

Word Partners or Phrasemes: Two distinct Types of Collocation

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Many of the types of formulaic language (e.g. idioms, phrasal verbs) have the property of being *phrasemes* or *lexemes*, that is, they behave as single-meaning units. Regarding collocations, there is a possibility that they are idiomatic as well. An example of this is *hot ticket* that does not literally mean 'a ticket that is hot', but instead refers either to a very popular person or thing, something illegal, or a useful idea. Furthermore, formulaic sequences (e.g. phrasal verbs) can be polysemous too. It seems that polysemy can also be found in collocations, as illustrated in the case of *top drawer*, which can refer either to the uppermost drawer in a cabinet or something that is best of its class. This presentation attempts to discover how many collocations are in fact phrasemic and polysemous. For the purposes of this study, all collocations have been classified into two types. The first is *(Word) Partners* (literal meaning of word A + literal meaning of word B: *old furniture* = old furniture). The second is *Phrasemes* and has two categories: Type 1 refers to collocations that only have one or more figurative meanings (*big ticket* ≠ a large sized ticket, but refers to something expensive, e.g. a 'big ticket item'); Type 2 (literal meaning + figurative meaning: *top drawer* has both 'top shelf of cabinet' and 'best quality' meaning senses. This detailed examination of over 50 collocations extracted from the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA) produced the following findings:

1. 76.5 % of collocations are Partners
2. 23.5 % of collocations behave as phrasemes (3.9% Type I Phrasemes and 19.6% Type II Phrasemes)

In terms of polysemy, the results indicate that about one fourth (27.5%) of collocations has more than one meaning sense.