




MODERN ENGLISH LEXICOLOGY

Problems of Collocability.
Word-groups in English.

Problems for discussion

- 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

The problems of valency and collocability:

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The «word-group theory»:

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What is collocability?

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.

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?

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

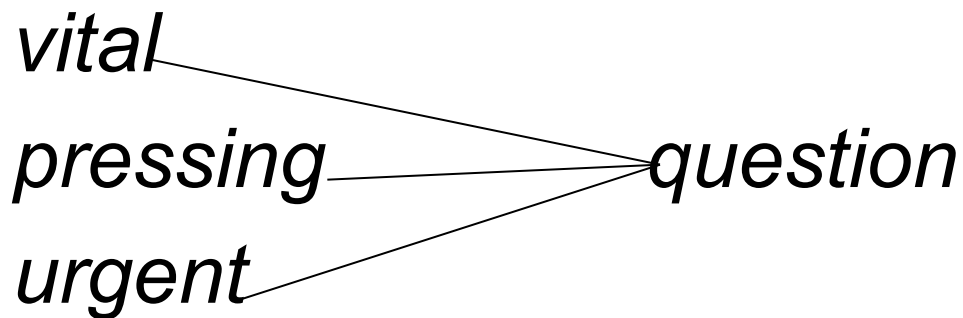
Lexical valency (collocability)

Grammatical valency (collocability)

Lexical valency

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

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

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

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

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

The norm of grammatical valency

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 structure of the word-group influences on its meaning:

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

structure

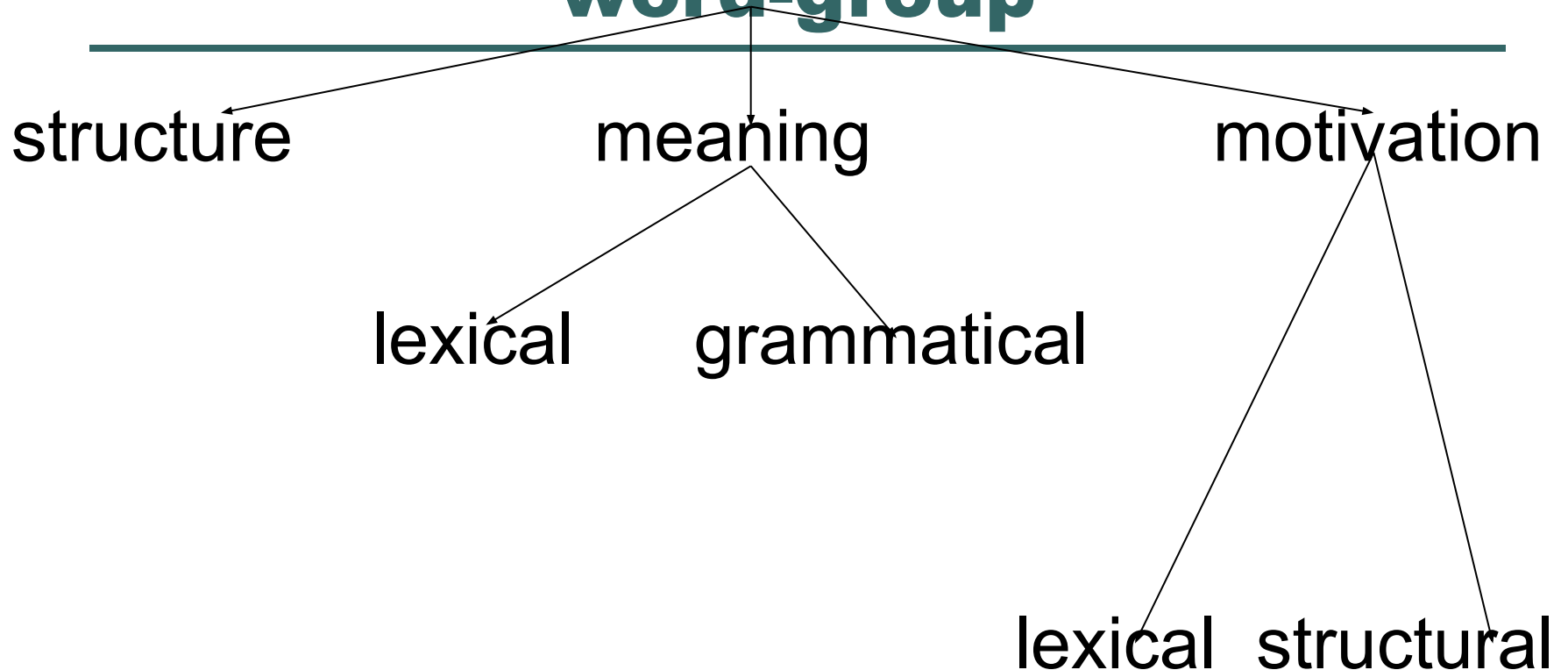
meaning

motivation

lexical

grammatical

lexical structural



Structure of word-groups

(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

(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

(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

(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

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

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

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

- 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

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

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

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)

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.*