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## WHAT IS A METAPHORICAL COLLOCATION?<sup>1</sup>

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*In research on collocations published in English we encounter, albeit rarely, the use of the notion “metaphorical collocations”. It is interesting to note that seldom if ever are metaphorical collocations defined in any way in these studies, suggesting that researchers find the term self-explanatory. However, seeing that metaphorical collocations are an exciting area of research that is yet to draw attention from the wider community of researchers, the aim of this paper is to analyze the current understanding of what a metaphorical collocation is by examining the theoretical foundations as well as studies, specifically those published in English (as the language of scientific research). Therefore, I examined publications in English (and German) for definitions of a metaphorical collocation, and I examined a number of studies on such collocations, or studies that refer to such collocations, in English. In view of theoretical considerations, I have found that metaphorical collocations indeed have an established definition, while in regard to research on such collocations, I have found that authors most often than not leave out the definition and actually label a wide range of multiword units as metaphorical collocations. I propose that for the sake of clarity and transparency in research on metaphorical collocations in English, researchers refer to and adhere to a definition of the notion. This is*

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*particularly important as metaphorical collocations are at the intersection of two quite complex linguistic phenomena: metaphors and collocations.*

**Key words:** *metaphorical collocation; conceptual metaphor; collocations*

## 1. Introduction

Both metaphors and collocations as specific areas of (applied) linguistics inquiry have garnered the attention of researchers for quite some time now. This has resulted in in-depth exploration of metaphors and collocations from various aspects. While the definition of the metaphor is widely accepted, what makes a collocation a collocation is still a matter of debate. At the intersection of these two linguistic phenomena lie metaphorical collocations as an exciting avenue of future research. An example of a metaphorical collocation is “a slim chance”, wherein “slim” is used figuratively and “chance” literally. However, seeing that generally collocations suffer from a lack of a unanimously accepted definition, it is important to know what a metaphorical collocation in particular is. Yet, researchers who explore metaphorical collocations or refer to them in their research, most often than not omit the definition, contributing thus to the vagueness of the matter explored. In addition, this type of collocations has not been sufficiently studied from the semantic and pragmatic aspect, so research in this direction could provide new insights into the processes underlying the creation of collocational combinations as well as new insights into the principles of selective combining as a specific semantically conditioned mechanism of natural languages. For this reason, a project at the University of Rijeka, financed by the Croatian Science Foundation, *Metaphorical Collocations – Syntagmatic Word Combinations between Semantics and Pragmatics*, has been initiated to examine metaphorical collocations in Croatian, German, English, and Italian in depth. The aim of this article in particular is to gather current theoretical considerations and research of metaphorical collocations published in English in an effort to understand what the notion represents in contemporary (applied) linguistics. I begin by providing the generally accepted definitions of metaphors and collocations, and I then turn to the exploration of metaphorical collocations.

## 2. Metaphor

Metaphor has commonly been understood as “a figure of speech in which one thing is compared with another by saying that one is the other”

(Kövecses 2010:ix) and this traditional concept has had five commonly accepted features. First, it is a linguistic phenomenon; second, it is used for “artistic and rhetorical purpose”; third, it is based on “a resemblance between two entities that are compared and identified”; fourth, it is a “conscious and deliberate use of words” that requires talent to do it well; finally, it is a figure of speech that people believe they can do without (Kövecses 2010). However, Lakoff and Johnson’s (1980, 2003) groundbreaking work gave birth to the cognitive linguistic view of metaphor whereby metaphor is not a property of words, but concepts; it serves to better understand concepts rather than having just an artistic purpose; it is not often based on similarity; it indeed does not require talent and is in fact used daily and effortlessly; it is an essential part of human reasoning, not an esthetic ornament (Kövecses 2010). Thus, in the contemporary, cognitive linguistics view, metaphor is “understanding one conceptual domain in terms of another conceptual domain” (Kövecses 2010:4). For example, “I am at a crossroads in my life” is based on the metaphor LIFE IS A JOURNEY. This is called a conceptual metaphor: CONCEPTUAL DOMAIN A IS CONCEPTUAL DOMAIN B. A conceptual metaphor needs to be distinguished from metaphorical linguistic expressions, and these are all the expressions that stem from the conceptual metaphor. To continue with the example above used by Kövecses (2010:3), these would be the expressions of the conceptual LIFE IS A JOURNEY: “He’s without direction in life”, “I’m where I want to be in life”, “She’ll go places in life”, “She’s gone through a lot in life”, etc. In the case of the metaphor LIFE IS A JOURNEY, LIFE is a target domain and JOURNEY is a source domain. In other words, we try to understand the target domain “through the use of the source domain” (Kövecses, 2010).

Research on metaphors in numerous languages is abundant, but for the purpose of this article, there is no need to go into details beyond the common understanding of what a metaphor is (understanding one conceptual domain in relation to another) and what a metaphorical expression is (the realization of the conceptual metaphor).

### 3. Collocations

Unlike metaphor, collocation does not have, as has been stated previously, a widely accepted definition. This is because there are various theoretical approaches to this syntagmatic relationship (Stojić 2012). Nonetheless, two dominant approaches are recognized today in the study of

collocations: the frequency-based approach and the phraseological approach (Nesselhauf 2004). The former is based on Firth's (1957) understanding of collocations and is mostly applied in corpus research, that is in computer analysis of collocations in lexicology and lexicography (Stojić & Košuta 2017); the essence of this approach, statistical in nature, is the frequency with which words co-occur. The phraseological approach is applied in lexicography as well, but also in applied linguistics and language teaching; the essence of this approach is narrowing down the definition of collocation to a specific category of a syntagmatic relationship (Stojić 2012). Hence, a collocation is a natural co-occurrence of two words in which we can clearly identify a base and a collocate (Hausmann 1984), with the base being semantically autonomous and determining the meaning of the collocate. This is the definition that we adopt in this article as we consider metaphorical collocations. To illustrate the two collocational components, in the collocation "to seal the deal", the word "deal" is the base, whereas the word "seal" is a collocate. In Sinclair's (1991:170) terms, the base is called the node. Furthermore, it is important to highlight the distinction between collocations and free combinations on one end and idioms on the other (Benson 1985). To exemplify, "an old house" is a free combination, "to bring the house down" ('to make an audience enthusiastic') is an idiom, whereas "a dilapidated house" would be a collocation because of the specific ties between "dilapidated" and "house". To explain further, while "old" and "house" may enter many other combinations, "dilapidated" cannot, and is rather dependent on the "house" as a base. Idioms, unlike collocations, are always figurative in their entirety, for example, "to spill the beans" ('to reveal secret information').

Stojić and Košuta (2012) elaborate that the stability and idiomaticity in collocational bonds is of varying intensity, which is reflected in the semantic cohesiveness between constituents: the weaker it is, the more difficult it is to differentiate collocations relationship from free word combinations, and the stronger it is, the harder it is to differentiate the collocation from phrasemes. This indicates that there are different types of collocations – collocations whose components have a prototypical meaning and metaphorical collocations in which one of the constituents has a figurative meaning.

#### 4. Metaphorical collocations

Metaphorical collocations seem to be a new avenue of research, particularly for researchers writing in English, but in other languages as well.

Previous research of Croatian linguists working with German (Stojić & Murica 2010; Stojić & Štiglic 2011; Stojić & Barić 2013; Stojić 2015) has shown that the metaphor is usually manifested at the level of the collocator. However, the results of these studies point to the need for a greater clarification of the semantic aspect of the collocational bond. A closer look at the semantic aspect of the collocational bonds, which includes questions of co-occurrence conditioned by convention, the semantic interdependence of the collocational components, as well as their limited collocational potential (Stojić 2018, 2019), has shown that the polysemy of a collocational component is the result of a metaphorization process which, from the synchronous aspect, represents a faded metaphor. The process has enhanced the semantic cohesiveness between the constituents, which results in restriction in the combining of the constituents. However, these findings need to be confirmed by further systematic research on a larger corpus, which is the aim of the aforementioned project.

Using one of the largest online libraries, RIT Wallace Library, I searched for scientific work that refers to metaphorical collocations in any way, be it in the title, the abstract, or in the text. The search returned 28 valid results. In the next part, I describe how authors use the term “metaphorical collocations”, and I specifically look at whether a definition is provided or not, as well as whether through the examples that the authors use it is possible to see what they understand metaphorical collocations to be. Before that, I look into a few sources available that provide a theoretical consideration of metaphorical collocations in English to establish the criteria according to which the studies can be analyzed.

Perhaps the most thorough exploration of metaphorical collocations in English is Phillip (2011). In his book about meaning exemplified through color words, Phillip (2011:25) explains that metaphorical collocations are “like idioms in that once learned, the salience of the collocation is at least as high as the salience of the collocates when viewed independently”. He argues that other collocations do not attract such sort of exploitation, partly because metaphorical collocations are sometimes a part of idiomatic expressions: “they often occur as the invariable or minimally variable cores around which particular phrasal configurations build up (e.g. *black sheep*, *blue moon*, *green light*)”. Furthermore, since these collocations are central to the idiom, they are focal points “for the salient phrasal meaning and are for this reason able to convey that meaning in ellipsed form – without the aid of the complementary collocates which complete the phraseology associat-

ed with the canonical form”. Finally, metaphorical collocations are like idioms because “their contextual environments can be tweaked so that the salient meanings of the individual collocates are reactivated”. Thus, the “original meaning is not lost but is instead supplemented and enriched”. It is interesting to note how Phillip (2011:31) exemplifies the distinction between idioms, proverbs, similes, and polysemous or metaphorical collocations: “idioms (*scream blue murder, red rag to a bull, the pot calling the kettle black*), proverbs (*the grass is always greener, red sky at night*), conventional similes (*as red as a lobster, whiter than white*), and polysemous or metaphorical collocations (*black and white, grey matter, green fingers, white wedding*)”. Phillip (2011) thus likens metaphorical collocations to idioms in several regards, yet clearly distinguishes them from each other.

At this point it is worth mentioning that McCarthy and O’Dell (2017:90–94), authors of the well-known series of exercise books for collocations in English, write about the metaphorical use of collocations and explicitly call such collocations metaphorical only in relation to smell, taste, color, and light; for example: “a grey area”, “shed some light”, “cast a shadow”, “taste freedom”, “develop a taste”, “smell danger”, etc. However, this is a rather constrained view of metaphorical collocations as many other words can enter into combinations we deem metaphorical collocations.

Outside the world of scientific work in English, it appears that authors writing in German have dedicated some attention to metaphorical collocations. Reder (2006:161) explains that in a metaphorical collocation, the collocate has a figurative meaning, while the base has a literal meaning; thus, the collocate is polysemous and has a metaphorical meaning in the collocation, but outside it, it can be used literally. The collocate, according to Reder, needs to have at least two meanings and, depending on the context, can be used figuratively or literally. Likewise, Volungevičienė (2008:296) sees metaphorical collocations as fixed, partly idiomatic, combinations of words, with a polysemous collocate. Note that the key difference between Reder (2006) and Phillip (2011) is that according to the former, the base has to have a literal meaning. Phillip (2011), on the other hand, provides the example of “black sheep” – this, indeed, is not an actual sheep, but a person who does not fit in a certain group and thus stands out. I align my thinking with that of Reder (2006) because Phillip’s (2011) “black sheep” is simply a metaphorical expression, not a collocation. For that reason, for the purpose of the analysis of the studies below, I adopt Reder’s (2006) definition of a metaphorical collocation whereby one of the key

points that distinguishes metaphorical collocations from other (metaphorical) expressions (free combinations, idioms) is that the base is used in a literal sense.

Only a handful of authors investigated metaphorical collocations directly. Dai, Wu, and Xu (2019:412) investigated the effect of types of dictionary presentation on the retention of metaphorical collocations. They distinguish between literal and metaphorical collocations, saying that “unlike literal collocations, metaphorical collocations cannot be understood by simply adding up the meanings of their component words (Macis and Schmitt 2017b). For instance, the meaning of the literal collocation *keen blade* is straightforward, while that of the metaphorical collocation *keen understanding* is less transparent” and that “corpus findings have demonstrated that the majority of collocations, particularly metaphorical collocations, are motivated (Deignan 2005; Liu 2010)”. They explain that the metaphorical collocation “keen understanding” is motivated by the conceptual metaphor INTELLIGENCE IS A KNIFE, which is a valuable observation that motivates us to consider whether all metaphorical collocations can necessarily be traced to a certain conceptual metaphor.

Hori (2004) in a comprehensive collocational analysis of Charles Dickens’s style refers to metaphorical collocations extensively. For Hori (2004), metaphorical collocations are one of eight types of creative collocations, the other being transferred, oxymoronic, disparate, unconventional, modified idiomatic, parodied, and relexicalized collocations. Hori (2004:57) states that the “metaphor can be thought of as a matter of lexical collocation, in that the degree of metaphorical effect is dependent upon the mutual unexpectedness or unusualness of two or more co-occurring words, that is, the constituent elements of the collocation. In other words, creative metaphor is an interaction of words which are not conventionally associated”. Hori (2004:58–62) lists the following examples of metaphorical collocations: “malevolent baboon”, “apple-faced family”, “angelic rattlesnake”, “glorious spider”, “epicure-like feeling”, “lady-like amateur manner”, “fishy eyes”, “ferret eyes”, “tigerish claws”, “nomadically drunk”, “cherubically escorted”, and many more. It is difficult to see these as collocations in the traditional sense, considering that collocations are words that habitually go together, and these seem to be the author’s (Dickens’s) one-off creation. This view of metaphorical collocations certainly opens the debate to whether artistic creations can be considered collocations at all if they have not been taken up by other speakers, similarly to the idiosyncratic cre-

ation of new words that are constrained to an individual or to a literary piece.

Mueller (2010:81) investigated the effect of explicit instruction on incidental noticing of metaphorical word sequences during a reading task and, interestingly, only once refers to metaphorical collocations, in the abstract, whereas elsewhere he calls them “metaphorical word sequences”. These word sequences are provided in the appendix, for example, “biting wind”, “brave souls”, “tortured logic”, “blind faith”, “fragile truce”, “landed a promotion”, “baby steps”, “grudgingly tolerate”, “hardened warriors”, “sink into madness”, “sounded the alarm”, etc.

Onal (2020:66–71) investigated the structural and semantic peculiarities of metaphorical political collocations. In her article, she draws on the definition by Baranov and Dobrovolskiy, writing that a metaphorical collocation is “a combination of words in which the one is used in its direct meaning and the other is a metaphor changing the meaning of the first one”, exemplified with “seed of truth” and “worm of doubt”. Onal’s research is interesting as she identifies four subtypes of metaphorical collocations. The first type is where the first component is used in the metaphorical meaning and the second component is used in the literal meaning: “banana republic”, “satellite state”, “maiden speech”, “political suicide”, “election marathon”, “migrant flow”, “presidential fever”. In the second type, the entire collocation is used metaphorically: “cattle call”, “old bull”, “boiler room”, “trial balloon”. In the third type, both components are metaphors: “landslide victory”, “sleepers cell”. Finally, the fourth type is a metaphorical collocation with a metonymic component: “shadow cabinet”, “green paper”. I would argue that only some in the first category, and none in the other categories, could be considered metaphorical collocations. For example, while a “banana republic” is indeed a republic, and the base is thus used literally and the collocate “banana” figuratively, a “political suicide” is not an actual suicide.

Selmistraitis and Boikova (2020:16–20) investigated the source domains of smell-related metaphorical collocations, yet do not provide neither a definition nor an explanation of a metaphorical collocation. Nonetheless, they offer plenty of examples: “pick up a scent”, “heavy scent”, “sharp scent”, “filled with scent”, “light fragrance”, “strong aroma”, “savour the aroma”, “give off the perfume”, etc.

Zuhair Shalal and Hayif Sameer (2020:5092) investigated metaphorical collocations in the language of news and in a way define metaphorical collocations as those in which one of the two words is used metaphorically. They



exemplify this with a “sunny smile”, where “sunny” is used metaphorically, in contrast with the literal use of “sunny” in “sunny weather” (as is done in McCarthy and O’Dell 2017). The authors found the following metaphorical collocations: “poor health”, “roots of disease”, “heavy rain”, “pass a budget”, etc.

Other researchers did not directly investigate metaphorical collocations, but do in some way refer to them, so I explore their work as well in the following part.

Andreou and Galantomos (2008:10) researched the teaching of idioms in Greek as a foreign language. In their theoretical considerations, they refer to the Greek scholar Mitsis (2004) who argues that “idioms are a part of a continuum which starts with usual collocations, continues with stable or fixed collocations, metaphorical collocations are following and the continuum ends with idioms”. Since the work of Mitsis is originally in Greek, it was not accessible to me to verify the source and explore it further. Nonetheless, this continuum is not unlike that referred to by Volungevičienė (2008), an author writing in German.

Crow (1986:249) in his work on the receptive vocabulary acquisition for reading comprehension provides a footnote, saying that “idiomatic and metaphorical collocations are often problematic for the NNS reader” and explaining that “neither receptive nor productive acquisition of the individual components of these collocations will alleviate the problem”.

Cozma (2018:52) explored the translation of collocations in political speeches through a norm-centered approach. She briefly mentions that modulation is “often used for rendering the figurative meaning of metaphorical collocations by means of literal formulations” and she provides these examples: “Europe has fought back”, “a fair playing field”, “helping the wind change”, and “a window of opportunity”. The first one could hardly be considered a collocation from the perspective of the phraseological approach.

Deignan and Potter (2004:1243) conducted a corpus study of metaphors and metonyms in English and Italian. They note that “more transparent metaphorical collocations, on the other hand, are not usually seen as the territory of a dictionary, because they are the product of their components”. The authors view the following as metaphorical collocations: “open one’s heart”, “break someone’s heart”, etc. “Heart” in these combinations is not used literally and cannot thus be considered a metaphorical collocation, but a metaphorical expression.

Durjava (2012:19) in her paper on modulation as variation in target-language translation equivalence refers to metaphorical collocations in the following context: “Another relevant modulation-related assumption is that non-metaphorical collocations can result in more variation in TL than the metaphorical ones, as in non-metaphorical e.g. *careful/close check*=*natančen/temeljito pregled/kontrola/preverjanje* vs. *to hold oneself in check*=*obvladati se*”. For the author, “to hold oneself in check” is clearly a metaphorical collocation, yet I would rather consider it an idiom.

Gouteraux (2017:13) explored metaphors and collocations in native, non-native, and bilingual speech and found that a “speaker also produced varied conventional metaphorical collocations (i.e. *warm colors, torn between two feelings, intruding in a very private moment, caught off guard*)”. While “warm colors” is a metaphorical collocation, I would argue that some of the examples listed, such as “to be caught off guard”, are an idiom rather than a collocation.

Kordić (2019:107) examined the metaphoric use of denotations for colors in the language of law and in her study mentions that “what is symbolized by the expression *green book* (= a collection of guiding information in the specific field of work) in the United States, is expressed in U.K. terminology by the metaphorical collocation *white book*”. In either case, it is not necessarily an actual book, but rather a document, a “collection of information”, which makes it a metaphorical expression more than a collocation.

MacArthur (2004:59) in her work on embodied figures of speech in “Alice in Wonderland” says that “the puzzling connection between animate and inanimate entities (*butter* and *humans*) is further explored in relation to other conventional metaphorical collocations with *draw* and *time*”. This is exemplified with the collocation “to tell the time”.

McIntyre (2015:947) in an article about event modifiers in German adjectival participles seems to equate idioms and metaphorical collocations: “...in which agents are fixed parts of idioms or metaphorical collocations”. He provides the examples in German with direct translations in English, which I interpret as “kissed by the muse” (inspired), “blown away by the wind” (disappeared), “abandoned by good spirits” (insane). These, I would argue, are primarily idioms rather than collocations.

In their two articles on collocations, Mousa Obeidat, Rajeh Ayyad, and Tengku Mahadi (2020a, 2020b) refer to metaphorical collocations without

further explanation. In the first article, a metaphorical collocation is exemplified by “an easy prey”, while in the second article, the authors simply note that metaphorical collocations “constitute a challenge to any translator due to the idiomatic features they carry” (2020b:134) and in fact go on to call them “idiomatic collocations”. “Easy prey” is generally used to describe a person who is deceived easily or is easily taken advantage of; for this reason, it is a metaphorical expression more than a collocation.

Obukadeta (2019) in his doctoral thesis on collocations in a corpus of learners’ English explains that “the collocations in the data set I refer to as ‘semantically burdensome’ are essentially metaphorical collocations” and goes on to describe metaphorical collocations by referring to Phillip (2011) (which I referred to above). These “semantically burdensome” collocations are, for example, “take care”, “damage one’s image”, “shed blood”, “bright future”, “innocent blood”, “deep voice”, “bear the burden”, “shoulder responsibility”, “bring up a child”, “strong argument”, “naked truth”, and others.

Salman (2017: 448) wrote about the characteristic features of collocations and provides the following examples of metaphorical collocations: “grill the suspect”, “juicy gossip”, “hit the roof”, “wage war”, etc., without an explanation or a definition of what they are. Unlike the others mentioned here, “to hit the roof”, that is, ‘to become very angry’, is an idiom and cannot be considered a metaphorical collocation.

In her work on the descriptions of pain, metaphor, and embodied simulation, Semino (2010: 15) simply reports not finding any metaphorical collocations “with *pains, ache, hurt* and *head*” in the British National Corpus.

Walldén and Nygård Larsson (2021:10) seem to equate idioms and metaphorical collocations in their paper on negotiating figurative language from literary texts, stating, “Our choice to regard lexical metaphors such as *fallen från skyarna* and *kämpa med näbbar och klor* as abstract wordings that can be rephrased using resources of everyday language is not entirely unproblematic. ... However, adult L2 learners’ exposure to condensed metaphorical collocations of this kind in out-of-school contexts is likely to be limited”. Yet, these are clearly idiomatic expressions.

Yang, Zhou, Ding, Chen, and Shi (2009) reported on using CHMeta, a metaphor recognition system, and in their work refer to metaphorical collocations, stating that “CHMeta also failed on some of the conventional

collocational metaphors because some conventional metaphorical collocations were included in the corpus data”. They exemplify this with the collocation “save time”, calling it a “dead metaphor” that has in fact become daily language and is no longer perceived as a metaphor.

In their study of metaphors with basic taste adjectives in Polish and English, Zawisławska and Falkowska (2018:9) claim that it is difficult to explain “why only two basic tastes (sweet and bitter) have so many metaphorical collocations in Polish and English”. The examples are “sweet ignorance”, “sweet voice”, “sweet agony”, “sweet sorrow”, “bitter confusion”, “bitter reality”, “bitter wisdom”, “bitter truth”, etc.

Zhang and Zhou (2019:1237) carried out a study on the spatial metaphor of collocations with the word “high” in the corpus of Chinese EFL learners’ English. They only refer to metaphorical collocations in the abstract, stating that the paper “hopes to understand different type of metaphorical collocations of HIGH”, and, peculiarly, do not mention them at all in the rest of the paper. The collocations they list are “high salary”, “high social position”, “high pressure”, “high temperature”, etc.

From the studies above, at least five key points emerge: 1) metaphorical collocations are a perceived linguistic phenomenon, 2) most authors take metaphorical collocations to be self-explanatory (rarely is a definition or an explanation provided), 3) around half of the authors seem to view metaphorical collocations in line with Reder’s definition, which is evident from the examples used; 4) around half of the authors seem to equate idioms and metaphorical collocations as they either refer to idioms exclusively or compound both idioms and metaphorical collocations under the term “metaphorical collocations”, 5) most studies were carried out in the 2010s, signifying that it is a recently recognized linguistic phenomenon. Table 1 below provides an overview of authors, examples, and a comment on whether their examples are indeed metaphorical collocations.

*Table 1. Overview of studies referring to metaphorical collocations*

No.	Author(s)	Example	Metaphorical collocation
1	Dai, Wu, & Xu (2019)	<i>keen understanding</i>	Yes
2	Hori (2004)	<i>fishy eyes,</i> <i>malevolent baboon</i>	Inconsistent; some are and some are not metaphorical collocations
3	Mueller (2010)	<i>biting wind</i>	Yes
4	Onal (2020)	<i>banana republic,</i> <i>political suicide</i>	Inconsistent; some are and some are not metaphorical collocations
5	Selmistraitis & Boikova (2020)	<i>light fragrance</i>	Yes
6	Zuhair Shalal & Hayif Sameer (2020)	<i>poor health</i>	Yes
7	Cozma (2018)	<i>a window of opportunity,</i> <i>Europe has fought back</i>	Inconsistent; some are and some are not metaphorical collocations
8	Deignan & Potter (2004)	<i>break someone's heart</i>	No
9	Durjava (2012)	<i>to hold oneself in check</i>	No
10	Gouteraux (2017)	<i>warm colors,</i> <i>caught off guard</i>	Inconsistent; some are and some are not metaphorical collocations
11	Kordić (2019)	<i>white book</i>	No
12	MacArthur (2004)	<i>to tell the time</i>	Yes
13	McIntyre (2015)	<i>kissed by the muse</i>	No
14	Mousa Obeidat, Rajeh Ayyad, & Tengku Mahadi (2020a, 2020b)	<i>easy prey</i>	No
15	Obukadeta (2019)	<i>bright future</i>	Yes
16	Salman (2017)	<i>juicy gossip,</i> <i>hit the roof</i>	Inconsistent; some are and some are not metaphorical collocations
17	Walldeén & Nygård Larsson (2021)	<i>fallen från skyarna (fall from the sky)</i>	No
18	Yang, Zhou, Ding, Chen, & Shi (2009)	<i>save time</i>	Yes
19	Zawisławska & Falkowska (2018)	<i>sweet ignorance</i>	Yes
20	Zhang & Zhou (2019)	<i>high salary</i>	Yes

It appears that the primary issue in defining, or rather, understanding a metaphorical collocation is that a collocation itself is difficult to define, and certain authors thus clearly do not distinguish collocations from idioms. Sometimes, even when authors deal indeed with collocations as opposed to idioms, these collocations are metaphorical expressions rather than metaphorical collocations in Reder's sense as their base is not used literally and the whole multiword unit is in fact metaphorical (e.g. "a black sheep"). Hence, based on the studies above, and currently rather limited theoretical considerations, I conclude that metaphorical collocations are a specific type of collocations in which one component, the collocate, is used figuratively, thus resulting in the metaphorical meaning of the whole collocation. This distinguishes them from metaphorical expressions in which the base is not used literally (e.g., "a political suicide"). For example, in the collocation "to reach a verdict", "verdict" is the base and "reach" is the collocate. Here, "reach" is used figuratively, not literally. We can also say with great confidence that this metaphorical collocation is motivated by the conceptual metaphor THINKING IS A JOURNEY, because "to reach" is "to arrive at a destination". Further research is to show whether it is possible to trace all metaphorical collocations to corresponding conceptual metaphors or whether metaphorical collocations should only be those that can fulfill this condition. In the conclusion below, I turn to the future of researching metaphorical collocations.

## 5. Conclusion

Metaphors and collocations are widely investigated from a variety of aspects in linguistics, applied linguistics, and language teaching, and they are certainly fascinating linguistic phenomena that merit the attention of researchers. Therefore, it is somewhat surprising that metaphorical collocations, a specific type of a syntagmatic relationship at the intersection of metaphors and collocations, have not yet garnered attention of the wider academic community. Research on metaphorical collocations published in English is less than modest and comes down to a few articles. Interestingly, some researchers who explore metaphors, figurative language, collocations, vocabulary, refer to metaphorical collocations without providing any further details about what they interpret metaphorical collocations to be. From the authors' examples listed in this article, it is obvious, however, that metaphorical collocations may not mean the same

thing for everyone. For that reason, it is important that there is a clear definition and understanding of what a metaphorical collocation is in the English language.

There are currently only several publications that provide a brief theoretical exploration of metaphorical collocations, and it seems that many questions are still to be answered. For example, can all metaphorical collocations be traced to a motivating conceptual metaphor? If not, can such a collocation be considered a metaphorical collocation? Where is the line to be drawn between metaphorical collocations and metaphorical expressions and idioms? The project *Metaphorical Collocations – Syntagmatic Word Combinations between Semantics and Pragmatics* has been initiated to explore these and other questions on the basis of collocations in Croatian, German, English, and Italian. Until these answers are provided through empirical research, I suggest that authors who study or refer to metaphorical collocations explain or define the notion in line with the current understanding, which is that a metaphorical collocation is a type of a collocation in which the collocate is used figuratively and the base literally, thus imbuing the collocation with metaphorical meaning and distinguishing it from a metaphorical expression in which none of the components is used literally.

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## SAŽETAK

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### ŠTO JE METAFORIČKA KOLOKACIJA?

U istraživanjima kolokacija objavljenima na engleskome jeziku susreće se, iako rijetko, uporaba pojma „metaforičke kolokacije“. Zanimljivo je primijetiti da se rijetko ako uopće metaforičke kolokacije u tim radovima definiraju, što upućuje na to da znanstvenici pojam smatraju značenjski transparentnim odnosno samoobjašnjivim. No, s obzirom na to da su metaforičke kolokacije zanimljivo polje istraživanja koje tek treba privući pažnju šire akademske zajednice, cilj je ovoga rada analizirati trenutno poimanje metaforičke kolokacije pregledom teorijskih radova i istraživanja na engleskome jeziku kao jeziku znanosti. Stoga su pregledane publikacije na engleskome, ali i njemačkome, jeziku kako bi se pronašle definicije metaforičke kolokacije te su pregledana istraživanja na engleskome jeziku koja se bave takvim kolokacijama ili koja ih spominju. U pogledu teorijskih razmatranja, pronađeno je da metaforička kolokacija doista jest definirana, no kad su u pitanju istraživanja, u njima se autori rijetko referiraju na definiciju. Predlaže se da se radi transparentnosti u istraživanju metaforičkih kolokacija na engleskome jeziku znanstvenici referiraju na definiciju metaforičke kolokacije kako bi se povećalo razumijevanje toga jezičnog fenomena u akademskoj zajednici i šire. To je posebice važno jer se metaforičke kolokacije nalaze na razmeđu dviju složenih jezičnih pojava: metafora i kolokacija.

**Ključne riječi:** *metaforička kolokacija; konceptualna metafora; kolokacije*