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| RESEARCH ARTICLE

## Collocations in Short Stories

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| ABSTRACT

Collocation is a universal term found in any language, yet it has not got much attention. In comparison to other aspects of language, collocation is new to linguistics because of its nature; it is controversial and open to debate in linguistics. This study investigates the use of collocation in short stories and compares old and modern in terms of employing collocations. The paper attempts to answer these questions: What is collocation? What are the major characteristics of collocations? How do different writers present collocations? How are collocations utilized in old and modern literature and what effect do they have in this discourse? For the purpose of analyzing data, the researcher follows a qualitative method and adopts Haussmann's (1989) model. Tables that cover percentages and frequencies are provided to support the qualitative analysis. Concerning data, four short stories are chosen. The study concludes that ancient and modern writers employ different structures of collocation. However, the Adjective-Noun pattern is used more frequently than others.

| KEYWORDS

Collocation, Ancient writings, Modern writings, Short Stories.

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### 1. Introduction

Collocations are a group of words that come together frequently in texts such as "make a wish" or "take a chance." Definitions vary greatly. The term was first devised by the British linguist J.R. Firth in the 1950s to refer to the common co-occurrence of particular words. He said, "You shall know a word by the company it keeps" (Firth, 1957, p.11). Firth claimed that the resultant meaning is derived from the meaning of the words with which it co-occurs. According to Joshi (2021), collocation is when two words go and sound naturally together, e.g., it is more natural to say "don't commit a crime" instead of saying "don't do a crime."

In modern English, collocations occur in various contexts in which a word is used with another habitually with some restrictions. Palmer (1981, p.79) presented three types of collocational restriction. Some collocations are restricted to the meaning of the items, as in "green cow." Others collocate according to range depending on similarity in semantic features, as in the unlikelihood of "the rhododendron passed away" and "the pretty boy." Finally, some limitations are collocational in the firmest sense, as it doesn't depend on meaning or range, as in "addled eggs."

Meaning by collocation refers to how words are used together in a sentence rather than the individual meaning of each word. For example, one of the ways in which the word "night" can be used is in combination with "dark"; similarly, "dark" can be used in combination with "night" (Hipkiss, 2014, p. 59). For Firth, the meaning of this combination, which he called collocation, can be kept by keeping company and found in the context of a situation. Thus, different contexts can give different meanings for collocations. Nida (1964, p.98), as cited in Palmer (1981, p.76), for instance, discussed the use of chairs in different contexts in which the pairs have four different meanings:

1. "sat in a chair."

2. "the baby's high chair"
3. "the chair of philosophy"
4. "has accepted a University chair."
5. "the chairman of the meeting"
6. "will chair the meeting."
7. "the electric chair"
8. "condemned to the chair."

Collocation involves more than just connecting ideas. For example, we don't say "white milk" simply because the milk is white. It can be quite specific and not easily predicted based on the meaning of the words involved. For instance, we typically use "blond" in connection with "hair". We wouldn't normally refer to "a blond door" or "a blond dress," even if the color of the object is similar to that of blond hair (Palmer, 1981, p. 77).

The purpose of this paper is to study the different uses of collocation in short stories as well as the effect these collocations have on the text being under investigation and to find out the writer's intention behind such uses. A study of collocation in short stories includes "A Day at Sea," "The Beach," "By the Mountains: Regret," and "A Provincial Family Feud".

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1 Collocation: Definitions**

The concept of collocation is considered one of the most controversial notions in linguistics, even though it refers to certain words that tend to occur close to each other in natural language. Francis Bacon was the first to use the word collocation in his *Natural History* from 1627. Palmer, on the other hand, was the first to use it as a linguistic term in the 1930s to refer to combinatory units of words. This denotation is typical and close to modern uses, such as a natural combination of words (McCarthy & O'Dell, 2005, as cited in Gyllstad, 2007). J. R. Firth (1957) stands out as the pioneering scholar in the examination of collocation, earning high respect for his contributions to and development of collocations. Widely revered as the father of collocation, he introduced the concept as the habitual co-occurrence of words such as "rotten food" and "rancid butter," asserting that the meaning and usage of a word can be determined by its neighboring words. Palmer (1972) concurs with Firth's definition of collocation and the habitual co-occurrence of words like "pass" and "make," which occur more frequently with "judgment" and "decision," as in "passing judgment" and "making a decision." It's crucial to note that the verbs in these collocations cannot be changed due to collocational restrictions.

According to Gramley and Patzold (2004, p.51), "The term collocation refers to combinations of two lexical items, each of which makes a distinct semantic contribution, belongs to a different word class, and shows a restricted range." These two writers presented collocation as a combination of two lexical items and not as grammatical items.

In *Encyclopedic Graded Grammar*, collocation is "a combination of words in language that happens very often and more frequently than would happen by chance." While *Cambridge Learner's Dictionary English-Russian* offers a slightly different definition, collocation is "a word or phrase that sounds natural and correct when it is used with another word or phrase" (2011, p.159); the latter drags the phrase into notion, yet they both agree on the habitual co-occurrence of words in certain distance. Sinclair (1991, p.170) states that collocation is "the co-occurrence of two or more words within a short space of each other in a text. The natural measure of proximity is a maximum of four words intervening".

According to (Croft and Cruse, 2004, p. 249), collocation is "a combination of words that are preferred over other combinations that otherwise appear to be semantically equivalent." It is true that the words "toasted" and "roasted" are different words that are used for the same process. However, each collocates with certain words that can't be replaced, i.e., "roasted meat" and "toasted bread" (Matthews, 1981, p. 5).

Martynska (2004, p.5) explains that collocation refers to the ability of words to occur together and form meaningful connections with one another naturally. For example, while words like flock, herd, school, and pride are all used to describe groups of animals, they each collocate with specific words. For instance, we say "a flock of sheep," "a herd of cows," "a school of whales," and "a pride of lions."

### **2.2 Structure of Collocation**

Distinguishing collocations from other combinations can be a challenging task. To make it easier, it might be helpful to classify collocations based on their size and type or by the number of words they consist of that modify the meaning. This can help readers better understand the context in which collocations occur in the text.

Collocation is a combination of two words; one of the words is more prominent and dominating as compared with the other word that is attached to it to delimit its meaning. Sinclair (1991, p. 115) introduces the two terminologies "Node" and "Span." Node is the main word in combination, while "Span" refers to the number of relevant words on either side of a given node. Later, Sinclair (Ibid) modified the previous concept slightly and developed a new approach. In this new approach, both the lexical and grammatical aspects of collocation are taken into consideration. Therefore, he (Ibid. p. 116) categorizes collocations into two groups:

1. Upward collocation
2. Downward collocation

The first group consists of words that commonly occur together with other words more often than the second group. For example, "back" often occurs with "at, down, from, into, and on." These words are more frequent and are commonly used in natural language. On the other hand, "downward collocations" are words that typically occur with less frequent words. For instance, "arrive" and "bring" are less frequent words that often occur with "back". Sinclair (1991) distinguishes between these two categories by pointing out that elements of "upward" are mostly adverbs, pronouns, and prepositions, which tend to form grammatical collocations, while "downward" collocations, mostly nouns and verbs, form lexical collocations (Ibid).

Hausmann (1989, p.1010), cited in (Seretan, 2011, p.13), defines collocations as "a characteristic combination of two words in a structure." He (1979, 1985) categorizes collocations syntactically into a "base" and a "collocator" and explained that the item whose meaning is not changed after collocated is called "base," and the other item which is selected by the base is called "collocate". In a collocation, the base chooses the collocate, not vice versa, and the meaning of base dominates collocated words. He classified collocations into six types according to their syntactic structures. These categories are shown in table 1:

**Table 1: Collocation Syntactic Structures According to Hausmann (1989).**

No.	Structure	Type	Example
1	Verb + Noun	Collocate + Base	carry insurance
2	Adjective + Noun	Collocate + Base	heavy smoker
3	Noun + Verb	Base + Collocate	dogs bark
4	Noun + Noun	Base + Collocate	Lemon tree
5	Verb + Adverb	Base + Collocate	confess frankly
6	Adverb+ Adjective	Base + Collocate	deeply disappointed

### 3. Methodology

The research was conducted by adopting Hausmann's (1989) model to analyze the selected data. The model of analysis follows the syntactic classification of collocations used in four short stories. The study is based on a qualitative method of analysis in investigating its aims, supported by tables of percentages and frequencies to show the results of the analysis. The following figure shows the model proposed by Hausmann (1989) that presents a theoretical framework for analyzing collocations according to their structures.

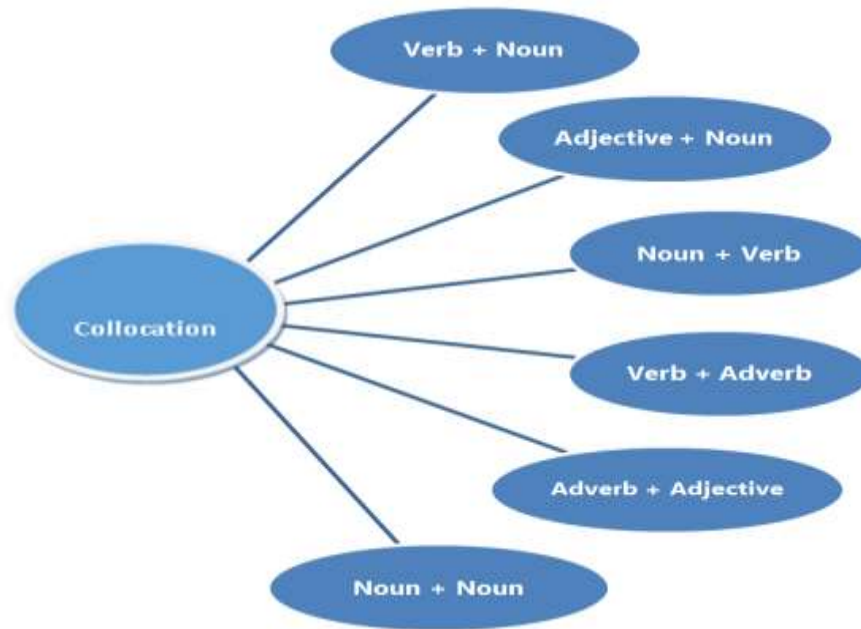


Figure 1: Hausmann’s (1989) framework

The selected data includes one old short story and three modern short stories. The number of short stories was selected according to word counting so that old and modern short stories would be compatible in length.

**4. Results and Discussion**

Analyzing the four short stories shows that collocation is used with its different structure. However, some structures are used more often than others. Tables 2 and 3 provide information about the frequency and percentage of each use. They show that the A-N pattern is the most frequent structure in both ancient and old writings, with percentages of 62.5% and 52.3%, respectively. Whereas the pattern Adv-A has the lowest frequency with a rate of 1%. Modern use of collocation is almost compatible with the ancient use, with some divergence in frequency. The results show that the pattern A-N is used more frequently in ancient writings, whereas the pattern N-V is used more frequently in modern literature. Table 2 shows the use of collocations in ancient writings, and Table 3 shows the use of collocations in modern writings, in which both classify collocations into different structures:

**Table 2: Occurrences of Collocations in Ancient Writings**

No.	Structure	Type	Example
<b>Provincial Family Feud (1859) by Ivan Turgenev</b>			
1	Verb + Noun	Collocate + Base	Spilling blood Spilled money Disregarded the boundaries Showered legal documents Rubbed their hands Heard mass Wore blue gowns Heard a murmur Caught his sister Bared the shutters Blotted the words See the ruins Assumed the behavior Maintained a live Persuaded the parents Losing property Disguising or smoothing their voice Evade the vigilance

			<p>Be married          Awoke attention          Overlooked his neighbor's courtyard          Built a dove-cote</p>
2	Adjective + Noun	Collocate + Base	<p>Rival families          Small scale          Dead relations          Obstinate delight          Provincial life          Wrong direction          Unruly goat          Obscured and stupid potatoes          Legal documents          Barbarous invasions          Deep and declare enmity          Different churches          Blue gowns          Pink ones          Municipal council          Evil-speaking complaints          Pleasing things          Provincial towns          Eldest son          Small town          Social dancing party          Grumbling grandfathers          Priestly uncle          Comparable fortune          Provincial customs          Feeble lamps          Hapless heroines          Fantastic passions          Exceptional love          Furtive glance          Softly murmured word          Singular perception          Sudden pallor          Sudden blush          Armed intervention          Old girl          Flat iron          True love          Brief reply          Little letter          Long letter          Voluminous epistles          Highest point          Young people          Respective Papas          Poor lovers          Bated breath          First floor          Young friend          Continual fear          Resounding box          Small window</p>

			<p>Faithful lovers          Thwarted love          Exclamation points          Prussian soldiers          Daily imprecations          Fantastic plan          Long run          Faithful paper          Unshakable love          General interest          Melancholy air          Joyless days          Lonely walks          Poor young man          Unfortunate love          Unwearying monotony          Continual struggle          Daily weeping          Long love          Worthy person          Greatly consoled          Sincere story-teller          Free colloquy          Great embarrassment          Silly couples          Series piece          Great coolness          Stupid marriage          Lively remarks          Optical delusions          Similar pinpricks          Irritated tone          Heroic husband</p>
3	Noun + Verb	Base + Collocate	<p>Lawyer toiled          Lawsuits grew          Advocates rubbed          Affirmations varied          Women heard          Girls wore          Carnation-pink fallen          News reached          Love became          Neopolitan arrived          Townsfolk took          Love affair saddens          Love maintained          Christ forgave          Questions came          Lovers felt          A quarrel ensued          Doves ran          Advocates said</p>
4	Noun + Noun	Base + Collocate	<p>Parish priest          Household comings and goings          Balcony windows          Terrace door</p>

5			Exclamation points Girl friends Love affair First-floor window
	Verb + Adverb	Base + Collocate	Be clearly Looking askance Married prosaically

**Table 3: Occurrences of Collocations in Modern Writings**

No.	Structure	Type	Example
<b>A day at sea (2022) by Hania Khan</b>			
1	Verb + Noun	Collocate + Base	Parked the car Deserve a break Take a stroll Drenching the sand and my feet Scorched our bodies Adding salt Huddled together Watch the day
2	Adjective + Noun	Collocate + Base	Ideal day Shady spot First glimpse Fresh air Dreamy sea Hot day Added bonus Uncrowded beach Balanced weather Slothful sea Golden brown sand Cold winter night Barbecued aromas Rumbling stomachs One pristine sunset Tanned leather
3	Noun + Verb	Base + Collocate	Sun shined Breeze helped Sand felt Sun scorched Aromas drift Daytime neared Day come
4	Noun + Noun	Base + Collocate	Sea side Candy floss Acetylene blue colour Neon blue colour Beach picnic Chlorine-like odour
5	Adverb + Adjective	Collocate + Base	Perfectly balanced
<b>The Beach (2022) by Claire Miller</b>			
1	Verb + Noun	Collocate + Base	Letting the water Run riot Letting the sea-cat Leaving the infants Make sandcastle

2	Adjective + Noun	Collocate + Base	Dragging their children Cool rippling surface Exquisite scene Gold medal Sleeping creatures Beautiful day Older siblings Hundred cries Turquoise swirls Deep blue carpet Nourishing sea Nice long sunbathing Wonderful feeling Powdery sand Blissful sensation Cool waves Blood-red sky Petty attempt Silver gown
	Noun + Verb	Base + Collocate	Sun shines Cars drive Mums screech Dads huff and grumble Joy down out Sea cools Sea-cat rub The hours whiz by People come and go Parents dragging Person turns to Sky swirls Sea kicks
4	Noun + Noun	Base + Collocate	Parking space Deck chair Sunbathing session
5	Verb + Adverb	Base + Collocate	Shines happily Run frantically Giggling wildly
<b>By The Mountain: Regret</b>			
1	Verb + Noun	Collocate + Base	Reached the opening Laced the edge Lost her husband Dulling their brightness Climb mount Everest
2	Adjective + Noun	Collocate + Base	Warm tones Shiny silver plaque Curved structure Carefree one Best side Best verdant hues Golden shafts Vibrant colours Marigold depths Marmalade orange Few white clouds Crimson halo



3			Tranquil breeze Iridescent leaves Green plants Smooth texture Lazy ripples Gentle, artistic shops Grey hair Pearl river Black orbs Thin, fragile glass Pure water Chocolate brown hair Lone goldfish Questioning eyes Playful gestures Little bubble Steely determination Aged appearance Youthful spirit Meaningless reasons Countless doubts Beloved wife
	Noun + Verb	Base + Collocate	Trees rose Sky flaunted Tranquil breeze brushing Wrinkles blossomed Grey hair fell Tears streaked The fish looked The rainbow of flowers dulling
4	Noun + Noun	Base + Collocate	Water's edge Life's desire

Table 4 includes the results of the four short stories *A Day at Sea*, *The Beach*, *By the Mountains: Regret*, and *A Provincial Family Feud*. These stories have several collocation forms, but we can notice that the use of some forms of structure is more frequent than the others. The following table shows the frequencies and percentages of the co-occurrence of collocation forms:

**Table 4: Frequencies and Percentages of the Co-Occurrence of Collocation**

Collocation Structures		Occurrences						Total
		Verb + Noun	Adjective + Noun	Noun + Verb	Noun + Noun	Verb + Adverb	Adverb + Adjective	
Ancient writings	Frequencies	22	85	19	8	3	0	136
	Percentages	16.17 %	62.5 %	13.97 %	5.88 %	2.2 %	0 %	100 %
Modern writings	Frequencies	19	68	28	11	3	1	130
	Percentages	14.6 %	52.3 %	21.53 %	8.46 %	2.3 %	0.77 %	100 %
Total	Frequencies	41	153	47	19	6	1	266
	Percentages	15.4 %	57.5 %	17.67 %	7.14 %	2.25 %	0.37 %	100 %

## **5. Conclusion**

The analysis of using collocations in the four short stories reached valuable insights into its structure, the writer's style, and the theme of the narrative. Collocation refers to the frequent occurrence of two or more words appearing together in a text, and these combinations can reveal patterns in the language and the author's choices. The study shows that ancient and modern writers used the combination of A-N in their writings more frequently than other patterns. The four stories are descriptive in nature, and the writers used adjectives to describe nouns. Adjectives can be useful in providing more information about the qualities and characteristics of the nouns and clarifying the exact noun being referred to. Thus, the writers used descriptive adjectives to make their writing more engaging and appealing, drawing readers in and creating a deeper connection to the topic of the story.

The study also concludes that the A-N pattern is used more frequently in ancient writing than in modern writing. This could be due to the theme of the story, which is a conflict between tradition and modernity. The writer has to describe the different characteristics of people and situations of traditional individuals and communities and modern ones using clear and simple patterns aiming to convey the message easily to a wide range of readers.

Writers of modern writings used the combination of N-V more frequently in modern literature to make the text more readable and easier to understand since they follow a common pattern in language use and to create a sense of coherence and unity, making the story more engaging for readers. In addition, it can help create vivid images in the reader's mind, enhancing the story's overall effect.

In summary, the writers of different eras used different structures of collocations with different frequencies. However, both used simple and clear language patterns to make it easier for readers to understand and convey their messages clearly and concisely.

For further studies, the researcher suggests exploring the use of collocations by University staff of different departments to find similarities and differences among them and how these differences affect communication.

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