

Choose a short, authentic, written or spoken text in English (about 200 - 500 words) and select at least twelve examples of collocations, including some fixed expressions. Discuss how you might use these examples to demonstrate to students the constraints on word-combinations in English.

1.1 Introduction

The patterns of lexical usage including collocation, idioms and fixed expressions have been somewhat neglected until recently (Carter 1998). However, a look at the literature on lexis reveals a rich territory for discovery, which can now be better explored thanks to modern computers and corpora, and a new view of lexis as functioning within a system, exercising influence and restriction on the text around it. After a brief review of the literature on lexical restriction and a definition of relevant key terms, this study will investigate 12 examples of lexical restriction in a selected text, aiming to identify patterns of meaning and usage which may be of use to both teachers and learners of English.

1.2 The Open-Choice Principle

In the research there exists a dichotomy as regards language acquisition. In the 1960s, Chomsky developed his theory of *generative grammar*. He reasoned that children could not possibly learn their native language only as a result of environmental interaction. He posited the existence of a Language Acquisition Device (LAD) in the brain that allows the child to develop linguistic *competence* although it is only exposed to imperfect *performance* (Hoey 2005). Part of this process involves an innate knowledge of *universal grammar* whereby the child is able to analyse speech it is exposed to and deduct rules regarding syntax. This theory sets up grammar at the heart of language learning and competence. Chomsky claims that knowledge of syntax is sufficient to produce language. The syntax provides a framework into which words can be fitted and interchanged freely. As a result, each act of speech or writing is considered to be a completely new creative construction which uses grammar as a scaffold. Sinclair (1991) names this the *open choice principle*, and it is also known as the *slot and grammar* approach.

1.3 The Case for the Idiom Principle

Although Chomsky's paradigm was highly influential, there were some critical voices. Halliday (1966) highlighted awkward cases of phrases where detailed knowledge of grammar was not sufficient to disambiguate meaning or usage. Admittedly, he stated, extremely detailed grammatical analysis might allow a linguist to explain the reason why we say "strong / weak tea" and not alternate adjectives, but the effort involved would be unreasonable. He proposed a lexical approach, separate and complementary to grammatical analysis, which could serve as a powerful descriptive tool for expressions that resisted grammatical analysis. He speaks of *lexical restriction*:

“In a lexical analysis, it is the lexical restriction which is under focus, the extent to which an item is specified by its collocational environment.” (Halliday 1966, pp166)

Sinclair (1991) proposed the notion of *the idiom principle* in direct contrast to the *open choice* paradigm. He noted that although the scaffolding provided by grammar is a valid concept, it is not the only controlling process in action because not any word can be comfortably fitted into the slots provided by syntax. Here, he claims, lexical restriction, namely *register* and *collocation* narrow down the choice of words that can fill the slot provided by the syntactic scaffold.

He posits that most language is not the result of a creative process involving generative grammar, but instead consists of limited choices of pre-constructed phrases, or words accompanied by regular patterns. A good example is the case of “of course” which acts as a single lexical item and does not seem to fit into a grammatical category. Such cases of very frequent lexical items, he notes, tend to have their own distinctive patterns, and might be dealt with better as *unique types*.

Another effective demonstration of lexical restriction is provided by Hoey (2005) where he rewrites an extract from a Bill Bryson text which is grammatically correct but strikes the native speaker as awkward. This effect was achieved by using corpus data to substitute common collocations with less common ones. In a teaching situation, learners often create sentences which are indeed grammatically correct, but feel wrong. An understanding of collocation frequencies, Hoey argues, can help us to grasp the intricacies of lexical patterning and allow intermediate learners to progress to a more advanced level.

2.1 Taxonomy

2.1.1 Collocation

The first well-known attempt to address collocation is that of Firth (1951) who analyses word combinations in the limericks of Edward Lear. He considers collocation in a literary context, and as a trait particular to a particular author in a particular work.

Collocation can be broadly described as the co-occurrence of two or more words which is more frequent than chance should dictate. Thus the words “speak” and “softly” are frequently found together whereas “speak” and “hard” are not. Collocation can result from grammatical patterning, such as verbs that are followed by a specific preposition, or lexical patterning (Carter 1998).

Collocations can be difficult to delimitate. Sinclair (1991) highlights the example “never set eyes on” as one such difficult case. He suggests that collocations nest, meaning that words have relationships with multiple items within a phrase and come together to form longer chains of pre-constructed language. Thus we could consider “set eyes on” as a collocation, which in turn collocates with “never”, and the sum phrase might then collocate with various object pronouns such as “him, her, you” etc. Thus a system of complex interweaving lexical relationships is built within a phrase. For the sake of practicality, Sinclair and Jones (1975 in Hoey 2005) set the limits of a collocation, or *span*, to four words either side of an item. Although this limit is arbitrarily determined, a cut-off point is necessary, and shall also be used here.

2.1.2 Collocation as a Cohesive Device

Halliday and Hasan (1976) present collocations as also having a cohesive function. Two lexical items may be associated with each other in a reader / listener's head because they are semantically related, or simply occur frequently together. Thus the lexical items "candle" and "blow out" collocate, and, even if the words are somewhat spread out in a sentence, the second instance of this pair refers back to the first.

Consequently, all lexical items have the ability to act as cohesive devices, but the power of association they carry will also depend on how many other lexical items they collocate with. For example the word "get" collocates with many words, and has a weak cohesive role, but the collocates "acrimonious" and "divorce" occur far less frequently and collocate with far fewer other items, so that their co-occurrence would have a stronger cohesive effect in a text.

2.1.3 Fixed and Free Expressions

Once the argument for the importance of studying relationships between lexical items had been made, researchers then set about trying to classify the different types of phrases that result from collocation. A plethora of technical terms ensued (Alexander 1978, Moon 1997).

For the purpose of this work, it is sufficient to determine the difference between *collocations* and *fixed expressions*. Thereafter, any particular sub-classes of expression that occur in the text selected will be discussed on an ad-hoc basis.

Carter (1998) classifies collocations into four broad overlapping categories. An example of the first group, *unrestricted collocations*, is the word "have" which might collocate with a large number of other lexical items, such as "have a party, a pet, a rest, a walk" etc. A *semi-restricted* collocation is a word patterning where the collocates are fewer in number. There are also *familiar collocations* defined as "combinations [...] between words which keep regular company with each other" (Carter pp 70) such as "unrequited love". A final group is *fixed or restricted collocations* which act as pre-constructed phrases. Carter further proposes that items in this last category be considered as positioned along a cline that stretches from relative syntactic and morphological flexibility (break my heart, my heart was broken, heart breaker etc.) to expressions that are fully frozen.

Alexander (1978) provides an insightful categorization of *fixed expressions* which in the light of its relative simplicity, I shall be using for this study. This categorization is also interesting in that it renders explicit the predominantly functional role of certain expressions.

Table 1: Fixed Expressions *Reproduced from Alexander (1979)*

Types of Fixed Expressions	Examples
1. <i>Idioms</i> 1.1 Phrasal Verbs 1.2 "Tournures" 1.3 Irreversible binomials etc.	<i>to turn in</i> <i>to keep tabs on someone</i> <i>spick and span</i>
2.1 <i>Proverbs</i> 2.2 Proverbial (metaphorical) Idioms etc.	<i>a stitch in time saves nine, to pay the piper</i>
3. <i>Discourse Structuring devices</i> 3.1 Greetings, introductions, "formulae" 3.2 Connectives, "gambits" etc.	<i>How do you do?</i> <i>To begin with, let's be realistic</i>
4 <i>Catch-phrases</i>	<i>Who loves you baby?</i>

For the following text analysis I shall consider lexical restriction in terms of “free collocations” and “fixed expressions” which in turn will be categorized according to Alexander.

2.1.4 Semantic Prosody

This refers to the tendency of a word to have specific semantic associations that emerge from the way it collocates with other lexical items. Stubbs (1995) claims that “cause” has a negative semantic prosody because it frequently precedes unpleasant words such as *accident*, *cancer*, *concern* etc. It is clear that if many lexical items also have their own semantic prosody, this is vital information for both the teacher and learner of English.

3 Method

3.1 Text Selection

It has been pointed out that idiomatic expressions occur more frequently in certain types of text including spoken English, sports reports, weather reports, and journalism (Moon 1997). For this reason the genre and medium of the text selected were of key importance. Here a written text has been chosen in order to shed light on lexical decisions that are the result of a conscious stylistic choice on the part of the author. The text is an extract from an article entitled “Why Academics Stink at Writing” that featured in the “Chronicle of Higher Education” on September 26th 2014¹. The author, Stephen Pinker, has a characteristically elegant and colourful writing style which one would expect to yield rich pickings in terms of use of lexis, and a reputation for being a “good” writer. The subject of the text is also metalinguistic, discussing writing style. The introduction and conclusion of the article are focussed on here because these two sections have very clear functions: those of catching the reader’s attention and of preparing the reader for the end of the debate.

3.2 Collocation Selection and Corpus

Collocations were highlighted in the text with a concern for selecting a **variety** of different types of lexical co-occurrence with the goal of determining whether a corpus-based analysis of these lexical combinations can enrich their linguistic description.

Moon (1998) notes that many idioms show high degrees of variation between British and American English. COCA², being a corpus of American English (Stephen Pinker is American), seems like the best corpus to use in this case. However, it is smaller, and search results are less easily sorted and reproduced than in the Bank of English. After a number of comparison searches, the results for the lexical items studied displayed similar patterns and similar relative frequencies. I assume therefore, for the specific lexical co-occurrences studied

¹ http://stevenpinker.com/files/pinker/files/why_academics_stink_at_writing.pdf?m=1412010988

² The Corpus of Contemporary American English. <http://corpus.byu.edu/coca/>

here, that American and British English do not differ significantly in their usage. Thus the Bank of English was used to analyse the selected lexical items in context as well as to view both t-scores and mutual information scores for the co-occurrence of terms.

Items were sorted automatically as far as possible, but where items were morphologically identical but carried substantially different meanings to those of the source text, they were discarded. This kind of classification according to word class and then meaning emergent from the surrounding text is recommended by Sinclair (1991).

4 Analysis of 12 cases of lexical restriction

4.1 A case of Intricately Intertwined Associations and Meanings

Lines 6 to 10 feature at least five collocations in a web of association that creates a complex semantic picture. These provide an example of Halliday and Hasan's collocations that stretch beyond sentence boundaries (1976). The items focussed on here are: "softer fields"; "spout obscure verbiage"; "dress up.... with the trappings"; and "highfalutin gobbledygook".

As cohesive devices, "spout verbiage" links with "nothing to say" and "gobbledygook"; "dress up" with "trappings" and "highfalutin"; and "softer fields" with "scientific sophistication". On top of this comes a layer of semantic associations created by the collocations themselves.

4.1.1 Softer Fields

This combination is rare in the corpus, occurring only two times with the meaning "humanities or social science". However the collocation feels natural and a look at alternative combinations reveals why. In fact the reader is clearly expected to make linguistic associations with related collocates (soft / hard and field / science) in order to process this collocation. Hoey (2005) describes this ability as a result of how we acquire lexical associations (priming) as we learn our native tongue:

"it is probable that collocations are primed first and that the semantic communality between collocates produces the more abstract priming ... The primings move outwards from specific words to the semantic set, and in doing so permit creative choices to be made that in themselves reinforce the more general priming."

It would therefore clearly be of value for learners to be aware of how collocations can reach out to other strong collocations, and so-doing share their meaning, and how proficient writers can make use of this flexibility to coin original, yet acceptable and unmarked collocations.

Table 2: "Soft | softer field/s" and Related Collocations

Collocation	Number of Results (raw data): expression used metaphorically
Soft softer softest field/s	3
Hard harder hardest field/s	4
Soft softer softest science/s	12
Hard harder hardest science	54

4.1.2 Spout Obscure Verbiage

The corpus reveals that when “spout” is used as a verb, it mainly does so in a metaphorical manner meaning *to talk about something in a way that is obnoxious or excessive*. “Spout” can co-occur with highly emotive items such as; “crap”, “bollocks” and “tripe”, and can also enter into collocation with “off” and “about” to form phrasal verbs, both of which have consistently negative connotations. A t-score analysis reveals that; “homilies”, “platitudes”, “nonsense”, “tripe” and “propaganda” all have a significant association (t-score > 1.96) with “spout”. “Spout” when used metaphorically therefore has what Sinclair (1991) calls a strongly negative semantic prosody. Although “spout verbiage” does not appear in the corpus, it is apparent that “verbiage” fits into the current pattern of negative connotations and collocations. Perhaps also the specific choice of the rare “verbiage” rather than “words” helps to highlight the elitist and somewhat ridiculous attitudes the author is criticising in his article.

Figure 1: Examples of “spout”

splitting workplaces as ambitious types try to spout the right words to gain an advantage. The
the next wave of feminists, but they too still spout the tired old mantras of the 1970s. One Irish
South East, government ministers happily spout the ‘urban renaissance’ mantra of Rogers and
the pressure being on them. However much they spout the one-game-at-a-time mantra, it is
have no mainstream appeal and should be left to spout their insipid gibberish on late night telly.
advertising goons and fashion designers get to spout their usual bollocks at the expense of the
may be, and no matter how assertively they spout their confidence, it's likely that in the end
are a soft-shoe-shuffling, hand-jiving trio who spout their incantations to a jaunty jazz score.
s the wrong word I dislike these people who spout their mouths off and yet when you talk to
fight to my last breath to defend his right to spout them – and so I believe would the vast
which are really rallies), he does not spout theories or present data but instead tells
pockets and telling them to come down here and spout this kind of rhetoric. <p> Hochberg: The
12:31:38 Message 8 of 29 I can't believe you spout this tripe! By Keith # 001 Oh Weneed...such a

4.1.3 Dress up

This is a phrasal verb, thus a fixed expression but one which allows for some variation (*dresses up something*, *dressed up*, *dressed something up* etc.). An investigation of the semantic prosody of “dress up” reveals several usages of this term. It is positive when used in the context of *food presentation*, *fashion* and *interior design*. This first group were frequent, and probably result from the large number of magazine articles the corpus contains. When used for other topics, a pattern of negative semantic prosody begins to emerge. Many of the examples below show how “dress up” is often used to mean *to attempt to hide some kind of fault, a dishonest action*.

Figure 2: Dress Up

backed away from it and somehow had to dress up its retreat,” said Mike Jendrzeyczyk, a
serialisation in the Mail on Sunday tried to dress up Naughtie's prediction that Tony Blair will
sort of way. At other times brilliant titles dress up otherwise mediocre ramblings (‘Waco-
old-fashioned, mechanistic way of thinking and dress up our denial in a ‘new,’ ‘scientific’
was Salt's diagnosis of floggers as people who dress up perverse pleasures in elevated
standard rock documentary, Haynes chooses to dress up reality. Along with the Bowie-like Slade,
even used empowerment language, implausibly, to dress up Republican plans for campaign-finance
and booking revenue early, in an effort to dress up results -- and perhaps bolster performance-
lengths publishers and film makers will go to dress up sex, and then sell it. Selina Seymour is
passed on through reproduction. We may try to dress up sexual love and glorify it; but when a man
utilize, eliminate, liquidate, are used to dress up simple statements and give an air of
‘theology’ or ‘lesbian cultural theory’, which dress up sub-Marxist slogans as academic inquiry.
the institution to which he belongs. We try to dress up that reality in fetching rationalizations,
just having them there, as somebody said, to dress up the dictatorship and even what's going on
TOLEDO Bob Edwards, host: <p> Costumed hecklers dress up the campaign trail, after headlines from
I want this,” I want that,” although we may dress up the language to sound rather more
s no way round it. No matter how tactfully you dress up the words, you are in effect saying you'd

Thus, the choice of “dress up” to describe the topic area of *writing* adds another layer of negative connotation to lines 6-10.

4.1.4 Trappings

It is difficult to define the limits of a collocation of the collocation “dress up” here. One might consider “dress up... with the trappings” as one expression, but here, due to the distance between the terms (7 word span), it seems more productive to consider this as a case of two associations that “nest” (Hoey 2005) within each other. “Trappings” is a surprisingly common word in the corpus (>1000 occurrences), and the corpus reveals that it tends towards three grammatical patternings.

Table 3. Trappings: Grammatical Patternings (Colligation)

Situated at end of a sentence, or clause	Followed by “and” and a noun (often plural or abstract and uncountable)	Followed by “of” and a noun (many abstract)
ideological, and religious trappings. But at the very heart of this system	adopt and then discard the trappings and the teachings of one religion	the same trappings of wealth as their cousins in the West,
with equally magnificent trappings. But instead of pursuing	and all the other trappings and technology of sophisticated	and to have all the trappings of a state that belonged to such

Figure 3: Examples of “Trappings + of + noun” (mainly abstract meaning)

women could garb themselves in the skewed trappings of male fantasy - leather, rubber, watch a herd of domestic horses freed of the trappings of slavery and allowed to be just horses is marketing, broadcasting and sponsorship, the trappings of a major entertainment industry. The very pattern. He embraced wholeheartedly the trappings of membership. His tinted glasses and - home on The Wirral. He flaunts none of the trappings of stardom, is affable with the media, and describe. It is not until Vietnam that the trappings of masculine and military self- of the British legal system - the wigs and that they may have spent too much on the trappings of privilege at the last college ball: 'A for senior staff, he robustly rejected the trappings of a Dean's office, and 'made do' in between the party elite, long used to the trappings of power, and the grassroots has widened. we face frustrations. Giving computers the trappings of intelligence will make them easier to sentence, but they are already displaying the trappings of a full-blown celebrity trial. Every He borrowed and earnestly embraced the trappings of the privatising age. Producer's Choice, dozen rackets each. For all the middle-class trappings of the game, the atmosphere at ground level Surrounded by cds and videos, the musical trappings of decadent western culture, he read out an land with three children, surrounded by the trappings of wealth but without a cent in her and common citizenship. It wears the trappings of democracy, but its institutions, its we get this over here? We may not have the trappings of authority, but we know how to use the He had rejected all the conventional trappings of a stage work, and composed something a battleship-sized bodyguard were the only trappings of Springsteen's megastar status. Not the conquest) is barely concealed beneath the trappings of Catholicism. Here a dozen shamefaced

Regarding semantic effect, a collocation search reveals a significant association between “trappings” and *success, power, wealth, fame, office, state, corporate, democracy, royalty, celebrity, and authority*. It becomes clear how the author has used the reader’s network of associations to imbue *scientific sophistication* with the undercurrents of *authority, bureaucracy and elitism*.

4.1.5 Highfalutin Gobbledygook

“Highfalutin” occurs a 64 times in the Bank of English, a much higher frequency than intuition would have us expect although this is perhaps a result of the concentration of journalistic material in the corpus. Although it never occurs together with “gobbledegook”, it is often used in the context of artistic criticism and co-occurs with “ideas”, “talk”, and “verbiage”. The frequencies here are too low to provide more general usage rules, but the lexical set of *words* demonstrates that “gobbledegook” is a natural extension of this.

Of course, in these 5 lines there are other collocations that contribute to the overarching meaning of *pretentious nonsense based on a false status of authority* but it is beyond the scope of this assignment to deal with every item in this section. The analysis of lexical choice here serves as a powerful tool for uncovering the machinery behind the complex web of meaning has been built up by carefully choosing lexical items and nesting their associations. It is clear that conducting such an analysis with learners on extracts of texts would help them to better understand the mechanisms between both text cohesion and stylistic effect.

4.2 Lexical Restrictions: Non-fixed Expressions

4.2.1 Grace and Verve

The corpus reveals that “verve” is often part of a reversible binomial. While “grace and verve” or “verve and grace” do not occur in the corpus, a closer look at other collocates of “verve” reveals why the combination still sounds natural to the native-speaker ear. “Verve” will happily collocate with a wide range of other uncountable nouns in a pattern of **uncountable noun + and + verve**, or **verve + and + uncountable noun**. The partner word is positive in 99% of cases and the meaning is overwhelmingly of positive evaluations rather than negations or irony. Common lexical areas involve sports commentaries and reports, writing, music, and film criticism.

Such information could certainly guide students in coining their own similar phrases using the above pattern, in selecting suitable sub-genres and making them aware that the phrase will be taken at face value.

Figure 4: Examples of “uncountable noun + and + verve” and “verve + and + uncountable noun”

<p>Angeles low-life, presented with more dash and verve than the scumbags deserve. It's a patchy It is sung and played competently with dash and verve by soloists, choir and orchestra of the Czech 21 September 2001 </dt> <p> Batsman of dash and verve who set hearts beating when he came to the was blown away by the actor's dedication and verve. Brad Pitt is the white man's Bruce Lee. He and James Kirtley bowled with discipline and verve with the new ball and combined to claim four Sonata has a quite superb eloquence and verve - the variations are especially deeply felt. time. Especially when it spells energy and verve, a scratchy post-punk disregard for polish to the signers for the deaf, whose energy and verve was in such contrast to many of the speeches of the day shared Armstrong's energy and verve, and sought his great range and bold tone. to transmit his own unfailing enthusiasm and verve to his side. Last night, though, England Paris. Rightly, he recognised that the fire and verve of Spanish painting, bubbling away under if every jump was a banker, all with fire and verve and attack. She won it, and you knew she</p>	<p>cynicism, trusting in touch and movement, verve and vision. Alan Buckley is carrying on the of the leaders. But today it seems to lack the verve and vision of its international rivals. As saying Labour had too often failed to show the verve and vision" expected. <p> As a result, the <p> A tough double-cross thriller directed with verve and visual panache by Boorman. Point Blank (Tony Yeboah and Brian Roy have all added a verve and vivacity to good sides such as Newcastle, that fact, as his team had no answer to their verve and vivacity. Such was the visitors' Walsall played with considerable style and verve and will certainly travel to Elland Road in 99, Michael Joseph), written with all her usual verve and wit, tells the story of Rosie, a recently kids' writer who hates children. Makes up in verve and wit what it lacks in originality. West It crackles along, all fired up on energy, verve and wit. It's brilliantly talky, and the way takes on the challenge with a mix of knowledge, verve and wit that makes him a compelling the first time with a combination of acumen, verve and witty repartee. To look at camera four,</p>
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4.2.2 Groundbreaking Work

“Work” is an extremely common word, and this collocation demonstrates what Sinclair (1991) calls “upward” and “downward” collocation.

When “work” is taken as the node word, the most common collocates are either grammatical items or de-lexicalised words, i.e. very frequent words that have all but lost their independent meaning (Sinclair 1991). The corpus here reveals the grammatical environment in which “work” finds itself.

Table 4: Collocates of “work”. Items in each column ordered according to frequency.

Possessive Pronouns	De-lexicalised Items	Lexical Items
his	to	hard
their	at	will
her	of	can
your	the	social
my		good

A t-score search with the less frequent “groundbreaking” as node (downward collocation) shows that “work” is the top collocates. Students are usually aware of the many combinations and compounds “work” can enter into, but the corpus reveals that it might be more efficient to learn “groundbreaking” in the context of its common lexical environments.

Table 5: Lexical Sets Related to “groundbreaking”

science and (political) policy	<i>work, study, research, programme, project, discovery</i>
the arts	<i>series, film, book, novel, performance, debut</i>
changes in business practice	<i>deal, transaction</i>
law	<i>ruling</i>

4.3 Fixed Expressions

The following three items are examples of phrasal verbs which are on the freer end of the fixed – free cline (Carter 1998) as they allow for inflection for tense and person.

4.3.1 Ring True

This item is an idiom with a metaphorical meaning. A corpus analysis does not reveal any specific semantic prosody for this expression, but instead some interesting patterns emerge. The expression displays some regular patterns which might be useful for learners to acquire as a chunk. It also has a tendency to eschew future forms with only 12 cases out of 491 when it was used with “will” “won’t” or “going to”, 4 of which were cases of generalisations, or “timeless statements”. Knowledge of this “tense” avoidance would of course be useful for learners who wish to integrate the expression into their active vocabulary.

Table 6. Ring true: Patterning

Pattern	Examples
<i>(not) ring + adjective + true</i>	
with adjectives indicating degree; <i>absolutely, completely, consistently, deeply, entirely, especially, quite, so, wholly, more, less</i>	It rings absolutely true to me... Lamb's narrative voice does not ring consistently true. ... a saying that rings especially true when...

4.3.2 Turn out

This is a very frequently occurring phrasal verb. It has several potential meanings including as a cookery term (“turn out the cake and cool”), meaning *produce a large number*, meaning *turn out to vote* and as an expression meaning *happen in the end* when it takes the form “turn out to be”. The reader must use

pragmatic knowledge to determine which interpretation applies. In contrast to my initial intuition, “turn out” meaning *produce a large number* appears to have neutral semantic prosody. Even when used to describe people for example, in “turn out graduates”, the collocation alone does not impose a negative connotation.

Table 7. Turn out: Patterning.

Pattern	Example
turn out + noun	turn out graduates
turn out + number	
turn out + to be (meaning = in the end)	
turn out + in + evaluative adjective + numbers / doves etc.	turn out in large numbers
turn out + comparative	turn out higher than expected

4.3.3 Go a long way toward

This is what Makkai (1972) calls a tournure, or in other terms, a phrasal verb that is made up of more than two words. Learners might be aware that the preposition “toward” can be followed by either a verb in the gerund form or a noun (group). However, a glance at the corpus reveals that the number of cases where the verb is used is significantly higher: of 466 examples, only 26 involve the expression followed by a noun, a pronoun or “that”. A learner concerned with sounding natural might then be well advised to opt for verbs after this expression.

4.3.4 Enough already

This is an example of a prefab, a pre-constructed phrase that can perform a discourse structuring function (Moon 1997 pp47 and Wray 2002). The expression is frozen and is grammatically anomalous. The corpus indicates that it is common in spoken English. Awareness of this would help a learner reading the Pinker article to better grasp the impact the author wishes to achieve. At this point he is preparing to conclude his discussion, but does not wish to do so in the conventional manner. This expression renders the register more intimate and indicates that a direct and no-nonsense conclusion is to follow.

4.3.5 By and large

This is another example of a prefab which should be learned as one single unit. The corpus provides information about the expression’s meaning – *generally* –, its register – both written and spoken – but also its position in sentences. Learners might be interested to see that it can be positioned at the head of a sentence, or in similar positions to the word “generally”.

4.3.6 Fruits of our labors

This is what Alexander (1979) would call an *allusion* with its origins in the Bible. However, its high frequency in the corpus³ indicates that it has perhaps grown beyond this role and taken on a life of its own. It may also have lost some of its religious connotation in the process. The expression is also less frozen than one might assume, with “fruit” appearing in both singular and plural forms, “this” and “these” replacing the possessive pronoun, and other words substituting for “labor” such as *council*, *programs*, and *friendship*. It would seem therefore that this expression is often taken as a base from which speakers / writers create variations reasonably freely. It would at the same time be useful to a learner to be able to recognise variations on this theme when encountering other texts, and to be aware of the creative freedom this expression allows.

5 Conclusion

This brief analysis of just 13 collocations demonstrates how not only grammar can be said to pose restrictions on word choice, but that lexical restriction impacts on both grammatical choices (colligation) and lexical choices (collocation) in a manner that is powerful and complex. Corpus analysis of these terms revealed hitherto unknown, or merely intuited rules or patterns including avoidance of certain tenses, preferred word patterns after the item, semantic prosody, association with specific lexical sets (topics) and genres. It becomes clear that “knowing” a word constitutes a great deal more than simply being aware of its morphology and dictionary meaning, and the information retrieved here would be of use to learners in order to better understand texts and the elements that contribute to their particular style, but also to produce natural sounding English and create a style of their own. One must of course be careful when using a corpus, as some items might occur too infrequently to provide reliable guidelines for usage, and might also suffer bias due to the specific types of text that make up the corpus – a preponderance of lifestyle magazines, for example. An interesting next step would be to compare the findings for the expressions studied here when using an alternative corpus, COCA for example, or for more frequent items, to search these in restricted genres to reveal more about their usage in different types of text.

³ COCA was used here because The Bank of English serve was unavailable. 1075 occurrences of “fruit of our labor” and variations thereof.

6 Bibliography

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Appendix 1:

Excerpts from “Why Academics Stink at Writing” from *the Chronicle of Higher Education*, September 26th 2014. Collocations analysed have been highlighted.

But the familiarity of bad academic writing raises a puzzle. Why should a profession that trades in words and dedicates itself to the transmission of knowledge so often **turn out** prose that is turgid, soggy, wooden, bloated, clumsy, obscure, unpleasant to read, and impossible to understand?

The most popular answer outside the academy is the cynical one: Bad writing is a deliberate choice. Scholars in the **softer fields spout obscure verbiage** to hide the fact that they have nothing to say. They **dress up** the trivial and obvious with **the trappings of** scientific sophistication, hoping to bamboozle their audiences with **highfalutin gobbledygook**.

Though no doubt the bamboozlement theory applies to some academics some of the time, in my experience it does **not ring true**. I know many scholars who have nothing to hide and no need to impress. They do **groundbreaking work** on important subjects, reason well about clear ideas, and are honest, down-to-earth people. Still, their writing stinks.

A third explanation shifts the blame to entrenched authority. People often tell me that academics have no choice but to write badly because the gatekeepers of journals and university presses insist on ponderous language as proof of one’s seriousness. This has not been my experience, and it turns out to be a myth. In *Stylish Academic Writing* (Harvard University Press, 2012), Helen Sword masochistically analyzed the literary style in a sample of 500 scholarly articles and found that a healthy minority in every field were written with **grace and verve**.

Instead of moralistic finger-pointing or evasive blame-shifting, perhaps we should try to understand academese by engaging in what academics do best: analysis and explanation. An insight from literary analysis and an insight from cognitive science **go a long way toward** explaining why people who devote their lives to the world of ideas are so inept at conveying them.

[.....]

You don’t have to swallow the rational-actor model of human behavior to see that professionals may not bother with this costly self-improvement if their profession doesn’t reward it. And **by and large**, academe does not. Few graduate programs teach writing. Few academic journals stipulate clarity among their criteria for acceptance, and few reviewers and editors enforce it. While no academic would confess to shoddy methodology or slapdash reading, many are blasé about their incompetence at writing.

Enough already. Our indifference to how we share **the fruits of our intellectual labors** is a betrayal of our calling to enhance the spread of knowledge. In writing badly, we are wasting each other’s time, sowing confusion and error, and turning our profession into a laughingstock.

Appendix 2: Examples of Corpus Results

1. Highfalutin

want the information, we expected to get it in the highfalutin accents of the educated upper-middle classes, to whom we s
pression he may have received after reading a bunch of highfalutin articles. "Amongst these," Frayling interjects, "might
<01> to rescue one. <M01> Yes. <F01> I don't go in for highfalutin breeds. <M01> No. And <ZF1> com <ZF0> complete <F01>
profession, played down occurrences of such behaviour, highfalutin Brit food scribe Egon Ronay had this to say: "Temperame
, bang on cue, evidence arrived on my desk of a rather highfalutin collaboration at the recent Venice Biennale between Phi
lyrics and a monotonous beat. For those who find these highfalutin criticisms uninteresting or irrelevant, however, this b
cellar (the hotel's list is serious), a grill, and a highfalutin dining room called simply The Restaurant. Bemelmans and
of course would have come from quite <tc text=pause> highfalutin direct grant schools anyway wouldn't they mm. <M02> Yes
the Tahiti, but as a basement-priced line without the highfalutin fashion image. It did very well and put a real dent in
pository with desks. He likes action movies more than highfalutin foreign films. One of his former wives says he is 'tota
/ in motion. Finally, it is also very likely that the highfalutining idealized conditions that development economics envisag
ist admit that was what attracted me to her. All those highfalutin ideas, as my mother would say. Me, I wanted to find off
for title aspirants who came to lord it over them. Any highfalutin ideas that Liverpool, the league leaders before the sta
destroy all books. <p> The forest on the one hand, this highfalutin metacritical talk on the other this turns an historical
<p> Throughout Ahern's political career, ideology and highfalutin morality have always been less important than populism.
nes. I definitely <tc text=pause> I mean for all of my highfalutin morals and I am ashamed sometimes of how spoiled I am a
themselves: running, jumping, expressing themselves in highfalutin movement, in joshing, goodnatured shoving matches. Polc
ing called a cross-trainer." Essentially, despite the highfalutin name, a cross-trainer is no more than a sneaker you car
ourses that <ZF1> w+ <tc text=pause> <ZF0> were given highfalutin names introduced that never got more than er a handful
added by what he sees as a critical bias in favor of highfalutin obfuscation. Listen, I have absolutely no difficulty be
organised as elaborate attention-seeking exercises or highfalutin photo opportunities, and the sponsors expect returns in
al initiatives, pledges (priced), pilots, acronyms and highfalutin' phrases, most of them cheap. Loyal Ms King was waiting
arrow and often enclosed world of crime fiction to win highfalutin plaudits. Herbert's Others wears its literary allusions
< months. Though extremely self-assured, Edison had no highfalutin pretension about inventing, even advertising that he wa
sandy bay nearby though which has so far resisted the highfalutin pretensions of our times. La Boquía is ramshackle spiri
ie poem "Change": <f> Once I courted the poor, not for highfalutin principles, but because their lives were free from pomp
ould wager my next New Statesman pay packet that these highfalutin principles are doomed in practice. In an environment v
> the reader's attention with ease. Most of Estragon's highfalutin prose mocks its subject -- he does a deliciously nasty

2. Spout

a rat was a rat. Show me a rat now and I'll spout a seminar. The odd thing is that I like both
in a "kiss-my-ass" kind of way). I'm loathe to spout a list of credible points of reference. (I
triumph. Mainstream politicians already spout a diluted version of his views; and the
WHAY-HAALE # now that's certainly a catch to spout about back at the bar. It was an Orca-ward
the not-quite-so-famous who really love to spout about love. They then get so seriously burned
Easier said than done young man. We can all spout about it but how to put it right's another
rebels but their teen lips do sulk when critics spout accusations against the young. <p> Adults
bored materialism as middle-class party-goers spout advertising copy until family man Pierrot ups
El. These kids now, they're different. They spout all that. It's a love-in with them. It's like
this was written by an American? <p> You can spout all the sacharrine blandishment you want
in his own right, although the word is he can't spout all that agenda flim-flam and New Labour
Swindon. 1836 Were you bribed in any way to spout all that unbelievable tosh about Michael
Winterson; a Helena who is far too pretty to spout all those lines about how plain she feels; an
Street-Porter's wettest dream. Bono gets to spout almost as much crap as Sellafeld itself, but
we see today between astrologers (who always spout ambiguous rubbish) and astronomers who
at Geysir. The word is Icelandic for erupt or spout and the place gave its name to jets where
the shape and you get a bad brew # its generous spout and handle guarantee perfect pouring, while
Fireholes and Acid Springs", geysers spout, and mud pots bubble with lethal, brightly-
has become. <p> Muslim fanatics can freely spout anti-British propaganda on our street
actor who can play any part, make any speech, spout any principle, inject passion to rouse an
fold of the new millennium a few critics still spout archaic. In 1993 Lisa Cresswell was sacked
and telling tales. It began to bubble and spout at an alarming rate, with water welling up
as the BBC puts it, and at 10 am we start to spout at our first clients. Recording gets under
you listen to me?" she snapped. I'm listening. Spout away. The bard here's a melancholy man, and I

3. Trappings

designed and executed western jewelry and trappings, a wide range of gold and diamond jewelry, itself, and are rarely led astray by the trappings. A consequence of this is that one a Wall Street investment banker with all the trappings: a Jaguar, a 25-foot pleasure boat, an \$825, <p> Heroin abuse became a symbol, one of the trappings affected by the boppers just as dark is to steer clear of conventional rock-gig trappings, aiming for a far more ambitious, anarchic is to steer clear of conventional rock-gig trappings, aiming for a far more ambitious, anarchic adoration and has little time for stardom's trappings. All admirable enough, but maybe this would not insist on modern and vulgar trappings already in dreary abundance in the cities total of 5 million. Simmons gave his society trappings and mystery calculated to attract gullible for up to 1,000 guests was crammed with royal trappings and symbols. And last night there was tally, added: "How Michael copes with the trappings and pitfalls of success depends on his in front of 600 guests. Gone were the formal trappings and pomp as the couple walked before a value for its money and for all the modern trappings and top-division status, the boardroom one <f> cannot <f> adopt and then discard the trappings and the teachings of one religion after the strategic modelling, and all the other trappings and technology of sophisticated, the minutiae of carefully choosing the best "trappings" and forget the "substance" of what we are she could still retain many of the trappings and responsibilities of her former status. in the tents, gather up her necromancer's trappings, and go out to sell her arts. For traveling will need to disengage and let go of those trappings and styles of working and thinking continue to be fettered by the outmoded trappings and controls of the centrally planned I told you, m'sieu, the curtains all, and the trappings, and the few ikons the church possessed, other one, the humanist one with aristocratic trappings, and found it to be rotten. The sociologist a short story in the Daily Telegraph. The trappings and the honours come with the job, and they done to make KLF look good. They used all the trappings and none of the righteousness, and that seems more than usually preoccupied with the trappings and travails of, well, stardom. And, given There are too many bands falling into rock trappings, and they always pick up on the worst bits. attempted to take on the heart-of-darkness trappings and attitudes of the likes of Messrs Napalm Death. But for avoiding stereotypical trappings and looking ahead this easily deserves a (of A Rock God. <p> David Gahan has all the trappings, and a few of the problems, of a Rock God.

4. Dress Up

could become classic illustrations on how to dress up a truism with lots of jargon and a graph, Other Client" Pettibone, who's so reluctant to dress up a groove he must still sleep with posters hopeless self-deceivers. Sometimes they like to dress up a one-night stand as a simple case of down faster than the markets think, so we can dress up a giveaway as fiscal prudence, even if the the question now is how can ministers "dress up" a satisfactory subsidy without seeming to flowers were his idea and he was only trying to dress up a place often visited by dignitaries. He was to be more than a case of hijacking art to dress up a trade show. "We were honestly encouraged re not # cried Emily. "Your job just lets you dress up all that vindictiveness in rules and and harmonic scales. Traum shows you how to dress up any song. Beginning-intermediate. 60 min. Images for Windows or Macintosh </h> <p> Dress up business publications, memos, bulletins paid it to L&G Bank. <p> However L&G chooses to dress up commission charges, it is surely the or self-interest as desperate attempts to dress up conservation in more appealing clothes. have had less impact. But in their eagerness to dress up desirable norms as unarguable facts, the 10 April, p 4) spread because people like to dress up dull messages with fancy fonts and arty on ALL our great images, fonts and software to dress up everything you create at your computer! language, John Maynard Smith and Eors Szathmary dress up evolution in the frock of the moment. The <p> Using coloured borders or friezes to dress up expanses of plain tiles or cutting tiles for a certain type of dinner-party cook to dress up expensive ingredients in elaborate and the point, the union yesterday decided to dress up four actors as "fat cats" to sing "you're There's a temptation to wonder why she needs to dress up her music like this," says James Jolly, public expenditure, the Opposition might then dress up higher public expenditure as the offer of market for some sort of ideology in which to dress up his opportunism. And how intellectually songsmiths of rock history and knows how to dress up his songs to suit, but he is stronger on what so many innovators before him have done: dress up his novelty as a return to a preexisting that otherwise rational people will choose to dress up inadequacy in socially acceptable terms. unfolds the C major Prelude, never trying to dress up its simplicity, is a model of tact that he backed away from it and somehow had to dress up its retreat," said Mike Jendrzeczyk, a serialisation in the Mail on Sunday tried to dress up Naughtie's prediction that Tony Blair will sort of way. At other times brilliant titles dress up otherwise mediocre ramblings (waco-

6. Ring True (Examples of negatives)

Now You See Me. Lamb's narrative voice does not ring consistently true. Some elements of the story early September. I am hoping that this does not ring true, as despite my recent good run I still June 2001 </dt> <p> SOMEHOW the words did not ring true. Straight-faced he may have been, but idea of Ronson letting go of the reins does not ring true. A grandfather he may be, but slowing I mean it you know it j+ doesn't it's just not ring true. <M01> Okay. We'll see MX. Thank you very maybe there's something that just doesn't quite ring true to you. That could mean that you're just as per usual." <p> His mockery didn't quite ring true. <p> Dog smiled and said, "Now I've got about his intonation which did not quite ring true. And his use of "compass" gave me the Her portrayal of Dora Carrington may not quite ring true, but it's a very good performance all the but the alienation effect doesn't quite ring true. You don't have to worry about the and press and television. This does not quite ring true. Drug money has certainly had a baleful THAT New Lounge" stuff never did quite ring true on record. Maybe it was too self-equal so his mental torture never quite rings true. The film fares better with its support its effect, but in some way it will not quite ring true. In the end it is probably better to be and cricket, although this does not quite ring true. The exceptional hand-eye skills and co- </dt> <p> Judy Upton's new play doesn't quite ring true for Benedict Nightingale. <p> If I ran against the whole civilised world doesn't quite ring true. Have they not rather been directed really is in W11. Pleasantly seedy but rarely rings true. Sliding Doors (1998): the opening of know the kind of thing. Nor does the science ring true. Will the fruits of the human genome a statement made by Officer which doesn't ring quite true. <p> He says, with regard to global Campaign. <h> Chirac's nuclear excuses "don't ring true" </h> By TARA PATEL <b1> PARIS

5. Groundbreaking: T-score Results of Collocates

work	323761	24	4.495821
series	81205	13	3.468157
s	4308217	51	3.461247
his	1936210	29	3.191803
study	59402	9	2.879208
the	24780121	189	2.751866
book	115658	8	2.578975
its	727626	14	2.555340
in	8143020	71	2.530753
research	88021	7	2.442799
film	91912	7	2.433827
ruling	19880	5	2.181832
hardly	30532	5	2.152771
a	9925232	79	2.076050
most	475980	9	2.032114
emptive	609	4	1.998142
potentially	10235	4	1.968781
exciting	17488	4	1.946658
it	3994942	36	1.938224
novel	23730	4	1.927619
author	25722	4	1.921543
done	127501	5	1.888223
pre	37714	4	1.884965
band	43734	4	1.866603
victory	51230	4	1.843739
china	51515	4	1.842870
agreement	54330	4	1.834283
on	3154716	29	1.811466
<p>	4971796	42	1.800746
first	620770	9	1.737690
discoveries	2469	3	1.723355
discovery	12838	3	1.686835