Collocational Competence as a measure of ESL / EFL Competency: A Scoping Review

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this review is to identify the appropriate strategies or methodologies that can help address those problems related to collocational competence amongst English as a Second Language (ESL) and English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners. The topic of collocational competence needs to be explored given that having collocational competence would advantage language learners to attain second or foreign language fluency. Collocational competence is in fact a reliable indicator of high language proficiency level. Numerous studies that explored collocational competence found that most learners are still facing difficulties in mastering different types of collocations. This problem seems unending despite major advancements in teaching technologies. Therefore, new and exciting ways of learning and teaching collocations that cater to students' individual needs and that are useful for teachers should be devised. A scoping review protocol was established for this study. A total of 21 articles from 2010 to 2020 were qualitatively synthesised. Of the 21, nine articles on corpus-based methodology, eight articles on traditional methods of teaching collocations and three articles discussing other relevant learning and teaching strategies that focus on solving the problem of lack of collocational competence were isolated and analysed. The findings suggested that implementing an indirect corpus approach in language classrooms may be the most suitable and practical approach that can cater to almost all levels of proficiency whilst consuming a limited amount of resources. The use of corpora in language classrooms is beneficial as it also offers reliable references for learners to explore and for teachers to adopt and teach.

Keywords: Scoping Review; ESL; EFL; Collocations; Collocational Competence

INTRODUCTION

In language classrooms, English language is often taught to learners in a variety of ways, including read-aloud protocols, flash cards and pictures, puzzle games, dictionary activities, digital storytelling, corpora and concordance activities and a range of web-based activities, amongst others. Whilst language classrooms often focus on teaching vocabulary and developing grammatical and communicative competence, teaching the collocation of language has not been prioritised for both teaching and learning.

Cruse (1986) defined collocation as 'a string of two or more words that have the tendency to co-occur'. Meanwhile, Gledhill (2000) indicated that previous researchers defined collocations in different ways depending on their aims. For instance, McCarthy (1995) defined collocation as 'a marriage contract between words' (p. 12), whereas Lewis (2000) defined such concept as 'the way in which words co-occur in natural text in statistically significant ways' (p. 132). Dokchandra (2019) defined collocations as the way one word seems to automatically appear with another word in a recurring manner. The arbitrariness of words is an important feature of collocations. The constituent terms are selected only based on linguistic tradition (Lewis, 1997). For instance, one cannot explain why *good chance*, *high likelihood* and *strong probability* are considered English collocations and why *strong chance*, *good probability* and *high probability* are unacceptable collocations in English (Farrokh & Mahmoodzadeh, 2012). Such arbitrariness explains why 'we say *breaking rules* but not *breaking regulations*; *holding*

a funeral but not *holding a burial*; *making an attempt* but not *having an attempt* and *having a try* but not *making a try*' (Sinclair, 1991).

THE IMPORTANCE OF COLLOCATIONAL COMPETENCE

Having collocational competence is especially important for second and foreign language learners as acknowledged by Dukali (2018). Dokchandra (2019) revealed that language and collocational knowledge are simultaneously important, thereby highlighting the importance of collocational competence. Collocation is necessary for one to understand how to combine words and use language. collocation can be viewed as an indicator of high language proficiency, and proficient language users are able to produce natural and native-sounding collocations. Asbulah, Aladdin and Sahrim (2020) argued that collocation mastery is an indication of language fluency. By looking at one's collocational competence, teachers are able to recognise and differentiate those students with high and low language proficiency.

Sari and Gulö (2019) claimed that collocation is a significant aspect of English that allows languages to be created naturally and meaningfully. Whilst one can easily speak or write in second or foreign languages, writing or speaking such languages like a native is difficult. Although many studies have examined collocational competence amongst ESL and EFL students, the aforementioned problem does not seem to end. Researchers are yet to find suitable approaches that can cater to the needs of every learner. One factor that leads to difficulties in addressing this problem could be the constant evolution of language. With the advancement of technologies are being used in classrooms, new words and phrases are being generated and used daily (Tan et al., 2020). For example, in the early days of the Internet, the word 'Google' is still understood as a noun; however, Google is now being used as a verb. Therefore, members of the academia should find new and exciting ways to teach and learn collocations.

PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED BY ESL AND EFL LEARNERS IN COLLOCATIONAL COMPETENCE

Most ESL and EFL learners are still having difficulty in mastering various types of collocations. For example, Ang, Rahim, Tan and Salehuddin (2011) and Abdullah and Noor (2013) reported that learners experience problems in relation to the use of verb–noun collocations. Abdullah and Noor (2013) found that whilst more advanced ESL learners can use almost the same percentage of lexical verbs collocation as native speakers, their usage deviates from the norm. Zarifi and Mukundan (2014) found that students use phrasal verbs sparingly but produce some uncommon phrasal verbs. Meanwhile, most studies on collocational competence amongst different groups of ESL learners in Malaysia show that the production and appropriate usage of multi-word units impose a challenge for learners across all proficiency levels. Whilst highly advanced learners can create collocations that are close to those of native speakers, their usage of such collocations is uncommon (Abdullah & Noor, 2013; Halim & Kuiper, 2018; Zarifi & Mukundan, 2014) and often incorrect (Ang, Rahim, Tan & Salehuddin, 2011; Yunus & Awab, 2011; Kamarudin, 2013).

ESL and EFL teachers are having difficulties in teaching collocations, whereas learners are having a hard time mastering them. Chan and Liou (2005) pointed out that given the difficulties in teaching collocations in a manner that encourages their storage and retrieval, an explicit teaching of collocations is often disregarded. Al Ghazali (2015) attributed such challenge to the lack of user-friendly tools for guiding collocations. Previous studies on collocational competence reveal that the problems faced by most ESL and EFL learners in producing correct collocations often result from their insufficient exposure to specific strategies and techniques for reinforcing their knowledge of collocations (Howarth, 1996; Abdul Wahab, 2014). Similarly, the absence of effective strategies and learning techniques has been identified as a cause of confusion in producing collocation (Aladdin, 1998; Ahmad Sokri & Ismail, 2017; Abdullah, Mezah, Mohammad & Mat Teh, 2015; Abdul Wahab, 2014). Other factors, such as

lack of relevant knowledge and interference from primary languages, lead to collocational errors in the writings of EFL and ESL learners. Ginanti (2020) believed that gender is one difference among learners that can influence their short-term memory and their comprehension of the function and use of collocation.

The problem related to lack of collocational competence is widely known in the ESL and EFL scene. Most ESL and EFL learners are still having difficulties in mastering various types of collocations. The importance of this review is highlighted as follows. Firstly, the use of collocations is important as it helps in authentic language production and accurate language organisation. Secondly, given the lack of emphasis on collocations in language classrooms, incorporating collocation in the syllabus is crucial (Smith, 2005). This review aims to identify methodologies and treatments that are considered effective and ineffective in addressing collocational knowledge. Accordingly, this analysis is motivated by the following research question: 'what are the strategies and methodologies that are useful in solving collocational competence issues amongst ESL and EFL learners?'

METHODOLOGY

According to Tricco et al. (2016) 'scoping reviews are used to present a broad overview of the evidence pertaining to a topic, irrespective of study quality, and are useful when examining areas that are emerging, to clarify key concepts and identify gaps'. This research employed the scoping review methodology of Arksey and O'Malley (2005) to analyse studies on collocational competence and to identify their successful treatments and methodologies. This methodology follows five framework stages that will be discussed further in this subsection. These stages include (1) identifying the research question; (2) identifying the relevant studies; (3) study selection; (4) charting the data and (5) summarising and reporting the results (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005). This scoping review also integrates the updated scoping review framework from Peters et al. (2020), which also will be described in the following subsections. Additionally, Preferred Reporting of Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) procedures introduced by Moher, Liberati, Tetzlaff and Altman (2009) is also utilised as to guide the process of article selection.

SCOPING REVIEW RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The research question served as the starting point for defining the analysis criteria, and the principles used in solving this question were described to explain the emphasis of this study (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005). Our former guiding question was, 'what are the main issues or challenges being faced by ESL and EFL learners in collocational competence'? The general idea of collocational competence guided this research, and the main research question was formulated based on early readings. This review focused on those instruments and methodologies that were employed to address problems related to the collocational competence of ESL and EFL learners. Following the recommendations of Arksey and O'Malley (2005), a broad approach to the review parameters was adopted in order to encompass the breadth of studies in this field, and decisions about how to set the requirements for the collected papers were taken after the general volume and context of the literature were reviewed.

IDENTIFICATION OF RELEVANT STUDIES

Keyword searches were conducted on relevant databases, such as Google Scholar and Research Gate. The selected database contained a large amount of journal articles that are available and easily retrievable online. Whilst articles from 2010 and 2020 were given the most attention,

some relevant articles from the early 2000s were also selected to obtain more insights on the research topic. The search terms used for this review included 'collocational competence' + 'language', 'collocational competence' + 'grammar OR vocabulary OR writing', 'collocational knowledge' + 'language', 'collocational knowledge' + 'grammar OR vocabulary OR writing'. These keyword searches generated over 5,650 results however, for the purpose of this review only 90 references were identified for selection process.

STUDY SELECTION: INCLUSION AND EXCLUSION CRITERIA

The retrieved articles underwent two levels of evidence screening following the recommendations of Peters et al. (2020). In the first level, the titles and abstracts of the identified articles were screened. Their abstracts were also reviewed to ensure their relevance to the current topic. In the second level, the full texts of the retrieved articles were screened. The inclusion criteria include articles that have been retrieved from a peer-reviewed publication written between 2010 and 2020. An additional inclusion requirement is that the topic of the article should be relevant despite being presented in a different format. Therefore, all theoretical articles (e.g. literature reviews and recommendations based on cited research) and empirical articles (e.g. original qualitative or quantitative method studies) were included in the review.
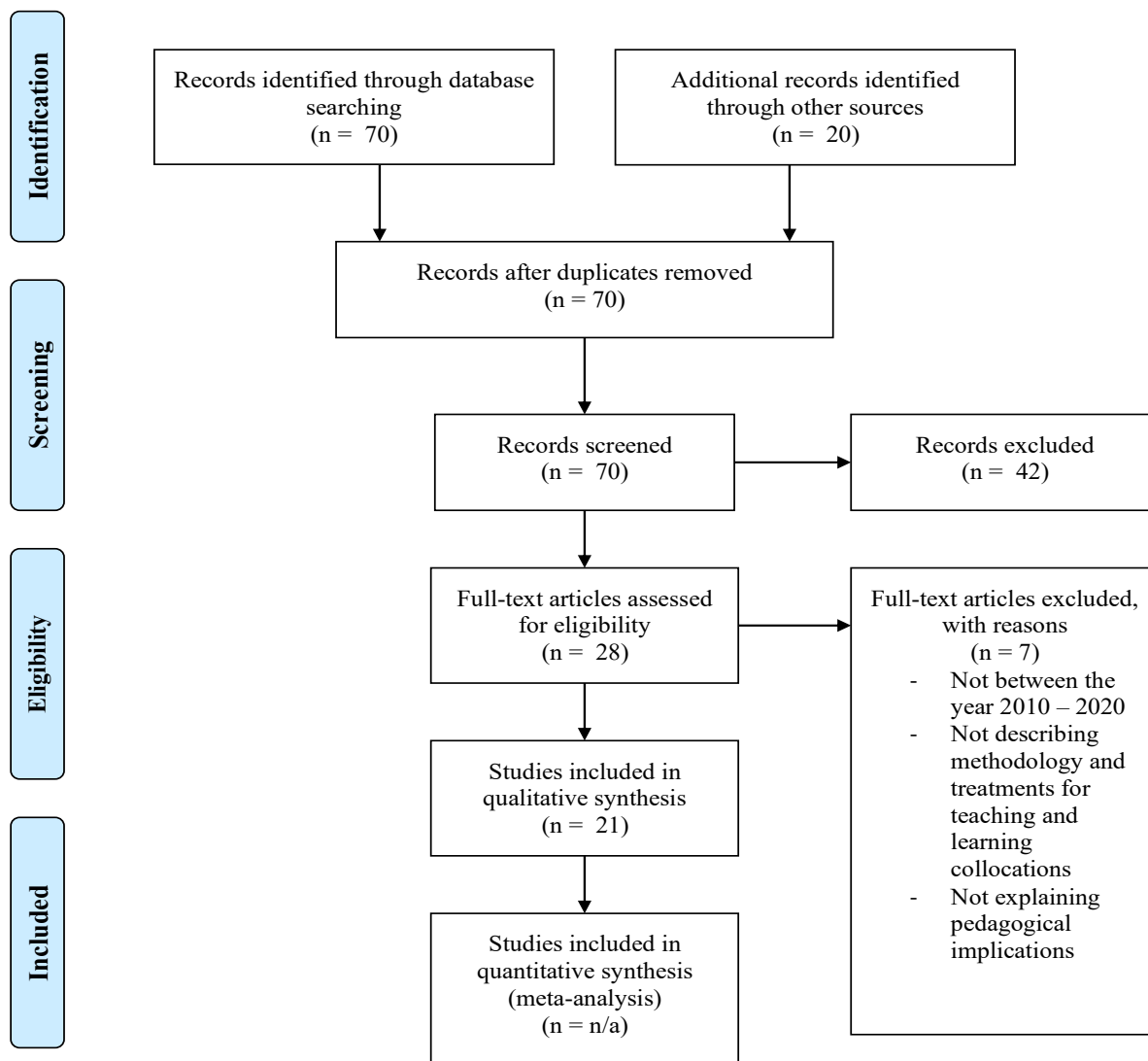
The exclusion criteria were formulated during the article screening process in order to remove those articles that did not specifically focus on those treatments and methodologies for improving collocational competence amongst ESL and EFL learners. An article was excluded from the review if the following exclusion criteria were satisfied: 1) the article was not published between 2010 and 2020; 2) the article does not describe its adopted methodology and treatments for teaching and learning collocations; and 3) the article does not provide future recommendations or pedagogical implications. After reviewing the 28 retrieved articles, 21 were included in the analysis.

CHARTING THE DATA

After the selection process, each article was 'charted' or sorted according to its main issues and themes (determined based on its research question) (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005). The articles were divided into 3 emergent categories based on their methods, namely, corpus-based methods of analysing collocational competence (N=8), traditional methods of teaching and learning collocations (N=9) and other strategies for addressing collocational competence (N=4). Figure 1 presents a PRISMA 2009 Flow Diagram that illustrates the flow of identifying the relevant studies included in this review.

PRISMA Flow Diagram

Identification	Records identified through database searching (n = 70)
	Additional records identified through other sources (n = 20)

Records after duplicates removed (n = 70)

Screening

Records screened (n = 70) → Records excluded (n = 42)

Eligibility

Full-text articles assessed for eligibility (n = 28) → Full-text articles excluded, with reasons (n = 7)
- Not between the year 2010 – 2020
- Not describing methodology and treatments for teaching and learning collocations
- Not explaining pedagogical implications

Included

Studies included in qualitative synthesis (n = 21)

Studies included in quantitative synthesis (meta-analysis) (n = n/a)

From: Moher, D., Liberati, A., Tetzlaff, J., Altman, D. G., The PRISMA Group (2009). *Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses:* The PRISMA Statement. PLoS Med 6(7): e1000097. doi:10.1371/journal.pmed1000097
For more information, visit www.prisma-statement.org.

FIGURE 1. PRISMA 2009 Flow Diagram

FINDINGS

A total of 21 journal articles discussing the various instruments, methodologies and strategies for addressing problems related to the collocational competence of English learners were eventually selected. These articles were published in various countries between 2010 and 2020. Figure 2 illustrates the research trend.
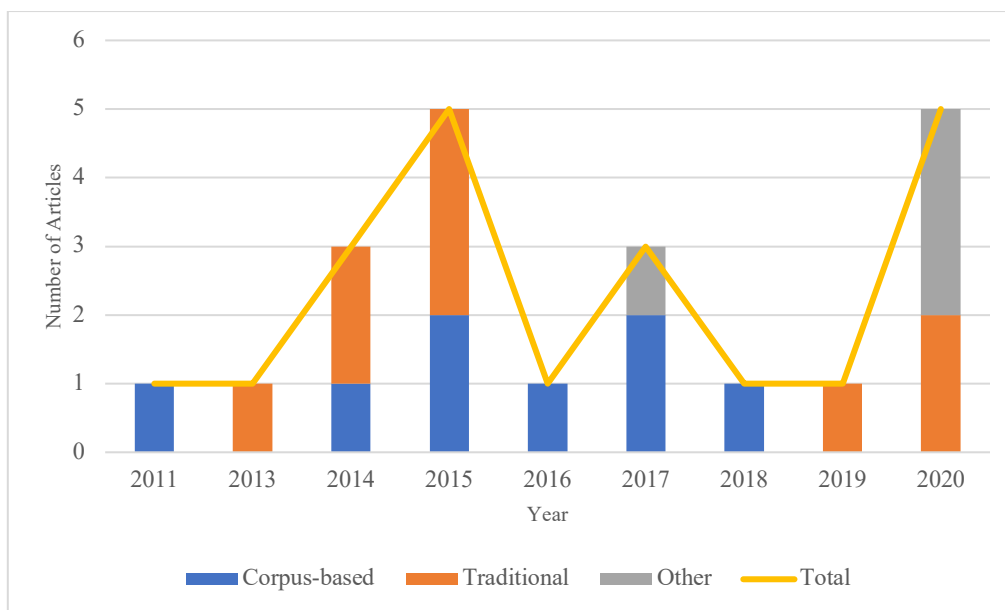
FIGURE 2. Publication Trends from 2010 to 2020

TABLE 1. Summary of the Findings

Findings	Examples
Corpus-Based Methods for Analysing Collocational Competence	• Direct Corpus • Indirect Corpus
Traditional Methods of Teaching and Learning Collocations	• Books • Dictionaries • Specific Instructions from Language Teachers and Instructors
Other Strategies Used to Address Collocational Competence	• Flipped Classroom • Mobile Application • Humour

CORPUS-BASED METHODS FOR ANALYSING COLLOCATIONAL COMPETENCE

According to Bennett (2010), corpora are applied in language teaching in three ways, namely, corpus-influenced materials, corpus-cited texts and corpus-designed activities. Corpus-influenced materials are designed based on the frequency of hits and patterns about certain information obtained from corpora. Corpus-cited texts include grammar introductory books and dictionaries, whereas corpus-designed activities actively involve learners in exploring and interpretating databases to independently look for patterns and answers. Corpus-influenced materials and corpus-cited texts use corpora indirectly, whereas corpus-designed activities directly use corpora.

In his experimental study, Li (2017) found a significantly greater improvement in collocational use in the experimental group compared with the control group. The experimental group used corpora directly as a treatment to learn collocations and experienced a significantly greater improvement as reflected in the increased number of collocations used in their writing and their increased range of collocations. Li (2017) also found that the use of corpora can improve the precision of collocation usage and promote the use of scholarly collocations. Similarly, Vyatkina and Boulton (2017) found that paper-based corpus-influenced materials are more effective than conventional approaches for teaching new collocations to low-level students. Sadeghi (2014) suggested that teachers should not limit their teaching and learning of English lexis to conventional standardised course books. Instead, they should promote the reading of literary works containing a range of authentic phrases that can be acquired from

language corpora. Similarly, Daskalovska (2015) found that corpus-based exercises are more successful than conventional activities in teaching verb–adverb collocations. Daskalovska (2015) showed that those who study collocations with the aid of an online concordancer were more aware and performed much better in all tests conducted in the experiment. Reynolds (2016) demonstrated that the adoption of the web-based collocation concordancer TANGO significantly improved the collocational usage precision of learners. Reynolds (2016) partly integrated direct corpus usage into the writing process (i.e. when students self-edit their essays for verb–noun errors). Similarly, Huang, Chen, Tsao and Wible (2015) proposed a corpus-based tool called TechCollo, which is very useful for researchers engaged in interdisciplinary studies, to help learners or researchers check word combinations in unfamiliar fields of study.

Dukali (2018) performed an error analysis by using AntConc, a corpus analysis tool that allows users to generate concordance lines, word frequencies and lexical bundles, all of which are useful in analysing collocational patterns. Dukali (2018) also applied several methods to determine the acceptability of collocations. These methods include validating the collocations with (1) the Oxford Collocation Dictionary (2009), (2) the online British National Corpus, (3) consultations with 2 native speakers and (4) the acceptability-of-collocations survey, which was used to triangulate the findings of the above methods. The findings of Dukali (2018) reinforced the statement that EFL learners have limited knowledge of English lexical collocations as reflected in their error-strewn performance in producing them (e.g. Wang & Shaw, 2008; Nesselhauf, 2003; Mahmoud, 2005). Similarly, in their error analysis, Ang, Rahim, Tan and Salehuddin (2011) investigated the types and sources of verb–noun collocational errors in a sub-corpus of the English of Malaysian School Students, a Malaysian learner corpus, by using the Wordsmith corpus analysis tool. They eventually identified preposition-related collocational errors as the most frequently emerging errors. With respect to the causes of collocational errors, intralingual transfer was identified as the most prevalent amongst three main groups of collocational error sources (i.e. interlingual transfer, intralingual transfer and paraphrase).

TRADITIONAL METHODS OF TEACHING AND LEARNING COLLOCATIONS

The retrieved articles were then categorised into research that focuses on traditional methods of teaching and learning collocational competence. Most of these articles used books, dictionaries or specific instructions from language teachers and instructors, and their findings highly emphasised the importance of teachers' instructions as suggested in many previous studies.

These articles emphasised the important role of teachers in teaching collocation (Phoocharoensil, 2013; Choi, 2019; Torabian, Maros & Subakir, 2014; Kamarudin, Abdullah & Abdul Aziz, 2020) and described those strategies that both language teachers and learners should pay attention to in order to develop collocational competence. For instance, teachers should clarify the differences between L1 and L2 for some collocations and the translation of such collocations. Phoocharoensil (2013) argued that this strategy often produces a better result compared with other teaching methods that neglect cross-linguistic differences. Similarly, Choi (2019) suggested that language teachers should provide implicit and explicit instructions to learners of all proficiency levels. These teachers should also be aware that collocational errors are mostly affected by interlingual and intralingual factors and thereby may require specific types of instructions. Torabian, Maros and Subakir (2014) recommended that collocations and vocabulary should be taught directly to learners and, given that the lexical collocational knowledge of L2 learners is positively related to their language production, college English instruction should consider teaching both individual words and grammatical patterns. The findings of Kamarudin, Abdullah and Abdul Aziz (2020) also highlighted a need for language

teachers to think about help they can help learners learn, understand and produce appropriate collocations in suitable contexts. Instructions from teachers and instructors are important in the long run as Ebrahimi-Bazzaz, Abd Samad, bin Ismail & Noordin (2014) claimed that lexical collocations are learnt and developed through four academic years of university but require at least two years to show significant development in language proficiency. El-Dakhs (2015) agreed that collocational competence improves along with increased language exposure but at a slow rate.

Al Ghazali (2015) developed 'Elicitation – Fixation – Creation', a template for teaching collocation in EFL classes. The initial elicitation stage requires teachers and students to practice both awareness and noticing. In this stage, teachers should not teach vocabulary in isolated lists that lack any actual or specific meaning. Instead, they should address =these words in the natural contexts in which they are used. At the beginning of the lesson, teacher should also determine which word combinations they will be discussing. Meanwhile, students should be conscious that English words are not randomly related to one another. The fixation stage indicates the students' understanding of collocational terms and aims to improve their acquisition of new terms. This stage also focuses on the precision and capability of these students to make the correct word combinations. This controlled preparation process is often initiated by instructors and takes the form of drills, multiple-choice tests, gap-and-cue exercises, matching exercises and expression development exercises. The third and final stage is creation, which is intended to establish the students' fluency in using their learned terms in oral and written discourse in addition to their ability to use those expressions that are normally used by native speakers.

Dorkchandra (2015) examined the effects of instruction of noticing collocation amongst Thai EFL learners and found that such instruction improves the English collocational knowledge of these students. The experimental group was taught how to notice English collocations via several awareness-raising exercises and activities where the noticing was guided by teachers. Some examples of these exercises and activities include underlining, highlighting, translating, recording and reconstructing. The group was also encouraged to consult the Oxford Collocation Dictionary for Students of English to explore the relevant collocates. Fhaeizdhyall (2020) studied the perceptions of low-performing students towards the effect of direct and indirect written corrective feedback (WCF) on improving their collocation competence and found that the perceived advantages of direct WCF included its promotion of autonomous learning behaviour. The students perceived indirect WCF as a promoter of learner autonomy. Overall, these students held contradictory views regarding the roles of direct and indirect WCF in developing their collocation skills. On the one hand, those who received direct WCF positively perceived that WCF helped improve their collocational competence. On the other hand, those students who received indirect WCF had mixed perceptions towards the effectiveness of this strategy.

OTHER STRATEGIES USED TO ADDRESS COLLOCATIONAL COMPETENCE

Besides the corpus-based and traditional methods used to address collocational competence, some researchers (Suranakkharin, 2017; Nagy, 2020; Özcan & Kert, 2020; Ginanti, 2020) proposed other methodologies that can help counter the lack of collocational competence amongst English language learners.

One of these approaches include the use of flipped teaching, where the learning materials are delivered outside class time through interactive means, and class times are solely used for practice. Suranakkharin (2017) revealed that students who attended flipped classes have higher English collocations in the post-tests than in the pre-tests. However, results of the post-tests reveal that the outcomes of flipped and conventional classrooms do not substantially

differ. Nagy (2020) proposed improving collocational awareness by using humour. Specifically, Nagy argued that forms of verbal humour, such as puns and riddles focused on wordplay, can be very useful instructional materials that can improve the understanding of the class by directing the focus of students towards a certain construction. However, verbal humour is typically used in highly advanced courses given that the vocabulary of riddles frequently includes homonymy or polysemy, which is difficult to comprehend at a lower level. Other humorous ways of teaching collocations include the use of comic strips (e.g. Garfield, Calvin and Hobbs and the Simpsons) and humorous picture stories and texts (anecdotes). Another version of this task is to share a whole picture scenario and ask the students to write a narrative and complete the story to their liking by inserting a hypothetical final frame to the tale. As in the previous activity, the students are given a handful of collocations to use in their storytelling. Audio-visual texts can also be used in collocations training given that students usually enjoy watching movies and are thus likely to appreciate a funny short film.

Özcan and Kert (2020) examined the use of mobile applications in collocation teaching. Vocabulary cards were sent to the experimental and control group students during the teaching process. Students from the experimental group were given vocabulary cards via a mobile software, whereas students from the control group received these cards in a classroom environment. These vocabulary cards include the target meanings of collocations as well as example sentences and visuals related to the collocations. Mobile applications have an essential place in the teaching of collocative words. However, the persistence test results showed that the average scores of the group using the mobile application decreased more than those of the other group. If the difference between these persistence test scores is decreasing, then the use of the mobile application in long-term syntactic vocabulary teaching is not meaningful. By contrast, Ginanti (2020) argued that language environment is important for EFL learners given its influence on their successful acquisition of foreign languages. Ginanti (2020) proposed that the subconscious acquisition of a language is more successful than conscious acquisition for students. In other words, a natural exposure significantly affects the abilities of students to learn their target language (Dulay, 1982 as cited in Ginanti, 2020). Exposure refers to the interaction between the learner and the language they are learning either in general or with particular language points. Communication outside the classroom is often referred to as a type of exposure.

DISCUSSION

The problems related to collocational competence are very familiar to ESL and EFL learners. Studies from 2010 to 2020 have attempted to address this issue whilst recommending treatments that are beneficial for both teachers and learners to integrate in their classroom. One of those methods that positively influence the collocational use of learners is the corpus-based method (Li, 2017; Vyatkina & Boulton, 2017); Reynolds, 2016; Daskalovska, 2015; Dukali, 2018; Ang, Rahim, Tan & Salehuddin, 2011; Huang, Chen, Tsao & Wible, 2015; Sadeghi, 2014). Traditionally, ESL and EFL classrooms tend to use textbooks and dictionaries with an emphasis on the roles of teachers in the classroom. However, the materials often used in traditional classroom settings provide unnatural examples of language. Therefore, researchers have recommended the use of corpus, which offers natural and native-like examples of language use. Both direct (Li, 2017; Reynolds, 2016; Dukali, 2018; Huang, Chen, Tsao & Wible, 2015; Ang, Rahim, Tan & Salehuddin, 2011) and indirect corpus use (Vyatkina & Boulton, 2016; Daskalovska, 2015; Sadeghi, 2014) are undoubtedly effective for learners. However, formal training and exposure are needed for teachers and learners in order to ensure that corpora are fully utilised in the classroom, especially in the integration of direct corpora

use. Researchers have also studied other possible treatments and methodologies that may help improve the collocational competence of ESL and EFL learners. These treatments include using flipped classrooms (Suranakkharin, 2017), instruction of noticing (Dokchandra, 2015) and templates (Al Ghazali, 2015), humour (Nagy, 2020) and mobile applications (Özcan & Kert, 2020).

Despite the availability of various treatments, teachers and learners should consider certain aspects, such as the proficiency of learners and the availability of resources when applying these treatments. Antle (2013) argued that collocation activities can be incorporated into most classes, but the needs, learning level and motivation of students should be considered when choosing amongst these activities. For example, some low-proficiency students may not be suitable candidates for flipped classrooms as they may be unable to study independently outside of their class time. Similarly, Nagy (2020) explained that the use of humour, such as homonymy or polysemy, may not be understood by low-level learners. Another aspect that needs to be considered is source availability; some students may not have mobile phones, thereby preventing teachers from integrating mobile application use in teaching collocations. Similarly, integrating a direct corpus approach that requires the use of computers in classrooms (which usually accommodate up of 20 to 30 students) may be impossible. The access to logistics or infrastructure poses another major problem for data-driven learning that involves the use of corpora (Gilquin & Granger, 2010). Schools may also be unable to equip themselves with computers and servers given that the associated expenses are outside their annual budget.

Technological advancements may still be used in language classrooms, but teachers and instructors should find suitable approaches that can cater to their students. One approach recommended in this study is the use of the indirect corpus approach. Apart from using textbooks and dictionaries in traditional classrooms, teachers and instructors may also use paper-based materials that are extracted from the language corpora. In addition to having various types of corpora, the materials should also cater to the proficiency level of students, and teachers can personalise paper-based materials according to those topics that warrant more attention from their students. The review also reveals that corpora use in teaching collocations is more effective than traditional classroom teaching and sheds new light on the basic mastery of collocations amongst learners by introducing the possibility of highly efficient and appropriate pedagogical applications. The use of corpus may also help take the pedagogical materials and curriculum design to another level when material developers and textbook writers make use of real examples of language. In other words, concordance-based exercises may become suitable alternatives to traditional methods, such as conventional gap fillers, given that they can be easily improve the learning outcomes of students. The performance of corpora use outstands the traditional manners in showing improvements in the writing skill among ESL learners and affects learners' comprehension and production of collocations of synonyms (Jafarpour, Hashemian & Alipour, 2013). Corpus-based teaching also plays a positive role in improving the writing fluency and quality of ESL learners apart from providing them with a rich learning experience. Specifically, in contrast to traditional teaching, corpora help ESL learners in understanding the lexical and grammatical continuum of learning, including collocations and idioms for both receptive and productive communication means (Ang, Tan & Mengyu, 2017). This approach is also applicable to cases where learners carry out extensive reading, writing or translation tasks and in usual problem areas where typical transmission-based teaching is not as helpful. Overall, the corpora approach provides a large database of references for learners to explore and highlights patterns and generalisations about a certain topic or area of language knowledge.

However, the budget for corpus resources that are not available for free and require users to buy expensive licenses also warrants consideration. Another aspect worth considering is the training of teachers to enhance their technological proficiency and encourage their

corpora use. Some teachers are less computer literate and have not received relevant exposure, thereby making them reluctant to adopt new methods, such as corpora use. Therefore, teachers should be prepared to be comfortable with the mechanics of corpora for them to provide learners with proper guidance (Ordulj & Sokolić, 2019).

Considering the implementation of teaching collocation as a subtopic in classrooms may also help promote awareness towards collocations. In other words, collocations are also being emphasised and incorporated into the four language skills and are taught with context (i.e. the use of corpora), which are particularly important for the developers of English language modules and textbooks. The current syllabus in Malaysia teaches grammar in isolation with collocations. The implementation of lessons that centre around English collocations may help students familiarise themselves with different types and examples of collocations. As most studies suggest, teachers play important roles in explicitly teaching collocations in the classroom and in providing examples of acceptable and unacceptable collocations. To guarantee effective teaching, collocations should be taught in levels. For example, students should start on easier types of collocations, such as lexical ones, before moving towards the more difficult parts, such as grammatical collocations. Several guidelines can also be formulated to help students familiarise themselves with collocations and raise their awareness.

CONCLUSION

The emphasis of collocations in teaching is observed to be on timely from this review. Previous studies show that the use of corpora and traditional strategies is effective in teaching and learning collocations amongst ESL and EFL learners. Grammar teaching has always been a concern in countries where English is adopted as a second language. In Malaysia, the Integrated Secondary School Curriculum for the English language as outlined by the Curriculum Development Centre of the Ministry of Education underscores the importance of grammar teaching in syllabus planning. This review therefore provides insights that can help curriculum planners, educators and teaching material writers understand the context of teaching and learning collocations. Having awareness about collocation proficiency and mastering collocational competence are important for learners to grasp a second language or foreign language with precision and without delay. Future studies should focus on certain aspects, such as styles matching amongst learners, degree of intervention from teachers, design of pedagogical teaching materials and autonomy of non-ESL or EFL learners, to provide a holistic overview for the future of teaching collocations.

As collocations are incorporated into language teaching to improve the learning outcomes of students, one should not go too far in implementing new strategies for teaching collocations. There are rooms for justification about quantifying the results obtained from various teaching strategies, learners' competence and perception, training and resources and measurement of effectiveness. The lack of substantial findings regarding the aforementioned aspects reminds researchers to be aware of and search for answers over time. Overall, the indirect corpus-based methodology can revolutionise language teaching, and the best approach is to incorporate corpora as a complement to traditional teaching materials, which will eventually lead to the development of a self-centred and proactive learning environment for ESL learners.

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