An Analysis of Collocations in the *Outcomes* Series: The Question of Paul Nation's (1996) Four Strands Theory

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Abstract

Can collocations be considered a pivotal element in English courses? Does the educative community around teaching English as L2 know about the importance of collocations for Secondary Students? Are collocations practised in coursebooks? How can we make collocation learning an efficient process working all skills? This dissertation set out to try to answer these questions by carrying out a coursebook analysis. The data gathered in this study comes from three coursebooks from the *Outcomes* Series, published by Hugh Dellar and Andrew Walkley in 2010. The main objective was to discover how collocations were practised in the three books chosen from the coursebooks series, which also implied to find out the way collocations were practised, meaning, type of exercises, type of collocations and unit's sections in which collocations were presented. At the same time, this paper set out to carry a revision of Paul Nation's (1996) Four Strands Theory, to determine whether Nation's theory could be applied to the designing process of coursebooks. What this dissertation found is that it is possible to use such a theory in coursebook's designs, as well as that collocations are an often-disregarded concept in vocabulary syllabus. Further research on the matter of collocations is needed to identify exact ways in which learning collocations can help students, and where collocations stand in real English courses and curriculums.

¿Deberían considerarse las colocaciones como elementos necesarios en la enseñanza inglesa? ¿Como comunidad educativa, se reconoce la importancia que tiene la enseñanza de colocaciones para el alumnado de secundaria? ¿Se practican colocaciones en los libros de texto? ¿Cómo podemos hacer de la enseñanza de colocaciones un proceso beneficioso en todas las destrezas? Esta tesis trata de responder dichas preguntas a través de un análisis de libros de texto. Los datos recolectados provienen de tres libros de texto pertenecientes a la serie *Outcomes*, publicada por Hugh Dellar y Andrew Walkley en 2010. El objetivo principal de esta investigación es el descubrimiento de cómo se trabaja el concepto de colocaciones en los tres libros. Lo que implica encontrar el tipo de ejercicios en la que se trabajan, el tipo de colocaciones y las secciones de las unidades en las que se trabajaban colocaciones. Además, este estudio también trata de revisar la teoría de las Four Strands de Paul Nation (1996) y determinar su aplicación en el proceso de diseño de libros de texto. Lo que este estudio descubrió es la posibilidad de aplicar dicha teoría en los diseños de libros de texto, además concluí con la idea de que las colocaciones son un concepto de vocabulario frecuentemente olvidado. Es necesario investigar más a fondo la materia de las colocaciones para identificar las formas exactas en las que su aprendizaje beneficia a los alumnos y donde podemos encontrar la enseñanza de colocaciones dentro de las aulas y el currículo de la asignatura.

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1. Introduction

There is a growing body of literature that recognises the importance of teaching collocations to secondary students of English as a foreign language. L2 students are often subject to investigations and research to discover how we can improve the curriculum, methods and syllabus of English courses and coursebooks. The way we teach collocations can play an essential role in addressing the issue of how we teach vocabulary nowadays. This allows us to debate and raise questions on matters such as the degree of importance that vocabulary teaching has nowadays, how that degree of influence translates to real-life classroom experiences and coursebook designs, whether we are approaching vocabulary teaching correctly as well as what is the role of collocations in the way we comprehend English teaching and learning. However, research has also shown that collocations lack presence in language courses, although the reason why is not entirely certain since there is not a large amount of literature on the matter that recognises this lack of work on the concept.

Data from several studies suggest that collocations are a significantly essential concept to teach secondary students of English as a foreign language. Many experts such as McCarthy, O'Keeffe & Walsh (2010) or Nation (1990) have established the importance of teaching vocabulary effectively to provide students with a contextualised way of learning English. Existing research recognises the critical role played by context when teaching vocabulary, as well as how this context should be contemplated in the mode coursebooks are designed. A considerable amount of literature has been published on the benefits of collocation teaching in secondary students of English. Studies such as the one conducted by Nizonkiza and Van de Poel (2019), allow us to see the effect of collocations in the proficiency improvement of students at secondary levels. Their methodologies and techniques might open a new door towards more extensive research and literature on different modes to include collocations in the vocabulary syllabus of language courses around the world.

Nevertheless, all these studies cannot have happened without the rigorous and essential examination of how a communicative approach to teaching English can help students to demonstrate and develop their full linguistic potential. Canale and Swain (1980) developed a theory that concluded with the importance of developing communicative competence in students so that they could face rapid changes in a more

English-connected world. To achieve this, the authors contemplated the necessity of abandoning audiolingual approaches to teaching English to include new aspects such as sociolinguistic elements or the learner's need to allow the students to develop competences and skills efficiently and more naturally. For this, Canale and Swain (1980) believed in the necessity of production, but useful production of language, which meant the importance of providing students with real-life interactions with competent speakers of the language, since the objective was to allow students to develop communicative competences and performance under contextualised environments that responded to the learner's needs

Many specialists followed Canale and Swain's approach to teaching, among them Paul Nation. Nation's findings and studies are an intrinsic part of my study on collocations. His theory of the Four Strands (1996) allowed me to realise that the way language courses are structured might not benefit vocabulary teaching, but most importantly it helped me to see how collocations can be disregarded by coursebooks and courses. Nation's studies regarding vocabulary teaching helped other experts to start turning questions towards the students' necessities instead of the teacher's responsibilities. What this meant was that instead of asking how can I teach such a thing, teachers could begin to ask how can I help students learn or understand such a thing. This eventually meant reprising past research studies and questioning them through these new perspectives. All of this was important for this study because I came to see collocation teaching as needing those type of questions to be effective.

This study, drawing upon two different purposes, attempts to discover first how the representation of collocations in coursebooks is. To that end, three coursebooks at three different levels but from the same series were selected. The coursebooks chosen belong to the *Outcomes* Series published in its first edition in 2010, although for this analysis the second edition of the coursebooks was selected, published in 2015. Hugh Dellar and Andrew Walkley designed this coursebook series. This coursebook analysis' objective is to discover how collocations are taught and presented in the coursebooks, also to find out whether the coursebooks' level affected in any way how collocations were presented in these coursebooks. The second purpose regards Nation's work. In 1996 he published his research on the different parts that a language course should have to fulfill a communicative outcome, and eventually help students improve their proficiency in the language. With this, the objective is to discover what is the influence of Nation's (1996)

Four Strands Theory in the designing process of coursebooks, which means that in the case of not having any influence, we would try to adapt or apply Nation's theory (1996) to the design of collocation practice in the coursebooks in the form of propositions. These propositions are meant to be considered as a way to demonstrate the possibility of applying Nation's theory to the designing processes of language coursebooks.

The methodology followed, as the purposes, can be divided into two different parts, the first one concerned with the analysis of collocations in the coursebooks. To carry out this analysis, first, it was essential to calculate and to locate the possible examples of collocations in the coursebooks. To then understand and classify how collocations were practised, in terms of how much the concept was presented to students, which meant organising the different cases of collocation practice concerning the explicit or implicit nature of such practice.

The reader should bear in mind that the study is based on theoretical premises; thus, it is beyond the scope of this study to examine the real effect of collocation teaching in secondary classrooms. The impossibility of working with real students, aa a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and resultant lockdown, meant that I had to base my study base upon theoretical premises and interpretations of the results obtained through the coursebook analysis. Therefore, another potential problem is that the scope of my thesis may be too broad. Nevertheless, this does not mean that the results and arguments presented in this dissertation should be regarded as less specific or less improbable, as we are dealing with the analysis of teaching materials and with the arguments of experts to justify how collocations are taught in English language courses nowadays. At the same time, in this paper, the reader will find insights from the coursebook series' authors themselves, which are an incredibly valuable source of information for this dissertation.

This paper has been divided into five parts. The first one will be composed of a review of the literature regarding language teaching, and most specifically, vocabulary teaching. The second part is a description of the methodology followed in this research; the third part presents the main findings and analysis' results. The fourth section of this paper deals with the arguments, interpretations and includes the proposals that were previously mentioned. Finally, the fifth section is conformed by the conclusions and an improvement plan for future research on this matter.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1 The image of language teaching nowadays

Language teaching is an increasingly essential area in applied linguistics, especially when we consider the importance that learning a foreign language has nowadays. According to Long (2009), there are two variations of foreign language learners, those voluntary learners and those who are not (p.3). Now, when we consider the non-voluntary variety, we might think of students in the education system, being the foreign language a mandatory subject to study. New groups are emerging, Long (2009) credits the current developments in society and history, the unprecedented current chaos, as well as the accelerating migration phenomenon to their development. Long (2009, p.1) refers to these groups as those that see themselves obliged to learn a new language due to migration caused by wars, natural disasters, or any other social issue currently happening around the globe. For this reason, Long (2009, p.1) does not exaggerate when he contends that language teaching might be at its most crucial moment in history.

Likewise, McKay and Rubdy (2009) hold the same view regarding language teaching. Nevertheless, they go more in-depth and go on to analyse the different contexts in which a language learner can be found. For them, globalisation has allowed English to go hand in hand with other languages around the world, which has provoked the emergence of English in bilingual contexts, hence, the rise of new standard versions of English that fit into the necessities of these bilingual contexts and countries. (p.14) This phenomenon is termed by Kachru, according to McKay and Rubdy (2009, p.13) as the *nativised variety.*

Consequently, to this phenomenon, it is of great importance to reflect upon the definition of what a Speech Community is. A term coined by Hymes in the 1970s, a Speech Community, is the group of speakers of a language that have in common at least one particularity (McKay and Rubdy 2009, p.14). Regarding the value of English in today's world, the global presence of this language makes it worth analysing. Kachru (1986) explored the different levels where English can be spoken within different types of speakers. He divided these levels into circles from Inner to Expanding (McKay and Rubdy 2009, p.16) while being the expanding circle the one this dissertation is interested in, it is worth commenting on the characteristics of each section. Kachru identified the Inner Circle as the basis of English, where speakers have the language as their first, in the

Outer Circle, we can locate those speakers in which English coexists with another official language, and finally the Expanding Circle. Foreign-language speakers are part of this ongoing and growing sector. Schmitz (2014) argue that this circle includes immense international varieties that differ from each other in many ways. Hence, English is used as a foreign language (p.375).

Nevertheless, Schmitz makes interesting remarks on the issue of the Three Circles and its applicability to the current spectrum of globalisation, hence, multilingualism. Schmitz comments regarding Kachru's Expanding Circle, drawing a blurred line among the three circles that Kachru proposed, stating that multilingualism is the norm, and monolingualism is the exception. The effects of migration and diaspora have allowed English to become an international force; thus, the presence of this language in numerous contexts, that as was mentioned earlier, has caused the emergence of a new standard version of English. Thereby, the circles are slowly but efficiently becoming one. (Schmitz, 2014, p.403)

2.2 Teaching English and the concept of Communicative Competence

The concept of Communicative Competence, appeared in the decade of the 1980s, with the work of Canale and Swain. This work might be one of the most important regarding the communicative approach to English teaching, and even though it was published around four decades ago, it is still very influential to this day. The concepts and theoretical framework developed in this influential article have helped to shape and promote understanding of the importance of adopting a communicative approach to language teaching. In the article, to comprehend the concept of Communicative Competence, the authors began commenting on the main difference between competence and performance, two main ideas when it comes to language learning and teaching. For this, the article supported itself with a definition by one of the greatest linguists, Chomsky, whose work dated in 1965, (as cited in Canale and Swain 1980) made a clear distinction between the two concepts: 'competence' being the internalised language characteristic and linguistic system obtained by a native speaker and the idea of 'performance' was defined as the psychological factors that involve the production and comprehension of speech (pp. 3-4). In other words, Canale and Swain (1980) understood these two concepts as the former being a combination of grammatical and sociolinguistic competence and the latter, the realisation of the two mentioned competences, hence, the interaction and production of such in speech. When we talk about a sociolinguistic control of the

language, we mean that the learner and speaker know the contextualised language, saying that the speaker knows when and how to use the language, taking into account the context in which language is produced for some communicative purpose.

Canale and Swain (1980) developed five principles to support their understanding of the communicative approach. (1) The Communicative Competence contain grammatical and sociolinguistic components as well as communication strategies, which leads to developing a strategic capability. (2) A communicative approach should respond to the learner's needs, and these needs would be regarding the learner's skills and issues around acquiring the language. Thereby, these issues can be relatively fixed and terminal or transitional, and change due to different factors such as age or the learning process. (3) The opportunity of having meaningful communicative interaction with highly competent speakers is of great importance since real communication can lead to communicative confidence. Something very similar to the idea of 'fluency' by Nation (1996), which has its explanation in the following section. (4) Developing skills regarding communicative competence acquired in L1 during early learning stages is essential to promoting those in L2. (5) The main objective of the communicative approach is to provide the learners with information, practice, and as much experience as required to meet the learner's communicative needs (pp. 27-28).

Through these principles, Canale and Swain provided a sharp image of what the communicative approach should look like, and it has influenced many other experts and language course makers.

2.3 Paul Nation and the balanced language course

One of the most prominent figures in language teaching is Paul Nation. Nation (1996) conveyed the elements that a successful language course should have and labelled them in terms of language inputs, outputs, and fluency. These elements became an essential guide for the creation and organisation of language courses. Nation's Four Strands describe what a great course should look like and be like; these strands are meaning-focused input, language-focused learning, meaning-focused output, and fluency development activities (p.7).

To begin with, the first strand, meaning-focused input, makes the student focus on the ideas expressed within a message, in an oral or written text, instead of focusing on the grammatical patterns. This strand is applied through listening and reading tasks that

involve comprehending the message that is carried (Nation, 1996 p.8). Through meaning-focused input, the goal is for the students to assimilate new aspects of the language by comparing it to their previous knowledge, to have a 'creative comparison and use' of the language, towards a rethinking process of the significance of the newly learned items (Nation, 1996, p.8). Furthermore, Nation comprehends that this input is essential in a language course; however, it is not enough. Therefore, he continues describing the rest of the strands as elements that should be balanced and complementary to one another's functions.

According to Nation (1996), the language-focused learning strand is interested in analysing and understanding the features and structures that compose the English language, thus, grammatical patterns, syntactic structures and so forth (p.8).

The third strand, meaning-focused output, considers the use of spoken production to put into practice what the two prior strands stand for. The use of spoken production would allow the student to convey a message and contextualise the structures and language features and combine both strands, which according to Nation *"leads to better results than [working] either kind of strand alone"* (1996, p.9). The final strand deals with fluency and Nation (1996) characterises fluency as the practice of producing language effortlessly or without any critical issues (p.10). Moreover, Nation considers that fluency centred activities can lead to demonstrate to learners that when they put into use all the strands correctly, they can produce language with ease, especially, spoken production. (p.10) Furthermore, Nation continues by stating that:

> There need to be substantial opportunities for both receptive and productive
> language use where the goal is fluency. If the items that have been learned are
> not readily available for fluent use, then the learning has been for little purpose
> (Nation, 1996, p.10).

Nation's Four Strands principle, suggests a change of perspective when it comes to language teaching. The strands are not centred on teachers and the methods we can use to teach certain parts of the language; instead, the Four Strands principle shines the focus on the student's learning process and raises questions such as 'how can I help the student learn X?' rather than 'how can I teach X?'. Nation's principle emphasises not only the role of the learners as key for language learning but the importance of balance between the different elements that make a language course. This balance, according to Nation and

Yamamoto (2012), should not only involve the right amount of treatment of the different skills and its strands but that each strand of Nation's principle, becomes an additional and integral part for the rest. This meaning, the various elements in a language course should account for each other, each strand function as an area of work and preparation for the rest of the strands (pp.172-173).

Further back, in 1947, Professor Charles Duff (as cited in Clements, 1948) published an analysis of the cognitive processes through which someone learns a language, entitled 'How to learn a language'. Duff suggested that pure linguistic learning is not enough to control a language fluently, and considered of greater importance communicative efficiency and the interchanges of ideas, rather than grammatical or linguistic accuracy (p.432). In 1970 Cooper concluded with the suggestion that as teachers we should set learning goals according to the usefulness and real practice that our students will experience, thus, language courses, should have in mind the situations in which students will use English so that the course can prepare and satisfy those necessities. Therefore, teachers should be able to combine what he calls the linguistic competence and the communicative one (p.311). Why is this important when commenting on Nation's Four Strands? It is to comprehend the applicability of the strands in language teaching in secondary schools, at the same time because Nation and Yamamoto's claims (2012) have significant effects on the process of course design and the pedagogical perspective of language teaching (p.178). If we take into account that all strands must be balanced to have a successful language course, we should also realise that from the Four Strands Nation (1996) suggested, three of them are message focused. Hence, a communicative approach can be seen in Nation's theory.

The implications that this has is that under Nation's principle, the teacher relinquishes the protagonist function, and stands as helper and planner. This planner role is, in fact, the key to the success of Nation's principle, due to the necessity of the teacher to provide learning opportunities to the students, throughout the Four Strands. (Nation and Yamamoto, 2012, p.178) Thus, the reduction of direct teaching, which implies that the student is the centre of attention and guidance, thereby teaching-centred sessions, are transformed into learning-centred sessions. (Nation and Yamamoto, 2012, p.178)

2.4 Teaching vocabulary, from a secondary to a critical element

To date, several studies have investigated the theories and practices of vocabulary teaching and learning; however, the importance and presence of vocabulary in language courses have become a problematic issue. According to Carter and McCarthy (1988), what is known and analysed regarding vocabulary teaching and learning nowadays, comes from far back when the matter of including vocabulary in a courses' syllabus was the subject of considerable debate. Thus, when it comes to the trajectory of research on vocabulary learning and teaching, it is more a story of the dominance of ideology and shifts rather than a succession of old insights to newer ones (p.39). To begin with this trajectory and understand why Nation's (1996) Four Strand principle is that important nowadays, we have to go back to the 1940s and go through the 1950s and 1960s. During these decades, vocabulary was relegated to a secondary level of importance, and many times left in the background, focusing on the linguistic features of a language, hence, grammar, or syntactic aspects (Carter and McCarthy, 1988, p.40).

In the decade of the 1970s, Richards (1976) developed eight assumptions regarding what it means to know a language's vocabulary. These assumptions go from the lexicon to the syntax and usefulness of the words we learn, and such assumptions helped vocabulary to gain the importance that it deserved in a language course syllabus. Richards's premises are: (1) A native speaker's vocabulary expansion continues through adulthood; thus, we keep learning new words almost all our life. (2) "Knowing a word" has the implicit knowledge of deliberately acknowledging the probability of the use of a word. (3) "Knowing a word" implies knowing when and how to use it. In terms of the functional and situational limitations that the word means for the speaker. (4) "Knowing a word also implies understanding its syntactic behaviour in a sentence, thus knowing the function of a language. (5) "Knowing a word" suggests comprehending the different variations that a word underlies. (6) "Knowing a word" entails understanding the relationship between words and the associated network that it implies. (7) "Knowing a word" means that the speaker knows and understands its semantic value. (8) "Knowing a word" involves the implicit control of the different meanings a word can have (p.83). Richard's research is of pivotal importance because it makes plain the fact that vocabulary teaching and learning is a complex process. Furthermore, Carter and McCarthy (1988) further comment that Richard's assumptions are essential because they shine a light on

the different aspects of vocabulary and provide both a focus on the various ways in which vocabulary can be learned and how it can be taught (p.45).

2.5 How many words does a second language speaker of English need to know?

Nation (1990) concluded that answering this question was not straightforward, due to the two considerations that it involved, considerations that a teacher of English should take into account when deciding what type of words, a student needs to know to succeed and meet the communicative needs required. The first consideration was to contemplate the vocabulary knowledge of a native speaker and set that range as the goal of an L2 learner. The second consideration was to analyse the data on the frequency and practical experience with particular vocabulary as well as to research the vocabulary needed for specific activities and experiences that an L2 learner might encounter (p.11). When it comes to the first consideration Nation (1990) stated that to estimate the number of words that a native speaker knows is to consider as well the number of variations that this estimation can lead to (p.11). Therefore, Nation (1990) continues contemplating the comparison between native speakers and L2 learners, specifically with the learning process of these two. Nation (1990) states that for L2 learners to achieve the same level of comprehensibility and management of vocabulary as native speakers, L2 learners need to be integrated into a similar education system as that of the native speaker. Meaning that to make up for the differences in vocabulary size between these two subjects, they need to overcome the differences in entering the education system of that language, which is not impossible; nevertheless, as Nation (1990) argues, it involves the need for a great deal of help and tremendous effort (p.12).

Nation (1990) continues commenting that to fulfil this goal for students, they must be taught in terms of necessity and objectivity. If the words are set to be for productive or receptive use, there will be different things to take into account and several answers to take into consideration (pp.30-31). Nation (1990) states that there is plenty of literature that proves the importance of L1 in the process of learning L2 vocabulary. He concludes by citing Meara who says that studying the effect of bilingual knowledge in second language learning is very important to comprehend how teachers can help L2 learners to increase their vocabulary size and control through L1 experience:

> When some kind of cognitive operation other than simple recall of the phonetic form is called for, it does become extremely difficult to keep two languages apart. In this sense, forms in one language clearly evoke the

corresponding related forms in the other language, a finding which would be very difficult to explain if the independent lexicons claim were true *(Meara as cited by Nation 1990, p.33).*

Nation concludes on this matter that there are only advantages in integrating the two languages instead of separating them, due to the encouragement of borrowing and inference between L1 and L2, that it would produce. (1990, pp.33-34). Furthermore, Nation (1990) argues that learning words effectively involves the amount of effort needed to learn them. This effort can be quantified by three factors that serve us as a conclusion to the question presented at the beginning. The first factor is the previous knowledge of the L2 of the learner, as well as the learner's understanding of the mother tongue, the second factor is the way the word is taught and learned, and finally, the difficulty that learning that word implies (p.33).

Part of Nation's research was dedicated to the way teachers can help vocabulary learning in students. Through his (1996) Four Strands theory, he developed other principles, techniques and recommendations for teachers to make the learning process of new vocabulary feel less of a burden for the student and more an exciting process. An aspect already mentioned is that of trying to figure out what type of things a student needs to learn from a language and eventually what teachers should teach, for these two important factors should be taken into consideration, student's learning needs and their interest for the learning process are the answer. As early as 1938, Mersand acknowledged the significant importance of provoking interest in students to learn vocabulary. He commented that finding interest in learning anything will help the learner to feel inclined to participate in the learning process actively (p.216). Mersand proposed some possibilities in which teachers can create this interest in students, and these proposals go from learning vocabulary through a linguistic and correlative analysis of languages such as Latin and English or discovering the functionality of dictionaries. And although these proposals nowadays would be considered sort of 'old-fashion' approaches, it is still remarkable how the factor of creating and provoking enthusiasm in students when learning vocabulary, has always been of great importance and continues to be these days (Mersand 1938, p.217). Nation (1974), decades after Mersand's proposals, also brought up the significance of creating that interest in students, namely because students might not be interested in learning new vocabulary in the first place, especially if we think of secondary school students. Thus, Nation proposed ways in which teachers can infuse that

interest in students (p.19). However, it is essential to first comment on what Nation believed was needed to teach vocabulary. According to him, teachers should pay attention to three aspects, the form of a word, the meaning of a word and the relationship and connection that those two aspects have. Therefore, teachers should take into account those three aspects of vocabulary teaching when presenting new words to students (p.18). Nation, comments that for creating interest in the process of learning new vocabulary, teachers can incite exciting and guided challenging processes to learn new words so that the students are drawn into the journey of discovering these new words. (p.19) Some of the examples Nation (1974) proposes to incite interest are to make students guess meanings, give clues about form, play with the arrangement of words or provide demonstrations of given actions (p.19-20). With these examples, Nation (1974) hopes that teachers can ease a student's vocabulary learning process (p.20). Nevertheless, other aspects are equally important as creating interest in the student, and those aspects are the different parts that compose the vocabulary syllabus in a language course. To have a successful learning process, it is necessary first to have a reliable program for the course, Nation and Newton (1997) distinguished three different parts to take into consideration when dealing with the vocabulary syllabus of a language course, selection, sequencing and presentation. (p.238)

When it comes to the selection aspect, Nation and Newton (1997) include two selective processes to follow, one regarding the frequency of the most used words, especially in beginners' levels and other processes regarding the different abilities that the course wants to reinforce, (a) the ability to combine words, (b) to define words, (c) to replace words, and finally (d) associative and availability factors (p.238). These two processes are connected to what Nation and Newton titled 'sequencing', which they also divided into two types: first sequencing in terms of level and secondly, sequencing in terms of organising words in sets for each lesson. For the level sequencing, Nation and Newton (1997) distinguished four levels, (1) High-frequency words; (2) Academic Words; (3) Technical Vocabulary; (4) Low-Frequency Words (239). , Nation (2008) developed different definitions of what we should consider of each level of words, to discover and help teachers understand what kind and how many words their students might need to learn (p.7). *High-frequency words* were considered as the most important group of words that can appear both in formal and informal uses of the language because they are the most common and can occur in all kinds of language uses (Nation 2008, p.7).

Academic Vocabulary does not happen as often as the previous level because this vocabulary consists of words frequent in specialised areas (p.8). *Technical Vocabulary* is that which occurs in particular and specific areas within the academic vocabulary (p.9). Finally, *Low-Frequency vocabulary* is considered by Nation (2008) as the largest group of words from the other three, because this group includes those not widely used words, words from technical areas that are not familiar to an individual and words that rarely occur (p.11). Nation and Newton (1997) explain that after selection and sequencing, meaning comprehending the kind of words that your students need to know through the classification commented above, it is also essential to understand how to present this vocabulary to facilitate its learning and teaching. The authors comprehend that each type of word should be treated differently depending on the objectives and learning goals that the students have. Thus, high-frequency words should be the group with more significant attention from teachers, although this group is not the biggest in number, it is the most useful for students (p.240).

2.6 The question of vocabulary in context and collocations

Many experts consider the need to teach vocabulary in context to make students aware of the different ways in which words can be used, but especially when a word or phrase should be used, taking into account the context. Burgess and Head (2005) consider of great importance to openly discuss in the classroom the different and appropriate ways that certain words should be used (p.64), this leads us to the concept of collocations. Palmer (1933) provides a useful definition of what collocations are; Palmer emphasises the importance that collocations have for the language learner. Palmer defined collocations as:

> Successions of words [that] must or should be learnt as an integral whole or independent entity, rather than by the process of piecing together their component parts (as cited by Nizonkiza and Van de Poel 2019, p.14).

McCarthy, O'Keeffe and Walsh (2010) pointed out that a significant aspect of language teaching and learning is to comprehend that words in English and any language do not happen to go together "by chance," there are reasons for this explanation, and collocations are the established form for explaining it (p.29). Nation (1990) contemplates learning vocabulary through collocations as a way of not altogether rejecting word list learning by using context. Taylor, as cited by Nation (1990), presented in 1983 four main reasons for learning words as collocations:

(a) Words which are naturally associated in text are learnt more easily than those not so associated; (b) vocabulary is best learned in context; (c) context alone is insufficient without deliberate association; (d) vocabulary is a distinct feature of language which needs to be developed alongside a developed grammatical competence. (as cited by Nation 1990, p.38)

Burgess and Head (2005) further suggest that learners need to understand the importance of learning vocabulary through context and appreciate that words pair with other words and form established collocations. This matter, according to Burgess and Head, allow students to have a higher understanding of the language and also improves their accuracy and proficiency. (p.70)

The Council of Europe, through the Common European Framework of References for Languages, also recognises the importance of learning collocations by categorising collocations as an essential part within the communicative competence that learners should reach. Furthermore, collocations are included as a critical element in the improvement of sociolinguistic competence (p.111), which connects us to Canale and Swain's (1980) research. This integrating approach emphasises the preparation of L2 learners to develop grammatical features of L2 through sociolinguistic and strategic competences, which are acquired through communicative experience in the L1 (p.29). When checked the official curriculum of the subject English as a Foreign Language 1 in the Canary Islands, there is no direct comment or mention of collocations. However, it seems to be implicit in the emphasis on communicative language teaching. When considered what Canale and Swain (1980) regarded as Communicative Competence, we have to think that it includes more elements, sociolinguistic competence, linguistic competence, strategic competence, that all embody the global idea of the Communicative Competence and approach that English teaching should have according to these authors, (pp.27-28). With this in mind, we have to consider that collocations fall in between these competencies because using collocations means to understand its lexical function, and to know the sociolinguistic context in which collocations can be used.

Rahimi and Momeni (2012) conducted a fascinating study to prove that teaching collocations in the classroom contributed directly to an improvement in student's proficiency. Their study was based upon the question described above; they chose two groups of students, one of which would be taught vocabulary in what they termed 'traditional techniques' and another coined as the experimental group, whose teaching

was conducted through practising and learning collocations (p.39). Their results were pleasing because they would support what all the experts mentioned above have claimed for decades. Through a pre-test and post-testing system, the results were precise, the experimental group seemed to have a more significant improvement and improved proficiency in the post-test after learning and working with collocations (p.41). Furthermore, as commented by Lewis, cited in Rahimi and Momeni (2012), teaching fixed, semi-fixed expressions, collocations, or idioms can help student's language production skills, which also leads to a higher level of fluency. Nation and Newton (1997) highlight the importance of teaching collocations, not only in terms of sets of words but also of meaning. The authors comprehend that words can collocate with several others, hence, having different meanings. Nevertheless, Nation and Newton, argue that it is necessary to make students aware of the differences between collocations in terms of meaning, not in terms of words (p.250). Nation and Newton (1997) also see as beneficial for the student, making a comparison of how other languages construct collocations to understand how these sets of words work and the importance of meaning in them (p.250).

2.7 How do we teach collocations?

McCarthy, O'Keeffe and Walsh (2010) present two ways of teaching collocations. The first one being deductive or directly, by explaining the concept of collocations and working on it with exercises and activities. The second approach is inductive, or indirectly which is achieved by implicitly introducing the idea of collocations through initial games, in which they have to connect a set of verbs with a set of nouns so that they can reflect upon the importance of choosing the correct connection. There is no need to have the word collocation involved; such an activity can be called, word pairs or connected words. Using the approach of applying collocations under another name can be regarded as having worked if students are made aware of collocations (p.36).

Nizonkiza and Van de Poel's study (2019) raised a question that was mentioned in a previous section, that of quantity. How many collocations are enough to guarantee the fluency improvement that teaching collocations aim to achieve? Nizonkiza and Van de Poel (2019) concluded that the frequency of use is a crucial factor to know what collocations should be taught mainly and first (p.17). Although it is not the only factor to take into consideration, Siyanova-Chanturia, as cited in Nizonkiza and Van de Poel (2019), demonstrated that learners of L2 could become aware of the explicit functioning of collocations, those strong relations between words, thus improving their proficiency.

(p.17) Nevertheless, in terms of frequency, Nizonkiza and Van de Poel's study (2019) proved it is noun collocations that are significantly acquired by L2 learners (p.22), knowing what type of collocations is most common for students indicates that frequency is important and will allow the learner to acquire collocations faster and successfully, meeting the learning and communicative needs of these L2 learners.

Notwithstanding all these comments, Ward, as cited in McCarthy, O'Keeffe and Walsh (2010), observed that there was another important consideration when teaching collocations:

> One might argue that collocations are at least as important in learning the technical language of a particular profession or activity as the individual words, or even more important. This is because, although individual words are often shared across subjects and disciplines, collocations involving those words may not be shared across different subjects. (p.35)

Ward's point is that collocation teaching is even more important in specific domains, therefore, when teaching in specific areas or professions like hairdressing or electrics, students need to be aware of these specific area collocations. Nevertheless, other things can be done to change and help the integration of collocations in a student's vocabulary size and comprehension, as McCarthy, O'Keeffe, and Walsh (2010) indicated, to present the unexpected. Students will not expect to work on collocations, but instead follow the course-book, practice some listening or production skills. Thus, it is essential to raise awareness among L2 learners of the importance of collocations; therefore, according to McCarthy, O'Keeffe, and Walsh, the explicit work on collocations in the classroom will only have a positive effect on the learner and puzzling the learner's expectation of L2 learning (p.36). For the teachers, McCarthy, O'Keeffe and Walsh (2010) emphasise the importance of having a well-organised plan when teaching collocations and vocabulary in general. These authors consider that vocabulary teaching is a great task for teachers. Therefore, one of the first things these authors recommend is to have a precise selection of the kind of collocations that you want to teach, to then organise the lessons in terms of word-class classifications (p.38).

Nation and Newton (1997) also consider the different ways in which collocations can be taught and how well-organised vocabulary teaching can help students improve their language fluency. Collocations, according to the authors, can be taught through

connected words activities or as Brown understands (as cited by Nation and Newton 1997), in terms of group activities in which the class provides collocations for a specific word and works on the different meanings that these collocations have. As was mentioned in a previous point, the relationship between collocations and meaning is something that the authors find extremely significant for students (p.250). McCarthy, O'Keeffe and Walsh (2010) consider collocations as an aspect of language vocabulary that, according to them, can be approached in every level (p.38). The authors understand that students may have problems, across all levels, to comprehend collocations; however, teachers can take several decisions to help students get used to collocations in their vocabulary syllabus. Namely, these authors recommend teachers to make students aware of collocations but most importantly, practice regularly, so the presence of collocations becomes ordinary for them (2010, p.34).

When it comes to lower levels, for example, McCarthy, O'Keeffe, and Walsh (2010) propose the use of synonymic and near-synonymic relations between words to understand how collocations are created (p.32). On the contrary, Nation (2007) considered as an unnecessary difficulty and interference for the student's vocabulary learning process, the teaching of vocabulary through relations or lexical sets (p.6). Many researchers such as Neuner or Dunbar, (as cited by Nation 2007), defend the use of lexical sets and relations of words to teach new vocabulary. However, Nation believes that due to the growing literature on the matter of avoiding lexical sets when teaching vocabulary, teachers and coursebook designers are starting to shift from past beliefs and beginning to consider other ways of teaching vocabulary (p.7). Kelly (as cited by Nation and Newton, 1997) recognise the importance of teaching, learning and understanding strategies to students, to help them get through the daunting job of learning new words or in our case of interest collocations. The author approaches this from the belief that guessing and systematic learning of lexis are not too different from each other. According to Kelly, these two strategies should not be forgotten by teachers (p.240). Nation and Newton (1997) further add that guessing is a strategy that must be taken into consideration, and these authors propose that teachers consider guessing as a strategy that works with context. These authors also suggest other strategies such as mnemonic vocabulary learning or using word parts to identify meaning, sense and use (p.240). What is clear from the proposals of all the researchers mentioned above is that there is not a specific

way to teach vocabulary and collocations specifically. However, what this proves is the importance of teaching collocations correctly and in well-organised teaching plans.

3. Research Questions and Objectives

One of the most popular tools for assessing vocabulary knowledge is size tests; these types of tests were revolutionary in the area of vocabulary teaching. Researchers such as McCarthy or Nation crafted pioneering size tests to evaluate and to try to answer questions like:

How many words do students need to know, taking into account the language proficiency the students are opted to have? How can their English level or school year be of importance to dictate this number? How many words are enough words? Furthermore, these tests questioned how teachers could teach specific amounts of words. The answers to these questions were commented in the previous section, but to summarise them, it includes the semantic area of these words, students' interests, but most importantly, the students' learning necessities. This dissertation is interested in answering similar questions regarding the learning and teaching of collocations through the analysis of three selected coursebooks. A systematic literature review was conducted of studies that researched and opted to demonstrate the importance of teaching and learning collocations to secondary students of English as a foreign language, nevertheless, instead of working with secondary students this dissertation will focus on the presence, and the way collocations are taught in coursebooks aimed to secondary students of English as L2. The analysis of the coursebooks resulted by taking as a principle that learning collocations have significant advantages for students' proficiency.

The three coursebooks selected to accomplish this research belong to the *Outcomes* series of coursebooks published by Cengage Learning. The coursebooks *Outcomes Series* were published in 2010 by Hugh Dellar and Andrew Walkley, however, the version that this dissertation is using is the second edition from 2015, due to availability issues. The essence of this coursebook series is to provide students with "real-life" English lessons to provide a communicative outcome to students. The *Outcomes* series was used for the present coursebook analysis because there was no availability to other coursebooks and I knew and have worked as a student with this coursebooks beforehand. I am aware that secondary schools in Spain might not use these coursebooks; still, the reason why this series was chosen is that the way vocabulary is treated in such

coursebooks is very similar to those used in secondary schools in Spain. That is why the eligibility of this coursebook series for the present research was adequate for my objectives and this study's goals. At the same time, I have to say that this research, as will be explained in the methods section, was going to be connected with my internship period. Nevertheless, with the current global health crisis, there were no reassuring options that the internship was going to happen in time to finish the research adequately. Thus, when I had the chance of starting the internship, I had already begun the study and coursebook analysis.

The reason why I chose three coursebooks from the same set of books was due to the interest in observing if the level progression had anything to do with the teaching of collocations. In addition to answering this question, another query was proposed through Nation's Four Strands Theory (1996). The application of this theory was central for this paper for the possible relevance that Nation's principle of strands has in the process of designing language courses nowadays. Thus, this paper established an additional question: Do coursebooks take into consideration the teaching and learning of collocations? Several factors were taken into account to get the desired results (1) There was a need to discover if collocations appeared in the units explicitly or implicitly, in addition to this and regarding the previous point, were collocations introduced in some way? Was there a theoretical explanation of the concept of collocations? (2) If collocations appear both implicitly and explicitly, how were they taught? Through production, reception…? For this consideration, Nation's (1996) Four Strands Theory was taken into account since there was a great interest in analysing the presence of collocations in the coursebooks but also seeing if Nation's theory could be applied to coursebook designs. Furthermore, we also wanted to discover whether collocations are taught in a balanced way. Nation's (1996) theory determined what a stable language course should look like, applying these conditions to the analysis one main question rose, is the way collocations are taught in the coursebooks balanced, according to what Nation contemplates in his theory? Thus, is there an equilibrium between the productive practice and the receptive practice of collocations? For this, an initial hypothesis was outlined; if collocations are taught in a balanced way, there should be an equal amount of implicit and explicit work. Thus, an explicit mention or explanation of the concept of collocations should be made. (3) The final consideration taken regarded the type of collocations that were taught in these coursebooks. On the basis that we can think around seven examples

of collocations such as (adverb + adjective; adjective + noun; noun + noun; noun + verb; verb + noun; verb + prepositions or prepositional phrases; verb + adverb) a central aspect of this consideration was to highlight the primary type of collocation that was taught in the coursebooks.

4. Methodology

To conduct an adequate analysis and to assess whether collocations are taught or not and whether the coursebooks selected taught them correctly or not, the first step was to locate the instances, if any, that the coursebooks mentioned and worked the concept of collocations explicitly and implicitly. Furthermore, once these instances were found, an in-depth analysis was conducted on how collocations were put into context and practised. This analysis was conducted from the perspective of Nation's Four Strands Theory through analysing the different skills the students have to employ to practice collocations. Another consideration was also taken regarding how Nation's principle could be applied in these coursebooks; it was essential to bear in mind that the strands principle might not have been part of the designing process of these books. Thus, we also aimed to assume how could the design of explicit collocation practice of these books be related to Nation's theory. If there was no relation, I was also determined to provide an insight into how these books could apply some of Nation's principles. In addition to the consideration just mentioned, I was interested in discovering the number of times in which collocations are mentioned or worked globally in the entire coursebooks and within each unit. Thus, the next step was to quantify the frequency in which collocations appear explicitly in comparison to the average amount of exercises in the coursebook. The separate study of collocations within the entirety of the coursebooks and the units had a significant interest for this dissertation; the interest was to discover whether collocations were practised with specific topics within a unit or not, meaning that this research would also focus on the type of collocations that are taught in particular contexts.

On the other hand, we also focused on the implicit work of collocations, since the concept of collocations may not be an essential part of the coursebook design and may not appear explicitly. Therefore, I also looked for instances of possible practice of this concept through other ideas in the vocabulary and grammar sections or the reading and speaking sections of the units. What I mean with implicit work on collocations, is instances in which collocations are taught, but they are not acknowledged as such, this

can be in the units' new vocabulary sections, words in bold in reading tasks, or instances of language use clarifications that deal with collocations. I also took into account the possibility of other terms used for collocations such as 'word pairs' or 'fixed expressions', to ensure the identification or lack of these implicit instances. This led me to explore the question of whether collocations were pointed out in any way or, on the contrary, if they were left unbeknownst to the student. An aim arising from the analysis was to propose adaptations of the coursebook in which collocations would be introduced more explicitly. These adaptations followed the recommendations and suggestions found in Nation's work. Another source of information for this research were the authors themselves. Through a short interview, conducted via email, I received valuable information regarding the insights of the author's designing process and views on collocation teaching and learning in secondary schools. This interview consisted of two main questions, the first one being "From your perspective as coursebook designers, how important would you say that including collocations was in the designing process?" and the second question, "Would you say that English teachers acknowledge the importance of collocations to secondary students? Or would you say collocations is an aspect of vocabulary often forgotten by teachers or even by other coursebook designers?" With these questions, the objective was to provide an overall answer to the research questions.

Although this is the methodology taken to accomplish this research, it was not the initial idea to proceed. Since the current social and health emergency, a series of adaptations were necessary for the methodology followed, the data subjects and even in the goals of the research. In the initial plan, a coursebook analysis was meant to be planned as a secondary source of data, as a supportive way to account the data gathered in the principal source. Before proceeding to the following section, the previous research design will be explained next for the sake of presenting the initial idea. This dissertation was initially interested in answering similar questions regarding the learning and teaching of collocations, likewise to many important pieces of research conducted by the linguists mentioned above, this dissertation intended to answer the following research questions, do students know what collocations are?

Furthermore, do students know how to use collocations? Several considerations were going to be taken to answer these questions, firstly do students know what collocations are? The following account was whether if they knew collocations, did they learn it at school or were self-taught? Finally, do students know how to use collocations?

Action research was meant to be approached to answer these questions and evaluate the effectiveness of collocations usage in the students that were intended to be part of the research. The participants were ideally going to be selected based on availability and possibility of participating in this research, which involved the educative centre where the participants studied as part of my internship.

What is more, English level and group were going to be determined by whether colocations were included in their English textbooks or not; this was important due to the initial interest of this dissertation to discover if collocations are regularly taught in their class. To rule out the possibility that knowing collocations could help to improve a student language proficiency, the participants of this dissertation were going to be asked to do a test influenced by Nation's vocabulary size tests. The complexity of the tests depend on the number of words students are opted to know; this seeks to analyse their proficiency. Before data collection, students were meant to be given an introduction and presentation on collocations, before the follow-up test. To establish whether there was an improvement or not in student's proficiency, the participants were going to be asked to do two tests in a temporal range of three to four weeks, to have a systematic perspective on the pre-test knowledge and post-test knowledge.

The small size of the dataset meant that it was not possible to provide an analysis of the results to be applied in general terms to the area of collocation teaching; further data collection is required to determine what is the importance of collocations in the coursebooks. To conclude this methods section, this paper aimed to provide an answer on whether the level of coursebooks and teaching collocations relate in any way; furthermore, this paper was also keen to discover how collocations are taught in the series of coursebooks chosen to accomplish this research. At the same time, this paper attempted to provide ways in which Nation's Strands Theory can be applied to coursebook designs regarding the teaching and learning of collocations.

5. Results

The first set of questions aimed to be answered in this section and dissertation are mainly related to the importance that collocations have in the coursebooks mentioned in the previous methods section. Furthermore, taking into consideration that the coursebooks used in this analysis are at three consecutive levels, I also aimed to answer and detect if the level of English proficiency is an intrinsic part of the work on collocations. The

procedure followed in this dissertation was, most importantly, necessary to report the results shown below, how this procedure is reflected in the results can be observed through how the data is displayed in this section. First of all, the method followed dictated that before any type of classification, the first step would be to locate all the instances that appeared throughout the three coursebooks used in this research. Secondly, after a thorough study of the coursebooks, the following step was to classify examples found depending on the explicitness or implicitness nature of these, for the sake of understanding the percentage of direct work on the concept of collocations in the three books, which allowed us to answer the second question contemplated in the previous section, which was that of the importance of level proficiency on the matter of teaching collocations to secondary students. Therefore, together these results will provide an insight into the practice of collocations on the *Outcomes* coursebook series for the levels, pre-intermediate, intermediate and upper-intermediate, which consists of the most common levels of English taught in secondary schools. Therefore, before beginning reporting the data, a description of the coursebook series will be given to understand the information displayed in the charts below.

This coursebook series is organised in sixteen units with a review section every two units, dedicated to recap the essential grammar dealt in the prior two units and work on the main concepts of the different vocabulary sections. The units of this coursebook series are organised in terms of subtopics from the central unit theme, meaning within each section or subtopic, different skills and contents are practised. Thus, each unit is not divided into skills or knowledge content. Moreover, there are an additional eight sections dedicated to writing skills, and a video section every two units to further practise audio-visual and listening comprehension, besides, a grammar reference section to revise the grammar of each unit, and the audio transcripts of the listening exercises. Before commenting on how collocations are worked in these coursebooks, the table below illustrates the average tasks' number in each unit.

LEVEL	**TOTAL NUMBER**	**AVERAGE**
Pre-Intermediate	**601**	**38**
Intermediate	**558**	**35**
Upper-Intermediate	**539**	**34**

Table 1 → Source of Data: OUTCOMES Coursebook Series (2015)

These calculations were made without quantifying the review units since they are additional sections and do not belong to a specific unit; video sections were also not considered for this calculation due to the same reasons. The reason why this data is presented before the number of instances of collocations worked is due to interest in having a contrastive view of the practice of this concept within the total number of exercises dedicated to other contents and skills. Table 1 shows a clear trend of decreasing the exercises' number with the subsequence of levels. I assumed it had to do with the complexity of the tasks and content, taking into consideration how the level increases, as a way of balancing the coursebook's complexity.

Furthermore, before presenting the first chart, it would be interesting to describe how the results will be displayed. First of all, a comparative chart with the number of instances of collocations practice in each unit of the three coursebooks will be presented. Secondly, some other tables quantifying, in terms of percentages, will show the explicit or implicit nature of the instances displayed in Chart 1. This table will allow us to observe how collocations are worked in these coursebooks. Finally, a final chart will be used to present the type of content in which collocations are practised. This chart will allow us to answer and discuss later whether the practice of collocations in these coursebooks is balanced according to Nation's 1996 theory. When we talk about types of content, this paper means the vocabulary, grammar, writing or listening parts of an ordinary unit in an L2 coursebook of English.

One aspect to take into account for the analysis of this coursebook is a matter of terminology, in the method section is was pointed out that we had into consideration the possibility of having the concept of collocations entitled with a different name like fixed expression or in the case that matters us for these coursebooks, 'word pairs'. Nevertheless, it is still essential to highlight the fact that the coursebook series that we are currently presenting, treats the concept of 'word pairs' with two different senses. The first one regarding collocations and those instances were considered explicit examples of the work on collocations, the other sense in which the concept of 'word pairs' was used, regarded to the semantical connection of words, such as build and construct. Hence, those examples were not considered as work on collocations because they were seen as examples of synonymic work.

Therefore, the chart below will display the examples that were considered both implicit and explicit of collocation practice in the three coursebooks we are analysing.

Before continuing to the chart, I would like to explain why I used this colour-coded charts to present the data. First of all, I believed that it would be much easier and representative of the analysis, if the data of the three coursebooks were within the same charts and tables, to have a comparative and critical view of the data altogether. Furthermore, I was also interested in easing the identification of the data of each coursebook analysis, in the rest of the charts and tables, for which the same colour-coded structured was followed.
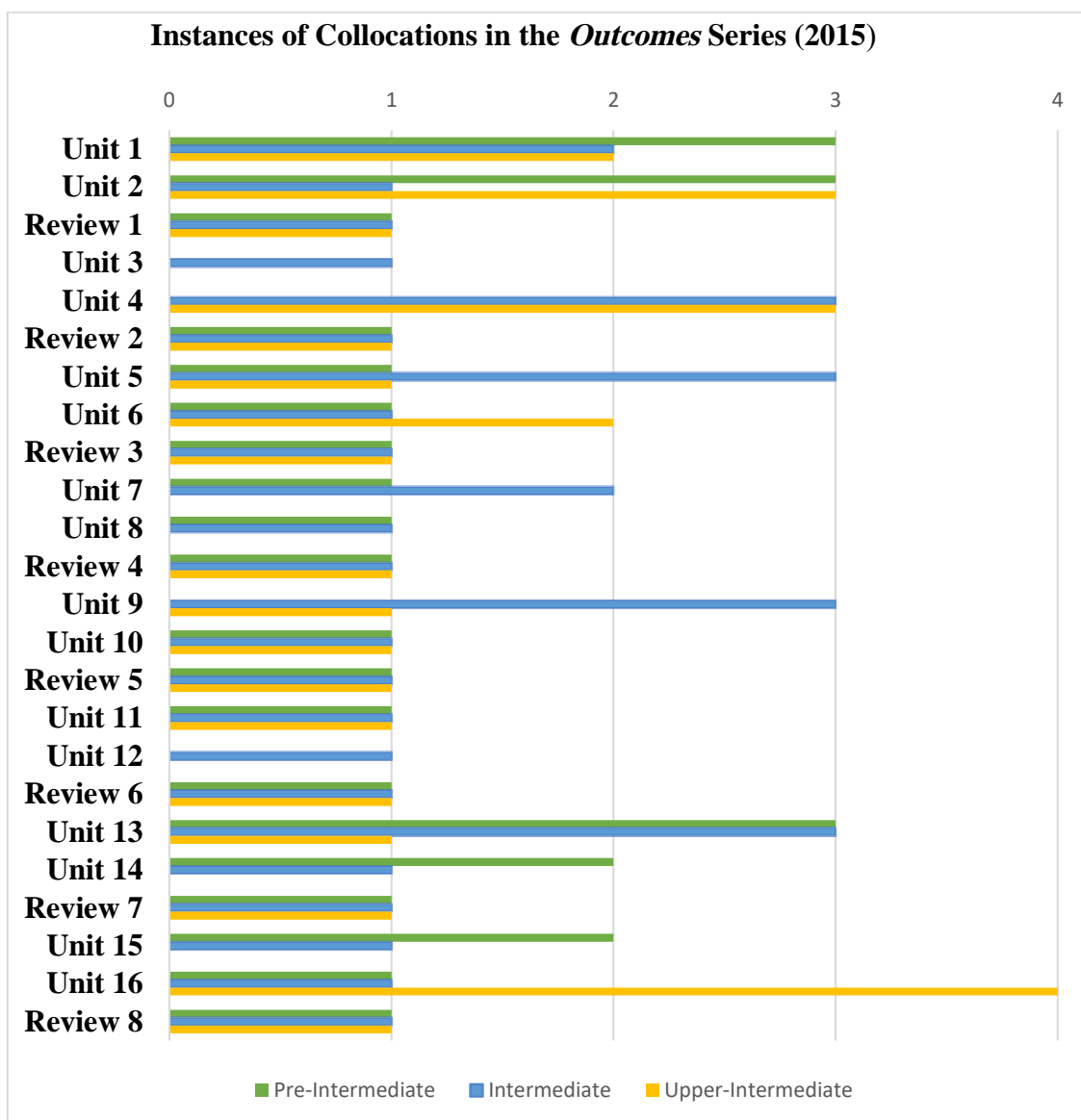

Instances of Collocations in the *Outcomes* Series (2015)

Legend: Pre-Intermediate (green), Intermediate (blue), Upper-Intermediate (yellow)

Chart 1 → Source of data: Outcomes Series (2015)

The results obtained from the preliminary analysis of the *Outcomes* coursebook series are set out in Chart 1 above. From what this chart shows, it is displayed the number of instances in which collocations can be found throughout each unit and review units of all three coursebooks. With a colour code, this being green for the pre-intermediate level coursebook, blue for intermediate and yellow for upper-intermediate, the chart serves as

a comparative set out of the primary data gathered in the analysis of these coursebooks. After a thorough observation of such data, we can say that the work on collocations is not as central as I first thought it would be. This assumption comes with the comparison of the average number of exercises and activities per unit, presented in Table 1, and the number of instances working on collocations shown in Chart 1.

Further looking at the chart data, it shows us a certain consistency, with only a few exceptions, because collocation practice is present in every unit. Something added to this analysis is the fact that the number of units is the same for every coursebook, but the topics of each one do not correlate. Therefore, we will not judge results by theme; instead, we will focus on general collocation practises in the units. Another aspect to take into consideration is that from this chart it is clear that unit sixteen from the upper-intermediate coursebook (Yellow Bar) presents the most considerable number of collocations practise within the three coursebooks, with four instances.

These coursebook series provide the students with individual sections within each unit, dedicated to the work of specific aspects of the English language. Depending on the level of the coursebook, we are going to find sections named 'Understanding Vocabulary' or 'Developing Conversations'. The two sections just mentioned, provide the student with a more theoretical explanation of parts of the English language, such as collocations. It is in the case of the pre-intermediate level coursebook, that we find the section 'Understanding Vocabulary' in the first unit, giving students an explicit explanation of the concept of collocations as well as further practice. It is in the case of the coursebook of intermediate level, that provides us with an account under the section 'Developing Conversations' in which we use collocations to sound more native, more natural and develop other aspects of conversational competence. The matter of explicitness or not will be commented further on. Still, it is interesting to consider that this explicit concept's explanation occurs, neither in all the units nor in all the coursebooks. Another thing that could be interesting to comment is the fact that all review units from the three coursebooks, contain one single instance of explicit practice of collocations, even if the two previous did not include explicit practice. What this demonstrates is that collocations are not entirely disregarded and have some level of importance in the coursebooks, although it is not highly present throughout the units.

To make Chart 1 clearer, Table 2 below, displays the specific number of instances of collocations practise in each coursebook analysed, to provide a more straightforward look of the data and comment on it.

LEVEL OF THE COURSEBOOK	NUMBER OF INSTANCES
Pre-Intermediate	29
Intermediate	34
Upper-Intermediate	27

Table 2 → Source of Data: Outcomes Series (2015)

What is interesting about Table 2's data is that there seems to be no correlation between the complexity of the level and the number of instances in which collocations are worked in these coursebooks. Something to clarify is that in these calculations, both in Chart 1 and Table 2, both explicit and implicit instances were considered. A different chart will be used to display the differences between the instances' nature, depending on its explicit and implicit work. One of this paper's aims was to try to understand if the work on collocations was related to the level of the coursebook. Table 2 above shows us that, at least for this coursebooks series, it seems not to be an intrinsic factor.

What is more, the fact that the coursebook with more instances is the one of intermediate level, confirms this assumption. Nevertheless, an important aspect to also consider is that the number of cases has nothing to do with how these instances are practised. Meaning that even though the intermediate level coursebook has the most examples, it is not related with the explicit or implicit nature of these exercises, thus, raising a question of transparency and effectiveness when dealing with the concept of collocations in these coursebooks.

To distinguish between the two possibilities of explicit and implicit practises of collocations in these coursebooks, two charts will be presented below. The first one will provide, in terms of percentages the explicit work on the concept of collocations throughout the three coursebooks, and the second chart will give the same data regarding the implicit work. Something to take into consideration is that for these charts, the review units were also considered, namely because for some coursebooks it is the only possibility to find instances of explicit nature working on collocations.
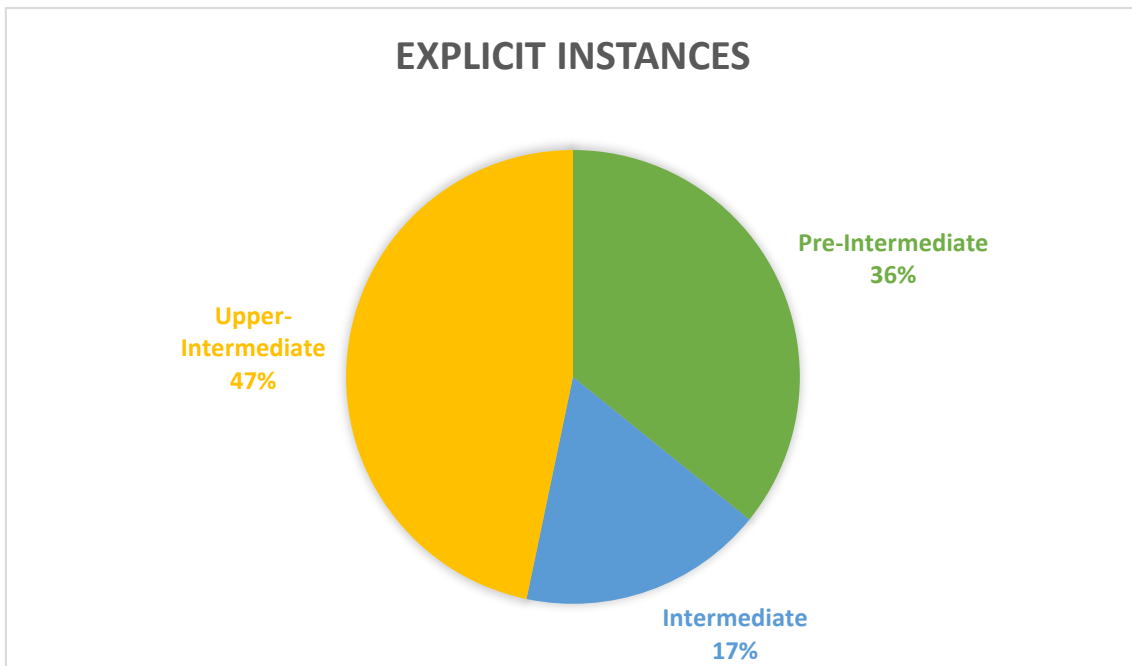
EXPLICIT INSTANCES

Pre-Intermediate 36%

Intermediate 17%

Upper-Intermediate 47%

Chart 2 ➔ *Source of Data: Outcomes Series (2015)*

IMPLICIT INSTANCES

Upper-Intermediate 23%

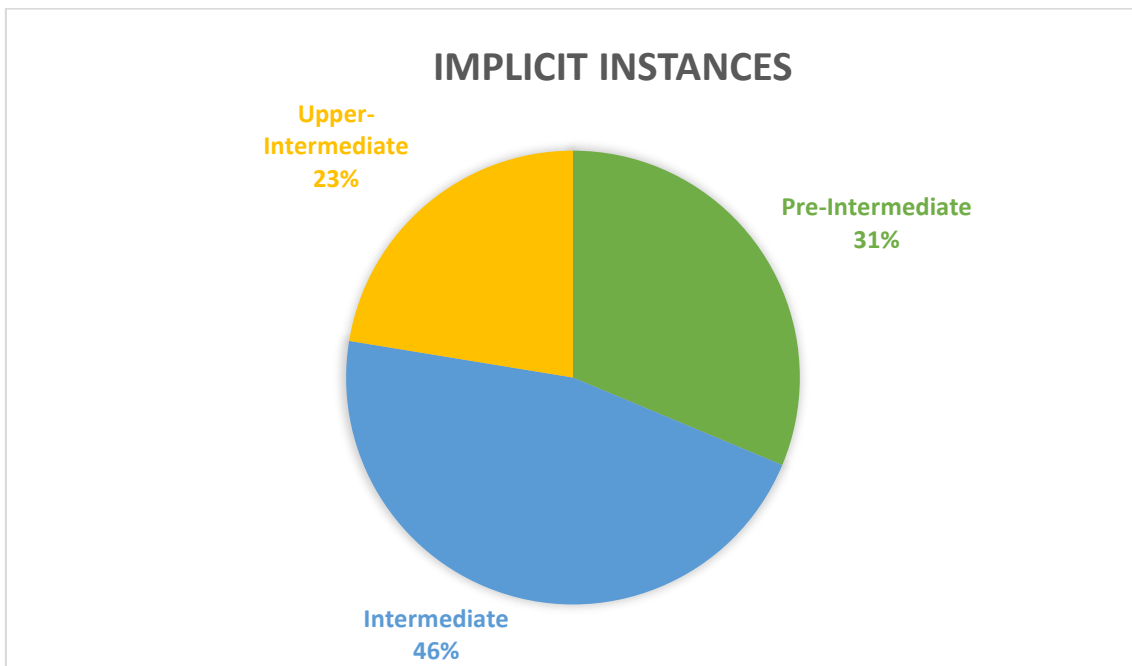Pre-Intermediate 31%

Intermediate 46%

Chart 3 ➔ *Source of Data: Outcomes Series (2015)*

The pie charts above show the breakdown of the instances working on collocations from the three coursebooks. As can be seen in the map, the practice of collocations is quite balanced in terms of transparency and exposure of the concept in the pre-intermediate level coursebook. This fact does not mean that there is an excellent work on the idea. It means that with the limited collocation practice, there is a balance between what is left for the student to assimilate indirectly and what is presented straight away, in a lesson, explanation or by acknowledging it in the exercises' headings. One aspect that

is important to highlight again is what we understand for implicit work on collocation: it is essential to comment that to be considered work on collocations, the exercise or activity must have had to work on any level with this concept. Meaning that the objective of the task must be to underline, fill in the gaps, search, identify or connect word pairs or groups of words that are substantially related by a collocation. The fact that a collocation was in the exercise was not considered practising the concept; there must have been some utility to these word pairs apart from its use for context or additional information. Thus, then when we talk about implicit work, we are dealing with exercises that work something as described above but does not acknowledge that there is a collocational connection among those words or phrases.

Considering what it was just explained, I feel that there is a significant difference between the implicit and explicit practise of collocations in the intermediate level coursebook, providing a clear unbalance when dealing with the exposure of collocations to students. Nevertheless, it is essential to highlight that, as it was already mentioned, in all three coursebooks, the review units presented explicit works of this concept, which provides a more favourable view on the matter. Although the two first coursebooks favour more implicit work on collocations, the upper-intermediate level shows a significant positive correlation between the number of instances of collocations in the coursebook, with fewer examples above all the three coursebooks, see table 2, and the amount of explicit work, which stands out above the rest. What, this fact answers, is an assumption made earlier in which the number of instances and effectiveness was not considered to be related. When we talk about effectiveness in these coursebooks, it means that the goal for teaching collocations and providing students with the best tools to learn them is to be as transparent and direct as possible when presenting the concept of collocation.

What is more, an additional explanation must be made on what we mean by explicit work, and although it was already mentioned in the method section, it is essential to highlight it again. This paper has understood explicit work on collocations when the heading of the exercise or theory mentions the word 'collocation' directly or acknowledges that what the student has to do, is to match, find, underline or simply write words with are connected by something else than grammar or syntax. It is the case of the upper-intermediate level that we can see three instances in three different units, (2, 9 and 11) as shown in Chart 1. In these examples, the heading of the exercise asks for the

students to match two pair of words or expressions, suggesting that these have a particular connection or relation to each other.

To finish with this results section, I will now present a chart with the most common type of content in which collocations are practised throughout the three coursebooks. The chart below serves this paper to connect the results and the following discussion section through Nation's (1996) Four Strands Theory, as part of the second question I aim to answer by the end of the research. Nation's theory established a standard in language course making, to summarise what was reported in the Theoretical Framework, Nation developed a principle that dictated what a balanced language course should be like, which namely meant that language courses should be organised in terms of fours strands, each strand strengthening a necessary skill and component of L2 students of English.

TYPE OF CONTENT

- Others 4%
- Grammar 4%
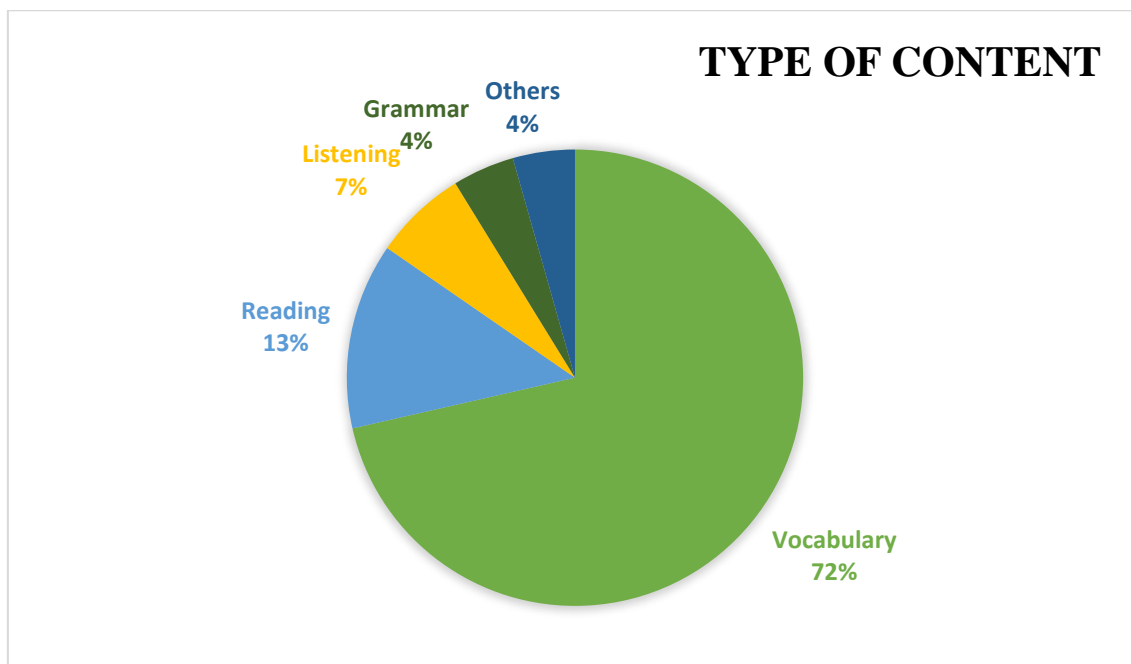- Listening 7%
- Reading 13%
- Vocabulary 72%

Chart 4 → Source of Data: Outcomes Series (2015)

It is apparent from the pie chart above that very few instances of collocations practise were done out of the vocabulary section of each unit and review units. From the chart, it can be seen that by far the most significant issue for this coursebook analysis, is the unbalanced work of collocations. When we talk about, unbalance practice, it relates directly to terms used by Nation (1996) theory of Four Strands, an approach that has been repeatedly mentioned due to its importance to answer one of the questions outlined at the beginning of this paper. As can be seen in the pie chart above, the most common sections from a coursebook on L2 English are illustrated: vocabulary, listening, grammar, and

reading. They are the basic parts of language learning, aspects that the student must control and be familiarised with, as the level of English rises. Thus, it is not surprising to find these sections as areas in which collocations can be seen practised, both explicitly and implicitly. This paper has labelled as 'others' those special sections that were mentioned earlier, those of 'Understanding Vocabulary' and 'Developing Conversations.' When analysing Chart 4 and the coursebooks through Nation's (1996) theory, there is something essential to consider and highlight. Nation's theory of he Four Strands (1996), in general comments, included more aspects than what is displayed in Chart 4, meaning that this theory considered a balance language course one which worked on issues such as the meaning of utterances and inferences through listening and reading, the production of these meanings through speaking and writing, and the capacity of using all these aspects, all together and consistently to produce fluency. Hence, when it comes to analysing these coursebooks through Nation's theory, especially, after contemplating the results of the research, I comprehend that a coursebook analysis limits me to accomplish what I initially wished to do since Nation's theory regards to a real classroom experience of a language course. Still, this situation also brings an opportunity to ask ourselves if it is possible or not to apply Nation's theory in the designing process of coursebooks.

Therefore, we will present alternatives, propositions and ideas on how the coursebook could have applied the different strands in Nation's theory. These propositions do not mean to degrade the integrity of the *Outcomes* Series author's work, but it means to prove that applying Nation's Four Strands theory (1996) is possible and advantageous during the designing process of a language coursebook.

6. Discussions

The objective I had with this study was to determine whether collocations are taught in coursebooks or not. Furthermore, I was also interested in discovering how collocations are taught in coursebooks, with all that it implies. I took as reference and guidance to answer the previous matter, Nation's (1996) Four Strands Theory, to prove the usefulness of designing coursebooks under the author's theory. At the same time, Nation's approach was used to analyse the three coursebooks. These three coursebooks were also analysed, taking into consideration the first question that this study sought to determine, which was identifying whether level progression has any relation with the

presence of collocations in the coursebooks. In addition to answering these questions, this section sets out further hypotheses and propositions that complements the coursebook's analysis.

In reviewing the literature, very little was found on specific strategies to teach collocations; nevertheless, there was plenty of research regarding how vocabulary should be taught, with recommendations from experts and researchers that considered vocabulary an essential aspect of language learning, which sometimes can be overlooked or disdained by language course designers and teachers. Researchers like Nation (1974; 1990; 2008), allowed vocabulary to be observed as an element that must not be forgotten and have to be thoroughly practised and analysed with students of all levels. A part of a language's vocabulary, that with years have grown to be a fundamental element to consider when language teaching, is collocational knowledge. As mentioned in the literature review, collocations might be comprehended as a vital aspect of a language to accomplish fluency and vocabulary proficiency. Researches conducted by experts such as Rahimi and Momen (2012) or Nizonkiza and Van de Poe (2019) proved that effective collocation teaching provides a tremendously positive effect on secondary student's proficiency. One of the most common teaching tools in language education is the coursebook; around the world, students of English as L2 develop productive and receptive skills through their work in the language coursebook. And although with technological advances, and new educative devices emerging to help teachers around the globe make language learning an exciting and more accessible process, the coursebook continues to be an essential utensil for teachers and students. For the present study, an appealing outlook of language coursebooks to analyse is how these coursebooks have integrated fundamental aspects in language teaching, such as collocations. Therefore, through this discussion section, I will comment on the main results found in the analysis conducted on the *Outcomes* coursebook series.

This study analysed three books from the *Outcomes* series belonging to three different levels, pre-intermediate, intermediate, and upper-intermediate as it was specified before and in previous sections (see Methods and Results sections). The reason why I decided to use three coursebooks from three different levels was first due to interest in discovering whether level progression has an effect on how collocations are taught, and secondly because those three books belong to the most frequent levels in secondary schools. As presented and regarded in the previous section, the results from the present

study's analysis were constituted by three objectives, first displaying the amount of collocation practice in each coursebook and unit of each book; secondly presenting the nature of this practice, explicit or implicit; and thirdly a representation of the most common way in which collocations are practised in these coursebooks. The analysis concluded with the general conception that the coursebooks examined worked on collocations irregularly, which means that although there is a clear presence of collocations in their units, both explicit and implicit, the coursebooks seem to have a minimal regularity when presenting and working collocations with students. On the question of practising this concept, the coursebook series offer more work on collocations through the vocabulary sections of the units that presented practise on the matter. Furthermore, there is little work on the concept through other skills or competencies; this finding was not unexpected and suggested that this coursebook series did not seem to prioritise collocations as a matter to study thoroughly.

It is important to remember that in the second edition of these coursebook series, which is the one used for this study's analysis, the units were designed in terms of subtopics, instead of skills or content sections. The present study was not aware of this organisation at first; therefore, the initial conception of how collocations could be worked in this coursebook series did not apply to the one surfaced after realising how this organisation was. With this in mind, it is vital to comment that I expected to find collocations exclusively in vocabulary sections, probably in the first pages of each unit. The former came up to be almost right; however, the latter did not coincide with what this study first considered. What follows is an account of the results from this study, as well as an interpretation of these.

6.1 The matter of collocations instances within the coursebook series

The results will be reported according to the order in which they were displayed in the previous section. Therefore, the first aspect ti comment will be the relationship between the total number of exercises in the coursebooks and the number of instances in which collocations were practised, both implicitly and explicitly. First of all, it is interesting to comment that the intermediate level coursebook contains the most amount of instances working on collocations with 34 examples (see Table 2). It is also important to say that this coursebook is the only one with examples in every unit, nevertheless when considered the global amount of exercises in the book, and we compare it to the number of collocation practise we may think that the concept, overall, is not very present in the

coursebook. Regardless of this, it is interesting to compare how the three books work on collocations (see Chart 1), as it was mentioned above the intermediate coursebook contains the most significant amount of collocation practice from the three levels analysed; thus, the question would be why. I believe that the intermediate level is worked most commonly across secondary students. Taking into consideration what are the different objectives of the subject English as foreign language 1, in Spain, and the importance of the Communicative Competence in the organisation of these courses and the curriculum, it would be safe to say the reason we find more instances of collocations in the intermediate level coursebook amongst the rest, is due to the commonality of this level.

Furthermore, this leads us to question, are collocations prioritised in these coursebooks? In reality, when the data are compared, there is a precise uneven treatment of this concept in comparison to other concepts in the syllabus. Nevertheless, it is necessary to contemplate that these coursebooks are not dedicated to collocations exclusively. They are not even sold as vocabulary centred coursebooks, namely due to the objective that the authors present at the beginning of these, which is to provide students with real-life English, which means getting students to practise all skills and types of contents with a communicative outcome. This statement is worth commenting, due to the commonality that 'real-life English' has in current educative trends and researches. It would be interesting to try to define what real-life English is, is it native like English? Is it a communicative approach to English? Or simply like a survival kit to maintain a conversation with natives? As mentioned in the literature review, Kachru's schemes of English speakers around the world, helped to draw a line and identify the different groups of English speakers and the usage that these different groups give to the language. When it comes to students in secondary schools learning the language as a subject, it is essential to comprehend the student's learning goals, another concept repeatedly commented in this paper. An additional question to consider is how the function of English shapes the learning goals in the country the students live. When we think about Spain, English is not used as an official language, nor is it used for government procedures or forums. In addition to this, it is not a language that is heard on TV regularly or cinema, in general terms, it is a language that is seen and learned in educative environments and voluntary situations, such as watching international content in its original version. Therefore, when we consider these facts when designing and

deciding what the learning goals for a Spanish student of English as L2 are, we can guess that they are going to have a communicative approach.

Following what was just stated, it would be necessary to comment on how collocations can help students' proficiency and allow them to improve their communicative competence. As previously reported in the theoretical framework, many experts believe in the importance of teaching collocations to provide students with higher proficiency, even a sense of more native-like speech (see Burgess & Head (2005), and Nizonkiza & Van de Poe (2019).

Another factor that should be further analysed and commented on is the matter of explicitness or not when teaching collocations in the coursebooks. As it was previously mentioned, the intermediate level coursebook is the one that contains more instances of collocation practise, and I believe that this is due to the commonality of this level in secondary schools. Nevertheless, I also consider that quantity does not have anything to do with the level of exposure. When analysing the matter of exposure of the concept to students, we must go back to charts 2 and 3 in the results section, which displayed that the coursebook with greater collocation exposure is the upper-intermediate level one and the one with less explicit practises, the intermediate level coursebook. Finally, the pre-intermediate level book is the only one that seems to have a more balanced work in terms of acknowledgement. After briefly recalling a part of the results section, I will now move on to present some possible explanations as to why these are the results. However, a word of caution is due here since the analysis was conducted without knowing the designing process and specific decisions taken by the authors that created this coursebook series, the following ideas need to be interpreted having that into consideration.

First of all, I will comment on the matter of how the intermediate level coursebook works collocations, as it has been discussed, it is the coursebook which has more instances but regardless of this, this coursebook has the most significant level of implicit work of collocations, for what this paper raises the question, how does this affect students' collocation learning process? On the one hand, this coursebook indeed has the most amount of collocation examples, but being these implicit, it makes me question whether students would be aware they are practising collocations or not. An aspect to take into account is the existence of a short explicit explanation of the concept, which makes students aware of collocations, at least in one unit at the beginning of the coursebook. That leads us to consider the following considerations (1) students after presented the

concept of collocations and a brief practice of it, are going to be aware of collocations throughout the rest of the coursebook. (2) collocations grow unaware in the students' vocabulary syllabus due to the disregarding and low practice of it, which leads to students not knowing what collocations are and why they are essential for them as L2 learners of English.

Regarding the first consideration, I believe it is quite unlikely due to the necessity of practice to comprehend collocations correctly and integrate them into a students' language knowledge. Regarding the second consideration, I favour this option better than the first, due to the reasons explained in the previous account. It is, in fact, this second consideration that leads me to ask what is the teacher's role when there is an interest in teaching collocations but is mainly implicit? Teachers have two options as well, the first one following the coursebook syllabus and tailoring the course as the book guides to, without altering the exercises in it. The second option is for the teacher to be aware of the fact that collocations are barely explicitly exposed to students, and acknowledge them when an example of them come across a lesson. What these considerations and the two previous ones allow us, is to answer the question stated above regarded with the matter of the effect that exposure has in student's learning process. It may be safe to say that if the teacher has to acknowledge the existence of collocations in the coursebook, it is due to the significant possibility of students not learning collocations correctly. Another fact that would help to answer this matter is the review sections. These review units, after every two general units of each coursebook, included a single explicit exercise regarding collocations, even if any of the previous units did not practise collocations, explicitly or implicitly. In these review sections, there was not an explanation of collocations or a guide about the use of them, only a matching exercise to create collocations from verbs and nouns. What matters for the current discussion is that the teacher would again be expected to identify these explicit examples and present them to students. Thus, to conclude answering this question, if the teacher needs to be aware of how the coursebook work collocations and it is a learning goal, then the intermediate coursebook is not entirely practical for this specific learning goal, namely, since collocations are not thoroughly presented and practised in it. Still, this argument is from a coursebook point of view; however, I also believe that teachers have a sort of responsibility for presenting concepts that may not be as clearly included in the coursebook. For that, we have to get away from the coursebook bound relationship between teachers and coursebooks, acknowledging

that there might be other resources that complement, not disregard the work and usefulness of coursebooks.

After taking a look at charts 2 and 3 from the results section, which displays the explicit or implicit nature of the collocation practice in the three coursebooks, it clearly shows that the pre-intermediate level coursebook is the only one with a more adjust work of collocations from an exposure perspective. Regardless of this, I would like to analyse the effect on student's proficiency in this as well. It has already been mentioned that the three coursebooks share the same structure and similar characteristics on how they practice collocations. Therefore, these comments will constitute further reflections on whether the pre-intermediate level coursebook taught collocations to accomplish student's learning goals. First of all, it would be essential to start by contemplating that the present coursebook is the second book with more instances among the three while being the second one with more explicitness and implicitness. The differences between explicitness or not are quite minimal, which shows a somewhat balance among what is presented to students, what is unacknowledged, and what is left for students and teachers to recognise and identify as collocations. From a global point of view, we should think of the pre-intermediate level as the starting point to teach students collocations. As it has been mentioned in the literature review, teaching collocations is only helpful, and this study takes this as a standard belief to interpret results and construct the present discussion. Thus, when taking this fact into account, this study understands the importance that significant collocation work in the pre-intermediate level coursebook has, to reproduce and continue that work in the levels after that. Having this in mind, did the pre-intermediate coursebook practised collocations in a way that affected the student's learning process positively? Several considerations will be explained to answer this question. The first one being the existence of an explicit explanation of collocations as a theoretical concept. We have to think that students up to the point in which they start to use this coursebook, probably have not encountered an explanation of collocations; thus, the importance of having this open presentation of the concept is even more significant.

Nevertheless, we should also consider that students form a pre-intermediate level encountering a new idea, with a quite limited practice following the explanation, and with such young learners, constant practise is utterly necessary. Therefore, does the coursebook provide constant practise on collocations, so students are aware of them every time they see them? From a critical point of view, it doesn't; nevertheless, this leads us

again to the same question of the teacher's role when collocations are a learning goal, and the coursebook does not seem to prioritise its work. Teachers have several options apart from using the coursebook, such as external resources or even exercises from other books that could be of great help for teachers, notwithstanding this fact, I am more interested in understanding the coursebooks as essential teaching tools but not as a restricted or limited one. I am also well aware of the commonality of coursebooks being the central teaching tool for many teachers, and although there are many extra resources, this study believes in the importance of coursebook designs to benefit students and meet their needs, or in this case to teach collocations correctly. Thus, if we continue considering the pre-intermediate coursebook and how it works collocations, three aspects must be contemplated. (1) Being collocations presented almost immediately at the beginning of the book in unit 2 has a positive effect on students. (2) The amount of explicit work on collocations might not be enough for the level of the students it is addressed to and design for. (3) It is a great introduction to present the concept if the following coursebooks have a higher rate of instances working on collocations. Bearing these in mind and the analysis and reflection of the intermediate level coursebook, I have to consider that it is indeed a great introduction to the concept; however, it may not be enough attending how collocations are practised in the intermediate coursebook. As a matter of fact, before starting the analysis of the coursebooks, I believed that if collocations were meant to have any importance in these coursebooks, then the work on the concept would have a somewhat correlation with the level evolution, meaning that with higher levels more instances and more explicitness would be found. The matter of progression will be further commented after we have reflected upon the upper-intermediate level coursebook.

When considered, the upper-intermediate level coursebook should be the one with more instances and more explicitness, since I thought that extensive treatment of collocations would be affected by the level of the coursebook; thus a first hypothesis before the analysis of the books was that this coursebook would have the highest number of instances and the most considerable amount of explicit practise of collocations. Nevertheless, one of those ideas ended up not being right since the upper-intermediate level coursebook is the one with fewer instances among the three books. Meanwhile, it is the coursebook that has more percentage of explicit presence of collocations, for this, I initially thought that it was the perfect balance between the number of collocations and those that are left unbeknownst to the student; however, I would like to comment on

another interpretation of this consideration. When I considered and compared how the three coursebooks practised the concept of collocations, a question came to my mind, and that is the relationship between quantity and explicitness. Taking into consideration that we are analysing how the coursebooks treat collocations for the effect they may have in student's proficiency, I wondered if the number of instances had anything to do with the way the coursebook teach collocations. First of all, it is safe to say that this coursebook, the one with the highest level, the exposure of the concept is higher than the other two coursebooks. Regardless of this, I wondered if there were enough instances to make this exposure useful for the student's learning of collocations. First, we have to think of this analysis as a whole, meaning that when we talk about the current coursebook or the intermediate level coursebook, we should think of the predecessors and how these practised collocations. In this analysis, it was argued that since this was a series of coursebooks, the way one treated collocations should be affected by how the one before practised the concept. Therefore, when we consider the upper-intermediate level coursebook, it is essential to analyse it, taking into consideration how the two previous coursebooks organised the collocational competence. Thus, when analysed from this perspective, the coursebooks did not follow a gradual procedure when it comes to the practice of collocations and level since it is quite irregular.

The pre-intermediate level coursebook worked on collocations in a quite balanced way; however, it is the number of instances that may not help students of such level. The intermediate level might be the most irregular coursebook when it comes to teaching collocations, and it has the most significant number of instances from the three books. However, the unbalance between the acknowledged and what is not, is as well the most significant; hence we may say that this organisation could not be suitable for collocation teaching. As it was previously stated, the probable reason why this coursebook has the most considerable number of instances is due to the commonality of the level in secondary schools. However, the way collocations are presented makes this coursebook the most irregular and probably ineffective to teach collocations. The upper-intermediate level coursebook can be considered as the one that collocations the best; despite this, if we analyse it as a whole and from the perspective of a series, we might say that it does not entirely accomplish sufficient collocation practise to achieve a learning goal based on this concept, since it has fewer instances than the previous coursebook. Yet, if we look at it in isolation, we may say that although the number of examples may be small, the levels

of exposure of the concept justifies and helps to create a balance between the amount of practice and how it is presented to the student. The question of whether level progression was significant for the presentation of collocations in the coursebooks will be commented in further depth at the end of this discussion section. However, it has already been introduced in this brief analysis and comments on the books.

What follows is an account of the type of collocations that were mainly taught in these coursebooks. Although it may look as these comments belong to the results section, they do not since it was not part of the primary research, this data is presented here because it is going to help us understand the last point in this discussions section, which deals with how collocations were taught and whether this way is acceptable according to Nation's (1996) Four Strands Theory.

The importance of collocation teaching has been acknowledged repeatedly in this paper, supported by ideas of experts and my reflections. From a personal point of view, indeed, I have not been able to prove this fact with real students due to the context that surrounds 2020. Nevertheless, it is possible to say through the researches by experts that teaching collocations only provide positive results to students, especially those that are learning English as a foreign language. Collocations have been defined as an essential aspect of language learning since these relationships between words help learners to identify patterns that the language has when constructing sentences. This not only allows learners to create written sentences by developing spoken production skills and understand the language better. In our native languages, collocations are an aspect that is learned intuitively through listening to others, reading, and, namely, through productive exercises. Thus, the importance of teaching collocations through different skills is evident, still before designing practices to teach them, we have to consider what types of collocations exist and which are essential to specific learning goals. As it was specified previously in this paper, we may find various kinds of collocations, such as Noun and Verbs or Adjectives and Adverbs. At first, I wondered if the type of collocations also had a relationship with the level of the coursebook, a first hypothesis was that the collocation Noun plus Verb or vice versa would appear most probably with a higher frequency than the rest, namely because this is the most common relationship of words that you could find in lower levels of English teaching. After the thorough analysis of the results, it was clear that the most common combination was indeed verbs and nouns or the other way around.

In general terms, the three coursebooks when working on collocations emphasised on this type of collocation. In fact, in the review units of every coursebook, there was only one exercise regarding collocations; this one was explicit and practised verb+noun type of collocations. Other examples that can be found with less frequency are adjectives and noun collocations and adverb plus verb collocations. The last two types appeared with much less frequency than the former throughout the three coursebooks; however, the intermediate level coursebook indeed had a greater variety of collocations. This matter might be, namely, due to the number of instances of collocations in the book, bringing the opportunity of including various kinds of collocations. Some other types that were rarely seen were the combination of noun and noun, adjective and adverb, as well as a verb and prepositional phrase. Although some more than others, these combinations did not stand out when compared to the other three, the reason might be difficult to express with certainty, but I would guess, these types of collocations are considered more appropriate for higher-level English courses; therefore, they do not have a significant presence in these coursebooks. As it was stated a couple of paragraphs before, this explanation will suit us to understand how collocations are practised in these coursebooks, analysing them through Nation's (1996) Four Strands Theory, which will be repeatedly mentioned in the following section as 'Nation's Theory.'

6.2 Revising and applying Nation's (1996) Four Strand Theory

After commenting on the different aspects of the coursebook series' analysis, we will revise how Nation's theory is presented in the series, as well as applying the theory in those aspects that can be used. Therefore, before talking about Nation's theory, we are going to comment on several points regarding the analysis of the coursebook series. In general comments, the series practise collocations not excessively, it does not seem to be a progression between level and how collocations are worked, due to the irregularity in which the concept is included within each coursebook level. Nevertheless, it is essential to highlight that, as reported in the previous part of this section, in terms of exposure's level, the upper-intermediate coursebook provided the student with a more precise and more significant explicit presentation of the concept. Although this matter is essential, it was also previously stated that quantity is not connected with the levels of display, this is the matter that will be commented and reflected upon in the following paragraphs.

To begin reflecting upon this matter, we should start by answering one of the research questions stated at the beginning of this section and already commented. Does

the *Outcomes* Series work on collocations in a balanced way? Before answering this question, it would be necessary to contextualise what balanced means for this study. Taking into consideration that the following comments are based upon Nation's theory of the Four Strands, it is going to be considered a balanced work on collocations, if the coursebooks apply all four strands. From this perspective, the coursebook series do not practise collocations in a balanced way. First of all, we will comment briefly on the four strands and what they imply to understand better why the series is not balanced when it comes to collocations.

The first strand, meaning-focused input, suggests that the teacher or the coursebook should focus on transmitting the messages from listening or reading tasks. The second strand, language-focused, highlights the grammatical aspects of the language. The third strand, meaning-focused output, provides the student with language production practice through speaking or writing tasks. Finally, the fourth strand, fluency, englobes the three strands above, and it serves as an objective for the theory. Therefore, after commenting on Nation's theory briefly, it is safe to say that the present coursebook series practice collocations, namely, through the language-focused strand. As it was displayed in the results section, collocations are practised principally in the vocabulary sections of the units, to understand collocations as a grammatical unit, by connecting, underlying, filling the gaps, among other exercises which are very typical of focused grammatical teaching. Thus, the *outcomes* series have an unmistakeable language-focused strand work; however, it leaves the practice of the other strands unattended. What follows is an account of how the remaining strands could have been applied to the coursebook's work on collocations. One of the main objectives with this paper was to present propositions on how to include Nation's theory in the designing process of coursebooks so it would demonstrate that it is possible to create a balance language course from its coursebook, which as it was already mentioned, it is a much-used teaching tool by language teachers around the world. For this reason, the following paragraphs will display descriptions of dynamics in which the remaining strands are used to practise collocations further.

When it comes to implementing the Four Strands Theory to practise collocations, it is important to recognise that collocations can be practised throughout all four strands, meaning that they can be worked with any skill. Thus, t ways to practise collocations should not be seen as limited to vocabulary exercises; instead, they can be presented, practised and even tested through reading, writing, listening or speaking tasks, in which

collocations are simply another intrinsic element needed for learners to complete the activity. A second aspect to consider is that Nation (1996) argued that the strands practise should not be regarded as isolated work, on the contrary, each strand should complement each other to create that balance practises of the language, in which outcome will be fluency. Therefore, to demonstrate how Nation's Four Strands Theory (1996) could be applied in any way to the practice of collocations, each strands' dynamic should be connected with the previous one. What I have set out to do in this proposal is to plan dynamics in which the same thematic line of collocations will be practised in all strands. Therefore, what follows is an account and description of how these dynamics would be and how they could be applied to a real classroom. At the moment of designing the present proposal, I have taken a holistic approach to organising how the dynamics could be presented and developed in a real-life situation.

Furthermore, it would also be necessary to comment that these dynamics are not given for a specific level. Through this research we have seen (See Results Section) that collocations can be practised in any proficiency level, altering the grade of the content difficulty. Thus, this proposal will not specify the type of content or collocation that is worked on the dynamics. Since what I am interested in is to provide ideas of how collocations could be practised based on Nation's Four Strands Theory (1996) with a description of coursebook-like dynamics as well as an account of how these could be accomplished in a classroom of any level and topic because collocations can be taught with any type of content. At the same time, a final remark needs to be cleared. These dynamics are not planned with a temporal factor in mind, which means that it would be necessary, to accomplish or apply these dynamics in a real-like environment, to implement them in the course of several sessions.

Turning to the meaning-focused input strand and listening and reading tasks, here the primary focus is on comprehension. This is not merely a question of understanding the words on an audio track or in an adapted reading text but being able to understand and do something with the message these texts convey. In the *Outcomes* series, collocations that are taught through these tasks, asked for the students to fill in gaps or recreate sentences heard in the audio track, which does not seem to be very useful due to the simplicity of the exercise, it comes again from a grammatical point of view, the student does not get to work on meaning, only through the coursebook. Thus, to apply Nation's theory, we should consider several aspects, first of all, what is the use of listening and

reading tasks? Traditionally, these exercises would evaluate student's abilities to comprehend texts in a foreign language but may forget to assess how students approach the meanings of these texts. Teachers can provide students with strategies such as skimming or scanning for reading tasks, and it will help students to understand better the content of written documents, but the questions that we should ask ourselves would be, how can we make that comprehension useful for student's proficiency of the language outside of the classroom? A possible answer could be teaching vocabulary in context. As it was reported in the theoretical framework, to teach collocations correctly and successfully, teachers need to teach them in context, so that students understand the relationship of these words and provide them with the information to ease them the learning process of new vocabulary, especially in lower levels.

Reading and listening tasks usually are connected in coursebooks, through the same topic or learning goal. Because the learning goal of this proposal is to make students aware, practise and develop a collocational competence in some way, the description below also considers that reading and listening skills can be complemented to work on collocations. What follows is a dynamics' description, how they could be reflected in a coursebook and how they could be implemented in a classroom.

From a holistic point of view, reading tasks are generally approached in terms of three key steps: pre-reading, initial reading and re-reading. Pre-reading tasks include comprehension tools such as brainstorming or skimming. These tools allow the students to encounter and discover topics regarding the text they are about to read, and these could be done in groups or individualised. Nevertheless, what is interesting for us is to comment on is how collocations can be included in these processes. Still, we should think of two possibilities when introducing the concept of collocations. (1) Students have gotten a previous theoretical explanation of the idea. Therefore, they are familiarised with the existence of this relationship. (2) Students have not seen collocations before, and are going to encounter the concept for the first time in this reading task. collocations are introduced in the various levels of the *Outcomes* series (See Results), through two explicit presentations of collocations in the pre-intermediate and intermediate levels. These introductions allowed students to comprehend what collocations are, why they exist and why they are necessary. Since that is the case, in this proposal I will assume that students have been introduced to the concept   so the reading task means a development of the theoretical explanation.

One way of including collocations in the pre-reading stage is to highlight them in bold and acknowledge their presence in the text in the exercise's title. Although students have not yet begun the actual reading of the text, they have the possibility of connecting what they already know of collocations with the further stages. By accomplishing a brainstorming with the entire class, regarding the given topic of the reading task, students may well actually use the collocations, or synonyms of vocabulary items in the text, and this allows for the introduction of some of the instances and the topic of collocation before students begin a closer reading.

The initial reading stage concerns the understanding of the text with different tools to help students navigate through the content of the text. The meaning-focused input strand highlights the importance of comprehending the meaning of a written text, form a communicative point of view, in which students understand the message of the reading task. From the initial reading stage, we can provide students with a guided matrix, in which they search for specific things in the text. What this guided matrix will allow students to discover the messages, the meanings of words and expressions and locate examples of collocations and their meanings in context. Because the collocations present in the reading task are already in bold, what is interesting to achieve with this guided matrix is to allow students to connect the relationship between these words, their meaning and the message they convey in the article, tale, or whatever kind of document the students are facing. Hence, in the guided matrix, students should find an item which asks for them to find the collocations and try to guess their meaning

Making students guess or even discover what these words mean will allow them to learn these words in context, simply because they need the background to understand these collocations, and therefore that will, hopefully, lead to conveying more than meaning but the message of the story they are reading, which is the ultimate goal of this strand. To illustrate how I would implement collocation teaching through a guided matrix, I have created a sample version of one with general items that could be found in any guided matrix for any level (See Appendix 1). The reason why I do it, is to provide an example of how collocations can be taught and included in reading tasks, to help students in the reading process. In the guided matrix there are going to be two sections the one with a description of the item, and another that where student's answers would be, nevertheless, for us in this sample version, I will use it as an observations section, to comment on the specificities of each item or those that prominently interest us (See

Appendix 1). However, in this section, we are still going to comment on some things. What follows, is a description of the guided matrix, the objectives, the number of items that appear, and the type of items that students would have to find part of their reading task.

The guided matrix, because it is a sample version since there is no text to create the guided matrix from, has four items. I believed that this would be the average number of items that students could find in all levels. Because this is a sample version that is interested in providing an example of how collocation teaching can be a part of the learning of other concepts, some items ask students for specific grammar elements or other vocabulary aspects. Furthermore, in the observations of the guided matrix, there are descriptions or explanations of particular items to clarify my intentions (See Appendix 1).

The rereading stage's objectives regard the importance of keeping students engaged with the text's content. As teachers, we can help students analyse the content of the text more deeply. For example, through rewriting, retelling and considering the message conveyed in the reading task. This can be done at any level because retelling or rewriting can be accomplished with single form sentences to paragraphs or the whole text. Rereading activities will help students be sure they have comprehended the meaning of the text, but also locate the messages conveyed in the written passage they have read. Since collocations are to be a vehicle but also an intrinsic part of the text; there is no need to focus this stage on collocations. The objective is to include collocations in the process of understanding the text as a whole. I will now go from the reading task to a writing task, which involves the meaning-focused output strand.

In the rereading stage, we may use writing as a subskill to make students rethink the message conveyed in the text. Nevertheless, we are not going to consider that as a practice of the message-focus output, because language production is not the focus in such stage but the reception of the text's message. It is the former, language production, that concerns the meaning-focused output strand. Through speaking and writing tasks, the present strand uses the previous one to produce language and put the student's knowledge into use. A writing task will go after the reading task to continue with this proposal. Also, form a holistic approach to the writing task, it is divided into three stages, pre-writing, during-writing and post-writing.

The pre-writing stage concerns approaching students with relevant aspects such as vocabulary, grammar and their background knowledge. One possibility is to use reading or listening activities to provide students with a pre-writing mindset. At the beginning of this proposal, we commented that the dynamics are planned to work on the same thematic line and collocations with all the strands. Therefore, this pre-writing stage will be connected to the previous reading task. Because this initial stage of the writing task is concerned to evoke background knowledge in students, we are going to use what was worked in the reading task, in terms of vocabulary work, meaning and message of the text, to convey what could be dealt in further stages of the writing task.

The writing task itself can be about creative writing, depending on the difficulty level interested. The reason why creative writing could be an attractive option is that this type of task would allow students some freedom, but with specific guidelines, to explore writing and permit them to use the vocabulary worked in the prior task, including collocations. In the during-writing stage, teachers can provide students with a checklist in which they are guided through the different items and aspects that should be included in the writing task. Within this checklist, the need to use the collocations learned in the reading task will be emphasised. Thus, after learning a specific set of collocations in context, students use these collocations and put them into their own created context. Writing itself is, of course a cyclical process, in which the students go from one initial idea to the composition, to a stage of rereading that allows them to revise their writing, being critical about their own and their classmates' work, by checking whether they have fulfilled and added all the items in the checklist or not and successfully satisfied task demands.

As mentioned before commenting on this proposal, the language-focused strand is worked extensively in the *Outcomes* series. Still, through the writing and reading tasks it is possible to put into action more grammatical competences, the key focus of this strand. The final strand, fluency, is explained by Nation as the culmination of the combination and practice of all strands as a whole. Thus, when it comes to the dynamics, they were designed to work on collocations with all strands complementing each other. Moreover, these dynamics are not only intended for collocations since they can be used to mix single words vocabulary and collocations of the same topic. Thus, it incorporates learning collocations as part of the vocabulary, not as an isolated aspect of vocabulary, which should be a goal for coursebook designers and teachers. It is essential to bear in

mind that these propositions were presented for the sake of offering a view of how Nation's (1996) Theory of Four Strands could be applied in language coursebook designs; therefore, these propositions should be taken and considered with caution, as well as ideas presented in this paper without disregarding the efforts and authorship of the coursebooks.

Nation's (1996) Four Strands Theory, includes more skills within each strand, listening for the meaning input and speaking for the meaning output. Nevertheless, this proposal sought to describe how Nation's theory could be applied when using a coursebook and what the teacher's role would be in adapting the coursebook. It is evident that other skills can be practised and that these can also be part of other plans, even if those do not appear in the present one.

Before continuing to the last part of this discussion section, I would like to comment on several aspects that arose while considering these propositions and the analysis of the coursebooks. Several questions came into mind, which may be regarded as hypotheses, nevertheless, before commenting them, it is necessary to state that there was an attempt to contact the coursebook series' authors, to ask them some questions ti help me understand even more how collocations are practised in the coursebooks. Before receiving a response by the authors, I had to contemplate several options to these questions, in case I received no answer, therefore, when I finished the analysis of the coursebooks and considering the results of such study, I thought it was impossible not to ask why collocations are not that present in this coursebook series. I could not comment this with complete certainty because I did not know the intention of the coursebook designers, nor did I know what the designing process of this coursebook series was, hence, where collocations were in such process.

All I could do is to report what was said in the theoretical framework and guess. Although collocations seem to be a significantly important concept for L2 learners of English to know and practise, it gets disregarded due to several possible reasons. (1) The complexity of teaching the concept and making it understandable for younger students. Collocations, at first, might seem an idea difficult to comprehend since there is no theory or rules to create this relation of words. Therefore, it may mean for younger students to develop specific skills in them and prepare certain theoretical lessons before actually getting into working with collocations. (2) The volume of the vocabulary syllabus makes it hard to include collocations as a single concept to practise. It is well known that

language courses, especially in intermediate levels in secondary schools, contain a significant number of items to learn in the vocabulary syllabus, and this list increases when level moves forward. Therefore, when we think about collocations, it is a concept that requires some previous preparation, which taking into consideration the way courses and coursebooks are planned in secondary levels may seem impossible. Still, it is possible to include it. In the previous part of this discussion section, it was commented on the matter of progression in the coursebook series, which we concluded there was no progression due to the irregularity in which collocations are practised within the three coursebooks. Hence, if the coursebook series treated collocation from the pre-intermediate level and sequentially increased collocation's exposure and practise towards upper levels, then it would mean the concept could be included as part of the regular vocabulary syllabus. (3) Finally, teachers might not be aware of the importance of collocations for secondary level students. This consideration was taken with great caution and awareness that I could not provide any proof of this statement, but still believed it was worth commenting. Making it form my personal experience as a student of English as L2, I never received a lesson, nor was I acknowledge around the idea of collocations, until starting my university degree. Things may indeed have changed over the years; nevertheless, it is also true that in terms of coursebook syllabus, they have not changed that much, which may lead us to think two things:

First that collocations are disregarded by coursebooks and teachers for any of the reasons presented above, or secondly, that teachers or coursebook designers, due to the limited but still growing literature on the matter, are not aware of how collocations can help secondary students. Considering what has just been commented above, we may also guess that in the particular case of the coursebook series we are analysing, we had to suppose that the coursebook designers did not regard as crucial, including collocations more explicitly in their coursebooks due to the levels of exposure of the concept. Nevertheless, as it was mentioned before, these statements must be taken as guesses and proposals to try to understand the matter of why collocations are disregarded so often in language coursebooks, or even why collocations are not as present in the coursebook series as they might be. Some of the issues emerging from these considerations relate specifically to this study's objectives and research questions contemplated at the beginning of this paper. In the next part of this discussion section, I will present my interpretations and answers to the research questions just mentioned.

Nevertheless, before concluding this part, I would like to comment on the importance that collocations have outside of learning English as L2 in secondary levels. Nation (2008), categorises that vocabulary can be identified depending on the different uses or frequency of its use by speakers. One of the categories is *technical words* attached to specific areas of study, which lead me to think of the project CLIL. Dalton-Puffer and Smit (2013) reviewed and defined what CLIL is. Many might think that is adding a second language to the teaching of other subjects; nevertheless, both experts explain CLIL's aim is to create a lingua franca, that could be English, to work on other areas (p.546). The reason I bring up collocations and Nation in this matter is to acknowledge that collocations are not only used in day by day language and not only help students develop a communicative competence of the language, but that collocations are also present in other areas, specific, scientific, and other branches of study. What I want to argue with this, is that collocations are not exclusively helpful for secondary students of English, but also to students that are in educative centres in which the CLIL methodology is implemented, or in the case of the Canary Islands, the PILE plan. These facts argue positively of the incorporation of collocation teaching in all areas in which English is used, not only for L2 students who learn the language.

6.3 Final considerations of the research questions and the authors' perspectives

Thus far, this discussion section has commented on the results of the study, have proposed possible adaptation of the coursebooks to include an explicit and adequate practice of collocations, based on Nation's 1996 theory of Four Strands. At the same time, this discussion section has already attempted to answer some of the research questions that follow.

Before answering these questions, first, we are going to revise what these were. First of all, it was essential to discover how collocations were worked in this coursebook series, and this meant several things; (a) Understanding the structure of the coursebook; (b) Signalling in which sections of the coursebook's units appear more collocations; (c) Whether collocations were presented to students explicitly or implicitly. Secondly, as it was regarded in the methods section, the three levels chosen were due to an interest in finding out if there was a relationship between level and teaching collocations, which dealt with understanding how the coursebook series organised teaching this concept

through the levels chosen. Finally, one initial interest was to discover whether students knew what collocations were, and how did they get to know them.

As it was explained in the methods sections, this was impossible to tell since there was no opportunity to work with students on this matter. The question was turned around towards the coursebook designers to understand the designing process and their belief of collocations. What follows now is an account of the answers of the questions suggested above. Indeed, the responses of these questions have already been commented on in their specific parts of this discussion section. However, this account will allow as to answer them as a whole to comprehend the results of this study better; moreover, it will enable us to see how they complement each other, which was another objective.

First of all, as we already mentioned, this coursebook series does not seem to have a level progression when it comes to teaching collocations, this is because there is not consistent work on the concept throughout the three coursebooks, which led us to think that collocations were not a crucial aspect of the vocabulary syllabus of this series. Nevertheless, it is still safe to say that collocations are somewhat present in the series, although it is minimal in comparison with other concepts. It is also safe to say that we do not know if collocations were meant to be an essential aspect of the vocabulary syllabus, even though there is some clear presence of the concept in the review units of each coursebook, where there is always one explicit example of collocation practise. Still, we have to say that the aim of understanding how level affected teaching collocations was not possible to find out through this analysis, because such study of the coursebooks do not provide the information, but they give another kind of information. The second objective of this paper was to find out whether it was possible or not to apply Nation's theory of Four Strands (1996) in the designing process of coursebooks. We took as a standard the possibility of transforming or adapting some of the exercises present in the coursebooks to what Nation's theory states. An aspect to clarify is that the proposal was meant to be an example of how Nation's theory could be applied to these coursebooks.

A general description of the proposition was provided since it could be used in the three levels with the corresponding adaptations. With these propositions, the objective was to discover whether the coursebooks practised collocations in a balance or unbalanced way, according to Nation's theory. For this, we found that the coursebooks work collocations prioritising one specific strand, the language-focused one, which indicated that there is a strong grammatical work on the coursebooks and a grammatical

interpretation of collocations. This matter does not mean that collocations were considered a grammatical concept, but that they were presented with exercises used to revise grammar which usually is not contextualised, such as fill in gaps or connecting the different parts of a collocation. Therefore, when we talk about contextualising collocations, we are seeking for the student to construct a message.

Building this message connects us with Canale and Swain (1980) Communicative Competence and approach to language teaching that was explained in the theoretical framework. When we consider how Canale and Swain (1980) defined communicative competence, we have to comprehend that to teach collocations, as it is our interest, we must as teachers provide students with the context, the platform and the instructions to use collocations in way that these words are learned as pairs not as isolated words. So that teachers can give learners strategies, tips, and tools to construct language and use language not only to know about language. Canale and Swain (1980) Nation and Yamamoto (2012), among other specialists, have already highlighted the importance of teaching language based upon the learner's needs. Therefore, before designing or prepare a course, we have to consider what are the student's learning needs, so that we know what the objective is when teaching such language. In the previous section of the theoretical framework, we presented the importance and relevance that English has today as a foreign language; nevertheless, as teachers, we have to understand what these students are going to use English for, and here comes the Communicative Competence once again. International relations through social media, a global job market, every year, the amount of international media that is consumed in Spain increases thanks to streaming services. All of these factors should shape how we understand teaching English nowadays, we live in a digitalised world in which we no longer write letters but emails, we have reshaped the way we communicate in social media, in internet blogs among other digital spaces. Therefore, it is my perspective that as teachers, we should provide students with linguistic tools to face the immense variety of communicative platforms that exist nowadays, and that should be reflected in coursebooks. If we take coursebooks as guides and platforms to teach English, these should reflect the topics, mediums, and concerns of nowadays learners' needs.

When it comes to comprehending the designing processes and insights of the coursebooks, there is no better resource than the designers themselves. After contacting them, I was lucky enough to receive a response to my questions. Their answers and

willingness to introduce me to the designing process allowed us to comprehend aspects of how the coursebooks work on collocations. Through their responses, I could also understand the coursebook series' aim, what point drove the design of the coursebooks, and their insights on how collocations are worked or should be worked. What follows is an account of these insights, which will lead us to answer one of the study's questions, which is how the coursebooks designers understand the importance of collocations in their work.

Hugh Dellar and Andrew Walkley, both authors of the *Outcomes* coursebook Series, acknowledge that collocations were not a driving force in the designing process of the series. What is more, Walkley comprehends that collocation driven pages in a coursebook produce designing pressure and problems due to one main reason. Walkley, in his answer, recalls something named "the flick test," which essentially is the moment in which a possible buyer takes a peek at the first pages of the coursebook and decides whether it is worth acquiring it or not. Walkley considers that including collocations as a designing characteristic leads to a higher amount of words per page in the coursebook, which would probably provoke failing the flick test that he mentions. At the same time, Walkley considers that such "flick tests" make publishers wishing single word exercises, more images than word-dense designs. Considering this, we already have an answer to the matter we are interested in discovering; nevertheless, what was interesting in their responses and incredibly helpful was to understand the aim of the coursebook series. As we have commented, at the beginning of the coursebooks, there is a description of the series' objectives. Which namely is to provide a communicative outcome to students. Dellar described the aim as trying to present the students some knowledge about language to use in common topics to develop conversational competence. Still, regarding these topics, Dellar acknowledges the importance of understanding the relationship between the conversational topics used by native speakers and those used by L2 speakers of English. This matter connects us to what we were just discussing, that of the learner's needs, and how essential they are to decide which type of topics are going to be included in the coursebooks.

Regarding the teaching of collocations, both authors comprehend the importance that they have in language teaching and learning. They also understand how necessary it is to present collocations and vocabulary in context, to have some utility in the student's learning process. Dellar follows saying how single-word type exercises offer vocabulary

decontextualised which do not have a communicative outcome; he considers that if collocations are presented in context or within sentences, it will conclude in a communicative learning experience. The authors brought up an idea that helped me to understand why collocations should be taught but also from which perspective this concept should be taught. Dellar and Walkley reflected upon the idea of turning the tables and beginning to ask ourselves what it means to know collocations instead of what it means to know single words in isolation. Namely, it can be comprehended as understanding language and vocabulary within lexical relations instead of isolated items, which eventually, collocation teaching would pursue and help students to realise. Moreover, it is from this perspective that Walkley considers the following, *"Thinking about the textual relations of collocations might also lead us to reconsider the kinds of units of vocabulary learning we present."* From these comments, we can understand that the way we approach vocabulary teaching, specifically collocations, can dictate how vocabulary is presented in coursebooks.

When I contacted the authors, I requested them to share their insights on two matters, the first one being how they placed collocations within the designing process of the series, as well as the importance of collocations when making decisions regarding such design. This question has already been beyond answered above, with the highly helpful insights by the authors, which eventually can be summarised as no, collocations were not a focus when designing the *Outcomes* coursebook series. However, they do acknowledge how essential teaching collocations are, as well as teaching language in context. The second matter that I asked them about was to share their insights on how they think teachers present collocations, do they acknowledge the concept? Do other coursebooks acknowledge collocations?

To answer this, Dellar went to his coursebook and contemplated how the series from the Elementary level presented collocations in sections like 'Understanding Vocabulary.' We have mentioned them in the results section as a part of units in which the authors provide definitions of vocabulary aspects and practise on such matters as collocations. Nevertheless, both authors also consider that students and teachers have a role in understanding and learning collocations. First of all, Dellar believes that students should also work on noticing examples of collocations. Furthermore, the author thinks that even though some coursebooks acknowledge collocations, teachers do it more often than coursebooks do. To this, Walkley adds that it is, at some level, a responsibility for

teachers to present collocations even if they are explicitly expressed in coursebooks when collocations are a learning goal. He brings up the idea of making students participate and intervening in the learning and identification of possible cases of collocations. When we think of this matter and connect it to the results of this study's analysis, we might comprehend to a certain extent, why there are higher levels of implicitness rather than explicitness in coursebook levels like the intermediate one, which showed a more implicit presentation of collocations in its units than the other two coursebooks. This fact might have been unintentional, but it helps us understand the distribution, the type of exposure, and how collocations are worked throughout the coursebook series.

Going back to the idea of requiring students to identify examples of collocations as a part of their learning experience, we have to comment on what is the teacher's role in such a scenario. Based on this consideration, we have to think of two possibilities regarding what the teacher can do to prepare students to identify collocation examples. First of all, we can say that the teacher can provide students with tools, based on theoretical knowledge of what collocations are, which namely means that students should be aware of a definition of collocation, the different types of collocations, and the fact that these relations between words are everywhere. This relation is not rare, but that the way adjectives affect the meaning of nouns is due to this collocational relationship. So that students comprehend the way languages work, to ease them the process of constructing messages towards that communicative *outcomes* objective.

A final comment that we can take from the responses of the authors is Walkley's understanding of how many coursebooks comprehend and present collocations as grammatical units instead of what they are. He goes further by adding that he fears that through this approach on collocation teaching, the way teachers might end up assessing if students have acquired collocational competence, is for them to be tested on this concept. It may lead, according to Walkley, to what he recalls a negative obsession around grammatical accuracy, or in this case, collocational accuracy. If we go back to the theoretical framework, when I review the literature that I have encountered on the matter of collocations, there seems to be little mention of testing collocations. This fact confirms Walkley's considerations as well as an assumption that has been repeatedly commented throughout the paper, which is that collocations should not be an aspect focused on assessment; instead, it should be an aspect taught as a tool for students to comprehend and facilitate them the way we see, engage and learn languages.

Thus, as a conclusion to this discussion section, we have acknowledged the importance of teaching collocations, teaching this concept explicitly but also making students aware of collocations so that they can notice, discover and identify them by themselves. The way we present this concept shapes not only the way learners can study new words and comprehend the relations among such but also, what we understand as collocations can structure how we present them, having several possibilities: We can introduce them as a theoretical concept to practise; we can provide students with lists of common collocations according to their level; or we can present collocations by putting them into use, in a contextualise environment, in which practice allows students to create language instead of demonstrating what they know about language.

7. Conclusions and Improvement Plan

7.1 Conclusions

This essay has discussed and analysed several arguments on why collocation teaching should be an intrinsic part of language courses, but most specifically, language coursebooks. This study had several objectives, all of them regarding how collocations are taught, the importance of collocation teaching and how this reflected in language coursebooks. First of all, we aimed to discover whether collocations have any presence in coursebooks, through three coursebooks from the *Outcomes* Series. This series, designed by Hugh Dellar and Andrew Walkley, allowed us to take a look at how the level of the language coursebooks affected the way collocations were taught and presented to students. This matter was significantly important because there was an interest in proving a hypothesis that level and collocations are connected, meaning that the initial belief was that collocations were taught mainly at higher levels.

At the same time, another aim was to research how Nation's (1996) Four Strands Theory could affect the designing process of coursebooks. For this, another hypothesis was suggested, which was that Nation's theory was generally applied to the design of language courses' syllabus and curriculums, and not focused on the designing processes of coursebooks. Therefore, with this study, I was interested in seeing if it was possible to apply Nation's four strands to the design of dynamics practising collocations.

Through the experts' discussions, the authors and designers of the coursebooks used to support the analysis and the interpretation of the results, we have concluded with several *outcomes*. (1) Collocations are present in coursebooks, but many coursebooks

designers and English teachers still disregard this concept. Even though the literature proofs that teaching collocations to L2 learners of English help them improve their proficiency and allow them to learn English in context, which eventually will permit students to comprehend the language more and develop communicative competence, which should be an objective in language courses. (2) How collocations are presented in coursebooks matter, but also the teachers and students' role in the learning process of collocations. Because collocations are implicitly outlined in coursebooks, it does not mean that teachers cannot acknowledge them or provide students with tools to notice them. (3) Nation's (1996) Fours Strands theory cannot be delimited to the design of language courses. Language coursebooks could also be designed under Nation's standards, although it is true that it might be more challenging to make it happen, due to possible restrictions or requirements from publisher companies, and the needs of the coursebook market.

What this research may help to accomplish is to open the opportunity of further analysis on the matter of collocation teaching. In addition to this, through the insights of the coursebook series' designers, we may start to acknowledge the fact that we should restructure how we teach and learn vocabulary. As a matter of fact, through their insights, we discovered and suggested that as teachers, we may be asking the wrong questions when dealing with vocabulary teaching. Maybe, we should start teaching vocabulary in a contextualised way in which single-word lessons and lists no longer seem useful for students, instead, we should begin contemplating the option of teaching and learning vocabulary based on the relations, and the function of these relations in the construction of messages, towards a communicative outcome.

7.2 Improvement Plan

The context in which this study was developed requires me to present an improvement plan of what the initial intention was, and how future research can help the present research to progress and offer better results connected to the reality in the secondary schools' classrooms.

The initial intention, as was explained in the methods sections, was to provide an account on collocation teaching in secondary classrooms, through testing, practising and presenting the concept to real students in an educative centre. When the Covid-19 crisis began, I had to choose between continuing with the initial idea, taking into account

the possible risk of not being able to work with students or undertaking this research from a different perspective, which was analysing how collocations were presented in coursebooks.

For future studies, it would be very helpful to work with students to discover what the collocational knowledge in secondary classrooms in Spain is, or specifically in the Canary Islands. Since the curriculum does not comment on the teaching of collocations explicitly but comments on the importance of having a communicative approach to English education, it would be fascinating to see how collocational competence can help students and teachers achieve this communicative outcome.

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Appendix

Guided Matrix

GUIDED MATRIX	
Find 4 examples of the Negative form the Past Simple in the text.	
Search 3 examples of Noun + Verb Collocations.	Even though the number of collocations asked is not very high, the interest is introducing collocations and with further practice allow them to identify examples of collocations by themselves.
Look for 5 examples of types of accommodations.	The reason why I included an item for a specific topic, although, in the description of the proposal, I commented that it was not going to be topic-specific, is because I want to show that collocations can be included within specific topics, even if the interest is to teach single-word items without its collocations.
Find 2 examples of Adjective + Noun Collocations.	In the discussions section, I commented on how this type of collocation is not very common in the *Outcomes* Series, but it is still a type of collocation than can be easily found in any text.