



## THE ROLE OF COLLOCATIONS IN ENRICHING ENGLISH VOCABULARY

**Orinbaeva Kamila Baxadirovna**

*2<sup>nd</sup> year student at the University of Innovation Technologies*

**Supervisor: Kalimbetova Xurliman Islambekovna**

*Assistant Teacher at the University of Innovation Technologies*

**Abstract.** *This paper examines the role of collocations in enriching English vocabulary. It explains how collocations make speech and writing sound more natural and fluent, describes common collocation types, and discusses methods for teaching collocations to language learners.*

**Keywords:** *collocation, vocabulary, language learning*

**Annotatsiya.** *Ushbu maqolada ingliz tilidagi birikmalar (collocations)ning lugʻat boyligini oshirishdagi roli oʻrganiladi. Unda collocationlar nutq va yozuvni tabiiyroq va ravonroq qilishi, collocation turlari va ularni oʻqitish usullari bayon etiladi.*

**Kalit soʻzlar:** *collocation, lugʻat boyligi, til oʻrganish*

**Аннотация.** *В статье рассматривается роль словосочетаний (collocations) в обогащении словарного запаса английского языка. Описывается, как коллокации делают речь и письмо более естественными и беглыми, приводятся типы коллокаций и методы их преподавания.*

**Ключевые слова:** *коллокации, словарный запас, изучение языка*

### Introduction

Language is a tool for expressing thought, and vocabulary forms its foundation. Knowing individual words is necessary, but learners also need to know how words typically combine in natural speech. These habitual combinations are called collocations. For example, native speakers say *make a mistake* rather than *do a mistake*, and *heavy rain* rather than *strong rain*; such preferences are the result of conventional usage and help language sound natural [1, 26]. Recent studies emphasize that collocational knowledge supports both comprehension and production, enabling learners to understand texts faster and speak with greater fluency [2, 34].

Collocations can be described as recurrent word combinations whose joint occurrence is statistically and semantically motivated. Common categories include adjective + noun (e.g., *strong tea*, *heavy rain*), verb + noun (e.g., *make a decision*, *take responsibility*), noun + noun (e.g., *language barrier*, *data analysis*), adverb + adjective (e.g., *deeply concerned*, *highly effective*), and verb + adverb (e.g., *speak loudly*, *run quickly*) [3, 55]. Recognizing these patterns helps learners produce idiomatic phrases



rather than awkward literal translations, which improves both accuracy and acceptability in communication [1, 30].

Empirical research shows several benefits of learning vocabulary through collocations. Nesselhauf argues that collocational knowledge reduces grammatical errors and increases the meaningfulness of learner output, because learners who know common word pairings are less likely to produce unnatural combinations [1, 30]. Schmitt highlights that collocations are stored and recalled more effectively than isolated words, partly because collocational chunks reduce cognitive load and provide ready-made units for speech and writing [2, 62]. In practical terms, teaching collocations supports retention and automatization, making it easier for learners to retrieve language under time pressure, such as during conversation or exams [5, 37].

Traditional vocabulary teaching often relies on memorizing long word lists, but this approach can leave learners uncertain about correct combinations and register. Context-based methods, which present words together with their typical collocates, are more effective. For instance, learning *commit a crime* in context is more useful than learning *commit* and *crime* separately, because context clarifies the correct collocational partner and usage [6, 39]. Classroom activities that focus on collocation — such as matching exercises, gap-fill tasks, and corpus-based searches — encourage learners to notice frequent pairings and to practice producing them naturally [7, 48].

Modern digital tools and corpora offer powerful resources for collocation teaching. Corpora like the British National Corpus (BNC) and the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA) allow teachers and learners to observe real usage and frequency patterns, which helps to distinguish common collocations from rare or context-specific ones [3, 61]. Teachers can design activities where students compare native-speaker examples from corpora with learner-produced sentences, highlighting mismatches and guiding correction. Similarly, learning platforms and vocabulary apps that expose learners to authentic collocations through examples, spaced repetition, and contextualized sentences further reinforce collocational knowledge [6, 41].

Collocational competence also positively affects writing quality. Students who use appropriate collocations tend to produce texts that sound more coherent, idiomatic, and academically suitable. In speaking, collocations support fluency: having phraseological chunks ready to use reduces hesitation and translation from the native language [5, 37]. Consequently, integrating collocations into curriculum design contributes to learners' communicative competence across skills and contexts.

To implement collocation-focused instruction, teachers can adopt several practical steps. First, introduce high-frequency collocations related to the learners' level and subject matter. Second, use corpus examples and authentic texts to demonstrate natural usage. Third, design communicative activities (role-plays, dialogues, and information-gap tasks) that require the use of target collocations in meaningful contexts. Finally, provide regular recycling through written and oral practice so that



collocations become automatized [7, 59]. These measures help learners internalize common word combinations and apply them spontaneously in real communication.

### **Conclusion**

In sum, collocations form a crucial bridge between vocabulary knowledge and fluent language use. Teaching and learning collocations through contextualized activities and corpus-informed materials enhance learners' ability to speak and write naturally. A systematic approach to collocational instruction—combining explanation, controlled practice, communicative use, and corpus exposure—will strengthen both vocabulary retention and overall language proficiency [2, 34; 6, 41].

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