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Structural and Functional Properties of Collocations in English

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Abstract: This article focuses on expressions with a verb and its nominal object in order to answer the question of what makes for an appropriate theoretical framework for ingrained collocations. The main argument is that a functional and cognitive approach is more descriptively adequate and has more room for explanation than a traditional approach that views phraseological expressions as random because they are conventional and are further characterized as deviating from an assumed norm of full compositionality.

Key words: collocation, compositionality, concept, category, structure.

Introduction.

The syntagmatic attraction between two (or more) lexical objects, such as morphemes, words, phrases, or utterances, is referred to as collocation. Collocation investigations have, however, typically been carried out at the word level. The idea behind collocation is that every word in a language favours some lexical contexts over others, which means that every given word tends to co-occur with certain words more frequently than it does with others. For example, the word grass is often used together with green, and the lexeme "letter" is often used together with the lexemes "write" and "read". The strength of this kind of attraction between words can be measured through the statistical analysis of corpus data. These statistical analyses aim to identify word pairings with much higher co-occurrences than would be predicted by chance, given the total frequencies of the terms in the data. As a result, we are able to identify the most important collocates of a given word across the range of languages represented by the data.

Main part.

In the linguistic literature, the term "collocation" has been used with a few slightly different definitions. The majority of that diversity relates to collocations' semantic status. Several academics adopt a strictly statistical definition of collocation in the Firthian tradition. This point of view claims that collocations—regardless of their intended meaning—are statistically significant co-occurrences of two or more words. A collocation is a group of words or terms that co-occur more frequently than would be expected by chance in the field of corpus linguistics; they create a syntactic and semantic unit whose meaning cannot be inferred through composition. This means that its meaning cannot be inferred from the words that make up the collocation. Non-compositionality is still present, along with non-substitutibility and non-modifiability. The last characteristic means that a collocation cannot be altered or undergo syntactic changes. For instance, neither John's kicking of the green bucket nor the kicking of the bucket has anything to do with death.

Additionally, Meaning and Schutze list the following standards that characterize linguistic analyses of collocations:

Non-compositionality. The meaning of a collocation is not simply the sum of the meanings of its constituent elements. There is either a connotation or additional element of meaning that cannot be inferred from the parts, or the meaning is entirely different from the free combination. White wine, white hair, and white woman are just a few examples of collocations that all refer to slightly distinct colors.

Non-substitutability. Close synonyms cannot be used in place of a collocation's constituent parts. For instance, even if yellow is a fair description of the color of white wine, we cannot say it in place of white wine.

Lack of flexibility. Many collocations cannot be freely altered by the addition of new lexical items or by grammatical changes. This is especially true for idioms and other frozen statements. For instance, although nouns like frog can typically be changed by adjectives like ugly, we cannot modify frog in order to obtain a frog in one's throat into to get an ugly frog in one's throat. Similar to this, switching from singular to plural can ruin a phrase, as in "people as poor as church mice".

Compositionality ought to be explained by a theory of collocations as well. The phrase "grammatical construction" "is applied to this full ensemble: the component structures, their form of integration, and the resulting composite structure," according to Langacker's cognitive grammar. Conceptually, component structures are dynamic "schematic networks" in which various meanings are nodes connected by "categorizing relationships" like "specialization" or "extension". According to "valence relations," which take into account the component structures' combinatorial potential, their mode of integration is specified. They consist of correspondences, relationships between conceptual autonomy and reliance, and (often) overlap between shared substructures. Langacker suggests a synthesis between the prototype model, which concentrates on representative examples of a category, and the schematic network, which serves as an abstraction incorporating all category members and further elaborates the schema in many ways. Examples of categories include component structures and composite structures. It's crucial for a theory of collocations that the composite structure's meaning isn't constructed additively from its component parts: "It is more appropriate to say that the component structures motivate aspects of the composite structure, and that the degree of motivation is variable (though typically quite substantial)". Howarth's basic requirement—that the phraseological spectrum only contain phrases constrained by semantic and collocational features—is more clearly defined in terms of substitutability, the paradigmatic aspect of compositionality. The "set" of other nouns with which it co-occurs in the same sense determines whether the dependent element of a combination, which is often an adjective or verb coupled with a noun, is to be considered collocationally restricted.

In addition to "both constituents are utilized in a primary literal sense," free collocations are described as "very apparent, simply derivable from the juxtaposition of the elements in a recognizable syntactic pattern".. This description of spontaneous collocations runs counter to the idea in cognitive linguistics that component structures are not the "building bricks" from which the composite structures are put together, but rather, in the words of Langacker, "motivate various elements of it".

Phraseologists look for collocations based on restricted compositionality, taking into account both the syntagmatic and paradigmatic dimensions. It is necessary that this element cannot be explained in terms of general selection limits; it is not sufficient that "some aspect of their meaning be indicated when their usual word accompaniment is shown." Due to this, the paradigmatic aspect of collocation—the lexical set—as well as the phenomena of "substitutability" are now in the spotlight. The fact that sets cannot be freely extended to include synonyms is seen as evidence of restricted collocability because the paradigmatic set is determined by the syntagmatic relationship of collocation. In order to form acceptable combinations with nouns like importance, form, role, and mantle, it is often necessary to distinguish between verbal expressions like assume, acquire, take on, and adopt, which are thought of as close synonyms. This line of reasoning is frequently supported by examples of "overlapping lexical sets," which demonstrate how collocational restrictions make this necessary.

The ensuing overlaps not only highlight the difficulties faced by non-native speakers, but they also serve to support Palmer's claim that collocations are "strange comings-together of words," and that in a natural situation, all (near) synonyms would be able to stand in for one another. The phraseological status of combinations like adopt a role/a form shouldn't, in theory, depend on whether "adopt importance" or "adopt a mantle" are recognized combinations because the components of a set are rarely, if ever, totally synonymous. This is extrinsic evidence, but intrinsic evidence must be based on an examination of the elements' true nature and integration process. According to Howarth, some "blockages" appear to be random, while other "blockages" are discovered to be semantically motivated by "slight, albeit considerable disparities of meanings between the nouns and consequently between verbs." The ability to trace the origins of expressions in a way that enables us to understand why lexical categories overlap in some circumstances and do not in others is likely what distinguishes that which appears motivated from that which appears arbitrary. For instance, the fact that adopt (from the Latin ad + optare: "to pick") has evolved to be associated with roles as well as shape rather than being completely random.

As was mentioned in the discussion of "technical" collocations above, blockages of lexical sets are used to support the argument for collocational status in phraseology, whereas relatively free substitutability is thought to weaken it. According to Cowie, "limited collocations are perceived as being more like 'open collocations' or free combinations in expressions with more lexical diversity like cardinal error/sin/virtue/grace." Since Amosova's "phraseme" requires that the meaning of a collocate be specified by a single base-word, such as in "jog someone's memory," it must be regarded as the prototypical example of a constrained collocation.

Though they are not as explicitly confined, phraseologists nowadays are casting a wider net than Amosova and even Vinogradov to include all the terms that are thought to be an issue for learners. Cowie offers a set of standards for defining the phraseoloid, a category of combinations that Amosova did not consider to be phraseological because they can only be contextually determined by a small number of nouns. Cowie gives the three-part definition of pay one's respects, offer a compliment, and court someone as an example.

Conclusion.

Even though they tried to account for the gradedness they discovered by loosening the criteria and splitting the category of restricted collocations, phraseologists have found it challenging to categorize combinations in terms of criterial qualities. But, as Langacker has shown, if the defining criteria in a criterial attribute model are loosened, there is no predetermined ending point, and the model is no longer useful.

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