INNOVATIVE WORLD
Ilmiy tadqiqotlar markazi

INNOVATSION TALABALAR AXBOROTNOMASI

htttps://innoworld.net   +998335668868

ILMIY JURNAL

INNOVATSION TALABALAR AXBOROTNOMASI

3-JILD, 3-SON

2026

Jurnal quyidagi xalqaro bazalarda indekslanadi:

Google Scholar | digital object identifier | ResearchGate | zenodo

ADVANCED SCIENCE INDEX | OpenAIRE | Academic Resource Index ResearchBib | DRJI Directory of Research Journals Indexing

Ilmiy jurnalning rasmiy sayti:

www.innoworld.net

O'ZBEKISTON-2026

WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN WORD PHRASES AND COLLOCATIONS?

Botirova Nilufar

PhD student of Uzbekistan State World Languages University

Annotation: This study examines the distinction between phrases and collocations in modern linguistics and highlights their role in lexical and syntactic analysis. The research clarifies the theoretical foundations of these concepts based on the works of J. R. Firth, who first introduced the notion of collocation, and John Sinclair, who developed corpus-based approaches to collocational analysis. The paper compares phrases as grammatical units with collocations as conventional lexical combinations formed through habitual usage and frequency. Particular attention is given to the structural and functional differences between these two linguistic phenomena. The study also demonstrates the presence of collocations in the Uzbek language and provides illustrative examples from both English and Uzbek. The findings emphasize the importance of collocational competence for linguistic analysis, discourse studies, and translation practice

Key words: collocation, phrase, lexical combination, syntactic structure, corpus linguistics, Uzbek language, translation studies.

In modern linguistics, the study of lexical combinations plays a significant role in understanding how language operates in discourse. Two related but distinct concepts in this area are phrases and collocations. Although both involve combinations of words, they differ in terms of their linguistic nature, formation principles, and usage in communication. The concept of collocation was first introduced by J. R. Firth, who emphasized that the meaning of a word can be understood through its habitual co-occurrence with other words[2]. Later, scholars such as John Sinclair expanded this idea using corpus linguistics methods. This section aims to clarify the differences between phrases and collocations and to demonstrate the presence of collocations in the Uzbek language.

Phrase as a grammatical unit

A phrase is generally defined as a syntactic unit consisting of two or more words that function together within a sentence but do not form a complete clause. According to Rodney Huddleston and Geoffrey K. Pullum, phrases are grammatical constructions organized around a central element called the head [3]. The main characteristics of phrases include:

❖ Syntactic structure – phrases are governed by grammatical rules;

❖ Relatively free combinations – components of the phrase can often be replaced by other words;

❖ Functional role in a sentence – phrases serve as syntactic constituents such as noun phrases or verb phrases;

❖ Semantic transparency – the meaning of the phrase usually derives from the meanings of its components.

Examples of phrases include:

In English language: beautiful house, read a book, very quickly.

In Uzbek language: katta uy, kitob o'qimoq, tez yugurmoq.

These combinations follow grammatical rules and allow substitution of elements without affecting grammatical correctness.

Collocation as a lexical phenomenon

Unlike phrases, collocations represent habitual combinations of words that frequently occur together in natural language. The term was first proposed by J. R. Firth, who stated that a word is known by "the company it keeps"[2]. Later research by John Sinclair demonstrated that collocations can be identified through corpus analysis by examining recurrent lexical patterns[4]. The defining features of collocations include:

1. **Lexical restriction** – only certain words naturally combine with each other.
2. **High frequency of co-occurrence** – collocations appear repeatedly in authentic language data.
3. **Conventional usage** – they are established by language tradition rather than grammatical rules alone.
4. **Importance for fluency and naturalness** – correct collocation usage is essential for producing natural discourse.
5. **Relevance for translation studies** – collocational mismatches often lead to translation problems.

Typical examples in English include: make a decision, strong tea, heavy rain and serious problem. Although alternative combinations may be grammatically possible, they may sound unnatural to native speakers.

Differences Between Phrases and Collocations

Despite their structural similarity, phrases and collocations differ significantly in linguistic status[5]. There are many linguistic barriers can be summarized as follows:

1. **Linguistic level** – phrases belong primarily to syntax, whereas collocations belong to lexical semantics.
2. **Formation principle** – phrases follow grammatical rules, while collocations depend on habitual lexical pairing.
3. **Degree of freedom** – phrases allow relatively free substitution of elements, whereas collocations have restricted combinations.
4. **Analytical approach** – phrases are studied in syntactic analysis, while collocations are often investigated through corpus linguistics.
5. **Role in translation** – collocations require special attention because literal translation may produce unnatural expressions.

The table below illustrates the differences between collocations and word combinations (table 1)

Feature	Word phrases	Collocations
Nature	Grammatical unit	Lexical combination

Basis	Syntax rules	Usage and frequency
Freedom	Free combinations	Restricted combinations
Example	Big house	Strong tea
Linguistic level	Grammar	Lexis / corpus linguistics

As shown in Table 1, phrases are primarily syntactic structures formed according to grammatical rules, whereas collocations represent conventional lexical combinations determined by habitual usage and frequency in discourse.

Collocations in Uzbek language

Collocations are not limited to English; they also exist in the Uzbek language. Uzbek lexical combinations often demonstrate stable patterns that are preferred in communication, especially in formal and political discourse. Examples of Uzbek collocations include: **qaror qabul qilmoq** – to make a decision; **katta ahamiyat bermoq** – to attach great importance; **keskin tanqid qilmoq** – to strongly criticize; **jiddiy muammo** – serious problem; **yuksak daraja** – high level.

These expressions represent conventional lexical pairings commonly used in Uzbek academic, journalistic, and political texts. Their usage demonstrates that Uzbek, like many other languages, relies on stable lexical combinations that function as collocations.

Conclusion. The distinction between phrases and collocations is essential for linguistic analysis and translation studies. While phrases represent grammatical combinations formed according to syntactic rules, collocations are conventional lexical pairings that emerge from habitual language use. The presence of numerous stable lexical combinations in Uzbek demonstrates that collocational patterns are universal linguistic phenomena. Understanding these patterns is particularly important for corpus-based research and for improving the quality of translation between languages.

References

1. Benson, M., Benson, E., & Ilson, R. (1986). The BBI combinatory dictionary of English. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
2. Firth, J. R. (1957). A synopsis of linguistic theory 1930–1955. Oxford: Blackwell.
3. The Cambridge Grammar of the English Language. Retrieved from https://en-wikipedia--on--ipfs-org.ipns.dweb.link/wiki/The_Cambridge_Grammar_of_the_English_Language
4. Sinclair, J. (1991). Corpus, concordance, collocation. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
5. Stubbs, M. (2001). Words and phrases: Corpus studies of lexical semantics. Oxford: Blackwell.