
Using Corpus–Based Collocation Program to Promote Speaking Skills of College–Bound EFL Majors

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Abstract

Recent research on English as a foreign and second language has indicated that collocations are crucial to mastering the language. Hence, its significance in EFL learners' speaking skills is crystal clear. Therefore, the current research has been conducted to explore the impact of using a corpus–based collocation program on developing third–year faculty of Education English majors' speaking skills. The research adopted the quasi–experimental method (a pre–post control group design). Sixty students in third–year faculty of Education English majors participated in the research that lasted eight weeks in the second semester of 2021–2022. They were assigned to a treatment group of thirty students, who received corpus–based collocation instruction in speaking for ten sessions, and a non–treatment group of thirty students who received regular method in teaching speaking. The research instruments included a pre–post speaking test and a rubric for scoring the students' speaking skills. Results of the research demonstrated that the treatment group surpassed the non–treatment group in the speaking post–test. The results of independent sample t–tests at a significant level (estimated: 0.05) revealed a statistically significant difference between students' mean scores of the treatment and non–treatment groups in the speaking post–test (in favor of the

treatment group). Also, the results showed that using a corpus-based collocation program positively affected third-year faculty of Education English majors' collocational knowledge and use in their speaking skills. In the light of the research findings, recommendations and suggestions for further research were offered.

Key words: Collocation, Corpus, Speaking Skills, College-bound EFL Majors

استخدام برنامج في المتلازمات اللفظية قائم على المتون اللغوية لتنمية

مهارات التحدث لدى طلاب كلية التربية – شعبة اللغة الإنجليزية

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مستخلص

لقد تم إجراء هذا البحث للتحقق من أثر استخدام برنامج في المتلازمات اللفظية قائم على المتون اللغوية لتنمية مهارة التحدث لدى طلاب الفرقة الثالثة-شعبة اللغة الإنجليزية بكلية التربية. واتخذ هذا البحث المنهج شبه التجريبي القائم على التصميم القبلي والبعدي للمجموعتين التجريبية والضابطة. وقد تم مشاركة عدد ستون طالبا وطالبة من طلاب الفرقة الثالثة- شعبة اللغة الإنجليزية بكلية التربية- جامعة المنيا كعينة للبحث والذي استمر لمدة ثمانية أسابيع. و تم تقسيم الطلاب إلى مجموعتين، إحداهما تجريبية والأخرى ضابطة، حيث تكونت كل مجموعة منهما من ثلاثون طالبا. واشتملت أدوات البحث على اختبار قبلي-بعدي في مهارات التحدث. وأظهرت نتائج البحث تفوق طلاب المجموعة التجريبية على أقرانهم في المجموعة الضابطة في اختبار كتابة المقال البعدي. وقد لوحظ أن هناك فرق ذو دلالة إحصائية عند مستوى دلالة (0.05) بين متوسطي درجات الطلاب في المجموعة التجريبية والمجموعة الضابطة في اختبار مهارة التحدث البعدي لصالح المجموعة التجريبية. مما يُشير إلى فاعلية استخدام البرنامج في تنمية مهارات التحدث لدى طلاب وطالبات المجموعة التجريبية. وفي ضوء تلك النتائج تم تقديم التوصيات والمقترحات لإجراء البحوث المستقبلية.

الكلمات الإفتتاحية: المتلازمات اللفظية، المتون اللغوية، مهارات التحدث، الفرقة الثالثة-شعبة اللغة الإنجليزية بكلية التربية.

1. Introduction:

English is the language of communication between individuals and nations. Meaningful communication is at the heart of social life. In order to communicate efficiently, one should master the productive skills of the English language, either in oral or written form.

Bsharat and Barahmeh (2020) mentioned that achieving success in studying a foreign language greatly depends on an individual's ability to converse in that language. Thus, speaking is a crucial skill to be developed since it is essential for showing language proficiency.

Speaking is how students can interact with others to accomplish specific purposes or express their views, thoughts, and intentions. It is supported by Rao (2018), who argued that speaking is used twice as much in our conversation as reading and writing.

Furthermore, in most situations or places, speaking is the most utilized skill of language skills. Speaking skill is important to EFL learners. Graves (2008) and Nazara (2011) postulated that English mastery has increased because of the strengthening English as a language. It became evident that EFL students saw themselves as strong and competent learners when they were able to communicate in English fluently and effectively.

Students' success in speaking is measured through the fluency and accuracy of their speech (Newton & Nation, 2020). Fluency is the ability of an individual to express themselves in an understandable, logical, and right way; otherwise, contact would fail due to the lack of listener interest (Hughes & Reed, 2017). Accuracy refers to "how well

the target language is produced concerning the rule system of the target language” (Ellis & Barkhuizen, 2005). Thus, students should mainly focus on pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammatical structure in producing the spoken language.

Luoma (2004) maintained that speaking for EFL learners is not a simple skill that can be easily achieved. This is owing to the several rules that should be followed while speaking, such as having a wide range of vocabulary, using correct pronunciation and grammar, and conveying a clear message with the correct intonation. So, speaking skill represents complexity to EFL learners. Jaya et al. (2022) claimed that a lack of lexicon (vocabulary), specifically collocation is a big challenge for students to master speaking skills.

Lexicon is one of the vital elements contributing to improving speaking performance. Lewis (2000) mentioned that language is grammaticalized lexis, not lexicalized grammar. In other words, lexis plays a primary function in establishing meaning, while grammar plays a secondary role in managing sense. Therefore, the lexicon should be a crucial component in teaching English in general and speaking in particular.

McCarthy (2005) asserted that lexicon study is a key part of language learning because communication will break down, and meaning cannot be conveyed without vocabulary. Milton (2009) asserted the necessity of vocabulary in language acquisition by stating that "words are the building blocks of language, and without them, there

is no language" (p.3). In the same line, Hunt and Beglar (2015) postulated that vocabulary is the core of language use and perception.

The correlation between vocabulary and speaking proficiency has been asserted by (Sari, 2021; Uchihara & Clenton, 2022). The researchers were unanimous that students who can identify and retrieve much vocabulary are more proficient in language skills than those who can only remember a few vocabulary items. They concluded that educators and learners of a foreign language believe that a wide vocabulary repertoire can enhance learners' language proficiency.

However, learning words in isolation does not assist learners in becoming successful and proficient communicators, as many components of language comprise prefabricated chunks (a language structure that combines the features of both lexicon and grammar and plays out a certain function of speech). Also, perfect knowledge of a word does not mean just knowing the meaning of the word but knowing the words that accompany it. Thus, learners should learn isolated words and their collocations to become language competent, which are significant for language use (Hill, 2001). Monica (2022) asserted that collocations play a vital role in promoting students' speaking mastery and concluded that EFL undergraduate students' speaking fluency was developed through chunking and collocations.

Collocation is a term rooted in the Latin verb "collocate," which means "to place together or to assemble" (Seretan, 2011, p. 7). It can be divided into "col," which means "together, with," "loc," which means "to place or put," "ate" (a verb suffix), and "ion" (a noun suffix). In other

words, collocations allude to words that are put together (Nation, 2003, p. 32). The term was explicitly introduced by Firth in 1957, who was the first linguist to introduce collocation. Firth embraced the lexical approach, which centers on the notion that words receive meanings from the words they co-occur with (Hsu, 2010).

According to Cheng (2019), meaning via collocation is an abstraction at the syntagmatic level and has little to do with the concept or idea approach to the word meaning. It means that the meaning is not understood from the individual words but the collocational correlation between the frequently co-occurring words.

There are two approaches to collocation studies: phraseological and frequency-based approaches. Nurmukhamedov (2015) pointed out that the phraseological approach defines collocations by concentrating more on the lexical, syntactic, and semantic restrictions that collocations carry. The phraseological approach utilizes native-speaker judgment and corpora to examine collocations. On the contrary, the frequency-based approach utilizes corpus evidence to recognize the co-occurrence of two or more words in a text within a short distance from each other. Despite the researchers' discrepancies, they saw collocation as the tendency of specific words to be accompanied by other words and go together in a certain domain. These words have the meaning of arbitrariness and independence.

Hill (2001) classified collocations into seven types as in the following table:

Table (1)

Seven types of collocations (Hill, 2001)

CollocationTypes	Examples
Adjective+noun	a huge profit
Noun+noun	a pocket calculator
Verb+adjective+noun	learn a foreign language
Verb+adverb	Live dangerously
Adverb+adjective	Completely socked
Adverb+verb	Half understand
Verb+preposition+noun	Speak through an interpreter

Importance of teaching and learning collocations

The importance of teaching and learning collocations has been asserted by Hill (2001), Rao (2018), and En-nda and Koumachi (2022). They elucidated that EFL/ESL teachers should incorporate collocations to raise students' awareness of collocation use and encourage them to memorize collocations. They added that collocational knowledge enhances students' writing skills.

According to Hill (2001), collocations are at 70% of everything we hear, say, read, or write, and they are ubiquitous in language. Sinclair (2004) mentioned that collocations assist students in comprehending words' connotational meanings in context. McCarthy et

al. (2010) postulated that teaching collocations have been conducted to enhance students' lexical and grammatical knowledge, improving students' writing skills.

Collocations are habitually used in writing (e.g., conducting research by accident). In his/her opinion, Seesink (2007) saw that teaching collocations can improve EFL/ESL students' spoken and written production. El-Dakhs (2015) asserted that learning collocations are important because of their frequency of occurrence and their positive influence on language processing.

For teaching collocation, various approaches have been used, but the most effective one, according to many researchers, such as Sinclair, 2004; O'keeffe and McCarthy, 2010; Dang, 2020; Liu, 2020; Csomay, 2020; Jaafar, 2022; Xodabande and Nazari, 2022; is the *corpus approach*. The corpus approach helps acquire collocations properly since it supplies chunks of language within context. In addition, it is a rich and authentic source of language data. Also, it is helpful for students to be greatly exposed to the language as they lack exposure to it.

The term "corpus," or "corpora," for plural, refers to a digital archive of written or spoken texts. Magazines, newspapers, and other written texts can be read on the computer through a CD, a scanner, or the internet. Conversations and other spoken materials are recorded. Afterward, the recordings are written down in the same words so that the transcribed texts can be fed into the computer database. Hence, it gives the possibility to analyze and

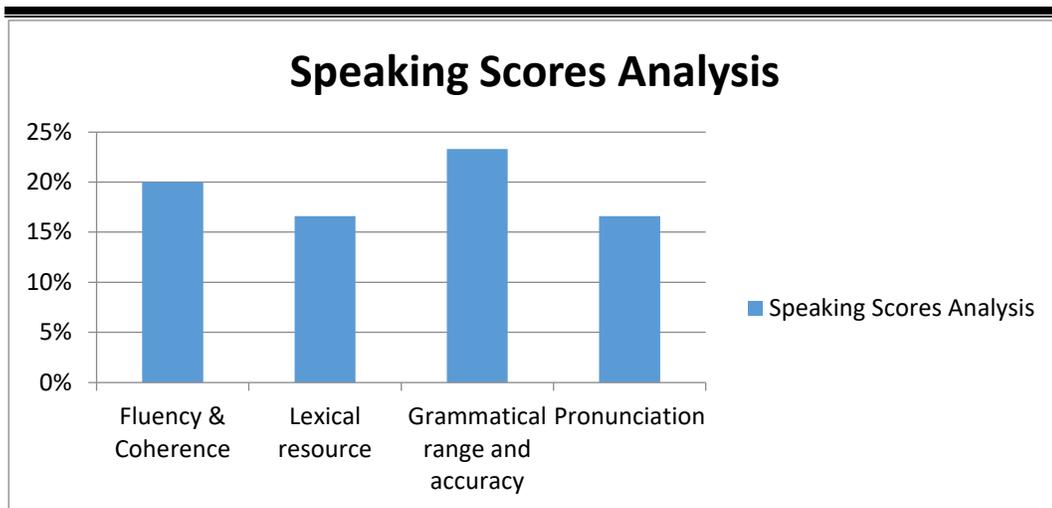
dissect the language in the corpus with corpus software devices to see how people speak or write (McCarten, 2007).

1.1 Statement of the Problem

The problem of the present research sprang from third-year faculty of Education English majors' lack of collocational knowledge and use in their speaking. As a result, they performed poorly and received low scores on the pilot study speaking test. Results of the pilot study, which was implemented on a stratified sample of 30 students (apart from the research participants), revealed that:

- Six students (20%) could speak at length but lost coherence at times due to occasional repetition and hesitation,
- Five students (16.6%) could use some less lexical collocations, with few inappropriate choices,
- Seven students (23.3%) produced various grammatical structures and some grammatical collocations with few mistakes,
- Five students (16.6%) produced a full range of pronunciation features (accuracy, word and sentence stress, and intonation) precisely and subtly.

The following chart shows the percentage of students with speaking test scores.



More specifically, the present research addressed the following question: "*What is the impact of using a corpus-based collocation program on promoting third-year faculty of Education English majors' collocational knowledge and use in speaking skills?*"

1.2 Objectives

This research attempted to:

- Investigate the impact of using a corpus-based collocation program on promoting third-year faculty of Education English majors' collocational knowledge and use in their speaking skills.

1.3 Hypothesis

- There would be a statistically significant difference at a significance level (estimated: 0.05) between the mean scores obtained by students of the treatment group and those of the non-treatment group on the speaking post-test (favoring the treatment group).

2. Literature Review.

2.1. Speaking skill

In an attempt to expand on the speaking interactive nature, Luoma (2004) described speaking as an interactive meaning–creation process that includes information reception, processing, and production. Its form and significance depend on the context in which it happens, involving the speakers themselves, the environment, and the goals of the conversation. It is frequently spontaneous, open, and shifting. However, speech is often predictable. Badr (2009) postulated that speaking is the ability of students to talk fluently in oral language via active learning strategies such as games and role play.

Azlan et al. (2019) viewed speaking as a two–way interactive activity, including the production, reception, and processing of information in the presence of both a speaker and a listener to transmit emotions, ideas, and opinions. According to Tracy and Robles (2013), speaking is the ability to articulate words to communicate ideas in a conversation or discourse. A fluent speaker can accurately pronounce phonemes in connected speech with the appropriate stress and intonation. Azzahroh (2015) argued that speaking takes into account fluency and grammar in addition to articulating sounds while presenting ideas.

Fluency is the ability to deliver a speech in a natural colloquial flow without pauses and hesitation. It does not emphasize the flaws speakers make in terms of grammar, pronunciation, and lexical collocation as long as the audience comprehends the content. Grammar is described as the correct use of tenses and a combination of linguistic units in producing speech (Wang, 2014). Anggit (2019)

saw that pronunciation refers to the ability to produce speech using correct stress, rhythm, and intonation. By mastering these speaking elements, learners can successfully convey their ideas (Pratiwi, 2018).

In his comment, the researcher is not in line with Azzahroh (2015), who stated that speaking looks into fluency and grammar, neglecting vocabulary, specifically collocation, and its importance in facilitating the speech and making it natural. Memorizing collocation helps speakers not to pause and hesitate during speech. In addition, it makes them more confident and natural, and native-like. Furthermore, the researcher does not concur with Anggit (2019), who mentioned that speaking does not highlight the mistakes of grammar, pronunciation, and lexical collocation that a speaker makes during his speech as long as the audience understands the content. The researcher does not believe that the audience can easily understand the message the speaker hopes to convey if he does not pronounce the words correctly, use collocations precisely to be natural, and construct the sentences correctly in terms of grammar and tenses. This might be acceptable in informal language, but the formal language requires accuracy and precision in communication.

2.1.1. Functions of Speaking:

Functions of the speaking skill should be scrutinized and considered. These functions pose some difficulties and recognize specific guidelines for comprehending this skill and thus design educational activities to prepare students to communicate in real-life situations effectively. Richards (2008) classifies these functions into

three types: a– speaking as interaction, b– speaking as a transaction, and c– speaking as performance

a– Speaking as Interaction:

In order to build effective communication and develop or sustain a relationship, one should have the ability to talk naturally. This is often called interpersonal language use. It plays a significant social role in the pumping of social relationship wheels. Therefore, according to Renandya and Nguyen (2022), knowledge sharing and exchange will allow them to create a dialogue that expresses their intentions in real-life communication. Speaking as interaction refers to what we call communication and specifies interaction, mainly a social activity interaction.

b– Speaking as Transaction:

Speaking as a transaction implies the concentration of situations on what is done or said. Renandya and Nguyen (2022) stated that the main focus is on getting the message and making oneself understand correctly and clearly, instead of the interlocutors and the way they speak together. In this type of speaking, students and teachers concentrate on the meaning or on speaking.

c– Speaking as Performance:

This is about speaking to the public. It is a talk that conveys information to the audience, such as classroom lectures, morning talks, public speeches, and announcements. It must be prepared in written text form, and a monologue form instead of a dialogue, like lecturing and conducting a debate (Burns & Siegel, 2018).

2.1.2. Elements of Speaking

Speaking is an essential skill for students who want to master English communication. Four aspects significantly affect speaking proficiency according to the IELTS assessment of speaking skills (UCLES, 2007). They are as follows;

a- fluency and coherence

According to Segalowitz (2010), fluency is a speaker's ability to utilize facilitation skills such as lexical phrases, fillers, and ellipsis and compensation such as rephrasing or self-correction to cope with continuous rapid communication. Coherence is a speaker's ability to follow a logical sequence of speech to help listeners. Coherence is a speaker's ability to follow a logical sequence of speech to help listeners easily follow along. This requires proper knowledge of facts and social norms (Louwse & Mitchell, 2003).

b. Lexical resource

Students should learn the language components. They should learn the words and accompanies (collocations). That is, the students must have many prefabricated chunks and collocations: the essential aspect that bolsters speaking.

c. Grammatical range and accuracy

It entails the ability to construct the various grammatical structures of the language and apply them effectively in conversation, considering the features of spoken grammar. For example, spoken clauses, rather than whole sentences, are frequently connected with conjunctions such as "and" or "but" or pronounced next to one another,

with perhaps a brief pause between them. Thus, simple phrase structure and purposeful repetition are frequently indicative of a high level of skill (Hughes & Reed, 2017; Luoma, 2004).

d. Pronunciation

Words consist of sounds, and it is a must for language speakers to identify these sounds. According to Levis (2018), pronunciation indicates the enormous ability to systematically utilize only a limited selection of sounds in any language. One should pronounce the words accurately and clearly to communicate appropriately to the audience.

2.1.3 Difficulties of Speaking in Foreign Language Learning

A foreign language speaker faces some difficulties when communicating and making an interactive situation with others. According to Ur (2000), these difficulties are represented in four major elements: apprehension, nothing to say, low participation, and mother tongue use.

Apprehension

This problem appears when students try to take part in the classroom. Littlewood (2011) postulated that it is very easy for EFL students to have apprehension. Some factors stop students from participating in the classroom, such as shyness and worry about committing mistakes. They are owing to bad communication skills growth and a sense of linguistic inferiority. Students fear for audience's criticism if they make mistakes while speaking. Hashemi (2011) supported that, stating that students are often apprehensive about speaking in a foreign language in the classroom because they are afraid of making mistakes, fearing criticism or losing face, or simply uncomfortable with the attention their speech attracts.

Nothing to Say

When EFL learners are forced to participate in a given topic, they usually utilize popular phrases like 'I have nothing to talk about or stay silent. These phrases are because of their lack of desire to express themselves or to speak about the chosen subject. Moreover, the poor practice of a foreign or second language can cause problems. Students can talk only about certain ideas; they cannot know how to speak or the grammatical correctness (Backer & Westrup, 2003). Several students have difficulty answering their teachers' questions in a foreign language.

Low Participation

This issue applies to any student's speaking time. Some students are dominant and take nearly the entire time to talk. Some students, however, tend only to talk if what they say is right, and some of them

remain quiet and display no interest or involvement in the entire class. Harmer (2007) proposed streaming and working together with weak participants in groups. In these instances, they are not behind strong participants, and the instructor can obtain a high degree of participation. The class arrangement that may not help students to carry out speaking events is another explanation for this issue. Celce-Murcia (2001) supported that, commenting that standard classroom seating arrangements often work against students' interactive learning.

Use of native language

EFL/ESL students tend to use their native language (mother tongue) outside and even inside the classroom because they feel more comfortable and are less exposed to the target language. According to Backer and Westrup (2003), learning hurdles can occur when students deliberately or unknowingly transfer cultural rules from their native language to a foreign language. Therefore, the students will be unable to correctly use the foreign language if they continue to speak their native language.

Therefore, developing speaking skills is crucial for EFL students, and its instruction is necessary as it aids students in conversing with people spontaneously and naturally. Teachers need an appropriate method having the potential to help students promote their spoken language and have a better level of speaking. Bui (2021) stressed the importance of teaching students collocation since it is a useful and effective method for helping students enhance their

speaking skills. Knowledge and the use of collocations contribute to the development of fluency, a goal that students try to achieve.

2.2. What is a collocation?

Richards and Schmidt (2002) argued that collocations refer to how words are commonly utilized together. In English, for example, the verb 'perform' can be followed by a noun, such as an operation but not by a debate. According to Celce-Murcia and Schmitt (2010), collocations are words co-occurring together (e.g., black tea and strong tea), formed in chunks, and regularly used by native speakers.

Similarly, McCarthy and O'Dell (2017) defined collocations as pairs of words that are natural to native speakers but pose major challenges to English learners. According to Walker (2011), collocations are the combination of two or more words that exist close to one another in both spoken and written language. Collocations are not arbitrarily chosen but have a fundamental meaning and context. This definition provides a broader meaning since collocation is more than the mere co-occurrence of individual words; it is determined by contexts and word associations. Henriksen (2013) mentioned that collocations are frequently repeated in two-to-three-word syntactic units (e.g., mild noise, tolerance for) and smaller parts of formulaic language.

Gablasova et al. (2017) identified two main research approaches to collocations: frequency-based and phraseology. The frequency-based approach uses statistical evidence to determine the strength of

association inside a collocation, whereas the phraseology approach is concerned with the semantic features of collocations. From the frequency-based approach, it is concluded that collocations are co-occurring words regularly employed by language users, particularly native speakers. From the phraseology approach, it is deduced that collocations are fixed formations with semantic transparency.

Despite the wide diversity of definitions, the current research focuses on two key features of collocation: (1) its fixedness in forms with transparent semantics and (2) its predominance in the communicative repertoire of native speakers. Consequently, collocations are recurrent fixed word combinations with clear meanings native speakers use.

2.3. Corpus-based Tools for Collocations

Liu and Lei (2018) described a corpus as a systematic collection of documents representing a language as it is utilized in spoken, written, or both contexts. A modern corpus is a computerized representation of these lines of spoken or written text. These corpora are typically available online and are referred to as online corpora. Google, COCA, and BNC are examples of well-known free corpora. Egbert et al. (2022) defined a corpus as a collection of authentic texts representing a language or domain.

Reepen and Simpson-Vlach (2010) stated that the employment of corpus-based tools or concordances with computers has appealed to many researchers and educators since the advent of modern Technology. Such tools are believed to increase language learning

acquisition by encouraging learners and teachers to pay closer attention to various features of collocations. According to Leniewska (2006), employing corpus tools for teachers serves two key purposes: (1) developing and adapting materials and (2) teaching academic vocabulary and collocations to students in classrooms. Online corpora and corpus-based tools were deemed effective for students' practicing learning autonomy and writing correction (Dung, 2016).

The current research used two types of the corpus in teaching collocations, which helped students promote their speaking skills: Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA) and Flexible Language Acquisition (FLAX).

2.4. Corpus-based approach versus Traditional approaches to collocation instruction

Recognizing the significance of collocations in language competency, EFL/ESL teachers have developed a variety of classroom activities for teaching and memorizing collocations. In a book by Lewis (2000), s/he proposed various collocation exercises. Similarly, other studies on explicit collocation teaching in regular classroom settings have found that collocation teaching can promote students' writing skills (Liu, 2002; Khoja, 2019; Fei &Suphon, 2019).

However, the methods adopted to teach collocation have centered on grammar and the final product. It means that only introducing language in isolation is insufficient for language competency. Antle (2018) asserted that exposure alone to the chunk language is inadequate for students to acquire collocational knowledge.

S/he added that because lexical items do not collocate freely, students have difficulty in language production despite their ability to comprehend the same collocations receptively. Consequently, providing students with the context in which a word is used is more beneficial (Anthony, 2006) and helps them overcome their difficulties with language production (Yoon, 2008). The corpus tools like concordances have the potential to do that.

The corpus tools have big data and different word contexts to provide to the students, which in turn help them overcome their difficulties in producing language. Sinclair (2003) claimed that the corpus-based approach is the most recent and informative approach, through which a huge amount of data can be rapidly analyzed. Similarly, Nesselhauf (2004) postulated that a corpus-based approach is beneficial since it shifts the focus away from users' language errors to users' language features and patterns.

To assert that the corpus-based approach is more advantageous than other approaches, McEnery et al. (2006) declared that it can provide objective data free from subjectivity or external influences since it depends on real examples. Hyland et al. (2012) state that the corpus-based approach is useful in conducting the five major issues of EFL/ESL learners: knowledge, language use, First language (L1) role, instruction, and linguistic contribution. Moreover, the relationship between collocation and corpus approach is strong as the conduct of collocation alludes that language is dominated by norms and patterns (Stubbs2007).

To cope with collocation and raise students' awareness of its use, Fox (1998) recommended using concordances as corpora tools in the classroom. Koosha and Jafarpour (2016) described concordance as a method of linguistic analysis based on the study of digital databases' structural and lexical patterns. They add that concordances might assist students in identifying collocation in diverse contexts, and as a result, they know how native speakers utilize it. Also, Willis (2011) stated that concordances assist learners in speaking fluently and naturally.

Similarly, Ashouri and Rahimi (2014) explored the impact of corpus-based collocation on EFL students' collocation learning. The participants were separated into a treatment group and a non-treatment group. The treatment group received instruction using corpus-based lexical collocation, whereas the non-treatment group was taught by the regular method. They significantly concluded the positive effect of using a corpus-based collocation program in developing collocation learning. Ucar and Yukselir (2015) explored the effect of corpus-based activities on the acquisition of verb-noun collocation in EFL classes. They concluded that there was a statistically significant difference between the treatment group and the non-treatment group in favor of the treatment group. This signified that corpus-based activities significantly affected verb-noun collocations in EFL classes.

Also, Koosha & Jafarpour (2016) conducted a study to compare the data-driven approach with the conventional approach in teaching

prepositions and their collocations with Iranian EFL adult learners. They divided the participants into a treatment group and a non-treatment group. They concluded that the treatment group taught by the data-driven method surpassed learning prepositions and their collocations.

2.5 Corpus-based Collocation and Speaking Skill

Proficiency in speaking a foreign language can take place if listeners can comprehend the meaning of the message that needs various abilities; the ability to pronounce the words correctly, the ability to select the words related to the topic precisely, the ability to arrange those words into phrases or sentences properly, and ability to convey the content of the message efficiently. Neither knowing the syntactic rules of that language nor using words in isolation is sufficient for speaking proficiently. EFL/ESL Learners should have a store of combined words and collocations to help them speak fluently.

Ellis (2005) stated that what distinguishes native speakers from non-speakers is that they have a huge repertoire of lexical phrases in their minds, which they utilize masterly in pertinent situations with a phenomenal rate of articulation. That is why fluency takes place in their speech. He added that stress and intonation might enhance if language is picked up and learned in chunks since quality input leads to quality output. Similarly, Hill (2001) mentioned that native speakers can speak at the speed they do due to utilizing a tremendous collection of ready-made language.

A store of chunks in the mental lexicon plays a major part in facilitating language production. Schmitt (2000) and Sung (2003)

agreed that mastery of collocation would enhance EFL learners' speaking proficiency. Likewise, Hunston & Francis (2000) asserted that a good command of collocation assists in attaining native-like speaking fluency. In their line, Hsu and Chiu (2008) pointed out that collocational knowledge could be a major factor in developing EFL learners' speaking proficiency. Wood (2010) stated that collocation knowledge could enhance ESL learners' speech fluency.

Men (2018) acknowledged that it is not easy to perform at a native-like level without knowing and having a suitable scope of formulaic units. Moreover, knowledge and the use of collocations help in saving much information processing time. In contrast to the creative side of producing language in which individual words are combined individually in line with syntactic rules, Sinclair (2004) opined that the agglomeration of words into clusters forms one single decision and saves much processing time. In a similar vein, Wray and Perkins (2000) maintained that collocation use can be viewed as facilitative and time-saving for the communication between learners and users of the language. Moreover, collocation communicative functions facilitate the second language understanding and production in real-time communications.

Regarding understanding, using collocation enables the listener to save enough time for processing the information. Regarding the production, it assists the speaker in arranging the speech competently and sounding more natural. Moreover, the use of collocation supplements

speech with fluency by reducing the load of processing in mind while speaking.

According to Qader (2018), learning collocations enables students to surmount the problem of arranging words in the wrong order, which helps them not to flub their speaking. Also, Alharthi (2020) emphasized that learners' proficiency in the target language requires knowledge and the production of more lexical items. Therefore, the paramountcy of collocation knowledge for EFL/ESL learners should never be downplayed. Students need to know how native speakers utilize the language naturally by capitalizing on collocations.

To figure out how native speakers use the language naturally, the corpus can serve this purpose because it provides a wealth of authentic spoken language. McCarthy (2004) commented that spoken corpora demonstrate how language is utilized in real life and many various contexts. Farr (2008) demonstrated that corpus software presents lists of collocation; in addition, it counts the occurrences of the words searched. Consequently, teaching collocation through corpus tools would be beneficial and valuable in promoting the students' speaking proficiency.

A range of studies has been conducted to probe the impact of teaching collocation on EFL /ESL speaking proficiency. Their results corroborated the positive effects of collocation on students' speaking skills. For example, Boers et al. (2006) showed a positive correlation between the EFL students' use of collocation during interviews and their oral competency scores. The study findings demonstrated that the

expanded number of collocations the students utilized in the interviews made the raters see them be more fluent and idiomatic users of the language.

Attar and Allami (2013) investigated the relationship between collocation instruction and EFL Iranian Learners' speaking proficiency, the relationship between the participants' knowledge and their use of collocation, and students' attitudes towards collocation. The researchers administered a collocation test including 30 items in addition to a collocation interview to all participants as a pre-test and post-test. After that, collocation in use was treated to the treatment group. The results revealed that the speaking proficiency of the treatment group improved, and their performance in the interview after collocation instruction was better than before. Moreover, there was positivity in students' attitudes towards explicit collocation teaching.

Shooshtari and Karami (2013) investigated the impact of lexical collocations use training on the speaking proficiency of pre-intermediate students enrolled in the Iran Language Institute, Ahvaz branch. The students received instruction on five patterns of lexical collocation: Verb+ Noun, Verb+ Adverb, Noun+ Verb, Adjective+ Noun, and Adverb + Adjective. The results revealed that lexical collocation teaching positively impacted the students' speaking proficiency and moderately impacted their lexical collocations use. The researchers asserted that teaching students the patterns of lexical collocation and their use can enhance the students' language skills, specifically their speaking.

Ahmad and Eljack (2020) probed the impact of lexical collocations use on pre–intermediate students' speaking ability. The results showed that lexical collocation had a positive effect on the participants' speaking skills and a moderate effect on their lexical collocations use.

Most of the conducted studies used corpus or concordance in learning collocation or vocabulary. However, to the best knowledge of the researcher, there is still an insufficiency of empirical studies on the use of corpus in teaching collocation and its effect on EFL /ESL speaking proficiency. Chao (2010) examined the effects of concordancers on Taiwanese junior high students' collocation learning through collocation concordancers, IWILL. The researcher used pre–post–tests and a questionnaire to know students' attitudes towards concordance learning and their feedback about the course. The results revealed that the treatment group surpassed the non–treatment group in the collocation post–test and had great performance on collocations. Data from the questionnaire revealed that the students' attitudes towards concordance were positive. The students stated that it was more interesting to learn. Additionally, most students mentioned that they would utilize concordance in their future learning. Chao added that he noticed that the students' speaking level was better than before.

Ergül (2014) investigated the impact of using corpus–based activities as opposed to conventional techniques for teaching vocabulary and students' attitudes towards corpus–based vocabulary activities. Thirty–four students participated in the study. The students

were separated into a treatment group that received teaching with concordance-based materials and a non-treatment group that received instruction with textbooks and paper dictionaries. Results revealed that corpus-based vocabulary activities were more effective than textbooks and paper dictionaries. In addition, the students' attitudes toward corpus-based vocabulary activities were favorable.

Uchihara et al. (2022) investigated the correlation between the collocation knowledge and oral proficiency of second language learners. A novel method of measuring collocation was used by eliciting responses throughout a word association task and utilizing corpus-based measures (absolute frequency count, *t*-score, MI score) to analyze the degree to which stimulus words and responses were collocated. Human evaluations and objective measurements of fluency (articulation rate, silent pause ratio, filled pause ratio) and lexical richness were used to evaluate speaking skills (diversity, frequency, range). Results showed that speakers who employed more low-frequency collocations in the word association task (i.e., lower collocation frequency scores) spoke faster with fewer pauses and were judged more fluent. Speakers who produced more strongly associated collocations (as measured by MI) employed more sophisticated lexical items and were perceived as lexically competent. After the effect of learners' vocabulary size (i.e., their knowledge of single-word items), collocational knowledge remained a unique predictor. These findings reinforced the key role that collocation plays in oral proficiency and

provided essential insights into the phraseological competency of second language speech development.

From the literature review, it is crystal clear that collocational knowledge and use is a crucial prerequisite for speaking proficiency.

3. Methodology

3.1 Participants

The research participants were sixty students enrolled in third-year faculty of Education English majors during the second semester of 2021–2022. The two groups were assigned to a treatment group and a non-treatment group. Each consisted of thirty students. The treatment group students were taught using a corpus-based collocation teaching in speaking in 10 sessions, whereas the non-treatment group students were taught using the regular method of speaking, such as the teachers' open questions or closed questions on certain topics and the students would respond shortly without taking feedback on their speech from teachers.

3.2 Instruments

The researcher developed a speaking test used as a pre-test and a post-test to achieve the research objective. The speaking pre-test was used to identify the students' collocational knowledge and use besides their collocation errors and ensure that students of both groups were at the same level before beginning the treatment. Thus the progress achieved by the treatment group could be attributed to the program they have been exposed to. As a post-test, it was used to investigate the effect of using a corpus-based collocation program on

promoting the speaking skills of that group (treatment group). In both tests, students were required to talk about various topics 'Travel, economy, tourism, environment, war and peace'. As for scoring reliability, it was made sure by training three raters to utilize the rubric in marking students' speaking performance. Each rater marked the tests on his own. The average of the three raters' marks was taken.

3.3 Variables of the study

- **The independent variable:** A corpus-based collocation program
 - **The dependent variables:** Speaking skills

3.4 The Study procedures:

The researcher followed the following procedures to collect data for the study:

- 1) Reviewing literature and studies related to collocations, corpus, and speaking skills to prepare the research literature review.
 - 2) Deciding the educational content used in the program (seven units) from the 'English Collocations in Use-Advanced' Book by Felicity O'Dell & Michael McCarthy, 2008, Cambridge University Press.
 - 3) Deciding the instructional design (ADDIE) to present the educational program.
 - 4) Designing the research instrument (a pre-post speaking test and establishing its validity and reliability by the jury.
 - 5) Selecting the subjects from the third-year faculty of Education English Majors, Minia University, during the second semester of 2021-2022.
 - 6) Getting the approval of the College Dean to conduct the research.
 - 7) Pre-testing the treatment and non-treatment groups to measure speaking skills on April 4, 2022.
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Table (2)

Means, standard deviations, and t-value of the treatment and non-treatment groups in the pre-performance of the speaking test

Speaking Test		Treatment Group(N= 30)		Non-treatment Group(N= 30)		df	t-value
Performance Area (Skills)	Scores	mean	St.dv	mean	St.dv		
Fluency and coherence	5	4.76	0.97	4.20	1.09	58	2.12
Lexical resource	5	3.43	0.56	3.66	0.75	58	1.34
Grammatical range and accuracy	5	3.70	0.79	4.10	0.75	58	1.99
Pronunciation	5	5.50	1.00	4.80	0.71	58	3.10
Total score	20	17.40	2.38	16.80	2.73	58	0.90

Tabulated t at a significance level (0.05) =2.02

Table (2) shows no statistical difference at a significance level (Estimated: 0.05) between the mean scores of the treatment group and the non-treatment group on the pre-performance of the speaking test. The calculated t-values in all the sub-skills and the total score of the test were lower than its tabulated value. This means the two group subjects were homogenous in their speaking level before implementing the treatment.

8) Implementing the treatment on April 11, 2022. The treatment group received corpus-based collocation teaching in speaking, while the non-treatment group received teaching by the regular method. 9) Post-testing the treatment group and the non-treatment group students on June 9, 2022, to measure their progress in speaking after conducting the treatment. 10) Processing statistical data using SPSS Statistics for Windows, Version 23.0 (IBM SPSS Statistics for Windows, Version 23.0. Armonk, NY: IBM Corp). Cronbach's Alpha, Mean scores, Standard deviations, Independent Samples t-Test, Paired Samples t-Test, and Cohen's D were used. 11) Analyzing data to determine the research results, interpretations, and discussion. 12) Offering some recommendations and suggestions for further research in the light of the results.

Findings and Discussion

The results of the analysis of the post-test scores are shown in table 3.

Table (3)

Means, standard deviations, and t-value of the treatment and non-treatment groups in the post-performance of speaking test

Speaking Test		Treatment Group(N= 30)		Non-treatment Group(N= 30)		df	t-value
Performance Area (Skills)	Scores	mean	St. d v	mean	S t . d v		

Fluency and coherence	5	7.50	0.73	4.53	0.93	58	13.67
Lexical resource	5	7.90	0.60	3.86	0.62	58	25.26
Grammatical range and accuracy	5	8.10	0.66	4.23	0.77	58	20.80
Pronunciation	5	7.13	0.73	4.93	0.94	58	10.09
Total score	20	30.63	2.28	17.56	2.45	58	21.33

Tabulated t at a significance level (0.05) = 2.02

Table (3) shows a statistical difference at a significance level (Estimated: 0.05) between the mean scores of the treatment group and the non-treatment group favoring the treatment group on the post-performance of the speaking test. The students' scores showed high development in speaking skills, where the calculated t -value in each sub-skill and the whole test was greater than its tabulated value.

4.1 Discussion of the findings:

The research results demonstrated that the students in the treatment group, who received corpus-based collocation instruction, surpassed the non-treatment group, who studied through the regular method in the post-test of speaking. The research results are in agreement with Boers et al. (2006), Chao (2010), Attar & Allami

(2013), Shooshtari & Karami (2013), Ergül (2014), Ahmad & Eljack (2020), and Uchihara et al. (2022).

These results can be attributed to the positive effect of using corpus-based collocation instruction on increasing the awareness of collocations and their use. This awareness of collocations led to having lexical richness (diversity, frequency, range) and provoking students' attention to use them in their speaking. As a result, students spoke faster with fewer silent pauses and were perceived to be more fluent and lexically proficient. Thus, collocation knowledge plays a paramount role in speaking fluency and proficiency. This is in line with Uchihara et al. (2022). They concluded that collocation plays a key role in oral proficiency and provide important insights into understanding second language speech development from the perspective of phraseological competence.

Additionally, collocation knowledge could lead to native fluency in Speaking. Lewis (2000) maintained that collocation enables speakers to construct lengths of fluent language. Because the use of collocations reduces the burden of language processing, it enables speakers to adopt regular discourse patterns without excessive hesitation and dysfluency. Simultaneously it enables students to concentrate more on the language content. In other words, collocations allow EFL students to digest and produce language faster since they have a huge repertoire of ready-made language immediately available in their mental lexicons. In case a speaker can recall these phrases as wholes from memory, fluency is improved. This decreases the amount

of preparation, processing, and encoding required, allowing the speaker to focus on the multitude of other tasks that must be performed while speaking. Therefore, it may be argued that collocations can significantly enhance language fluency.

Moreover, using corpus tools might improve the participants' vocabulary pronunciation. This could be because through the corpus tools; participants could listen to the words and sentences many times as the corpus tools used in the study provide the service of sentence articulation. In addition, participants repeated the words and sentences after the speaker of the corpus, and that repetition might help them master the pronunciation of the words and sentences.

Furthermore, corpus-based collocation might help students identify various contexts in which collocations are used. The collocations identification in contexts might assist students in improving their performance in expressing their knowledge creatively. This result comes with what Akhter and Nordin (2022) found out. They concluded that the corpus-based collocation intervention significantly affected the student's performance in conveying their information creatively. In addition, collocation knowledge played a paramount role in promoting EFL students' speaking skills.

Over and above, corpus-based collocation instruction could promote the participants' language accuracy. Pawley and Syder (1983) claimed that to master a foreign language, students must know its individual words and how to combine them. They suggested that selecting the subset of utterances commonly employed by native

speakers is one of the most challenging tasks for even the most adept non-native speaker. They defined "native-like selection" as the ability of the native speaker to convey his/her meaning with an expression that is both grammatical and native-like. Therefore, to gain the capacity of native-like selection, students must be able to select accurate and collocational patterns to express their ideas as effectively as native speakers.

5. Recommendations and Suggestions for Further Research

5.1 Recommendations:

In the light of the research findings, the following recommendations can be offered.

- 1- Applying corpus-based collocation instruction in different educational stages.
- 2- English Language teachers should incorporate collocations in teaching and adopt various activities to raise students' collocational knowledge and competence.
- 3- Training teachers on how to utilize corpus tools in teaching collocations to help students be aware of collocations in various contexts and use them in speaking.
- 4- Improving the students' technological skills since the internet and corpus-based method positively affect learning collocations.
- 5- Curriculum designers should incorporate collocation in the English language syllabus of all educational stages due to its paramountcy in raising proficiency of speaking skills.
- 6- Supplying schools with necessary materials to use corpus tools in the classrooms to teach collocations to help students promote their speaking skills to be native-like.

5.2 Suggestions for further research

In the light of the research findings, the researcher suggested the following further studies:

1)–The current study should be replicated using other subjects from first, second, and fourth–year faculty of Education English majors. 2) Future research is required to investigate the effect of using a corpus–based collocation program on developing listening skills. 3) Future research is required to investigate the effect of using a corpus–based collocation program on developing reading skills. 4) Future research is required to investigate the effect of using a corpus–based collocation program on developing receptive skills. 5) Future research is required to explore the effect of using corpus–based collocation instruction on improving EFL learners’ writing skills. 6) Future research is required to explore the effect of using corpus–based collocation instruction on improving EFL learners’ language proficiency.

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