



SEMANTIC FEATURES OF COLLOCATIONS IN THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

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ANNOTATION

This study explores the semantic features of collocations in the English language, focusing on how words combine to create meaning beyond their individual definitions. Collocations are conventional word combinations that frequently occur together, such as *make a decision* or *strong tea*, and they play a crucial role in achieving fluency and naturalness in communication. The research examines the semantic relationships between collocational components, including restrictions, compatibility, and contextual meaning. Special attention is given to the distinction between free combinations and fixed expressions, as well as the role of collocations in language acquisition and teaching. The findings highlight that understanding collocational semantics enhances learners' communicative competence and contributes to more accurate and idiomatic language use.

ANNOTATSIYA

Ushbu tadqiqot ingliz tilidagi kollokatsiyalarning semantik xususiyatlarini o'rganishga bag'ishlangan bo'lib, so'zlarning birikishi natijasida ularning alohida ma'nolaridan tashqari yangi ma'no hosil qilish jarayoni tahlil qilinadi. Kollokatsiyalar — bu *make a decision*, *strong tea* kabi tez-tez birga qo'llaniladigan so'z birikmalari bo'lib, ular nutqning tabiiyligi va ravonligini ta'minlashda muhim ahamiyatga ega. Tadqiqotda kollokatsiya komponentlari o'rtasidagi semantik munosabatlar, ya'ni moslik, cheklanish va kontekstual ma'no masalalari ko'rib



chiqiladi. Shuningdek, erkin birikmalar va turg'un iboralar o'rtasidagi farqlar ham yoritiladi. Natijalar shuni ko'rsatadiki, kollokatsiyalar semantikasini anglash til o'rganuvchilarning kommunikativ kompetensiyasini oshiradi va nutqning tabiiy hamda to'g'ri bo'lishiga yordam beradi.

Key words: Collocation, Semantic features, lexical compatibility, word combinations, contextual meaning, idiomatic expressions, lexical semantics, language acquisition, communicative competence.

Introduction. In modern linguistics, the study of meaning occupies a central position, particularly within the field of lexical semantics. One of the key aspects of this field is the analysis of collocations—habitual and recurrent combinations of words that co-occur more frequently than would be expected by chance. Collocations such as *make a mistake*, *heavy rain*, and *strong argument* illustrate how meaning in language is not constructed solely at the level of individual words, but rather through their interaction in context.

The semantic features of collocations reveal important patterns of lexical compatibility and restriction. Not all words can be freely combined; instead, language users tend to follow conventionalized patterns that are shaped by usage, cultural norms, and cognitive associations. These patterns contribute significantly to the naturalness and fluency of speech, distinguishing native-like expression from grammatically correct but unnatural constructions.

Furthermore, the study of collocations is essential in understanding the relationship between free word combinations and fixed or semi-fixed expressions. While some collocations allow variation, others are highly restricted and approach idiomaticity. This gradience reflects the complexity of semantic relations in language and highlights the importance of context in interpreting meaning.

From a practical perspective, collocations play a crucial role in language acquisition and teaching. For learners of English as a foreign language, mastering collocational usage is often more challenging than learning individual vocabulary



items. A lack of collocational competence can lead to errors that, although grammatically acceptable, sound unnatural to native speakers.

Therefore, this study aims to investigate the semantic features of collocations in the English language, focusing on their structure, meaning, and functional role in communication. By analyzing collocational patterns and their semantic properties, the research seeks to contribute to a deeper understanding of lexical organization and to provide insights that are valuable for both linguistic theory and language pedagogy.

The semantic analysis of collocations in the English language requires an understanding of how lexical items interact within specific linguistic environments. Collocations are not random combinations; rather, they are governed by semantic compatibility, which determines why certain words naturally co-occur while others do not. For instance, English speakers say *strong tea* but not *powerful tea*, even though *strong* and *powerful* are close in meaning. This demonstrates that collocational choice is influenced not only by dictionary definitions but also by conventional usage.

One of the key semantic features of collocations is **lexical restriction**. This refers to the limited set of words that can combine with a particular lexical item. For example, the verb *commit* is typically used with nouns such as *crime*, *suicide*, or *offense*, but not with unrelated nouns. These restrictions are often arbitrary and must be learned through exposure rather than through grammatical rules alone. Another important aspect is **semantic transparency**. Some collocations are fully transparent, meaning their overall meaning can be easily inferred from their components (e.g., *open the door*). Others are semi-transparent or opaque, approaching idiomatic expressions (e.g., *break the ice*). This gradation highlights the continuum between free combinations and fixed expressions in language.

Collocations also demonstrate **contextual dependency**. The meaning and appropriateness of a collocation often depend on the context in which it is used. For



example, the adjective *heavy* can collocate with *rain*, *traffic*, or *smoker*, but its meaning slightly shifts in each case. This shows that collocations are closely tied to semantic fields and real-world knowledge. From a functional perspective, collocations contribute significantly to **fluency and naturalness** in communication. Native speakers rely heavily on prefabricated chunks of language, which reduces cognitive effort during speech production. In contrast, language learners who lack collocational competence may produce grammatically correct but unnatural expressions, such as *do a mistake* instead of *make a mistake*.

Furthermore, collocations play a crucial role in **language teaching and learning**. Modern approaches to vocabulary acquisition emphasize not only individual words but also their typical combinations. Teaching collocations helps learners develop a more native-like command of the language and improves both receptive and productive skills.

Another significant semantic aspect of collocations is their classification based on structural and functional criteria. Linguists such as J.R. Firth and later corpus linguists emphasize that collocations can be categorized into **grammatical** and **lexical collocations**. Grammatical collocations involve a dominant word combined with a grammatical element (e.g., *afraid of*, *interested in*), whereas lexical collocations consist of content words such as noun + verb (*make a decision*), adjective + noun (*strong coffee*), or adverb + adjective (*deeply concerned*). This classification helps to systematize collocational patterns and reveals how meaning is distributed across different linguistic levels.

In addition, the role of **corpus linguistics** has significantly advanced the study of collocations. Large electronic corpora, such as the British National Corpus (BNC) and the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA), allow researchers to analyze real language usage and identify statistically significant word combinations. Through frequency analysis and concordance tools, it becomes possible to distinguish true collocations from random co-occurrences. This empirical approach



has strengthened the semantic analysis of collocations and provided reliable data for language teaching.

Another important concept is **collocational range**, which refers to the variety of words that can co-occur with a given lexical item. Some words have a wide collocational range (e.g., *make*), while others are more restricted (e.g., *utter*, as in *utter nonsense*). The range of collocation is closely related to the semantic specificity of a word: the more specific the meaning, the narrower its collocational possibilities.

Moreover, collocations are closely connected with **register and stylistic variation**. Certain collocations are typical of formal language (e.g., *conduct research*), while others are more common in informal speech (e.g., *do research*). This indicates that collocational choice is influenced not only by semantics but also by sociolinguistic factors such as context, audience, and communicative purpose.

Conclusion. It is also worth noting that collocations are language-specific and often present difficulties in translation. Direct translation of collocations from one language to another may result in unnatural expressions. For example, the Uzbek phrase *kuchli yomg'ir* corresponds to *heavy rain* in English, not *strong rain*. This highlights the importance of learning collocations as fixed or semi-fixed units rather than translating word-for-word.

In sum, the semantic features of collocations—including lexical restriction, semantic transparency, and contextual dependency—demonstrate that vocabulary knowledge extends beyond isolated words. Understanding these features is essential for both theoretical linguistics and practical language use.

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