

Using the *Diccionario de colocaciones del español* in the Elaboration of Didactic Material for SFL¹

Begoña Sanromán Vilas & Margarita Alonso Ramos
University of Helsinki, Finland & University of Coruña, Spain

After examining six English monolingual collocational dictionaries, Nuccorini (2003:387) proposes that a dictionary of collocations has to be “appropriate to individual needs”. From our viewpoint – trying to specify Nuccorini’s claim –, a dictionary of collocations has to satisfy both advanced learners of a foreign language and native speakers. The former needs to learn collocations in L2 because either it is not possible to translate them word by word (*to pay attention* (Eng.), *prestar* ‘to lend’ *atención* (Sp.), *fare* ‘to make’ *attenzione* (It.), *kiinnittää* ‘to fix’ *huomiota* (Finn.), *die Aufmerksamkeit schenken* ‘to give (as a present)’ (G.)) or there are no symmetrical correspondences (*a piece of news* (Eng.) vs. *una noticia* (Sp.); *to queue* (Eng.) vs. *hacer cola* (Sp.)). The latter, the native speaker, could need to have quick access to all the ways of expressing a particular lexical unit (LU) through different perspectives according to the participants of the situation. If the LU were *analysis* (*person X’s A(nalysis) of phenomenon Y*), the combinations could be: *X carries out an A of Y*; *Y underwent A (by X)*; *the A of Y is due to X*; *X’s A concerns Y*; *X submits Y to an A*; *Y leads X to an A*; *X’s A of Y is in progress*, etc.²

In this paper, attention will be devoted to learners of Spanish. In particular, our experience with Finnish-speaking learners confirms that even those of our most advanced students can make mistakes when using Spanish collocations (Sanromán, forthcoming).

According to this, the current paper pursues two objectives: firstly, presenting the *Diccionario de colocaciones del español* (DiCE)³, a research project under construction at the University of Coruña in Spain (Alonso Ramos 2000, 2003); and secondly, proposing specific exercises to improve and check the collocational competence of learners.

The DiCE follows the theoretical and methodological framework of the Explanatory and Combinatorial Lexicology (Mel’čuk et al. 1995). The primary access to the collocation is via the base of the collocation (headword). If the headword is a polysemous item, then each LU has its own entry, which consists of three major sections: the semantic one, the syntactic one, and the lexical co-occurrence one.

Although this idea of combining dictionary plus exercises is not a new one – for example, the *Oxford Collocations Dictionary* (OCD) has done it earlier –, it is original in the sense that our DiCE is provided, in the lexical co-occurrence section, with a description of collocations by means of a gloss (*por amor* ‘como una muestra de A’ (*for love* ‘as a act showing the feeling’); *cobrar cariño* ‘empezar a sentir C’ (*to get affection* ‘to start to feel A’). Glosses will be proved to be especially useful in the elaboration of didactic material. Learners, as it is the case with the OCD, will not be forced to use a general monolingual dictionary of Spanish to understand and be able to use the collocation: each group of collocates will be preceded by its gloss or paraphrase.

¹ Spanish as a Foreign Language.

² *Analysis*’ examples are taken from Mel’čuk (1998:39). Only one of the verbs used (*to carry out*) was found in the *Oxford Collocations Dictionary* and another one (*to undergo*), in *The BBI Dictionary of English Word Combinations*.

³ A demo of this dictionary is available in <http://www.dicesp.com> and <http://dicesp.cesga.es>.