ISSN:2828-6235
Impact factor:13.77

International Journal of Literature and Language Studies(IJLLS)

THE ROLE OF IDIOMS AND COLLOCATIONS IN DEVELOPING COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE

Ergasheva E'zoza Ozod qizi

Samarkand State of Foreign Languages Faculty of Philology and Translation

Doi: https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.23423184

Abstract. Communicative competence is the core objective of modern foreign language teaching, emphasizing not only grammatical correctness but also sociolinguistic appropriateness and natural language use. Idioms and collocations—collectively known as formulaic language—play a pivotal role in achieving naturalness and fluency in English as a Foreign Language (EFL). This paper investigates the impact of idioms and collocations on building communicative competence among EFL learners. Through an analysis of syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic functions, the study highlights how mastery of collocations enhances lexical accuracy, while idioms foster cultural fluency and stylistic flexibility. The article also discusses common pedagogical challenges, such as mother-tongue interference and literal translation, offering practical strategies for integrating contextualized phraseology into English language instruction.

Keywords: communicative competence, collocations, idioms, formulaic language, EFL methodology, lexical approach, native-like fluency.

Annotatsiya. Zamonaviy chet tillarini o'qitishning asosiy maqsadi nafaqat grammatik to'g'rilikni, balki tilning tabiiyligi va sotsiolingvistik mosligini ta'minlaydigan kommunikativ kompetensiyani rivojlantirishdir. Idioma va kollokatsiyalar (birgalikda frazeologik birliklar) ingliz tilini xorijiy til sifatida (EFL) o'rganuvchilarda tabiiy so'zlashuv hamda ravonlikni shakllantirishda muhim o'rin tutadi. Ushbu maqolada ibora va kollokatsiyalarning EFL o'rganuvchilarida kommunikativ kompetensiyani oshirishga ko'rsatadigan ta'siri tahlil qilinadi. Sintaktik, semantik va pragmatik funksiyalarni o'rganish orqali kollokatsiyalarni o'zlashtirish leksik aniqlikni, idiomalar esa madaniy ravonlik hamda stilistik moslashuvchanlikni oshirishi ko'rsatib berilgan. Maqolada, shuningdek, ona tilining salbiy ta'siri (interferensiya) hamda so'zma-so'z tarjima qilish kabi metodik muammolar ko'rib chiqilib, ularni bartaraf etish bo'yicha amaliy tavsiyalar berilgan.

Kalit so'zlar: kommunikativ kompetensiya, kollokatsiyalar, idiomalar, frazeologik birliklar, EFL metodikasi, leksik yondashuv, ravon so'zlashuv.

Аннотация. Коммуникативная компетенция является ключевой целью современного преподавания иностранных языков, подчеркивая не только грамматическую правильность, но и социолингвистическую уместность и естественность речи. Идиомы и коллокации (формульный язык) играют решающую роль в достижении беглости и естественности речи у изучающих английский язык как иностранный (EFL). В данной статье исследуется влияние идиом и коллокаций на формирование коммуникативной компетенции учащихся. Путем анализа синтаксических, семантических и прагматических функций показано, как освоение коллокаций повышает лексическую точность, а идиомы способствуют культурологической беглости и стилистической гибкости. Также рассматриваются методические трудности, такие как интерференция родного языка и буквальный перевод, и

предлагаются практические стратегии интеграции контекстуализированной фразеологии в обучение.

Ключевые слова: коммуникативная компетенция, коллокации, идиомы, формульный язык, методика преподавания EFL, лексический подход, беглость речи.

INTRODUCTION. In contemporary language pedagogy, language proficiency has shifted from mere knowledge of grammar rules and vocabulary lists to the ability to communicate fluently, appropriately, and effectively in real-world contexts. This holistic ability is defined as communicative competence (Hymes, 1972; Canale & Swain, 1980). A primary challenge for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners is overcoming "textbook language"—a style of speaking or writing that is grammatically correct yet sounds unnatural to native speakers. The catalyst for bridging the gap between basic structural competence and native-like fluency lies in the mastery of collocations (statistically frequent word co-occurrences, e.g., make a decision, heavy rain) and idioms (figurative expressions whose meanings cannot be deduced from individual words, e.g., bite the bullet, break the ice). Together, these formulaic sequences form a crucial part of human memory and linguistic processing, allowing language users to communicate efficiently under real-time processing constraints. This study explores the theoretical and practical dimensions of idioms and collocations in fostering communicative competence among EFL learners.

LITERATURE REVIEW. The theoretical foundation of communicative competence was pioneered by Hymes (1972) as a reaction against Chomsky's concept of linguistic competence, arguing that language use must be socio-culturally appropriate. Canale and Swain (1980) expanded this model into four distinct components: grammatical, sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic competence.

In the realm of vocabulary acquisition, Lewis (1993) introduced the Lexical Approach, proposing the principle that "language consists of grammaticalized lexis, not lexicalized grammar." Lewis argued that native speakers rely heavily on prefabricated multi-word units rather than constructing sentences word-by-word from scratch. Subsequent empirical studies by Nattinger and DeCarrico (1992) and Nation (2001) demonstrated that formulaic language accelerates language processing speed. While collocations facilitate structural cohesion and reduce cognitive effort during speech production, idioms introduce stylistic variation and pragmatic subtlety (Moon, 1998). However, literature also highlights that L1 interference frequently causes learners to produce awkward direct translations (e.g., using "strong rain" instead of "heavy rain"), emphasizing the necessity of targeted phraseological instruction.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY. This study employs a qualitative, analytical approach combining corpus-informed analysis and pedagogical literature synthesis.
- Analytical Framework: The communicative functions of multi-word expressions were categorized according to Canale and Swain's (1980) communicative competence framework (Grammatical, Sociolinguistic, Discourse, and Strategic).
- Data Corpus & Selection: A curated selection of 50 high-frequency collocations and 30 idiomatic expressions commonly occurring in academic and conversational English (extracted from the British National Corpus) were analyzed.
- Error Pattern Identification: Student writing samples and oral production tasks from pre-intermediate to upper-intermediate EFL learners in Uzbekistan were qualitatively analyzed to identify common errors resulting from L1 (Uzbek/Russian) transfer and literal translation.

ANALYSIS AND RESULTS. 1. Impact on Communicative Competence Components. The qualitative analysis of the gathered linguistic material demonstrates that idioms and collocations

exert a profound, multidimensional influence on each structural component of communicative competence as outlined by Canale and Swain (1980). First, in terms of grammatical competence, the mastery of collocations enhances structural predictability and prevents unnatural lexical combinations. Language learners who acquire words in natural pairings—such as take a risk rather than do a risk, or make an effort rather than do an effort—exhibit a significantly higher degree of lexical precision. Collocations constrain the arbitrary co-occurrence of words, thereby refining sentence construction and reducing grammatical awkwardness. Second, multi-word expressions directly bolster sociolinguistic competence by providing learners with register appropriateness, stylistic flexibility, and cultural nuance. Idiomatic expressions, in particular, allow speakers to navigate varying social contexts with authentic expression. For instance, utilizing the idiom "We are on the same page" instead of the literal statement "We agree" transforms a basic proposition into a natural, culturally resonant utterance that aligns with native-speaker communicative norms. Third, phraseological units contribute substantially to discourse competence. Collocational linkages create textual cohesion and maintain a smooth, logical flow across both spoken and written discourse. Multi-word transitions and fixed expressions, such as draw a conclusion, raise an issue, or reach a consensus, serve as organizational pillars that structure arguments coherently and reinforce discourse continuity. Finally, formulaic sequences strengthen strategic competence by acting as effective cognitive fillers and speech-processing shortcuts during real-time communication. Phrases such as as a matter of fact, to be honest, or at the end of the day allow speakers to gain valuable processing time to formulate complex thoughts without breaching conversational fluency or resorting to silent pauses.

2 Main Findings and Learning Barriers. The qualitative synthesis of student performance data revealed three major findings regarding the acquisition and deployment of formulaic language among Uzbek EFL learners:
- L1 Interference and Negative Transfer: A predominant cause of lexical error stems from direct literal translation (calquing) from the learners' native language (L1). For example, translating the Uzbek expression "kuchli yomg'ir" literally yields the awkward English phrase "strong rain" instead of the natural collocation "heavy rain". Similarly, the Uzbek verb phrase "vaqtni o'tkazish" is frequently mistranslated as "pass time" in contexts where "spend time" is required. These findings underscore that native language structures heavily influence word selection when learners lack automated multi-word chunks.

- Cognitive Load Reduction and Fluency: Learners who received explicit, chunk-based instruction demonstrated a noticeable reduction in cognitive processing time. Because pre-fabricated chunks are stored and retrieved from memory as single holistic units, these learners produced speech with fewer pauses, lower hesitation rates, and superior overall oral fluency compared to peers who constructed sentences word-by-word from individual grammatical and lexical components.
- Avoidance Behavior and Semantic Opacity: Due to the non-compositional nature of idioms—where the global meaning cannot be inferred from individual constituents (e.g., spill the beans or bite the bullet)—learners frequently exhibit avoidance behavior. Fearing pragmatic misuse or misinterpretation, students often rely exclusively on literal, plain language, which results in overly formal or stiff communication. Addressing this barrier requires targeted pedagogical intervention aimed at building semantic confidence through contextualized exposure.

CONCLUSION. Mastering a foreign language extends far beyond memorizing isolated words and abstract syntax rules. Idioms and collocations constitute the core of authentic communication, serving as vital tools for achieving lexical precision, fluency, and socio-cultural appropriateness. To bridge the gap between basic competence and communicative mastery, EFL pedagogy in Uzbekistan must transition from traditional word-level memorization to a chunk-based Lexical

Approach. Language educators are encouraged to incorporate contextualized phraseology, contrastive analysis (L1 vs. L2), and interactive error-awareness activities into daily classroom practices.

REFERENCES:

1.Canale, M., & Swain, M. (1980). Theoretical bases of communicative approaches to second language teaching and testing. Applied Linguistics, 1(1), 1–47.
2. Hymes, D. (1972). On communicative competence. In J. B. Pride & J. Holmes (Eds.), Sociolinguistics (pp. 269–293). Penguin Books.
3. Lewis, M. (1993). The Lexical Approach: The State of ELT and a Way Forward. Language Teaching Publications.
4. Moon, R. (1998). Fixed Expressions and Idioms in English: A Corpus-Based Approach. Oxford University Press.
5. Nation, I. S. P. (2001). Learning Vocabulary in Another Language. Cambridge University Press.
6. Nattinger, J. R., & DeCarrico, J. S. (1992). Lexical Phrases and Language Teaching. Oxford University Press.