Project Title

The knowledge of collocations among learners of English as a second language (ESL) and its relation to progress in remedial English writing

Participating Faculty

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Abstract (200 words maximum):

This project is an interdisciplinary collaboration between computational linguistics and Teaching English as a Second Language (TESOL). Its goals are (a) to evaluate knowledge of English "collocations" among different proficiency levels of ESL learners and (b) to identify the importance of ESL learners' knowledge of collocations for their progress in writing courses. The novelty of the project is its use of quantitative measures from computational linguistics (such as word association metrics based on Student's t, chi-square, mutual information, and the log likelihood ratio) to analyze ESL learners' progress. A second aim of this project is to address the need for pedagogical research on the relation between ESL learners' linguistic sub-skills and their chances of academic success in ESL writing courses. The findings will shed light on current ESL classroom practice, specifically with respect to the question of how much emphasis should be placed on the teaching of pre-fabricated phrases such as collocations.