

# CONTEXTUALIZING EFL LEARNERS' PROFICIENCY IN USING ENGLISH COLLOCATIONS

*by* Erikson Saragih

---

**Submission date:** 02-Feb-2023 12:45AM (UTC+0700)

**Submission ID:** 2004177325

**File name:** 2.\_jurnal\_iain\_kediri.pdf (347.21K)

**Word count:** 7773

**Character count:** 44199



5  
**JEELS**

(Journal of English Education and Linguistics Studies)  
P-ISSN: 2407-2575 E-ISSN: 2503-2194  
<https://jurnalfaktarbiyah.iainkediri.ac.id/index.php/jeels>

3  
**CONTEXTUALIZING EFL LEARNERS' PROFICIENCY IN USING  
ENGLISH COLLOCATIONS**

**Rohdearni Wati Sipayung<sup>1</sup>; \*Erikson Saragih<sup>2</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>English Education Department, Universitas Simalungun, Indonesia;

<sup>2</sup>Linguistic Department, Universitas Sumatera Utara, Indonesia

*dearsipayunk@gmail.com; \*eriksonsaragih@usu.ac.id*

(\*) Corresponding Author

3  
**Abstract:** Proficiency in using a foreign language cannot be separated from mastery of collocation in the target language. Although several previous studies have explored collocations in various forms of oral communication; however, few studies have investigated the context of collocation use and proficiency in collocation use by EFL learners. This study aims to describe the English collocation competence and collocational mistakes of Indonesian (EFL) students. A total number of 50 students from an English education department in Medan, Indonesia, served as the subjects. The research instrument was a 40-item Simple Completion Test that the researchers created themselves. It assessed students' understanding of four different lexical collocations: pure idioms, figurative idioms, free combinations, and restricted collocations. The findings

---

<sup>1</sup>**Citation in APA style:**

Sipayung, R. W., & Saragih, E. (2023). Contextualizing EFL learners' proficiency in using English collocations. *JEELS*, 10(1), 1-25.

DOI: 10.30762/jeels.v10i1.700

Submission: November 2022, Revision: December 2022, Publication: January 2023

2 showed that pure idioms were the most difficult for these students, while free combinations posed the fewest number of a challenge. Student performance on restricted collocations and figurative idioms were roughly equal. The student's inconsistent responses often showed a lack of proficiency with English collocations. It is concluded that poor first language transfer is to blame for the collocational errors made by EFL learners. The greatest way to get more proficient at using collocation while avoiding errors that have been identified thus far is to utilize it as frequently as feasible in English.

3 **Keywords:** *collocation, proficiency, free combinations, restricted, figurative idiom, pure idiom.*

## INTRODUCTION

The correct use of collocations from the target language is one indicator of someone's ability in utilizing a foreign language (Saito & Liu, 2022). The accuracy with which collocations are used in various communication events helps listeners understand the meaning and purpose of sentences said by someone. A group of idiomatic expressions known as collocations is made up of a string of words that, for the most part randomly, appear together in a specific order. Collocations are not always grammatically correct and/or cannot be created by following formulas or rules. As a result, they are frequently difficult for EFL students to comprehend and are frequently only addressed in the final stages of foreign language learning.

16 Collocational knowledge has been identified by TEFL (teaching English as a foreign language) study as an essential component of English phraseological competency (Stengers & Boers, 2015). A lexical item's syntactic relations aid in defining its lexical range and the context in which it occurs. Understanding the limitations of lexical co-occurrence can help ESL/EFL students better acquire language. They may also generate grammatical and conceptually sound statements because of it. Studies on the vocabulary development of ESL/EFL

students have generally concentrated on the understanding and production of specific lexical units (Feng et al., 2018). In comparison, the study of collocations has been given less attention by scholars. An empirical investigation revealed that EFL students did not pick up collocational knowledge when learning foreign language vocabulary (Wang & Qiu, 2021). However, they frequently lagged in collocational skills compared to lexical skills. The majority of the research on English collocation learners' performances has noted the difficulties of students whose original languages are comparable to English (Dąbrowska, 2018). There are few studies of students who utilize a significantly distinct language system, like Indonesian, in terms of their collocational understanding (Arifani, 2019; Oktavianti, 2022; Karyn, 2019). It would be helpful to do the challenges that students from various L1 backgrounds have while learning English collocations since it would help teachers figure out the best strategies for developing their students' collocational competency.

Depending on the speaker's word choice, certain lexeme combinations may co-occur, while others are predictable (Blanco-Elorrieta & Caramazza, 2021). A collocation is a grouping of lexical items that occur together and are to some extent predictable from one another (Jahanbakhsh et al., 2019) noted, the placement of certain lexicons is not always determined by the subject's familiarity with the outside world. Instead, what is necessary for one object to draw another depends, in part, on a native listener's innate understanding. Some word pairings can be unpredictable (Shen et al., 2021); for example, the word dark has a wide variety of collocates. In comparison, because it may collocate with only two or three other items, an item like rancid is likely to have significant consistency.

Most researchers concur that various collocations should be positioned on a spectrum (Fendji et al., 2022; Duan & Qin, 2012). They show that it is difficult to distinguish between collocations that are either foreseeable or not solely by relying on the meanings of collocational constituent parts. There is still no consensus among scholars on the boundaries of the continuum. Nevertheless, efficiency,

modifiability, and semantic transparency are the primary requirement for classifying various grammatical constructions (Liu & Brown, 2015). Free combinations, which have the maximum levels of productivity, semantic transparency, and substitutability of things for their component components, are found at one end of the lexicon-semantic continuum.

The least useful combination of collocation is idioms, those with the most ambiguous semantics, and those with the most fixed substitution patterns are found at the other end of the spectrum. Different forms of limited collocations fall in between these two extremes. At present, some scholars (Shen et al., 2021; Basal, 2019) still lack a clear, non-controversial, and all-embracing definition of collocation. The syntagmatic links between lexical components are therefore typically described by academics using a variety of terminology and contexts (Kanerva & Viimaranta, 2018). Howarth's categorization model of lexical collocations is used in the latest research since it offers clear explanations of the classification criteria and examples that are simple to understand. There are four types of colloquial expressions on the model's collocational spectrum. (Hong & Basturkmen, 2020): (a) free combinations, (b) restricted collocations, (c) figurative idioms, and (d) pure idioms. A free combination's meaning is derived from the literal meanings of each of its core elements, and its parts are interchangeable (Feng et al., 2018). A restricted collocation, such as "bust a fuse," is more constrained in its choice of compositional pieces and often has one part. Howarth (1998) further classifies idioms into figurative and pure idioms for those that are excessively frozen or semantically opaque. A pure idiom has a unity meaning that is unforeseeable from the meaning of its elements, in contrast to a metaphorical idiom, which has a metaphorical meaning as a whole that can be inferred from its literal meaning.

Recent empirical findings on collocation studies (Normann, 2020; Ding et al., 2022) have shown some variables that might affect how well learners produce collocations. Semantic domains, meaning borders, and collocational constraints are some of these elements. A lexicon's

conceptual field determines its semantic field. The conceptual realms of color, kinship, and marriage connections are a few instances (Feng et al., 2018). Suparno et al., (2021) and Crosthwaite et al., (2021) tested the proficiency of Indonesian EFL students with English collocations. They concluded that the greater the semantic range of a given lexical term, the greater the likelihood of L1 interference mistakes. For example, some subjects provided "produce money" for the target collocation "make money", which was an instance of L1 interference. In the same vein, the more synonyms an item had, the more difficulties learners encountered in producing a restricted collocation. Suparno et al., (2021) also discussed the causes behind learners' incorrect usage of verbs with high frequency like the place, go, and take. The extensive polysemy and intricate syntactic structure of these verbs were the primary causes. These verbs imposed collocational constraints that necessitated careful consideration of their collocational surroundings because they formed sentences with prepositions. Various levels of difficulty for learners were established by these semantic characteristics.

In this instance, paraphrasing was frequently utilized as an opening to further conversation. Of course, there are additional tactics that students use often. In this situation, students can explore by coming up with a collocation that they believe can be used in place of the targeted one. Tanihardjo (2018) observed that students generated collocations they believed to be appropriate, such as furiously frightening and grossly misused, in her corpus of Indonesian writings. These unusual word arrangements were the outcome of the inventiveness of the students. Coombs-Hoar (2022) and Candarli & Jones (2022) analyzed the faults in the corpus of non-native writers and discovered several additional tactics, such as recurrence and analogies. Based on a well-known L2 collocation, these authors produced new collocations. They compared selecting a technique to implement a strategy in this paper. This tactic, nevertheless, could potentially cause collocability to be overgeneralized. Adopted methods are an example of this; it's an idiomatic term that non-native speakers are inclined to

use sparingly. The non-native authors frequently combined a small number of collocations, such highly with a range of adjectives. Repeating was an especially preferred tactic when students lacked sufficient collocational knowledge. To meet the objectives of the study, the following research questions were addressed: 1) How is the description of Indonesian EFL learners on collocation based on collocation categories? 2) What types of issues do English collocations provide for Indonesian learners from various linguistic backgrounds?

## METHOD

The study used a descriptive qualitative study method with a case study design to accomplish the goals. Fifty students from the English department at a university in Medan, Indonesia, were selected as subjects for the study. The respondents included 19 male and 31 female students ranging in age from 20 to 23 years old and majoring in English education. English was a required course for the students to finish their degrees. They had obtained at least six years of English education by the time they finished high school before enrolling in this university.

A self-developed Simple Completion Test (SCT) was used as the study instrument to test respondents' comprehension of four kinds of lexical collocations: free combinations, limited collocations, figurative idioms, and pure idioms. The test consisted of 40 free-response questions, with 10 in each collocational region. Each item was made up of two or three phrases that served as the context for an inserted collocation or idiom about food or animals. A participant was required to finish the missing word in the target combination or phrase by using the textual background.

The majority of the SCT's phrases were adapted from Booker's Longman's current American idioms. The 40 test items were sorted into four categories based on their employment in different types of speech. Each section comprised different test items from each of the four collocation groups. In Section A, the participants had to fill in relevant

verbs, verb-adjective combinations in Section B, and adjective-related words in Section C. Nouns-related words were sought in Section D.

The SCT was delivered in the same classroom as the normal instruction for the topics was offered. There was enough time for each participant to concentrate solely on the test questions. The test was finished in around 35 minutes by all subjects. Before the exam, the researcher offered the respondents instructions in Indonesian and advised them to answer each question truthfully or make educated assumptions if they were unsure. Individuals' response sheets were collected, and they were examined using both quantitative and qualitative paradigms. The correct responses of each participant were highlighted first. When calculating scores, test words that fell into the categories of unconstrained colloquial phrases and free combinations were given extra consideration. Correct colloquial expressions are used in responses, however, nevertheless, proper terminology was believed to be correct.

The results of each group's participants were then evaluated using descriptive statistics to establish the relative difficulty of the various categories. The mean for each class was the average amount of test takers who finished the questions in each group. The average number of blank responses for each group was also collected because it revealed participants' perceptions of the level of difficulty. Because students were encouraged to complete each test item, blank responses may suggest that they were unable to even provide an accurate judgment due to the item's difficulty. One indicator of an item's complexity is the number of incorrect answers submitted by participants. It was expected that participants would give more choices for the more difficult situations. A qualitative paradigm was also used to assess the collocational clusters of subjects supplied for each group. The purpose of this application was to discover the lexical colloquial expressions that respondents found particularly challenging, in addition to the words that confused their collocability.



## FINDINGS

### Collocation Comprehension of Idioms

Table 1. The result of the correct answer on the four collocation categories.

	Free Combination	Limited collocations	Figurative Idioms	Pure Idioms
Mean	48.21	8.11	8.59	4.1
Standard Deviation	7.52	7.68	11.09	10.22

The average number of correct answers for each section is shown in Table 1. The category of free combinations has the highest mean of the three (48.21). The essential idioms category earned the lowest mean score (4.1), as expected (9 Knowledge of English Collocations). Restricted collocations have a somewhat higher mean than figurative idioms, but their topic presentation deviates more from the average. The statistics support the notion that pure idioms are the most difficult, but free-word combinations tend to be the easiest. It was predicted that constrained collocations would be easier to learn than metaphorical idioms. Surprisingly, they made the topics' difficulty levels the same.

Table 2. Description of blank response and incorrect answer variations in each category

		Free Combinati on	Restricted collocatio n	Figurati ve idioms	Pure Idiom s
Blank responses of each item	M	1.75	7.69	9.70	12.7
Number of variations of incorrect responses	SD	7.61	22.3	23.2	26.7

Table 2 describes the blank responses and incorrect answers of test items of the four collocation categories. From both the percentage of blank responses and the number of variations of incorrect responses, the following is the sequence; Pure Idioms, figurative idioms, restricted collocations, and free combinations. The same pattern emerged when the researchers examined the typical proportion of individuals'

aberrant responses (excluding the exact answers supplied) and empty responses. Table 2 shows that, when compared to the other three groups, respondents had considerably fewer deviating responses and blank responses for free combinations. The table shows little variance in restricted collocations and figurative idioms, indicating that the two groups delivered roughly the same degree of complexity to the participants. Pure idioms provided the most unusual responses and blank reactions of the four types. The subjects gave a wide range of incorrect answers for limited collocations and both figurative and pure idioms. The wide range of responses implies that they do not grasp word creation. An analysis of subjects' collocational errors in each category suggests that test items created different degrees of difficulty for the subjects. Item 22, for example, asked respondents to fill in an appropriate adjective related to eating. However, several of the aberrant answers comprised lexical components from other areas of speech as well as spelling problems. No subjects properly answered questions 19 (Eat like a horse) or 27 (soup... too thick/solid/stiff to stir) in the restricted collocations group. Items 18 (hen...hatch/produce eggs), 33 (food stamps), 17 (make/propose/drink a toast), and 25 (soft/non-alcoholic drinks) were also extremely tough, with only ten participants responding correctly.

The respondents did incredibly poorly in the free combination category. They were all unable to provide correct responses to the following idioms. 210 (a dark horse), 211 (beat a dead horse), and 45 (black coffee) (a bull in a China shop). Item 43, on the other hand, was correctly answered by more than half of the individuals (a paper tiger). Similarly, their performance in item 34 (his cup of tea) was outstanding, with 22 out of 60 participants correctly answering. Pure idioms, as expected, were found to be particularly difficult for the subjects, as none of them correctly answered half of the test items. Except for item 111 (which had a whale of a time), the other half of the test items were likewise challenging, with only one or two participants providing accurate answers. Thirty-three individuals out of 60 chose correctly for item 111, despite making numerous affixation errors.

## Restricted Collocation and Figurative Idioms

Table 3. Description of EFL learners on free combinations, limited collocations, figurative idioms, and pure idioms

Items	Restricted Collocation		Items	Figurative Idioms	
	Correct answers	Deviation of answer		Correct answers	Deviation of answer
14	Take (6) Get (8)	Eat (30)	4	Give (6)	Smell (5)
17	Have (19) Save (5) Do (4)	Pay (6)	5	Smell (3)	Useful (7)
18	Make (7)	Give (4)	7	Cold (5)	Hot (7)
19	Catch (9)	Keep (3)	9	Empty (8)	Bottle (9)
20	Go (11)	Break (5)	12	Full (11)	Cool (8)
25	Deep (3)	Small (3)	35	Tea (16)	Green (11)
26	Heavy (7)	Bitter (4)	21	Coffee (17)	Black (10)
27	Big (4)	Pure (6)	29	Cow (10)	Crocodile (7)
28	Health (2)	Light (4)	39	Dog (8)	Horse (8)
34	Food (5)	Drink (5)	40	Chicken (1)	Dog (3)

The noun-noun collocation that was displayed in the test items includes the following collocations such as; **health club**, *interest group*, *kitchen cabinet*, *office job*, *liquor license*, *motor vehicle*, *office hours*, *core values*, *car manufacturer*, *case study*, *cheesecake*, *child care*, *car park*, *call center*. While the verb-noun collocation involves *having a bath*, *drink*, *good time*, *haircut*, *holiday*, *problem*, *rest*, *relationship*, *lunch*, *sympathy*, *give a call*, *chance*, *choice*, *hope*, *hug*, *ride*, *advice*, *birth*; **break** *a leg*, *habit*, *record*, *promise*, *window*, *heart*, *ice*, *law*, *rules*. Adjective noun collocations cover; **deep** *depression*, *devotion*, *feeling*, *pocket*, *sleep*, *thought*, *trouble*, *breath*; **heavy** *drinker*, *features*, *rain*, *sleeper*, *snow*, *smoker*, *traffic*, *workload*; **big** *brother*, *deal*, *decision*, *dreamer*, *improvement*, *mistake*, *money*, *surprise*; a **great deal of**, *failure*, *fun*, *joy*, *power*, *strength*

The participants' erratic answers could indicate L1 transfer. For example, for item 19, the subjects preferred to communicate temperature by saying "feel cold" rather than "get a cold." It was the same situation when allowing the employees to make "to produce

money" rather than "make money." In the case of figurative idioms, some collocations with L1 equivalents include "heavy drinker," "heavy smoker," "deep breath," "huge power," "deep feeling," "keep a promise," and so on. The influence of the first language is not always negative. The subjects may undergo a positive transmission that allows them to recognize relevant idioms such as black coffee, green tea, and give birth. These idioms have an Indonesian equivalent that has the same meaning as their English counterparts.

This explains why it is the only test word correctly replied to by more than half of the participants. Rather than limited terms, the individuals appeared to have difficulty identifying specific objects' target collocations. They then presented a lexical item that did not combine with the other words to form a restricted collocation or an idiom. For example, 25 people switched the phrase "one's cup of tea" from tea to coffee (item 35). Other examples include consuming tea rather than coffee and keeping a promise (20) rather than breaking it. Furthermore, they altered the meaning of the statement by substituting a variety of items for the intended one.

Instead of a milking cow, propose using one of their cows as an example. Participants preferred to select responses to animal idioms based on their cultural conceptions of specific animal attributes. They adopted this strategy when confronted with the conundrum of a novel collocation. Unfortunately, they usually gave wrong answers. A dog's life, for example (item 39), denotes a difficult life. The previous line's use of the phrase "work hard" may have worked as motivation for individuals who switched a dog to a cow. They then utilized the analogy of the cow, which is regarded as a hardworking animal in Indonesian culture.

## DISCUSSION

The present study aimed to investigate and describe the English collocation understanding of Indonesian L2 learners before looking at actual mistakes in four different collocation classes. The findings showed that basic idioms were the most challenging, while free

variations presented the least degree of difficulty. The students found restricted collocations and figurative idioms to be extremely challenging, and they only marginally outperformed the true idioms group in these 2 categories. Collocational mistakes made by the majority of individuals might be ascribed to poor transfer from their native tongue. This fact confirms the results of previous research on errors in the use of collocations by EFL learners (Sari & Gulö, 2019; Reynolds & Teng, 2021).

Additionally, some participants choose to use the avoidance and analogy techniques. Their erratic responses occasionally showed the effect of cultural prejudices and a disregard for collocational limitations. Essentially, the numerical outcomes demonstrate that Indonesian EFL learners have insufficient knowledge of English collocations (Crosthwaite et al., 2021). Students are left with no choice except to quit when faced with idioms that are meaningless or have a narrow range of collocates. The fact that such students performed poorly in limited collocations supports Ding et al., (2022) 's assertion that lexical proficiency and collocational understanding are not always correlated. Many academics have suggested that confined collocations are the most crucial class to explain or acquire in light of this. It is the kind of word combination that is halfway along the collocational spectrum. Considering exclusion is a common learning approach used by students without a passive or active understanding of a topic, it is reasonable to say that idioms provide a more limited framework for their utilization and may be readily ignored.

In contrast, limited collocations are virtually always used in the written and spoken communication of L2 learners (Yusuf & Reski Amelia, 2018). Since no particular perspective issues are raised when students came upon a new combination, this is an additional area that is frequently disregarded. According to Macis et al., (2021) students' comprehension of English collocations does not necessarily reflect creative proficiency with colloquial expressions, nor does their collocational competence advance as their vocabulary knowledge does. To effectively teach colloquial expressions, it is important to focus on

the constrained category and the students' cognitive performance. The examination of the study participants' mistakes kinds demonstrates how important the L1 is to their development of English colloquial expressions. The learners' belief that the L1 and L2 match one another is reflected in the common transfer approach. Therefore, the positive transfer happens when the targeting collocations coincide with the L1 colloquial expressions. Therefore, instructors should examine and contrast comparable colloquial expressions in the L1 and other languages while explaining collocations.

Furthermore, it could be useful to highlight the various vocabulary elements utilized in the parallel collocations between English and the students' L1. Thus, students may focus on the lexicosemantic differences between the two languages and lessen mistakes brought on by interruption from L1 (Huang & Renandya, 2020). The students' propensity to replace the targeted vocabulary items with elevated terms is an important discovery. It serves as a reminder that these students are mostly unaware of the lexicosemantic limits and are perplexed by the variety of lexical items that these phrases can just have.

Therefore, when learning the language proficiently, EFL learners need to become aware of the meaning choice and collocational restrictions of elevated lexical items. Collocational vocabulary learning may be more important to certain linguists than separate vocabulary sessions. When acquiring colloquial phrases, one should evaluate both intralingual and interlingual strategies. Teachers should examine multiple implications of lexical elements with various collocates using an interlanguage technique to help pupils become aware of the differences (Oktavianti et al., 2022). As opposed to this, an interlingual approach makes advantage of the present corpus of colloquialisms developed by native English speakers. It assists to highlight to students the native-like usage of the collocations. One of the primary reasons for subjects' language errors, particularly those in idiomatic creation, is a lack of cultural knowledge.

Since cultural preconceptions are most obvious in a language's idioms, some academics contend that phrasing is a vocabulary of culture. A culturally distinctive idea that perplexes Indonesian EFL students who are not knowledgeable about the sociocultural circumstances in their country is the constrained collocation of food stamps in the current research. Idioms' meanings frequently draw on cultural and historical information, therefore learning idioms from a cultural viewpoint might help students understand and remember L2 idiomatic expressions.

Comparing comparable L1 and L2 idioms may also help learners connect the internal representations of the L1 phrase with its L2 equivalent. As a result, they have a better chance of improving idiomatic interpretation in L2. Some experts suggest a strategy for learning idioms that is considerably different from the conventional approaches, which stress learning idioms mostly by rote memory. In a series of investigations, researchers discovered that metaphorical idioms can typically be broken down such that each component contributes to the idiom's analysis and interpretation.

The impact of the learners' native language is the second component. Multiple linguistics contain parallel fixed phrases that are syntactically and semantically identical due to the similarity of particular human circumstances (Gao et al., 2021). However, some of the components that make up these idioms vary among languages due to cultural differences. For instance, there is a limited collocation in English and Indonesian to describe the process of character development. Indonesian learners frequently say "to conclude," as opposed to the English collocation "to conclude." Because they lack collocational understanding, learners largely rely on L1 as their main resource, and as a result, they do better in collocations with L1 parallels than those without.

The third factor is each student's level of collocational proficiency (Hashemi et al., 2012). When ESL/EFL learners' writing samples were contrasted to those of native English speakers, it was found that students typically lacked competency with English

collocations. When contrasted to their native-speaking counterparts, the ESL/EFL students produced fewer common collocations but significantly more uncommon combinations. These students seemed to lack a solid understanding of the significance of collocational elements. Other researchers such as Zaabalawi and Gould (2017) discovered a significant difference between EFL students' receptive and productive collocation understanding. Similarly, Basal (2019) recognized knowledge about cultures as a further factor embedded in the lexical competency issue. He suggested that specific cultural prejudices prohibited the usage of various vocabulary collocations.

Metaphorical collocations provided hints about the cultural information behind the significance of limited collocations. (Werkmann Horvat et al., 2021). Learners' inability to pick up such culturally specific collocations may be due to a lack of cultural competency. Because idioms' metaphorical interpretations were so closely tied to cultural connotations and discourse tropes, this was particularly true in the case of idioms. Idioms are a distinct type of collocation, and understanding and creation are influenced by some circumstances. The interpretations of an idiom's components, its context, and students' mental understanding of metaphors and figurative language are among these (citations). Native speakers tend to find idioms to be more suitable when the context matches the intended message. Sun et al. (2022) claimed that the interpretation of an idiomatic statement could be determined by any significant portion that could be analyzed, such as the primary verb. According to the findings of several research, learners' metaphorical competency would indeed affect how well they understood idioms.

English language learners might need certain ways to form idiomatic phrases due to a lack of collocation understanding, which can lead to specific sorts of mistakes. When learners are unable to locate the necessary lexical elements in the L2, transference is the method they most frequently utilize (Northman et al. 2013). Therefore, based on L1 counterparts, their mistake kinds represented an expansion of L2 meaning. The group of Indonesian students, on the other hand, tended



to presume formal parallels between their L1 and English. They, therefore, committed mistakes like language flips and mixes. The learners' belief that their L1 and L2 correlate on each basis might also be reflected in the approaches and practices. As Moghadam, Zainal, and Ghaderpour (2012) the targeted collocations fitted those in the L1, but the transfer of learning emerged if no similar patterns could be detected in the L1. As was previously said, meaningful learning happened when this occurred. The second tactic is to avoid things. Due to their inability to recall the relevant lexical items for which they have passive knowledge, second-language learners may avoid the target lexical items. They, therefore, change the collocations' actual intent.

The third method that students frequently employ is paraphrasing or utilizing synonyms. The targeted item can be replaced with a replacement, and learners who are unfamiliar with the targeted collocations can convey them via paraphrase. Sun et al. (2022) compared to the Polish students, employed more inventive techniques by giving descriptive replies, such as changing "the answer to the question" to "the answer of the question." Also noteworthy is Ranalli (2013), who looked at how Arabic EFL learners used synonyms. The research found that the individuals made erroneous and irregular collocations because they heavily relied on the open-choice concept for item analysis. The study also found that learners used fewer paraphrases in their L2 output the more idiomatic phrases they learned.

Throughout that their meanings would be influenced to some extent by the interpretation of the idiomatic' primary verbs, even the frozen, non-decomposable pure idioms may be evaluated. As a result, students can understand L2 idioms by paying attention to background knowledge, recognizing the cultural stereotypes conveyed by the idioms, and grasping the meaning of the core verb of an idiom.

The results of this study are highly helpful to teachers as they work to enhance students' learning, particularly in speaking and writing. The capacity of pupils to employ natural collocations is always correlated with their proficiency in these two characteristics of

language. The findings of this study undoubtedly give a thorough grasp of the many types of collocation, their degree of difficulty, and an overview of the comprehension of English collocation by Indonesian students.

## CONCLUSION

This study showed that the EFL students' performance in forming English collocations was subpar due to their limited lexicogrammatically expertise. The use of the limited collocations suggests, particularly, that they are generally uninformed of the English lexicon's meaning breadth and collocational limitations. Their propensity to absorb the English language as individual words may be the root of this issue. Fundamentally, mastering a new vocabulary entails being familiar with its cultural difference, conceptual domains, and word formation constraints. Students may only achieve the appropriate degree of collocational competency for both spoken and written communications through all of this. Collocation instruction must necessarily be combined with language teaching, which may be accomplished using both intralingual and interlingual methods. The social dimension, metaphor connotations, and historical background of the next collocations must be discussed by ESL/EFL instructors.

Additionally, references on colloquial expressions can aid in the growth of collocational mastery if users give examples of vocabulary units with various collocates, identify the various contexts connected to a given phrase, and draw attention to the slight variations between colloquial expressions that initially look to be structurally related. Until further studies of the same kind are done, it is premature to conclude if collocation is simpler or harder to deal with. Another issue is the descriptive ability of learners in distinct L1 circumstances. To understand how learners' languages and cultural contexts or unique qualities affect their performance, we also need additional information about how learners employ collocations in both their L1 and English. Using actual findings from such studies, ESL/EFL instructors could use higher efficient techniques to raise students' lexical proficiency. In

addition to the usefulness of the findings of this study, several limitations are found in terms of its methodology and the number of research objects which should be complemented by future research to obtain a more comprehensive picture of the mastery of collocations by EFL learners.

#### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The research team would like to express their gratitude to the Research center of Universitas Simalungun, Universitas Sumatera Utara which help them by providing the research fund for this project. Their thanks also go to the Boards of editors and reviewers who have made valuable corrections to this article manuscript.

#### REFERENCES

- Arifani, Y. (2019). The application of small WhatsApp groups and the individual flipped instruction model to boost EFL learners' mastery of collocation. *Call-Ej*, 20(1), 52-73.
- Basal, A. (2019). Learning collocations: Effects of online tools on teaching English adjective-noun collocations. *British Journal of Educational Technology*, 50(1), 342-356. <https://doi.org/10.1111/bjet.12562>
- Blanco-Elorrieta, E., & Caramazza, A. (2021). A common selection mechanism at each linguistic level in bilingual and monolingual language production. *Cognition*, 213(July 2020), 104625. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cognition.2021.104625>
- Candarli, D., & Jones, S. (2022). The representation of students in undergraduate prospectuses between 1998 and 2021: a diachronic corpus-assisted discourse study. *Critical Discourse Studies*, 1-20. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17405904.2022.2130952>
- COOMBS-HOAR, K. (2022). Influence of culture on the English language - press as a creator of new idiomatic expressions. *Humanities and Social Sciences Quarterly*, 1(1), 19-29. <https://doi.org/10.7862/rz.2022.hss.02>
- Crosthwaite, P., Luciana, & Schweinberger, M. (2021). Voices from the periphery: Perceptions of Indonesian primary vs secondary pre-service teacher trainees about corpora and data-driven

- learning in the L2 English classroom. *Applied Corpus Linguistics*, 1(1), 100003. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.acorp.2021.100003>
- Dąbrowska, E. (2018). Experience, aptitude, and individual differences in native language ultimate attainment. *Cognition*, 178(May), 222-235. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cognition.2018.05.018>
- Ding, C., Reynolds, B. L., & Ha, X. Van. (2022). Learners' perceptions of a collocation instruction and practice component in a Chinese EFL context. *Language Learning Journal*, July, 1-12. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09571736.2022.2098366>
- Duan, M., & Qin, X. (2012). Collocation in English teaching and learning. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, 2(9), 1890-1894. <https://doi.org/10.4304/tpls.2.9.1890-1894>
- Fendji, J. L. K. E., Tala, D. C. M., Yenke, B. O., & Atemkeng, M. (2022). Automatic speech recognition using limited vocabulary: A survey. *Applied Artificial Intelligence*, 36(1). <https://doi.org/10.1080/08839514.2022.2095039>
- Feng, H., Crezee, I., & Grant, L. (2018). Form and meaning in collocations: a corpus-driven study on translation universals in Chinese-to-English business translation. *Perspectives: Studies in Translation Theory and Practice*, 26(5), 677-690. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0907676X.2018.1424222>
- Gao, J., Picoral, A., Staples, S., & Macdonald, L. (2021). Citation practices of L2 writers in first-year writing courses: Form, rhetorical function, and connection with pedagogical materials. *Applied Corpus Linguistics*, 1(2), 100005. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.acorp.2021.100005>
- Hashemi, M., Azizinezhad, M., & Dravishi, S. (2012). Collocation is a neglected aspect in teaching and learning EFL. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 31(2011), 522-525. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2011.12.097>
- Hong, J., & Basturkmen, H. (2020). Incidental attention to academic language during content teaching in two EMI classes in South Korean high schools. *Journal of English for Academic Purposes*, 48, 100921. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jeap.2020.100921>
- Huang, S., & Renandya, W. A. (2020). Exploring the integration of automated feedback among lower-proficiency EFL learners. *Innovation in Language Learning and Teaching*, 14(1), 15-26.

- <https://doi.org/10.1080/17501229.2018.1471083>
- Jahanbakhsh, A. A., AliAsgariZamani, M., & Garman, Z. (2019). CIRC and STAD in Iranian context: Through the five elements to cooperative learning of lexical collocations. *Cogent Arts and Humanities*, 6(1).  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/23311983.2019.1692469>
- Kanerva, O. A., & Viimaranta, J. (2018). The functional motivation of punctuation with onomatopoeic verbal interjections. *Vestnik Tomskogo Gosudarstvennogo Universiteta, Filologiya*, 52(June), 83-97. <https://doi.org/10.17223/19986645/52/5>
- Karyn, D. A. (2019). A corpus platform of Indonesian academic language. *Software*, 9(3), 102-106.  
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.softx.2019.01.011>
- Liu, Q., & Brown, D. (2015). Methodological synthesis of research on the effectiveness of corrective feedback in L2 writing. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, 30, 66-81.  
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jslw.2015.08.011>
- Macis, M., Sonbul, S., & Alharbi, R. (2021). The effect of spacing on incidental and deliberate learning of L2 collocations. *System*, 103(November 2020), 102649.  
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2021.102649>
- Moghadam, S. H., Zainal, Z., & Ghaderpour, M. (2012). A review on the important role of vocabulary knowledge in reading comprehension performance. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 66, 555-563.  
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2012.11.300>
- Normann, A. (2020). Secondary school students' perceptions of language-learning experiences from participation in short Erasmus+ mobilities with non-native speakers of English. *Language Learning Journal*.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/09571736.2020.1726993>
- Nothman, J., Ringland, N., Radford, W., Murphy, T., & Curran, J. R. (2013). Learning multilingual named entity recognition from Wikipedia. *Artificial Intelligence*, 194, 151-175.  
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.artint.2012.03.006>
- Oktavianti, I. N. (2022). Students' familiarity with metaphorical collocations of time: A preliminary investigation. *Metafora: Jurnal Lintas Disiplin Studi Metafora*, 1(1), 1-14.

- <https://doi.org/10.26877/mf.v1i1.10898>
- Oktavianti, I. N., Triyoga, A., & Prayogi, I. (2022). Corpus for language teaching: students' perceptions and difficulties. *PROJECT (Professional Journal of English Education)*, 5(2), 441. <https://doi.org/10.22460/project.v5i2.p441-455>
- Ranalli, J. (2013). Online strategy instruction for integrating dictionary skills and language awareness. *Language Learning and Technology*, 17(2), 75-99.
- Reynolds, B. L., & Teng, M. F. (2021). Innovating teacher feedback with writing activities aimed at raising secondary school students' awareness of collocation errors. *Studies in Second Language Learning and Teaching*, 11(3), 423-444. <https://doi.org/10.14746/ssllt.2021.11.3.6>
- Saito, K., & Liu, Y. (2022). Roles of collocation in L2 oral proficiency revisited: Different tasks, L1 vs. L2 raters, and cross-sectional vs. longitudinal analyses. *Second Language Research*, 38(3), 531-554. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0267658320988055>
- Sari, B. N., & Gulö, I. (2019). Observing grammatical collocation in students' writings. *Teknosastik*, 17(2), 25. <https://doi.org/10.33365/ts.v17i2.325>
- Shen, W. W., Lin, J. M., Cheng, W. K., & Hong, Z. W. (2021). Developing and evaluating an online video-assisted collocation learning system for EFL students. *Interactive Learning Environments*, 0(0), 1-15. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10494820.2021.2003408>
- Stengers, H., & Boers, F. (2015). Exercises on collocations: A comparison of trial-and-error and exemplar-guided procedures. *Journal of Spanish Language Teaching*, 2(2), 152-164. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23247797.2015.1104030>
- Sun, Y., Cui, Z., Hu, Y., & Wang, Q. (2022). Exploring the technicality of LIQUID metaphorical chunks in business discourse. *Journal of English for Academic Purposes*, 57(March), 101113. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jeap.2022.101113>
- Suparno, D., Abshar, U., Mulyadi, M., & Iroth, S. (2021). Collocation of English, Arabic, and Indonesian Covid-19 terms. *Arabiyat: Jurnal Pendidikan Bahasa Arab Dan Kebahasaaraban*, 8(2), 189-208. <https://doi.org/10.15408/a.v8i2.22300>
- Tanihardjo, J. (2018). Indonesian EFL students' production of

- english lexical collocation in writing. *Journal of English Language and Culture*, 7(2). <https://doi.org/10.30813/jelc.v7i2.1025>
- Wang, S., & Qiu, J. (2021). A deep neural network model for fashion collocation recommendation using side information in e-commerce. *Applied Soft Computing*, 110(5), 107753. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.asoc.2021.107753>
- Werkmann Horvat, A., Bolognesi, M., & Lahiri, A. (2021). Processing of literal and metaphorical meanings in polysemous verbs: An experiment and its methodological implications. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 171, 131-146. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma.2020.10.007>
- Yusuf, F., & Reski Amelia, A. (2018). Metaphor expression in fall for you song lyrics. *Elite : English and Literature Journal*, 5(1), 35-45. <https://doi.org/10.24252/elite.v5i1a4>
- Zaabalawi, R. S., & Gould, A. M. (2017). English collocations: A novel approach to teaching the language's last bastion. *Ampersand*, 4, 21-29. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.amper.2017.03.002>

## **Appendix**

### **Research Instrument**

Title: "Contextualizing Elf Learners' Proficiency in Using English Collocations"

Research Team:

1. Rohdearni Wati Sipayung (Universitas Simalungun)
2. Erikson Saragih (Universitas Sumatera Utara)

Complete the following sentences with suitable English collocations/idioms!

### **Section A**

1. In many countries, doctors \_\_\_\_\_ medicine to patients electronically. (prescribe)
2. Last week, I \_\_\_\_\_ a really bad cold just before I arrived here. (caught)
3. I have been waiting for the bus for an hour; however, I do not get it. Would you \_\_\_\_\_ me a ride? (give)
4. The cake must be delicious. It \_\_\_\_\_ good. (smell)
5. He was \_\_\_\_\_ to the hospital after complaining of pains in his chest. (admitted)
6. You should eat your dinner. I am afraid it is getting \_\_\_\_\_ (cold)
7. The surgeon rush to the hospital because he had to \_\_\_\_\_ an operation tonight. (perform)
8. Please help me to put the \_\_\_\_\_ bottles in the trash bin. (empty)
9. I would like you to \_\_\_\_\_ your own business and stop telling me what to do. (mind)
10. You should run your business patiently step by step. You know, Rome was not built in a \_\_\_\_ (day)



### Section B

11. We had to park our car outside the building. The car park inside was completely \_\_\_\_\_ (full)
12. I often find my husband in the garage, busy as a \_\_\_\_\_, working on some new project. (bee)
13. After work, I usually \_\_\_\_\_ a rest before having dinner. After an hour, I then \_\_\_\_\_ up for jogging. (Take-get)
14. The married couple fought like \_\_\_\_\_ and dogs the entire time they were together. (cats)
15. Every kid in the world is the apple of their parent's \_\_\_\_\_ (eyes)
16. I really cannot concentrate well on the test because I \_\_\_\_\_ a headache. I should \_\_\_\_\_ my time to do it in the second round. I must \_\_\_\_\_ my best. (have, save, do)
17. Can you wait for a second while I \_\_\_\_\_ a call? (make)
18. I always seem to \_\_\_\_\_ a cold after walking in rain. (catch)
19. My mother always reminds me if I \_\_\_\_\_ home late. (go)
20. A cup of \_\_\_\_\_ will lose my sleep. Will it work on you, too?

### Section C

21. I am really happy with the new job and I mean that from the \_\_\_\_\_ of my heart. (bottom)
22. Hearing his son's test result, the woman took a \_\_\_\_\_ breath. (deep)
23. We canceled our trip last night because of \_\_\_\_\_ rain. (Heavy)
24. You have had a \_\_\_\_\_ mistake by taking the option). (big)
25. Mental \_\_\_\_\_ is about how we think, feel and behave. (health)
26. \_\_\_\_\_ ' milk contains about 4.8% lactose (cows)
27. Our new teacher looked like a \_\_\_\_\_ out of the water, nobody was aware of the issue. (fish)
28. You have failed the test and we can't fix it. There's no need to cry over spilled \_\_\_\_\_. (milk)

29. I know what I did. You can't teach an old dog new \_\_\_\_\_ (tricks)
30. Taking care of my younger sister is a bed of \_\_\_\_\_; she is an easy-going girl. (roses)

#### Section D

31. If you have arrived in a restaurant, order your \_\_\_\_\_ and beverage from the waiter or waitress. (food)
32. Please have a seat. Would you like hot or warm \_\_\_\_\_ or coffee? (tea)
33. Learning English is a piece of \_\_\_\_\_ as long as you do it with joy. (cake)
34. The subject of bullying and fighting in my school is a hot \_\_\_\_\_ . (potato)
35. Don't be too afraid of the noisy boy. A Barking \_\_\_\_\_ never bites. (dog)
36. In every exam, you must watch items like a \_\_\_\_\_ (hawk)
37. I am very sleepy. It is better for me to have a cat \_\_\_\_\_ for a while (nap)
38. You do not need to show me your \_\_\_\_\_ tears. I know the truth (crocodile)
39. She is as loyal as a \_\_\_\_\_ to her boss. (dog)
40. Don't count your \_\_\_\_\_ before they hatch. (Chicken)

Have good work!

# CONTEXTUALIZING EFL LEARNERS' PROFICIENCY IN USING ENGLISH COLLOCATIONS

## ORIGINALITY REPORT

19%

SIMILARITY INDEX

18%

INTERNET SOURCES

1%

PUBLICATIONS

2%

STUDENT PAPERS

## PRIMARY SOURCES

1	<a href="http://files.eric.ed.gov">files.eric.ed.gov</a> Internet Source	8%
2	<a href="http://www.researchgate.net">www.researchgate.net</a> Internet Source	5%
3	<a href="http://searchworks.stanford.edu">searchworks.stanford.edu</a> Internet Source	2%
4	<a href="http://journals.ju.edu.jo">journals.ju.edu.jo</a> Internet Source	1%
5	<a href="http://jurnalfaktarbiyah.iainkediri.ac.id">jurnalfaktarbiyah.iainkediri.ac.id</a> Internet Source	1%
6	Submitted to Assumption University Student Paper	<1%
7	Submitted to University of Liverpool Student Paper	<1%
8	<a href="http://scholarsarchive.byu.edu">scholarsarchive.byu.edu</a> Internet Source	<1%
9	<a href="http://repository.essex.ac.uk">repository.essex.ac.uk</a> Internet Source	<1%
10	<a href="http://www.asian-efl-journal.com">www.asian-efl-journal.com</a> Internet Source	

<1 %

---

11 [eprints.soton.ac.uk](https://eprints.soton.ac.uk)  
Internet Source

<1 %

---

12 [hdl.handle.net](https://hdl.handle.net)  
Internet Source

<1 %

---

13 [markaldrich.blogspot.com](https://markaldrich.blogspot.com)  
Internet Source

<1 %

---

14 [www.ling.hawaii.edu](https://www.ling.hawaii.edu)  
Internet Source

<1 %

---

15 Sharmini Thanga Rajan, Hanita Hanim Ismail. "TikTok Use as Strategy to Improve Knowledge Acquisition and Build Engagement to Learn Literature in ESL Classrooms", International Journal of Learning, Teaching and Educational Research, 2022  
Publication

<1 %

---

16 [grad.litu.tu.ac.th](https://grad.litu.tu.ac.th)  
Internet Source

<1 %

---

17 [jees.umsida.ac.id](https://jees.umsida.ac.id)  
Internet Source

<1 %

---

18 [mjltm.org](https://mjltm.org)  
Internet Source

<1 %

---

19 [watermark.silverchair.com](https://watermark.silverchair.com)  
Internet Source

<1 %

20

Internet Source

<1 %

---

21

journal.uinjkt.ac.id

Internet Source

<1 %

---

Exclude quotes Off

Exclude matches Off

Exclude bibliography On