

Collocation and Idioms: Similarities and Differences Assist. Teacher Iman Farhan Mohammed

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التلازم اللفظي والتعابير: التشابه والاختلاف

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Abstract

This paper focuses on two facts that are collocations and idioms. Its purpose is to survey different linguistic views towards these phenomena and their categorizations. On one hand, the term collocation indicates groups of words that frequently seem in the same context. On the other hand, the term idiom merely means a unit which operates as a single unit and whose sense cannot be worked out from its separate parts. The aim of this paper is an attempt to provide an adequate background knowledge for those who are interested in these semantic phenomena.

المستخلص

يركز هذا البحث على حقيقتين هما التلازم اللفظي والتعابير. والغرض منه هو دراسة وجهات النظر اللغوية المختلفة تجاه هذه الظواهر وتصنيفاتها. من ناحية، يشير مصطلح التلازم اللفظي إلى مجموعات من الكلمات التي تظهر بشكل متكرر في نفس السياق. أما المصطلح فيقصد به مجرد وحدة تعمل كوحدة واحدة ولا يمكن استنتاج معناها من أجزائها المنفصلة. الهدف من هذه الدراسة هو محاولة لتوفير معرفة خلفية كافية لأولئك الذين يهتمون بهذه الظواهر الدلالية.

كلمات مفتاحية: التلازم اللفظي ، التشابه ، الاختلاف

Section One

1.1 Collocation: Overview

Broadly speaking, Bussmann (1996: 200) states that Firth is the first scholar who presents the notion of collocation in his semantic theory. So, collocations are semantically related (not grammatically). In contrast, Matthews (2003: 530) argues that collocation is concerned with syntactic field in a relation between individual lexical elements; e.g., for instance, *computer* collocates with *hate* in *My computer hates me*. Another example, *blond* collocates with *hair* in *blond hair* or *their hair is blond*.

In this regard, Meyer (2009: 223) describes collocation as words that usually come together. For instance, the statement "*I strongly agree*" has two words, *strongly* and *agree*, that usually come in this context. Other words might surely follow *strongly*, but are much less probably to do so than *agree* and other words, such as "*disagree* or *dislike*".

Cruse (2006:27), on his turn, illustrates that collocation is a succession of words that is structural (as opposed to a prototypical idiom, for instance), but nevertheless makes a form in some way. This takes place because they always come together, but occasionally the succession also has a semantic unity. For instance, one or more of the component words can have a certain meaning which solely

seems in that group, or in a specific series of concerned groups. The examples below have collocations in this meaning:

- *a high wind*
- *high seas*
- *high office*
- *have a high opinion of.*

In each instance, the word *high* conveys a distinguishable particular sense, and this sense is distinguishable from the default sense exist in, for example, *a high wall*. Consequently, Saeed (2016:438) views that collocation has two explanations. The first one describes expressions coming together syntactically and semantically in an acceptable way. The second explanation can be summarized as the semantic influences on terms of repeatedly coming together. For instances, "*whisper softly* rather than *whisper quietly*, or *high mountains* rather than *tall mountain*".

In this regard, Müller (2008:4) mentions that collocation usually indicates the expression of words which are often used, like, "*bitterly cold, rich imagination or closed friends*". If one hears the first term, the following one can anticipated, or at least he/she has an impression what it could be. He (ibid) adds that "in context with nouns and verbs, collocation means the syntactic relationship between the verb and the noun phrase such as to make a decision or to take a photo".

Finch (2003: 137), on this ground, states the following worth lines:

If you look up the adjective *clear* in a good dictionary of contemporary English you will probably find it will list at least ten different meanings, depending on the linguistic context in which it is used, from *clear conscience* and *clear sky* to *clear case* – as in a *clear case of theft*. In each instance the meaning of *clear* is slightly different; *clear conscience* means ‘without guilt’, whereas *clear* in *clear case* means ‘unmistakable’. At the same time, however, we should find it hard to say that in each instance there was a separate conceptual sense. We can see enough commonality of meaning to assume an underlying sense. All the examples I have given have the meaning ‘free from’, whether free from complications (*a clear case*) free from guilt (*a clear conscience*) or free from clouds (*a clear sky*). The differences between them come from the words *clear* is put with, or, in other words, collocates with. ‘Collocate’ is a verb meaning ‘to go with’, and one of the ways by which we know the meaning of a word is

Moreover, Gledhill (2000:9) mentions that collocation has conceptual relationship into words ignoring frequency of existence or probability, altering the focus from the textual co-occurrence of a term to its possibility for semantic combinability.

Finally, it can be distinguished between free and bound collocation. Fischer (1998:44) comments that the components of the free collocation can be free joined with words. Thus, the components of collocation can be literally (e.g., fill the sink). As for bound collocation, Cruse (1986: 41) mentions that collocations, such as, *foot the bill and curry favour*, whose elements do not similar to be broken, are established as bound collocations.

1.2 Types of Collocation

Various classifications of collocations are approachable through investigations of different criteria which form basis for the classifications. Nevertheless, Kurosaki (2012:77)'s divisions will be adopted in this study. It can be classified into two kinds: collocation categories and collocation types. Collocation categories indicate grammatical constituent of collocations, like, "verb + noun" whereas collocation types means lexical collocations, (ibid).

On this occasion, Binza and Bosch (2012: 184) claim that grammatical collocation is a phrase involving a dominant word (a noun, an adjective, a verb) and a preposition or grammatical structure, such as, an infinitive or a clause while lexical collocations usually do not have a prepositions, infinitives, or clauses. In this respect, Lu (2017: 66) mentions that grammatical collocations are distinguishable from lexical collocations in two aspects. Firstly, elements of grammatical collocation involve close words such as, preposition and adverb. Secondly, all grammatical collocations are stable collocations, like, *bring up* and *depend on*, while the whole lexical collocations are restricted collocations such as, *close*, *good friend*, *old friend*, etc.

In conclusion, Wilkes (1993:172) shows that grammatical collocations are alike to lexical collocations in that they also identical to arbitrary and recurrent word co-occurrences. Concerning structure, grammatical collocations are much easier because most of the grammatical collocations solely have one lexical word that has sense conveying element and the function word which is called "the collocator".

1.3 Characteristics of Collocations

Seretan (2011: 15) states some essential characteristics that are concerned with the concept of collocations by which one can differentiate them from other terms. These features can be illustrated as follows:

1. Collocations are prefabricated: collocation is derived from studies on mother tongue explicating that children keep not only words in isolation, but also groups of words.
2. Collocations are arbitrary which indicates that this characteristic may not point out only to the selection of a special word in conjunction with another so as to explain a given sense, but also to its grammatical and semantic features.
3. Collocations are not expected since the establishment of a collocation as a prefabricated unit does not rely on observe linguistic causes, it is not possible to expect that collocation. Firstly, the close of a word for a specific collocate is not expected. Secondly, the morpho-syntactic characteristics of collocation cannot be expected on the ground of the features of the taking place words.
4. Collocations are recurrent which means that it is the repeated usage of collocations that their recurrence enables their recognition and learning relied on practice.
5. Collocations have two or more words: although the practical work is dealt with collocations involved two lexical items, in theory there is no length determination for collocations, (ibid).

1.4 Collocation Range and Restrictions

As a matter of fact, Richard and Schmidt (2010:95) show that collocation indicates that "the restrictions on how words can be used together, for example which prepositions are used with particular verbs, or which verbs and nouns are used together". In English, the verb *perform* can be used with *operation*, but not with *discussion*, for examples:

-*The doctor performed the operation.*

* *The committee performed a discussion.* Instead we say:

-*The committee held/had a discussion.*

perform can be used with (collocates with) *operation*, and *hold* and *have* collocate with *discussion*.

Lyons (1995: 62), in his turn, mentions that the collocational range of a term is the set of contexts in which it can happens (its collocations). It might be thought that the collocational range of a term is completely specified by its sense. It can be noticed that most contexts in which *large* cannot be interchanged for *big* without flouting the collocational restrictions of the one or the other. For example, *large* is not substituted with *big* in:

1. You are making *a big* mistake.

The sentence

2. You are making *a large* mistake

Nevertheless, it is collocationally not agreeable. So, *big* appears to have the alike sense in (2) as it does in phrase such as *a big house*, for which one could interchange *a large house*.

Additionally, Cowie (2009:50) explicates that with collocations, the range of selection is more firmly determined. Though many collocations can be easily interpreted since the literal sense of one word in each case, a characteristic is specified selection at one or both aspects. For instances, *light rain*, *heavy rain* and *light exercise*, **heavy exercise*. The presence of both *light* and *heavy* in collocation with *rain* is to be predicted.

Palmer (1976: 97), on the other hand, elaborates that there are three types of collocational restrictions can be differentiated that are as follows:

-Some collocations are depended fully on the sense of the unit as in the difference *green cow*.

-Some are relied on range-a word that may be used with a complete group of words that have some semantic characteristics in common.

-some determinations are collocational in the strictest meaning, including neither sense nor range, like, *addled* with *eggs* and *brains*.

Consequently, Nesselhauf (2005:24) states that there are five levels of restrictedness that can be differentiated via two norms, called the number of components that are determined in their commutability and the degree of the restriction. These levels can be shown as follows:

1. Independence of interchange in the noun; some restriction on the selection of verb.
2. Some interchange in both units. A small range of nouns is used with the verb in that meaning. So, there are a small number of synonymous verbs, such as, "introduce/table/bring forward a bill/an amendment".
3. Some interchange in the verb; a full restriction on the selection of the noun. No other noun is used with the verb in that meaning, there are a small number of synonymous verbs, like, "pay/take heed".
4. Full restriction on the selection of the verb; some interchange of the noun. A small range of nouns is used with the verb in that sense, so, there are no synonymous verbs, such as, "give the appearance/impression".
5. Full restriction on the selection of both items. No other noun is used with the verb in the given meaning. So, there are no synonymous verbs, like, "curry favour".

According to Lyons (1995: 125), the following lines are worth quoting:

it is important to note that certain lexemes are so highly restricted with respect to collocational acceptability that it is impossible to predict their combinatorial relations on the basis of an independent characterization of their sense. Classical examples from English are the adjectives rancid and addled. It is clearly an important part of Knowing their sense to know that rancid combines or collocates, with butter and addled with egg. The view taken here is that the sense of any lexeme, whether it is highly restricted with respect to collocational acceptability or not, includes both *its* combinatorial and substitutional relations.

Section Two

2.1 The concept of Idiom

Binza and Bosch (2012: 184) state that term idiom has to take into consideration two features viz. its stable character and its unexpected of sense. These stable phrasal systems are typical or peculiar of

the language being defined. Concerning the first feature, idioms contain words that are usually used together. Their sense is unexpected since it cannot be collected logically from its constituent parts. In this regard, Binkert (2004: 71) views that idiom a highly specialized unit whose sense typically cannot be predicted from the sense of the words out of which it is made. Expressions like, *shoot the breeze*, *be up tight*, and *so long* are instances of idioms. In most instances, idioms are stable in usage and cannot be substituted or modified.

According to Philip (2011: 15), the concept idiom is a set of two or more orthographic words whose sense cannot be deduced from the sense of the component parts. That is., there is a discrepancy between what the phrase as a full indicates and what its components would indicate if read compositionally. This, however, is only one of the characteristics of idiomaticity. Regarding an idiom to show the sense that it does, it must also be established.

Brinton (2000: 100), on the other hand, illustrates that an idiom is a successive of words which operates as one unit; it is grammatically stable and semantically conventionalized. He (ibid.) exemplifies the following instances:

spill the beans	saw logs	shoot the breeze
keep tabs on	add fuel to the fire	lose one's cool
steal the show	bite the dust	rock the boat
take stock of	flog a dead horse	hold your horses

He (ibid.) adds that the meaning of the idiom are usually not expected from the sense of the isolated words; this is what linguists name "non-compositionality". For instance, one cannot count the sense of "being sick" or "feeling ill" from the senses of "*under* and *weather*".

In this connection, Richard and Schmidt (2010:270) describe idiom as a unit which operates as one unit and whose sense cannot be worked out from its separate constituents. For instance, "*she washed her hands of the matter*" indicates that she rejected to have anything more to do with the matter. They (ibid.) state that idiomatic is the degree to which speech is not merely grammatical but also native-like in use.

2.2 Types of Idioms

Cacciari and Tabossi (1993: 17) indicate that idioms can be classified into three types which are illustrated below:

1. **Opaque idiom:** this idiom type, the relations between idioms' components and the idiom sense are not clear, but the senses of isolated words however can determine both comprehension and use. For the idiom *kick the bucket*, for example, the semantic of the verb *to kick* specify both comprehension and discourse creativity.
2. **Transparent idioms:** in these idioms, there are one to one semantic relations between the idiom words and elements of the idiom's sense, usually because of metaphorical identical between an idiom's words and elements of the idiom's sense. For the idiom *break the ice*, for instancee, the word *break* is similar to the idiomatic meaning of altering a mood.
3. **Quasi- Metaphorical idioms:** in these idioms, the literal referent of an idiom is itself an example of the idiomatic sense; for instance, "*giving up the ship*" is altogether an ideal or prototypical exemplar of the act of giving up and a phrase that can indicate to any example of full surrenders, (ibid).

2.3 Characteristics of Idiom

According to Brinton and Akimoto (1999:113), the major feature of an idiom is the non-compositional nature of its sense. An idiom is usually defined as a phrase whose sense is not a conclusion of the sense of its elements. Another feature is its grammatical stability; for example, in

kick the bucket, the noun cannot be expected, nor substituted by adjectival phrases, the word-order cannot be altered and the verb can take different inflected forms, but cannot be passivised.

As a matter of fact, Yong and Peng (2007:176) affirm that idioms have the following features that are:

1. An idiom is a stable conventionalized phrase or sentence which is easy in form but brief in sense.
2. An idiom is a phrase which indicates something distinguishable from the senses of the isolated words from which it is constituted.
3. An idiom is a number of words which show something distinguishable from the isolated words of the idiom when they come alone.
4. An idiom is a set of words which, when they are used together in a certain combination, has a distinguishable sense from the one they would have if one takes the sense of all the isolated words in the combination.
5. An idiom is a unit which operates as a one unit whose sense cannot be worked out from its separate constituents.
6. An idiom is a term used to point out a successive of words which is semantically and often grammatically determined, so that they work as a one unit.

Bussmann (1996: 533), on the other hand, maintains that the term idiom is a group, multi-elemental combination of words, or lexical unit with the following features:

(a) The whole sense cannot be deduced from the sense of the isolated elements, e.g. *to have a crush on someone* ('to be in love with someone');

(b) The interchange of one element does not bring about a systematic alter of sense.

(c) A literal reading caused by a homophonic non-idiomatic variant, to which conditions (a) and (b) no longer adopts (metaphor).

He (ibid.) says that frequently there is a historical combination between the literal reading and the idiomatic reading (idiomatization). In such cases, the treatment of the idiom cannot be analyzed lexical entity.

Brinton and Akimoto (1999: 7) mention that:

Of the various definitions of idiom, three criteria, both semantic and syntactic, emerge as predominant. The first is semantic opacity, or what has come to be known as non-compositionality, the fact that the meaning of an idiom cannot be deduced from a sum of the meanings of its parts; in this sense, the meaning of an idiom is not motivated. Thus, the meaning of *die* cannot be produced from the sum of *kick + the + bucket*. No constituent of an idiom carries independent meaning. The second criterion relates to the apparent morphological and transformational deficiencies of idioms, in not permitting the syntactic variability displayed in other, freer sequences of words; operations such passive (**The bucket was kicked by Sam*), internal modification (**Hold your restless horses*), and topicalization (**The bucket Sam kicked*) cannot occur with the idiomatic meaning being retained. The third criterion is the lack of substitutability in idioms, their lexical integrity; synonymous lexical items cannot be substituted in an idiom, as in *have a crush on*, but not **have a smash on*, nor can elements be reversed or deleted. Idioms are, therefore, syntagmatically and paradigmatically fixed.

2.4 Differences and Similarities

From lexicographic point of view, the main semantic distinction between collocations and idioms is that idioms are single lexical items whereas collocations are groups of semantic items. Furthermore, a collocation differs from an idiom by the fact that it is semantically transparent. As already said, a collocation is the relationship between two words or groups of words that often go together and form a common expression. Collocations illustrate the typical combinations in which the

lemma occurs as well as its typical use by mother tongue speakers and, enable the mother tongue speaker to the language's idiomatic phrase, (Binza and Bosch, 2012: 184).

Wouden (1997: 38) presents that collocations have proved to be the most difficult; therefore, the critical problem for the lexicographer has been the treatment of collocations. It has been far more difficult to identify them than idioms or even compounds; as a result, their inclusion in dictionaries has been erratic. He (ibid:11) argues that a sharp borderline between idioms and collocations is that the semantic aspects of idioms are always idiomatic, whereas the semantic aspects of collocations are only subject to idiomaticity with respect to generation.

On this ground, Ding (2018: 29) indicates that the distinction between collocations and idioms is that an idiom resembles rather a root; it is a bloc or an assemblage of roots, non-productive in terms of the productivity of roots within it. It is a particular cumulate association, as a rule inoperable in the sense that its parts unproductive in relation to the whole in terms of the normal operational processes, that of substitution above all. The collocation *tear up* is not an idiom because there is no such fixity of association between *tear* and *up*. *Lope, amble, shamble, race, etc.*, may be substituted for *tear* and *down, across, onto, into, along, etc.* for *up*. An idiom is an entity whose meaning cannot be deduced from its parts. For example, *tear down* in *he put down the book* is a collocation while *he put down the rebellion* constitutes an idiom.

As far as similarities, Brinton and Akimoto (1999: 7) mention that like idioms, collocations are groups of lexical items which repeatedly or typically co-occur, but unlike idioms, their meanings can usually be deduced from the meanings of their parts. In diachronic terms, the distinction between idiom and collocation is often difficult to draw.

On the other hand, Ding (2018: 29) adds that it is hard to make a clear difference between them. So, the similarities can be observed as follows:

-First, idioms can occur as part of collocations (e.g., [*the nose in your face*] in *as plain as [the nose in your face]*) or join to make a collocation.

-Second, both idioms and collocations often coincide to alike one unit which may substitute them either optionally or obligatorily in "*certain (stylistic) contexts: idioms, make up=compose, make it up=(be) reconcile(d), make up to=flatter; collocations, put down (the book)=deposit, come down=descend*".

-Third, collocations and idioms are alike to the extent that both are generally concerned with syntactical generalizations and that both cut across grammatical classes, e.g., "verb + object complement: *play tricks* (collocation), *kick the bucket* (idiom), verb + adverbial complement, *put on* (the coat) (collocation), *put off* (the meeting) (idiom)".

-Fourth, the available functional uses to which language is stated day by day (functional idioms such as, *do you think you could...., could you possibly....*) can be predicted to coincide to the extensive aspect of idioms and collocations, (ibid).

Conclusion

The following points are concluded:

1. As far as collocations are concerned, it can be noticed the following:
 - Collocation refers to a group of two or more words that usually go together.
 - Collocation restrictions show how words can be used together, for instance, which prepositions are used with certain verbs, or which verbs and nouns are used together. For instance, in English the verb *perform* is used with *operation*.
 - Collocational range of an expression is the set of contexts in which it can occurs (its collocations) and it is wholly determined by its meaning, such as, *light rain, heavy rain*.
 - They can be classified into two basic types which are: lexical and grammatical collocations.

- They manifest many characteristic features that shape its realization in the wide spectrum of language which are prefabricated, arbitrary, recurrent, unpredictable and two or more than two words collocations.
- 2. Concerning idioms, the following points are observed:
 - The idiom is a unit which functions as one unit and whose sense cannot be worked out from its separate elements. For example, *kick the bucket*.
 - As for classification, idioms have three kinds that are opaque, transparency, and quasi-metaphorical idioms.
 - Features of idioms are:
 - a. The complete meaning cannot be derived from the meaning of the - individual elements, e.g. *to have a crush on someone* ('to be in love with someone');
 - b. The substitution of single elements does not bring about a systematic change of meaning (which is not true of non-idiomatic syntagms), e.g. **to have a smash on someone*;
 - c. A literal reading results in a homophonic non-idiomatic variant, to which conditions (a) and (b) no longer applies (metaphor).
- 3. With reference to distinctions and similarities, like idioms, collocations are groups of lexical items which repeatedly or typically co-occur, but unlike idioms, their meanings can usually be deduced from the meanings of their elements. In sum, the distinction between idiom and collocation is often hard to draw.

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