



The Effect of Textual Enhancement on Collocation Learning: The Case of Arab EFL Learners

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Abstract

Interest in second language (L2) collocation instruction studies is increasing because collocations constitute a major difficulty for L2 learners. The current study investigates the effect of textual enhancement on L2 collocation learning in a foreign language learning environment. To this end, a total of 137 Arab learners of English were divided into three groups; a textual enhancement group, a textual non-enhancement group and a control group. The treatment period lasted for 4 weeks during which the participants were repeatedly exposed to unfamiliar verb + noun and adjective + noun collocations (n=16) embedded in stories in four 45-minute sessions. Using a pre-test/post-test design, the results surprisingly showed a clear advantage for the textual non-enhancement group across different comparisons although to varying degrees. The results also revealed minimal and inconsistent differences in learning gains for different word types. Pedagogical implications and directions for future research are proposed.

1 Introduction

A central component of second language (L2) lexical knowledge is collocation, which can be defined as “a group of words that belong together either because they commonly occur together ..., or because the meaning of the group is not obvious from the meaning of the parts” (Nation, 2001, p. 317). Examples in English, such as *blow nose* (verb-noun), *firm belief* (adjective-noun), *interested in* (adjective-preposition), *bird sing* (noun-verb), and so forth, represent word partnerships with frequent co-occurrence in the language. The significant role of collocations partially stems from their high frequency of occurrence in natural language, but also reflects their strong influence on fluent language processing, enhancement of native-like language use and efficient understanding of meaning, such as polysemy and connotations (see El-Dakhs, 2015b; Henriksen, 2013). Despite this evident importance, collocations have been repeatedly reported as a major difficulty for L2 learners (e.g. Howarth, 1998; Laufer & Waldman, 2011). Causes of difficulty include the arbitrary nature of

collocations, their unpredictable differences across languages and various impediments to their identification and retention (see Boers, Lindstromberg, & Eyckmans, 2014; El-Dakhs, 2015b). Despite this notable difficulty of collocations, relatively little is known about how they should be effectively practiced in the language classroom (Szudarski & Carter, 2016).

L2 collocation learning studies have mainly examined two approaches to the problem; incidental learning and intentional learning. Incidental learning describes learners' acquisition of new and particularly noticeable language forms while focusing on the message, not forms, of texts (Tian & Macaro, 2012). This approach is mainly supported by Krashen's (1993, 1989) Comprehensible Input Hypothesis that postulates that the majority of language learning is the result of incidental learning when learners are exposed to sufficient frequent and comprehensible input that is just above their level. Intentional learning, however, describes the acquisition of new features or forms due to learners' focus on form-meaning relationships in texts (Tian & Macaro, 2012). This focus is believed to draw learners' attention to the target features and forms and, hence, accelerate their learning. Theoretically, the intentional learning approach is mainly grounded on Schmidt's (1990) Noticing Hypothesis that sets noticing as a starting point for acquisition.

The current study investigates the effect of a semi-incidental approach on L2 vocabulary learning. According to Boers and Lindstromberg (2009), a semi-incidental approach refers to learning that results from a meaning-oriented activity in which materials are manipulated or designed to attract learners' attention to target forms. This approach is supported by recurrent reports on learners' inability to notice important language forms on their own due to varied reasons including infrequent occurrence of lexical chunks in spoken and written discourse (Boers & Lindstromberg, 2009), relatively poor learning opportunities in certain learning environments and/or learners' lack of sufficient linguistic and cognitive readiness (Segalowitz & Freed, 2004). This semi-incidental approach, known as input enhancement (Sharwood Smith, 1993), can occur in many forms (e.g. glossing, repetition, etc.). The current study focuses on textual enhancement, which refers to the use of typographical cues, such as underlining, bolding or capitalizing, to draw learners' attention to target forms, while the learners' main focus is on meaning (Wong, 2005).

The current study is designed to investigate the effect of textual enhancement, represented by bolding, on L2 collocation learning among Arab learners of English as a foreign language (EFL). The study is motivated by the evident importance of collocations for L2 competence and the notable difficulty they cause for L2 learners, particularly in the Arab World (see literature review). The study is also motivated by the dearth of research on how to best support L2 collocation learning in the classroom (Pellicer-Sánchez, 2017; Szudarski & Carter, 2016). To this end, a survey of collocation studies in the Arab World and research into L2 collocation learning is provided. This is followed by a description of the study methodology and results, which are later interpreted with reference to the existing literature and relevant theoretical models. Pedagogical implications and directions for future research are also proposed.

2 Literature review

Recent collocation studies acknowledging the special difficulty of L2 collocation acquisition have targeted a variety of second languages, such as French, German, Italian and Korean (e.g. Krummes & Ensslin, 2015; Kunz, 2015; Park, 2007; Siyanova-Chanturia, 2015). The findings mainly highlight that L2 learners use collocations differently from native speakers, even at advanced levels of learning. This difference is reflected in different forms, including the L2 learners' overreliance on formulaic sequences in essay writing at an advanced level (Krummes & Ensslin, 2015), their struggle to find the right collocates and phrases at beginning levels (e.g. Kunz, 2015) and their tendency to use different word types (e.g. subject + verb, object + verb, etc.) than the more frequent ones among native speakers (Park, 2007). The acquisition of L2 collocations seems a slow and gradual process that is influenced by a number of variables, such as L2 proficiency and L1 interference (Park, 2007). To facilitate this gradual process, instructional intervention, in the form of explicit instruction of collocations, has been useful (Kunz, 2015; Siyanova-Chanturia, 2015).

Similar to these studies, the present study acknowledges the special difficulty of L2 collocation acquisition, particularly that the study targets foreign language learners who do not enjoy rich L2 exposure. In the current study context, instructional intervention thus seems necessary to accelerate L2 collocation acquisition. The current study assesses the effectiveness of textual enhancement on the acquisition of L2 collocations among Arab EFL learners. To this end, the present review will mainly focus on English language studies. The survey consists of three parts: (1) collocation studies among Arab learners of English; (2) research on L2 collocation learning; and (3) research on textual enhancement.

2.1 Collocation studies on Arab EFL learners

Collocation studies in the Arab World have addressed diverse nationalities. For instance, studies assessing both the receptive and productive knowledge of collocations were carried out among university undergraduates of English in Saudi Arabia (Brashi, 2009), Libya (Ahmed, 2012), Tunisia (Almaktary, 2017) and Algeria (Zohra, 2015). The four studies highlighted the poor collocation knowledge of learners, particularly at the production level. Interpretation highlighted a number of potential determinants including L1 influence, minimal L2 exposure and lack of collocation awareness. Other studies mainly focused on the receptive knowledge, such as Alotaibi (2014) among Kuwaiti learners and Banboua (2016) among Yemeni learners. Both studies again revealed poor collocation competence that may arise from L1 interference, lack of collocation awareness and poor instruction. Alotaibi (2014) also failed to show a positive influence of increasing L2 proficiency and highlighted that certain collocation patterns are specially problematic for learners, namely, adjective + noun and verb + noun, pronoun or preposition.

El-Dakhs (2015a) in Saudi Arabia, Abu Naba'h and Al-Share'h (2011) and Alzi'abi (2017) in Jordan, Dukali (2016) in Libya, Abdul Ridha and Al-Riyali (2011) in Iraq, Farghal and AlHamly (2007) in Kuwait, and Mahmoud (2005) in Oman all examined the production knowledge of collocations. In addition to recurrent evidence of poor collocation knowledge, the studies highlighted a number of important determinants of collocation competence, including intralingual factors (El-Dakhs, 2015a; Mahmoud, 2005), learners' creative production (Farghal & AlHamly, 2007), ignorance of collocation restrictions and use of ineffective strategies (Abdul Ridha & Al-Riyali, 2011; Abu Naba'h & Al-Share'h, 2011; Alzi'abi, 2017; El-Dakhs, 2015a) and deficient vocabulary stock (Alzi'abi, 2017). The studies also revealed specially problematic collocation patterns, including verb + noun, adjective + noun, noun + verb collocations (Abdul Ridha & Al-Riyali, 2011) and adverb + verb collocations (Alzi'abi, 2017) with verbal patterns exhibiting more difficulty than adjectival patterns (Dukali, 2016; Farghal & AlHamly, 2007).

It is worth noting that a number of other studies mainly examined the influence of specific variables on the collocation knowledge of Arab learners. Examples include Awaj (2018) who showed a notable advantage for the naturalistic setting over the classroom setting in collocation learning and Gaballa and Al-Khayri (2014) who showed a clear influence for the learning environment and word class, with an advantage for verb + noun collocations over adjective + noun and verb + preposition. Other examples include Al-Miqdad (2012) and El-Mashharawi (2008) who showed significant influence for the mother tongue, gender, word class (Al-Miqdad, 2012), amount of exposure and academic discipline (El-Mashharawi, 2008). Irrespective of causes, the problem persists that Arab learners of English seem to face a serious difficulty with the learning of English collocations, which represents a strong motivation to explore how efforts to overcome this difficulty can be supported.

2.2 Research into L2 collocation learning

As explained in the introduction of the current paper, two main approaches to L2 collocation learning are (1) intentional learning and (2) incidental learning. Research into intentional learning has revealed interesting results. For example, a positive influence for dictionary use (Laufer, 2011),

online concordancers and concordancing materials (Chan & Liou, 2005; Daskalovska, 2015; Kheirzadeh & Marandi, 2014; Koosha & Jafarpour, 2006) and a corpus-assisted contrastive analysis and translation approach (Alharbi, 2017) has been found. A similar positive influence has been noted for explicit instruction over attention-directing techniques (Serrano, 2018) and for input-based and output-based instruction (Gholami & Farvardin, 2017). As for specific tasks, Ertürk (2017) showed that the receptive glossed sentences task and the productive cloze task lead to notable learning gains of collocations. In the same vein, Minaei and Rizaie (2014) showed an advantage for cloze and collaborative tasks over editing and individual tasks for L2 collocation learning. Additionally, Majd (2017) showed that tasks including a minimal involvement load (Hulstijn & Laufer, 2001) as represented by the recall task in his study proved more effective than other tasks with higher involvement loads; mainly, multiple choice and gap-filling tasks, although the task with the highest load (i.e. gap-filling) were preferred by learners.

Fewer studies have been conducted examining incidental learning. Two examples that indicated the effectiveness of incidental learning are Pellicer-Sánchez (2017) and Webb, Newton and Chang (2013). The former study showed the positive influence of reading stories with embedded collocations while the latter revealed the effectiveness of reading and listening to graded readers with embedded collocations on learners' lexical knowledge. The two studies, however, differed in the frequency of manipulation on L2 collocation learning with the former study failing to show any effect and the latter showing a significant influence. This difference may be interpreted in the light of Pellicer-Sánchez's (2017) comparison between 4 and 8 encounters of collocations whereas Webb, Newton and Chang (2013) found sizeable learning gains when reaching 15 encounters with the target collocations within graded readers. Another example is Vilkaitė (2017) who showed that incidental acquisition of L2 collocations is equally effective in non-adjacent collocations as well as adjacent ones, and that larger prior vocabulary knowledge seems to lead to better learning gains in incidental collocation learning. Additionally, some studies investigated the influence of different incidental learning techniques. For instance, Kasgari (2018) showed that both input flooding and input elaboration are two effective methods of teaching collocations.

Other studies compared the influence of incidental and intentional learning. Szudarski (2012) and Laufer and Girasi (2008) showed superiority in learning gains for the intentional learning approach. Szudarski (2012) showed a positive influence for a combined approach of incidental learning with some form-focused instruction, but failed to show much improvement through incidental learning. This may be due to the special difficulty of stimuli as Szudarski (2012) was targeting delexical and incongruent verb + noun collocations, which may require special intervention. Regarding Laufer and Girasi (2008), they revealed the effectiveness of combining reading texts with vocabulary tests and translation tasks and contrastive analysis with a clear advantage for the latter combination of translation and contrastive analysis. The superior influence for the combination of translation and contrastive analysis may have helped the participants overcome L1 influence through consciousness of L1-L2 differences.

In the same vein, El-Dakhs, Amroun and Charlot-Muhammad (2018) investigated the influence of explicit instruction and incidental learning on collocation learning among Arab undergraduate learners of English who were studying at the same Saudi university where the current study was conducted. Dividing a sample of 114 elementary learners of English into an explicit learning group, an incidental learning group and a control group, El-Dakhs et al. (2018) showed a clear advantage for explicit learning in form recognition and recall for short-term and long-term learning gains, while incidental learning proved only slightly beneficial in short-term form recognition. The superior gains for intentional learning should not, however, discourage researchers from exploring ways to increase gains based on incidental learning. With the slow and gradual development of L2 collocation acquisition, it is important to maximize learning gains through all possible means.

2.3 Textual enhancement studies on L2 collocation learning

Textual enhancement is a semi-incident approach, since the learners' focus remains on the message, while their attention to form is drawn through certain textual manipulations. This approach has triggered increasing research particularly in morphosyntax and, to a much lesser extent, in reading comprehension and writing (e.g. Arabani, 2010; Balcom & Bouffard, 2015; Fang, 2016; Hassani, Azarnoosh, & Naeni, 2015; Jabbarpoor & Abdollahzadeh, 2013; Jabbarpoor & Jajeddin, 2013; Jahan & Kormos, 2015; Khoshnevis & Mikaeli, 2012; LaBrozzi, 2016; Lee, 2007; Leow, Egi, Nuevo, & Tsai, 2003; Mayén, 2013; Meguro, 2017; Palomino, 2014; Pinsonneault, 2016; Rassaei, 2015; Sarkhosh, Taghipour, & Sarkhosh, 2013; Torkabad & Fazilatfar, 2014). Much fewer textual enhancement studies have, however, been carried out on collocations.

Most textual enhancement studies on collocations involved a comparison between a group who read texts with enhanced collocations (e.g. underlined, bolded or capitalized) and another that read the same texts in an unenhanced condition. The group with the enhanced condition often outperformed the other group with the unenhanced condition. Boers et al. (2017) showed that typographic enhancement brought better post-reading recognition of the enhanced parts than a reading condition without any enhancement, a finding that supports the view that typographic enhancement benefits L2 learners' noticing of enhanced language forms. Similarly, Szudarski (2015) found an advantage for the textual enhancement group over the reading only group in form recognition and recall tests, leading to the conclusion that textual enhancement supports phraseological development. Likewise, in Szudarski and Carter's (2016) study, the input flood – a semi-incident approach to increase the salience of a target form through artificially engineered frequency (Han, Park, & Combs, 2008) – and textual enhancement group displayed collocation learning gains in form recognition and recall, while the input flood only group failed to show any gains. Variation in collocation repetitions, however, influenced the learning gains in form recall. The researchers concluded that the influence of input methods and repetition may vary based on the different aspects of collocation knowledge.

Similar comparisons were conducted by Choi (2017) and Campillo (2015). Choi (2017) examined the eye movements of two groups reading the same texts in a typographically enhanced versus an unenhanced form. Longer eye fixations were noted for unfamiliar collocations by the enhanced group, which reflects deeper processing. No significant difference was, however, noted for familiar collocations. Moreover, the textual enhancement group outperformed the unenhanced group in a post-reading collocation test, but lagged behind in a recall test of unenhanced text, revealing a trade-off between learning collocations and recalling unenhanced texts. The trade-off was interpreted in terms of additional cognitive resources allocated to the unfamiliar enhanced collocations. Campillo (2015) examined a specific type of fixed collocations (i.e. idioms, e.g. *brass monkeys*, *as cool as a cucumber*, *to be a bag of bones* and *to see the light at the end of the tunnel*) through a comprehension task and another recognition task. The results revealed that textual enhancement increased the salience and comprehension of transparent idioms and, to a lesser extent, opaque idioms. Textual enhancement, however, did not provide any gains on recognition of idioms.

Two further studies compared different conditions including textual enhancement. Sonbul and Schmitt (2013) compared the effect of explicit instruction through the teaching of decontextualized collocations with two semi-incident approaches: namely, input flood and textual enhancement among native and non-native speakers. The two conditions led to learning gains of collocations in form recognition and recall, with a clear advantage for textual enhancement among non-native speakers. No condition, however, influenced implicit collocation priming. Likewise, Hu (2015) compared the effect of three conditions on L2 collocation learning: (1) reading a text with L1 glossed and highlighted collocations; (2) same as (1) followed by multiple choice exercises; and (3) same as (1) followed by fill-in-the-blanks exercises. The second condition outperformed the other two in receptive knowledge at the levels of form and meaning. None of the conditions, however, led to learning gains in productive knowledge.

The current review highlights the special difficulty of L2 collocation acquisition in different parts of the world, including the Arab World. The wide acknowledgement of this difficulty has recently triggered increasing research on how to best address this difficulty in the language class-

room. Although most research has focused on intentional learning, incidental learning has also attracted attention. Particularly relevant to the current study is the use of textual enhancement to support collocation learning. The current study addresses the influence of textual enhancement on L2 collocation learning within a new population for this direction of collocation studies: that is, Arab EFL learners. The study also compares enhanced and unenhanced groups within a new procedure involving reading aloud rather than the recurrent silent reading in previous studies. The current study also compares the influence of textual enhancement along two important dimensions: (1) type of collocation knowledge (i.e. receptive versus productive); and (2) word class of collocates (i.e. verb + noun versus adjective + noun).

3 Research question

The current study is designed to address the following research question: “Does textual enhancement make a significant difference in L2 collocation learning?” The authors expect a positive response to the question in line with earlier studies (Boers et al., 2017; Choi, 2017; Hu, 2015; Sonbul & Schmitt, 2013; Szudarski, 2015; Szudarski & Carter, 2016) that showed an advantage for textual enhancement in L2 collocation learning. The authors also expect that the learners will perform better on multiple-choice tasks than gap-filling tasks, since productive collocation knowledge has often proved problematic to Arab learners (Ahmed, 2012; Almaktary, 2017; Brashi, 2009; Zohra, 2015). Additionally, the authors expect higher learning gains for verbal collocations than adjectival ones since verbs, unlike adjectives, constitute a central component of grammatical English sentences. Hence, findings of the current study may support the view that word class constitutes an important determinant in L2 collocation learning (Al-Miqdad, 2012; Gaballa & Al-Khayri, 2014).

4 Methodology

4.1 Participants

A total of 137 female EFL learners participated in the study. All participants were native speakers of Arabic and ranged in age between 18 and 22. The participants varied in nationality (i.e. Egyptians, Jordanians, Syrians, Palestinians and Saudis), but they had all studied at Saudi public schools during the middle and secondary stages. They were recruited from a private Saudi university in Riyadh, the capital of Saudi Arabia, which allows admission to Saudis and non-Saudis. The university allows admission to both male and female students. However, as per the Saudi higher education system, male and female students study in separate campuses with male students taught by male teachers and female students by female teachers. Hence, the participants in the current study were all recruited from the women’s campus and had female teachers.

Because the medium of instruction is English for all majors, the university carefully assesses the English proficiency level of applicants. Only those scoring at an intermediate level or above (equivalent of 5.5. on IELTS) are admitted to their majors. The applicants with lower scores join an intensive English program (known as Preparatory English Program or PYP), which offers students 20 hours of English instruction weekly for a period of three academic semesters for beginners, two semesters for elementary and one semester for pre-intermediate. The participants of the current study were recruited from six intact classes at the pre-intermediate level and were majoring in computer science, engineering and business administration.

4.2 Materials

The current study targets verb + noun lexical collocations and adjective + noun lexical collocations. The choice of these two patterns is based on results of previous research showing that they constitute special difficulty for Arab learners (e.g. Alotaibi, 2014; Abdul Ridha & Al-Riyali, 2011). It must be noted, however, that El-Dakhs (2015a), Gaballa & Al-Khayri (2014), Al-Miqdad (2012) and Alsakran (2011) attached more difficulty to adjective + noun collocations than verb + noun

collocations, while Dukali (2016), Farghal & Al Hamly (2007) indicated greater difficulty for the learning of verb + noun collocations than adjective + noun collocations. In order to identify the target collocations, a list of 120 collocations were compiled by the two researchers who are experienced PYP instructors including an equal number of the two collocation patterns. The list included unfamiliar collocations to the participants as per the researchers' discretion. The list was distributed to 15 PYP instructors to rate the participants' possible familiarity with the collocations on a 5-point Likart scale where 5 meant excellent and 1 poor. Examining the instructors' rating led to the final selection of 16 target unfamiliar collocations (see Appendix A). The use of subjective familiarity assessment was purposefully employed, since the target population had studied English for many years at schools, but still failed to achieve the expected proficiency level. In such EFL learning contexts, learners may be familiar with low-frequency collocations through the curriculum while missing some more frequent ones (El-Dakhs, 2015a) and the high frequency of collocations does not automatically lead to their acquisition (Park, 2007).

The teaching and testing materials were prepared by two researchers and were validated by 10 other PYP instructors. The teaching materials consisted of four stories that were adapted from an online story book titled "Chicken Soup" at www.chickensoup.com. The target collocations were embedded in the adapted versions (four collocations per story) and were bolded for the textually enhanced group. The stories ranged in length between 450 and 620 words and varied in topic as shown in Table 1. As for the testing materials, a multiple-choice test was devised to assess form recognition of the target collocations. Each collocation was tested in one sentence with four options including the verb or adjective part of the collocation. A gap-filling task was also devised to assess form recall. Each collocation was again tested in one sentence in which the verb or adjective part of the collocation was missing. To restrict the participant's choice, the first letter of the missing word was supplied as well as the Arabic translation equivalent (see Appendix B for the stories and tasks).

Table 1. Titles of stories

#	Story Title
1	The Pirate
2	The Dancing Grannies
3	Martha's Secret Ingredient
4	Graduation Day

While developing materials for collocation learning, it has been recommended to artificially engineer frequency of occurrence through repeating the embedded collocations several times in the text (Pellicer-Sánchez, 2017; Webb, Newton, & Chang, 2013). The repetition reflects the well-documented learners' need to encounter unknown lexical items a number of times before any learning occurs (Pellicer-Sánchez, 2017; Szudarski & Carter, 2016; Webb, Newton & Chang, 2013). In the current study, however, the embedded collocations were not artificially repeated. The researchers opted to expose the learners to the target collocations several times through engaging them in reading/listening to the same texts a number of times for different purposes. This approach better simulates natural language use where lexical items, particularly collocations, may not be recurrently repeated, but learners may approach the same text several times for diverse purposes.

4.3 Procedure

The current study was conducted over 7 weeks (see Table 2). In week 1, the participants completed the pre-tests for form recognition and recall. Weeks 2–5, which involved one 45-minute session per week, were assigned for the treatment and immediate post-tests. In every 45-minute session, a new story with four embedded target collocations was taught followed by an immediate post-test for these specific collocations. Two weeks after the treatment, in week 7, the delayed post-tests were administered. During the treatment period, the participants were divided into three groups: (1) the

textual enhancement group (TE) whose texts included bolded target collocations; (2) the unenhanced group (UE) whose texts did not include any typographical manipulation; and (3) the control group (CG) who did not receive reading texts and were not involved in any particular treatment. The study was conducted after seeking the approval of the concerned authorities at the university and the class instructors and the consent of the participants.

Table 2. Study Design

Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 5	Week 7
Pre-Test	The Pirate Treatment	The Dancing Grannies Treatment	Martha's Secret Ingredient Treatment	Graduation Day Treatment	Delayed Post-Test
	Immediate Post-Test	Immediate Post-Test	Immediate Post-Test	Immediate Post-Test	

In order to ensure consistency among classes, a unified procedure for the TE and UE groups was communicated to the class instructors, who were all Master's holders with EFL teaching experience ranging between 10 and 20 years. After a brief lead-in, the instructors read the story out loud to the students, who followed the story on the screen. Then, the students received a hard copy of the story, listened to the instructor reading it again out loud and supplied missing words whenever the instructor paused. This was followed by the students reading the story aloud in pairs while alternating with every new paragraph. Finally, the students were asked to individually answer five questions that assessed their general comprehension of the texts without any focus on the target forms. The students had to refer back to the text to complete the final task, since answers were required to be taken verbatim from the texts. This procedure ensured that the participants would be exposed at least four times to the target collocations.

The students took the post-tests without access to the teaching materials. It is also worth noting that the pre-tests, treatment, immediate post-tests and delayed post-tests were conducted in the same classrooms by the same class instructors. The instructors passed on the completed tests to the researchers who did the marking again to ensure consistency. Every correct choice in the multiple-choice test was granted one point. Students were allowed to choose only one correct option per sentence. As for the gap-filling test, one point was allocated to every answer that could be easily pronounced as the target word despite minor spelling deviation.

5 Results

In order to answer the research question "Does textual enhancement make a significant difference in L2 collocation learning?" the participants' performance on the pre- and post-tests was compared with Mixed ANOVA which examined the influence across instructional type (i.e. TE, UE and CG) as a between-subject factor and time of test (pre-, immediate post- and delayed post) as a within subject factor. The Mixed ANOVA results were also supplemented with Bonferroni-corrected post hoc pairwise comparisons. The results are reported in this section categorized by collocation pattern: 5.1. verb + noun collocations and 5.2. adjective + noun collocations.

Additionally, the learning gains for verb+noun collocations versus adjective+noun collocations are compared in both form recognition and form recall in order to assess the effectiveness of collocation instruction per word type. To this end, a T-test was conducted for potential differences in learning gains between the two word types with respect to the difference between (1) the post-test and the pre-test, (2) the delayed post-test and the pre-test and (3) the delayed post-test and the post-test. The results are reported in 5.3. Verb + Noun Collocations vs. Adjective + Noun Collocations.

5.1 Verb + noun collocations

Tables 3, 4 and 5 apply to the recognition of verb + noun collocations through the multiple-choice tests. Table 3 shows the mean and standard deviation of all groups at all time points. Table 4 summarizes the Mixed ANOVA results that reveal significant differences between the UE group and the TE group, on the one hand, and the UE group and the CG group, on the other hand. Significant differences are also noted at different times of the tests. Table 5 shows additional findings based on the Bonferroni comparisons. No significant differences were noted among the groups on the pre-test, suggesting that all groups were equally unfamiliar with the target form. Comparisons of instructional type reflect significantly better performance for the UE group than the TE and CG groups in both the immediate and delayed post-tests. The TE group, however, did not show any significant difference compared to the CG group. As for test time, all groups showed significant improvement in the immediate post-tests than the pre-tests, and this improvement was maintained in the delayed post-tests.

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics for verb + noun collocations for form recognition

Descriptive Statistics				
	Group	Mean	Standard Deviation	Number
Pre-test	UE	4.19	1.86	42
	TE	3.84	2.00	51
	CG	3.77	2.07	44
	Total	3.93	1.98	137
Post-test	UE	6.71	1.13	42
	TE	5.67	2.49	51
	CG	5.32	1.67	44
	Total	5.88	1.97	137
Delayed post-test	UE	6.74	1.11	42
	TE	5.29	1.69	51
	CG	5.73	1.45	44
	Total	5.88	1.56	137

Table 4. Mixed ANOVA results for verb + noun collocations for form recognition

		Comparison between groups			Comparison within Subjects		
		Mean Dif- ference	Standard Deviation	Sig.	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Overall Mixed ANOVA results	UE vs. TE	.95*	.28	.003	267.90	113.79	<.001
	UE vs. CG	.94*	.29	.004			
	TE vs. CG	-.004	.28	>0.999			

Table 5. Bonferroni comparisons for verb + noun collocations for form recognition

Comparison between groups					Comparison between time points of test						
		Mean Difference	Standard Deviation	Sig.	Eta ²			Mean Difference	Standard Deviation	Sig.	Eta ²
Pretest	UE vs. TE	.35	.41	> .999	0.008	UE	Pre vs. post	-2.52	.31	<.001	0.423
	UE vs. CG	.42	.43	.992			Pre vs. delayed post	-2.55	.31	<.001	
	TE vs. CG	.07	.41	> .999			Post vs. delayed post	-.02	.31	> .999	
Post-test	UE vs. TE	1.05	.39	.027	0.086	TD	Pre vs. post	-1.63	.37	<.001	0.134
	UE vs. CG	1.40	.41	.003			Pre vs. delayed post	-1.45	.37	<.001	
	TE vs. CG	.35	.39	> .999			Post vs. delayed post	.18	.37	> .999	
Delayed post-test	UE vs. TE	1.44	.30	<.001	0.149	CG	Pre vs. post	-1.55	.37	<.001	0.192
	UE vs. CG	1.01	.31	.005			Pre vs. delayed post	-1.95	.37	<.001	
	TE vs. CG	-.43	.30	.450			Post vs. delayed post	-.41	.37	.823	

Tables 6, 7 and 8 apply to the recall of verb + noun collocations through the gap-filling tests. Table 6 shows the mean and standard deviation of all groups at all time points. Table 7 summarizes the Mixed ANOVA results that reveal significant differences only at different times of the tests. Table 8 shows additional findings based on the Bonferroni comparisons. The instructional type comparison failed to show any significant improvement for the experimental groups than the control group, whether at the immediate or delayed post-tests. Regarding the test time comparisons, it was noted that the three groups performed better on the immediate post-test than the pre-test and maintained this improvement in the delayed post-tests.

Table 6. Descriptive Statistics for verb + noun collocations for form recall

Descriptive Statistics				
	Group	Mean	Standard Deviation	Number
Pre-test	UE	4.48	2.30	42
	TE	4.20	2.19	51
	CG	5.04	2.62	44
	Total	4.55	2.38	137
Post-test	UE	7.02	1.32	42
	TE	6.24	1.69	51
	CG	6.32	1.58	44
	Total	6.50	1.58	137
Delayed post-test	UE	6.36	1.65	42
	TE	5.98	1.84	51
	CG	6.77	1.16	44
	Total	6.35	1.61	137

Table 7. Mixed ANOVA results for verb + noun collocations for form recall

Comparison between groups					Comparison within Subjects		
		Mean Difference	Standard Deviation	Sig.	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Overall Mixed ANOVA results	UE vs. TE	.48	.29	.300	219.82	72.22	< .001
	UE vs. CG	-.09	.30	> .999			
	TE vs. CG	-.57	.29	.142			

Table 8. Bonferroni comparisons for verb + noun collocations for form recall

Comparison between groups						Comparison between time points of test					
		Mean Difference	Standard Deviation	Sig.	Eta ²			Mean Difference	Standard Deviation	Sig.	Eta ²
Pretest	UE vs. TE	.28	.49	1.000	0.023	UE	Pre vs. post	-2.55	.39	.000	0.269
	UE vs. CG	-.57	.51	.802			Pre vs. delayed post	-1.88	.39	.000	
	TE vs. CG	-.85	.49	.251			Post vs. delayed post	.67	.39	.277	
Post-test	UE vs. TE	.79	.32	.048	0.049	TD	Pre vs. post	-2.04	.38	.000	0.186
	UE vs. CG	.71	.33	.110			Pre vs. delayed post	-1.78	.38	.000	
	TE vs. CG	-.08	.32	1.000			Post vs. delayed post	.25	.38	1.000	
Delayed post-test	UE vs. TE	.38	.33	.772	0.042	CG	Pre vs. post	-1.27	.40	.006	0.133
	UE vs. CG	-.42	.34	.683			Pre vs. delayed post	-1.72	.40	.000	
	TE vs. CG	-.79	.33	.050			Post vs. delayed post	-.45	.40	.785	

5.2 Adjective + noun collocations

Tables 9, 10 and 11 apply to the recognition of adjective + noun collocations through the multiple-choice tests. Table 9 shows the mean and standard deviation of all groups at all time points. Table 10 summarizes the Mixed ANOVA results that reveal significant differences between the UE group and the TE group in the comparison between groups. It also reveals significant differences among the test times in the comparison within subjects. Table 11 shows additional findings based on the Bonferroni comparisons. The instruction type comparisons show that the UE group significantly outperformed the CG group in the immediate post-test and the TE group in the delayed post-test. No other significant differences were noted. The test time comparisons show that the UE group performed significantly better on the immediate post-test than the pre-test and maintained this improvement on the delayed post-test. The TE and CG groups also revealed improvement on the post-tests than the pre-tests, but their improvement on the delayed post-tests was lower than the immediate post-tests.

Table 9. Descriptive Statistics for adjective + noun collocations for form recognition

Descriptive Statistics				
	Group	Mean	Standard Deviation	Number
Pre-test	UE	4.14	1.59	42
	TE	3.60	2.07	51
	CG	3.86	2.50	44
	Total	3.85	2.09	137
Post-test	UE	6.45	1.48	42
	TE	5.94	1.79	51
	CG	5.29	1.46	44
	Total	5.89	1.65	137
Delayed post-test	UE	6.19	1.81	42
	TE	4.88	1.89	51
	CG	5.59	1.60	44
	Total	5.51	1.85	137

Table 10. Mixed ANOVA results for adjective + noun collocations for form recognition

Comparison between groups					Comparison within Subjects		
		Mean Difference	Standard Deviation	Sig.	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Overall Mixed ANOVA results	UE vs. TE	.78*	.29	.028	192.73	90.49	.000
	UE vs. CG	.68	.31	.088			
	TE vs. CG	-.106	.29	> .999			

Table 11. Bonferroni comparisons for adjective + noun collocations for form recognition

Comparison between groups						Comparison between time points of test					
		Mean Difference	Standard Deviation	Sig.	Eta ²			Mean Difference	Standard Deviation	Sig.	Eta ²
Pretest	UE vs. TE	.53	.43	.666	0.011	UE	Pre vs. post	-2.31	.36	.000	0.291
	UE vs. CG	.28	.45	1.000			Pre vs. delayed post	-2.05	.36	.000	
	TE vs. CG	-.26	.43	1.000			Post vs. delayed post	.26	.36	1.000	
Post-test	UE vs. TE	.51	.33	.382	0.078	TD	Pre vs. post	-2.33	.38	.000	0.201
	UE vs. CG	1.16	.34	.003			Pre vs. delayed post	-1.27	.38	.003	
	TE vs. CG	.65	.33	.155			Post vs. delayed post	1.06	.38	.018	
Delayed post-test	UE vs. TE	1.31	.37	.002	0.086	CG	Pre vs. post	-1.43	.41	.002	0.138
	UE vs. CG	.59	.38	.362			Pre vs. delayed post	-1.73	.41	.000	
	TE vs. CG	-.71	.37	.165			Post vs. delayed post	-.29	.41	1.000	

Tables 12, 13 and 14 apply to the recall of adjective + noun collocations through the gap-filling tests. Table 12 shows the mean and standard deviation of all groups at all time points. Table 13 summarizes the Mixed ANOVA results that reveal no significant differences between groups while significant differences are noted at different test times. Table 14 shows additional findings based on the Bonferroni comparisons. The instructional type comparison shows only one significant difference: that is, the UE group outperforming the CG group on the immediate post-test. The test time comparisons show a significant performance for all groups on the immediate post-test than the pre-test. This improvement was maintained for the UE and CG groups. As for the TE group, the performance decreased on the delayed post-test than the immediate post-test, but still remained higher than the pre-test.

Table 12. Descriptive Statistics for adjective + noun collocations for form recall

Descriptive Statistics				
	Group	Mean	Standard Deviation	Number
Pre-test	UE	3.92	2.43	42
	TE	3.82	2.06	51
	CG	4.50	2.67	44
	Total	4.07	2.39	137
Post-test	UE	6.62	1.43	42
	TE	6.19	1.55	51
	CG	5.63	1.63	44
	Total	6.14	1.58	137
Delayed post-test	UE	5.97	1.69	42
	TE	5.19	2.04	51
	CG	6.06	1.68	44
	Total	5.51	1.85	137

Table 13. Mixed ANOVA results for adjective + noun collocations for form recall

Comparison between groups					Comparison within Subjects		
		Mean Difference	Standard Deviation	Sig.	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Overall Mixed ANOVA results	UE vs. TE	.44	.30	.447	188.10	71.14	.000
	UE vs. CG	.11	.31	1.000			
	TE vs. CG	-.33	.29	.805			

Table 11. Bonferroni comparisons for adjective + noun collocations for form recognition

Comparison between groups					Comparison between time points of test						
		Mean Difference	Standard Deviation	Sig.	Eta ²			Mean Difference	Standard Deviation	Sig.	Eta ²
Pretest	UE vs. TE	.11	.49	1.000	0.016	UE	Pre vs. post	-2.69	.41	.000	0.272
	UE vs. CG	-.57	.51	.807			Pre vs. delayed post	-2.04	.41	.000	
	TE vs. CG	-.68	.49	.512			Post vs. delayed post	.64	.41	.370	
Post-test	UE vs. TE	.42	.32	.570	0.062	TD	Pre vs. post	-2.37	.38	.000	0.211
	UE vs. CG	.98	.33	.011			Pre vs. delayed post	-1.37	.38	.001	
	TE vs. CG	.56	.32	.239			Post vs. delayed post	1.00	.38	.026	
Delayed post-test	UE vs. TE	.78	.38	.126	0.047	CG	Pre vs. post	-1.14	.44	.031	0.096
	UE vs. CG	-.09	.39	1.000			Pre vs. delayed post	-1.57	.44	.001	
	TE vs. CG	-.87	.38	.065			Post vs. delayed post	-.43	.44	.975	

5.3 *Verb + noun collocations vs. adjective + noun collocations*

With the aim of assessing the effectiveness of collocation instruction per word type, a t-test was run to compare the difference in learning gains between verbal and adjectival collocation both in form recognition and form recall. To this end, statistical comparisons were performed between the two types of collocations with respect to the different scores between (1) post-test and pre-test, (2) delayed post-test and pre-test and (3) delayed post-test and post-test. Tables 15 and 16 show no significant differences in learning gains for the two types of collocations in the UE group, whether in form recognition or recall. As for the TE group, Tables 17 and 18 show no consistent pattern as adjectival collocations seem to achieve higher learning gains in the delayed post-test versus the post-test in form recognition while showing significantly lower learning gains for the same comparison in form recall.

Table 15. T-test results by word type in the UE group (form recognition)

	Group	Mean	Standard. Deviation	Sig.	Eta ²
Post-test and Pre-test	Verb + Noun	2.52	2.03	.623	.003
	Adjective + Noun	2.31	1.96		
Delayed-Pre	Verb + Noun	2.55	2.24	.287	.013
	Adjective + Noun	2.05	2.02		
Delayed-Post	Verb + Noun	.024	1.07	.303	.014
	Adjective + Noun	-.26	1.43		

Table 16. T-test results by word type in the UE group (form recall)

	Group	Mean	Standard. Deviation	Sig.	Eta ²
Post-test and Pre-test	Verb + Noun	2.55	2.51	.795	.001
	Adjective + Noun	2.69	2.52		
Delayed-Pre	Verb + Noun	1.88	2.81	.774	.001
	Adjective + Noun	2.05	2.47		
Delayed-Post	Verb + Noun	-.67	1.75	.949	<.001
	Adjective + Noun	-.64	1.66		

Table 17. T-test results by word type in the TE group (form recognition)

	Group	Mean	Standard. Deviation	Sig.	Eta ²
Post-test and Pre-test	Verb + Noun	1.63	2.51	.136	.022
	Adjective + Noun	2.33	2.26		
Delayed-Pre	Verb + Noun	1.45	2.22	.674	.002
	Adjective + Noun	1.27	1.99		
Delayed-Post	Verb + Noun	-.18	1.44	.012	.061
	Adjective + Noun	1.06	2.00		

Table 18. T-test results by word type in the TE group (form recall)

	Group	Mean	Standard. Deviation	Sig.	Eta ²
Post-test and Pre-test	Verb + Noun	2.04	2.14	.451	.006
	Adjective + Noun	2.37	2.31		
Delayed-Pre	Verb + Noun	1.78	2.18	.347	.009
	Adjective + Noun	1.37	2.23		
Delayed-Post	Verb + Noun	-.25	1.74	.044	.040
	Adjective + Noun	-1.00	1.95		

6 Discussion

In order to address the study question “Does textual enhancement make a significant difference in L2 collocation learning?”, the current study compared the performance of three groups of Arab EFL participants: (1) textually enhanced, (2) unenhanced and (3) control. The analysis of results showed no statistically significant differences among the groups on the pre-test and, therefore, performance on the post-tests could be attributed to the treatment and not to group differences from the onset. The statistical analysis, however, revealed an improvement for the three groups on the immediate and delayed post-tests than the pre-test. Comparing the instruction type, however, revealed a surprising advantage for the UE group which outperformed the two other groups in both the immediate and delayed form recognition post-tests with verb + noun collocations. As for adjective + noun collocations, the UE group outperformed the CG group in the immediate form recognition post-test and the TE group in the delayed form recognition post-test. An advantage for the UE group, although to a lesser extent, was also noted in form recall with the UE group outperforming the TE group in the immediate post-test for verb + noun collocations and outperforming the CG group in the immediate post-test for adjective + noun collocations.

In comparison with earlier studies, the current study renders novel findings, as it unexpectedly shows a clear advantage for the UE over the TE group contrary to previous research (e.g. Sonbul and Schmitt, 2013; Szudarski, 2015; Szudarski and Carter, 2016). Despite showing some evidence of learning in the immediate and delayed post-tests under all test conditions, the TE group never showed any significant difference in comparison to the CG group and performed worse than the UE group in form recognition at the immediate and delayed post-tests for verb + noun and at the delayed

post-test for the adjective + noun. This surprising finding can be interpreted in terms of the negative impact of textual enhancement on the recall of unenhanced text (Choi, 2017). Placing much focus on enhanced collocations impairs the recall of unenhanced text. As Choi (2017) puts it, there is a “trade-off” between the learning of enhanced collocations and the recall of unenhanced text. Since the participants in the current study were required to focus on text comprehension to complete the required tasks (e.g. supplying missing words, reading the text in pairs and answering comprehension questions), the participants may have purposefully suppressed the enhanced collocations to avoid their potential impairment of text comprehension and recall.

In terms of the literature, the unexpected advantage for the UE group may be due to the format of textual enhancement used in the current study. Earlier studies supporting the advantage of textual enhancement mainly used the format of underlining (Boers et al., 2017; Szudarski, 2015; Szudarski & Carter, 2016) or highlighting with L1 glossing (Hu, 2015). The format of bolding was only used in Sonbul and Schmitt (2013), but the font color was also changed to red. Additionally, this particular study is not comparable to the current study, since Sonbul and Schmitt (2013) addressed highly advanced learners of English studying at a British university, while the current study targeted learners of much lower L2 proficiency and in a foreign language environment.

Considering relevant theoretical models and hypotheses, it seems that the bolding format of textual enhancement may, counterintuitively, not aid “noticing” (Schmidt, 1990). Language learners may opt to purposefully ignore the textually enhanced parts in order to achieve other learning goals. In the current study, achieving better comprehension and recall of the text stood as a good reason for the participants to disregard the highlighted parts, leading to reduced processing of the enhanced collocations and hence less retention on the subsequent collocation tests. The current study also shows that “noticing” can be achieved through repetition. The participants in the current study were exposed to the target collocations almost four times, which is much less than required in other studies (e.g. Webb, Newton, & Chang, 2013). What could have supported the collocation learning in this context is that the participants were repeatedly exposed to the target collocations in the same context, a fact that may have rendered the collocations easier to infer and thus more “comprehensible” (Krashen, 1993, 1989).

In addition to the effect of textual enhancement, two other important findings in the current study are related to aspects of collocation knowledge and word types. Regarding collocation knowledge, the study supports the well-documented difficulty of the productive over the receptive knowledge for collocations, as reflected in the participants’ poor performance in the post-tests in form recall in comparison with form recognition. This expected finding is in line with the noted difficulty for Arab learners to put their collocation knowledge into production (e.g. Ahmed, 2012; Brashi, 2009; Zohra, 2015). As for word types, the current study presents another unexpected finding. Contrary to the authors’ expectation and the on-going debate whether verbal collocations (Dukali, 2016; Farghal & A; Hamly, 2007) or adjectival collocations (Al-Miqdad, 2012; Alsakran, 2011; El-Dakhs, 2015a; Gaballa & Al-Khayri, 2014) constitute more difficulty to Arab learners, the current study did not reveal any significant differences in learning gains between the two word types in the UE group, and minimal and inconsistent differences in the TE group. It thus seems that Arab learners may suffer more difficulty for one word type or the other in certain contexts based on the learning environment and the teaching priorities, but they can positively respond to effective teaching instruction to improve their collocation competence regardless of word type.

It must be highlighted that the current study was carried out in an EFL environment where learners suffer from minimal exposure to the target language outside the classroom. In such contexts, the scarcity of learning opportunities often calls for instructional intervention to support learning, particularly when multi-word units are concerned (Laufer, 2010; Segalowitz & Freed, 2004). The current study shows that intentional learning and input enhancement (Sharwood Smith, 1993) are not the only available options. As much as textual enhancement may be effective in particular contexts, “natural” repetition of L2 collocations through frequent encounters with the collocations in a meaningful and purposeful manner can also enhance learning. As shown in the current study, engagement in varied reading aloud activities of the same texts led to learning gains for the UE group. Hence,

when instructors opt for non-intentional learning options, they may consider careful manipulation of both teaching texts and learning tasks.

7 Pedagogical implications & research directions

Multi-word units, including collocations, constitute a major difficulty for language learners, particularly in foreign language environments where exposure to natural target language is mainly confined to the classroom. Hence, course designers and language instructors need to carefully consider effective methods to support L2 collocation learning. An important counterintuitive implication for the current study is to avoid using bolding to highlight target collocations in reading texts, particularly when learners are engaged in activities that require good text recall. In order to recall the text well and perform pertinent learning tasks, learners may suppress the textually enhanced collocations, which will lead to less retention of these target forms. The current study also recommends engaging learners in diverse tasks that require revisiting the same text several times in order to enhance the learners' meaningful encounters with the target collocations. Such repeated encounters in the same textual context seems to support L2 collocation learning. Additionally, the current study highlights the importance of employing well-tested teaching methodologies in L2 collocation teaching regardless of word type and providing sufficient practice to enhance learners' productive collocation knowledge.

The dearth of research studies into L2 collocation instruction calls for further research. In direct connection with the current study, which employed bolding as a textual enhancement format, future studies may consider assessing the effect of other formats of textual enhancement on L2 collocation learning. As it has been shown in a number of studies (e.g. LaBrozzi, 2016; Simard, 2009), the format of textual enhancement (e.g. underlining, emboldening, shadowing, enlarging, coloring, italics, etc.) could have a differential impact on learning. Other recommended areas of research include examining the effectiveness of various semi-incident approaches, the interaction between text manipulations and learning tasks and relevant determinants of collocation learning, including word characteristics (e.g. congruency, word class and frequency), learning conditions (e.g. foreign language environment), learners' characteristics (e.g. language proficiency) and collocation type (e.g. range of collocation restrictedness). It will also be useful to incorporate psycholinguistic measures to assess implicit collocation learning (e.g. Sonbul & Schmitt, 2013) and examine their natural cognitive processing (e.g. Choi, 2017).

8 Conclusion

The recent increasing interest in L2 collocation instruction reflects the dire need to support learners' efforts to build their collocation competence, which is a central component of lexical knowledge. The need is highlighted in EFL environments where learners' exposure to natural English is relatively minimal. Intentional and incidental learning are two approaches to the problem with other varied approaches along the continuum. The current study addressed the effect of textual enhancement, a semi-incident approach, on the learning of L2 collocations in an EFL context. Surprisingly, the results showed higher learning gains of L2 collocations for the textually unenhanced group than the textually enhanced group within the context of practicing texts in listening and reading aloud activities, which calls for careful consideration of the type of tasks when the effect of different approaches is examined. Careful consideration is also required with the format of textual enhancement, since the current study employed bolding, while a number of earlier studies that showed contradictory results used other formats (e.g. Szudarski, 2015; Szudarski & Carter, 2016). Additionally, the current study presented another surprising result with reference to the effect of collocation instruction on the different word types of collocations. Despite earlier indications of the specific difficulty of verbal or adjectival collocations for Arab learners (e.g. El-Dakhs, 2015a; Farghal & Al-Hamly, 2007), both word types seemed to equally benefit from collocation instruction. Language instructors thus need to make use of effective teaching methodologies to enhance learners' collocation competence without any preconceived judgments about the special difficulty of certain word types.

The present study is subject to a number of limitations. First, the study participants are only females. Although no earlier studies, to our knowledge, have revealed a gender difference in learning L2 collocations, future studies may consider having more gender-balanced samples. Second, the delayed post-tests were conducted two weeks after the treatment. A longer delay might have been more appropriate to assess long-term retention. Finally, the current study did not exercise sufficient control on the participants' repeated encounters with collocations. The last task the participants performed required them to read through the texts to answer comprehension questions. Although the questions did not address the target collocations, the participants may have encountered the target collocations repeatedly during their search for answers. The conclusions of the current study should thus be interpreted within these study limitations.

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Appendices

Appendix A – Target collocations

Verb + Noun Collocations	Adjective + Noun Collocations
dull the ache	rare disease
create a mood	rubber band
refill a container	brief description
sneak a peak	light sprinkling
wiggle hips	insecure teenager
grab attention	local newspaper
take a chance	visiting dignitaries
overcome a hurdle	artificial limb

Appendix B – Stories used in the experiment

Story (1) – The Pirates

The Pirate

We don't see things as they are; we see them as we are. One day Mrs. Smith was sitting in her doctor's waiting room when a young boy and his mother entered the office. The young boy **grabbed** Mrs. Smith's **attention** because he wore a patch over one eye. She thought how unaffected he seemed to be by the loss of an eye and watched as he followed his mother to a chair nearby. The doctor's office was very busy that day, so Mrs. Smith **took a chance** to chat with the boy's mother while he played with his soldiers. At first he sat quietly, playing with the soldiers on the arm of the chair. Then he silently moved to the floor, glancing up at his mother. Eventually, Mrs. Smith had an opportunity to ask the little boy what had happened to his eye. He considered

her question for a long moment, then replied, lifting the patch," There's nothing wrong with my eye. I'm a pirate!" Then he returned to his game.

Mrs. Smith was there because she had lost her leg from the knee down in an car accident. Her trip today was to determine whether it had healed enough to be fitted with an **artificial limb**. She has had a hard time coping with her loss. The loss had been disturbing to her. Try as she would to build strength and be courageous, she felt like an invalid. Intellectually, she knew that this loss should not interfere with her life, but emotionally, she just couldn't **overcome this hurdle**. Her doctor had suggested visualization, and she had tried it, but had been unable to imagine an emotionally acceptable, lasting image.

The word "pirate" changed her life. Instantly, she was transported. She saw herself dressed as Long John Silver, standing aboard a pirate ship. She stood with her legs planted wide apart—one pegged. Her hands were clenched at her hips, her head up and her shoulders back, as she smiled into a storm. Winds whipped her coat and hair behind her. Cold spray blew across the deck fence as great waves broke against the ship. The vessel rocked and creaked under the storm's force. Still she stood firmly—proud, fearless. In that moment, the unacceptable image was replaced and her courage returned. She regarded the young boy, busy with his soldiers. A few minutes later, the nurse called her. As she balanced on her crutches, the young boy noticed her amputation. "Hey lady," he called, "what's wrong with your leg?" The young boy's mother was embarrassed. Mrs. Smith looked down at her shortened leg for a moment. Then she replied with a smile, "Nothing. I'm a pirate, too."

Author: Anais Nin

A. Answer the following questions verbatim from the story.

1. Where was Mrs. Smith?
2. What was the boy doing?
3. Why was Mrs. Smith visiting the doctor?
4. What had the doctor suggested her to do?
5. Towards the end, what did she saw herself as?

B. Complete each gap with ONE word. The first letter and the meaning of the word are provided.

1. I tried to g----- his attention, but failed. يجذب
2. I would like to t----- this chance to thank you. انتهز
3. The handicapped child was putting on an a----- limb. صناعية
4. I am trying really hard to o----- this hurdle. يتخطى

C. Circle the correct answer to fill in the gap. Only ONE answer is correct.

1. The TV loud volume managed to ----- Mom's attention.
a. grab b. take c. have d. receive
2. I ----- any chance to help the poor.
a. take b. catch c. hold d. get
3. After the car accident, the poor girl had to put on a(n) ----- limb.
a. artificial b. industrial c. constructed d. unnatural
4. Please, calm down. We will ----- this hurdle too.
a. cross b. bury c. swamp d. overcome

Story (2) – The Dancing Grannies

The Dancin' Grannies

As soon as you feel too old to do a thing, do it! Twelve years ago, when I was 50, I thought, What will 60 be like? or 70? I looked around and saw only one style of being. It's not fair, I thought. Young people have so many styles to choose from—they can be yuppies or hippies or what I call regular folks but older people have just one option, and it doesn't look like much fun. No one seemed to be enjoying themselves. Many people (including me) generally disliked their aging selves. I certainly wasn't happy with the way I looked, and I didn't feel sharp enough to handle everything coming my way. I felt like an **insecure teenager** all over again!

I decided to do something about it, something practical. I worked on my fitness by joining exercise classes in town. A few years later, my husband and I moved to a retirement community, and I wanted to teach aerobic classes. The community center wouldn't give me a room to teach in, so I had to sneak around and find any

available empty room. One day, the community center staff came to me and asked if I would help with the entertainment for a Hawaiian luau (a party) they were putting on. I said yes. Then I convinced five other ladies into dancing with me. How hard could it be? I thought. The hula? Just **wiggle your hips!**

We performed the hula and a war chant and brought the house down. Someone had a camera and took pictures, then sent them on to our **local newspaper**. We got requests for more engagements, which in turn led to more publicity and yet more engagements. Soon we had invitations from all over the country. The Dancin' Grannies were born!

The sad thing was that we met the most resistance from our families and our peers. Older women were disgusted when we performed in dancing dresses and often echoed our children's advice, telling us to "act your age." What did that mean? Being humpy, lumpy and grumpy? No thanks! (Of course, after we were asked to perform at the White House for President and Mrs. Bush and **visiting dignitaries**, our families changed their tune.)

People are amazed at how physically demanding our routines are. We do splits, cartwheels, one-armed push ups, somersaults and high kicks. Our best cart wheeler is 72 years old. But I think the real secret of the Dancin' Grannies is our attitude. I was raised extremely poor—no food poor. If we wanted personal items like toys we had to make things up to play with, so I learned early to be very creative. And you know, I think being poor was one of the best things that ever happened to me because I learned to look for treasures. That's what I'm still taking pleasure in -looking for the treasure in growing old. I'm getting better and better. I haven't heard one young person yet say, "I'm just dying to get old—that looks like so much fun!" But it can be. It's true that antiques have to be treated a bit differently, with a little care, but they still have a beauty of their own.

Author: Margaret Deland

A. Answer the following questions verbatim from the story.

1. What was Grannies' age 12 years ago?
2. In the beginning what wasn't she happy about?
3. What was the Dancing Grannies first performance?
4. Who did they get the most resistance from?
5. What are some of the acts they do?

B. Complete each gap with ONE word. The first letter and the meaning of the word are provided.

1. He is very immature and sounds like an i----- teenager. لا يشعر بالأمان
2. Start to w----- your hips and dance. يهز
3. I love reading l----- newspapers. محلي
4. The White House welcomed the v----- dignitaries. الزائرين

C. Circle the correct answer to fill in the gap. Only ONE answer is correct.

1. I felt very much for the ----- teenager. He was literally shaking while speaking.
a. insecure b. afraid c. unsafe d. scary
2. Dancing is so much fun. Come on! Just ----- your hips.
a. transfer b. wiggle c. operate d. practice
3. Dad only reads our ----- newspapers.
a. limited b. narrow c. local d. sectional
4. The King welcomed the foreign ----- dignitaries.
a. visiting b. coming c. calling d. stopping

Story (3) – Martha's Secret Ingredient

Martha's Secret Ingredient

The little container in the Kitchen bothered Ben every time he went through the kitchen. He probably would not have noticed it so much or been bothered by it if Martha had not repeatedly told him never to touch it. She has always said that it contained a "secret herb" from her mother, and since she had no way of ever **refilling the container**, she was concerned that if Ben or anyone else ever picked it up and looked inside, they might accidentally drop it and spill its valuable contents.

The container wasn't really much to look at. To give you a **brief description**, it was so old that much of its original red and gold colors had faded. Martha didn't know for sure, but she felt that perhaps even her great grandmother had used this same container and its "secret herb." All Ben knew for sure was that shortly after he'd married Martha, her mother had brought the container to Martha and told her to make the same loving use of its contents as she had. Ben never saw Martha cook a dish without taking the container off the shelf and sprinkling just a little of the "secret herb" over the ingredients. Even when she baked cakes, pies and cookies, he saw her add a **light sprinkling** just before she put the pans in the oven.

Whatever was in that container, it sure worked, for Ben, and everyone else, felt Martha was the best cook in the world. But why wouldn't she let Ben touch that little container? Was she really afraid he'd spill its contents? And what did that "secret herb" look like? It was so fine that whenever Martha sprinkled it over the food she was preparing. Ben became increasingly tempted to look into that container just once, but never brought himself to do so. Then one day Martha became ill. Ben took her to the hospital, where they kept her overnight. Martha had never been gone overnight before. And when it neared supper time, he wondered what to do—As he wandered into the kitchen to see what might be in the refrigerator, the container on the shelf immediately came into view. His eyes were drawn to it like a magnet—he quickly looked away, but his curiosity drew him back. What was in that container? Why wasn't he to touch it? What did that "secret herb" look like? How much of it was left?

Ben looked away again and lifted the cover of a large cake pan on the kitchen counter. He took a bite and thought. What would it hurt if he looked inside? Why was Martha so secretive about that container, anyway? Ben took another bite and debated with himself— should he or shouldn't he? For five more big bites he thought about it, staring at the container. Finally he could no longer

resist. He walked slowly across the room and ever so carefully took the container off the shelf— fearing that, horror of horrors, he'd spill the contents while **sneaking a peek**.

He set the container on the counter and carefully opened the lid. He was almost scared to look inside! When the inside of the container came into full view, Ben's eyes opened wide—why, the container was empty ... except for a little folded slip of paper at the bottom. A brief note was

inside, and Ben immediately recognized the handwriting as that of Martha's mother. Very simply it said: "Martha—To everything you make, add a dash of love." Ben swallowed hard, replaced the note and the container, and quietly went back to finishing his cake. Now he completely understood why it tasted so good.

A. Answer the following questions verbatim from the story.

What bothered Ben every time he went through the kitchen?

1. Why didn't Martha let anyone touch the container?
2. How did the old container look like?
3. Where did Martha stay one night?
4. What was in the container?

B. Complete each gap with ONE word. The first letter and the meaning of the word are provided.

1. I wish to r----- this container. يعيد ملاً
2. Here's a b----- description of my plan. مختصر
3. Don't add much chocolate to the cake. Some l----- sprinkling is enough. بسيط
4. Don't s----- a peak like this. I'll tell you everything. تختلس

C. Circle the correct answer to fill in the gap. Only ONE answer is correct.

1. You can ----- the container for free.
a. top b. refill c. complete d. pour
2. Please, give us a ----- description of your proposal.
a. small b. limited c. narrow d. brief
3. Mom was adding a ----- sprinkling to the cake.
a. sunny b. light c. clear d. brilliant
4. How can I help you? You don't need to ----- a peak.
a. look b. see c. watch d. sneak

Story (4) – Graduation Day**Graduation Day**

Mother is not a person to lean on but a person to make leaning unnecessary.

Today Cathy will be going to kindergarten. Cathy is my youngest and I am feeling nostalgic. Her life and mine would dramatically change now. I would have a harder time protecting her from the bumps and scrapes of life. Perhaps I was being overprotective now because Cathy had been diagnosed at three as having a **rare disease** which can pose a threat to her health.

I'm about to leave the kitchen to awaken Cathy for her big day. But here she comes, wide awake all bright eyes and smiles, dressed in a new red skirt and blouse. She gives me a big hug as we say our good mornings. "See Mom, I got dressed all by myself and even brushed my hair." She proudly turned to show me. "But I can't put this ribbon in my hair." She hands me the brush, **rubber band** and red ribbon. I am amazed at how efficient she is this particular morning. As I tend to her hair and ribbon, I ask her once more, "Would you like me to walk you to school this first day?" I get the same answer as yesterday, "No, Mom, I can find my way all by myself. Renata, Leslie and I walked to the school yesterday and they showed me how to find the path through the woods right to the playground. My reply to her enthusiasm is, "Stand still so I can finish your hair ribbon." Then I gently push her towards the table. She quickly slide into her chair and attack her breakfast. I turn back to the kitchen cupboards and to a deep breath, but it doesn't melt the lump in my throat or **dull the ache** in my chest. I glance at the clock. "You can't leave before 8:30, so just slow down and chew your food."

In a few minutes she has finished the last drop of milk. Without prompting, she goes off to brush her teeth and comes back with her sweater. "Is it time to go now?" she pleads. "When this hand reaches 6," I point out to her on the clock, "You're sure you don't want me to walk you to school?" "No, Mom, I want to go alone." She goes out onto the deck to call to the dog and check the back yard. "Is it time now?" She is hopping up and down. With a sigh, I say, "Yes, dear." I give her a big hug, and off she races down the stairs and out the front door. Standing at the top of our stairs, I can watch through the window. She is running down the sidewalk. Then suddenly she stops, turns and races back toward the house. "Oh, no," I think, expecting to have to change out of slippers for a walk to school after all.

The front door bangs open and up the stairs she flies to throw her little arms around me and press her cheek into my tummy. The long tight hug ends as she turns her eyes up to mine and seriously says, "You'll be all right, Mom. I'll be home at noon."

Then off she dashes into her new world of school adventures, excited and happy to be graduating from babyhood. My misty eyes follow her progress to the end of our walk. She turns around again and waves to me. I wave back and find I can now smile. The lump in my chest has melted and her display of love has **created a mood**. Yes, I will be all right as go on to my own adventures. This is my graduation day, too.

A. Answer the following questions verbatim from the story.

1. Where was Cathy going?
2. Why was her mother being overprotective?
3. What can't she put in her hair?
4. What did she do while waiting for going to school?

B. Complete each gap with ONE word. The first letter and the meaning of the word are provided.

1. I'm really scared of this r----- disease. نادر
2. I love this r----- band on your hair. مطاطي
3. I need to medicate to d----- the ache. يخفف
4. What shall we do to c----- a mood? يخلق

C. Circle the correct answer to fill in the gap. Only ONE answer is correct.

1. She was very sad after hearing about her friend's ----- disease.
 - a. unlikely
 - b. rare
 - c. scarce
 - d. occasional
2. I don't like to tie my hair with a ----- band.
 - a. plastic
 - b. metal
 - c. nylon
 - d. rubber
3. The medicine I am giving you will quickly ----- your ache.
 - a. dull
 - b. remove
 - c. delete
 - d. cut

4. The joyful party helped me ----- a mood.
a. form b. create c. establish d. build