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THE INFLUENCE OF FORMULAIC SEQUENCES ON STUDENTS' ORAL PROFICIENCY VIA COLLOCATIONS AND IDIOMS

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Abstract

Formulaic sequences, particularly idioms and collocations, have received increasing attention in English language learning settings to bridge the gap between daily and academic life. Thus, it is expected to increase students' motivation in English classes when they see reflections of formulaic sequences in their daily lives. Although the number of publications has risen exponentially to measure the effects of idioms and collocations on students' proficiency globally, a gap in the literature has been pinpointed about their roles in the Iraq context. In this regard, this study aimed to explore the potential influence of idioms and collocations on students' oral proficiency. Having chosen sixty first-year students by employing a convenience sampling method to represent two experimental and one control groups equally at a private university in Erbil, Iraq, in the spring semester of the 2022-2023 academic year, the students went through the intervention spanning twelve weeks. Experimental group students received the education either with a collocation-enriched or an idiom-enriched format, respectively. However, control group students continued their education according to the prerequisites of the official curriculum. Data were collected via speaking exams and interviews to obtain quantitative and qualitative data in this quasi-experimental design study. Collected data, analyzed by SPSS 26 and NVivo, revealed that collocation and idiom-enriched groups outperformed the control group. Similarly, experimental group students had more positive views on collocation and idiom-enriched education with various compelling reasons, such as being catchy, handy, and effective. The findings of the study may have some implications for stakeholders who plan to implement formulaic sequences in English classes.
Keywords*: collocation enriched education, formulaic sequence, idiom enriched format, oral proficiency*

Introduction

The dominance of English has been noticed more starkly in all circles of life on an unprecedented scale thanks to globalization and advanced technology in the 21ˢᵗ century. Globalization and advanced technology have urged individuals to overcome communication barriers, thereby reaping the benefits correspondingly. In this regard, English functions as a lingua franca to remove the barriers and establish two-way communication spontaneously among the members of different countries (Celik, 2023; Rao, 2019). Stakeholders in education put increasing emphasis on the English language and learning process, which is initiated at the kindergarten level in many countries because it plays a crucial role in shaping people's academic, social, and professional lives. To illustrate, English is the key to earning higher marks at educational institutions where English Medium Instruction is adopted. Likewise, English level has been measured in standardized tests, such as TOEFL, IELTS, PTE, and SAT, so test-takers can prove their credentials to be eligible for a position at workplaces or secure a place at universities for various purposes. Moreover, English is indispensable for scholars who need to analyze publications in English, whose percentage amounts to 90 % (Kara & Kucuk,

2023). After that, approximately 70 % of websites are in English to welcome more visitors from varied countries of the world. Additionally, commanding English precisely can pave the way for gaining promotion or salary rise at workplaces. Subsequently, English has paramount importance in aviation, tourism and trade. As it is clear, knowing English has the potential to revolutionize people's lives during their lifespans.

Speaking skill has an irreplaceable place in the language learning process thanks to its tremendous effects on people's lives. To name a few, articulating thoughts appropriately in English is the key to conveying messages and forging a robust relationship with the other side of the conversation (Qi, 2016; Yildiz, 2019). In addition, expressing ideas persuasively can unlock the potential at workplaces to secure a job and be promoted. Moreover, individuals who can communicate well in English can increase their network in social interactions. After that, effective speakers can articulate their ideas confidently in classes, thereby increasing their success rates in their academic journeys. Likewise, they can solve the problems rationally and earn the respect of society. Similarly, they can be an inspiration for others by being a flawless model in English. Speaking convincingly is also essential to connecting with other cultures and forming a mutual understanding for global peace (Lebedev et al., 2020; Yang, 2003). On the other hand, speaking is one of the most challenging skills to be developed for the learners. Having a solid background in English, practicing regularly, and engaging the audience are some prerequisites to displaying exemplary performance in English. It is obvious that speaking English offers ample opportunity once a well-established plan is set and monitored closely.

Formulaic sequences (FS hereafter) have been regarded as an essential component of being a native speaker. In the same vein, the goal of teaching English academically is to develop students' fluency so that they can speak like native speakers. In this regard, teaching formulaic sentences is increasing in popularity to improve learners' levels and increase communicative competencies drastically. FS are sequences of prefabricated words that are retrieved from the memory upon necessities rather than being subject to generation (Boers & Lindstromberg, 2012). In other words, they are lexical bundles to be adopted automatically, thereby reducing pauses and hesitations in written and spoken communication. Although there are several categories of FS, collocations, and idioms are used more commonly than other categories, such as phrasal verbs, personal stance markers, transitions, and generic rhetoric. Speakers of English can gain a wide range of advantages if they use FS actively which accounts for 50 % of words in English (Conklin & Schmitt, 2008; Puimège & Peters, 2019). For instance, they can perceive and process words more easily than unpredicted words. Subsequently, FS contribute significantly to learners' proficiency in English because they write or speak creatively without wasting time elaborating on their ideas. Likewise, they can articulate their ideas more concisely as collocations and idioms help speakers save time with their compressed meanings.

Collocations are one of the most essential representatives of FS. They are defined as co-occurring lexical partnerships with relative transparency of meaning to contribute to oral and written language proficiency (Boonraksa & Naisena, 2022; Bui, 2021; Kerneža & Kordigel Aberšek, 2022). There are various forms of creating collocations. To illustrate, verbs and nouns can be combined harmoniously which can be exemplified with making appointments. Likewise, taking an annual leave is another instance of forming collocations with the sequence of verbs, adjectives, and nouns. Similarly, being seriously addicted can be formed by combining adverbs with adjectives. Collocations fulfill indispensable roles in sentences, such as ensuring semantic precision, grasping differences between literal and figurative language, and writing creatively (Shen et al., 2021). Thus, renowned publishing companies such as Oxford, Longman and Cambridge have released collocation dictionaries respectively to meet the needs of the learners and increase the learning rates substantially. In the same vein, the collocation knowledge of the learners is measured in standardized tests, such as TOEFL, IELTS and PTE. It is unambiguous that colloquial expansion paves the way for oral and written fluency.

Idioms, which are defined as non-literal phrases with figurative meanings, are also one of the most prominent examples of FS. In other words, various words are combined which are different from their primary definitions in the dictionary. While they are common in daily conversations, course books, movies, and podcasts, figuring out idioms is challenging for learners who receive English courses as a foreign language (Cucchiarini et al., 2022; Yusuf et al., 2018). Accordingly, CEFR and standardized tests rank speakers in C1 and C2 levels if they command the rules of idioms and use them coherently in sentences (Ahmadi & Zarei, 2021; Aydin, 2019). There are four types of idioms, which include pure, binomial, partial and prepositional. Pure idioms can spill the beans which means uncovering a secret to figure out the truth, whereas binomial idioms can be formed with the combination of a word with a conjunction or preposition, such as dos and don'ts. On the other hand, partial idioms are shortened forms that necessitate the prediction of the second part of the idiom, such as the early bird … which leaves the completion of the idiom to the other side of the conversation. The final category, prepositional idioms, is formed with the combination of a word with the preposition which can be exemplified with count on, suffer from or deal with. It is evident that encountering idioms occurs frequently thanks to their irreplaceable roles in English on different occasions.

Research Significance

Speaking is at the center of displaying oral proficiency which is also regarded as challenging for many learners. In the same vein, it is inevitable to escape this tough task, which can be encountered in academic tests, interviews, video talks or one-on-one conversations (Yeldham, 2018). In order to meet the expectations of academia and industry, developing speaking skills takes precedence in Iraq to ease the integration of students with the whole world in the 21st century, thereby seizing the opportunities of being a global citizen who can communicate in English spontaneously. Thus, it takes priority in curriculums to master as early as possible. Meanwhile, teaching FS is regarded as the key to fluency in English, so it is expected to bridge the gap between native speakers and foreign language learners.

Literature Review

FS have resonated with native speakers for many years which has undergone a tremendous transformation with the advent of technological advancements, particularly in the 21st century. Once the objectives have been modified to reach native-like fluency in EFL classes with the assistance of readily available means of communication, the importance of FS, particularly collocations and idioms, has increased exponentially. According to Schmitt (2008), FS account for around forty percent of native-speaker speech, so teaching them has gained increasing momentum to reap the benefits for learners of English. Some scholars (Bui, 2021; Lebedev et al., 2020; Puimège & Peters, 2019) have asserted that FS play fundamental roles in written and spoken communication, whereas others (Butler, 2005; Kecskes, 2007; Stranovska et al., 2019) have held the opinion that the positive effects of FS are dubious. To name a few, McGuire and Larson-Hall (2017) have pointed out that FS encourage learners to gain oral proficiency in English once they are embedded in lessons in a balanced format. Likewise, Goncharov (2019) has stated that there is a positive correlation between adopting a communicative language teaching approach and FS, both of which support each other. Subsequently, Wood (2009) has attested that the degree of success increases in universally accepted standardized tests once learners are exposed to FS in their instructions. After that, Ellis (2012) has elucidated that speaking anxiety reduces dramatically when learners figure out FS and put them into practice in conversations. However, it does not necessarily mean that a consensus has been reached about the effectiveness of FS in English classes. To illustrate, Myles and Cordier (2017) have

posited that inserting FS into English classes can be overwhelming if the number of FS is not reduced to manageable forms. Otherwise, it can be inevitable to make some grave mistakes while formulating them in communicative acts. In the same vein, Schauer and Adolphs (2006) have proposed that FS should be prioritized according to their practical values in learners' language learning endeavors. Otherwise, the expectations and realities can be deceptive once they are exposed to chunks in an incomprehensible format. Likewise, Yu (2022) has stressed that using FS inadvertently in writing can lead to serious errors because learners need to figure out the differences between literal and figurative meanings clearly.

The dilemma between including and excluding FS in English classes is prevalent in published studies. For example, Liou and Chen (2018) conducted a large-scale study about the effects of FS enriched language teaching program on Taiwanese university students which unleashed that FS have far-fetching effects on increasing students' scores in an academic writing course. Additionally, positive feedback in the questionnaire dovetailed with writing exam scores. Subsequently, Yilmaz and Koban Koc (2020) explored the role of FS in developing learners' receptive and productive skills in the Turkish context of university students. The findings revealed that FS play a significant role in stimulating students' receptive and productive skills substantially. Another significant study was carried out by Boers et al. (2006), whose findings unearthed that employing a FS enriched instruction helps learners expand their vocabulary knowledge because they learn collocations, idioms and personal stance markers in a disciplined mode in the Belgium context at the tertiary level. Additionally, Khatami et al. (2023) carried out a study in Iran on university students to measure the effects of speaking. They have integrated movies that include FS into the lessons, which enhanced their speaking performance exponentially. In addition, Tekingül's (2013) study showed that FS is fundamental in comprehending reading texts accurately, thereby improving the reading performance of the learners gradually. Subsequently, Abdullah et al.'s (2022) study revealed that watching movies urges Iraqi EFL learners at the tertiary level to grasp the meanings of FS, so they show far better performance in listening exams. Furthermore, Uchihara (2022) investigated the roles of FS in mastering pronunciation in Japan, which uncovered that the treatment yields better results in increasing their mastery in terms of pronunciation. On the other hand, some studies have raised some doubts about the effectiveness of FS in developing students' levels in English classes. To name a few, Serrano et al. (2015) found that it is not adequate to close the gap between native speakers and EFL learners. Their study hinted that more efforts are required to improve EFL learners' English proficiency in a Spanish university rather than solely focusing on FS. Similarly, Cucchiarini et al. (2022) carried out a study on Dutch L2 learners which unearthed that reading aloud FS is not sufficient to teach them. They suggested that FS should be taught in a holistic approach which includes all macro and micro-skills. Likewise, Sipayung and Saragih (2023) conducted a study on Indonesian EFL learners at the tertiary level which culminated in a negative correlation between teaching FS and students' proficiency. They suggested that FS should be integrated into the curriculum with web-enhanced tools to capture students' interests. Otherwise, the lessons can be tiring and dull for the students whose FS acquisitions are measured low.

Research Aim and Research Questions

A gap in the literature has been observed in the Iraq context about the influence of FS on students' fluency, albeit a growing number of studies have been prevalent around the world. To address this gap, the present study explored the influence of FS enriched education on students' speaking performance. Accordingly, given questions below were formulated:

RQ1. Does FS-enriched education with collocations and idioms increase students' speaking scores?

RQ2. What is the influence of FS enriched education in changing students' attitudes towards speaking?

Research Methodology

General Background

The quasi-experimental design was employed to forge a cause-and-effect connection among the dependent and independent variables in this study. It is used in social sciences for its convenience in terms of non-random sampling, manipulation of the independent variable and making comparisons between groups to come to more reliable interpretations via the integration of quantitative instruments with qualitative ones (Maciejewski, 2020; Rogers & Revesz, 2019). More specifically, two experimental and one control group comprised the backbone of the study to measure the effects of FS on learners' speaking scores via speaking exams and interviews. In this regard, participants went through pre-test, treatment, and post-test stages to expand our understanding about the potential benefits of FS in developing EFL learners' speaking competence including the spring semester of the 2022-2023 Academic Year in the Iraq context at the tertiary level.

Sample Selection

The present study was conducted at a private university in Erbil, Iraq. Participants were chosen via convenience sampling among the students who took the Foundation English course in the 2022-2023 Academic Year. The convenience sampling method offers several advantages for the researchers, such as being reasonable, easy to implement and efficient (Emerson, 2015). The Foundation English course is particularly designed for students whose background in English is not satisfactory to adapt to classes in the department based on the proficiency exam results. Thus, they take a yearlong education to sharpen their English so that they can seize the opportunity to pass their departmental courses with a high grade from registration to graduation period. Three groups, each of which includes 20 students, represented two experimental and one control group equally. The number of male and female students in each group was equalized, and their ages ranged from 17 to 24. Subsequently, they were the members of twelve departments ranging from survey engineering to medical analysis. The first experimental group of students took the education in a collocation-enriched format, whereas the second experimental group of students was exposed to idiom-enriched education. On the other hand, control group students continued their education in an orthodox way. The participants joined ten lessons weekly, which spanned the whole academic year. All classes were covered according to the principles of communicative language teaching approaches by experienced lecturers. It is worth noting that the researcher was able to conduct the study with the assistance of two lecturers in experimental groups who earned their M.A. in English Language Arts. The researcher received permission to initiate the study from the relevant units at the university by explaining the objectives, data collection instruments and ethical considerations. Upon being granted to start the study, the researcher organized a workshop to display the steps of the study thoroughly. In the aftermath of the workshop, the participants who were volunteers signed the consent forms. Meanwhile, four students did not want to be a part of the study expressing their concerns, which were accepted, so they were replaced with new members. Of particular note is that the scientific committee at the university examined the study periodically to figure out whether the study dovetailed with ethical considerations.

Instrument and Procedures

The researcher employed several instruments to conduct the study in line with research validity and reliability. In the initial step, a readily available Oxford Placement Test was applied to ensure that they were homogenized in terms of their language proficiency (Aghajanzadeh Kiasi & Pourhosein Gilakjani, 2023). The test included ten reading, listening, vocabulary, and grammar questions. In addition, it consisted of writing and speaking prompts. Of particular note is that a pilot study was conducted to measure the reliability of the test on some students whose characteristics were approximately the same as the participants of the study. Cronbach Alpha index was calculated as .86, which was acceptable to meet the reliability criteria. Besides, face and content validity were assessed by five experienced EFL lecturers who approved that the test was successful in ensuring face and content validity. The results of the test revealed that their levels were similar to each other, which showed homogeneity.

The second set of instruments, which included pre-test and post-test prompts, was designed by three researchers who took part in the study actively. The skill to be tested in this stage was speaking for the pre-test and post-test exams according to the principles of Revised Bloom's Taxonomy (RBT henceforth). Köksal and Ulum (2018) have pointed out that creating speaking tasks in line with RBT offers several advantages thanks to increasing the degree of difficulty in a graded format, so learners can adapt to them without having much difficulty. The questions were chosen from the official course book series, Scope 2, considering the stages of RBT, so questions started from the remembering stage and ended in the creating section. The researcher also created the speaking rubric. In the subsequent phase, the exam was piloted on other Foundation English course students, which culminated in a .81 Cronbach Alpha index. In the same vein, five EFL experts analyzed the items and the rubric to have error-free exams. They examined the items and offered some insightful comments to increase the intelligibility of the items. The detailed descriptions of the speaking questions are as follows:

Pre-test Speaking Exam Questions
- Can you describe your high school period with distinguishing qualities?
- What is the best technique to understand movies in English?
- What are the steps of brewing tea?
- What are the primary causes of traffic accidents in your city?
- Is artificial intelligence helpful or harmful to humanity?
- What are your solutions to solve traffic problem in your city?

Post-test Speaking Exam Questions
- What did you do at the weekend?
- Can you summarize the best book you have read?
- What are the steps of making coffee?
- What is the most chronic problem in the world?
- Should euthanasia be legal or illegal?
- What are some measures to eliminate air pollution?

The last instrument to be exploited in the study was interviews. Semi-structured interviews were formed to receive students' opinions about the effectiveness of FS. Questions were created to pinpoint whether their attitudes toward FS-enriched education differ substantially after being exposed to the intervention. The detailed descriptions of the interview questions are as follows:
- How did this study affect your opinions about enhancing speaking performance via collocation and idiom-enriched education?
- What are some advantages and disadvantages of formulaic sequences enriched education?

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The data collection process spanned 12 weeks. Two weeks were run commonly with a workshop to illustrate all points for the researchers and participants, placement test, pre-test and receiving their background information on FS. In the last ten weeks, the first experimental group of students increased their vocabulary knowledge via collocations, whereas the second experimental group of students expanded their vocabulary power via idioms. More specifically, Collocations in Use was used to enrich classes in the first experimental group, while English Idioms in Use Intermediate was adopted in the second experimental group. Cambridge University Press has published both books to welcome students at the intermediate level. Collocations and idioms were introduced with illustrations, videos, presentations, and contextualized reading passages so that they can be stimulated to unleash students' creativity by delving into various learning styles, such as auditory, visual, and kinesthetic. Additionally, some quizzes were created to learn in a welcoming atmosphere through Kahoot, Zip Grade and Google Form. In the meanwhile, students could take the exams several times until they were excellent. The rationale for conducting quizzes was to practice rather than demotivate them with challenging exams. On the other hand, control group students' conduct was not different from the official curriculum, which included mastering skills through the principles of CLT in Scope 2. When the twelve weeks were over, it was feasible to run the post-test exam and post-interview.

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics including mean, standard deviation, a one-way ANOVA, Tukey and Scheffe were used to come to the right interpretations in terms of quantitative data, while the thematic coding feature of NVivo was employed to transcribe and categorize students' genuine opinions in the interview. To illustrate, mean and standard deviation were used to measure whether the intervention increased students' marks significantly. Likewise, a one-way ANOVA was run to figure out whether there were stark differences between groups and within groups. Similarly, the Tukey test was run to determine whether the gains were noticeable enough in a cross-checked format. In the same vein, the Scheffe test was activated to know whether there was a considerable difference between the gains of the two experimental groups. On the other hand, thematic coding was realized by reading the transcripts, coding appropriately, generating the themes, revising, and finalizing. Meanwhile, inter-rater consistency of the coded data was measured as 0.75 by three analysts which indicates an acceptable level of reliability (Tang et al., 2014). SPSS version 26 and NVivo were the main instruments to analyze collected data. While the former was used to fetch and analyze quantitative data, the latter was adopted to analyze qualitative data.

Research Results

Descriptive Results

Participants' speaking pre-test and post-test scores were compared to determine whether the difference was significant under two headings.

The Comparison of Pre-test Scores

Pre-test scores are illustrated in Table 1 and Table 2, which include descriptive statistics and one-way ANOVA.

Table 1
Descriptive Statistics for the Pre-test

Variables	Measurement	N	M	SD
Pre-test	Experimental 1	20	53.50	12.04
Pre-test	Experimental 2	20	53.75	10.86
Pre-test	Control	20	53	15.50

The first research question explored whether FS-enriched education yields better results in terms of boosting speaking performance. According to pre-test speaking scores, as visualized in Table 1, the average scores were 53.50, 53.75 and 53, with 12.04, 10.86 and 15.50 SDs, respectively. It can be inferred that their average scores did not differ from each other significantly in the initial phase.

Table 2
One-way ANOVA Results for the Pre-test

Pre-test	SS	df	MS	F	p
Between Groups	5.833	2	2.917	.017	.983
Within Groups	9568.750	57	167.873		
Total	9574.583	59			

In the next stage, having completed descriptive statistics, the researcher ran a one-way ANOVA to measure whether a statistically significant difference was prevalent among the three groups' means on the pre-tests as illustrated in Table 2. The p-value, .983, revealed that there was not a noticeable difference between groups in pre-test scores as the p-value was higher than the pre-defined significance level of .05. In other words, no significant difference was measured concerning each group's pre-test scores, $p. > .983 > .05$.

The Comparison of Post Test Scores

Post-test scores are analyzed in Table 3, Table 4, Table 5 and 6 as descriptive statistics, one-way ANOVA, Tukey and Scheffe tests to ensure that measurements complement each other harmoniously without leaving any doubts.

Table 3
Descriptive Statistics for the Post-test

Variables	Measurement	N	M	SD
Pre-test Experimental	1	20	70.50	9.018
Pre-test Experimental	2	20	67.75	16.50
Pre-test Control		20	54.75	18.02

Having implemented pre-test exams, the researcher was prompted to run post-test exams. In this regard, Table 3 displays that two experimental groups outperformed the control group. To illustrate, the first experimental group's scores increased from 53.50 to 70.50, which is equal to precisely 17 points gain by employing a collocation-enriched education. Similarly, the second experimental group's marks shifted from 53.75 to 67.50, which is equal to 13.75 points enhancement by adopting an idiom enriched education. Conversely, the control group students' average changed from 53 to 54.75, which is equal to 1.75 points increase by following the steps of the curriculum in a traditional format.

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Table 4

One-way ANOVA Results for the Post-test

Post-test	SS	df	MS	F	p
Between Groups	279.500	2	1398.750	6.184	.004
Within Groups	1289.750	57	226.206		
Total	1569.250	59			

In the subsequent phase, a one-way ANOVA was duplicated by inserting post-test scores of students in each group, which unearthed that a statistically significant difference was observed, $p > .04$ based on the values, depicted in Table 4. It may be asserted that the intervention period increased students' productivity in terms of speaking via collocation and idiom-enriched English education.

Table 5

Results of Tukey Test for the Post-test

Groups	Test	MD	SE	p	95% Confidence Interval Lower	95% Confidence Interval Upper
Collocation	Idiom	3.000	4.756	.804	-8.45	14.45
	Control	15.750*	4.756	.004	4.30	27.20
Idiom	Control	-3.000	4.756	.804	-14.45	8.45
	Collocation	12.750*	4.756	.026	1.30	24.20

On the other hand, a Tukey test was integrated into the research to determine whether the differences were noticeable between groups. As visualized in Table 5, no significant difference was measured between experimental groups, $p. > .804 > .05$. In contrast, a substantial difference was observed between the first experimental group, collocation enriched education and the control group, traditional curriculum, $p. < .004 > .05$.

Table 6

Results of Scheffe Test for the Post-test between Experimental Groups

Scheffeᵃ		Subset for alpha = .05	
Groups	N	1	2
3	20	54.75	
2	20		67.50
1	20		70.50
p		1.000	.820

According to Table 6, a considerable difference is not prevalent between the two experimental groups which hints that both collocation and idiom enriched instruction yielded satisfactory results.

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Discussion

The effects of FS, primarily collocations and idioms, on EFL learners' speaking enhancement were sought meticulously by employing a quasi-experimental research design via speaking exams and interviews to leave room for the quantitative and qualitative data equally in this study. Quantitative findings documented that collocations and idioms were beneficial means to foster speaking skills. In contrast, they unleashed that adopting a traditional education in EFL classes was not as effective as collocation and idiom-enriched classes. The substantial gains in speaking can be ascribed to the effects of education provided with authentic materials such as e-collocation and e-idiom books. In other words, experimental group students whose lessons were enriched with idioms and collocations outperformed the control group students whose lessons were guided based on the official curriculum. Another point to be emphasized is that both experimental groups took advantage of the intervention period as they did not differ substantially from each other in terms of speaking gains. This finding suggests that both collocations and idioms can develop students' speaking skills once applied professionally. Speaking exam scores dovetail with previous studies of Almegren (2022) and Le-Thi et al. (2022), who have elucidated that FS provide learners with bountiful resources of comprehensible inputs, so they can develop their speaking skills more instantly than their peers whose lessons are covered in a traditional format. In the same vein, Celik (2023) has asserted that collocations and idioms are the reflections of daily life experiences, which can encourage learners to use them more actively in communicative endeavors. Thus, they can find more common ground between theoretical and practical knowledge, namely collocations in the lessons and in daily conversations. Moreover, Du et al. (2022) have stated that teaching FS in a contextualized and web-enhanced format increases students' engagement, so they can increase their vocabulary breadth gradually which paves the way for oral mastery. In contrast, the gains in speaking are not consistent with Peter's (2016) study which has hinted that the integration of collocation and idioms does not contribute to speaking enhancement in all attempts due to some drawbacks.

Qualitative findings also shed light on essential points, addressing the second research question which was designed for participants' opinions on FS-enriched education. The findings disclosed that participants had positive views about collocation and idiom-enriched education. To illustrate, they pointed out that they multiplied their vocabulary powers thanks to being exposed to the intervention period, which is congruent with Sipayung and Saragih's (2023) study. They have elucidated that FS were effective lexical bundles to increase learners' vocabulary breadth gradually. Likewise, they appreciated the researcher's efforts to teach FS with various repetitions via stories, videos, and presentations. They also paid a compliment to the roles of contextualized learning. These findings are consistent with Liou and Chen's (2018) study, which has revealed that teaching FS in context and supporting their learning with audio-visual materials can expand students' knowledge, thereby increasing their motivation to sharpen their English. Similarly, the importance of web-enhanced authentic materials is realized starkly, which is in line with Kara's (2023) study. It has unleashed that online supplementary materials offer countless opportunities such as being catchy, cost-free, and handy. On the contrary, Foroutan and Taghizadeh (2022) have stated that students' perceptions on FS-enriched education differ significantly because they may not be appealing and interesting for all students. In line with the findings of the study, it may be argued that FS, particularly collocations and idioms, increased participants' satisfaction rates after noticing the considerable improvement in their speaking scores. In other words, collocations and idioms have limitless potential to unlock students' creativity in speaking classes. As the findings demonstrated, experimental group students outperformed the control group whose lessons were conducted without the integration of any supplementary materials.

A further discussion of the findings can be attributed to the adoption of a communicative language teaching approach while teaching FS. Audio-visual materials, presentations and role-play activities triggered the students to join communicative activities in increasing numbers. In addition, cooperation was the key criterion for implementing peer- learning, so they closed the knowledge gaps by discussing, exploring, and coming to a final decision in cooperation which fostered communication drastically in a welcoming atmosphere. In this regard, Zarei (2014) has proposed that organizing English lessons by integrating cooperative acts plays unprecedented roles in developing students' speaking skills via FS. In the same vein, cooperative activities urged the students to expand their friend circles and become more sociable through common project works to present certain idioms or collocations periodically which is in agreement with Kavlu's (2015) study. She has asserted that urging students to create projects collaboratively can help them become more sociable and learn from each other because students can be prompted to overcome their weaknesses with the help of their friends. Thus, the positive cycle continues as long as they study together. However, Dos Santos (2020) has emphasized some negative aspects of the communicative language teaching approach, such as underestimating the accuracy, increasing the stress level of introvert students and having insufficient assessment tools, so he suggests employing an eclectic.

Conclusions, Implications and Recommendations

This research purported to explore the potential effects of FS on students' speaking scores at the tertiary level. Findings unearthed that FS, exclusively collocations and idioms, increased experimental group students' speaking performance substantially. On the contrary, control group students' speaking marks did not increase in a noticeable mode because they followed the curriculum in an orthodox format. Subsequently, the results evidenced that teaching either collocations or idioms yielded better results in enhancing students' speaking performance. More specifically, no significant difference was found between idiom and collocation-enriched groups, which hinted that both are effective in increasing students' productivity to create novel utterances in speaking. Complementary qualitative findings uncovered that teaching FS with the assistance of web-enhanced tools and principles of communicative language teaching approach was effective in capturing students' interests and increasing their language learning enthusiasm to become proficient speakers of English. In other words, web-enhanced tools and project-based learning methods fostered communication, thereby improving students' speaking skills considerably. It can be argued that quantitative data dovetailed with qualitative data without leaving any room for doubts.

Based on the findings of the study, some pedagogical implications are illustrated. To begin with, educational institutions may equip English classes with the latest technological tools so that educators can reap the benefits of a web-enhanced English teaching mode. In the second place, educators can seek ways to bridge the gap between theoretical and practical knowledge by teaching idioms and collocations so real-life examples can be brought to English lessons in an engaging atmosphere. Subsequently, cooperation should be at the center of English classes, so students can get the pleasure of overcoming various barriers, learning from each other and widening their friendship circles. Finally, contextualized learning and repetition of the target words should be supported in various means so long-term memory can be sharpened to retrieve information once the need arises. Meanwhile, monotonous classes, which are one of the most chronic problems in English language learning and teaching, can be eliminated instantly. Thus, the competencies of the learners develop earlier to be ranked as proficient speakers of English.

With respect to the limitations of the study, a wide range of suggestions are made for further research. Firstly, this study was confined to two prominent examples of FS, namely collocations and idioms, which can be extended with other examples of FS, such as phrasal

verbs, personal stance markers and transitions. Subsequently, the effects of FS on speaking were investigated in this study, which can be enlarged with other macro and micro-skills. Additionally, this study was limited to freshman university students, which can be extended to high or secondary school students. Furthermore, exams and interviews comprised the backbone of the study, which can be enlarged with questionnaires to get more statistical analysis.

Declaration of Interest

The authors declare no competing interest.

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