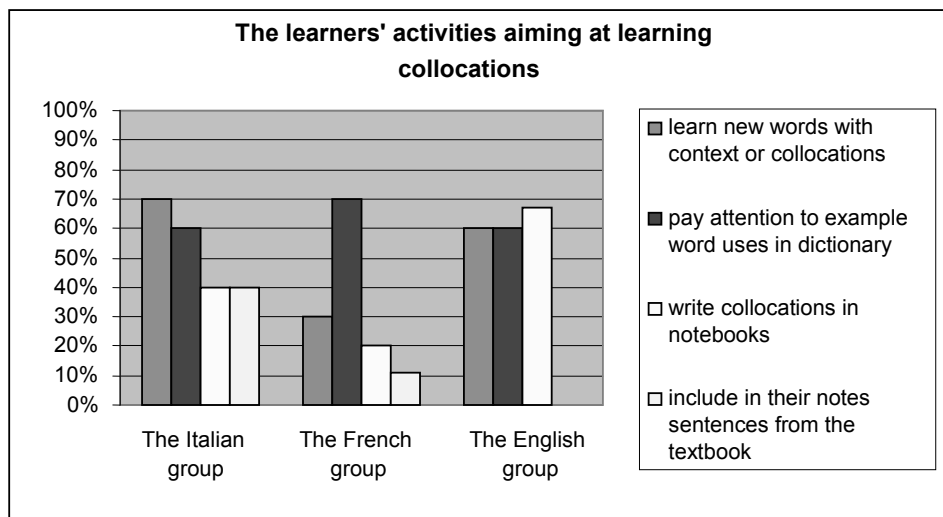

Figure 1

The answers to both questions do not seem to provide coherent results. The discrepancy may be explained by the fact that the English group might simply learn collocations in other ways than those included in the second, dichotomous question. Alternatively, it may be explained by the groups' attitude to learning the target language. It is possible that the English group devoted much attention to learning collocations in comparison with other aspects of word knowledge and the scarcity of performed activities resulted from the lack of specific actions aimed at learning English generally. The group might be demotivated from learning English, as it consisted of young people, who were considerably proficient in English, who had many duties due to the approaching matriculation exam and who generally posed acute educational problems. Nevertheless, the informants might have been keenly aware of the need to learn collocations and possibly would have spent time learning collocations if they had learnt English.

7.3. Strategies adequate to the task of learning collocations

Subsequently, the informants were asked to read a list of vocabulary learning strategies and to indicate five strategies that they would use to learn the presented

lists of Italian, French or English collocations. The informants' answers are presented in *Table 1:*

	the Italian group	the French group	the English group
Reading notes	9	2	4
Using flashcards	0	2	3
Associations with native words	5	6	4
Associations with known target language words	2	3	3
Multilingual associations	6	7	2
Repeating orally or in writing	8	5	8
Using rhymes	0	1	2
Self-testing	2	2	4
Creating sentences with new words	5	4	4
Creating stories with already know words	4	2	1
Using imagery	1	2	1
Using synonyms/antonyms	0	0	1
Drawing diagrammes / semantic maps	0	0	1
Groupings	1	3	3
Reviewing material after some time	8	4	8

Table 1. The number of learners who would use the listed strategies to learning collocations.

Learning strategies which were most often chosen for learning collocations include: oral and written repetition, reviewing material after some time, reading notes, multilingual associations, associations with Polish and creating sentences with new words.

It should be mentioned that the English group indicated a wider range of collocation learning strategies than the other groups. The above-mentioned phenomenon might be explained by the group's wider experience in learning collocations, possibly triggered by high proficiency.

Furthermore, it can be observed that the strategy of multilingual associations was more popular in the French and Italian groups than in the English group. This trend may be related to the fact that French and Italian were the learners' third languages, whereas English was the second language of the group. It should be mentioned that a similar observation has already been made by J. Arabski (2002: 212) who noticed that, though multilingual learners employed keywords of various languages, the third language keywords were the least frequent.

7.4. Collocational content in textbooks and the learners' activity

The research under discussion was conducted at the outset of a school year and all the three groups had finished working with their textbooks which had been used the previous year. The textbooks were *Nuovo Progetto Italiano 1* (T. Marin, S. Magnelli 2007) in the Italian group, *Matura Success* (the upper intermediate level, J. Comyns-Carr et al 2007) in the English group and *Champion 2* (A. Monnerie-Goarin and E. Siréjols 2001) in the French group. The contents of the above-mentioned textbooks were analysed with respect to the number of collocational exercises. Only the tasks which aimed at learning collocations specifically were taken into account in the analysis, though tasks aimed at learning various linguistic aspects frequently contribute to the development of collocational knowledge.

It turned out that *Matura Success* contained thirty seven collocational exercises. Contrastingly, in *Nuovo Progetto Italiano 1* and *Champion 2,* there were twenty three and twenty five collocational tasks respectively. Thus, the English group had used the textbook which contained the largest number of collocational tasks. It should be also mentioned that the words 'collocation' and 'to collocate' happened to appear in the instructions of the English textbook, whereas they were not employed in the two other textbooks. The relation between the textbook contents and results of the questionnaire permits to make some interesting observations.

Firstly, according to the questionnaire results, the English group attached greatest importance to collocational knowledge in comparison with the two other groups. It is probable that their attitude was triggered by the large number of collocational tasks in their textbook, as well as by explicit reference to collocations in the instructions.

Secondly, it should be observed that the English group indicated the widest range of strategies which they would employ for learning collocations. The fact is probably triggered by wider experience in learning collocations, which, in turn, may result from considerable collocational content of the textbook. On the other hand, the awareness of the need to learn collocations, the experience in learning them and the number of vocabulary learning strategies employed may be also related to the level of proficiency.

8. Conclusions

The results of the questionnaire demonstrate that many multilingual learners are aware of the need to learn collocations and actually devote time to learning this aspect of vocabulary knowledge. However, there are also learners who

underestimate the importance of collocational knowledge and do not pay enough attention to learning this aspect of vocabulary. It seems that the learners' awareness of the need to learn collocations depends on the level of proficiency. More proficient learners are probably more aware. The awareness of the importance of collocations may be also influenced by collocational content of textbooks.

Strategies which were considered adequate to the task of learning collocations include oral and written repetition, reviewing material after some time, reading notes, multilingual associations, associations with the mother tongue and creating sentences with new words. The learners' choices of strategies permit to make some additional observations.

Firstly, vocabulary learning strategies based on the second language are more popular during third language learning than strategies based on the third language during second language learning. The finding is congruent with the observations by J. Arabski (2002: 212).

Secondly, learners of different languages have similar strategic approaches to language learning tasks. The relatively slight differences probably result from factors different than the target language nature. However, the influence of the nature of the target language cannot be totally excluded.

Furthermore, the analysis of textbooks permits to observe that the approach to collocations presented by textbooks may exert influence on the learners' attitude to this aspect of vocabulary knowledge. It seems that numerous collocational tasks in a textbook result in increased awareness of the need to learn collocations. Moreover, they may trigger experience in learning collocations and application of more vocabulary learning strategies. Therefore, textbooks should contain a large number of varied collocational tasks. Nonetheless, the awareness of the need to learn collocations, the experience in learning them and the number of vocabulary learning strategies employed may be also attributed to other factors, such as the proficiency level.

The present study rises an interesting question for further investigation. It remains unclear which aspects of vocabulary knowledge are considered by learners to be the most difficult, and whether the difficulty of the aspects is the same for various target languages. Hopefully, the present study has demonstrated that there is still much to be improved and discovered in the process of learning and teaching collocations, which are, however, only one of the aspects of vocabulary knowledge.

REFERENCES

AITCHISON, J. (1989), *Words in the mind: an introduction to the mental lexicon*. Oxford.

ARABSKI, J. (2002), *Learning strategies of L1, L2 and L3 lexis*. In: J. Arabski (ed.), Time for Words: Studies in Foreign Language Vocabulary Acquisition. Frankfurt. 209–215.

BROWN, P.R. (1994), *Lexical Collocations: a Strategy for Advanced Learners*. In: Modern English Teacher, 2(3). 24–27.

CARTER, R. (1994), *Vocabulary: Applied Linguistic Perspective.* London and New York.

COMYNS-CARR, J./ J. PARSONS/ D. SZMERDT-CHANDLER (2007), *Matura Success. Upper Intermediate.* Harlow.

CRUSE, D.A. (1986), *Lexical Semantics.* Cambridge.

ELLIS, N.C. (1997), *Vocabulary acquisition: word structure, collocation, word-class, and meaning.* In: N. Schmitt/ M. McCarthy (eds), Vocabulary: Description, Acqusition and Pedagogy. Cambridge. 122–139.

GABRYŚ-BARKER, D. (2005), *Aspects of Multilingual Storage, Processing and Retrieval.* Katowice.

GAIRNS, R./ S. REDMAN (1986), *Working with words: a guide to teaching and learning vocabulary.* Cambridge.

GOUGH, C. (1996), *Words and words: helping learners to help themselves with collocations.* In: Modern English Teacher 1(5). 32–36.

KRAWCZYK-NEIFAR, E. (2002), *Foreign language vocabulary learning strategies and the proficiency and age factor.* In: J. Arabski (ed.), Time for Words: Studies in Foreign Language Vocabulary Acquisition. Frankfurt. 247–259.

LEŚNIEWSKA, J. (2002), *Multi-word items in vocabulary acquisition*. In: J. Arabski (ed.), Time for Words: Studies in Foreign Language Vocabulary Acquisition. Frankfurt. 139–144.

MARIN, T./ S. MAGNELLI (2007), *Nuovo Progetto Italiano 1*. Roma.

McCARTHY, M. (1994), *Vocabulary*. Oxford.

MONNERIE-GOARIN, A./ E. SIRÉJOLS (2001), *Champion 2*. Méthode de français. Paris.

MOON, R. (1997), *Vocabulary connections: multi-word items in English*. In: N. Schmitt/ M. McCarthy (eds), Vocabulary: Description, Acquisition and Pedagogy. Cambridge. 40–63.

NATION, I.S.P. (1980), *Strategies for receptive vocabulary learning*. Guidelines 3. 18–23.

NATION, I.S.P. (ed.) (1994), *New ways in teaching vocabulary*. Alexandria.

NATION, I.S.P. (2001), *Learning Vocabulary in Another Language.* Cambridge.

NATION, P./ P. MEARA (2002), *Vocabulary*. In: N. Schmitt (ed.), An Introduction to Applied Linguistics. London. 35–54.

NESSELHAUF, N. (2003), *The Use of Collocations by Advanced Learners of English and Some Implications for Teaching*. In: Applied Linguistics 2 (24). 223–242.

ODLIN, T. (1994), *Glossary*. In: T. Odlin (ed.), Perspectives on Pedagogical Grammar. Cambridge. 318–332.

O'KEEFFE, A./ M. MCCARTHY/ R. CARTER (2007), *From Corpus to Classroom: language use and language teaching*. Cambridge.

OXFORD, R.L. (1990), *Language learning strategies: what every teacher should know*. Boston.

PIASECKA, L. (1999), *Ways with words. Strategies of lexical acquisition*. Opole.

PIASECKA, L. (2002), *Sensitivity to fixed expressions and idioms – an aspect of lexical competence*. In: J. Arabski (ed.), Time for Words: Studies in Foreign Language Vocabulary Acquisition. Frankfurt. 61–70.

RINGBOM, H. (2006), *The Importance of Different Types of Similarity in Transfer Studies*. In: J. Arabski (ed.), Cross-linguistic Influences in the Second Language Lexicon. Clevendon. 36–45.

SCHMITT, N. (1997), *Vocabulary learning strategies*. In: N. Schmitt/ M. McCarthy (eds), Vocabu-
　　lary: Description, Acquisition and Pedagogy. Cambridge. 199–227.
SCHMITT, N. (2007), *Vocabulary in language teaching.* New York.
SWAN, M. (1997), *The influence of the mother tongue on second language vocabulary acquisition
　　and use.* In: N. Schmitt/ M. McCarthy (eds), Vocabulary: Description, Acquisition and Pedagogy.
　　Cambridge. 156–180.
TAYLOR, L. (1990), *Teaching and Learning Vocabulary*. New York.
WILLIAMS, S./ B. HAMMARBERG (1998), *Language switches in L3 production: Implications for
　　a polyglot speaking model*. In: Applied Linguistics 19(3). 295–333.
ZYBERT, J. (1999), *Errors in foreign language learning. The case of Polish learners of English*.
　　Warszawa.