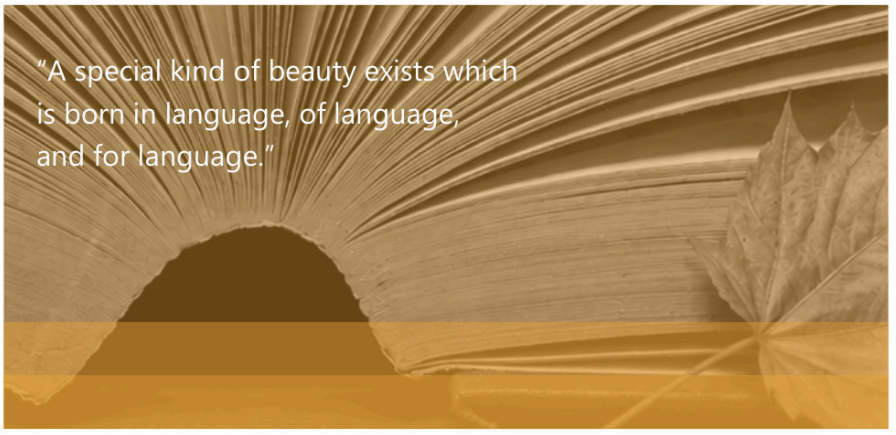
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Combinatorial properties of collocations

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Annotation *This article examines the combinatorial properties of collocations through the concepts of valency, distribution, combinability, syntagmatic restriction, and combinatorial patterning. The main purpose is to demonstrate that collocations are not simple lexical combinations but systemic units formed through the interaction of semantic, syntactic, lexical, and functional factors. Uzbek, English, and Russian verb–noun and adjective–noun combinations are compared to show how similar or related meanings may be realized through different combinatorial patterns. Valency is interpreted as the internal capacity of a linguistic unit to select other elements; distribution describes its contextual range; combinability reflects normative and conventional compatibility; and syntagmatic restriction defines structural limits on co-occurrence. The article also draws on construction grammar and corpus linguistics to explain the stability and variability of combinatorial patterns. The analysis indicates that collocations cannot be reduced to accidental word adjacency. Rather, they represent structured combinatorial systems stabilized by linguistic convention, semantic selection, recurrent usage, and discourse practice.*

Keywords *Valency, distribution, combinability, syntagmatic restriction, corpus linguistics*

Kollokatsiyalarning kombinator xususiyatlari

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Annotatsiya *Mazkur maqolada kollokatsiyalarning kombinator xususiyatlari valentlik, distributsiya, bog'lana olishlik, sintagmatik cheklanish va kombinator model tushunchalari asosida nazariy jihatdan tahlil qilinadi. Tadqiqotning asosiy maqsadi kollokatsiyalarning oddiy leksik qo'shilish emas, balki semantik, sintaktik, leksik va funksional omillar o'zaro ta'sirida shakllanuvchi tizimli birlik ekanligini ko'rsatishdan iborat. Tahlilda o'zbek, ingliz va rus tillaridagi fe'l–ot hamda sifat–ot birikmalaridan foydalanilib, mazkur tillarda bir xil yoki yaqin mazmunning turli kombinator modellar orqali ifodalanishi qiyoslanadi. Valentlik birlikning ichki birikish imkoniyatlarini, distributsiya real qo'llanish doirasini, bog'lana olishlik normativ va odatiy moslikni, sintagmatik cheklanish esa birikishning struktur chegaralarini belgilashi asoslanadi. Shuningdek, konstruksiya va korpus lingvistikasi yondashuvlari orqali kombinator modelning barqarorlik hamda variativlik xususiyatlari yoritiladi. Natijada kollokatsiya til birliklarining tasodifiy qo'shilishi emas, balki til tajribasi va me'yorida mustahkamlangan, ichki strukturaga ega kombinator tizim sifatida talqin qilinadi. Ushbu yondashuv kollokatsiyalarni qiyosiy o'rganishda nazariy mezonlarni aniq belgilash va ularning korpusdagi real qo'llanishini izchil tavsiflash imkonini beradi. Bu natijalar korpus asosidagi tadqiqotlar uchun ham muhim metodologik asos yaratadi.*

The Lingua Spectrum
Cogito, ergo sum

Jurnal Oliy Attestatsiya Komissiyasi tomonidan 2025-yil 4-yanvar kuni 366/5-sonli qaror bilan tavsiya etilgan milliy ilmiy nashrlar ro'yxatiga kiritilgan

Kalit so'zlar *Valentlik, distributsiya, bog'lana olishlik, sintagmatik cheklanish, kombinator model, korpus lingvistikasi*

Комбинаторные свойства коллокаций

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Аннотация *В статье теоретически рассматриваются комбинаторные свойства коллокаций на основе понятий валентности, дистрибуции, сочетаемости, синтагматических ограничений и комбинаторной модели. Основная цель исследования состоит в обосновании того, что коллокации являются не простыми лексическими соединениями, а системными единицами, формирующимися во взаимодействии семантических, синтаксических, лексических и функциональных факторов. На материале узбекского, английского и русского языков сопоставляются глагольно-именные и качественно-именные сочетания, что позволяет показать различия в реализации сходных значений посредством национально специфических комбинаторных моделей. Валентность рассматривается как внутренняя способность единицы выбирать определённые компоненты, дистрибуция – как область её реального употребления, сочетаемость – как нормативная и узуальная совместимость, а синтагматическое ограничение – как структурная граница совместного употребления. Дополнительно привлекаются положения конструкционной грамматики и корпусной лингвистики для раскрытия устойчивости и вариативности моделей. Анализ показывает, что коллокации нельзя сводить к случайному соседству слов. Они представляют собой структурированные комбинаторные системы, закреплённые языковой нормой, семантическим отбором, повторяемостью и речевой практикой. Такой подход позволяет точнее определить теоретические критерии сопоставительного изучения коллокаций и последовательно описывать устойчивые модели их употребления в корпусных данных.*

Ключевые слова *Валентность, дистрибуция, сочетаемость, синтагматические ограничения, комбинаторная модель, корпусная лингвистика*

Introduction

Valency expresses the ability of linguistic units, particularly predicative units, to attract other units and establish specific syntactic and semantic relations with them. In this sense, valency is not simply the possibility of being combined with another element; it is an internal property that determines what types of elements a linguistic unit requires, in what form they occur, and within what semantic domain they are selected. The concept was systematically developed by Lucien Tesnière,

who regarded the verb as the center of the sentence and explained its ability to attract other components through valency. From this perspective, sentence structure is not a random collection of elements but a system consisting of a center and the actants connected to it. Therefore, the capacity for combination is embedded in the structural nature of the linguistic unit (Tesnière, 1959).

Later studies expanded valency beyond purely syntactic relations. Within case grammar, Charles J. Fillmore explained the participants associated with a verb through semantic roles, thereby connecting valency with deeper semantic structure. This approach shows that the question is not only which form occurs with which form, but also why a particular unit is selected in a particular position (Fillmore, 1968). D.J. Allerton described valency as a category determining the arguments and complements with which a verb can occur and applied this perspective more specifically to English. Thus, valency can be understood as a point where syntactic, semantic, and lexical factors intersect (Allerton, 1982).

Valency is particularly important in the analysis of collocations because it explains why linguistic units combine with particular elements rather than with all theoretically possible elements. A collocation appears as a conventional and normative combination, whereas valency helps reveal the internal conditions that produce such conventionality. In other words, collocation is the observable result, while valency represents a system of possibilities and restrictions underlying that result. This relationship can be observed in Uzbek *qaror qabul qilmoq*, English *make a decision*, and Russian *принять решение*. Although semantically related alternatives may appear possible, the conventional language system selects particular verbs in these combinations. Such examples demonstrate that semantically close verbs do not necessarily have identical combinatorial properties.

The same principle can be observed in other examples. In Uzbek, *masalaga yechim topmoq*, *fikr bildirmoq*, and *qaror chiqarmoq* are conventional combinations in which the choice of the verb depends not only on semantic compatibility but also on patterns established through actual language use. In English, combinations such as *pose a question*, *reach an agreement*, and *hold a belief* demonstrate that semantically related verbs cannot always replace one another without changing the conventionality or discourse profile of the expression. In Russian, *принять меры, высказать мнение*, and *одержать победу* show similar lexical restrictions. These examples indicate that valency regulates not only the possibility of combination but also the preferred lexical realization of a particular meaning.

Valency therefore controls the relationship between freedom and restriction in language. In theory, a word may appear combinable with many units, but actual language use retains only a limited set of conventional possibilities. Semantic compatibility, stylistic appropriateness, and habitual usage operate simultaneously. For example, Uzbek *savol bermoq*, English *ask a question*, and Russian *задать вопрос* are conventional, whereas formally imaginable alternatives such as Uzbek *savol aytmoq*, English *say a question*, or Russian *сказать вопрос* are not equally acceptable. Consequently, valency raises collocation above simple semantic compatibility and reveals the internal combinatorial organization of language (Tesnière, 1959; Fillmore, 1968).

Distribution and Actual usage

Distribution is another important theoretical category in the analysis of relations between linguistic units. It refers to the contexts, positions, and accompanying units in which a linguistic element occurs. From this perspective, distribution describes the combinatorial possibilities of linguistic units at the observable level. If valency represents the internal capacity of a unit to enter into

relations, distribution demonstrates how this capacity is realized in actual language use. The concept was systematically developed in structural linguistics by Zellig Harris, who emphasized the importance of the environments in which linguistic units occur. A unit can therefore be described through the range of contexts in which it is distributed (Harris, 1951).

Distribution is directly connected with collocation in the work of J.R. Firth. His approach emphasizes that the meaning and function of a word can be understood through its habitual companions. English combinations such as commit a crime, commit suicide, and commit an offence illustrate how the distribution of commit helps define its semantic and functional range. The verb may occur in other contexts, but these recurrent combinations form characteristic distributional patterns. Thus, distribution is not merely a structural phenomenon; it also contributes to semantic interpretation (Firth, 1957).

In Russian linguistic tradition, a closely related notion is *сочетаемость*, or *combinability*. In the tradition associated with V.V. Vinogradov, the co-occurrence of linguistic units is connected with their lexical and semantic properties. For example, Russian *крепкий чай* is conventional, whereas *сильный чай* is considerably less natural. The contrast shows that distribution is related to language norms: units are not simply distributed among all theoretically possible combinations but participate in conventional patterns established by usage (Vinogradov, 1972).

Distribution is also clearly visible in Uzbek. Expressions such as *qattiq yomg'ir* and *kuchli shamol* are natural, whereas alternative combinations may not have the same degree of conventionality. English uses *heavy rain*, while Russian uses *сильный дождь*. The same semantic content is therefore realized through different distributional models in the three languages. This demonstrates that distribution is a language-specific combinatorial property and that each language develops its own conventional ways of combining lexical units.

The distinction between valency and distribution is consequently essential. Valency describes the internal possibilities of a linguistic unit, whereas distribution shows the limits of those possibilities in actual usage. Many theoretically possible combinations are filtered by distribution, leaving combinations that are normative, recurrent, and conventional. Distribution can therefore be regarded as an empirical basis for the study of collocations. If valency answers the question "What is possible?", distribution answers the question "What is actually used?". The two concepts complement one another and together reveal important aspects of collocational organization (Harris, 1951; Firth, 1957).

Combinability and Lexical selection

The process through which linguistic units combine is theoretically extensive, but actual speech is regulated by strict restrictions. These restrictions can be explained through the notion of combinability, which concerns not only whether units can occur together but also which combinations are accepted as natural in linguistic experience. Combinability therefore functions as a hidden selection mechanism within the language system.

Lexical compatibility is often explained by semantic similarity, but semantic similarity is not always decisive. English *pose a threat* is a conventional combination, whereas *make a threat* does not function as an equivalent collocational model. In Russian, *вынести приговор* is conventional, while *сделать приговор* is not normative. In Uzbek, *hukm chiqarmoq* is natural, whereas *hukm qilmoq* has a different semantic profile. These examples show that combinability goes beyond semantic closeness and depends on established lexical patterns and usage conventions (Cowie, 1998).

The degree of freedom in a collocation can also vary. Some combinations are relatively open, while others are strongly restricted. In English bear responsibility, the verb bear is conventionally associated with responsibility,

while carry responsibility, although interpretable, is less typical in the same collocational function. This demonstrates that combinability is not merely a matter of grammatical possibility; it is shaped by conventionality, frequency of use, and lexical experience (Cowie, 1998).

Stylistic and functional compatibility is another important factor. English *launch an investigation* is associated with formal discourse, whereas *start an investigation* is more neutral. Similar contrasts can be observed in Russian between *возбудить дело* and *начать дело*. Thus, combinability is not determined exclusively by semantic compatibility. It is also influenced by discourse, register, and communicative function. A collocation should therefore be assessed not only in terms of whether it is grammatically possible but also in terms of where and for what purpose it is appropriate (Cowie, 1998).

Syntagmatic restriction

Linguistic units occur sequentially in speech, and this sequence establishes relationships among them. However, such relations are not completely free. Syntagmatic restrictions determine which units may occur together in a particular context and which combinations are unacceptable. They therefore constitute an important structural basis of collocation. Syntagmatic restriction cannot be explained by grammar alone because many grammatically possible combinations are not conventional in actual speech.

English *utter nonsense* is natural, while an alternative such as *say nonsense* strongly does not function as an equivalent collocational pattern. Russian *глубокое уважение* is conventional, whereas *тяжёлое уважение* is not natural in the same sense. Uzbek *chuqur hurmat* is similarly conventional, while *og'ir hurmat* sounds unusual. These examples demonstrate that syntagmatic restriction regulates semantic and lexical compatibility beyond grammatical correctness.

J. Sinclair's idiom principle provides an important theoretical basis for understanding this phenomenon. According to this perspective, speakers do not construct every utterance through completely free combinations; they rely heavily on pre-existing patterns strengthened through repeated language use. As a result, the theoretically broad combinatorial possibilities of language become much more restricted in actual communication (Sinclair, 1991).

The English expression *set a precedent* illustrates this principle. Although *make a precedent* can be interpreted grammatically because make combines with many nouns, actual usage strongly favors set a precedent. The choice is therefore determined not simply by grammatical possibility but by an established syntagmatic pattern. Similar restrictions can be observed in Russian and Uzbek, where particular verbs are conventionally selected for equivalent meanings. Such evidence shows that syntagmatic restriction operates through language-specific patterns (Sinclair, 1991).

Another important form of syntagmatic restriction is semantic selection. Units may be grammatically compatible and semantically understandable, yet their combination may remain non-conventional because the pattern has not become established through usage. English *a bitter disappointment* is conventional, whereas *a sour disappointment*, despite its semantic interpretability, is not equally typical. In Russian, *сильное влияние* is widespread, while *мощное влияние* is more restricted stylistically and collocationally. These contrasts demonstrate that semantic proximity does not automatically create syntagmatic compatibility (Sinclair, 1991).

F.J. Hausmann places such restrictions at the center of collocational analysis. From this perspective, linguistic units do not combine through unlimited free choice but through patterns that have become established in the language. English *draw a conclusion*, Russian *сделать вывод*, and Uzbek *xulosa chiqarmoq* express comparable meanings, but the internal lexical components of each expression are

language-specific. Syntagmatic restriction also operates at the grammatical level. English *interested in something*, Russian *заинтересованный в чём-либо*, and Uzbek *biror narsaga qiziqqan* illustrate how prepositions and case-marking elements are selected according to conventional structural models (Hausmann, 1984).

From the perspective of the language system, syntagmatic restriction preserves combinatorial order and stability. Without such restrictions, linguistic communication would produce an unlimited number of irregular combinations. Syntagmatic restriction therefore functions as an internal control mechanism: it determines not only how units combine but also how they cannot combine. In this framework, valency represents internal possibility, distribution represents actual usage, combinability represents normative compatibility, and syntagmatic restriction regulates the interaction among these dimensions (Hausmann, 1984).

Combinatorial models and constructional approaches

Understanding collocations not as an isolated set of combinations but as a system formed by recurring structural and semantic patterns leads to the concept of the combinatorial model. The central issue is not merely which words occur together but what recurrent pattern lies behind their combination. A combinatorial model reveals the relationship through which linguistic units become conventional, identifies the central component, and shows which elements naturally occupy the available positions. Thus, while a collocation is an observable linguistic phenomenon, the combinatorial model represents its underlying constructive organization.

Adele Goldberg's construction grammar provides an important theoretical basis for this interpretation. In her approach, linguistic knowledge includes constructions understood as pairings of form and meaning rather than only isolated lexical items. This broadens the concept of combinatorial modeling beyond lexical selection: components combine within established structural and semantic patterns (Goldberg, 1995). English *give permission*, Russian *дать разрешение*, and Uzbek *ruxsat bermoq* express a comparable semantic center, but the concrete realization of that meaning is determined by the internal system of each language. The combinatorial model therefore captures not only semantic equivalence but also the structural means through which a meaning becomes conventional in a particular language.

Elena Tognini-Bonelli's corpus-driven approach strengthens the empirical basis of the combinatorial model. From this perspective, linguistic patterns should be identified through repeated manifestations in natural language rather than treated simply as predetermined lists. A combinatorial model is therefore not only a theoretical construct but also a recurrent configuration observable in corpus data (Tognini-Bonelli, 2001). English *reach a conclusion* and *come to a conclusion* are related but do not represent identical models. Uzbek *xulosaga kelmoq* and Russian *прийти к выводу* are closer to the second configuration, demonstrating that cross-linguistic similarity can exist at the level of a recurrent model rather than simple lexical equivalence.

The work of Stefan Th. Gries and Anatol Stefanowitsch, which connects construction grammar with corpus linguistics, provides an additional perspective. Their approach focuses on the relationship between words and constructions and on the typical filling of constructional slots. English *pose a threat* and *present a threat* are both grammatically possible and semantically related, but *pose a threat* represents a more established pattern. Uzbek *tahdid solmoq* and *tahdid tug'dirmoq* likewise differ in semantic profiling, while Russian *представлять угрозу* emphasizes a particular configuration of threat as a source or state. Therefore, a combinatorial model determines not only which elements occur together but also the semantic profile

associated with the combination (Gries & Stefanowitsch, 2004).

A combinatorial model should not, however, be understood as a completely fixed pattern. It includes both stability and controlled variation. This feature helps distinguish collocations from fully fixed phraseological units. In a phraseological expression, the pattern may be almost closed, whereas a collocation can retain a partially open structure while remaining subject to conventional restrictions. English *make an impact* and *have an impact* are both normative, but the first foregrounds active causation while the second emphasizes the existence of an effect. Uzbek *ta'sir ko'rsatmoq* and *ta'sirga ega bo'lmoq*, as well as Russian *оказать влияние* and *иметь влияние*, show comparable contrasts. Thus, the combinatorial model is better understood as a restricted but internally variable constructional space (Goldberg, 1995; Tognini-Bonelli, 2001).

Comparative discussion

The comparison of Uzbek, English, and Russian material demonstrates that the combinatorial properties of collocations have both universal and language-specific dimensions. The universal dimension lies in the fact that linguistic units are subject to selection, restriction, recurrent usage, and conventional patterning. The language-specific dimension appears in the particular lexical and grammatical resources through which these principles are realized. For example, comparable meanings are expressed through different combinations in *qaror qabul qilmoq*, *make a decision*, and *принять решение*; *xulosa chiqarmoq*, *draw a conclusion*, and *сделать вывод*; and *ruxsat bermoq*, *give permission*, and *дать разрешение*. Such contrasts show that translation based solely on lexical equivalence can obscure the combinatorial structure of the target language. A corpus-based approach makes it possible to identify recurrent patterns and compare their distribution, frequency, semantic profile, and structural configuration. In this respect, corpus linguistics provides an empirical bridge between theoretical descriptions of valency and the actual distribution of collocations in natural language (Tognini-Bonelli, 2001; Gries & Stefanowitsch, 2004).

Conclusion

The theoretical analysis of the combinatorial properties of collocations shows that linguistic combination is a multilayered phenomenon. Valency, distribution, combinability, syntagmatic restriction, and combinatorial modeling represent interconnected dimensions of the same general mechanism. Valency explains the internal capacity of a linguistic unit to select particular elements; distribution reveals how those possibilities are realized in actual contexts; combinability describes conventional compatibility; syntagmatic restriction establishes structural and lexical boundaries; and the combinatorial model explains recurrent configurations that organize form and meaning. These categories should therefore be considered together rather than as isolated concepts.

The comparative analysis of Uzbek, English, and Russian demonstrates that similar semantic content can be realized through different combinatorial patterns. Consequently, collocation should not be reduced to simple lexical adjacency. It is a structured linguistic phenomenon shaped by semantic selection, lexical convention, syntactic organization, discourse, and recurrent usage. Construction grammar further shows that combinations may function as form–meaning pairings, while corpus linguistics provides methods for identifying such patterns empirically (Goldberg, 1995; Tognini-Bonelli, 2001).

The findings support a combinatorial approach as a useful methodological basis for further corpus-based research. Instead of examining collocations as isolated examples, researchers can identify recurrent models, compare their distribution across languages, and determine the interaction between lexical choice and structural configuration. Such an

approach is particularly valuable for multilingual comparison because it reveals where apparently equivalent expressions differ in lexical selection, syntactic realization, stylistic function, and semantic profiling. The combinatorial perspective therefore contributes to a more systematic understanding of collocations as structured and language-specific units of linguistic organization (Gries & Stefanowitsch, 2004).

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