

Research Timeline

Teaching and learning collocation in adult second and foreign language learning

Frank Boers Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand
frank.boers@vuw.ac.nz

Stuart Webb University of Western Ontario, Canada
swebb27@uwo.ca

Perhaps the greatest challenge to creating a research timeline on teaching and learning collocation is deciding how wide to cast the net in the search for relevant publications. For one thing, the term ‘collocation’ does not have the same meaning for all (applied) linguists and practitioners (Barfield & Gyllstad 2009) (see timeline). For another, items that are labelled as collocations in one study may be called something else in another study (Wray 2000: 465).

In the discipline of corpus linguistics, collocation refers to the above-chance co-occurrence of two words (Sinclair 1991). The degree of likelihood of two words co-occurring in a corpus within a given span of discourse can be quantified through one of the available measures of collocational strength such as the mutual information (MI) score. The higher that score, the stronger the word partnership or collocation. Word substitutions that cause deviations from the regular co-occurrences (e.g. *highly religious* instead of *deeply religious*) will tend to stand out as unconventional or ‘non-idiomatic’ (where the term ‘idiomatic’ is used in the sense of ‘combining words like a native speaker would’).

However, in the older discipline of phraseology research, collocations are usually considered a particular type of multiword expression, distinguishable from other types, most notably idioms (e.g. Howarth 1998; Gitsaki 1999: 3). The principal argument for making this distinction is that the meaning of some multiword expressions (e.g. *cause damage*) follows from adding up the meaning of their constituents, while the meaning of other multiword expressions (e.g. *pull strings*) transcends that of their constituent words. The former type is then labelled ‘collocation’ and the latter is labelled ‘idiom’. This commonly made distinction between collocations and idioms is paralleled in the realm of language education by the availability of study materials devoted separately to either collocations or idioms (e.g. McCarthy & O’Dell 2002, 2005).

The distinction between collocations and idioms on the basis of semantic transparency (or ‘compositionality’) is not black-and-white, however. For one thing, many so-called collocations are transparent only provided one is not led astray by the primary meaning of constituent words (e.g. *pay* in *pay attention* is not used in its financial transaction sense) (Boers & Webb

2015). For another, many expressions that are listed in idiom dictionaries are to some degree compositional. If *pull strings* evokes the image of a puppeteer in action, and if this aids interpretation of the expression, then the constituent words *pull* and *strings* do contribute to the meaning of the phrase as a whole (Gibbs 1994).

Using the above-chance co-occurrence of words as a (corpus-based) criterion naturally leads to the inclusion of expressions considered idioms in phraseological tradition. For example, some of the target expressions labelled collocations in Webb, Newton & Chang's (2013) study (see timeline) are included in the *Collins Cobuild Dictionary of Idioms* (2002) (e.g. *cut corners* and *stay the course*) while other targets are not (e.g. *buy time* and *run the risk*). Conversely, given their relatively fixed nature, most idioms will conform to the corpus linguistic definition of collocation (e.g. *vicious circle*) (Macis & Schmitt 2017). We could therefore have cast our net as wide as to include publications with an explicit focus on idioms in second language (L2) learning. However, to keep the scope of this research timeline manageable, we have opted not to do that. The body of research on idiom comprehension and learning is large, and probably merits a research timeline of its own.

Apart from revealing the statistical likelihood that certain words will occur in each other's company (e.g. that *pretty* is much more likely to co-occur with *girl* than with *boy*), corpus data can also be used to make inventories of continuous strings of two or more words (*n-grams*) that meet a given frequency criterion. Such highly frequent strings have been called lexical bundles (Biber, Conrad & Cortes 2004). The resulting inventories will contain sequences such as *and so on*, and *one of the*, which consist of words that are so common that likelihood-of-co-occurrence statistics (e.g. MI scores) will often fail to reach significance (owing to the fact that these words are found in the company of just about any other word in a corpus). Despite the value in this line of research, we have also excluded publications with a particular focus on lexical bundles. Among these are several corpus-informed attempts to create inventories of uninterrupted word sequences that could be given priority in learning by virtue of their high frequency (Shin & Nation 2008; Simpson-Vlach & Ellis 2010; Liu 2012; Martinez & Schmitt 2012).

The phenomenon of collocation is of course part and parcel of formulaic language in general. A fair number of studies have explored the learning and teaching of 'formulaic sequences' (Wray 2000), encompassing diverse multiword expressions, often identified or selected by the researchers on the basis of intuition (and inter-coder agreement) instead of corpus data. We have also decided against including this line of research in our timeline, because a separate timeline devoted to formulaic language is in fact already available in the present journal (Wray 2013).

Still, we fully recognize that giving precedence in our research timeline to studies which explicitly focus on 'collocation' is at the expense of multiple other publications that offer valuable insights into the nature of phraseology more generally and into the challenges that particular types of multiword expressions (e.g. idioms) pose for L2 learners.

Turning now to our timeline, it is striking that interest in collocation in the context of L2 learning initially developed very slowly. The pace of research only began to pick up in the late 1990s, possibly spurred on by Nattinger & DeCarrico's (1992) and Lewis's (1993, 1997, 2000) seminal works that highlighted the relevance of multiword lexis for L2 learners. The proliferation of research on collocation learning and teaching since the late 1990s has been

astounding, however, with a particularly rapid rise in numbers of studies in the past decade. There is no doubt that the interval between the creation of this timeline and its publication will see more publications on the subject. As a whole, the timeline shows a progression in research from studies that provide evidence of the importance of collocation for L2 learners and the slow pace of L2 collocation learning in the absence of pedagogic intervention, to studies that evaluate the effectiveness of various types of intervention, ranging from relatively unobtrusive manipulations of input (e.g. textual enhancement) to explicit collocation-focused exercises.

The publications included in this timeline cover the following three broad themes, and each publication is classified according to the most relevant one(s).

- A** Demonstrating the usefulness of L2 collocation knowledge. These are publications that show strong associations between learners' mastery of collocation and their general levels of (speaking and/or writing) proficiency.
- B** Assessing L2 learners' collocation knowledge. This theme includes comparisons of natives' and learners' use of collocation, and also the development and validation of test instruments to measure collocation knowledge.
- C** Investigating factors that influence the pace of acquisition of (types of) collocations, and pedagogic interventions to accelerate learning. This broad category comprises studies which gauge the impact of variables such as first language (L1)-L2 (non-)congruency and frequency of encounters on learners' (incidental) uptake of L2 collocations, as well as studies that evaluate the effectiveness of collocation-focused instructional procedures.

References

- Biber, D., S. Conrad & V. Cortes (2004). If you look at . . . : Lexical bundles in university teaching and textbooks. *Applied Linguistics* 25.3, 371–405.
- Boers, F. & S. Webb (2015). Gauging the semantic transparency of idioms: Do natives and learners see eye to eye? In R. Heredia & A. Cieslicka (eds.), *Bilingual figurative language processing*. Cambridge University Press, 368–392.
- Collins Cobuild dictionary of idioms* (2002, 2nd edn.). Glasgow: HarperCollins.
- Gibbs, R. W. (1994). *The poetics of mind: Figurative thought, language and understanding*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Gitsaki, C. (1999). *Second language lexical acquisition: A study of the development of collocational knowledge*. San Francisco: International Scholars Publications.
- Howarth, P. (1998). Phraseology and second language proficiency. *Applied Linguistics* 19.1, 24–44.
- Lewis, M. (1993). *The lexical approach*. Hove: Language Teaching Publications.
- Lewis, M. (1997). *Implementing the lexical approach*. Hove: Language Teaching Publications.
- Lewis, M. (ed.) (2000). *Teaching collocations*. Hove: Language Teaching Publications.
- Liu, D. (2012). The most frequently-used multiword constructions in academic written English: A multi-corpus study. *English for Specific Purposes* 31.1, 25–35.
- Macis, M. & N. Schmitt (2017). Not just 'small potatoes': Knowledge of the idiomatic meanings of collocations. *Language Teaching Research* 21.3, 321–340.
- Martinez, R. & N. Schmitt (2012). A phrasal expressions list. *Applied Linguistics* 33.3, 299–320.
- McCarthy, M. & F. O'Dell (2002). *English idioms in use*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- McCarthy, M. & F. O'Dell (2005). *English collocations in use: Intermediate*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Nattinger, J. R. & J. S. DeCarrico (1992). *Lexical phrases and language teaching*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

- Shin, D. & P. Nation (2008). Beyond single words: The most frequent collocations in spoken English. *ELT Journal* 62.4, 339–348.
- Simpson-Vlach, R. & N. C. Ellis (2010). An academic formulas list: New methods in phraseology research. *Applied Linguistics* 31.4, 487–512.
- Sinclair, J. (1991). *Corpus, concordance, collocation*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Wray, A. (2000). Formulaic sequences in second language teaching: Principles and practice. *Applied Linguistics* 21.4, 463–489.
- Wray, A. (2013). Formulaic language. *Language Teaching* 46.3, 316–334.

FRANK BOERS is an Associate Professor at the School of Linguistics and Applied Language Studies of Victoria University of Wellington. His initial research endeavours concerned lexicology, semantics and rhetoric (e.g. studies of metaphor). Most of his more recent research interests, however, were sparked by his experience as a language teacher and teacher trainer. He now publishes mostly on matters of instructed second language acquisition, often regarding vocabulary and phraseology. Some of the latter work has appeared in journals such as *Applied Linguistics* and *Language Teaching Research*.

STUART WEBB is a Professor of Applied Linguistics in the Faculty of Education at the University of Western Ontario. His research interests include vocabulary studies, extensive reading and listening, and language learning through watching television. His articles have been published in journals such as *Applied Linguistics* and *Language Learning*. His latest book (with Paul Nation) is *How vocabulary is learned* (Oxford University Press, 2017).

YEAR	REFERENCES	ANNOTATIONS	THEME
1933	Palmer, H. E. (1933). <i>Second interim report on English collocations</i> . Tokyo, Japan: Kaitakusha.	This is one of several texts in which Palmer calls for more research on collocation and for giving due attention to collocation in language pedagogy. He recommends learning collocations holistically rather than through knowledge of the words that make up each item. This recommendation will be reiterated by many others (e.g. Lewis 1993), but also questioned by some (e.g. LIU 2010). ¹	A
1992	Biskup, D. (1992). L1 influence on learners' renderings of English collocations. A Polish/German empirical study. In P. J. L. Arnaud & H. Bejoint (eds.), <i>Vocabulary and applied linguistics</i> . London: Macmillan, 85–93.	Biskup finds that English as a foreign language (EFL) learners with a more distant L1 (Polish) make fewer L2 collocational errors that are due to L1 interference than those with a less distant L1 (German), and suggests that this is due to an assumed congruency between the more closely related languages. This book chapter is the beginning of a thread of studies on the influence of learners' L1 on their production of collocations in their L2 (e.g. GRANGER 1998; NESSELHAUF 2003).	C
1993	Bahns, J. & M. Eldaw (1993). Should we teach EFL students collocations? <i>System</i> 21.1, 101–114.	Bahns & Eldaw examined the extent to which verb-noun collocations were correctly produced in cloze and translation tests. They found that knowledge of collocations was far less than that of single-word items. L2 verb-noun collocations have since been found in several other studies to be particularly troublesome for learners, especially when they are incongruent with the counterparts in the learners' L1 (NESSELHAUF 2003; PETERS 2016).	B/C
1993	Read, J. (1993). The development of a new measure of L2 vocabulary knowledge. <i>Language Testing</i> 10.3, 355–371.	Read's <i>Word Associates Test</i> was not specifically designed to measure collocational knowledge. However, it was innovative in that it measured recognition of collocates of target words as one of the components of word knowledge.	B
1998	Granger, S. (1998). Prefabricated patterns in advanced EFL writing: Collocations and formulae. In A. P. Cowie (ed.), <i>Phraseology: Theory, analysis and applications</i> . Oxford: Clarendon Press, 145–160.	Granger provides evidence from a learner corpus of the impact that the L1 has on learning and use of L2 collocations and suggests that teachers and materials developers need to take this into consideration to make learning more efficient.	C

YEAR	REFERENCES	ANNOTATIONS	THEME
2003	Nesselhauf, N. (2003). The use of collocations by advanced learners of English and some implications for teaching. <i>Applied Linguistics</i> 24.2, 223–242.	Nesselhauf used a learner corpus to examine the types of mistakes that advanced language learners make using verb-noun collocations. She found that L1 influence, or the degree of L1-L2 congruence, was responsible for a large proportion of errors (thus confirming the earlier findings by BISKUP 1992, and GRANGER 1998).	B/C
2007	Keshavarz, M. H. & H. Salimi (2007). Collocational competence and cloze test performance: A study of Iranian EFL learners. <i>International Journal of Applied Linguistics</i> 17.1, 81–92.	Keshavarz & Salimi created a 50-item multiple-choice test designed to measure collocational competence and compared L2 participants' results on this test to their scores on open-ended and multiple-choice cloze tests. The significant correlations lend support to the claim that L2 proficiency and knowledge of collocations are closely associated. Further (indirect) evidence of this association is provided by HSU & CHIU (2008).	A
2008	Hsu, J.-y. & C.-y. Chiu (2008). Lexical collocations and their relation to speaking proficiency of college EFL learners in Taiwan. <i>Asian EFL Journal</i> 10.1, 181–204.	Hsu & Chiu report significant correlations between EFL learners' scores on written tests intended to measure knowledge of collocation, and the learners' grades obtained for oral narrative tasks. This provides more (indirect) evidence of the contribution that collocation mastery can make to oral proficiency.	A
2008	Laufer, B. & N. Girsai (2008). Form-focused instruction in second language vocabulary learning: A case for contrastive analysis and translation. <i>Applied Linguistics</i> 29.4, 694–716.	Laufer & Girsai compared the effectiveness of learning collocations in meaning-focused activities, exclusively L2 form-focused activities, and L1-L2 translation activities. The latter treatment resulted in the best learning outcomes. Explicitly contrasting L1 and L2 collocations in instructional materials thus appears to be an effective way of countering the well-documented interference from L1 on learners' (mis)use of collocations (cf. NESSELHAUF 2003). Laufer & Girsai's study is an early 'intervention' study that compares learning gains obtained from different kinds of engagement with the target collocations. More recent examples include EYCKMANS ET AL. (2016) and BOERS ET AL. (2017)	C

YEAR	REFERENCES	ANNOTATIONS	THEME
2008	Lindstromberg, S. & F. Boers (2008). The mnemonic effect of noticing alliteration in lexical chunks. <i>Applied Linguistics</i> 29.2, 200–222.	The results from the experiments reported by Lindstromberg & Boers suggest that collocations exhibiting alliteration (e.g. <i>make a mess</i>) – a conspicuously common feature of English phraseology – can easily be made more memorable for learners by alerting them to the alliteration.	C
2008	Siyanova, A. & N. Schmitt (2008). L2 learner production and processing of collocation: A multi-study perspective. <i>Canadian Modern Language Review</i> 64.3, 429–458.	Unlike others (e.g. GRANGER 1998), Siyanova & Schmitt found little difference between natives’ and advanced learners’ use of adjective-noun collocations in comparable native and learner corpora. However, L2 learners’ processing of the collocations was found to be slower than that of native speakers’.	B
2009	Barfield, A. & H. Gyllstad (eds.) (2009). <i>Researching collocations in another language – Multiple interpretations</i> . Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.	This edited volume contains original research studies that collectively cover the three broad themes identified in this timeline. Three of its chapters are specifically concerned with the design and validation of tests of collocation knowledge, and illustrate the intricate nature of this knowledge construct and how it can be measured.	A, B, C
2009	Boers, F. & S. Lindstromberg (2009). <i>Optimizing a lexical approach to instructed second language acquisition</i> . Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.	Boers & Lindstromberg argue on the basis of previous research that foreign language learners’ autonomous uptake of multiword lexis (including collocations) is almost bound to be unsatisfactory, and they call for initiatives that go beyond awareness-raising about the importance of phrasal lexis. The book presents experimental validation for classroom techniques intended to help learners not only to notice chunks of language but to remember them.	A, B, C
2009	Durrant, P. & N. Schmitt (2009). To what extent do native and non-native writers make use of collocations? <i>International Review of Applied Linguistics</i> 47.2, 157–177.	Durrant & Schmitt examine the degree to which frequency may affect L2 learners’ use of collocations. They found that non-native writers tend to overuse higher frequency collocations and underuse lower frequency ones.	B
2009	Webb, S. & E. Kagimoto (2009). The effects of vocabulary learning on collocation and meaning. <i>TESOL Quarterly</i> 43.1, 55–77.	Webb & Kagimoto look at how (silent) reading of glossed sentences and completing a cloze activity contribute to learning the written form and the meaning of target collocations. The two activities led to comparable gains in both aspects of knowledge, and so the study does not furnish evidence of a practice-mode – test-mode congruency effect.	C

YEAR	REFERENCES	ANNOTATIONS	THEME
2010	Durrant, P. & N. Schmitt (2010). Adult learners' retention of collocations from exposure. <i>Second Language Research</i> 28.2, 163–188.	Durrant & Schmitt's experiment starts a thread of investigations into the role of repeated encounters with the same collocation (see, e.g., WEBB, NEWTON & CHANG 2013 and PELLICER-SANCHEZ 2017, for later studies). Participants were asked to read sentences containing collocations aloud and were tested on their recollection of the target collocations shortly after this. More exposures to a collocation increased the likelihood of recollection, in particular when the collocation had been re-encountered in identical sentences.	C
2010	Li, J. & N. Schmitt (2010). The development of collocation use in academic texts by advanced L2 learners: A multiple case study approach. In D. Wood (ed.), <i>Perspectives on formulaic language: Acquisition and communication</i> . New York: Continuum, 22–26.	Li & Schmitt document the slow development of EFL learners' knowledge of adjective-noun collocations over time. The described pace of acquisition is perhaps particularly revealing given that the participants in the study were language majors, and it lends support to earlier claims that collocation learning tends to lag behind single-word learning (e.g. BAHNS & ELDAW 1993)	B
2010	Liu, D. (2010). Going beyond patterns: Involving cognitive analysis in the learning of collocations. <i>TESOL Quarterly</i> 44.1, 4–30.	Liu argues that many collocations can be motivated with reference to the core semantics of their component words. He argues that learners should be encouraged to explore the non-arbitrary facets of collocation as a way of stimulating retention. An instructional approach to multiword expressions along these lines was proposed by BOERS & LINDSTROMBERG (2009).	C
2010	Yamashita, J. & N. Jiang (2010). L1 influence on the acquisition of L2 collocations: Japanese ESL users and EFL learners acquiring English collocations. <i>TESOL Quarterly</i> 44.4, 647–668.	Yamashita & Jiang look at the effects of L1-L2 congruency and L2 exposure on learning collocations. Their results indicate that both factors affect learning; congruent collocations are more easily learned than incongruent collocations, and greater L2 exposure increases the potential for acquisition.	B

YEAR	REFERENCES	ANNOTATIONS	THEME
2011	Kasahara, K. (2011). The effect of known-and-unknown word combinations on intentional vocabulary learning. <i>System</i> 39.4, 491–499.	Kasahara compared learning collocations made up of one known and one unknown word with learning the unknown words alone. The research indicated superior retention of the intact collocations, which suggests that associating new words with a familiar collocate is helpful.	C
2011	Laufer, B. (2011). The contribution of dictionary use to the production and retention of collocations in a second language. <i>International Journal of Lexicography</i> 24.1, 29–49.	Laufer examined how dictionary entries may contribute to learning verb-noun collocations. She found that, although use of dictionaries did contribute to some extent to collocational knowledge, her EFL learners often overestimated their knowledge of the collocations and consequently did not consult a dictionary. At other times, they failed to find the information they needed.	C
2011	Laufer, B. & T. Waldman (2011). Verb-noun collocations in second language writing: A corpus analysis of learners' English. <i>Language Learning</i> 61.4, 647–672.	Laufer & Waldman compared EFL students' knowledge of collocations across different proficiency levels (operationalized as different years of language study). Their cross-sectional study reveals only piecemeal gains between proficiency levels, a finding reminiscent of LI & SCHMITT's (2010) longitudinal study.	B
2011	Webb, S. & E. Kagimoto (2011). Learning collocations: Do the number of collocates, position of the node word, and synonymy affect learning? <i>Applied Linguistics</i> 32.3, 259–276.	Webb & Kagimoto report an experiment where participants were asked to study differently designed sets of collocations. Post-test results indicate that learning is easiest when some of the collocations share the same collocate (e.g. <i>deep sleep</i> and <i>deep sigh</i>), and so fewer word associations need to be remembered. Learning is hardest when collocations in a set contain near-synonymous words (e.g. <i>slim chance</i> and <i>narrow escape</i>), as this increases the risk of cross-interference between the target items. Further evidence of the risk of cross-item interference is reported in BOERS ET AL. (2014).	C
2011	Wolter, B. & H. Gyllstad (2011). Collocational links in the L2 mental lexicon and the influence of L1 intralexical knowledge. <i>Applied Linguistics</i> 32.4, 430–449.	While previous investigations on the impact of L1-L2 congruency at the level of collocations used off-line tasks, Wolter & Gyllstad use online processing measures, and confirm that L2 collocations that are congruent with L1 collocations are processed with much greater ease by learners than those which have no L1 equivalent, thus supporting the findings of YAMASHITA & JIANG (2010).	C

YEAR	REFERENCES	ANNOTATIONS	THEME
2013	Levitzky-Aviad, T. & B. Laufer (2013). Lexical properties in the writing of foreign language learners over eight years of study: Single words and collocations. In C. Bardel, C. Lindqvist & B. Laufer (eds.), <i>L2 vocabulary acquisition knowledge and use: New perspectives on assessment and corpus</i> . EUROSLA MONOGRAPHS SERIES 2. European Second Language Association, 127–150.	Levitzky-Aviad & Laufer examined the use of collocations in written work of students of different ages and grade levels. A corpus that included 290 passages written by students in grades 6–12 and first-year university English majors was examined to determine if there was variation in the use of collocations during the years of formal English learning. The results indicated that there was a general increase in the use of collocations, but that statistically significant differences only occurred between the university level and each of the school grades. This cross-sectional study complements LI & SCHMITT's (2010) longitudinal study of the (slow) development of L2 collocation knowledge.	B
2013	Sonbul, S. & N. Schmitt (2013). Explicit and implicit lexical knowledge: Acquisition of collocations under different input conditions. <i>Language Learning</i> 63.1, 121–159.	Sonbul & Schmitt examine collocation learning in two contextualized conditions and one decontextualized learning condition. They found that all conditions led to significant learning, and that typographic enhancement contributed to greater learning than reading an unenhanced text. The effect of typographic enhancement on collocation learning has been further investigated in, for example, CHOI (2017) and SZUDARSKI & CARTER (2016).	C
2013	Webb, S., J. Newton & A. C-S. Chang (2013). Incidental learning of collocation. <i>Language Learning</i> 63.1, 91–120.	Webb et al. examined the extent to which collocations are learned incidentally through reading (while listening to) a graded reader, as well as the effect of frequency on collocation learning. The study was the first to reveal that incidental learning of collocation occurs and that frequency has a similar effect for learning collocations as it does with single-word items; incidental learning increased as the number of encounters with target collocations (1, 5, 10 and 15) increased.	C
2013	Wolter, B. & H. Gyllstad (2013). Frequency of input and L2 collocational processing: A comparison of congruent and incongruent collocations. <i>Studies in Second Language Acquisition</i> 35.3, 451–482.	In a follow up to YAMASHITA & JIANG (2010) and WOLTER & GYLLSTAD (2011), Wolter & Gyllstad look at the influence of frequency effects on the processing of congruent and incongruent collocations. They found that the frequency of adjective-noun collocations affected the response times of advanced L2 learners, and that this effect occurred with both congruent and incongruent collocations.	C

YEAR	REFERENCES	ANNOTATIONS	THEME
2014	Boers, F., M. Demecheleer, A. Coxhead & S. Webb (2014). Gauging the effects of exercises on verb-noun collocations. <i>Language Teaching Research</i> 18.1, 50–70.	Boers et al. evaluate by means of pre-test – post-test comparisons several commonly used textbook exercises on verb-noun collocations, and find poor learning outcomes, partly because of cross-item interference. This interference is attested more often in exercises where learners are required to match the constituents of collocations than in exercises where collocations are presented from the start as intact wholes.	C
2015	Crossley, A. S., T. Salsbury & D. S. McNamara (2015). Assessing lexical proficiency using analytic ratings: A case for collocation accuracy. <i>Applied Linguistics</i> 36.5, 570–590.	Crossley et al. collected holistic lexical proficiency ratings of L2 writing and L2 speech samples and the same raters’ assessments of particular facets of lexical proficiency exhibited in the samples. Of those facets, collocation accuracy was found to be the strongest predictor of the holistic ratings. This is an important addition to the body of evidence attesting to the importance of collocation knowledge.	A
2016	Eyckmans, J., F. Boers & S. Lindstromberg (2016). The impact of imposing processing strategies on L2 learners’ deliberate study of lexical phrases. <i>System</i> 56.2, 127–139.	Eyckmans et al. asked EFL learners to study a list of verb-noun collocations as preparation for a test. One group of students was asked additionally to look for the presence of alliteration in the target expressions as they tried to commit the items to memory (see LINDSTROMBERG & BOERS 2008), a second group was asked to compare the target expressions with counterparts in their mother tongue, and a third group was not given any specific directions to help them with the memorization task. Post-test results showed positive effects of engagement with the sound pattern (alliteration), but not of the L2-L1 comparisons. The latter finding differs from LAUFER & GIRSAI (2008), where contrastive analysis was found beneficial.	C
2016	Peters, E. (2016). The lexical burden of collocations: The role of interlexical and intralexical factors. <i>Language Teaching Research</i> 20.1, 113–138.	In this study, Peters investigated characteristics of collocations that hinder learning in deliberate, collocation-focused instructional activities. Like in aforementioned studies that looked at incidental learning, L1-L2 non-congruency was again found to be one of the obstacles to learning, especially in the case of verb-noun combinations.	C

YEAR	REFERENCES	ANNOTATIONS	THEME
2016	Szudarski, P. & R. Carter (2016). The role of input enhancement in EFL learners' acquisition of collocations. <i>International Journal of Applied Linguistics</i> 26.2, 245–265.	Szudarski & Carter compared the effects of repeated encounters with collocations to repeated encounters with the same collocations in typographically enhanced (underlined) forms. As expected, the latter, attention-directing, text manipulation was found beneficial for uptake of the collocations.	C
2017	Boers, F., T. C. T. Dang & B. Strong (2017). Comparing the effectiveness of phrase-focused exercises: A partial replication of Boers, Demecheleer, Coxhead and Webb (2014). <i>Language Teaching Research</i> 21.3, 362–280.	In this further evaluation of the effectiveness of textbook exercises on collocations, Boers et al. find that exercises in which verb-noun collocations are worked with as intact wholes from the start are more helpful than ones where learners are required to (re)assemble expressions from separate, jumbled parts, because the latter exercises carry a greater risk of erroneous cross-item associations. When it comes to the deliberate study of collocation, it seems that methods that minimize the risk of error are more judicious than those that rely on trial-and-error. An analysis of phrase-focused exercises in a corpus of ten recent EFL textbooks indicated that the latter approach is (unfortunately) still common practice.	C
2017	Choi, S. (2017). Processing and learning of enhanced English collocations: An eye-movement study. <i>Language Teaching Research</i> 21.3, 403–426.	Like SZUDARSKI & CARTER (2016), Choi finds that typographic enhancement of collocations in reading texts positively influences learners' uptake of the enhanced items. One of the strengths of this study is that the learners' post-test performance is triangulated with eye-tracking data which confirm that the typographic enhancement indeed directed the learners' attention to the target collocations. The study also indicates, however, that this enhancement may distract learners from other, non-enhanced, text segments.	C

YEAR	REFERENCES	ANNOTATIONS	THEME
2017	Nguyen, T. M. H. & S. Webb (2017). Examining second language receptive knowledge of collocation and factors that affect learning. <i>Language Teaching Research</i> 21.3, 298–320.	Nguyen & Webb evaluate, by means of a corpus-informed multiple-choice test, Vietnamese EFL learners' knowledge of adjective-noun and verb-noun collocations made up of words at three levels of frequency. The results indicate very poor knowledge of collocations in comparison with the same learners' knowledge of individual words. Congruency with L1 counterpart expressions was again found to be one of the predictors of test performance.	B/C
2017	Pellicer-Sanchez, A. (2017). Learning L2 collocations incidentally from reading. <i>Language Teaching Research</i> 21.3, 381–402.	This study is a conceptual replication of WEBB ET AL. (2013), which found positive effects of repeated encounters with collocations during reading. Unlike the original study, Pellicer-Sanchez found no such compelling evidence of a frequency-of-encounters effect, which suggests that other factors (including item-specific characteristics of the target collocations) can play a big enough part to override the expected frequency effect.	C

¹Authors' names are shown in small capitals when the study referred to appears in this timeline.