



A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF WORD COMBINATIONS IN ENGLISH AND UZBEK: STRUCTURAL AND SEMANTIC PERSPECTIVES

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Abstract. *This article provides a comparative analysis of word combinations (so'z birikmalari) in English and Uzbek within the framework of minor syntax. The study examines attributive, objective, and adverbial types, identifying key differences between the analytic English system and the agglutinative Uzbek system. Semantic roles are analyzed through Case Grammar (Fillmore, 1968) and Construction Grammar (Goldberg, 1995). The findings reveal that while deep semantic relations are universal, surface realization is typologically conditioned.*

Keywords: *word combinations, minor syntax, English, Uzbek, comparative linguistics, attributive relations, case grammar, agglutination.*

Introduction

Word combinations (so'z birikmalari) constitute the fundamental building blocks of minor syntax, serving as the bridge between individual lexemes and complete sentences. In both English and Uzbek, word combinations represent the primary level at which grammatical relations are established and semantic content is encoded (Turobov, 2023; Turniyozov et al., 2009). However, the mechanisms by which these combinations are formed, the grammatical devices employed, and the degree of structural flexibility permitted differ substantially between the two languages.

English, as an analytic Indo-European language, relies primarily on fixed word order, prepositions, and auxiliary elements to establish grammatical relationships within word combinations. Uzbek, as an agglutinative Turkic language, employs a rich system of suffixes – case markers, possessive affixes, and derivational formants – to encode the same relationships. This typological contrast makes comparative study particularly illuminating (Bekmurzayeva, 2024). The present study draws on Fillmore's Case Grammar (1968) and Goldberg's Construction Grammar (1995, 2006) as theoretical foundations for examining how each language organizes sub-sentential units.

The concept of word combination in Uzbek linguistics was developed by A. G'ulomov, N. Turniyozov, and others. Turniyozov (2009) defines so'z birikmasi as a combination of two or more notional words connected by subordinative grammatical relation, where one word serves as the head (bosh so'z) and the other as the dependent (tobe so'z). This definition parallels the concept of phrase in generative grammar, though with some differences in scope.





1. Attributive Word Combinations

Attributive constructions – combinations where one element modifies another – reveal significant structural differences. In English, the modifier typically precedes the head noun: beautiful garden, stone wall, my brother's book. The modifier position is largely fixed, and the grammatical relationship is signaled by position alone (for adjectives) or by the possessive morpheme -'s and the preposition of (for nominal modifiers). English adjectives are morphologically invariable: big house, big houses.

In Uzbek, attributive combinations exhibit greater morphological complexity. The genitive case suffix -ning signals possession: akamning kitobi (my brother's book), where -ning marks the possessor and the possessive suffix -i appears on the possessed noun. Crucially, Uzbek permits both full (-ning) and reduced (zero-marked) forms: ukamning daftari (specific notebook) versus ukam daftari (generic). The full form encodes definiteness analogous to the English article the, while the reduced form carries a more general, classifying meaning (Sayfullayeva et al., 2009).

This distinction has no direct structural parallel in English. English uses articles (the/a) for definiteness, whereas Uzbek uses the genitive suffix. English marks definiteness at the determiner level (before the noun), Uzbek at the modifier level (on the possessor). Pedagogically, Uzbek learners must transfer the -ning/zero distinction to the/a – a mapping crossing structural categories.

Noun-noun attributive combinations (ot+ot) in Uzbek express permanent, classifying attributes: oltin uzuk (gold ring), tosh devor (stone wall), ipak ko'ylak (silk dress). These tend toward lexicalization: temir yo'l > temiryol (railway). Adjective-noun combinations (sifat+ot) express temporary, descriptive attributes: chiroyli uzuk (beautiful ring), katta devor (big wall). This permanent/temporary distinction, systematically encoded in Uzbek, has no structural counterpart in English, where both types occupy the same pre-modifier position (Hojiyev, 2007). English differentiates through morphological class (adjective vs. noun as modifier) but not through syntactic position.

Demonstrative and quantitative modifiers also reveal cross-linguistic patterns. English uses pre-nominal determiners (this book, three books, many people), while Uzbek employs demonstrative pronouns (bu kitob, uch kitob, ko'p odamlar) in structurally parallel positions. However, the English article system (a/the) constitutes a functional category absent in Uzbek, creating systematic asymmetry in the determination system.

2. Objective Word Combinations

Verb-object combinations demonstrate the most fundamental typological contrast. English employs SVO order: read a book, open the door. Uzbek employs SOV: kitob o'qimoq, eshikni ochmoq. This ordering difference affects information processing – listeners receive semantic information in different temporal sequences.

In English, the object is marked by position alone: The cat ate the fish relies on word order. Reversing to The fish ate the cat changes grammatical relations entirely. Prepositions mark indirect objects: gave a book to John, cut it with a knife. The English prepositional



system constitutes a critical component of minor syntax, with over 100 prepositions encoding spatial, temporal, and abstract relations.

In Uzbek, the accusative suffix -ni explicitly marks the definite direct object: *mushuk baliqni yedi*, where -ni on *baliq* signals patient role regardless of word order. This morphological marking permits pragmatic reordering: *Baliqni mushuk yedi* shifts focus to the agent while preserving grammatical relations. A notable phenomenon is the alternation between accusative (-ni) and dative (-ga): *otga mindi* (mounted onto, direction) versus *otni mindi* (rode, complete control). This semantic alternation has no direct English parallel (Turniyozov, 2004).

Fillmore's Case Grammar (1968) provides a useful framework: deep semantic roles (Agent, Patient, Recipient, Instrument) are identical across languages, but surface realization differs – English uses positional syntax, Uzbek uses morphological case. For translation and acquisition, learners must understand that the same semantic content can be encoded through fundamentally different formal mechanisms. The English sentence *I cut bread with a knife* maps to *Men pichoq bilan non kesdim*, where English *with* (preposition) corresponds to Uzbek *bilan* (postposition) – both encoding the Instrument role but in different syntactic positions.

3. Adverbial Word Combinations

Adverbial combinations express manner, time, place, purpose, and other circumstantial relations. English employs diverse mechanisms: adverbs (*speak quickly*), prepositional phrases (*in the morning*), and infinitive clauses (*came to help*). English manner adverbs typically derive from adjectives via -ly (*quick* to *quickly*), creating a clear morphological marker.

Uzbek uses adverbs (*tez gapirmoq*), case-marked nouns (*ertalab* – in the morning), converb forms (*shoshilib keldi* – came hurrying), and postpositions (*uchun* – for/in order to). The converb suffix -b/-ib creates adverbial forms directly from verb stems without a dedicated morpheme. This convergence of verbal and adverbial categories is characteristic of Turkic syntax and reflects the deep integration of morphology and syntax in Uzbek.

Time expression reveals parallel structures: English uses prepositional phrases (*in January*, *on Monday*, *at three o'clock*), Uzbek uses case-marked nouns (*yanvarda*, *dushanbada*). The mapping between English prepositions (*in/on/at*) and Uzbek case suffixes is not one-to-one. Place adverbials similarly diverge: English *to the store* / *in the room* / *from home* correspond to Uzbek *do'konga* / *xonada* / *uydan*, where three different prepositions map to three different case suffixes (-ga, -da, -dan).

Purpose and reason adverbials show interesting cross-linguistic patterns. English uses infinitive clauses (*He came to help*) and prepositional phrases (*because of the rain*). Uzbek uses the postposition *uchun* with noun or verbal noun (*yordam berish uchun* – in order to help) and the converb form -gani (*yordam bergani keldi* – came having helped / came to help). The Uzbek converb system provides a compact means of expressing complex adverbial relations that English requires separate clauses or phrases to encode.





4. Semantic Encoding in Word Combinations

Following Goldberg's Construction Grammar (1995), word combinations carry independent constructional meaning. The English ditransitive X gave Y Z inherently encodes caused transfer; the Uzbek X Y-ga Z berdi encodes the same through the dative suffix rather than word order. Both carry identical abstract meaning through fundamentally different structural means. The caused-motion construction (She pushed him into the room / U uni xonaga itaridi) similarly encodes spatial transfer in both languages.

Deep semantic roles are organized hierarchically. In both languages, agents tend to be most prominent (subject position), themes receive default object marking, and recipients take oblique marking. However, the marking strategies create functional asymmetries: English relies on structural position within the VP, while Uzbek uses overt morphological case, permitting greater structural freedom while maintaining semantic clarity. This asymmetry has been formalized in Optimality Theory as a constraint ranking difference between the two languages.

Collocational patterns – fixed or semi-fixed word combinations – constitute an important category in both languages. English has extensive collocational sets: make a decision (not *do a decision), heavy rain (not *strong rain), commit a crime (not *make a crime). Uzbek similarly has fixed collocations: qaror qabul qilmoq (accept decision = make a decision), kuchli yomg'ir (strong rain), jinoyat sodir etmoq (realize crime = commit a crime). These collocational patterns are language-specific and must be learned as holistic units rather than generated from compositional rules.

Conclusion

The comparative analysis reveals that while deep semantic relations are universal, surface realization is typologically conditioned. English combinations feature positional rigidity and analytic marking (prepositions, word order); Uzbek combinations feature morphological richness and structural flexibility. The genitive alternation (-ning/zero), accusative-dative alternation, converb-based adverbial system, and ot+ot vs. sifat+ot distinction represent uniquely Uzbek features enriching minor syntax theory.

These findings have direct implications for contrastive linguistics, translation studies, and language pedagogy. Word combination patterns should be taught with explicit attention to typological differences. Future research should employ corpus-based methods to quantify the frequency and distribution of different word combination types in both languages, providing empirical grounding for pedagogical prioritization.

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