

COLLOCATIONS AND IDIOMS SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES

Instructor Muna Ibrahim Ahmed

College of Education (IBN-RUSHD) for Human Sciences

English Department

University of Baghdad

ABSTRACT

This research addresses collocations and idioms and the similarities and differences between both. A collocation is a style where certain words are frequently utilized jointly, and seem normal together. While an idiom is often a phrase in which the words jointly give a meaning differs from the lexicon definitions of words. There are many types of collocations and collocations themselves are so many which poses problems and difficulties to both learners and users native or non-native. The research aims at showing the definition, importance and types of collocations and idioms, as well as the similarities and differences between both of them. it has concluded that the learners need to increase their vocabulary knowledge

Keywords: *collocation, idiom, noun, verb, adverb, adjective, similarities, differences.*

INTRODUCTION

Collocation presents a method where a number of words are regularly utilized together, and look natural together. Also, this points to constraints on the way words can be utilized together, for instance which nouns and verbs may be utilized together as well as what kind of prepositions and verbs may be utilized together.

For example, we use the expression "heavy rain" or "light rain" rather than "strong rain" or "mild rain" because "heavy" and "light" better fits with rain unlike the word "strong" or "mild". This kind of language behavior is named "collocation". There are a lot of states in English language while it becomes hard to recognize which words fit finely with the word we desire to utilize due to the non-existence of clear rules. There are certain words that seem right together, whereas other words do not.

Collocation is a normal mixture of words closely associated with one another. "Pay attention", "fast food", "make an effort", and "powerful engine" are but only some examples. The advantage of collocations lies in making it simpler to keep away from worn-out or vague words like "very", "nice", or "beautiful", via utilizing a couple of words that suits

the context in a better way and carries a more accurate meaning. Skillful utilizers of language may generate impacts like humour via changing the usual collocation patterns. This method is particularly accepted with journalists, poets and advertisers.

Collocations might look natural to native English speakers, yet they are unclear to foreign speakers of English language. For example, the word "dark" does not collocate with the term "tea", but rather with "chocolate".

A number of collocations such as "take a photo" are fixed, in which no word other than "take" collocates with "photo" to give the right meaning. A lot of collocations are wide open for using a number of different words to give the same meaning, for instance using "keep to the rules" or "stick to the rules" where both phrases give the same meaning.

As for idioms, they are phrases in which the words together carry a meaning differs from the lexical definitions of single terms or words.

SECTION ONE : COLLOCATION

1- Definition of Collocation:

McCarthy (1984) defines collocations as **"units of meaning formed with two or more words."**

The words are usually written separately, but some may have a hyphen or be written as one word. Often, the meaning of the collocation can be guessed by knowing the meaning of the individual words"⁽ⁱ⁾.

Thornbury (2007) states that “two words are collocates if they occur together with more than chance frequency, such that, when we see one, we can make a fairly safe bet that the other is in the neighborhood”⁽ⁱⁱ⁾.

According to Richards, J & Schmidt (2010) "Collocation is the way in which words are used together regularly. Collocation refers to 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. For example, in English the verb perform is used with operation, but not with discussion:

- The doctor performed the operation.
- The committee performed a discussion. Instead we say:

The committee held/had a discussion. Perform is used with (collocates with) operation, and hold and have collocate with discussion"⁽ⁱⁱⁱ⁾.

Likewise, Benson et al. (1986) offer a simpler definition “In English, as in other languages, there are many fixed, identifiable, non-idiomatic phrases and constructions. Such groups of words are called recurrent combinations, mixed combinations, or collocations”^(iv).

Also, Goudarzi and Moini (2012) illustrate collocations and define them as “the company that words keep”^(v).

Collocations are fixed expressions in part or in full that grow recognized and well-known via frequent use depending on the context. Phrases such as 'middle management', 'crystal clear', 'nuclear family', and 'cosmetic surgery' are some instances of collocations made of two words^(vi).

The collocation processing entails several parameters, the measure of association is the most important one^(vii).

Gledhill suggests that collocation includes as a minimum (3) different viewpoints:

- (a) Co-occurrence.
- (b) Construction.
- (c) Expression.

These three different viewpoints explain collocation in a continual sequence 'Open Combination' ↔ 'Bound Collocation' ↔ 'Frozen Idiom'.^(viii)

2- Types of Collocation:

We can find 6 major kinds of collocations, they are as the following:

1) adjective plus noun, 2) noun plus noun, 3) verb plus noun, 4) adverb plus adjective, 5) verbs plus prepositional phrase, 6) verb plus adverb.^(ix)

1) adjectives and nouns

- Hilda likes yellow or pink or whatever **light color**.
- They got the chance in a **short chat** on Egypt but they did not get the opportunity to talk about it enough.
- Poverty is a **major problem** in some countries in Asia.
- Preventing wars in the world is a **key issue** for UN.

2) Nouns and verbs

- John's **plane takes off** at 6:00 pm tomorrow.
- The **bird laid** an egg yesterday.
- The **work has expanded** and is getting more money now.
- The financial corruption **poses a problem** for Iraq and its people.

3) Nouns + nouns

We find many collocations with the pattern **a ... of ...** or without

- I saw **a school of fish** in the middle of the sea.
- She felt **a sense of pride** when she was awarded a medal.
- The student has a **case study** as part of the graduation research.
- The **pressure group** has a great influence on crucial decisions.

4) Verbs and expressions with prepositions

- When George graduated from university with high marks, he saw his mother **feeling pride**.
- The woman was **filled with horror** as soon as she saw the lion.
- When her father was angry on the little child, she **burst into tears**.

5) Verbs and adverbs

- He **acted bitterly** with his friend.
- She **treated** her mother and father **well**.
- He **whispered softly** to his lover Sandy about their marriage.
- He **arrived early** in the morning to help his father.

6) Adverbs and adjectives

- Some of our friends were **blissfully married**.
- He should be **completely aware** of some risks in skating.
- Janet **simply accepted** his proposal.
- Sam was **totally unaware** that his wife was pregnant.

3- Importance of Collocation:

The 2nd short-term report presented by Harold Palmer about Collocations of English language in 1933 emphasized the collocation significance as a solution so as to generate a normal language among all learners of a non-native language. Therefore, in the years after 1940, information on frequent word combinations grew to be a typical characteristic of the dictionaries for monolingual learners. When those dictionaries grew less word-centered and more phrase-centered, an increasing attention and interest were given to collocation. This tendency was enhanced early in the twenty first century via the provision of large corpora of texts and clever corpus-questioning software like drawing device, which allows to present an extra organized explanation of collocation in lexicons. lexicons like Macmillan and Longman have lists of recurrent collocations^(x).

Example:

- *Once upon a time* the rabbit fooled the lion with a fake account.
- **The tiger has more lion sense than a lion. It knows when to stop hunting and it knows when to stop running.**
- **He is an unbelievable youth, possessing an iron will and nerves of steel, two merits helped him grow to be the genius he is now.**
- **The acting commissioner of real-estates said, 'The Department will make zero tolerance for designers, contractors, and owners who do not succeed in taking the right measures to ensure their construction locations and buildings.'**^(xi)

SECTION TWO : IDIOMS**1- Definition:**

According to Jackendoff (1997), an idiom is an expression or a fixed phrase having a literal meaning or a figurative one in some times. In classifying the idiom's figurative meaning as a standard language, it is different from the literal meaning. There exists a large number of idioms in all languages. Thus, it is expected that the number of idiomatic expressions may reach to about 25.000 in English^(xii).

An idiom can be defined as a phrase where the words jointly carry a meaning differs from the lexicon definitions of single terms. The idiom is one of speech types or a phrase of a particular language grammatically odd to itself or may not be explicit to the solitary meanings of the idiom's components. Hence, English learners often have difficulty with idioms in realizing the actual meaning without referring to an English dictionary of idioms. The English language include thousands of idioms, most of which are informal^(xiii).

2- Importance of Idioms:

Idioms have in common intellectual and chronological information and enlarge the language comprehension and handling of individuals. There are two important different definitions of idioms cited in the New Webster's Dictionary (1993): (1) "**the language peculiar to a people, country, class, community or, more rarely, an individual**"; (2) "**a**

construction or expression having a meaning different from the literal one or not according to the usual patterns of the language"^(xiv).

Idioms are constantly special things in relation to any language. They establish certain distinguishing characteristics which make one language different from the other. Furthermore, idioms mirror some cultural habits and show the national nature.

They are not a detached segment of the person's selected language to utilize or to neglect, rather they constitute a fundamental segment of the English general vocabulary. And, the language vocabulary is increasing and changing between time and time with old idioms and new ones which need to be placed in perspective and this can be achieved this increasing and changing in the language vocabulary is described^(xv).

In all languages, there are idioms, and there are thousands of idioms in the English language. They are frequently mystifying and bewildering because the meaning of the entire words collection altogether has almost nothing, or very little, connected with the meaning of terms if they are utilized individually^(xvi).

For the sake of understanding a language, we should recognize and identify what is the meaning of that language idioms and If one attempts to guess the idiom's literal meaning word by word, he/she shall be puzzled for one should know its concealed meaning. Thus, learning and teaching a language may be difficult and complicated because of idioms.

As vocabulary and culture are entwined, native and non-native speakers may get extra vocabulary through idioms and on the other hand may know other information about idioms in being exposed to the target culture, and thus they will improve their skills of listening, speaking, writing and reading^(xvii).

3- Types of Idioms:

a- Pure idiom

It is a kind of non-literal, conventionalized and multiword expression with a meaning that may not be comprehended by the addition of the meanings of the terms which build the phrase. The expression, for instance, "**spill the beans**" is considered as a pure idiom, because the real meaning is far away from "beans".

b- Semi-pure idiom

It has a literal component and a non-literal meaning. For instance, "**foot the bill**", which means "pay the bill", where the word "**foot**" is the non-literal component, unlike "**bill**" which is utilized literally.

c- Literal idiom

Semantically, it is less complicated than the previous two types, and consequently simpler to comprehend even if the person is unfamiliar with those expressions, for example "**on foot**" or "**on the contrary**".

Those expressions can be regarded idioms for the reason that they are either entirely invariant or permit constrained variation only. It is hard and uneasy to draw a clear limit among the three types of idioms^(xviii).

When considering the phrase function, idioms are classified into interpersonal, ideational, and relational idioms, as follows:

- Ideational idioms

They imply message content, experimental phenomena sensory, evaluative, & affective or they describe the message character. These idioms might depict:

- **(spill the beans - tear down) as actions**
- **(turning point) as events**
- **(be in a pickle) as situations**
- **(a red herring) as people and things**
- **(cut-and-dried) as attributes**
- **(a watched pot never boils) as evaluations**
- **(green with envy) as emotions**

- Interpersonal idioms

They perform a function that is interactional or describe the message character, this kind of idioms may for example start or maintain an interaction and communication among people and preserve politeness. They include:

- **(good evening- good bye) as greetings and farewells**
- **(let's face it) as directives**
- **(say no more) as agreements**
- **(what do you think?) as "feelers" that bring out viewpoints**
- **(come off it) as rejections**^(xix)

- Textual or Relational idioms

Halliday differentiates textual or relational idioms, ensuring the cohesiveness & coherence of the discourse. Some instances of such idioms include "on the contrary, in addition to and on the other hand"^(xx).

There are some other kinds and categories of idioms, but they are with a lot of details and complications. Two main types of idioms can be identified: the encoding and decoding ones. The decoding idioms can be classified into sememic & lexemic ones^(xxi).

- Identifiable or Encoding Idioms

They are idiosyncratic lexical mixtures of clear meanings. This kind may be identified by comparing various languages through the utility of appropriate prepositions. Thus, 'at' is utilized rather than "with" in the expression 'drive at 60 mph' and not the expression 'drive with' as in other languages such as French.

- Non-Identifiable or Decoding Idioms

They denote non-identifiable, misleading and confusing lexical expressions which explanation can not be guessed by utilizing just separately cultured linguistic traditions. They consist of phrases such as 'fly off the handle' & "beat around the bush". This kind may be categorized into sememic & lexemic idioms.

* **Sememic** often express pragmatic meanings concerning a certain culture, comprising:

- a. (A **bird in hand is better than ten on the tree**-**Chew of something over**) as proverbs.
- b. (Not a mouse stirring) as familiar quotations.

* **Lexemic** comprise:

- a. (to **turn off**, to **come up with**, to **take part in**) as phrasal verbs.
- b. (**black ice**, **black board**) as phrasal compounds.
- c. (**man-handle**) as incorporating verbs.
- d. (**spick and span**, **kit and kin**) as pseudo-idioms.

The sentences below include idioms marked in bold^(xxii):

- "The **ball is in your court**" which means the decision is yours.

- "It's **in the ballpark**" which means in the acceptable range.
- "To **take your ball and go home**" which means to stop the participation in something to self disadvantage.
- "I'm going **back to the drawing board**" which means failing in something and having to begin all over again.
- "To **kill two sparrows with one pebble**" which means one solution for two problems in the same time with one act.
- "You are **pulling his leg**" which means telling him untrue thing to teas him.
- "To **beat around the bush**" which means evading doing a thing, to postpone by a trick, for wasting time.
- "It's her **cup of tea**" which means it is her choice.
- "The **squeaky wheel gets the grease**" which means who complain too mush shall draw the attention and have what they wish for.
- "They are **missing a few marbles**, They have a **few loose screws**, They are not **playing with a full deck**, They don't have **both oars in the water**, They are **off their rocker**, They have **the light on but nobody's home**" which means that one is not mentally sound, crazy, or mentally deranged.
- "That's **the way the cookie crumbles**, That's **the way the ball bounces**" which means that when something slightly unlucky has happened, that there's nothing that could have prevented it.
- "You are **on the ball**, You **have it together**, You are **on top of your game**. You are **really with it**" which means you have merits and features, like capability, talent, or information, necessary for winning and success.
- " It's a **spilled milk**, That's a **water under the bridge**, To **burn his bridges**" which means it is something from the past especially a thing that is inevitable.
- "Cute as a **button**" which means something is really cute.
- "She will **drop** her fiancée **a line**" which means she will send him a message or make a

conversation with him by phone or whatever device.

- "To set **the wheels in motion**, To **get the ball rolling**" which means to start a process or a task.
- "He is going **to croak**, To **kick the bucket**" which means to pass away of die.
- "To **tighten up** a thing" which means to make a thing more tidy or controlled.
- "he is a **knock out**, He is **hot**" which means the person is handsome.
- "To **beat a dead horse**" which means wasting time in doing or trying to do something unsuccessful.
- "Be happy to **see the back of**" which means feeling glad at the leaving of some person.
- "That **size fits all**" which means what is acceptable or suitable for a person is acceptable or suitable for many people.
- "She should **keep an eye out for** that" which means to be aware as it happens.

Each of the bold expressions imply two meanings as a minimum: literal and figurative. These distinctive expressions of a language may emerge in the form of words, word combinations, phrases, whole sentences, and whole clauses.

- **Satan's in the details.**
- **The first sparrow gets the worm.**
- **Break a leg.**
- **Waste not, want not.**
- **He has butterflies in his stomach.**
- **If the shoe fits, wear it.**

Expressions like these are with figurative meaning. For example, the expression "The devil is in the details" means not a faith in Satan, but that things perhaps appear fine from outside, but when examined well, there it shows unwanted aspects. Likewise, when using the expression "The early bird gets the worm", it means there are many chances rather than one. On the other hand, the figurative explanation of this expression is that the one who works hard is the one who will get the most advantageous chance. While the expression "Waste not, want not" is entirely free of a

meaning that is figurative. It is considered idiom, yet for carrying a meaning that is literal, it is continuous among people.

SECTION THREE : SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES BETWEEN COLLOCATIONS & IDIOMS

Collocations are entities of meaning made with two words or more. The words are typically written unconnectedly, yet some of them perhaps contain a hyphen or they are written or made as one word. The collocation meaning may be figured out by identifying the individual word meaning. Whereas Idioms are a combination of words in a constant order with a sense difficult to figure out by identifying the individual vocabulary meaning. For instance, "*pass the buck*" is one of idioms which means putting the responsibility of a problem on other persons to evade oneself from it^(xxiii).

Expressions such as "*turn up*" which means 'arrive', "*break even*" which means 'make neither a profit nor a loss' and "*a can of worms*" which means 'a complicated problem' may be hard to comprehend, because their meanings have not the same meanings of single words in the expression. For instance, If one knows the word '*break*' and '*even*', it does not mean that he/she knows or understands the meaning of "*break even*". These expressions are named 'idioms'. Idioms are typically special to a certain language and difficult to be translated into another language word for word although some languages especially the related ones perhaps have some similar idioms^(xxiv).

We may say a "*burning desire*" or a "*blazing row*", but not a "*blazing desire*" or a "*burning row*". Someone can be a "*heavy smoker*" or a "*devoted friend*", but not a "*devoted smoker*" or a "*heavy friend*". Expressions like these are somewhat idiomatic as well. They are simple to comprehend, but not too simple for a learner to generate in the correct way. There may be a lot of adjectives that can be utilized with the word '*smoker*' to refer that one smokes a lot, for instance '*big, strong, hard, fierce, mad, devoted*', but English speakers chose to utilize the adjective '*heavy*', and learners should know this so as to convey the idea in

the correct way, because they do not and use any other adjective they will seem natural. These conventional mixtures are named 'collocations' of which all languages contain great numbers^(xxv). Additional examples:

a crashing bore

a golden opportunity

change one's mind

Thanks a lot

slightly annoyed^(xxvi)

The expressions utilized usually in daily situations are often idiomatic in a similar sense. With the aid of dictionary and grammar, there can be various ways to invent in order to convey a certain idea, yet just one way or two in general that may be utilized among English speakers, and they should know them well so as to speak or write in a natural way, for example:

Could you check the oil?

(More natural and correct than "*Could you inspect the oil?*" or "*Could you see how much oil there is in the engine?*")

Is it a direct flight or do I have to change?

(More natural and correct than "*Does the plane go straight there?*" or "*do I have to get another one?*")

Sorry I kept you waiting.

(More natural and correct than "*Sorry I made you wait*")

Could I reserve a table for three for eight o'clock?

(More natural and correct than "*Could you keep me a table for three persons for eight o'clock?*")^(xxvii)

There is a big difference between a collocation and an idiom. Collocation is how to combine words or terms in any language to generate the usual speech and writing. For instance, when we say "pay attention", it may mean "give attention, or put attention", yet it does not mean this, it means pay attention for it is surely the usual way where native speakers convey that meaning. Whereas idiom represents a series of words or terms that carry diverse meanings. For instance, when we say, "it's raining cats and dogs", we do not actually mean that sky is throwing or falling cats & dogs, but rather we mean a heavy rain^(xxviii).

CONCLUSION

Collocations perhaps look natural to natural native English speakers and writers, yet they are not clear to non-native English speakers. There are certain collocations that are fixed, constant or very strong.

Learning and teaching idioms form a lot of difficulties to English learners and teachers, chiefly because they have no information about the culture and history of English idioms. This is the reason behind the learners' use of idioms in the wrong or improper way with the position. In fact, learners of English language use idiomatic phrases or expressions in a very cautious way for they fear utilizing them incorrectly and thus the people misunderstand them. In the same sense, studying idioms poses a particular problem in language among all learners of language language due to the unpredictability of figurative meaning.

In conclusion, we can say that the total collection of idioms and their great occurrence in conversation turn them to be generally a vital and significant feature of acquiring vocabulary & learning language. One of the definitions and approaches of this linguistic phenomenon confirms that an idiom is a natural speaking manner to native speakers and non-native to non-native speakers. This means that just the ones who are very good in speaking English can properly utilize idiomatic expressions in their talk. English is a language that have an infinite idiomatic basis, which makes learning it very stimulating and fascinating. Hence, knowing and understanding the utility of idioms is an indispensable part of English learning.

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