

Handout - week 6

COLLOCATIONS/WORD GROUPS. PHRASEOLOGICAL UNITS. LEXICAL CHAINS.

Collocation – the habitual, frequent co-occurrence or mutual selection of lexical items.

Phrase – a cluster of words smaller than a clause, forming a grammatical unit. Such clusters are sometimes called **groups**.

Lexical phrases (= sentence stems, composite forms, language chunks) –

- **polywords** (function like individual lexemes: *by the way, so to speak*)
- **institutionalized expressions** (function as separate utterances; they are invariable, unseparable – like polywords) (*Have a nice day. Give me a break.*)
- **phrasal constraints** (some variation possible: *as far as I ____, a ____ ago*)
- **sentence builders** (considerable variation possible: *not only ____, but also ____; let me begin by ____*).

Idiom – a sequence of words functioning as one lexeme. Its meaning cannot be deduced by examining or adding up the meanings of its constituent words. Idioms are fixed, both grammatically and lexically.

Exercise 1:

How do the following adjectives collocate with the nouns? Indicate normal collocations with a tick, doubtful or unusual ones with a question mark, and unacceptable ones with a cross.

	problem	amount	shame	man
Large				
Great				
big				
Major				

(According to Michael McCarthy: *Vocabulary*)

Exercise 2:

Which of the following groups of idioms would you label as transparent, i.e. easy to understand without previously knowing them, just from the meaning of their constituents, which would be semi-transparent, and which opaque, i.e non-transparent?

What characterizes the second group?

- to be out of favour
- to give someone the gate
- to bring st. to light

to be like greased lightning

to grasp at straws

to be rolling in money

salt of the earth

no soap

to rob the cradle

to let up

to put sand in the wheels

to be a gone goose

to live on the fat of the land

Exercise 3:

What is the connection between an idiom and a metaphor? What is the result of the process of semantic shift? How were the idioms included in the following sentences formed?

His eyes are bigger than his belly.

I am all eyes.

At last, the company went belly up.
His fingers are all thumbs.
My mum has a green thumb.
Alison's family gave Terry the could shoulder.
Jews rub shoulders with Muslims and Orthodox Christians here.
Don't talk to us with a chip on your shoulder!
That rings a bell.
Are you prepared to bell the cat?
His grandfather was eighty-six when he kicked off.
The paint won't come off. How did you come off? Come off it!

Am I my brother's keeper? (The Bible)
Beggars must not be choosers.

Lexical chains - in written and spoken discourses, vocabulary items re-occur in different forms across boundaries (clause-, sentence-, or turn-boundaries), creating regular patterns.

Exact repetition x reiteration/relexicalization

Negotiation of meaning - meanings become fixed in context by the lexical environment created around them by the different speakers or by a writer varying lexical choice.

Exercise 4:

How is the meaning negotiated in the following conversations using lexical variation?

- I didn't know he can't speak English.
- Actually, he can't speak any foreign language.

- She looks beautiful in the new dress.
- Yeah, she looks totally awesome!
- As pretty as a picture.

- And the people were very polite.
- Yes, not at all rude. Even the kids were well-behaved.

Exercise 5:

*Find repetitions and relexicalizations in the written extract and label them as **exact repetition**, **synonym** and **superordinate**:*

BAGHDAD

A deal with a turbulent Shia and talks with rebel Sunnis offer a chance of respite

Hundreds of gun owners have been converging on police stations in Sadr City, the rebellious Shia slums of northeastern Baghdad, to give up arms for cash. Some came with plastic bags of rocket-launchers, others with carloads of mortar rounds. But many others simply wanted to know the price they could get for their private arsenals. Still, for the militiamen of Muqtada al-Sadr's Mahdi Army even to consider selling off their weapons suggests they may not be bent on using them in the immediate future against American troops or Iraqi police or soldiers loyal to the interim government. Some militiamen admitted that they hated to surrender the arms - a badge of honour for many Iraqi families. But they said they had to obey Mr Sadr and turn themselves from a fighting militia into a peaceful political movement. If this actually happens, it will hugely buoy hopes that Iraq's government and its American backers can bring Iraq to a more-or-less credible election in January.

Still, it is easy to be cynical about the arms deal. To qualify to take part in the election, Mr Sadr's lot must divest itself of its militia - and arms. Yet even after he said he would dissolve his Mahdi Army, American troops claim to have uncovered arms caches in mosques loyal to the cleric. Some even fear

that under the arms deal Mr Sadr's people may unload their broken machineguns and rusty rockets ,
then use the cash to stock up with newer weapons.