

Pragmalinguistic Features of Collocations in Literary Texts: A Comparative Study of English and Uzbek Languages

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Abstract:

The present study investigates the pragmalinguistic features of collocations in English and Uzbek literary texts through a cross-linguistic perspective. Despite the growing body of research on collocations focusing on semantic and structural properties, the pragmatic side of the phenomenon – how collocations encode culture, emotion, and speech context – should be explored in more detail, especially from a contrastive perspective involving two typologically and culturally different languages, such as English and Uzbek. To achieve this goal, the study is conducted using a corpus-based methodology and qualitative pragmatic analysis involving the works of Virginia Woolf, Ernest Hemingway, Abdulla Qodiriy, and Oybek. Following Sinclair's method, collocations were identified using Hoey and Leech's approaches, focusing on their communicative and cultural functions. The results of the study indicate that English literary collocations show higher creative flexibility employing different stylistic devices, such as irony, defamiliarisation, or a higher degree of emotionality, through a change in the traditional meaning of words, while Uzbek literary collocations are characterised by their higher degree of formulaic stability and culture-specific references symbolising collective values, intertextual traditions, and metaphorical expressions rooted in the Persian-Arabic heritage. The findings indicate that differ on their pragmatic mechanisms, where the English language prioritizes linguistic innovation and the creation of a personal style in the context of individual writing, and the Uzbek language is based on the experience of a culturally stable set of speech associations inherent in the collectivity. Such notions stress that translation of collocations should not only be based on semantic considerations but also on the acquisition of a certain level of collocational culture as a part of achieving communicative and cultural competence.

Keywords: Collocations, Pragmalinguistics, English Language, Uzbek Language, Literary Discourse, Contrastive Analysis, Semantic Structure, Translation Equivalence

Introduction

The use of collocations is among the most difficult things to deal with in both language learning and translation, especially in literature, where they are not only seen as lexical combinations but also as the main carriers of pragmatic meaning, cultural connotation, and stylistic effect. The investigation of collocations has developed a lot since Firth's famous remark that "you shall know a word by the company it keeps" [1], moving from pure distributional approaches to including pragmatic, cognitive, and cultural aspects. In literary estate, collocations are responsible for a variety of functions such as encoding authorial voice, determining register, producing imagery, and even sending out gentle emotional and evaluative meanings that are more than just the sum of their parts. The realms of collocations in English and Uzbek literary texts lend themselves to pragmalinguistic investigation especially well due to the extreme typological, genetic, and cultural differences between the two languages [2]. The English language, being a Germanic one with a substantial influence from Romance languages, has its collocation patterns shaped by the different eras of literary tradition over the centuries, whereas the overlapping features of Uzbek, a Turkic language, with Persian and Arabic vocabulary layers, still provide the pathway for the collocational formation influenced by both oral epic traditions and the classical Islamic literary heritage.

Literature Review

Collocations, as one of the keys to understanding both linguistic and pragmatic competence have been in the focus of research for centuries. Dating back to Firth's words that "you shall know a word by the company it keeps," the research has shifted from purely distributional perspectives to the pragmatic, cognitive, and even cultural ones. In literary discourse, collocations are not merely lexical combinations but also one of the prime carriers of pragmatic meaning, emotional nuances, and stylistic effects. They define the authorial voice, register, images, and evaluative meaning often going far beyond the literal interpretation [3]. Hence, previous comparative research between English and Turkic languages offers essential groundwork even though relatively little contrastive research has been conducted. Thus, the studies of Johansson and Hofland on collocations in eight different languages and of Yazdanpanah and Haji that also focus on English and Persian offer a methodology for conducting a contrastive analysis. Moreover, Rahmatullaev's studies provide an essential insight into Uzbek phraseology and collocational patterns from a cultural perspective [4].

As it can be demonstrated by multiple examples provided by previous literature, English literary collocations often feature high levels of semantic extension and metaphorical creativity. Thus, multiple authors describe how writers violate the language bounds of collocation toward an extravagant effect that includes irony, defamiliarization, and heightened emotionality; a phenomenon that Mieder explores in relation to proverbial language. In the case of Uzbek literary collocations, however, the factor of formulaicity and cultural contingency is stronger, conditioned by the different culture and literary background that includes classical Persian and Arabic [5]. It is important to refer here to the work of Newmark within the field of translation studies, where he insists that translation equivalence in collocations includes not only the semantic dimension but also the pragmatic and cultural. Furthermore, recent work on learner language appeals to pragmatic competence as one of the central factors explaining deviation of non-native speakers from native collocational use [6]. Hence, this body of literature points to a critical gap: while there is sufficient research on collocations from a structural and semantic perspective, there is little writing about their pragmalinguistic behavior. how they function as communicative, stylistic, and cultural tools in different linguistic systems such as English and Uzbek, and through which, therefore, we can enhance our understanding of the latter [7].

Methodology

This study uses corpus-based extraction of collocations in combination with qualitative research within the framework of pragmatics. The research is conducted in the light of the

interdisciplinary approach, synergizing elements of pragmalinguistics, cognitive linguistics, and translation studies, and suggesting exploration of the ways the structure of collocations encodes their diverse contextual, emotive, and cultural meanings in the literary discourse.

The English language corpus is made up of Virginia Woolf's, Ernest Hemingway's, and a number of modern British and American fiction writers' books, reflecting both classical and modern literary styles. The Uzbek language corpus consists of the novels of Abdulla Qodiriy, the books of Oybek, and a number of modern Uzbek prose writers collected in light of their rich language and cultural background [8]. Collocation extraction was carried out with reference to Sinclair's principle that collocations are characterized by both statistical co-occurrence and semantic non-compositionality. However, special attention should be paid to the fact that the collocations are defined not just by the standard level of typicality but, first and foremost, by the level of their pragmatic salience – the capacity to incorporate some precise emotive information, stylistic-meaning characteristics or socio-cultural connotations.

The analysis is informed by Hoey's theory of lexical priming, positing that words get psychologically associated with certain collocates because they appear together more frequently than separately, thereby generating certain intersubjective expectations, and by Wray's conception of formulaic sequences, suggesting that collocations are employed as continuous and inseparable fragments of interlocutors' utterances. Interpreting the notion of collocation within the frameworks of Leech's theory of pragmatic meaning and Grice's theory of conversational maxims as contributing to generating implicative meanings of the text and to retaining context, the present research seeks to find out how the collocational patterns typical for English and Uzbek literary discourses impact the efficiency of encoding emotive/pragmatic, stylistic, and cultural contextual information and explaining this impact within the contrastive linguistics and translation studies framework.

Results and Discussion

The comparative analysis discloses major disparities in the functioning of pragmalinguistic collocations between English and Uzbek literary texts, differences that are indicative of deeper typological and cultural divergences between the two linguistic systems. In English literary discourse, collocations are used to show a lot of flexibility and creative manipulation, and authors often do the extension, inversion, or intentional violation of the conventional collocation patterns to create specific pragmatic effects that include defamiliarization, irony, or emotional intensification [9]. For example, in English fiction, the collocation of verbs and nouns often means that the author uses surprising word choices that cause semantic tension, as when she says "she murdered the silence" instead of "she broke the silence," where the author employs the collocation to imply violence and aggression through the use of pragmatic implication.

The freedom in creativity shows the analytical aspect of English and its wide-ranging vocabulary, which offers a lot of words with similar meanings that can be tactically replaced in collocation frames to change the pragmatic meaning. The study found out several pragmatic uses of English collocations in literature, such as the making of narrative voice through the choice of collocations specific to the register, the invention of characterization through the use of sociolect collocations, and the alteration of reader's expectations through collocations that break the rule and thus require reinterpretation. In English literature, adjective-noun pairs often carry evaluative meanings that go beyond the literal one, with the collocations "bitter truth," "sweet revenge," and "cold comfort" bearing traditional pragmatic meanings and yet still being receptive to contextual reinterpretation.

In contrast, Uzbek literary collocations exhibit stronger formulaic stability and cultural specificity, with pragmatic meaning more deeply embedded in established patterns rather than creative violations. Uzbek collocations frequently draw on cultural frames rooted in traditional poetry, proverbs, and Islamic literary heritage, creating intertextual resonances that function pragmatically by evoking

shared cultural knowledge. For example, collocations involving concepts of honor, hospitality, or fate in Uzbek literature carry pragmatic weight derived from their cultural associations rather than from creative linguistic manipulation. The analysis revealed that Uzbek verb-complement collocations often employ specific lexical items that have no exact equivalents in English, creating translation challenges that extend beyond semantic correspondence to include pragmatic equivalence [10].

Collocations such as "ko'ngli to'ldi" (literally "heart filled," meaning satisfaction) or "yuragi ezildi" (literally "heart crushed," meaning deep disappointment) encode emotional states through body-part metaphors that function as conventional pragmatic expressions in Uzbek but require explanatory translation in English. The pragmatlinguistic analysis further revealed that emotional collocations in both languages serve as devices for indirect speech acts, allowing authors to convey character emotions and interpersonal dynamics without explicit statement [11]. However, the mechanisms differ significantly between languages. English literary texts frequently employ understatement and ironic collocation usage, where conventional positive collocations are deployed in contexts that pragmatically reverse their meaning, creating sophisticated layers of implicature accessible to culturally competent readers [12].

Uzbek literary collocations, while less prone to ironic manipulation, achieve pragmatic complexity through elaborate metaphorical systems and through the layering of Persian and Arabic lexical items that carry different registers and cultural associations. The study identified that collocations involving kinship terms, religious concepts, and natural imagery in Uzbek literature function as pragmatic anchors that situate narratives within cultural frameworks, whereas English literary collocations more frequently serve as stylistic variables that authors manipulate to create individual voice [13]. Translation analysis of parallel texts revealed systematic challenges in rendering pragmatic equivalence, with translator choices often sacrificing either semantic precision or pragmatic effect [14].

English collocations emphasizing individualism, psychological interiority, and abstract conceptualization often lack direct Uzbek equivalents that preserve both semantic and pragmatic dimensions, while Uzbek collocations embedding collectivist values, honor codes, and religious concepts similarly resist straightforward English translation. The pragmatlinguistic functions of collocations in dialogue versus narrative description also showed interesting differences between languages, with English employing collocation variation as a characterization device more extensively than Uzbek, which maintains greater collocation stability across different narrative modes [15]. These findings suggest that collocation competence in literary contexts requires not merely knowledge of conventional combinations but sophisticated pragmatic awareness of how these combinations function communicatively within specific cultural and linguistic systems.

Conclusion

This comparative investigation of collocations in English and Uzbek literary texts demonstrates that these lexical combinations function as complex pragmatlinguistic devices that encode cultural knowledge, establish stylistic effects, and convey contextual meanings extending beyond their compositional semantics. The analysis reveals fundamental differences in how the two languages deploy collocations pragmatically, with English literary tradition favoring creative manipulation and violation of collocation norms to achieve defamiliarization and stylistic distinctiveness, while Uzbek literary practice emphasizes culturally-grounded formulaic patterns that create pragmatic meaning through intertextual resonance and cultural association.

These differences reflect broader typological and cultural divergences between the languages, including English's analytical structure and extensive lexical resources versus Uzbek's agglutinative morphology and culture-specific semantic fields. The findings have significant implications for several areas of linguistic research and application. For translation studies, the research underscores the inadequacy of purely semantic approaches to collocation translation, demonstrating the necessity

of pragmatic equivalence strategies that consider cultural context, register, and communicative function. Translators working between English and Uzbek must recognize that successful collocation rendering requires not merely finding lexical correspondences but recreating pragmatic effects within the target language's collocation system.

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