

THE COLLOCATIONAL CONSTRAINTS OF SYNONYMIC UNITS IN CONTEMPORARY UZBEK LITERARY LANGUAGE

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Abstract. This article investigates the usage possibilities of units in the current Uzbek literary language that are synonymous or close to a group of synonyms in real speech, based on a collocation approach. The research object is the verb "e'tibor bermoq", The units "e'tibor bermoq", "diqqat qaratmoq", and "nazar tashlamoq" are selected, and alongside their semantic proximity, their lexical environment, valency properties, combinatorial possibilities, and contextual semantic distinctions are analyzed. The study is based on the theoretical perspective that synonymic proximity does not imply the free interchangeability of units in all contexts. The analysis shows that despite having a common semantic component, these units differ in their object selection possibilities, semantic nuances, and usage context. The article evaluates collocation restriction as an important criterion for determining the differential semantic and stylistic relationships between synonymic units.

Keywords: synonymy, synonymic unit, collocation, collocation restriction, combinability, valency, context, semantic differentiation, the modern Uzbek literary language, corpus linguistics.

Synonymic units are one of the most important means of ensuring the lexical richness of the language. However, the semantic proximity of synonyms does not guarantee their free interchangeability in speech. In particular, collocational (associability) restrictions enhance the functional differentiation of synonyms. Collocational restriction is the semantic, syntactic and stylistic limitation of the ability of a word to combine with other lexical units. Each member of the synonymous series has its own collocation profile. This profile is determined by the dominant, stylistic features and semantic subtleties.

In Uzbek linguistics, synonymy was studied by A.Hojiyev, Sh.Rahmatullayev, M.Mirtojiyev and others. In particular, the two-volume "Large Explanatory Dictionary of Uzbek Language Synonyms" created by N. Mahmudov and co-authors extensively covers the semantic subtleties, stylistic features and examples that substantiate them.

However, the closeness of synonymous units in lexical meaning does not mean that they have the same possibilities in syntagmatic relations. For example, the units "to pay attention", "to pay attention" and "to look" can express similar meanings in certain contexts. Nevertheless, they differ in the nature of the action they express and the contextual function of the units they are combined with. From this point of view, it is necessary to study synonymous units not only on the basis of paradigmatic relations, but also through their syntagmatic environment. Corpus linguistics allows for such research to observe a large volume of real speech materials and determine the frequency of joint use of units. Modern studies of the national corpus of the Uzbek language also note the possibility of identifying collocations using statistical indicators, including

measures such as MI and t-score. Synonyms are a relationship based on the closeness of meaning between language units, and synonymous units usually have a common semantic component. However, the meaning of synonyms is not absolutely equal. One of them may be neutral in a given situation, while the other may be stylistically, semantically, or expressively specific.

The use of synonymous units in speech is also limited by their combinability. A particular unit may be naturally and actively combined with some words, while being used sparingly or not at all with other units.

The concept of collocation is of great importance in studying this phenomenon. In corpus linguistics, collocation is associated with the identification of statistically and lexically characteristic co-use of words in real speech. Studies on the Uzbek national corpus in 2025 also showed that collocation can be identified by connecting the words that occur most characteristically around the selected unit and using statistical criteria such as MI and t-score.

Therefore, the semantic proximity of synonymous units cannot be equated with their collocational identity.

Below we analyze the collocational restriction of synonymous units based on groups:

to pay attention – to pay attention – to look:

The three selected units are close in the general meaning field by expressing a person's attitude to a specific object, observing it, taking it into account, or expressing mental activity directed towards it. However, it is necessary to take into account the semantic difference between them. In the combination of *эр* The external grammatical model of the above units is similar:

[noun + auxiliary verb]

- to pay attention + to pay attention;
- to pay attention + to look at;
- to look at + to look at.

However, their syntagmatic possibilities cannot be limited only to their internal components. The important aspect is the object with which these units are combined in the sentence structure. We have seen that certain units are grammatically similar. However, their real collocational difference is manifested in the lexical-semantic structure of the objects.

The unit to pay attention has a wide lexical scope. It can be used with units belonging to various semantic groups, such as person, event, problem, issue, error, sign, detail, demand, idea.

For example:

- pay attention to the problem;
- pay attention to the issue;
- pay attention to the mistake;
- pay attention to the detail;
- pay attention to the child's condition;
- pay attention to safety.

In these units, the semantic core of “pay attention” is related to taking into account or giving importance to an object.

“Pay attention” is also semantically close to “pay attention”. However, in this unit, the component of singling out a specific object and consciously directing oneself to it is stronger.

It can be naturally combined with the following objects:

- pay attention to the issue;
- pay attention to the problem;
- pay attention to an important aspect;
- pay attention to a specific issue;
- pay attention to a safety issue.

The separation of the object as a specific problem, issue or aspect plays an important role in the use of this unit.

In this regard, the difference between “pay attention” and “pay attention” can be explained not only by the lexical meaning, but also by the nature of their object selection.

“To look” differs from the previous two units in the presence of a visual observation component in the semantic structure of the unit.

It can be used in such combinations as:

- to look at a document;
- to look at a book;
- to look at an article;
- to look at a picture;
- to look around.

Here, the semantics of looking, examining or briefly observing is more strongly expressed than expressing a reaction to an object.

Therefore, the combinations to pay attention - to pay attention - to look cannot be replaced as absolutely synonymous units. They intersect in certain parts of the semantic field, but are differentiated in terms of collocational and semantic properties.

According to the examples given above, although the three units have a common semantic field, their collocational profile is different. For example, in the combination “look at the picture”, the semantics of visual observation is natural.

“Pay attention to the picture” can reveal a different meaning – taking into account the picture or giving it importance. Therefore, the similarity of the external grammatical form alone does not allow the interchangeability of synonymous units.

We	can	see	another	synonymous	series	below:
<i>decide</i>	–	<i>find</i>	<i>a solution</i>	–	<i>draw</i>	<i>a conclusion</i> :
<i>decide</i>	–	the	most	neutral	and	widely used dominant;

find a solution – has the meaning of solving a problem, finding a solution;
draw a conclusion – has the meaning of making a logical conclusion, drawing a conclusion.

When analyzing official, journalistic and artistic texts, we found that the unit “decide” often comes with a collective or formal subject. It is less often used for personal decisions (“I made a decision”, but “I found a solution”, “I made a conclusion” are more natural).

The unit “to make a decision” works on the basis of “problem - solution”. It is almost never combined with the word “decision”. It is actively used in personal and creative contexts.

The unit “to draw a conclusion” is mainly found in logical, scientific or analytical texts. In official documents, it is significantly less common than “to take a decision”.

The collocational restrictions between members of the synonymous group are explained by the following factors:

- a) semantic differentiation: “decision” is the semantics of authority and responsibility; “solution” is the solution to the problem; “conclusion” is the logical conclusion;
- b) methodological specialization: “to take a decision” is dominant in official discourse, “to draw a conclusion” is dominant in scientific discourse;
- c) syntactic preferences: “to find a solution” often comes with the construction “to the problem/issue”.

These differences limit the free interchangeability of synonyms and ensure the clarity of speech.

Thus, the study of collocational features of synonymous units allows us to identify differences that are not fully reflected in their lexical meanings. Collocational limitations can be one of the important criteria for determining the boundaries of interchangeability of synonymous units, determining their semantic-stylistic differentiation, and more accurately describing them in modern electronic dictionaries.

In the future, to expand the research, it is necessary to determine the frequency of the selected units in a large corpus, their collocations, MI and t-score indicators, as well as their distribution in various functional styles. Such an approach allows us to enrich the traditional lexical description of synonymous units with statistics of their use in real speech.

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