

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF FORM FOCUSED
INSTRUCTION IN AUGMENTING THE USE OF VERB-
NOUN COLLOCATIONS IN **L2 LEARNERS' WRITING**

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2019

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**DISSERTATION SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL
FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE
DEGREE OF MASTER OF ENGLISH AS A SECOND
LANGUAGE**

**FACULTY OF LANGUAGES & LINGUISTICS
UNIVERSITY OF MALAYA
KUALA LUMPUR**

2019

UNIVERSITY OF MALAYA
ORIGINAL LITERARY WORK DECLARATION

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Title of Project Paper/Research Report/Dissertation/Thesis: THE EFFECTIVENESS
OF FORM FOCUSED INSTRUCTION IN AUGMENTING THE USE OF VERB-
NOUN COLLOCATIONS IN L2 LEARNERS' WRITING

Field of Study: LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

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THE EFFECTIVENESS OF FORM-FOCUSED INSTRUCTION IN AUGMENTING

THE USE OF VERB-NOUN COLLOCATIONS IN L2 LEARNERS' WRITING

ABSTRACT

Form focused instruction (FFI) is a pedagogic approach to teaching linguistic form through communicative language use. This study aims at investigating the effectiveness of FFI in the primary school L2 learners' use of verb-noun collocations in their writing. In this experimental study, data was collected from pretest and posttest which was conducted before and after a 6 week-course. The 30 respondents from a primary school in KL federal territory (14 males and 16 females) involved in this study were randomly assigned to an experimental group which was treated with Focus on Form (FonF) approach following an inductive and learner-centered learning. The learners in the control group (treated with non FonF approach) followed the traditional Presentation-Practise-Production (PPP) model of language teaching. The analysis of the types of errors found in the use of verb-noun collocations indicated the highest percentage of error occurring in the use of verbs specifically in the formation of the past tense verb form. The errors found revealed that the learners faced difficulties in using delexical or weak verbs such as "make" take" and "have" with the correct noun pairs. The data from the pretest and posttest were also analyzed using a paired sample t-test to determine the between group performance at two time points. The findings suggested that the learners in the FonF group performed better than the non FonF group in terms of the number of collocational uses. This could be attributed to the influence of the focused tasks used during the intervention which gives holistic representation of the collocations in appropriate contexts. Errors in the use, however, are still prevalent in the FonF group as the learners may have stopped short at comprehension without in-depth understanding of the structure.

Keywords: verb-noun collocations, focus on form instruction

**KEBERKESANAN FORM FOCUSED INSTRUCTION DALAM MENINGKATKAN
PENGUNAAN KOLOKASI KATA KERJA (KK) DAN KATA NAMA (KN) DALAM
HASIL PENULISAN PENUTUR BAHASA INGGERIS SEBAGAI BAHASA KEDUA**

ABSTRAK

“Form Focused Instruction” (FFI) adalah pendekatan pedagogi yang menjurus kepada pengajaran elemen-elemen linguistik melalui penggunaan bahasa secara komunikatif. Kajian ini dijalankan untuk mengenalpasti keberkesanan FFI dalam meningkatkan penggunaan kolokasi kata kerja (KK) dan kata nama (KN) dalam hasil penulisan penutur yang menggunakan bahasa Inggeris sebagai bahasa kedua. Dalam kajian ini, data dikumpul melalui pra-ujian yang menggunakan instrumen berbentuk penulisan. Seterusnya, data melalui pasca ujian yang menggunakan instrument yang sama dikumpul setelah intervensi selama enam minggu selesai dijalankan bagi tujuan perbandingan penggunaan kolokasi KK dan KN. 30 orang responden dari sebuah sekolah rendah di Wilayah Persekutuan Kuala Lumpur (14 lelaki dan 16 perempuan) yang terlibat dalam kajian ini dibahagikan secara rawak kepada kumpulan eksperimen bagi pendekatan Focus on Form (FonF) yang bermodelkan pembelajaran induktif dan berpusatkan murid. Manakala, kumpulan kawalan (bukan intervensi FonF) menggunakan model pembelajaran tradisional Pembentangan-Praktis-Pengeluaran (PPP). Data dianalisis menggunakan perisian *Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS)*. Secara keseluruhannya, dapatan kajian mendedahkan kesalahan berkaitan kata kerja dalam penggunaan kolokasi KK dan KN berada pada tahap tertinggi. Secara spesifik, kesalahan dalam penggunaan kata kerja melibatkan pembentukan kata kerja dalam bentuk kala lampau. Dapatan yang lebih mendalam menunjukkan bahawa responden menghadapi kesulitan dalam menggandingkan kata kerja deleksikal yang mudah seperti “make”, “take” dan “have” dengan kata nama yang tepat. Dapatan analisis juga menunjukkan bahawa responden yang diberikan intervensi FonF berupaya meningkatkan kadar penggunaan kolokasi KK dan KN lebih tinggi berbanding kumpulan kawalan. Peningkatan ini mungkin dipengaruhi oleh penggunaan tugas terfokus semasa intervensi yang mengandungi kolokasi KK dan KN dalam konteks yang sesuai. Namun

begitu, kesalahan dalam penulisan menggunakan kolokasi KK dan KN masih berada di tahap yang kurang memuaskan. Hal ini boleh dijelaskan dengan kemungkinan pemahaman responden yang kurang mendalam tentang struktur dan pembentukan kolokasi dengan lebih tepat.

Keywords: kolokasi KK dan KN, Form-Focused Instruction

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my supervisor, Associate Professor Dr. Suad binti Awab for her continuous support of my study and research. I wish to acknowledge her dedication, motivation and encouragement without which would not lead to the completion of this work. I am extremely grateful for her thorough feedback of my work and her amicable and positive disposition. A “thank you” for her enthusiasm and care would be an understatement.

My sincere thanks also go to Dr. Murad Abdu Saeed Mohammed who has been a great advisor and whose immense knowledge of SPSS has been very insightful. It is also important that I thank Dr. Anne Benedict Nair for her willingness to take me under her supervision and making sure that the final steps of my journey were laid out smoothly. Thank you for devoting the time to check on my work. I would also like to thank the helpful staffs of the Postgraduate Office of Faculty of Language and Linguistics, University of Malaya for bearing with my constant phone calls and questions. Without them, the completion of this dissertation would have been a discomfort.

Last but certainly not least, I would like to express my utmost love to my family who has been extremely encouraging in times where I am taken over by doubt and for bearing with my constant missing from important social events. Without your prayers and support, I would not have endured this journey. A heartfelt thank you also goes to my best friends, Wan Rozi and Sim Chiang Huey for lifting me up and for bringing joy in times where we worked together and raced against time. Thank you to all for being the light at the end of the tunnel.

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LIST OF SYMBOLS AND ABBREVIATIONS

FFI	:	Form-Focused Instruction
FonF	:	Focus on Form
FonFs	:	Focus on Forms

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Appendix A: Pretest/Posttest Instrument

Appendix B: Sample Student Writing

Appendix C: Focused Tasks.....

Appendix D: Sample Data Extraction

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

This section presents a discussion of the background of this study. The first part of the section discusses the standpoints about the L2 instruction in the field of SLA and includes the discussion about form focused instruction. Subsequently, this chapter also sheds some light about the problems faced in learning collocations in the L2 learning contexts. This chapter explains the overall fundamental background of this study.

1.1 L2 Instruction in the Field of Second Language Acquisition (SLA)

Language learning and acquisition exceed the mere process of memorization and regurgitation of the learned grammatical rules. On the contrary, language learning is an intricate process which encompasses the interplay of the learner's background, prior awareness of the target language, perceptions, beliefs, as well as the learning conditions. It is also vastly influenced by the pedagogical decisions made by the instructor which is guided by his or her purpose for the overall learning outcome. In this sense, the instruction adopted by the instructor plays a crucial role in determining how a second language is acquired and by extension whether adequate language skills and knowledge have been acquired by the learner to communicate effectively in both oral and written production.

Following De Graff and Housen (2009), this study adopted the definition of instruction as any effort to enhance language learning by controlling the learning conditions. In a broad view, learning conditions can be viewed as pedagogical decisions which encompass the methods, approaches, strategies, techniques and practices; all of which can be manipulated and applied across a wide range of learning settings. In spite of this view, the role and the potential effectiveness of L2 instruction have been vastly debated. In retrospect, it is questioned whether instructions have any direct impact upon language

learning or whether instruction can act as a catalyst to enhance language progression (Richards & Rogers, 2001). In the discussion, it is assumed that L2 learning, much like L1 acquisition takes place incidentally and is guided by universal mechanisms which requires little to no intervention. Therefore, it is believed that instruction may not be fundamental to L2 learning.

On the contrary, the interventionist view – believed that the debate against L2 instruction to be misguided or perhaps a premature misconception. As put forward by Ellis (2005), although L2 instruction may not be a prerequisite to achieving L2 competence, it makes a difference in how well the learners acquire the language and understand its structure. Further support of the impact of instruction relative to different learner conditions (children and adults; beginners, intermediate and advanced learners) in a study by Norris and Ortega (2008) revealed that L2 instruction has impact on the learner factors. For instance, it is important for learners having little contact to L2 outside the instructional setting, for learning different aspects of the language system (e.g.: salient or non-salient grammar) and for attending to learners with different levels of proficiency. Therefore, L2 instruction is essential to navigate through the larger dimensions of learning.

Following the discussion above, there is also a growing consensus that meaning-based learning alone is inadequate for the development of accurate use of language. It is suggested that a form-focused instruction (FFI) needs to be incorporated, as Long (1991) stated, FFI-driven learning will enhance the L2 learners' functional control of specific linguistic features irrespective of the learners' developmental level. Ellis (2001) agreed that although the incorporation of FFI instruction may not result in immediate ability to use language in communication, it facilitates the learners to notice the gap in their

language use and so, leads to the development of the implicit knowledge which is required in the later stage for language production.

1.1.1 Form -Focused Instruction (FFI)

In more recent years, Form Focused Instruction (FFI) - driven research highlighted that learners can benefit from language learning which integrates the use of FFI. Proponents of FFI described two major strands of FFI: Focus on Forms (FonFs) and Focus on Form (FonF) (Long, 1991; DeKeyser, 1998; Ellis, 2001). The Focus on Forms (FonFs) outlines a more traditional approach to grammar teaching: pattern-drilling and explicit rule explanation method which emphasizes teacher-centeredness while the learners act as receivers of knowledge (Hammerly, 1975). In this manner, the learning process is carried out as a sequential presentation of the target forms which operates as a transmission of knowledge from the teacher to the learners.

On the contrary, Focus on Form (FonF) refers to an instructional activity which values communicative teaching, aligned with the emphasis on student-centered learning and authentic teacher-learner interaction. Within the interaction, the learners are afforded the opportunity for modifying and adjusting input by requesting for clarifications, repetitions and consulting comprehension checks (Ellis, 2001). Within FonF, the language instructor assumes the role of a facilitator who provides assistance to learners perceived to have difficulties processing and producing specific linguistic structure in the L2. Form focused instruction should therefore be viewed not as a method to instruct the use of specific grammatical forms but rather as a method whose overriding aim is to facilitate the acquisition of L2, and to enable language use in contextually appropriate and authentic communicative circumstances.

In addition, as Long (2015) explains, incidental learning and meaning-negotiation are no longer the only major catalysts for improving L2 acquisition. The new dimension of

FFI encourages planned and intentional learning to improve the likelihood of the form-meaning to be acquired more quickly (Ellis, 2016). Furthermore, Nation (2001) explains that to fully grasp communicative competence in the language, first, the learner must possess lexical competence which means understanding words in its form, meaning and use which includes spelling, pronunciation, grammar, connotative and denotative meaning, collocations and register. For instance, using –ed for signaling an action done in the past is an understanding of form (Norris & Ortega, 2008). In line with this, lexical competence is what the FonF approach aims to achieve, through a platform for real life communicative opportunities which involves occasional attention to discrete forms through correction, direct explanation, feedback and recasts (Ellis and Younghee, 2002).

Likewise, advocates of Form - Focused Instruction (FFI) added that without form focused instruction, high level of linguistic competence may not be accomplished. Celik (2015) further asserts that the focus on form approach not only enhances lexical acquisition, it is also extensive to reinforcing the breadth and depth of vocabulary among the learners. This way, learners gained extended understanding of how the language is used in various forms. Therefore, instruction is central for L2 acquisition and is a major aspect of language learning and acquisition.

1.2 Collocations in L2 Learning

This study's discussion of form focused instruction (FFI) may be linked to the potential effects of the instruction in enhancing the use of collocations. Primarily, collocations are often defined in various ways: prefabricated chunks, or lexical items which typically co-occur and associated with one another (Halliday, 2004). These definitions raised the question of whether collocations should be approached from a semantic, syntactic or idiomatic perspective (Hsu, 2005). This realization is a crucial aspect in language learning

considering that words do not typically behave as a single unit, rather, strung together by syntax which then occur in multiword phraseological units (Schmitt, 2013).

In the field of second language acquisition, collocational competence has been widely accepted as a prerequisite to language production (Boers, Eyckmans & Stengers, 2006). Columbus (2010) and Ellis and Simpson-Vlach and Maynard (2008) assert that language users with collocational competence are able to make idiomatic choices, achieve near-native fluency and able to resolve ambiguity of polysemous words. Most importantly, as Hill (2000) asserted, 70% of language made in utterances, written texts or speech are fixed expressions. Due to this, it is well recognized that collocational competence is what differentiates native and non-native speakers (Ellis, 2001; Nation, 2001). This is because with the appropriate use of collocations, learners are able to produce language at a much faster rate (Webb & Kagimoto, 2010).

Also, the mastery of collocations can help learners to achieve accuracy as they provide “zones of safety” where errors are less likely to occur (Boers, Demecheleer, Coxhead and Webb, 2014). Hence, learners can express their ideas more precisely based on lexicalized routines. Besides that, it is also crucial to recognize the pragmatic values of collocations. For instance, Nattinger and Decario (1992) state that formulaic sequences are often relied upon to accomplish recurrent communication needs. It is emphasized that the recurrent communication usually has an attachment to conventionalized language. For example, saying “*I am sorry to hear about...*” serves the purpose of expressing sympathy or in the expression “*I’d be happy to...*” illustrates compliance to a request. Thus, collocations are able to realize different conversational routines and written registers which enable one to achieve the specific discourse objectives (McCarthy & Carter, 2002).

Furthermore, collocations and formulaic sequences carry more than just denotative meaning. Stubbs (2002) and Hunston (2007) elucidate that collocations and other types of formulaic sequences may also have various types of marking called semantic/collocational prosody. For instance, certain verb such as “cause” customarily carries negative connotation as in the verb-noun collocations “cause inflation” and “cause pain”. Conversely, one may also recognize positive connotation in the verb “provide” in collocations like “provide information” and “provide care”. Therefore, collocations become a necessary aspect of L2 acquisition, not only because they provide expedient ways to communicate, they also allow the manifestation of various emotions, evaluations and attitudes.

1.3 Problem Statement

Collocations (e.g.: *make a mistake, catch a cold, pay attention, take risks*) along with other types of multiword expressions listed under the umbrella term “formulaic language” (Wray, 2002) have been gaining increased attention as a necessary component of second language lexical competence. L2 practitioners such as Laufer and Waldman (2011) and Gledhill (2000,) agree that collocational competence is a prerequisite for the writing process. It is indicated that without proper and an in-depth knowledge about the phraseology of the field in question, it is impossible for a writer to come across as fluent. Gledhill (2000) adds that there are specific conventions and salient features which are unique to each field. Therefore, this indicates that each collocation has its own role and carries individual meaning which then requires the learners to process texts holistically.

In addition, an important feature of collocation is that it is more crucial at the productive level (Schmitt, 2013). As meanings can be manifested in various ways, Columbus (2010) and Ellis, Simpson-Vlach and Maynard (2008) propose that at productive level, collocations are vital to enable the L2 learners to: 1) produce idiomatic

expressions and illustrate native-like proficiency, 2) process language fluently, 3) establish zones of safety for creative language production, 4) solve ambiguity in the meaning of polysemous words e.g.: the verb “commit” in *commit a crime* as opposed to *commit to memory* (Henriksen, 2014) and 5) to understand connotational meaning. Extensively, Ellis, (2001; 2005) posits that the knowledge of collocations will help both L1 and L2 learners alike to fulfill various pragmatic functions and to enhance comprehension. The fulfillment of such functions is accessible to L2 learners with adequate collocational competence, considering that collocations are, in the word of Hill (2000) in Lewis (2004, p. 47) “the most powerful force in the creation and comprehension of all naturally-occurring text”.

However, L2 learners often face predicament in the course of vocabulary acquisition due to various challenges and so, ideal use of the collocations is not always possible. One of the many challenges is the need to first acquire the collocational properties of lexical items. The second challenge is the production of the lexical items and adhering to its idiomaticity (Boers, Demecheleer, Coxhead and Webb, 2014). Typically, unlike L1 speakers, when constructing collocations, L2 learners have the inclination to produce it via word-by-word approach (Laufer and Waldman, 2011). This way, the collocations are formed based on free production instead of with reference to the idiom principle.

In addition, in seminal research done which links collocational competence to language acquisition, there are numerous documented poor rate of uptake and performance of L2 learners in the production of collocations, specifically for verb-noun combinations. In pedagogical contexts, the difficulty surrounding the use of the verb-noun collocations can be clarified based on two factors. The first factor concerns with the flexible nature of collocations (Yamashita & Jiang, 2010). The flexibility of the component words to form various collocations is predisposed to assumed cross-linguistic

nature of L1 and L2 structures. In the Malaysian ESL classrooms, learners often use deviant forms of verb-noun collocations in their writing. Hong, Rahim, Hua and Salehudin (2011) reported erroneous forms in the L2 learners' writing such as *make homework* instead of *do homework* and *get a child* where it should be *have a child*. In this example, the assumed L1-L2 equivalence between the Malay phrase "*mendapat anak*" and the English "get a child" illustrated that the cross linguistic nature of collocations added to the difficulty of learning collocations, as it is susceptible to L1 influence (Hong, Rahim, Hua & Salehuddin, 2011).

Extending from this phenomenon, it is highly likely that L2 learners rely on their L1, whether consciously or subconsciously to construct collocations; many of which caused infelicitous forms. As exemplified among Chinese speakers of English, Wu, Fraken and Witten (2010) documented the use of the verb *do* to construct the collocation *make a decision* as both *do* and *make* possess similar Chinese equivalent. Therefore, the above-mentioned difficulties in the acquisition of collocation imply that it needs to be emphasized and taught in the language classroom to enhance the accuracy in its use.

Furthermore, the second factor contributing to the difficulty in learning collocations is "delexical verbs" or "light verbs". Scholars in the field of L2 acquisition often caution against the assumption that delexical verbs do not carry meaning in any way. Rather, it is pointed out that delexical verbs contain very little semantic force of a fully functioning verb. Wang (2016) explains that the lack of semantic meaning of the verbs make it more difficult for the core meaning to be retained, considering its dependence upon the elements it co-occurs with. As a result, L2 learners may be too liberated in their attempts of constructing collocations and hence may ended up producing inappropriate collocations which are not typical as the ones used by native speakers.

Another challenge is where the learners are unable to differentiate the use of synonymous verbs. Huddleston and Pullum (2002) explain that delexical verbs may not be used interchangeably even when the verbs are synonymous in nature. For example, although the verbs *make* and *create* carry the notion of producing something, they do not allow substitution in a phrase like *create friends* as opposed to *make friends* (Lewis, 2000). Therefore, it is fundamental for the collocations to be embedded in the context of L2 learners' writing, where the appropriate meaning and the constructions of collocations can be properly signified. The felicitous constructions of collocations and its use in the wrong contexts are indicators that the teaching of collocations should exclusively address how to incorporate the collocations so that it would harmonize with the overall sentences and paragraphs (Lewis, 2000).

Conclusively, collocations are undeniably a core element in language acquisition and the approach to teaching collocations is no simple task. Hence, there is a need for making informed decision to incorporate the best instruction for teaching collocations based on the problems faced by the L2 learners in Malaysia. Essential to this decision however, is to first turn away from the customary pattern-drilling and explicit rule teaching in the English classroom as has been done in the Malaysian primary school setting.

1.4 Aims of Study

Essentially, this study was carried out as an attempt to fill a lacuna in the existing body of research pertaining to the teaching of verb-noun collocations. This is considering that most seminal research placed their emphasis on the secondary and tertiary levels L2 learners in Malaysia. The study aimed to gauge insights about the effectiveness of Focus on Form (FonF) instruction, a strand of form focused instruction (FFI), in enhancing the use of verb-noun collocations among Malaysian primary school pupils.

1.5 Objectives of Study

Based on the aims mentioned above, the objectives of the study were identified as below. The objectives included:

- i. To examine the type of errors most prominent in the primary school pupils' use of verb-noun collocations
- ii. To explore the extent to which Focus on Form (FonF) instruction is able to augment and enhance the construction of verb-noun collocations in terms of:
 - a. form
 - b. meaning
 - c. overall expressions of ideas

1.6 Research Questions

Primarily, the aforementioned aims and objectives in this study were guided by the following research questions:

- i. What are the types of verb-noun collocational errors found in L2 learners' writing after focus on form instruction?
- ii. To what extent does focus on form instruction augment and enhance the construction of verb-noun collocations?

The research questions allow both quantitative and qualitative discussions of the effect of Focus on Form (FonF) instruction on the primary L2 learners' use of the verb-noun collocations to be made.

1.7 Significance of Study

The present study contributes to understanding the need for effective instructional practices in order to enhance the mastery of collocations among the Malaysian primary school L2 learners. Essentially, this study's standpoint is guided by the view that collocations are a necessary part of language learning as it helps L2 learners to fulfill a specific function or discourse through the use of routinized language. This study proves Nation's (2001) proposition that words are better learned as holistic units which are embedded within contextually appropriate texts. Hence, this study signposts that language learning is not limited to the teaching of grammar and structural accuracies. Rather, contextual significance and relevance are fundamental to language learning.

Imperatively, this study reveals that collocational competence is more crucial at the language production level; especially in writing. This is because collocational competence is often integral to the understanding of lexical restrictions. In turn, by understanding lexical restrictions, L2 learners may express their ideas more efficiently. This is pivotal considering that their cognitive effort of language processing is reduced when they are able to retrieve pre-existing building blocks of language. Therefore, this study paves the way for teachers and educators to adapt their instructions to encourage the enhancement of not only the breadth of the L2 learners' vocabulary, but vocabulary depth as well. From a pedagogical standpoint, instructional strategies suitable for embedding more use of collocations can also be tailored to the needs of the L2 learners. The implementation can be done alongside remedial practices to reduce the effect of the underlying factors of collocational errors as revealed in the study.

More importantly, the study also contributes to the understanding of the differences in the subsystems of English to that of the L2 learners' native language. The comparison of the written production in L2 and the participants' L1 helps to shed some light upon the

areas of difficulty in learning English as a second language. The data and systematic analysis enabled detailed descriptions of the possible factors of collocational inaccuracies to be made. Hence, the findings in this study contributes to a better understanding of the predicament among L2 learners in learning English; at both receptive and productive levels.

1.8 Organisation of Thesis Sections

As has been aforementioned, the first chapter highlights the central discussion related to L2 instruction in the field of SLA and extensively a background review of Form Focused Instruction. This chapter covers the overall problems faced by L2 learners in learning collocations. It serves as the pathway to understanding the fundamental issues of L2 instructions and collocational competence.

The second chapter frames the theoretical underpinnings which form the overall study. The first part of the chapter outlines the various strands of Form Focused Instruction and notably signposts the revised strand of FFI fundamental to this study's investigation. A review of literature and seminal works pertaining to FFI is also presented. The subsequent parts of the chapter accounts for the pivotal discussion of the approaches to collocations and its importance to L2 learners. Finally, the underlying problems of collocational incompetence and the framework used for data analysis are also highlighted.

The methodology chapter presents the descriptions of the study's overall research design. Essentially, this chapter outlines the procedural details implemented during the study as well as giving details of the participants selected. The teaching and testing instruments are also described at length. The final part of the chapter helps to shed some light upon the data collection procedures and data analysis.

Following the methodology chapter, the findings and discussion are presented in the fourth chapter. The findings of the study are described in great detail following the research questions. The final chapter of the study summarises the overall findings and discusses about the research implications and recommendations for future research.

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CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This chapter outlines the theoretical underpinnings of the study which describe Form-Focused Instruction in the field of Second Language Acquisition (SLA). The different strands in FFI will be described at length to make clear the variegated ways in which form focused instructions are implemented in language learning. Throughout this chapter, the theories embedded within FFI will be discussed in alignment to relevant studies pertaining to FFI. The final parts of this chapter will highlight the approaches to collocations and its importance for L2 learners. Additionally, the factors influencing the errors in collocational uses will be established which is then followed by the discussion of the framework used in data analysis. Finally, a thorough description and review of the teaching instrument used in the study is given.

2.1 Form-Focused Instruction in the Field of Second Language Acquisition

The role of form-focused instruction in second language classroom has gained significant interest from researchers and educators alike in the past few decades. It is evident that FFI-driven research has undergone changes specifically, the manner in which FFI is perceived. Firstly, in the earlier years, FFI-driven research consisted of global-level comparisons of various methods which carry different conceptualizations of how best to teach a language and its subsystems. In the 1960s and 1970s when FFI studies took place, the principal aim was to understand how form should be taught. The understanding of the teaching of form was divided into two orientations: 1) the teaching of form should be made explicit (as in grammar-translation method) and 2) the teaching of form should be implicit (as in audiolingual method) (Ellis, 2012). However, FFI studies done with

reference to both orientations were largely inconclusive and failed to explain and demonstrate the potentials of either method (Loewen 2011; Szudarski, 2017).

Later on, the earlier conceptualization of FFI diminished and FFI was progressively referred to as the exposure to certain target structure during language learning and was discussed parallel to first language acquisition. Scholars such as Larsen-Freeman and Long (1991) brought into attention how L1 learners acquired a language naturally while following a natural order of acquisition. Within the L1 setting, learners were directed to learn based on systematic and well-defined sequences of target structures. Based on this realization, the research into FFI during the time was oriented into using L1 acquisition processes as a frame of reference in which the L1 learners' successful experiences can be incorporated into L2 classroom settings (Ellis, 2001). Finally, the conceptualization of FFI in recent years appeared to be pedagogically oriented. It has been centralized that second language teaching with primarily meaning-focused approach can be improved when a certain degree of attention to form is incorporated (Ellis, 2001). Overall, the research done to investigate the various aspects of FFI was driven by the fact that there is a possibility that FFI can enhance pedagogical practices which would assist struggling L2 learners.

Crucially, considering the various changes in the conceptualization of FFI, there was a need for adopting a definition to guide the overall direction of this study. Hence, form-focused instruction (FFI) which is defined as "any planned or incidental instructional activity that is intended to induce language learners to pay attention to linguistic form" (Ellis, 2005,) is central to this study. Correspondingly, the definition by Ellis (2005) serves as a cover term for other conceptualizations of FFI, such as "analytic teaching" (Stern, 1990) as well as "focus on forms" and "focus on form" (Long, 1991). In this light, the notion of FFI may address both the traditional approaches to the teaching of forms

following a structured syllabus and contrastively, the revised FFI which follows communicative approaches. Conclusively, the investigation of FFI in this study was driven by a pedagogical approach rather than psycholinguistic in that FFI is considered to be techniques and procedures of language teaching (Ellis, 2001).

2.2 Theoretical Underpinnings of the Study

Mainly, theorists expressed different values on the role of interaction in second language acquisition (SLA). Krashen (1993) held to the belief that the amount of comprehensible input which is both understandable and which surpassed a learner's current linguistic competence is the only prerequisite to SLA. Other theorists such as Pica (1994) and Long (1996) on the other hand assumed an "interactionist position" which places value upon the role of interaction and asserted that a two-way communication facilitates SLA within certain conditions. The view that comprehensible input is essential to SLA is not disregarded. Rather, Pica (1994) and Long (1996) highlighted that acquiring a language is not limited only to the concept of conveying messages learners can understand, but how the input is manipulated through facilitative strategies for optimal effects. In essence, this study is underpinned by the "interactionist position".

According to Lightbown and Spada (1990), when learners engage in meaningful language activities, negotiation of meaning becomes central, in that the learners are compelled to express and clarify their thoughts, in ways which permit them to arrive at mutual understanding of the input. Pica (1994, p. 494) further referred to "negotiation of meaning" as modification and restructuring strategies in which the learners are assisted by their interlocutors in times when they anticipate or experience difficulties in input comprehensibility. Modifications strategies— such as repetition, clarification and confirmation checks may also be adopted in times where linguistic problems arise. In this vein, the interactionist position recognized linguistic predicaments among the

learners and offered the ways to enhance comprehension and saliency of the target features (Long, 1996).

Although the role of interaction is central to the interactionist position, the role of input is equally important. Long (1989, p. 3) in the initial proposal of the Interaction Hypothesis, provided clear definitions for both constructs of “input” and interaction”. “Input” is defined as linguistic forms or structures apparent in the target language, whereas “interaction” refers to scaffolding and facilitative strategies which serve the learning of the linguistic forms (Long, 1989). In the context of the current study, input and interaction are constructs which are central to Form Focused Instruction (FFI). As far as the importance of input is concern, Krashen’s (1985) Input Hypothesis outlines that language is acquired based on understanding and receiving comprehensible input. Krashen (1985) defines comprehensible input as the pieces of language put together containing linguistic information which surpassed the learners’ existing internal syllabus. Comprehensible input is posited as pivotal to enable the learner’s current level of competence, “i”, to progress to “i+1”, which is a newly constructed understanding of the language (Krashen, 1985) and which is postulated to cause acquisition. However, this view received criticism in which it is argued that input alone is inadequate to guarantee acquisition (Gass, 2003).

Although it is possible for learners to acquire the meaning of the input beyond their competence, it may still be rather superficial and remains at only surface level (Gass, 2003, p. 232). In this sense, it is remarked that Krashen (1985) may have overlooked and oversimplified the complexity of acquisition processes and failed to distinguish between “input” and “intake”. Thus, Long’s (1996) Interaction Hypothesis posits that owing to the nature of learning which is dynamic, “input and “learning conditions in which interaction is central” are interdependent, work interactively and modify each other. Long (1996)

believed that interaction helps to mediate selective attention to linguistic input and enhances L2 development. In extension, negotiation of meaning within the interaction helps to trigger modification of input and overall understanding through meaningful tasks. Interaction Hypothesis as proposed by Long (1985) and investigated by Pica (1994) can be summarized as follows:

- i. comprehensible input is one of the essential factors for second language acquisition
- ii. modifications and attention to input in the course of learning can be realized by means of two-way interaction
- iii. tasks help to mediate interaction and encourages negotiation of meaning
- iv. negotiation of meaning enhances acquisition in which learners are led to comprehend input, notice the targeted features and compare what is produced in their output
- v. interaction helps learners to modify their output and facilitates internalization of input

(Gass, 2003, p. 230)

Furthermore, Egi (2004) asserts that communicative opportunities and negotiation of meaning help to stimulate learning. This is because conversational practices allow the learners to be immersed in acquisition-rich environment where comprehensible input, chances for output production and feedback are accessible. In the context of this study, similar view underlies Form Focused Instruction. Within FFI, learner-centeredness is primary and the instructor holds facilitative roles. The roles include providing the platform and opportunities for negotiation of meaning, confirming or suggesting modification to the learners' comprehension should the need for linguistic adjustment arises (Ellis, 2005). As Gass (2003) states, interaction within language learning is

fundamental in order to prepare and “prime” the learners of the input to be taught. The more the input is queried, paraphrased or discussed, the potential usefulness of the input becomes greater. In this vein, the input becomes increasingly well-targeted to the developmental needs of the individual learner. As has been done in this study, the analysis of the learners’ difficulty in using verb-noun collocations became the source of input which was based on real and authentic problems faced by the L2 learners. Hence, through interaction and negotiation of meaning, understanding is constructed as more than just a by-product of structural syllabus (Ellis, 2012).

Besides that, the role of interaction in SLA has been long celebrated and has framed various seminal research which has outlined the effects of interaction on L2 production (Gass, 2003; Mackey, 1999; Pica, 1994; Edstrom, 2015; Loewen & Isbell, 2017). According to Pica (1994), interaction in the L2 classroom facilitated learning and L2 learners in various ways: 1) input can be modified to fulfil the learners’ needs, 2) feedback on the meaning and structures of language can be provided and 3) raising awareness of the L2 language data which outlines the meaning-form relationship. Parallel to focus on form (FonF), interaction further enhances the learners’ awareness of the form when the linguistic input is rephrased, repeated and reorganized (Ellis, 2012). Although Focus of Form (FonF) instruction does not involve explicit instruction, Gass (2003) concurs that through interaction, the saliency of linguistic features can be enhanced by manipulating the stress and intonation of the verbal instruction.

Moreover, input processing is also a prerequisite to language learning. According to VanPatten (1994), learners may not be able to focus their attention to variegated forms in the input simultaneously due to limited processing capacity. For instance, VanPatten (1994) illustrates that within L2 learning, a learner may first process content words, followed by the forms which contain a high communicative value and which makes the

input salient. Then, a supplementary form of language which may or may not add value to the learning is attended to in the last stage of processing. VanPatten (1994) further highlights that during these processes, learners decode the input in order to map the meanings into forms. Therefore, without some form of systematic instructional intervention, the learners may not be able to optimally utilize their processing ability to notice the input and to simultaneously modify their understanding.

It is due to the above complexity that Ellis (2008) cautions that there are still caveats within the usefulness of interaction and negotiation of meaning as suggested by Long (1996). Firstly, interaction constitutes more than just negotiation of meaning or confirmation checks and therefore may not reflect the larger portion of learner experiences. Secondly, Ellis (2008) posits that for successful interaction and negotiation of meaning to occur, the learners require enough language repertoires to negotiate and express themselves effectively. Otherwise, the learners may not be able to recognize their linguistic problems and in turn are unable to ask for assistance to resolve it. Thirdly, as Gass (2003) and Ellis (2008) brought to attention, language instructors should also account for the learners' readiness to negotiate as well as the difference in their negotiation styles. If these aspects are not accounted for, it is possible that the learners would simply resort to their own superficial interpretation of the language structures and be deprived of linguistic clarity (Ellis, 2008).

Nevertheless, Ellis (2008) explains that despite the caveats, the Interaction Hypothesis remains significant to the field of SLA and the role of interaction is deeply embodied in the discussion of L2 development. As Gass and Mackey (2007) point out, interaction is important as it provides the learners with information of the accuracy or inaccuracy of their language production. The provision of information on language use can be carried out via two broad types of feedback; which is explicit and implicit feedback. In alignment

to corrective feedback in FFI, the learners' problematic language productions are indicated. In this sense, Gass and Mackey (2007) state that feedback is pivotal and particularly useful for increasing the saliency of language inaccuracies and hence allow the learners to focus on comprehending the input and subsequently reformulate their language production. Ellis (2008) supports this postulation by pointing out that the learner-instructor interaction as well learner-learner interaction can further promote internalization of input and helps to routinize accurate language use. It can be in terms of providing meaning of linguistic items, questioning the accuracy of grammatical form as well as correcting their own and another learner's use of words (Gass & Mackey, 2007). To conclude, the main issue may be to determine the best interaction dynamics which may work best for the learners. Equally critical is to determine whether comprehensible input and interaction can be effectively used in integration to account for linguistic problems of varying complexities. The next section in this chapter would discuss further the notion of Form Focused Instruction.

2.3 Focus on Form versus Focus on Forms

Form-Focused Instruction (FFI) can be discussed based on two strands namely, "focus on form" and "focus on forms". First and foremost, the preliminary distinction of both strands may be established based on the strategies adopted; the "focus on forms" assumed a traditional teaching method based on a structural syllabus while the "focus on form" approach integrates communicative approaches where attention to form takes place as a result of communicative activities which are primarily meaning-focused (Fotos, 1998; Littlewood, 2007). Ellis (2012) supplements the above distinction from a pedagogical standpoint in that "focus on form" works to induce incidental acquisition by raising the learners' awareness of the target structure while incorporating communicative and facilitative strategies such as corrective feedback, negotiation of meaning and form and

recast. This way, the fundamental learning outcome of a “focus on form” classroom is to enhance acquisition by assisting the learners to comprehend the target structure in depth whenever a breakdown in communication arises (Ellis, 2001). In doing so, the learners’ noticing of the target structure may be raised and in turn accelerates the internalization of the language items (Pawlak, 2006).

This works in contrast to “focus on forms” wherein the primary aim is to assist learners to master a structurally arranged features required by the syllabus. Hence, in a “focus on forms” classroom, the target structure and explanation will be made explicit during the instruction. As Doughty and Williams (1998) concur, in “focus on forms” there is bound to be linguistic features which are extracted from contexts to be taught as isolated units. Basically, the items extracted are preselected and prearranged by the teacher according to the following criteria: difficulty level, frequency of occurrence or utility (Pawlak, 2006).

To further compare and contrast both strands of FFI, Ellis (2001) outlines the key differences of “focus on form” and “focus on forms” based on eight aspects: 1) orientation, 2) type of learning, 3) primary focus, 4) secondary focus, 5) acquisitional processes, 6) syllabus type, 7) target selection and 8) instructional processes.

Table 2.1: Focus on Form vs. Focus on Forms

Aspect	Focus on form	Focus on Forms
Orientation	Language as tool	Language as subject
Type of learning	Incidental	Intentional
Primary focus	Message	Code
Secondary focus	Code	Message
Acquisitional processes	Interpsychological mediation intrapsychological mediation noticing noticing the gap modified output	Conscious rule formation proceduralization automatization monitoring
Syllabus type	Task-based	Structural
Target selection	Proactive and reactive	Proactive

Table 2.1: continued

Aspect	Focus on form	Focus on forms
Instructional processes	scaffolded production	consciousness-raising through the provision of explicit rules
	dynamic assessment	
	input-priming	structured input
	negotiation of meaning	controlled production practice
	corrective feedback	
	consciousness –raising task	free production practice corrective feedback

(Ellis, 2012; p. 272)

2.3.1 Focus on Forms (FonFs)

In principal, the summarized key aspects of “focus on forms” and “focus on form” distinguished both approaches further; “focus on forms” as the traditional strand of FFI and “focus on form” as the revised strand of FFI. According to Hammerly (1975), the focus on forms (FonFs) refers to the traditional approach to grammar teaching which involves pattern-drilling and explicit rule explanation. In this manner, the learning process is carried out as a sequential presentation of the target forms which is a transmission of knowledge from the teacher to the learners. Based on a predetermined syllabus, the main goal of learning is to comprehend distinct linguistic features. Then, the learned features are used to achieve a proactively determined learning outcomes and for completion of tasks (Ellis, 2001). Thus, in focus on forms, the learners are guided to attend to the target language (TL) as an object to be studied rather than as a tool for achieving communication functions (Trendak, 2015).

Furthermore, FonFs works in line with the traditional Present-Practise-Production (PPP) model of teaching, in which preselected target features are first presented and brought to attention, either inductively or deductively, followed by providing exercises to

check the learners' understanding of the target features. Finally, the learners are given the opportunities to illustrate their comprehension by producing the features taught in the tasks (Lewis, 2000). The teaching and learning dimensions of FonFs is not limited only to the aforementioned scenario. Additionally, according to Ellis (2012), the nature of explicit focus on forms is in such a way that it aims to enable the learners to articulate the construct of grammar and its rules fluently, when required. Pawlak (2006) explains that this may involve comprehension of language in a technical sense in which the learners are able to label grammar items, for instance, articles and pronouns. Extensively, the treatment of language as an object counts as intentional learning where explicit guidance is given to assist the learners to acquire the target structure and as an added value, other features not in the learning aim may possibly be attended to as well (Ellis, 2012)

Moreover, the tasks used in a focus on forms classroom typically require the application of explicitly taught rules. As Trendak (2015) further discusses, the tasks used in a focus on forms lesson may include transformations tasks, translation tasks or gap-filling exercises which essentially demand conscious understanding of certain rules during the task completion. Although similar tasks may also be used in a "focus on form" setting, the main difference lies in the way the tasks are oriented during task completion. In focus on forms, the teacher may supply direct and explicit rule explanation whereas contrastively, in focus on form, the teacher uses the tasks as a medium for inducing awareness of form through meaning-focused interaction (Trendak, 2015).

Besides that, a significant issue worth mentioning in the discussion of focus on forms is the use of L1 during the instruction. Although in many cases where the use of L2 is primary, Borg (1999) proposes that there are certain circumstances where L1 should be integrated during focus on forms instruction. It is believed that in cases where learners are at beginner's level and that the target structure is rather complex, additional

explanation in L1 should be given. Borg (1999) further highlights that allowing comparison between the learners' L1 and the target structure in L2, might arouse interest among the learners and possibly makes the internalization of the L2 target structure less challenging.

Fundamentally, although the strategies involved in focus on forms appeared to be fairly easy to be implemented, Trendak (2015) cautions that the manner in which the rule is given plays a vital part in guaranteeing learners' comprehension. As has been discussed previously by Swan (1994), there are certain requirements that should be met in order for a grammatical rule to be efficacious. To begin with, the rule should be authentic and is able to reflect linguistic facts. Subsequently, supplementary to the linguistic facts is the illustration of the possible limitations of the rules. In the part of the teacher or instructor, Swan (1994) encourages clear and straightforward manner of rule explanation to allow easy comprehension.

Nevertheless, Pawlak (2006) argues that even when these considerations are made, rule-making may not always be authentic, direct and clear. In agreement with Pawlak (2006), Larsen-Freeman (2003) concurs that even with explicit rules certain grammatical intricacies cannot be easily defined and illustrated. Therefore, it is suggested that in the course of learning, the teacher or instructor should inform the learners how certain rules are applied differently in different contexts.

2.3.2 Focus on Form (FonF)

In the field of second language acquisition, theorists such as Long (1991) and Swain (1995) brought into discussion that learning should involve engagement in communicative language use. It is highlighted that communicative language use

integrated with a focus on form would yield better outcomes based on the following premises:

- i. in order to acquire and use linguistic forms communicatively, learners should be afforded the opportunity to engage in meaning-focused language use (Long, 1991)
- ii. complete acquisition of the target linguistic forms nevertheless, can only be achieved when the learners' awareness of the forms are induced and raised while engaging in meaning-focused language use (Long, 1991)
- iii. focus on form enables the learner to attend to meaning and form simultaneously in one cognitive event (Doughty, 2001)

Basically, the principal difference between “focus on forms” and “focus on form” lies in the way the instruction orientates the learners towards language learning. In contrast to “focus on forms” where learning follows a structural syllabus, focus on form is based upon what Long (1991) termed as “analytic syllabus”. This means that the source of the linguistic content is typically a linguistic problem where learners have shown evidence of difficulty (Ellis, 2012). As further agreed by Pawlak (2006), the attention to linguistic items which proved to cause problems to L2 learners makes learning more authentic rather than simply attending to random linguistic items. Correspondingly, Long and Robinson (1998) as cited in Trendak (2015) state that in order to achieve a focus on form setting, a teacher is afforded three ways to do so.

First and foremost, the teacher could implement the use of problem - solving tasks. The researchers suggest “seeding” the tasks with the linguistic items in focus. For instance, where a given activity aims to assist the learners' acquisition of specific verbs such the teacher may increase the saliency of the target verbs by increasing their frequency in the texts given. This way, the learners' awareness of the verbs is enhanced.

Secondly, focus on form can be achieved by directing the learners' attention to a certain problem which arises during meaning-focused activity. Essentially, this can be done when the teacher notices a recurring problem in using certain linguistic items and takes the time to address the particular problem. Finally, advocates of focus on form suggest the incorporation of implicit negative feedback in order to enable the teacher to assist the learners in reformulating their language use. In this vein, assisting the learners to modify their understanding is deemed to be facilitative towards acquisition.

Additionally, focus on form instruction is underpinned by both sociocultural and interactionist theory (Ellis, 2001; 2012). As a proponent of the sociocultural perspective in learning and development, Vygotsky (1962) asserts that when learners are entrenched in an interdependent sociocultural learning context when completing language tasks, their internal development processes will be activated. This assertion added more potential to focus on form where learners hold the ownership to their learning, intertwined with the teacher's facilitative strategies and scaffolding. Moreover, the interactionist perspective recognized language learning as a function of social and meaningful interaction (Nassaji, 2000). This approach is credited to Long (1996) where it is stressed that interaction is a prerequisite to second language acquisition. This is because as conversations and linguistics modifications occur, learners are provided with comprehensible input. Therefore, the level of learning success is fairly dependent upon the quality of interactions between the learners and the instructor (Nassaji, 2000).

Despite the distinction made to differentiate focus on forms (FonFs) and focus on form (FonF), a definite conclusion cannot be easily made. This is because, for one, as expressed by Batstone (2002) instructions and its surrounding contexts are dynamic. Therefore, the teacher and the learners may need to constantly orientate and re-orientate throughout the lesson or during task completion. Hence, from the beginning, the instructor needs to

clearly outline the sense of purpose of the learning and make informed decisions in adopting the right approach for the problem at hand. Focus on form is further divisible into “planned focus on form” and “incidental focus on form”.

2.3.2.1 Planned Focus on Form

The first type of focus on form is “planned focus on form”. The term “planned” refers to directing the learners to a particular language feature in an extended amount of time (Trendak, 2015, p. 17). The selection of the language features does not involve adherence to a syllabus. Rather, the target feature is selected based on the difficulty that is observed when learners attempt to use it in language tasks. Dakowska (2003) as cited in Trendak (2015, p. 15) concludes that planned focus on form is a learner-oriented approach and therefore places the learners as language users rather than language learners. It is evidently an approach which is put into practice in response to authentic language problems.

Furthermore, planned focus on form can be extended to different pedagogical options. The main option pertains to the nature of the input presented. In this vein, the first crucial aspect of planned focus on form is “enriched input” (Ellis, 2012, p. 212). According to Ellis (2012) and Trendak (2015), “enriched input” frames a vital part of focus on form as it comprises linguistic data which has gone through alteration in order to present various exemplars of the target structure. Even more crucial is the integration of the input into learning where Ellis (2001) states, the instructor has to navigate a communication-oriented interaction to induce noticing of the target item without explicitly supplying the rules.

Ellis (2001) further explains that the input may be conveyed in various ways. It is clarified that there are variegated ways for enriched input, one of which is *input*

flooding. As far as *input flooding* is concerned, it is believed that the more often the items appears and discussed, the more it becomes salient (Trendak, 2015, p. 18). Pawlak (2006) explains that the efficacy of the input flooding is guaranteed by two factors: the duration taken for the discussion of the input as well as the intensity of the input. In unison with Pawlak (2006), Trendak (2015) notes that despite being frequently exposed to the targeted form, explicit rule is not prescribed to the learners. Both scholars however concluded that solely relying on input flooding to help learners acquire a certain linguistic feature may not be adequate without effective navigation throughout the learning.

Aside from input flooding, planned focus on form also includes *input enhancement*. To illustrate, input enhancement involves improving the saliency of the target feature by visually highlighting the features (Ellis, 2001). Ellis (2001) explains that while the target features are contextualized within appropriate texts, the learners' noticing of the input can be enhanced by putting the features in bold, colour-coding or as the discussion takes place, the instructor may modify his or her intonation during the interaction. However, similar to other approaches to language teaching, incessant risk of the learners failing to notice the target feature and internalize is still possible. As Ellis (2001; 2012) articulates, while the instructor may have externally modified the target features to trigger the learners' incorporation of the input into their interlanguage, the saliency of the input to the learners is not always guaranteed.

Moreover, *focused communicative tasks* and *focused tasks* have also gained considerable attention as strategies in Focus on Form. Both tasks are essentially designed to gauge the learners' attention towards the target feature while performing communicative activities. As has been discussed from the beginning, focus on form values interaction during language learning and thus these *focused communicative tasks* and *focused tasks* assist the learners towards achieving the learning goals (Ellis, 2001).

The learning goals can be achieved through the tasks which are outcome-evaluated and can be used to elicit the use of the target structure in the production stage. However, Trendak (2015) and Ellis (2012) clarify that the focused tasks are not always meant for consciousness-raising. It is in certain cases, used to induce natural and useful production of language.

2.3.2.2 Incidental Focus on Form

The second type of focus on form is incidental focus on form (incidental FonF). As opposed to attending to a target structure which is evidently problematic to the learners, incidental FonF covers numerous target structures simultaneously. In this vein, incidental FonF comes into play when the learners come across problematic linguistic structures and the instructor has to respond to all the problems at the same time (Ellis, 2001). Within incidental FonF, the instructor is not able to provide in depth explanation to all the structures at once. Consequently, the linguistic structure may only receive limited attention. In the words of Ellis (2001, p. 23), incidental FonF can be described in comparison to planned FonF as follows:

“it is the difference between shooting a pistol repeatedly at the same target and firing a shotgun to spray pellets at a variety of target”

Hence, within incidental FonF, the instructor does not have prior planning of the target structures. Rather, attention to linguistic features and assistance emerge as a response to the problems faced by the learners at the time of instruction (Ellis, 2001). Besides that, like planned FonF, incidental FonF can be further discussed in terms of *preemptive* and *reactive* incidental FonF. The preemptive incidental FonF is implemented when the instructor decided to allocate some time to discuss certain linguistic forms (Ellis, 2001). As opposed to planned focus on form, the discussion within preemptive FonF is not

necessarily an attempt to address a linguistic problem. Instead, the discussion is conducted to place emphasis on the linguistic features or meaning although no problems in using the target structure is evident. In this vein, Trendak (2015) asserts that language is now oriented to be an object of study rather than as a tool for solving communicative problems. To illustrate, Ellis (2001, p. 23) provided an example which shows how an instructor allocated time to focus on meaning-making in the midst of an activity.

S: What's an alibi?

T: S has an alibi.

T: Another name for a girlfriend? (laughter)

T: An alibi is a reason you have for not being at the bank robbery (...)

Based on the illustration above, preemptive focus on form is typically initiated by the learners in the form of a query addressed to the teacher. In this light, preemptive focus on form is beneficial for language learning as it addressed the gaps in the learners' knowledge where the teacher has the opportunity to provide immediate assistance (Ellis, Basturkmen & Loewen, 2002). It is suggested that the learners would most likely be able to recall and enhance their understanding of the items they had initiated independently.

In comparison to preemptive focus on form, reactive focus on form involves the treatment of learner errors by means of *implicit and explicit negative feedback* (Trendak, 2015). According to Seedhouse (1997), the implicit negative feedback is typically adopted by teachers whose aim is to respond to learners' errors which can either be actual errors or perceived errors. On the other hand, the second component which is explicit negative feedback involves directly informing the learners of their mistakes. The teacher then provides correction for the deviant form of utterance and language production (Ellis, 2001). This form of feedback however received backlash from language instructors and

teachers alike, as it is perceived to be highly obtrusive. It is further argued that if the learners are regularly given explicit negative feedback, the learners' motivation may be affected (Ellis, 2001).

Overall, the efficacy of Form Focused Instruction has been the subjects of inquiry for much seminal work in retrospect as well the more recent studies. Although distinctions can be made to point out the various pedagogical approaches to grammar teaching, concluding that only one definite approach is a cure-all should be avoided.

2.4 Studies Pertaining to FFI

Over the years, various researches began to outline a strong case for Form Focused Instruction (FFI). One of the earliest studies in relation to FFI was done by Lightbown and Spada (1990). Both scholars investigated the potential effects of form-focused instruction on second language learning. The study reported that form-focused instruction was able to enhance the accuracy of the use of grammatical feature such as *-ing* compared to learners receiving instruction without attention to form (Lightbown & Spada, 1990).

Pertaining to the teaching of grammar, another increasingly prevalent topic for focus on form instructional research is the teaching of collocations and multi-word units. One such study is done by Szudarski and Carter (2014) who investigated the impact of "input flood" and "input enhancement" upon EFL Polish learners' acquisition of collocations. Input flood strategy operated as the frequency of exposure (6 to 12 repetitions) of verb-noun and adjective-noun collocations found in stories. Input enhancement on the other hand involved underlining as an attempt to increase the saliency of the target structures. It is revealed in the study that "input enhancement" significantly enhanced the learners' collocational gains compared to "input flood". This finding further indicated that with

FFI, the saliency of input played an important role in enhancing the learners' grasp of the target structures.

In addition, the use of tasks is rather pertinent in the studies of FFI and the acquisition of collocations. A study examining the effects of "consciousness-raising tasks" which is a strategy within FFI, in acquiring verb-noun collocations reported poor gains among the Malaysian ESL learners who attended a university in New Zealand. The researchers attributed the poor outcome to the tasks where verb-noun collocations are not presented in "intact wholes" (Boers, Demecheleer, Coxhead & Webb, 2014). It is concluded that consciousness-raising tasks without proper contextualization and facilitative strategies to attract attention to the form of the target structure does not reflect the true potential of FFI. On the other hand, in a study by Boers, Dang and Strong (2017) involving EFL learners in Vietnam, the effects of three tasks with emphasis on form (selecting appropriate verbs as constituents of collocations, completing verb-noun collocation with first letter cues and choosing whole phrases) were investigated. The results indicated that learning collocations as holistic units is the most efficient way for the development of collocational knowledge. The learning gains in the "whole phrases" tasks surpassed the outcome of the tasks which decontextualized the collocations into separate constituents (Boers, Dang & Strong, 2017).

Another study done with reference to FFI has been investigated by Boers, Lindstormberg and Webb (2014). The study scrutinized how learning process of multiword units (MWUs) can be enhanced by raising the learners' awareness of the phonological and orthographic properties. By drawing learners' attention to the alliteration within the collocations (repetitions of sounds within the phrases), the researchers however, failed to document any relation between studying alliteration of collocations in fostering the knowledge of collocations. It is evident that there is a need

for conducting research in the area of phonological awareness and whether it may promote the acquisition of collocations and other types of MWUs.

Crucially, FFI is a cover term for different instructional approaches which can be manipulated depending on the need of the learning. Spada, Jessop, Tomita, Suzuki and Valeo (2014) investigated two different types of FFI which are “isolated” and “integrated” form focused instruction. The research was done to examine the potential contributions of both types of FFI upon different types of L2 knowledge. In isolated FFI, the adult ESL learners received instruction which was separated from communicative practice whereas those receiving integrated FFI were given the opportunity for communicative practice. Both types of FFI indicated advantages for two different tasks; the learners in the integrated FFI group performed significantly better on the oral production task while the isolated FFI indicated significant gains on the written grammar task. The study illustrated the extended effects of FFI in which the instruction can be maneuvered according to the different types of tasks (either oral or written tasks) to relish its full potential. Essentially, the study was informed by transfer-appropriate-processing theory in which learners tend to perform better if the production stage resembles the learning context of the structures (Spada, Jessop, Tomita, Suzuki & Valeo, 2014).

Aside from the comparisons between the different types of FFI, the relative effectiveness of FFI as compared to different approaches has also been studied. In a study by Tsai (2017), 73 Chinese-speaking English learners were assigned to a group receiving FFI, another group for a concept-based instruction (CBI) and a control group. The participants were taught verb-noun collocations and were tested via form recall testing, form recognition testing and meaning recall testing. The effect of CBI surpassed that of FFI in terms of acquisition and retention. The researchers suggested that CBI was better able to enhance the learners’ focus on verbalized meanings based on image schemas and

conceptualization practice. In this vein, the FFI approach may need to be integrated with other types of instruction to achieve its full potential.

Besides that, other dimensions of FFI such as the role of corrective feedback, recasts and interaction have also been the subject of various researches. For instance, Saito (2013) explored the acquisitional effect of recasts among Japanese EFL learners. In the exploration, the study examined how FFI paired with recasts enhanced the learners' ability to acquire the English pronunciation /ɹ/. The study's findings revealed that FFI in itself impacted L2 speech learning processes. As an added effect, recasts and FFI helped to raise the learners' attention to the pivotal aspects of second language speech (Saito, 2013). Moreover, in terms of interaction within FFI, Tomita and Spada (2013) observed that teenage Japanese learners became increasingly communicative. The study reflected how FFI was able to create social contexts for L2 learners, owing to the nature of FFI which utilized interaction as a prerequisite to learning.

Imperative to the context of the study, other than FFI, it is pivotal to put into scrutiny other approaches to the teaching of collocations. Johns' (1993) data-driven learning (DDL) describes that language learners can assume the role of detectives who explore large language data. Boulton (2012) explains that as learners work with a large compilation of authentic language samples, they are exposed to indefinite numbers of language patterns. This helps the learners to realize what language elements or expressions are typical and how they are used in authentic contexts. Boulton (2012) emphasizes that DDL helps to improve learner independency, autonomy and language awareness because the learners are required to identify patterns and the underlying rules of the linguistic elements.

However, the approach does not escape criticism. As Braun (2007) points out, the effectiveness of DDL is dependent upon the learners' proficiency. DDL is deemed more

appropriate for adult learners who are motivated and are of advanced level of proficiency (Johns, 1993) and that beginner level learners may require intensive scaffolding. Other criticism includes the need for intensive training in order to fully understand the rationale for DDL and to practise DDL efficiently (Boulton, 2012). In sum, the Focus on Form approach is therefore considered more practical for use in the classroom with learners of all levels (Ellis, 2002) and as Laufer (2006) asserts; learners may not always notice the structure without form-focused instruction (FFI) component which helps to increase the saliency of the target structure.

In similar vein, the investigation of collocational competence of undergraduate law students in University Zainal Abidin by Yunus and Awab (2014) revealed that while learners are able to use variety of collocations, accurate production is still hampered by interlingual and intralingual factors which then reduce their ability to conform to the legal discourse. The findings paved the investigation of the impact of Data-Driven Learning (DDL) in the teaching of colligations of prepositions (Yunus and Awab, 2014). The results illustrated that while DDL improves the learners' receptive knowledge, the production of single sentence colligations of prepositions still requires more time and practice within the DDL approach.

2.5 Approaches to Collocations

To begin with, collocations are not always precisely defined. The notion of collocation is pioneered by Firth (1957); generally accredited as the "father of collocations" based on the dictum "you shall know a word by the company it keeps" (p. 2). Following this notion, various definitions surfaced. Nation (2001) proposes that multiword units such as idioms (e.g.: blow off steam) and fixed expressions or prefabricated chunks (e.g.: to and fro, leap year) should be dictated under the cover term collocations. Boers, Demecheleer, Webb and Coxhead (2014) support the prior definition, adding that within the notion of

collocations a wider range of multiword units also come into play such as fillers (e.g.: sort of), functional expressions (e.g.: excuse me), proverbs (e.g.: a penny saved is a penny earned) and standardized phrases (e.g.: There is mounting evidence that...). Despite the diverse ways in which collocations are defined, at its core, there seems to be a mutual acceptance that collocations refer to the tendencies of items to co-occur more typically with certain elements than with others (Sinclair, 2005).

Essentially, this study is underpinned by phraseological approach which sees collocations as a word combination which is characterized by a certain degree of “fixedness” or “restrictedness” (Nesselhauf, 2005, p. 224). Primarily, the framework of degree of restrictedness of collocations has been proposed by Cowie (1988). Basically, the “fixedness” is reflected in four different types of word co-occurrence which are free combinations, restricted collocations, figurative idioms and pure idioms.

Table 2.2: Framework of collocation restrictedness

Category	Examples
Free Combinations -restriction on substitution can be specified on semantic grounds -elements used in literal sense	<i>drink tea :</i> <i>tea can be substituted by juice, coffee, etc.</i>
Restricted Collocations -substitution is possible with arbitrary limitations -at least one element has non-literal meaning and another with literal meaning	<i>perform a task, not make a task</i>
Figurative Idioms -substitution is seldom possible combination has a figurative meaning but preserves literal interpretation	<i>do a u-turn, in the sense of “completely change one’s policy or behavior</i>

Table 2.2: Continued

Category	Examples
Pure Idioms	
-substitution of element is impossible	<i>blow the gaff</i>
-conveys figurative meaning and does not preserve literal interpretation	<i>kick the bucket</i>

(Cowie, 1988, p. 128)

Despite the outlined framework, Cowie (1988) realises the fact that drawing the distinctions of collocations based on the categories can be difficult at times. This is mainly true in collocations with delexical verbs (i.e.: make, take, and have). For example, in *(take) good care of*, the verb part of the collocation cannot be simply substituted with other verbs to imply similar meaning as the original, such as “give good care of”. Furthermore, working closely to Cowie’s (1988) framework, Howarth (1998) is another important figure in the phraseological tradition of collocations. Building upon the initial framework, Howarth (1998) establishes further distinction between “grammatical composites” and “lexical composites” which is in line with the categorization of grammatical collocations and lexical collocations (Benson, Benson & Ilson, 2010).

Extensively, grammatical collocations contained dominant words which are characterized by a preposition or other grammatical elements. Lexical collocations, on the contrary, are made up of nouns, adjectives, verbs and adverbs. The table below illustrates the framework which is in line with Howarth’s (1998) distinction of the two aforementioned composites.

Table 2.3: Collocational Framework

Types	Examples
Verb + Noun / Pronoun (or prepositional phrase); with the verb denoting the creation and/or activation	<i>Come to an agreement, make an impression, compose music</i>
Verb + Noun; with the verb denoting eradication and/or modification	<i>Reject and appeal, lift a blockade, break a code</i>
Adjective + Noun	<i>strong tea, warm regards, reckless abandon</i>
Noun + verb	<i>Adjectives modify, alarms go off, bees buzz</i>
Noun + of + Noun	<i>A herd of buffalo, a pack of dogs, a bouquet of flowers</i>
Adverb + Adjective	<i>Deeply absorbed, strictly accurate, sound sleep</i>
Verb + Adverb	<i>Affect deeply, amuse thoroughly, argue heatedly</i>

(Benson, Benson & Ilson, 2012, p. 25)

To conclude, a collocation is not limited to only the external combination such as “verb-noun”. Instead, as Howarth (1998) and Wray (2002) posited, a collocation consists of internal grammar structure that contributes to its overall meaning.

2.5.1 The Importance of Collocations for L2 Learners

According to Karoly (2005), L2 learners often undergo a few phases of language competence. In the first phase, L2 learners acquire and understand basic grammatical structures of the language in which they are able to thrive in daily interaction about conversational topics. Over time, L2 learners would then be competent enough to use language to fulfill a more specific functions and discourse. However, Karoly (2005) expresses that without further instruction to induce awareness of the “prefabricated chunks” in the language, L2 learners may not surpass the level of competence they are currently in. Hence, L2 learners are left with a limited set of lexical items which result in overused and simplistic language (Lewis, 2000; Wray, 2002). It is for this reason that appropriate instruction to assist the L2 learners to increase their vocabulary breadth and

depth, accuracy and richness of their expressions, is crucial. As Lewis (2000) emphasizes, collocational patterns are viewed to be “the core” of language competence (Lewis, 2000). In his discussion of the Lexical Approach, Lewis (2000) argues that grammatical knowledge and the knowledge of individual words alone are inadequate. Only by knowing what and how words co-occur, will the L2 learners be able to use collocations to embed more meaning into their language production.

Primarily, the importance of collocational knowledge for L2 learners can be discussed in several ways. Scholars in the field of second language acquisition (SLA) express mutual agreement that collocations are imperative at a productive level of language use; both in speaking and in writing (Howarth, 1998; Schmitt, 1998; Bonk, 2000; Boers, Eckymans & Stengers, 2006). In their opinion, the knowledge of collocation would often come with the understanding of lexical restrictions and most importantly the learners do not have to reconstruct the language every time they want to express an idea. Instead, the learners can use collocations as predetermined building blocks which can be manipulated to enhance language creativity (Nation, 2001).

Fundamentally, research pertaining to collocations has proven that non-native speakers or L2 learners require collocational knowledge in order to produce natural-sounding and fluent language production (Nation, 2001, Alhassan & Wood, 2015). Vural (2010) supports the claim that collocations can increase the L2 learners’ communicativeness because the learners have the ability to express their thoughts more precisely and creatively although they have limited language resources at their disposal. Wray (2002) addresses that collocational knowledge enables the learners not only the ability to utilize language rules for the formation of grammatical utterances, but also enables the learners to be intuitive enough to be selective upon utterances which are more native-like. For instance, Wray (2002) illustrates that while certain utterances are

considered grammatical, such as “will you be wedded to me?” it is not a native-like selection as opposed to “will you marry me”?

Therefore, collocational knowledge is fundamental to help L2 learners to understand that while certain utterances are grammatically sound, they may not be idiomatic. As Nattinger and DeCarrico (1992) posit, the prefabricated speech help to direct the language users to the larger structure of the language discourse rather than keeping focus on narrowed-down meaning of individual words. As further cautioned by Vural (2010), when L2 learners are used to combining words as per their meaning, they too, would most likely process language items or units individually according to their meaning. Thus, certain combinations may appear to be odd.

In addition, as has been mentioned briefly in the previous chapter, the knowledge of collocations may contribute to the efficiency of language processing and in turn reduce the time required to produce any expressions (Gledhill, 2000). Lewis (2000) illustrates the efficiency of collocations in the following example of language use: while a learner can say “*He got a job where he can work as long as he wants*”, if he or she has the knowledge of the collocation “*permanent job*”, a better expression could be “*He got a permanent job*”. Without collocational knowledge, the learner is bound to make longer utterances due to not knowing the collocation which would precisely expressed what they mean. As per the example, collocations or the “prefabricated chunks” helped to reduce cognitive effort and the time needed to put together an utterance. As a result, the learner is able to process the language more efficiently for immediate use (Nation, 2001). This is in sync with Pawley and Syder’s (1983, p. 194) postulation in that native speakers illustrated quick and efficient processing of language use because they “retrieve readymade chunks”. In similar manner, collocations allow the learners to form complex

ideas quickly so that the learners can continue to add on to the ideas without having to over-focus on the form of the word.

Moreover, the knowledge of collocations is imperative as it gives L2 learners the ability to use words in a more appropriate sense. In the example by Hill (2000), knowing how collocations operate would inform the learners of the dividing line between the synonymous nature of the words “handsome and beautiful” whereby it is generally acceptable to say “a handsome man” as opposed to saying “a handsome woman”. Nation (2001) concurs by stating that the English language is pervaded by restraints which affect word appropriateness: some collocations are used in speech rather than in writing, some might be colloquial or formal rather than informal whereas some might be gender-bound as has been exemplified by Hill (2000). Therefore, this proves that learning collocations would enable the learners to retrieve appropriate collocations for language production as well eliminating those which do not adhere to the idiomaticity in the language.

Extensively, it is also posited that collocational knowledge not only advanced the L2 learners’ language production, it also enhanced the learners’ ability to recognize and notice word in chunks rather than attending to words as separate entities. The above discussions consistently point to collocations as being central for efficient and fluent language use. Similar to the knowledge of collocations, Gledhill (2000) elaborates that it is crucial to have the knowledge of the phraseology of a particular field. To illustrate, Gledhill (2000, p. 2) explains that within an academic discipline, there is a necessity for predicate structures such as “make a claim”, “reach a conclusion”, “adopt an approach” or “set out criteria” in order to reflect specific meaning in the contexts intended.

Conversely, lacking the knowledge of this phraseological tendency as Howarth (1998) and Gledhill (2000) claimed, may impede the comprehensibility of the learners’ expression. At this point, the ability to implement a wide range of collocations or

prefabricated chunks, with consideration for both accuracy and appropriateness is one of the factors which makes a learner both efficient and proficient (Thornbury, 2002).

2.5.2 Factors for Collocational Errors

According to Boers and Lindstromberg, (2012) even at advanced level, L2 learners who are generally competent at using formulaic language may make errors from time to time. This is because, collocation, which is a subset of formulaic language represents an ambiguous area of language. Due to this ambiguity, Boers and Lindstromberg (2012) highlight that the rules and boundaries for the formation of collocations may not always be easily accessible to L2 learners. At length, in relation to collocational uses among native speakers, both scholars express that it is difficult to articulate exactly the reason for the selection of certain sequences. Therefore, deciding upon the “right” collocations to teach to L2 learners and to provide rationale for it can be exceedingly challenging.

Essentially, in this study, central attention is given to verb-noun collocations. Firstly, to reiterate the postulation by Hill (2000), 70% of language made in utterances, written texts or speech are fixed expressions. More specifically, Howarth (1998) and Nesselhauf (2005) claim that a large part of these utterances are verb-noun collocations because they contain the core of the information and the intended ideas of language expressions. Besides that, both elements involved in the formation of verb-noun collocations equally convey the overall meaning of the expressions (Granger, 1998). This means that the verbs or the nouns cannot be substituted lightly, as it may cause deviation in meaning. However, with delexical verbs, the semantic load of the overall meaning is carried by the noun they co-occur with, which has been found to be notoriously challenging for L2 learners especially when L2 learners are not familiar with the accurate and idiomatic form of the collocations (Yamashita & Jiang, 2010).

As per the above discussion, Boers, Demecheeler, Coxhead and Webb (2014) explain that most verb-noun collocations are made up of delexical or “light verbs”. Therefore, problem arises when L2 learners do not allocate adequate attention to the verb form and wrongly assume that any synonymous verbs may express similar meaning when paired up with the nouns (e.g.: “do an arrangement” in exchange for “make an arrangement”).

Due to the “loose” nature of the verb, errors in verb-noun collocations are more prominent than its counterparts such as adverb-adjective or adjective-noun collocations. This is mainly due to the verb’s attachment to inflections such as number, tense, aspect and person (Laufer & Waldman, 2011). For this reason, L2 learners cannot always rely only upon the dictionary form of verb-noun collocations. In the example by Laufer (2011), the verb-noun collocation “to take measures” may appear in variations such as “they took strong measures against”, and “measures are being taken to reduce”. In both variations, the verb in the collocation is used in the past tense form and with additional element as in the adjective “strong” in “strong measure”. Therefore, the L2 learners need to process the derivations which are possible for a single collocation and in doing so, they need to be aware of the restrictions bound to that particular collocation. It is essentially the lack of the knowledge of this restriction which causes the errors in collocational use.

Besides that, the L2 learners’ native language (L1) has been documented as having an impact on their learning of L2 collocations. In the corpus study by Hong, Rahim, Hua and Salehuddin (2014) among Malay speakers of English, it was found that the felicitous use of verb-noun collocations was prominently caused by a negative inter-lingual transfer. The learners’ reliance upon their L1 which is Malay language, illustrates that the learners assumed that there is a word-by-word correspondence between their L1 and L2. For instance, in the learner’s writing of “story about the tragedy”, it is evident that the learner has resorted to a word-by-word translation from the presumed Malay phrase

“*menceritakan tentang tragedi itu*” in which the verb “story” is assumed to be an equivalent of “*menceritakan*” (DBP Sah Bahasa, 2018).

In addition, a study among Thai learners’ use of verb-preposition collocations by Sumonsriworakun and Pongpairoj (2017) also documented a case of negative L1 transfer which is also related to incongruence between English and Thai formation of collocations. For example, the English combinations “die of” and “die from” are not common to the Thai language. Therefore, Thai L2 learners are prone to using felicitous form of the prepositions “by” and “with” as in “die by” and “die with”. Likewise, Poocharoenshil (2012) remarks that among Thai EFL speakers, it is likely that the use of the preposition “for” is avoided as in “I will wait for her” as the Thai language does not consist of the preposition. Hence, it is more likely that Thai learners would resort to an alternative utterance which would then be erroneous.

Moreover, another possible reason for L2 learners’ erroneous production of collocations is the transparency of the meaning of the collocations. Laufer and Waldman (2011) and Peters (2012) claim that certain collocations with transparency in meaning are unlikely to cause problem in comprehension. Conversely, it would pose problem in the production process. As exemplified by Laufer and Girsai (2008), L2 learners assumed that the apparent meaning of the collocation “carry the burden” allowed for substitution to be made, as in “carry the problem”. In addition to this, an earlier study by Nesselhauf (2005) documented that the German-speaking English learners were deceived by similar transparency in meaning of the collocation “do homework” which is compared against the German formation “make homework” or “*Hausaufgaben machen*”. Laufer (2011) suggests that L2 learners are susceptible to making such errors because they have fallen into the trap of “deceptive compatibility”. This means that L2 learners are unaware that

collocations are combined based on certain combinatorial restrictions and that there are formal differences between the L1 and L2 collocations.

Finally, another factor for collocational errors among L2 learners is approximation. L2 learners may resort to using word which they assume to have semantic likeness with the target items (Hong, Rahim, Hua and Salehuddin, 2014). Approximation was examined to be the second most prominent source of errors in collocations especially pertaining to the noun element. In this sense, the L2 learners resorted to approximation in order to reduce the linguistic load when the correct structure is not apparent to them (Boers, Demecheleer, Coxhead & Webb, 2014). For example, the learners in the study by Hong, Rahim, Hua and Salehuddin (2014, p. 40) approximated the word ‘cutting’ as in “cutting some flowers” as having a close proximity to the target structure “picking some flowers”.

In conclusion, language instructors need to determine the ways to overcome the factors of errors as discussed above. This is imperative in order to help the L2 learners overcome the final hurdle of collocational difficulty so that they may possess similar depth of understanding of formulaic sequences as native speakers.

2.6 Data Analysis Framework

As mentioned before, the main objective of the study is to explore the learners’ lack of knowledge in the use of verb-noun collocations. For this matter, the evaluation of the learners’ writing was not graded holistically using the rubric prescribed by Lembaga Peperiksaan Malaysia which outlines the descriptors for Ujian Penilaian Sekolah Rendah (UPSR) marking scheme. Only the learners’ erroneous productions of verb-noun collocations were analyzed and included in the counting while other writing components such as content, punctuation and overall coherence were disregarded.

To achieve the above aim, Hunston and Francis' (2000, p. 124) framework for analyzing syntactic patterns of verbs for verb-noun collocations was used as a standard guideline. The framework was a pivotal part of the analysis, in order to identify all the grammatical elements and structures which are recurrently associated with verb-noun collocations. It is crucial to this study as the elements may alter and contribute to the overall meaning of the word.

Table 2.4: Syntactical verb patterns

Main patterns	Sub-patterns	Examples
The verb + single noun group or clause	i. Verb noun (V n)	Save the lady
	ii. Verb + plural noun (V pl-n)	Saw two girls
	iii. V amount	Thank the three
The verb + preposition or a noun group	i. Verb prep noun	Fall into the river

(Hunston & Francis, 2000, p. 124)

According to Hornby (1954), the learning of a language should not only be about meaning - making. He advocates that a learner should also learn how different linguistic elements are assembled. For instance, the writing of sentences may include elements such as articles, prepositions and possessive markers (Hunston & Francis, 2000). Therefore, the framework became the medium of reference throughout the analysis of the written production to ensure that any verb-patterns can be accurately identified whenever attempts at constructing verb-noun collocations are made. This way, felicitous and accurate use of collocations can be differentiated and documented. Conclusively, consistency in scoring and evaluation of the writing was enhanced because only one framework was used throughout the study.

Additionally, after all the relevant verb-noun collocations were identified syntactically, the researcher referred to the framework by Nesselhauf (2005, p. 251)

which is a framework for categorizing collocational errors. By referring to a framework which has been used and established before, the consistency in the error quantification and tabulation can be sustained throughout the analysis (Creswell, 2014).

Table 2.5: Collocational error framework

Error Types		Examples
Verb	wrong choice of verb (or non existent verb)	*carry out races AUG: hold races
Noun	wrong choice of noun (or non existent noun)	*close lacks AUG: close gaps
Usage 1	Combination exists but is not used correctly	*take notice AUG: to notice
Usage 2	Combination does not exist	*hold children within bounds AUG: hold children within boundaries
Preposition	Preposition of a prepositional verb missing, present though unacceptable, or wrong	*fail in one's exams AUG: fail one's exam
Table 2.5: Continued		
Determiner	Article missing, present though unacceptable, or wrong	*get the permission AUG: get permission
Number	Noun used in the singular instead of the plural or vice versa	*pass one's judgments AUG: pass judgment

(Nesselhauf, 2005, p. 251)

2.7 Teaching Instrument/Focused Tasks

In order to achieve the aforementioned study objectives, the teaching instrument is essential to gauge the outcome intended. In this study, focused tasks were used as the teaching instruments. Prior to the tasks selection, the framework by Ellis (2003) as cited in Uriarte (2013, p. 3) became the guidelines for ensuring that the tasks fulfill the study's intent. In the tasks selection and adaptation processes, the following elements in the

framework were closely referred to in order to ensure that the tasks encompassed the following:

- 1) a *goal* which is the overall purpose of the selected tasks
- 2) *input*, which refers to the contextual information provided through the materials
- 3) *conditions*, which reflect how the input is presented or delivered
- 4) *processes* that harness the learners' interaction when using the tasks
- 5) *intended outcomes* for the designated tasks

(Uriarte, 2013, p. 3)

Johnson (2000) as cited in Ellis (2003) explains that focused tasks are important in a teacher's resource because they provide a platform for teaching and highlighting specific linguistic items. The items can then be discussed and attended to, through communicative processes. The communicative processes during the task completion, as highlighted by Nation (2001), need to cover different features of words (form, meaning and use) and work in parallel with the learners' thinking processes. This means that the learners should be able to discuss and negotiate their understanding of the input in the tasks, obtain feedback on their production and subsequently manipulate and adjust their output (Pica, 1994). In this light, the requirements for the tasks design were parallel to the framework suggested by Ellis (2003).

Essentially, three focused tasks were adapted and used alongside the Focus on Form (FonF) instruction and non FonF instruction. The focused tasks adapted were "insert the collocation" task, "cloze passage" task and "sentence formation" task. Newton (2001) posits that along the steps leading to requiring the learners to produce specific linguistic items in their language production, the tasks used need to reflect how language can be

used pragmatically to achieve an outcome as well as able to be evaluated and to check whether the intended content has been conveyed.

Hence, the first two tasks, “insert the collocation” task and “cloze passage” task as used and screened by Boers, Demecheleer, Coxhead and Webb (2014) were adapted. The tasks or as the researchers termed as “exercise” were intently studied and evaluated to ensure that they have “ecological validity” in that the tasks were able to reflect or convey real-life settings; in this study, a real language learning classroom conditions. In the “insert the collocation” task, the participants dealt with collocations as intact wholes and in contextually appropriate format. In completing the task, the participants had to evaluate the contexts and chose the best intact collocations given from a set of answer options (McCarthy & O’Dell, 2005). Boers, Demecheleer, Coxhead and Webb (2014) support the use of this task by explaining that the task design gives the participants processing advantage due to the holistic representation of the collocations. It is further explained that the task stimulated the learners’ semantic processing. This is because in order to complete the task, the learners were required to assess the contextual content and decide which one matches the semantics of the given collocations.

The second task which was the “cloze passage” task is essentially a matching exercise in the form of gapped sentences followed by a set of answer options. The learners were required to attend to the task in a holistic manner considering that the gapped sentences were appropriately contextualized (McCarthy & O’Dell, 2005). In the task, the parts where the learners were required to fill in were the parts where verbs were missing. Although Wray (2002) cautions that the task appeared to be militating against holistic processing of collocations, the task was able to direct the learners’ attention to the verb as the part most prone to erroneous substitutions. Therefore, fulfilling this study’s intent, the task enabled the learners to process the collocations in meaningful, sentential context

and thus provided indirect exposure to the typical combinations of verb-noun collocations.

In spite of this advantage, the possibility of the task becoming a guessing game was still possible. This is because the verb part of the verb-noun collocations may or may not be semantically restricted, hence allowing more than one possible combinations to be used, especially if the verb-noun collocations are not familiar to the learners. However, based on the Focus on Form instruction, the participants were able to negotiate and confirm their understanding with the instructor whenever any problems occurred. Therefore, this risk was minimized.

Thirdly, the “sentence formation” task was adapted in alignment to Yunus and Awab (2011). In the task, the learners were required to construct a single sentence for each verb-noun collocation provided in the task. The task was intended as a platform for encouraging the learners to produce the verb-noun collocations in a written format. According to Wray (2002) and Nation (2001), allowing the learners to process the specified linguistic items and then to subsequently produce it would establish a firm association between the learned combinations and the possible ways the verb-noun collocations can be incorporated (Boers & Lindstromberg, 2012). Conclusively, the three adapted tasks worked coherently, in that the first two tasks presented the learners with intact models of the verb-noun collocations before requiring the learners to draw exclusively from their prior knowledge in the final task; the instrument which helped to delegate the overall intended learning outcome (Richards & Bolke, 2011).

Concurrently, in the adaptation process, the overall goals of the teaching instrument and materials were derived from the analysis of the learners’ predicament in the learning of collocations. On deciding upon the content for the teaching instrument, the key aspect in adapting the materials was the learner errors. In simple term, McDonough, Shaw and

Manuhara (2013) explain that the content is the most important guiding principle of what needs to be taught and acquired. Therefore, material adaptation needs to illustrate the “theory” and the “practice” of language as interdependent. Subsequently, the next step in designing the instructional materials were to precisely arrange the content to be learnt, deciding upon the choice of topics and the language items to be included in the materials.

Pertaining to this, the content arrangement and the range of topics and language item required for the focused tasks were in alignment with McCarthy and O’Dell (2005). The decision was made in accordance to Boers, Demecheleer, Coxhead and Webb (2014) in which their detailed analysis of the book “English Collocations in Use” revealed that it is the best-established exercise book for learners as the collocations are appropriately-contextualized rather than being presented in a sequential manner and isolated. Importantly, the topics covered in the book are also intended for learners at intermediate level of proficiency; compatible to the participants’ level in the current study. The table below outlines the range of topics covered in the teaching content from McCarthy and O’Dell (2005) which were compatible to the syllabus content covered by the Primary School Standards-Based Curriculum (KSSR) for Malaysian English learners.

Table 2.6: Content topic comparison

Content Topic Comparison	
McCarthy and O’Dell (2005)	Malaysian Primary School Standards-Based Curriculum (KSSR) (2011)
1. Travel and the environment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ weather ○ travel ○ countryside ○ towns and cities 2. People and relationships <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ People: character and behavior ○ People: Physical Appearance ○ Families ○ Feelings and Emotions 3. Leisure and lifestyle <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Houses, flats and rooms ○ Eating and drinking ○ Films and books 	World of Self, family & Friends <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Our Community ○ Be Safe ○ Unity in Diversity ○ Good Values ○ Family Day ○ Appreciating Others ○ Family Ties World of Knowledge <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Spending Wisely ○ Yesterday and Today ○ Care for the Sea

Table 2.6: Continued

McCarthy and O'Dell (2005)	Malaysian Primary School Standards-Based Curriculum (KSSR) (2011)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Music ○ Sport ○ Health and Illness <p>4. Work and Study</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Computers ○ Study and learning ○ Work ○ Business 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Blogging ○ Work hard, Work Smart ○ Malaysian Legends ○ Unique Buildings ○ Healthy and Wise ○ Be Aware, Take Care <p>World of Stories</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The King's Decision ○ Gulliver's Travel ○ Akbar's Dream ○ The Wizard of Oz ○ The Jungle Book ○ Oliver Twist

As the table illustrates, the teaching content in both the KSSR curriculum and the book devoted to teaching collocations, covered a broad pattern of knowledge and were comparable to one another. The content to be taught is intertwined to interesting themes and is practiced in a real-world setting. This way, the language context prescribed to the participants through the focused tasks was in no way foreign or unfamiliar.

2.8 Summary

In brief, this study is underpinned by the interactionist position which places importance on the role of interaction within language learning. This study is further framed by the revised strand of FFI which is Focus on Form (FonF). Both the interactionist position and FonF approach adopted in this study, centralized the view that in order for language learning to occur, interaction between the facilitator and the learners are crucial to ensure optimal effects of the instruction as well as to enhance comprehension.

More importantly, the interactionist position does not limit language learning solely to facilitative classroom engagement. Rather, the role of input and input saliency are two

constructs which are equally important in achieving collocational competence. To achieve input saliency and contextually appropriate input, focused tasks are used in the study. The three focused tasks acted as catalysts which work in alignment with Focus on Form (FonF) instruction, as they provide a medium for highlighting and directing learners' attention to the targeted linguistic items.

Imperatively, the approach to teaching collocations cannot be conclusively directed to a single specific instructional strategy. It is pivotal that various factors be accounted for such as learning conditions, the learners' readiness and level of proficiency. Likewise, the decision related to the selection of collocations to be taught can also be challenging owing to the need to achieve the designated learning outcomes.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter describes the study's research design as well as the procedural details conducted in the study. The primary description entails the overall research design, the participants and the teaching and testing instruments. The subsequent section is a description of the data collection, the procedures undertaken during the course of the study and finally the data analysis.

3.1 Research Design

As stated previously in Chapter One, this study aims to ascertain the assumptions that Form Focused Instruction has the potential effects to augment the learners' use of verb-noun collocations in their writing. The study compares the effectiveness of form focused instruction against non form focused instruction which places emphasis on the learning of collocations through explicit grammar teaching and drilling based on the traditional Present-Practice-Production (PPP) model. Conclusively, this study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What are the types of verb-noun collocational errors found in L2 learners' writing after focus on form instruction?
2. To what extent does focus on form instruction augment and enhance the construction of verb-noun collocations?

3.1.1 The Participants

This study was undertaken in a suburban primary school in Kuala Lumpur Federal Territory. Prior to the conduct of the study, the potential participants were given consent forms to seek permission from their legal guardians or parents. It was made clear that the study would not pose any obvious risk to the participants and they may withdraw from the study if they are required to. Following the procedure, 30 participants were identified. The participants were Year 6 students, aged 12. Throughout their primary schooling years, the participants had undergone a curriculum reform which is the Primary School Standards-Based Curriculum (KSSR). With the reformation of the curriculum standard, the Standards-Based English Language Curriculum (SBELC) was designed following a modular structure. A part of the curriculum includes reading literacy, penmanship and language arts to encourage application of English Language extending outside of instructional setting. The other part of the curriculum incorporates critical and creative thinking skills as well as reasoning skills which are meant to boost the pupils' ability to solve problems.

Additionally, the participants are given the opportunity to express themselves based on the four language skills; listening, speaking, reading and writing. A fragment of the curriculum encourages innovative language use based on a language arts module. The module provides the ability for the participants to be exposed to different literary genres such as poems, short stories and graphic novels. In essence, innovative language use is cultivated through the participants engagement in planning, organising, producing and performing creative works using the English language (Curriculum Development Division, 2011). Even before this study took place, the participants were exposed to using the language through dramatization, role-playing and the production of creative works such as writing blog entries and newspaper columns.

Furthermore, with the emergence of the curriculum, no single method of teaching is encouraged. For the aims to be achieved, the curriculum itself demands that the teachers design activities and assessments which enable the participants' cognitive levels to be heightened rather than resorting to rote learning skills. Hence, where appropriate and relevant, the curriculum emphasizes the need to align to Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS). According to the KSSR curriculum, HOTS encompasses the ability to apply knowledge, skills and values along with reasoning and reflective problem-solving skills. In the study, the participants identified were regularly assessed in school through formative and summative assessments in the forms of reading comprehension and writing assessments.

Moreover, in integration with the curriculum, the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) was referred to in order to identify the pupils' levels of language skills for the four literacy skills; listening, speaking, reading and writing. Each language skill is outlined in detail and provides indication of the pupils' existing language abilities. In the study, the participants' level of English proficiency is at B1 for preliminary schools (independent user / threshold level) based on CEFR. The records of their academic performance were provided by the administration of the research site. At B1 level of English, the pupils are indicated to have sufficient proficiency to interact with English speakers on familiar topics. According to the detailed CEFR guidelines, the pupils at B1 level are able to carry out the following language functions:

- i. understand main points of standard input on regular and familiar matters encountered at work, school, leisure, etc.
- ii. able to deal with circumstances likely to occur whilst being in areas where the language is spoken

- iii. able to produce simple, intermediate connected texts on topics which are associated with personal interests
- iv. able to experience and provide descriptions of events, dreams, ambitions, hopes and support with reasons and explanations

(Cambridge Assessment English, 2018)

With reference to the pupils' level, the pupils were suitable candidates for accomplishing the intended purpose which required them to produce free writing. In this sense, the participants' language abilities enabled them to use the language readily during the study; with little to no scaffolding.

Moreover, the research site consisted of pupils with various background, occupying the three major races in Malaysia; Malay, Chinese and Indian. The participants were conveniently sampled to gather pupils who were at intermediate level as per the study's purpose. The participants consisted of 14 females and 16 males. They were 14 Malay, 6 Chinese and 10 Indian pupils. Based on the different backgrounds, the pupils also spoke different native languages which are Malay, Chinese and Tamil language respectively. Therefore, it is pivotal to note that the study may be predisposed to the influence of the difference in the learners' L1 background and the level of L2 proficiency at the time the instruction is administered. This is postulated by behaviorists such as Skinner (1971) whereby he states that the old habits of the L1 may inevitably cause a certain level of interference to the learning process of new habits of the L2. It is further predicted that while similarities between the L1 and L2 may facilitate learning, differences between the systems of two languages may also result in negative transfer and erroneous language productions (Nation, 2001).

For this reason, to reduce the effect of the various influences, the participants were randomly distributed to the experimental (n=15) and the control group (n=15). This

randomization is done using “Research Randomizer” tool to generate random numbers assigned to the participants in order to form the respective groups. This step ensured that any systematic differences among the participants were equally distributed to both groups. The only difference between the groups was the intervention itself (Creswell, 2014). Additionally, in order to be ethically sound, after the intervention had concluded which was after the 6 weeks, the control group was given similar instruction as the experimental group so that the learners would also acquire the learning benefits.

3.1.2 Testing Instrument and Validity

In preparation of the testing instrument which was the writing task, a few important conditions were accounted for. First and foremost, Reid and Kroll (1995) mention that the writing task should take into consideration the learners’ perspective in that the purpose of the writing should be for the learners to demonstrate their comprehension of the task requirement; most importantly in the ways anticipated by the instructor. In addition to fulfilling the study’s objectives, Reid and Kroll (1995) outline that the writing task should be:

- appropriately contextualized and authentic – in that the task stimuli had a close proximity to classroom tasks and one which the learners are were to make association between the assignment and the real world
- designed with reference to familiar content so that the learners’ existing schema and newly gained knowledge could be linked together for the writing tasks
- engaging and contextually realistic in order for the learners’ attention and interest can be retained and transferred to the instructor/evaluator
- evaluated in tandem with suitable and consistent evaluation framework or criteria which reflect the assignment goals

In lieu of the prescribed conditions, the first step taken was to ensure that the task used as the testing instrument is authentic. The format of the task which was used preliminarily as the pretest was adapted in alignment with the Primary School Standards-Based Curriculum (KSSR) which was at suitable level for the learners. The writing task consisted of a series of pictures illustrating “A Day at The Beach”. The task was sourced from the English Curriculum Teacher’s Guidebook which was supplied by the Ministry of Education. Hence, the scope of the task and stimulus fulfilled the level of the learners’ existing schema. Additionally, the task topic and context adhered to CEFR which states that at B1 level, pupils are able to understand topics associated to their personal interests and likely to occur in daily lives.

Furthermore, the topic assigned to the task encouraged learners’ engagement. The task allowed the learners’ thought processes to be stimulated in that they had to write an event which required a beginning, continuous action in the content as well as an imaginable ending. Besides that, a subsequent requirement that should be accounted for prior to any implementation of an instrument was to check and evaluate its content validity. The primary understanding is that adapting an instrument is more practical and reliable than designing an entire instrument from scratch (Creswell, 2014). Validity is imperative to confirm that an instrument is able to measure what it is intended for. According to Siegle (2004), an instrument is considered valid when the outcome of the instrument permits appropriate inferences to be made about the specific group and aims. In this study’s context, the testing instrument can be asserted to have content validity as it enabled the participants to produce written production according to the requirement of the study.

In order to check the validity of the writing task, two English teachers who are experts in UPSR marking were consulted. The two teachers both with 12 and 15 years of teaching experience respectively, were referred to in order to examine whether the series of

pictures and the probing questions (included as stimuli in alignment to UPSR format) were adequate and will be able to assist the pupils' writing as intended. Conclusively, the two experts showed mutual agreement on the aspects given in the task. Therefore, it can be confirmed that the writing task is valid specific to the purpose and the participants of the study.

As mentioned before, the main objective of the study was to explore the learners' knowledge in the use of verb-noun collocations. For this matter, the evaluation of the learners' writing was not graded holistically using the rubric prescribed by Lembaga Peperiksaan Malaysia which outlines the descriptors for Ujian Penilaian Sekolah Rendah (UPSR) marking scheme. Only the learners' erroneous productions of verb-noun collocations were analyzed and included in the counting while other writing components such as content, punctuation and overall coherence were disregarded. As has been mentioned in the previous chapter, the framework for analyzing syntactic patterns of verbs for verb-noun collocations by Hunston and Francis (2000) was used as a standard guideline to identify the errors made pertaining to the use of verb-noun collocations.

3.2 Preliminary Pretest and Analysis

The first phase of the study began with a preliminary pretest using the testing instrument which was the writing task mentioned previously. The pretest was administered by the researcher a week prior to the intervention to allow adequate time to analyze the participants' writing. The pretest was administered simultaneously to both groups (experimental and control group) in a computer lab at the research site. During the pretest, the task was administered with specific guidelines. To ensure that the length of the writing for all the participants was comparable, the participants were instructed to produce a writing which did not exceed 120 words and not less than 100 words. The time allotted for the task was 45 minutes which was similar to the UPSR testing condition and

which the participants have been accustomed to. It was decided through numerous previous writing tasks that the duration given was reasonable and that the participants has adequate time to plan, write and revise their work. The main aim of the pretest was to examine the types of errors in the use of verb-noun collocations found in the learners' written production. The outcome gathered from the pretest served as a baseline data to enable comparisons of the participants' performance after the focus on form instruction.

For the preliminary analysis of the pretest data, the total number of words written was counted manually (considering the small number of scripts). The counting ended once the maximum number of words was written. To guide the analysis of the pretest written production, the syntactic verb patterns framework by Hunston and Francis (2000) was consistently revisited. Based on the categories of verb sub-patterns, all occurrences of verb-noun collocations were extracted. As discussed previously, the pretest data was used to identify the types of verb-noun collocation errors made by the participants prior to the intervention. To ensure the reliability and accuracy of the analysis, the same experts who validated the testing instrument were referred to reaffirm the identified erroneous patterns and the suggested corrections. This was done judge the accuracy or inaccuracy of the verb-noun collocations produced in the writing. Besides that, to ensure that the verb-noun collocations really existed, the Oxfords Collocations Dictionary was used to eliminate and rule out possible misconception of the collocations.

Integral to the checking of the collocations, other measures were also taken during the preliminary analysis. In counting the patterns, any repeated occurrence (in each participant's writing) will only be counted as one. To reiterate, the objective of the pretest was to identify the types of errors made by the participants in their use of verb-noun collocations. Fundamental to this objective was using the identified errors as the source for the teaching instruments which were three focused tasks. To finalize the analysis of

the pretest data, the frequency count of the most salient errors committed was tabulated to illustrate the patterns which the participants had the most problem with.

3.2.1 Findings from the Preliminary Pretest Analysis

Table 3.1 presented the frequency count of the most salient erroneous patterns of the verb-noun collocations in the pretest writing task. The tabulated data shows that the participants produced a rather significant number of erroneous patterns in their writing which amounts to 35 errors out of the 73 patterns used; which is almost half from the overall use of the verb-noun collocations.

Table 3.1: Pretest error count

Pretest	Control group (CG)	Experimental group (EG)	CG + EG
No. of words	1650	1575	3225
No. of patterns	40	33	73
Accurate V-N coll.	23	15	38
Erroneous V-N coll.	17	18	35

This pre-intervention finding could be explained in that the participants do not have sufficient existing knowledge of collocations to be aware of the verb-patterns when constructing the collocations. As previously suggested by Hunston and Francis (2000), the knowledge of how different linguistic elements are used together is pivotal for constructing accurate sentence structure. Hence, a frequency count of the various erroneous collocations was tabulated to provide a more detailed categorization of the inaccuracies in the verb-noun collocations as shown in table 3.2 below.

Table 3.2: Collocation error frequency count

V-N Collocations with Errors	Frequency Count
have a fun	2
go to home	5
get advantage	3
look at outside	3
tell to her	4
make argument	1
have try	3
give an attention	2
do preparation	4
make experience	1
make a surprise	5
take a change	1

First and foremost, in line with the framework, the participants displayed a lack of skill for using different syntactic patterns in using the verb-noun collocations. For instance, there is evidence of the deviant use of the article “a” in the collocations “*have a fun*” and correspondingly deviant use of preposition in the collocation “*go to home*”. Butler (2002) explains that one of the key factors which hindered accurate use of articles among L2 learners is the notion of countability of nouns. It is explained that the categorization of nouns in the English language as countable and uncountable nouns constitutes a difficulty for the L2 learners. This is because some nouns such as “experience” may assume the countable and uncountable forms based on their contextual intent. Butler (2002) exemplifies where someone’s experience in China can be contrasted with the amount or level of experience someone might have in a field.

In this sense, the above error in “have a fun” may have occurred due to not fully understanding that the noun “fun” is not a concept that can be quantified as opposed to when the noun “fun” is followed by a notion of activity as in “have a fun boat ride” (Miller, 2005). Similar problem occurred in the combination “give an attention” in which case the L2 learner illustrated that they might have problems in categorizing the more

abstract concept of nouns. Hence, the countability of nouns may still be a concept which is difficult to fully grasp considering the various types of nouns; some of which are abstract and concrete (Miller, 2005). In extension, this adds to the apparent problem of deciding whether articles are necessary.

Moreover, the preliminary analysis also revealed that the learners have problems in using prepositions in the construction of the verb-noun collocations. It is evident in inaccuracies such as “go to home” “tell to her” and “look at outside”. Based on the types of prepositional errors produced, Chodorow and Gamon (2010) articulate that L2 learners faced the problem because a verb may sometimes require a preposition and on other instances it may not, depending on the context. To illustrate, the verb “look” in “look at me” requires the preposition “at” to signify the direction in which the hearer or reader should focus on. On the contrary, at other times, the verb “look” in “look outside” showed an absence of prepositions and is still able to convey similar intention of directing one’s attention to a point (Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman, 1999). Hence, this phenomenon is a viable explanation for the prepositional errors produced in the learners’ use of verb-noun collocations.

Furthermore, the L2 learners showed L1 influence in their use of prepositions. It is apparent in the error “go to home” whereby in the Malay language, the action of making the journey home is expressed as “*pulang ke rumah*” (DBP Sah Bahasa, 2018) as compared to the English equivalent “go home”. Hong, Rahim, Hua and Salehuddin (2011) highlighted similar example in their study where the L2 learners produced the collocation “fall in the river” as the equivalent to the expression “*jatuh ke dalam sungai*”. This evidence was remarked to be an ignorance of rule restrictions whereby the learners attempted to apply the same linguistic elements of a particular structure in their L1 in their L2. The study further posited that in doing so, the learners were unable to consider

the grammaticality and collocational restrictions. In conclusion, the preliminary analysis and findings of the pretest paved the way for the researcher to design the appropriate tasks and teaching instruments which could remedy the problems encountered by the L2 learners in using the verb-noun collocations.

3.3 The Use of Focused Tasks

As previously discussed, the pretest helped to ascertain the participants' problems in constructing verb-noun collocations. The erroneous patterns of verb-noun collocations were subsequently used as the content of the teaching instrument used during the instruction. According to Laufer and Girsai (2008) and Peters (2012), by deliberately selecting the appropriate items appeared to be most problematic, the L2 learners' pace of collocation acquisition can be encouraged and heightened. As discussed in the previous chapter, when the items are taught based on the learners' needs, the outcome of the learning would be more enhanced compared to when collocations are merely discussed following a syllabus plan. To reiterate, three focused tasks were administered to both the experimental and control group; "insert the collocation", "cloze passage" and "sentence formation" tasks.

3.4 Intervention Procedures for FonF and Non FonF groups

Essentially, a week after the pretest was conducted and the outcome was analyzed, the session for both the focus on form (FonF) and non FonF approaches commenced. As previously explained, the preliminary findings which revealed the most salient forms of errors produced in the construction of the verb-noun collocations became the source for designing and managing the content of the teaching instruments. The accurate forms of the twelve most salient erroneous patterns of verb-noun collocations (as illustrated in table 3.2) were assessed against the Oxford Collocations Dictionary in order to rule out

possible misconception of the collocations. As the treatment was administered over a duration of 6 weeks, the 12 patterns were distributed evenly across the 6 weeks to ensure that adequate attention was given to each pattern. Crucially, repeated discussion of similar patterns of the collocations in the focused tasks with various contexts was conducted to enhance the participants' comprehension and to further familiarize the participants with the collocations. This coincides with the standpoint that "it is the repeated meetings with an item, noticing it in context, which converts them into intake" (Lewis, 2000, p. 169).

Fundamentally, in order to investigate the effects of the Form Focused Instruction (FFI) in bringing about change to the learners' use of verb-noun collocations in their written production, two approaches, namely Focus on Form (FonF) approach and the non Focus on Form (non FonF) approach were compared. This section of this study entails the differences in the two approaches and the procedures carried out in both the experimental and control group. The components of lesson for both groups are outlined as below.

Table 3.3: Intervention procedures

	FonF (Experimental)	Non FonF (Control)
Orientation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Language as a tool ○ Teacher as a facilitator and learner as negotiator of knowledge 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Language as an object of study ○ Teacher as provider of knowledge and learner as the receiver of knowledge
Type of learning	Planned	Intentional
Primary Focus	Form	Meaning
Secondary Focus	Meaning	Form
Teaching Organization	Task-Based	P-P-P Model (Present, Practice & Production)
Lesson organization/components	Pre-task (20 minutes) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ teacher & learner interaction ○ discussion of input and input enhancement 	Presentation (20 minutes) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ rule explanation ○ discussion of examples

Table 3.3: Continued

	FonF (Experimental)	Non FonF (control)
Lesson organization/components	Task (30 minutes) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Insert the Collocation ○ Cloze Passage ○ Sentences formation Consolidation (10 minutes)	Practice & Production (40 minutes) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Insert the Collocation ○ Cloze Passage Discussion and checking of answers Sentence Formation

First and foremost, the experimental (intervention) session commenced a week after the pretest was carried out. The participants were given a one-hour treatment each; the non FonF group subsequently received their treatment right after the FonF group completed their session. At this point in the study, it was well informed that the study was potentially exposed to a validity threat. This is due to diffusion of treatment as Creswell (2014) explained wherein the participants in the control group and experimental group might communicate with each other and share information about the treatment. Therefore, in order to reduce the threat, the sessions for each group were conducted in different classrooms and one session commenced after one has ended to prevent leakage of information prior to either group's session. In essence, the intervention consisted of 12 teaching hours distributed evenly over the course of 6 weeks; 1 hour per session, twice a week. The teaching hours were similar for both FonF and non FonF groups.

Primarily, the Focus on Form (FonF) operated with reference to the inductive approach. Within the approach, the treatment involved the learners attempting to arrive at a rule independently wherein they went through the input containing the examples of the target structure. Subsequent to that, the learners then formulated their understanding of how the target structure operates via negotiation of meaning with the instructor. Additionally, a significant aspect which delineates the approach from traditional orientation of learning is the role assumed by the teacher and the learners. The focus on

form approach places the instructor as a facilitator who scaffolds the learning; whereas learners play the role of language users.

The FonF approach entails that learning occurs in times where linguistic problem arise and in response to the problems, the teacher would facilitate the learners to comprehend the input by encouraging a two-way interaction. During the intervention, the participants in the experimental group were led to interact with the instructor during the pre-task stage. The instructor began the interaction by discussing the input through input enhancement (Laufer, 2006; Loewen, 2010). As a dimension in Focus on Form, input enhancement enabled the discussed input to be further emphasized. The emphasis was placed upon the input by bolding or underlining the target structure so that the saliency of the input can be increased and hence more likely to be noticed (Ellis, 2012). The input presented during the pre-task stage was contextualized examples of inaccuracies in the use of verb-noun collocations in the written production from the pretest. This way, the learners attended to the input and processed the form and contextual elements simultaneously to understand the meaning of the collocations through the interaction (Wray, 2002; Broukal, 2002). Although no explicit grammar explanation was prescribed to the participants during the interaction, the instructor guided the participants by eliciting insights and opinions about the inaccuracies evident in the sentences. In response to the interaction, the participants were encouraged to share their understanding of the input and in turn provide other known collocations.

Subsequently, the “task” stage required the participants to attend to three tasks; insert the collocation, cloze passage and sentence formation tasks. Throughout the task completion, within FonF approach, facilitative strategies were allowed whenever the participants faced linguistic problems. The strategies in which both the instructor and the participants were engaged in consisted of requesting and providing feedback, clarification

and repetition of input and comprehension checks (Nassaji, 2000). Therefore, whenever inaccuracies were spotted, the instructor facilitated the participants by providing feedback and guided them to alter their production. In this vein, the interaction took place whenever a problem surfaced and thus the participants were not merely supplied the correct answers. Instead, they were guided to check upon their production based on the feedback and facilitation provided. In this light, the learners in the FonF group were allowed to practise ownership in their learning and exercise independent control over the process of learning (Moate & Cox, 2015).

This is in contrast to the P-P-P model where the learning process often emphasizes pattern-drilling and practise without in-depth exploration of the target structure. The final step of the session was the consolidation stage. Discussions to finalize the input and to reflect on the tasks were done to enable the participants to check their comprehension of the input after each session. This way, the instructor was able to provide clarification or contradiction on the participants' understanding of the target structure at the time. Conclusively, similar procedure took place for all experimental intervention sessions which lasted 6 weeks.

On the contrary, the session within the non FonF approach operated based on the Present-Practice-Production (P-P-P) model (Lewis, 2000; Ellis, 2001). As opposed to the FonF approach where learners acted as language users, the learners involved in the non FonF approach assumed the role of language users who viewed language as an object of study. Commencing from the presentation stage, the instructor held the authority as a know-all; the sole disseminator of knowledge and input throughout the learning session. Based on the non FonF approach, the instructor and the learners were aware of the primary purpose of learning which was to learn a preselected form and study it intensively to ensure the grasp of knowledge of the target structure (Spada & Lightbown, 2008).

In the initial stage of the non FonF session, the instructor provided the learners with structured input (Ellis, 2001) whereby the input entailed plentiful examples of the target structure. The input contained many examples of the verb-noun collocations without contextualized presentation. Using the given examples and input, the instructor provided explicit explanation of the linguistic elements which made up the verb-noun collocations. The learners were also given extensive explanation of grammar rules for forming the collocations. In this vein, the structured input reflected a more traditional approach to language teaching as it involved pattern-drilling and exercises to sustain the learned structure (Laufer, 2006). Following the traditional model, the learners' attention was repeatedly directed to specific verb-noun collocation patterns in order to familiarize the learners with the construction of collocations. Crucial to note, the non FonF approach matched the deductive learning process (DeKeyser, 1995). A deductive learning process became a part of the non FonF approach as the instructor presented the rules for collocation formation to the learners. Paired with an abundance of examples, the learners acted as receiver of knowledge; digesting the knowledge and subsequently regurgitate the learned structure for task completion (Loewen, 2018).

Following the presentation stage was the practise stage. The learners were given the first two tasks, "insert the collocation" and "cloze passage" tasks. At this stage, both tasks were assigned as a mean for checking the learners' understanding of the target structure from the presentation. Imperatively, the tasks facilitated the learners to achieve accuracy of the forms to be used later in the production stage. In accordance to this aim, Criado (2013) asserts that the teacher's control is still highly reflected within the non FonF approach. The control was exercised where the learners were directed to undergo drilling practise of the target structure so that accuracy can be achieved in the production stage. Following the completion of the tasks, the instructor and the learners then engaged in a whole class discussion to check the answers. Throughout the discussion, the instructor

asked the learners to present their answers which the instructor then indicated to be accurate or inaccurate. Repeated explanation of grammatical rules and the accurate forms of the target structure were explicitly supplied whenever the discussion required so. This was done so that the learners mastered the target structure before moving on to the next sessions as the PPP model advocated “an approach to teaching language items based on a sequential and structural manner where the items are presented and practiced to ensure sufficient skill for the later production (Tomlinson, 2011, p. 28).

The final imperative step of the P-P-P model is the production stage. In contrast to the experimental stage, the learners in the non FonF group were assigned the “sentence formation” task as a final task to be completed independently. It was assumed that following the previous two stages, the learners would have increased fluency in the use of the linguistic items and hence required to use the sentence writing task to express “autonomous and creative use” (Tomlinson, 2011). Crucially, the production stage mimicked the traditional setting of a classroom wherein the learners’ production in the tasks were marked and evaluated; eventually providing insights to the instructor whether the learners have been able to master the target structure. Similar to the FonF experimental group, similar procedures as explained were administered throughout the ongoing sessions over the course of 6 weeks.

3.5 Posttest

As mentioned previously, in order to be able to make comparisons of the participants’ use of verb-noun collocations prior and after the intervention, a pretest was initially conducted to document the participants’ existing schema of the notion of collocations. Data after the 6 weeks intervention course was then collected using similar testing instrument which has been employed during the pretest. The posttest was carried out as a mean of investigating the extent to which the instructions have been able to augment

the learners' use of verb-noun collocations. Fundamentally, the posttest was administered to both the experimental and control groups a week after the final session for each group has ended.

As the posttest was assigned, both groups took the test in the same classroom which was similar to the pretest testing conditions. Both groups received instruction which specified the general requirement of the task; the participants were instructed to produce writing about "A Day at the beach" which does not exceed 120 words and not less than 100 words. The time allotted for the task was 45 minutes which was similar to the UPSR testing condition as has been discussed earlier. In order to avoid being obtrusive, the instructor did not mention that the learners should incorporate the use of the verb-noun collocations they have learned. Rather, it was assumed that after the intervention, the learners would to certain extent, attempt to apply the target structure in their written production.

3.6 Quantitative Analysis of Pretest and Posttest Data

Pertaining to the study, the participants' knowledge and their use of verb-noun collocations in their written production were measured at two-time points; at pretest prior to the intervention and another point at posttest a week after the 6 week-course / intervention concluded. The analysis of the data collected from both pretest and posttest would inform the researcher of the gain or deterioration of the participants' extent of use of the verb-noun collocations as a result of both FonF and non FonF approaches. Essentially, the data analysis was done in accordance to the objective of the study which was guided by the research questions.

Before the overall analysis was carried out, the researcher and another coder extracted all the verb-noun collocations which were attempted by the learners in the posttest. The

inter-coder was a crucial aspect of the data analysis in order to ensure consistency and reliability in the manual extraction of verb-noun collocations in the writing. The inter-coder was the similar trained and experienced English instructor who validated the testing and teaching instruments for the study. Considering that the number of scripts were small (60 scripts accumulated from both pretest and posttest), both the researcher and inter-coder decided that manually checking the writing was possible.

The first step in the analysis of the data was to manually extract all the verb-noun collocations used in the written production. Since the data from the pretest has been extracted for the preliminary analysis, only the posttest data was attended to during this analysis. More importantly, the manual extraction was done independently so that the researcher and the inter-coder would not influence each other's judgments. Once the extraction was finalized and assessed against one another, the researcher and the coder referred the data from the pretest and posttest to the Oxford Collocations Dictionary as has been done in the study by Hong, Rahim, Hua and Salehuddin (2011). By referring to the dictionary which listed out the concordance lines of the verbs and their noun pairs, both the researcher and the inter-coder were able to eliminate any miscombinations.

Imperatively, using the dictionary helped both the researcher and the inter-coder to decide upon the acceptability of the verb-noun collocations used. Therefore, using the dictionary gave "detailed information on what words the headwords can combine with" (p. 228). Following the above extraction, the application of the syntactic verbs pattern framework of Hunston and Francis (2000) guided the second step of the analysis. By referring to the framework, it was made clear that the patterns may consist of the elements that either follow or precede it. Two possible verb patterns which can be followed by single or plural noun group, adjective group or clause are outlined as follows:

V n : *I broke my left leg*

V pl-n : *The research compares two drugs*

(Hunston & Francis, 2000, p. 52)

The above illustration only accounted for the V-N patterns, not mentioning other word classes and their patterns, considering that the main aim was to gain insight about the verb-noun collocations. Therefore, by being aware of the various verb patterns, the researcher and the coder were able to analyze the data more succinctly as so not to miss on potentially important findings. Successively, the data analysis involved the categorization of the erroneous verb-noun collocations. This categorization of the collocations was crucial in order to fulfill the aim of the first research question: to examine the type of errors in the use of verb-noun collocations. Therefore, the categorization framework as pre-coded by Nesselhauf (2005, p. 251) was implemented. In essence, referring to the framework enabled the researcher to present the finding in a well-arranged manner. Extensively, on the account that the verb-noun collocations were consistently classified based on the framework, the reliability of the findings can be said to have been enhanced (Creswell, 2014).

In addition to the analysis, a detailed classification of the types of errors produced by the experimental and control group respectively, was also carried out. For each group, the types of errors based on Nesselhauf (2005) framework was tabulated in order to identify the errors which are most prominent for both groups after the intervention. This step in the analysis worked parallel to the syntactic verb patterns framework which outlined the patterns which were problematic for the L2 learners to grasp. More importantly, conclusions about the effectiveness of the approaches implemented in the study can be reviewed in depth.

Additional to the first analysis, a statistical analysis was carried out to fulfill the aim of the secondary research question which was to reveal the extent to which the learners' ability in the use of verb-noun collocations have been augmented by the Focus on Form approach. For both approaches to be compared, a paired sample T-test was carried out. According to Hinton, McMurray and Brownlow (2011), in many situations where comparisons need to be made between two set of samples or groups, a t-test would inform the researcher of the difference in the performance of the two groups. However, to come to such a conclusion, the researcher needs to ensure that in the comparison, both the experimental and the control group needs to be assigned to similar conditions with one exception; the experimental manipulation (i.e. the Focus on Form approach). This is crucial so that any changes in the performance can be attributed to the effect of the manipulation (Creswell, 2014). Hence, in this study, the independent variable (i.e. FonF and non FonF approach) and dependent variable (the use of verb-noun collocations) were clearly defined and controlled so that any influence of confounding variable can be minimized or avoided altogether.

Moreover, similar statistical analysis of the learners' performance in the three focused tasks was also computed. The analysis was carried out to compare the learners' performance in the focused tasks in the first session and the final session. This analysis would further provide evidence of how both the FonF and non FonF approaches influenced the learners' ability to apply their learned knowledge of verb-noun collocations during the sessions.

3.7 Qualitative Approach to the Learners' Performance in Pretest and Posttest

The qualitative approach to the existing data was done by extracting the written production from individual learners by comparing their performance in the pretest and posttest. The data analysis placed emphasis on the form, meaning and the overall

expression of ideas. Moreover, any improvement or deterioration of the individual learner's performance was identified. In this vein, the identification of the data allowed the researcher to develop detailed understanding regarding the use of verb-noun collocations; ranging from the discussion of the potential reasons for the augmented use of the collocations or otherwise elaborating upon the reasons for the slow acquisition of collocations.

3.8 Summary

Primarily, the procedures undertaken in this study is guided by two main objectives; 1) to examine the types of errors most prominent in the primary school pupils' use of verb-noun collocations and 2) to explore the extent to which Focus on Form (FonF) instruction is able to augment and enhance the construction of verb -noun collocations in terms of form, meaning and overall expression of ideas. These objectives guided the multiple stages of the analysis of the data collected.

Imperatively, the classification of collocational errors was done with reference to the theoretical framework by Nesselhauf (2005) and also the syntactic verb patterns framework by Hunston and Francis (2000). This study believes that both frameworks were able to classify the collocations in terms of lexical and grammatical classifications effectively. Extending to this, the quantitative and qualitative analysis of the data uncovered collocational errors which can be discussed based on interlingual and intralingual factors.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.0 Introduction

This chapter describes the data analyzed and provide insights of the outcomes of the study. Discussions of the findings are linked to the theoretical underpinnings of the study.

4.1 The Importance of Instruction for Teaching Collocations

In recent years, the importance of collocations and other multi-words units have been vastly recognized (Schmitt, 2012; Yamashita & Jiang, 2010). Empirical studies done on collocational competence have been on the rise considering their success in contributing to the efficiency of language processing for both production and comprehension. Once collocational competence is enhanced, L2 learners may be able to express their thoughts more fluently and sound more native-like and natural by using prefabricated chunks (Nation, 2001). Additionally, the knowledge of collocations reduces the time taken for processing language in texts. In this vein, Yamashita and Jiang (2010) concurred that if multiword units such as collocations can be processed without utilizing most of the attention, the learners' cognitive resources can be channeled for higher level processing, for instance, resolving ambiguity in texts or understanding implied meanings.

Henceforth, it is crucial for scholars to continuously uncover the best teaching practices and instructions which can raise the saliency of collocations. In line with this, this study was geared towards investigating the effectiveness of Focus on Form (FonF) approach in augmenting the L2 learners' use of verb-noun collocations in their written production. Specifically, this study was driven by these objectives: 1) to examine the types of errors most prominent in the primary school pupils' use of verb-noun collocations

and 2) to explore the extent to which Focus on Form (FonF) instruction is able to augment and enhance the construction of verb-noun collocations in terms of form, meaning and overall expression of ideas in appropriate contexts. Conclusively, the above objectives allow for both quantitative and qualitative discussions to be made regarding the effect of Focus on Form (FonF) on the learners' use of the verb-noun collocations.

This chapter presents the findings of the analysis and provides discussion of the results at length in line with the approach and its theoretical underpinnings. To reiterate, the research questions are as follows:

1. What are the types of verb-noun collocational errors found in L2 learners' writing after focus on form instruction?
2. To what extent does the focus on form instruction augment and enhance the construction of verb-noun collocations?

4.2 Research Findings

This section presents the findings obtained from the data analysis which has been carried out based on the research aims and objectives.

4.2.1 Findings for Research Question 1

Fundamentally, in order to fulfill the objective of the first research question, the written production for both groups in the posttest which consisted of 60 essays, were first analyzed based on the syntactic verb patterns framework by Hunston and Francis (2000). Subsequently, the error categorization for the patterns identified was done with reference to error categorization framework by Nesselhauf (2005). The extraction of verb-noun collocations in the participants' posttest written production was done manually and the verb-noun collocations were tabulated based on the categories outlined by Nesselhauf (2005). The data analysis documented 111 usages of verb-noun collocations accumulated

by both the experimental and control groups. Within the 111 usages, the participants in the experimental group produced 93 uses (42 erroneous patterns out of 93 uses) as compared to 18 uses (9 erroneous patterns out of 18 uses) by the control group. However, for the purpose of this study, only the erroneous patterns of verb-noun collocations were further analyzed and subsequently separated from the non-erroneous patterns. By doing so, 42 erroneous patterns by the experimental group and 9 erroneous patterns by the control group became a total of 51 erroneous patterns of verb-noun collocations.

Based on the 51 erroneous patterns identified, verb related errors constituted the highest frequency (24 errors or 47.1%), followed by errors in the use of determiners i.e. the use of articles (article missing, unacceptable) which is 12 errors or 23.5%. In the usage category, the participants made use of existing verb-noun collocations which were contextually inaccurate at 10 errors or 19.6%. Additionally, the final category which involved the use of prepositions constituted 5 errors (9.8%). The types of errors found for each category are presented with examples taken from the participants' written productions.

Table 4.1: Erroneous patterns categorizations

	Error Types	Examples	Percentage of errors
1.	Verb		
	1. wrong choice of verb	1.* <i>did</i> some preparations (made some preparations)	3 (5.88%)
	2. Nonexistent verb i. creation of deviant verb	2.* <i>payed</i> attention (paid attention)	9 (17.65%)
	3. Wrong verb tense (while writing in the past tense)	3.* <i>have</i> a lot of fun (had a lot of fun)	12 (23.53%)
			24 (47.1%)

Table 4.1: Continued

	Error types	Examples	Percentage of errors
2	Determiner i. article missing ii. article unacceptable or wrong	i. *Amir <i>takes risk</i> to swim (Amir takes <i>the</i> risk to swim) ii. *John made <i>a</i> decision to ask (John made <i>the</i> decision to ask)	6 (11.7%) 6 (11.7%) 12 (23.4%)
2.	Usage 1 i. combination exists but inaccurate	i.* the family <i>decide to make the decision</i> (the family make the decision)	10 (19.6 %)
4	Prepositions i. wrong choice of preposition	i. *he got <i>in</i> the car (he got <i>into</i> the car)	5 (9.8%)

Based on the erroneous patterns categorizations, this study provides further discussions of each pattern of error in order to further comprehend the underlying predicaments faced by the L2 learners in their use of verb-noun collocations.

4.2.1.1 Errors in the use of verbs

Based on the error categorization framework (Nesselhauf, 2005, p. 251), the verb-related errors were further divided based on three sub-categories which are reflected in the table below.

Table 4.2: Verb Error Percentage

Error Types	Percentage of Errors
wrong verb tense	12 (23.53%)
nonexistent verbs/deviant form of verbs	9 (17.65%)
wrong choice of verb	3 (5.88%)
	24 (47.1)

As the table shows, the most common errors made were the use of verbs in the wrong verb tense which made up a total of 12 errors or 23.53% of all the verb-related errors. This is followed by the creation of nonexistent or deviant form of verbs in which 9 errors were made or 17.65%. Finally, the wrong choice of verb in the formation of verb-noun collocations reflected the least number of errors with a total of 3 errors or 5.88% out of the 24 errors made. The errors identified are discussed as follows.

According to Richards (1974), errors in the language use can be discussed in terms of negative intralingual transfer which reflects the learners' competence at a particular stage. The errors made are the results of partial internalization of the rules and restrictions of the target language (Richards, 1974). The following examples of "wrong verb tense" were extracted from the participants' written production. The erroneous patterns are reflected in comparison to the corrected version

Table 4.3: Examples of wrong verb tense

Participants' written production	Correction
(1) Last Sunday, Alice makes the arrangement to go to the beach.	made the arrangement
(2) In the car, Amir have a chat with his family.	had a chat
(2) Then, she built a sandcastle while have a chat with her father.	having a chat
(3) John and his brother make a decision to built a sandcastle.	made a decision to build a sandcastle
(4) After they have fun , Ahmad and his family packed all the things.	had fun

As reflected in the first example (1), the learner made an incorrect selection of verb tense when expressing the event which has happened in the past. With reference to Richards (1974), the learner exhibited what is termed as "ignorance of rule restriction". In this vein, the example (1) showed that the learner accounted only for the "subject-verb-

agreement” in that the singular noun “Alice” was given a singular verb (Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman (1999). In doing so, the time aspect “Last Sunday” was overlooked and resulted in the inaccurate use of verb tense for the verb “make”. Other tense related error was made as shown in example (3) in which the learners inaccurately used the simple past tense form “have a chat” instead of the progressive form “having a chat” which is appropriate to the context of the time-frame “while” as used in the sentence. Similarly, verb tense error is apparent in example (4) in that the learner expressed the verb in the simple past form “to built” instead of the accurate to-infinitive form “to build”.

Using similar examples, to certain degree, the errors can be discussed in terms of the learners’ L1 habits. Corder (1981) states that these habits reflect their understanding of the L1’s patterns, systems or rules which may impede their complete understanding of L2 structures. According to Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman (1999) the verb system in English is inflected. For instance, generally, the suffix *-ed* is used to signify that a situation happened in the past. In contrast, within the learners’ L1 system one of which is Malay language, Omar (2009) outlines the three time-frames which reflect the way an action is viewed in the Malay language, without having to change the verb form. Basically, three time-frames are used in the Malay language: “action not yet done” is expressed with the use of the adverb “belum”, for “action being done”, the adverbs used are “sedang” or “masih” and finally, to signal the “actions already completed” the adverbs used are “telah”, “sudah” and “pernah” (Omar, 2009). Therefore, to certain extent, the learners may have resorted to their L1’s rules and systems. In addition to this, their understanding of the variegated verb system in the target language may still be incomplete at the time this study was conducted.

In addition, the findings also indicated that the learners have the tendency to create nonexistent or deviant verb form in expressing verb tenses.

Table 4.4: Examples of deviant verb form

Participants' written production	Correction
(6) John payed attention on the road	paid attention
(7) Zaid and his brother maked the decision to swim	made the decision
(8) Halim's mother maked preparation and packed everything needed	made preparation

Essentially, Richards (1974) and Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman (1999) explained that L2 learners are susceptible to make the indicated verb-form errors due to “overgeneralization”. According to both scholars, overgeneralization occurs when the learners extended one rule to various grammatical forms which the rule does not apply to. Likewise, Corder (1981) elaborates that L2 learners often overgeneralize and form their own language rules in order to reduce the linguistic burden they might be facing during language production. Pertaining to the examples extracted from the learners' written production, the learners made use of the suffix *-ed* for forming the past tense of the verbs. In doing so, they ruled out the restriction for forming the past tense of irregular verbs as exemplified above: “make” to “maked” and “pay” to “payed”.

Finally, the least common error made related to error is the “wrong choice of verb”. Examples of the errors are as follows.

Table 4.5 Examples of wrong choice of verb

Participants' written production	Correction
(9) They did some preparations before going to the beach	made some preparations
(10) They took the decision to visit the beach	made the decision

The errors made can be attributed to the “delexical nature” of the verbs “make” and “take”. Specifically, it means that the semantic load of the verb is realized by its noun pair (Boers Demecheleer & Webb, 2016). In the collocation “did some preparations” the verb “did” was assumed as synonymous to the verb “made” in that both verbs reflected the notion of producing something or producing an action (Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman, 1999). Furthermore, it is also possible that the learner reflected upon his or her L1 in order to reduce the linguistic problem faced in the formation of the collocation. This is because, the learner’s mental lexicon of the Malay version of the collocation is “mengambil keputusan” (DBP Sah Bahasa, 2018) in that the verb “mengambil” can be translated to “take”. Therefore, it caused the complete translation to be “take the decision” instead of “make the decision”.

4.2.1.2 Errors in the use of articles

Besides that, the learners also exhibited errors which were related to the use of determiner i.e. articles. The errors are categorized as shown in the following table.

Table 4.6: Determiner error percentage

Error Types	Percentage of Errors
article missing	6 (11.7%)
article unacceptable or wrong	6 (11.7%)
	12 (23.4%)

According to the categorization, the learners revealed the tendency to make errors in the omission of article which is a total of 6 errors (11.7%). Similar percentage of errors was made in the use of articles which were unacceptable or wrong (11.7%). The following table reflects the examples of errors as extracted from the learners’ written production in the posttest.

Table 4.7: Examples of errors in determiner use

Missing article	
Participants' written production	Correction
(11) Amir took risk to swim	Amir took <u>the</u> risk to swim
(12) Then, Ali went for swim	Then, Ali went for <u>a</u> swim
(13) They made decision to go to the beach as Puan Rose and Encik John needed to take a break from working 9 hours a day.	They made <u>the</u> decision to go to the beach as Puan Rose and encik John needed to take a break from working 9 hours a day.
Article unacceptable or wrong	
Participants' written production	Correction
(14) Zaid and his brother maked <u>a</u> decision to swim	Zaid and his brother made <u>the</u> decision to swim
(15) They had <u>a</u> dinner with their family at the beach	They <u>had dinner</u> with their family at the beach
(16) They had <u>a</u> fun at the beach	They had fun at the beach

First and foremost, based on the examples shown in table 4.7, the learners displayed the tendency of omitting articles. A possible explanation is a word-by-word approach translation from L1 to L2. As aforementioned, L2 learners resorted to translation strategy to reduce the problems they faced in using the target language, (Corder, 1981). In examples (12) and (13), the verb-noun collocations “took risk” and “made decision” are both missing the article “the”. The errors could be linked to the form of the collocations in their L1. As both the errors are made by learners whose L1 is Malay language, the explanation compared the forms in English and Malay in which the Malay form is sourced from DBP Sah Bahasa (2018).

- (12) L2: Amir **took risk**
L1: Amir **mengambil risiko**
- (13) L2: They **made decision**
L1: Mereka **membuat keputusan**

Based on the comparison, the learners used the translation strategy in the formation of both verb-noun collocations. It is evident that, the learners omitted the articles in the L2 collocations as a direct comparison to their L1 which does not require the use of articles. Furthermore, according to Master (2002), problems in the use of the articles are caused by the notion of countability which is related to nouns. On the surface level, it may appear to be an easy concept to grasp especially in the mathematical sense (1, or more than 1). However, Master (2002) differed, and provided examples to illustrate that the article system is in fact complex to grasp. Both sentences in the example given are accurately formed despite only one used the article.

e.g.: The man caught a fish (countable)

The man caught fish (uncountable)

Based on the study's findings, as the above sentence in (11) shows, the article "a" is omitted in the collocation "went for swim" in which the accurate form is "went for a swim". In this sense, the omission of the article "a" in "went for swim" signaled that the learner may have understood the word "swim" in the sense where a doer is acting out the action, instead of referring to "swim" as an activity. Similar error is evident in example (15) in which the collocation "had dinner" was formed as had **a** dinner".

4.2.1.3 Errors related to combinations which exist but inaccurate

Evidently, the use of verb-noun collocations in the participants' written production was also contextually inappropriate. Based on the analysis, 10 errors were identified to be verb-noun collocation combinations which were well-formed but were indicated to have sentential inaccuracies.

Table 4.8: Combination error percentage

Error Types	Percentage of Errors
combination exists but inaccurate	10 (19.6%)

Table 4.9: Examples of combination errors

Participants' written production
(17) ...his mother took a liking of listening to the music that is playing on the radio
(18) While they were heading home, John made a decision to ask his parents to go to the beach again
(19) When they arrived, Alex and his mother went swimming while his father had a problem preparing the sandwiches
(20) Aliff and his family also took advantage by having a picnic at the beach
(21) Mr Tan and his family packed up the things and take interest at picking up rubbish

Based on the examples shown in table 4.9, at surface level, the verb-noun collocations appeared to be combinations which exist, as has been assessed against the Oxford Dictionary of Collocations. However, the verb-noun collocations were inaccurate due to the sentences in which they were used (Nesselhauf, 2005). A possible explanation can be made with reference to Halliday (1999). It is suggested that sentences can be grammatically correct but semantically incoherent. To elucidate the point further, the following sentences were given.

- e.g.: (1) Mary is a good student. She is first in her class.
- (2) Mary is a good student. It is getting warmer and warmer.

In example (1), Halliday (1999) posits that the sentence is coherent as it provided relevant information about Mary and her being an excellent student. On the contrary, in the second example, the first and the second sentence do not link and thus could not

effectively transmit the intended meaning. To relate this to the current study, in example (20), the verb-noun collocation “took advantage” carries a negative connotative meaning of “doing something while being unfair or unjust” (Nation, 2001) and therefore cannot be coherently linked to the act of having a picnic as reflected in the sentence. Likewise, in example (21), the verb-noun collocation “take interest” refers to being concerned or curious and liking something/someone (Oxford Dictionary of Collocations). Therefore, as reflected in the sentence in (21), “take interest” at picking up at rubbish appeared to be out of place.

4.2.1.4 Errors in the use of prepositions and noun

The final categorization of errors which was the least prominent in the learners’ use of verb-noun collocations is the use of prepositions which constituted 5 errors (9.8%). The errors indicated that the learners faced difficulty in using prepositions which express the notion of place or position i.e. *in*, *at* and *to* which are bound to its own restriction and rule of use (Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman, 1999).

Table 4.10: Preposition/noun error percentage

Error Types	Percentage of Errors
Prepositions	
i. inaccurate use of prepositions	5 (9.8%)

Table 4.11: Examples of errors in preposition/noun use

Participants’ written production	
Erroneous Patterns	Corrected Patterns
(22) Although Sam was scared, he still have a go in swimming	Although Sam was scared, he still have a go at swimming
(23) Fareez had a try using the float	Fareez had a try at using the float
(24) At 9pm, they packed their things to go back to the home	At 9pm, they packed their things to go back home
(25) They went to home	They went home

As shown in example (22) in table 4.11, the use of the preposition “in” for “have a go in swimming” instead of “at” is due to the learner’s “overgeneralization of the rule” for the use of preposition “at” which is typically used to indicate place. For example, the preposition “at” is used in instances such as “at Jalan Puchong, or “at home” (Kim, Akkakoson, Odacioglu, Mohd Zuki & Bating, 2017). Therefore, the learner resorted to another preposition, as he or she perceived the preposition “at” to be bounded by the indicated rule. Additionally, the error in the use of the preposition “to” in example (25), “They went to home” instead of “they went home” is mainly caused by the L2 learner’s generalization of the preposition “to” which is used to connect an action to its destinations or goals such as “She walked to the supermarket” and “He tiptoed to his room (Kim et al. 2017). Hence, the errors indicated that at a certain level, the learners exhibited incomplete internalization of the rules of the target language at the time of the study (Richards, 1974).

4.2.2 Findings for Research Question 2

Essentially, the second research question was formulated to uncover the extent to which focus on form instruction is able to augment and enhance the construction of verb-noun collocations. Primarily, the approach towards the second research question was done in two ways: firstly, a paired sample T-test was carried out to present a quantitative description of the difference in use of the verb-noun collocations, prior and after the intervention was administered. In addition, the statistical difference of the learners’ performance in the three focused tasks (insert the collocation, cloze passage and sentence formation) was also outlined. Finally, a qualitative discussion of the effects of Focus on Form instruction and non FonF is presented based on the data extracted from the L2 learners’ written production. Significantly, the qualitative discussion provided insights about the extent of the effects of Focus on Form.

4.2.2.1 Significant Effects of FonF Instruction on the Use of Verb-Noun Collocations

Fundamentally, a quantitative approach of analysis of the data was done to establish any possible objective relationship between the types of instruction given to the participants and its direct effect on the participants' use of verb-noun collocations. Imperatively, the quantitative analysis of both groups' performance at pretest and posttest helped to illuminate the extent to which FonF instruction was able to augment the L2 learners' use of verb-noun collocations in their writing.

Table 4.12: Paired sample T-test

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Experimental Group	pretest	1.6667	15	.72375	.18687
	posttest	6.3333	15	1.34519	.34733
Control Group	pretest	2.4667	15	1.64172	.42389
	posttest	1.2000	15	1.20712	.31168

		Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mea n	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Experimental Group	pretest - posttest	- 4.66667	1.175 14	.303 42	- 5.31744	- 4.01590	- 15.38 0	14	.000
	Control group pretest- posttest	1.26 667	1.667 62	.430 58	.34317	2.1901 6	2. 942	14	.011

p significant at $p < 0.05$

Based on the paired sample T-test, a significant difference in the performance of both FonF and non FonF groups was identified. As reflected in table 4.12 above, in the FonF group, the mean scores at pretest is $M=1.67$, whereas at posttest, the mean score is $M=6.3$. This indicates that the learners were able to use more verb-noun collocations in their writing after receiving FonF instruction. In comparison, the non FonF group had a mean score of $M= 2.47$ at pretest and $M=1.2$ in the posttest after the instruction has concluded, which indicated a decrease in the use of the verb-noun collocations. It is evident that the learners in the FonF group performed significantly better ($p\text{ value} < 0.001$, significant at $p < 0.05$) than the non FonF group. The quantitative analysis clarified that the Focus on Form instruction enhanced the learners' capacity for "holistic language processing" (Gyllstad, 2007) which then led to the augmented use of the verb-noun collocations in their writing.

More importantly, a qualitative approach to the learners' written production further informed the study of the quality of the collocational use in terms of form, meaning and overall expression of ideas based on the context given in the posttest. As per Nation's (2001) postulation, collocational competence helps L2 learners to express their ideas precisely. If a learner possesses ample collocational knowledge, language-processing time is reduced. This is because L2 learners can then retrieve readymade chunks to deliver the intended meanings (Gledhill, 2001). However, the knowledge or awareness of collocations is not always accessible to L2 learners. This is due to L2 learners' tendency to focus on individual words either receptively or productively (Barfield & Gyllstad, 2009). The scholars further added that due to this word-focused approach, L2 learners often overlooked recurring prefabricated chunks which could enhance their language production.

[S1] **Pretest**

*Last weekend, Chan and his family were **thinking about to went to the beach**.*

As shown in the example above, the learner [S1] wrote “*thinking about to went to the beach*”. As Wray (2002) and Vural (2010) pointed out, L2 learners tend to process language as individual lexical items and so evidently, the learner [S1], attempted to reassemble the lexical items based on their individual semantic reference. Corder (1981) supports that L2 learners tend to resort to overgeneralizing the rule of the L2 structure to ease their linguistic burden. Thus, in doing so, the sentence appeared incoherent and impeded the comprehensibility of the expression.

In contrast, at posttest, the learner [S1] was able to integrate the verb-noun collocation “took a trip” to convey the intended meaning precisely.

[S1] **Posttest**

*Last week, Raihan’s family **took a trip to the beach**.*

One of the factors which attributed to the change in collocational knowledge of [S1] is the use of “consciousness-raising” tasks which is a strategy within Form Focused Instruction (FFI). As previously discussed, collocations in the tasks are presented holistically in appropriate contexts. Aside from the task format, with FonF instruction, the learner was scaffolded to complete tasks interactively via interaction which afforded them the opportunity to negotiate the meaning with the language instructor. Therefore, although without being explicitly instructed of the rule for forming collocations, the teacher-learner interaction might have attracted the learners’ attention to the target structure in the task contexts.

Similar change in the learners' writing at pretest and posttest can be further observed as the examples below.

[S2] **Pretest**

Before they went, Ahmad's mom packed some stuff such as sunscreen, a shovel, a float and a bucket to build sandcastle's

Posttest

Before heading to the beach, Adam's mom made some preparations such as packing the towels, a mat, some beach toys and others.

[S3] **Pretest**

They went to home with happy faces

Posttest

John helped his mother and father to clean up before heading home.

In the context of this study, the learners [S2] and [S3] were identified as making recurring erroneous use such as “go to home”, in the pretest. This suggests that prior to the Focus on Form (FonF) instruction, the learners lacked awareness of useful “lexical bundles” which they could refer to for language production (Ying & O'Neill, 2009). In addition, without “noticing” these prefabricated chunks, the learners were unable to retrieve readymade lexicalized routines like L1 users (Pawley & Syder, 1983). Thus, L2 learners have to constantly process language for production, from scratch.

A change in the use of verb-noun collocations were identified later in the posttest. As illustrated by learner [S2], the erroneous use “*Before they went...*” was later expressed as “*Before heading to the beach...*” Likewise, the learner [S3] was able to produce non-erroneous use of the verb-noun collocation at posttest, “*...before heading home*” as compared to the erroneous production “*They went to home...*” in the pretest. The change in the use of the verb-noun collocations can be explained based on the primary objective

of Focus on Form itself. As has been previously explained by Ellis (2012), the need for Focus on Form (FonF) instruction arises by analyzing the L2 learners' needs and attending to linguistic elements which are evidently difficult for the learners. As Long (1991) concurred, attending to the learners' real linguistic problems is more significant compared to implanting random grammatical features based on a structural syllabus.

In this study's context, the difficulty surrounding the learners' use of verb-noun collocations were identified and integrated within the content of the instruction. Thus, to reiterate Doughty and Williams (1998), the teacher is able to provide extensive information on the target structure in response to the learners' "demands". Conclusively, according to Long (2015), FonF instruction increases the likelihood of the target structure to be synchronized and restructured in the learners' internal syllabus.

Moreover, the improvement in the learners' use of verb-noun collocations can be attributed to the power of contextualized input. As has been done in the study, the focused tasks used afforded the learners the much-needed practice for noticing the collocations holistically. As Boers, Dang and Strong (2017) pointed out, by integrating the collocations in the tasks, the learners became more aware of how the collocations are used in meaningful, sentential contexts. As the collocational knowledge is enhanced by the instruction, Hunston and Francis (2000) supported that it helped the L2 learners to efficiently use language as the learners are provided with a solid conceptual grounding of how the target words recurs in various texts.

In contrast, the study has also identified the disadvantage of the Focus on Form instruction. Although the study indicated that more verb-noun collocations were produced in the experimental group, the productions are still significantly laden with grammatical errors. A few examples of erroneous productions in the posttest are illustrated as follows.

[S4] *Then, she built a sandcastle **while have a chat** with her father*

[S5] *John **payed attention** on the road*

[S6] *Then Ali **went for swim***

[S7] *They **had a fun** at the beach*

Evidently, the learners receiving the FonF instruction were still hampered by the grammatical rules surrounding the use of verb-noun collocations. Ranta and Lyster (2017) highlighted that FonF instruction is problematic due to input saliency. While the teacher may have integrated facilitative strategies to highlight the input, the learners may still be unaware of the actual target structure being focused on. Besides that, as has been discussed in the previous chapter, FonF is vastly learner-centered. Therefore, without the language repertoire, a learner-led discussion and negotiation of meaning may not be effective and hence reduce the depth of the discussion. On the part of the teacher, the input provided through “teacher-talk” may not effectively deliver comprehensible input which is meaningful to the learners (Osborne, 1999). Finally, it is possible that some learners require explicit grammar instruction in order to be able to use the verb-noun collocations effectively (Ellis, 2001). Without grammar instruction, L2 learners may not be able to identify the various grammatical patterns in which the collocations can be expressed.

In addition, a comparison of the tasks performance between the two groups was done to find further indication of the potential effects of FonF compared to the non FonF approach. First, the FonF group showed improvement in the “*insert the collocation*” task compared to the non FonF group. First, the FonF group showed improvement in the “*insert the collocation*” task with pretest at M=6.93 and posttest, M=8.7 as compared to the non FonF group, pretest at M=6.93 and posttest M=7.6 as illustrated in table 4.13.

Table 4.13: Insert the Collocation Task

Insert the collocation		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
FonF	week1	6.9333	15	1.27988	.33046
	week6	8.6667	15	1.23443	.31873
Non	nweek1	6.9333	15	1.48645	.38380
FonF	nweek6	7.6000	15	1.35225	.34915

insert the collocation		Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
FonF	week1 - week6	-1.7333	1.66762	.43058	-2.65683	-.80984	-4.026	14	.001
Non FonF	nweek1 - nweek6	-.66667	2.22539	.57459	1.89905	.56572	-1.160	14	.265

p significant at $p < 0.05$

This could be due to the orientation of learning which was sustained throughout the FonF instruction. The learners were able to interact, be given feedback as well as being allowed to negotiate meaning with the instructor regarding the collocations. In contrast, the learners in the control group attended to the task independently following an explicit grammar instruction. Thus, the learners have to process the input given and complete the task independently without in depth discussion of the input. Hence, their comprehension may have stopped short at the presentation stage when the input was explained by the instructor.

For the *cloze passage* task, both groups indicated a significant change in the performance of the task between the first week and the 6th week as illustrated in table 4.14; the experimental group at pretest, $M = 5.8$ and posttest $M = 7.6$, whereas the control group yielded $M = 6.53$ at pretest and $M = 7.7$ at posttest.

Table 4.14: Cloze Passage Task

Cloze passage task		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
FonF	week1	5.8667	15	1.40746	.36341
	week6	7.6000	15	1.35225	.34915
Non	nweek1	6.5333	15	1.40746	.36341
FonF	nweek6	7.7333	15	1.03280	.26667

Cloze passage task	Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
				Lower	Upper			
FonF week1 - week6	-1.73333	.70373	.18170	-2.12305	-1.34362	-9.539	14	.000
Non nweek1 - FonF nweek6	-1.20000	1.26491	.32660	-1.90048	-.49952	-3.674	14	.003

p significant at $p < 0.05$

This finding could be explained in terms of the power of contexts (Lewis, 2000). It can be concluded that the learners in both groups were assisted by the contextual representation of the collocations. In this vein, the learners were also able to exercise their processing skills based on the sentential information given in the tasks. Finally, in the *sentence formation* task, the non FonF group performed significantly better than the FonF group with pretest, $M=6.3$, posttest, $M=7.9$ compared to the FonF group, pretest, $M=6.0$, posttest, $M=6.3$ as illustrated in table 4.15.

Table 4.15: Sentence Formation Task

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
FonF	week1	6.0000	15	1.30931	.33806
	week6	6.3333	15	1.18723	.30654
Non	nweek1	6.2667	15	1.48645	.38380
FonF	nweek6	7.8666	15	.97590	.25198

sentence formation	Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
				Lower	Upper			
FonF week1 - week6	-.13333	1.59762	.41250	-1.01806	.75140	-.323	14	.751
Non Fonf nweek1 - nweek6	1.06667	1.83095	.47275	2.08061	-.05272	2.256	14	.041

p significant at $p < 0.05$

This can be attributed to the fact that within the non FonF approach, the learners were explicitly given grammar instruction pertaining to forming verb-noun collocations and other grammatical aspects such as verb tenses, the use of articles and prepositions. Based on this, the learners in the control group were able to practice sentence writing more intensively than the FonF group.

4.3 Discussion

Focus on Form (FonF) as a revised strand of FFI has proven to be malleable and has undergone multiple shifts in its conceptualization. Many researchers reported the potential of Focus on Form in which L2 learners' linguistic accuracy is strengthened through metalinguistic awareness, meaningful input and communicative exchanges which led to learners' continuous language growth (Tomita & Spada, 2013; Saito, 2013; Valeo, 2013; Fordyce, 2014). However, as does any other approaches, the overall effect of Focus on Form also has its limitations. In reality, Focus on Form may also be constrained by the larger instructional and various learner factors. The following section will attempt to discuss both the potential and limitations of FonF in the L2 classroom context as has been done in this study.

4.3.1 Potential of Form Focused Instruction

Firstly, according to De Graff and Housen (2009) and Ellis (2012), the most celebrated contribution of FonF has been in terms of input-processing enhancements. As Doughty and Williams (1998) and Ellis (2001) outlined, although the term form has been predominantly linked to explicit grammatical forms, attention to form in FonF extensively includes understanding of phonological, lexical, grammatical and pragmatic functions of the language. As Klein (1986) as cited in De Graff and Housen (2009, p. 738) pointed out, essential to SLA, L2 instruction should be able to do the following:

- provide learners with input significant to their current needs and opportunities for practicing said input
- trigger input processing mechanisms (noticing, internalization of the input, restructuring of linguistic representations

(Klein, 1986 as cited in De Graff & Housen, 2009, p.738).

Within Form-Focused Instruction, several taxonomies have been proposed to assist language instructors to identify specifically which aspects of the language, needs to be dealt with in order to enhance its effectiveness in the L2 classroom (Ellis, 2001; 2012). One such taxonomy and perhaps the most clearly defined is the scalar of criterion proposed by Williams (2005, p. 272): *obtrusiveness* (the extent to which intervention interjects processing and communication), *problematicity* (the extent to which the intervention is driven by authentic linguistic problem) *planning* (whether attention to linguistic form is reactive or proactive) *targetedness* (whether intervention is intensive to specific linguistic form or extensive which includes multiple forms) and *locus of responsibility* (to whom does the responsibility of the initiation of the instructional intervention lies, the instructor or the learners).

As the taxonomy above has outlined, using FonF may also help the L2 learners to grasp the language form which include grammatical structures; lexical items, pragmatic features of the language and even phonological features (Norris & Ortega, 2008); Tomita & Spada, 2013). Ellis (2001; 2012), Shintani (2013) and Valeo (2013) support the use of FonF in L2 learning. In the study of content-based language program, Valeo (2013) documented an overall positive impact on language outcomes and significant benefit on the enhancement of content knowledge of the L2 learners receiving FFI. Shintani (2013) reported similar effect of FFI in which L2 learners receiving FonF instruction gained a considerably more significant expansion in vocabulary than those immersed in entirely meaning-focused learning. It was evident that FonF also enhanced the L2 learners' ability to acquire adjectives. To link to the context of this study, the learners in the FonF group were able to produce more use of the verb-noun collocations in their writing. Several collocations which were not intently studied were also produced. This can be attributed to the learning which is vastly under the learner's control as it occurs in response to the learners' linguistic problem (Ellis, 2016). According to Long (2015), FonF draws learners

attention to form and gauge them to work on problem-solving tasks. This would then increase the likelihood that the language structures in focus will be internalized by the learners successfully.

Moreover, according to Ellis (2001) Form Focused Instruction is best implemented as Focus on Form (FonF) rather than Focus on Forms (FonFs) owing to the fact that FonF allows L2 learners to gradually progress in the learning of L2 language structure instead of following prearranged learning contents. Several researchers such as Laufer (2011), Lindstormberg and Boers (2008) Peters (2014) and Webb and Kagimoto (2009) support and the claim that L2 learners' awareness of collocations can be raised through explicit form-focused instruction. This is because FonF assists the learners to map out form-function which promotes both accuracy and fluency. For example, in FonF classroom, the learners assumed the role of language users who use language as a communicative tool (Ellis, 2001). Therefore, the learners can actively interact with their language instructor who holds facilitative roles and one who supports the processing mechanisms of input instead of merely supplying it. In FonF, the need for input occurs in response to the learners' linguistic needs (Doughty & Williams, 1998) in which the teacher may provide extensive information on the L2 structure as required. According to Moate and Cox (2015), learning is essentially enhanced in FonF, because the learners are allowed to be in control and be responsible for their own process of learning.

On the contrary, in FonFs, learners' internal syllabus is often ignored. Learning within FonFs as Ellis (2001) and Long (1991) point out, disregards the learners' difficulty in language learning and instead appeared to be a superficial attempt at implanting specific grammatical features during learning. In this study, the non FonF group following the P-P-P model (Lewis, 2000) produced significantly fewer uses of verb-noun collocations at 18 productions compared to 93 productions in FonF group. As McCombs and Whisler

(1997) further suggest, within the P-P-P model learning is often simplistic, rote and involved linear teaching which is concerned with mastering sequential language knowledge (McCombs & Whisler, 1997). Thus, the learners may not be able to sustain the skill standards due to the nature of the learning which emphasizes pattern-drilling and practice without in-depth comprehension. Hence, the learners in the non FonF group were not able to grasp the notion of collocations further in depth and might have resorted to shallow memorization.

Besides that, according to Ranta and Lyster (2017), FFI is meant for creating opportunities for learners to attend to specific language structures through content-based or meaning-oriented tasks. It is essentially different from traditional language instruction which directs learners' attention to language structures which taught separately and decontextualized from any other content. Lightbown (2008) argues in accordance to transfer-appropriate-processing stating that the context of learning should have a close proximity to the context in which the learned language structure will be put to use. Lightbown (2008) and Segalowitz (2000) explain that language features learned in specific contexts can be easily retrieved via similar context during production. In this vein, Ranta and Lyster (2017) support this view in relation to FFI, in that FFI places value on purposeful form-function mapping in purposeful contexts. Pertaining to this study, the three focused tasks used required the learners to practice the use of collocations in terms of writing (e.g.: sentence formation task). The posttest given also required the learners to write a free production. Thus, the skill that the learners have been led to practice is eventually tested.

Furthermore, it is also posited that FonF approach to language could enhance learners' awareness of the rules attached to the target structure through consciousness-raising tasks and activities. Consciousness-raising tasks, according to Fotos and Ellis (1991), are tasks

which simultaneously emphasize grammatical forms and allow communicative interaction. During the interaction, the learners are able to solve problems related to the target structure while maintaining focus on the acquisitional processes which guides the interaction (Fotos & Ellis, 1991). In the context of the study, the focused tasks were “insert the collocation”, “cloze passage” task as well as “sentence formation” task. As has been done in the study, the “insert the collocation” task is likely to stimulate semantic processing prior to focusing on the target structure. According to Boers, Demecheleer, Coxhead and Webb (2014), the task format gives the learners the processing advantages because the collocations are presented holistically and in appropriate contexts. In order to complete the task successfully, learners had to evaluate the sentence content before matching it to the right collocations. This study’s consciousness-raising tasks are considered to be inductive as the learners were required to collaboratively work on the task via interaction, in alignment to Focus on Form which emphasizes negotiation of meaning (Ellis, 2012). The next task in the study was the “cloze passage” task which gauged the learners to start paying attention to the accurate forms of the verb-noun collocation. This task afforded the learners the advantage of processing the collocations in meaningful, sentential context (Boers, Dang & Strong, 2017). In FonF, paired with consciousness-raising tasks which can be prepared by the teacher in advance, the teacher-learner interaction (in the form of learner questions and teacher-prompts) help to draw learners’ attention to the target structure without needing to explicitly point it out.

Finally, Form Focused Instruction is valuable to learning because it allows noticing and awareness of target structures by providing opportunities for both guided and autonomous practice (Lyster, 2007). As outlined by Lyster (2007), the noticing phase in FFI establishes context which is meaningful and has been contrived to increase the saliency of the input. The awareness phase then becomes a platform for the learners to develop and restructure their knowledge of the structure which is realized by means of

consciousness-raising tasks, metalinguistic feedback and opportunities for practice of the language form (Ranta & Lyster, 2017).

4.3.2 Limitations of FonF

While many great potentials of Focus on Form have been discussed and reflected in the findings of this current study, the fact that FonF has various limitations cannot be omitted. The first criticism of FonF is essentially the vague distinction of FonF and FonFs. Despite being described and outlined by Ellis (2012), implementing FonF in the classroom is challenging due to the dynamic nature of learning and interaction (Batstone, 2002). This is because, learners as individuals have essentially different approach to language learning. Batstone (2002) further argues that in any discourse, learners may interpret and act upon learning depending upon their own perceived difficulty. In this vein, the learners and the teacher may not have a mutual “sense of purpose” in that particular learning session (Batstone, 2002; Samuda & Bygate, 2008). To add to the problem, learning is often dynamic and constantly changing in accordance to the need of the learners. Thus, it is difficult for the teacher to sustain a purely FonF instruction which upholds interaction and negotiation of meaning. In the context of this study, the learners may have not experience optimal learning experiences due to the “vagueness” of the learning purpose. Thus, they might have lost the sense of purpose in the learner-centered learning condition if they could not truly understand the intended learning outcome.

Besides that, FonF approach is challenging due to perceived saliency of the input given to the learners (Ranta & Lyster, 2017). The saliency of the target structures may still not be apparent to the learners if the interaction lacks meaningful input. This is true as Nunan (1991) posited, the “teacher-talk” in a learner-centered classroom such as FonF is perhaps the main language input the learners are exposed to. Osborne (1999) supports this claim, stating that teacher talk becomes the source for “comprehensible input” which would

vastly modify language in terms of vocabulary and target structure. Hence, this is a challenge that a language teacher has to confront with in the implementation of Focus on Form. In the context of this study, although the learners were able to produce more verb-noun collocations, the grammatical errors evident in the production suggested that Focus on Form on its own may not be sufficient to foster knowledge and acquisition growth.

Similarly, as has been discussed by Ellis (2008), on the part of the learner, without sufficient language repertoire, effective negotiation of meaning may not occur or contribute to L2 learning. This is because, in order for successful negotiation of meaning to occur, certain conditions are required for a “learner-centered” learning (Gibbs, 1995). Among the condition is the learners’ sociability in the class which would guarantee their communication with the language instructor. There is also the potential danger of a learner’s isolation from the other learners which then inhibits one’s learning in the classroom (Gibbs, 1995). The current study faced similar predicament in encouraging the learners to highlight any potential difficulties with the target structure. Thus, it is possible that the learners relied more on the instructor rather than putting in the effort to comprehend the input on their own. At length, this limitation could be the reason for the still prevalent grammatical errors in the learners’ use of verb-noun collocations even after the FonF instruction. In this vein, the FonF instruction lacked the ability to intensely direct the learners to fully grasp the “syntactical structures” which are possible within the formation of collocations.

Finally, another limitation of FonF is the lack of direct focus on the accuracy of target structures (Ellis, 2001). Although to certain extent, learners’ awareness of the language is raised by means of feedback, negotiation of meaning and consciousness-raising tasks, some learners may still require explicit grammar instruction to further understand the linguistic elements for the production of collocations (Ellis, 2001). Despite language use

being central in Focus on Form, the learners may not be able to sustain the input without going through the stage of proceduralization of knowledge which is helpful in assisting the learners to know what to do with the language data (DeKeyser, 1998). To conclude, the limitations of Focus on Form instruction are due to various factors related to its practicality in the L2 contexts. In this vein, future research should account for the learners' various proficiency levels, the difference in learners' learning styles as well as the skills of the language instructor.

4.4 Summary

Primarily, the findings discussed in this chapter corresponded to the overall research objectives. The quantitative analysis of the data revealed a change in the L2 learners use of the verb-noun collocations in their written production. Likewise, the qualitative approach of the data has evidently illustrated how the L2 learners implemented the use of collocations in terms of the form, meaning and the overall expression of ideas in their writing. Additionally, the study also revealed how interlingual and intralingual factors played a role in the L2 learners' ability and understanding of how to use collocations in their writing.

More importantly, the findings illustrated the need to account for the potential and possible limitations of focus on form (FonF) instruction. As has been done in the study, the focused tasks used also acted as catalysts which guided the interactional processes in FonF. In this sense, it is evident that various factors such as the teaching instruments, the learners' level of proficiency, the role of input as well as engagement influenced the effectiveness of instruction within language learning.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

5.0 Introduction

As mentioned in the previous chapters, the purpose of this study is to examine the effectiveness of Form Focused Instruction (FFI), specifically the revised strand, Focus on Form (FonF) in augmenting the use of verb-noun collocations among the primary L2 learners. Essentially, this chapter will discuss the summary of findings, the research implications and future recommendations for future research.

5.1 Summary of Findings

Primarily, this section discusses the summary of findings based on the research questions which guided the study as has been presented in the previous chapters.

5.1.1 Summary of Findings for Research Question 1

What are the types of verb-noun collocational errors found in L2 learners' writing after focus on form instruction?

This study has found that the 6-week exposure and learning within the Focus on Form Instruction (FonF) has impacted the L2 learners' knowledge of verb-noun collocations to a certain extent. The overall analysis of the learners' use of collocations in both FonF and non FonF group illustrated a significant difference in terms of the number of productions in their written production in the posttest. It was evident that the learners in the FonF group used more verb-noun collocations than the learners in the non FonF group. This could be attributed to the fact that within the FonF instruction, the discussion and treatment of the target structure was intended as a response to real linguistic problems as indicated in the pretest. In contrast, in the non FonF group, the input was rather "implanted" and practised for later use in the production stage. Therefore, the learners'

orientation towards the target structure was significantly different. As a result, the awareness of the importance of collocations was at different level. Therefore, the learners in the non FonF may have resorted to memorization of the target structure without fully understanding the notion of collocations.

A closer inspection of the types of errors produced in the use of verb-noun collocations reflected that, despite the increased use of collocations in the posttest, the productions were laden with grammatical errors. This could be attributed to the lack of explicit grammar instruction in FonF instruction, which is customary in the Malaysian L2 classroom context (Hong, Rahim, Hua & Salehuddin, 2014). In the FonF group, explicit grammar teaching was not given and so the learners made significant errors related to the use of verb tenses, determiner (articles) and prepositions.

As discussed in the findings, due to the lack of grammar instruction, the learners exhibited reliance upon their L1 in order to ease their linguistic burden (Corder, 1981). A word-by-word approach translation from the learners' L1 and assumed L1-L2 equivalence were indicated as the main factors for the erroneous productions of the verb-noun collocations. In essence, as Richards (1974) and Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman (1999) posited, the L2 learners, sometimes irrespective of the instruction given, are susceptible to make grammatical errors due to the overgeneralization of the L2 structure rules which are applied freely across various linguistic elements. Nevertheless, the fact that the learners receiving the FonF instruction used more verb-noun collocations indicated that task-based lesson organization in FonF, paired with the interaction and attention to the "real-learner problems" was able to enhance the learners' continuous growth and grasp of verb-noun collocations.

5.1.2 Summary of Findings for Research Question 2

To what extent does focus on form instruction augment and enhance the construction of verb-noun collocations?

The findings of the study have indicated that the FonF instruction had a considerably significant impact on the L2 learners' knowledge of verb-noun collocations. As has been illustrated earlier, the learners in the FonF group produced more use of the verb-noun collocations in the posttest based on the statistical analysis of the paired sample T-test. A qualitative discussion of the findings was also done to add to the comprehensiveness of the data. The qualitative investigation of the learners' written production revealed that the FonF instruction had a significant impact on the learners' use of the collocational use in terms of form, meaning and overall expression of ideas.

It was illustrated that the Focus on Form (FonF) instruction was able to alter the learners' reliance upon the word-by-word approach in their expression of ideas. Some learners indicated that they were able to use a verb-noun collocation which expressed their idea precisely instead of resorting to making longer utterances which resulted in errors. The change in the overall quality of the sentences can be explained in relation to the use of focused tasks in the study. Boers, Demecheleer, Coxhead and Webb (2014) supported that the focused tasks which mediated "awareness and noticing" among the learners, were able to present the verb-noun collocations in contextually appropriate format. The collocations were laid out coherently. In the "insert the collocations" task the collocations were processed as intact wholes and subsequently in the "cloze passage" task the verb constituent associated to be the factor for collocational errors, were omitted from the passage in order to lead the learners to pay attention to them. As explained by Lewis (2000), "it is the repeated meetings with an item, noticing it in context, which converts them into intake" (p. 169).

Although similar tasks were used for the learners in the non FonF group, the teaching organization following the Present-Practice-Production (P-P-P) model (Lewis, 2000) was merely pattern-drilling and practice. In this sense, the learners in the non FonF were mainly supplied with input which to them, may be of no significance. As McCombs and Whistler (1997) stated, learning within the traditional approach is often rote and systematic, and is bound to structural syllabus which needs to be referred to. Hence, in the study, the learners in the control group could not grasp an in-depth understanding of the target structure and its benefits in language productions.

Additionally, the difference in the groups' performance in the three focused tasks can be related to both types of instruction. The FonF group performed significantly better than the other group in the "cloze passage" and "insert the collocations" tasks owing to the interaction and facilitative strategies within the instruction. The learners were able to independently attend to the tasks and negotiate the knowledge when required. In contrast, the learners in the non FonF group outperformed the FonF group in the sentence formation task. This can be attributed to the fact that within the non FonF approach, the learners have been vastly practising sentence writing based on the explicit grammar instruction in forming the verb-noun collocations in sentences.

Overall, although the learners in the FonF group produced more verb-noun collocations than the control group, erroneous productions are still prevalent. Gaskell and Cobb (2004) explain that errors are inevitable because learners may have stopped short at comprehension without in-depth understanding of the target structure especially considering that the effect of FonF may not be immediate. This is further supported by the fact that the 6 weeks instructions are not sufficient to allow the input-to-intake process and effective retention of productive knowledge to fully happen (Doughty, 2001). Hence, in this study, time factor may be crucial to further enhance the effect of FonF.

5.2 Implications of the study

First and foremost, this study was carried out to determine how L2 instruction may bring about change in how L2 learners deal with problems in using collocations. Essentially, this study informed the researcher of the difficulties faced by the primary L2 learners in their use of collocations. The study was focused on verb-noun collocations because, as posited by Howarth (1998) a large number of language utterances are made up of verb-noun collocations which hold the core information in language utterances. As illustrated in the study, the notion of collocation is still considerably unclear under the L2 learners' radar. For many of the learners, collocation is a complex concept to grasp especially due to the rules and restrictions which are attached to it. Therefore, this is an implication which is significant to the education field. Teachers, language instructors and language syllabus planners alike should work unanimously towards making collocation a more salient concept in the L2 learning context.

Another important implication of this study is the realization of the L2 learners' heavy reliance on grammar instruction. Based on the findings, although the Focus on Form instruction was able to encourage the learners to use more verb-noun collocations, the lack of explicit grammar teaching caused the L2 learners to actively make grammatical errors in their language production. It is apparent that without explicit grammar instruction, the L2 learners resorted to their L1 to ease the linguistic burden they faced at productive level. This is a cause for concern, as learning a language is not limited to learning its grammar structure based on a structural syllabus. In extension, as Nattinger and DeCarrico (1992) postulated, language learners should be directed to the larger structure of the language discourse rather than keeping focus on narrowed-down meaning and structure of individual words. Therefore, a call for instructional changes is pivotal to

enable more efficient language use and enhanced knowledge of collocations among the L2 learners in primary schools in Malaysia.

In addition, the L1 and L2 differences in language learning should be given attention. As exemplified by the findings of the effect of Focus on Form instruction, learner errors are the primary “syllabus” which is integrated in language learning. This way, the teachers have the opportunity to highlight common errors and discuss the underlying factor of the errors with reference to the learners’ L1. For instance, in using verb-noun collocations, delexical verbs have been proven to be the main reason for erroneous written production. Thus, teachers can direct and focus the learners’ attention to the form of the verbs in collocations with substantial examples. By comparing the L1 and L2, the learners’ awareness of the causes of errors will be raised. Therefore, the errors in language production can be reduced.

To conclude, identifying the types of errors made by the learners in using collocations is beneficial. For the teacher, the error identification would signpost the problems the learners find to be most challenging. Thus, remedial actions and revision of materials can be made to support the need of the learners. In terms of language syllabus content, collocations can be incorporated more saliently in order to enhance the learners’ ability to use language expressively and precisely. Likewise, in the long run, the learners will be able to familiarize themselves with the structures of L1 and L2 and be able to use English more confidently.

5.3 Suggestions for future research

The findings of this study were based on the data collected which involves a small sample size. Thus, it is possible that the findings might not be generalizable to other populations outside the study. It should be noted however, the transferability (Creswell,

2014) is possible as the study has provided description of the participants and the contexts of the study. Therefore, the study gave enough information for it to be employed by other researchers as a larger scale study in different primary schools in Malaysia. Besides that, the scope of the study should also be broadened to include other types of collocations which are equally important in allowing L2 learners to express their thoughts more creatively and fluently such as adjective-noun collocations which are also within the learners' internal syllabus.

Another suggestion for future research of verb-noun collocations is the inclusion of phrasal verbs which has been identified to be closely attached to the formation of verb-noun collocations and equally crucial for writing. Therefore, by investigating more syntactical patterns of verbs, it would inform the researcher of other linguistic problems faced by the L2 learners. The final suggestion for future research is related to the proficiency level of the L2 learners. In the context of this study, the participants were at intermediate level of English language proficiency. Therefore, in the future, the research can be conducted among advanced L2 learners. This way, a comparison between collocational use and competence among intermediate and advanced learners can be compared and contrasted.

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