




# ***MODERN ENGLISH LEXICOLOGY***

Problems of Collocability.  
Word-groups in English.

# Problems for discussion

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- The notion of “collocability” (valency);
- The notion of “word-group”;
- The role of lexical and grammatical valency in uniting words into word-groups;
- The norm of lexical and grammatical valency;
- Linguistic properties of word-groups:
  -  structure;
  -  meaning;
  -  motivation;

# Valency and word-group studies in Linguistics

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The problems of valency and collocability:

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The «word-group theory»:

А.А. Шахматов  
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# What is collocability?

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**Collocability** (also *valency*, *distributional characteristics*, *colligation*, *collocation*) is the ability of the units of the language - phonemes, morphemes, words - to form units of higher level.

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В.Г. Гак: «Сочетаемость – свойство языковых единиц сочетаться при образовании единиц более высокого уровня; одно из фундаментальных свойств языковых единиц, отражающее синтагматические отношения между ними» [БЭС «Языкознание», стр. 483]

## What is a word-group?

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**A word group** is the largest two facet lexical unit comprising more than one word.

*red tape*

*beautiful girl*

*to walk slowly*

# **Words are united into word-groups thanks to the following linguistic factors**

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Lexical valency (collocability)

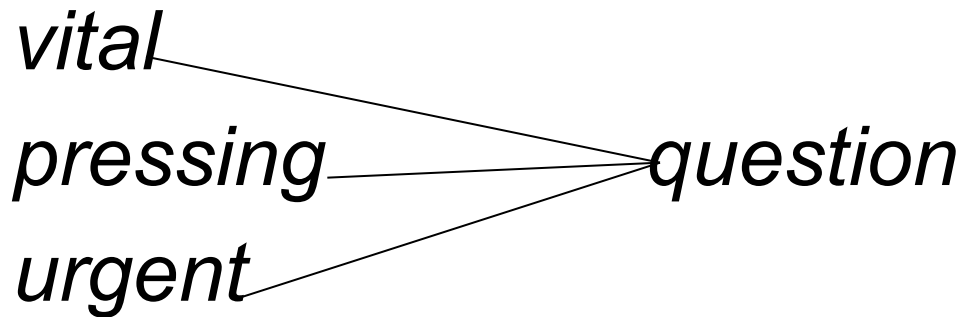
Grammatical valency (collocability)

# Lexical valency

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**Lexical valency** is the ability of a word to appear in various combinations:

*vital*  
*pressing*  
*urgent*                      *question*



But not: sweet question  
green question



## **The norm of lexical valency**

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**The range (norm) of lexical valency** is determined by the *semantic agreement* – the semes of the combining words should not disagree (violate the logical norms).

For example, a verb, denoting an action characteristic of a living being agrees only with an animate noun.

# Example 1: a dog barks

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Dog - an animal kept as a pet, for guarding buildings, or for hunting.

to bark - to make the short loud sound that a dog makes

## Example 2: a pen barks

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Pen - an object that you use for writing or drawing with ink

Object - a thing that you can see and touch that is not alive and is usually solid □ an inanimate object can't produce sounds.

# **Grammatical valency**

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**Grammatical valency** is the aptness of a word to appear in specific grammatical (syntactic) structures.

# The norm of grammatical valency

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**The norm of grammatical valency** is determined by the part of speech of the word:

The property of the object □ Adj. + N

a green apple

The diagram illustrates the grammatical structure of the noun phrase 'a green apple'. It shows the phrase 'The property of the object' followed by a square symbol and the grammatical pattern 'Adj. + N'. Three arrows originate from this text: one points to the article 'a', one points to the adjective 'green', and one points to the noun 'apple' in the phrase 'a green apple' below.

## **The structure of the word-group influences on its meaning:**

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**keen + N** - *keen sight, hearing* "острый"

**keen + on + N** - *keen on sports* "увлеченный"

**keen + inf.** - *keen to know* "сильно желающий".

# Linguistic properties of the word-group

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structure

meaning

motivation

lexical

grammatical

lexical structural

# Structure of word-groups

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## **(1) the order of the components:**

- a verbal - nominal group:

*to sew a dress, to read a book;*

- a verbal - prepositional - nominal group

*to look at something;*



# Structure of word-groups

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## (2) the criterion of distribution:

(distribution - the sum of contexts of the language unit):

- **endocentric** - have one central member functionally equivalent to the whole word-group, while all other members of the group are subordinated to it:

*I saw a red flower – I saw a flower;*

- **exocentric** - having no central member:

*become older, side by side;*

# Structure of word-groups

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**(3) according to the part of speech of the headword:**

- nominal (*beautiful garden*);
- verbal (*to fly high*);
- adjectival (*lucky from birth*);

## Structure of word-groups

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### **(4) according to the syntactic pattern:**

- *predicative* - have a syntactic structure similar to that of a sentence (*he went*);
- *non-predicative* are subdivided according to the type of syntactic relations between the components into:
  - (a) *subordinative* (*modern technology*);
  - (b) *coordinative* (*husband and wife*).

# Meaning of word-groups

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The meaning of a word group is derived

- (a) from the combined lexical meanings of its components – lexical meaning,
- (b) from the meaning of the pattern of their arrangement – grammatical\structural meaning,
- (c) from the extra-linguistic situation in which word-groups are habitually used by native speakers

## **Lexical meaning**

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**The Lexical meaning** of the word-group may be defined as the combined lexical meaning of the component words.

*Blind man*

*Blind type*

# Grammatical meaning

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**Grammatical \ structural meaning** is conveyed by the order and arrangement of member words:

*grammar school*

*school grammar*

# The most frequent patterns of word-groups in English

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- Adj. + N

*nice cap*

- V + N

*to built houses*

- V + N + V (Inf.)

*to make somebody work*

- V + Prep. + N

*to rely on somebody*

- V + N + Prep. + N

*to hold something against somebody*

- V + V (Inf.)

*to get to know*

# Lexical motivation

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Word-groups are **lexically motivated** if the combined lexical meaning of the groups is deducible from the meaning of their components:

*red flower*

*tall boy*

*beautiful carpet*



## Structural motivation

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Word-groups are **structurally motivated** if the meaning of the pattern is deducible from the order and arrangement of the member-words of the group

The word-group: *yellow bag*

The pattern: *Adj + N*

The meaning: «*quality - substance*»

# Degree of motivation

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## Complete motivation:

*Black dress – dress of black colour*

## Partial motivation:

*Black market – illegal market*

## Non motivated:

*Black death - a disease that killed millions of people in Europe and Asia in the 14th century. Its medical name is bubonic plague.*

# **Non-motivated word-groups (set-expressions)**

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**Lexically non-motivated** word-groups are word-groups in which the constituents do not possess any individual lexical meaning of their own:

*heavy father - serious or solemn part in a theatrical play.*