Assessing Lexical Collocations in the *Masnavi Manavi* by Maulana

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Masnavi manuscript
Courtesy: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Masnavi

Abstract

In different languages, there is a sense relation between lexicons which makes syntagmatic and paradigmatic relations among linguistic structures. One of the sense relations is

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12 : 10 October 2012
Mohammad Reza Pahlavannezhad, Ph.D. and Shima Ebrahimi, M.A.
Assessing Lexical Collocations in the *Masnavi Manavi* by Maulana   497

collocational relation which is based on a relevance and sequence of two or more vocabularies whose co-occurrence can be predicted. Lexical collocations are of considerable importance in any language and in close association with a community's literature, attitudes and customs. Any poet's innovative and unique use of lexical collocations in syntagmatic axis makes his work semantically relevant, graceful, and different from other poets' works.

Due to the fact that one of the most significant characteristics of Maulana Jalalu-D-Din Muhammad I Balkhi's poems, the present study seeks to investigate and categorize the existing collocations in his Masnavi Manavi according to semantic and corresponding collocations, synonymous collocations, antonymous collocations, situational collocations, historical and Quranic collocations.

Keywords: syntagmatic relations, collocation, semantic relevance, Quranic collocation, syntagmatic axis, paradigmatic axis

1. Introduction

Maulana Jalalu-D-Din Muhammad I Balkhi

Courtesy: http://afghanland.com/poetry/rumi.html

The important issue in collocations is how the arrangement and juxtaposition of vocabularies which commonly co-occur is possible and which words can be collocated with each

Language in India www.languageinindia.com
12 : 10 October 2012
Mohammad Reza Pahlavannezhad, Ph.D. and Shima Ebrahimi, M.A.
Assessing Lexical Collocations in the *Masnavi Manavi* by Maulana 498

other. Being able to recognize which words can be linked is a great help both with understanding and translating a text. By and large, it can be alleged that any vocabulary can be collocated with one or more vocabularies, and this characteristic makes the speakers of a language capable of structuring statements or larger units in a text. Collocations can be studies from different point of views such as theoretical, descriptive and applied linguistics. Nowadays, researchers' studies should be more extensive and accurate since collocations' horizons have been hugely broadened to the other spheres of study such as mathematical linguistics, corpus-based linguistics, lexicography, second language acquisition, natural language production and processing, and especial translation studies. It can be a reasonable indicative of collocations' importance in Persian Language.

Generally speaking, lexical collocations define a sequence of two or more words which are used by native speakers and indicate their capability of coining and are prevalent between different dialects of a language. Learning collocations is essential at the time of both first and second language acquisition, since there is no generalized criterion in their grouping and functioning. Different factors such as syntactic, semantic, phonological, historical and pragmatic are effective in defining how and how many words can be collocated with each other. Frequency of a word's co-occurrence with different adjacent vocabularies can be various and sometimes two words are so associated with each other that make a compound word; these hybrids should be noticed in defining collocations.

Owing to the fact that there is no specific and universal criterion for collocations' grouping, we can only assess the collocations' causes, investigate them through literary corpuses and find out how and based on which linguistic elements a poet has created lexical collocations in his/her work; therefore, one of the most considerable features of poetic texts and compositions is the way a poet has taken advantage of collocations in his/her poems. Appraising a poet's style in applying collocations can also reveal the poetic features of his/her compositions.

One of Maulana's strategies in composing the Masnavi Manavi was citing the Holy Quran, using semantic relevance, and cultural collocations which created more subtlety and elegance in his work. His coherent and homogeneous application of collocations demonstrates his special capability of using language and vocabularies. Different categories of collocations in Maulana's Masnavi will be exemplified after reviewing the literature.

Language in India www.languageinindia.com
12 : 10 October 2012
Mohammad Reza Pahlavannezhad, Ph.D. and Shima Ebrahimi, M.A.
Assessing Lexical Collocations in the *Masnavi Manavi* by Maulana   499

2. Review of Literature

The concept of collocation is of great importance in different languages and widespread researches have been conducted apropos of this field. Collocations have a principal role in structuring the lexical and syntactic system of a language, so the inquiry into collocations is a major focus of interest. Before any discussion in relation to collocations, it is required to explain them. It should be pointed out that although a wide range of definitions have been presented for collocations until now, no universal and clear-cut one has been accepted due to their complexity. It shows that there is no identical attitude towards the concept of collocation, its features, representation and classification.

The term of collocation was first introduced by J. R. Firth (1957) in his semantic approach arguing that "you shall know a word by the company it keeps" (Firth, 1957, 90).

Influenced by Firth's original idea of collocation, some other linguists such as Halliday and Sinclair have spread this concept. Halliday (1966) considered lexis as complementary to, but not part of, grammatical theory. He introduced the notion of '*set*' as an extra dimension of the collectability of words. A collocation, in his definition, is "a linear co-occurrence relationship among lexical items which co-occur together", whereas the *set* is "the grouping of members with like privilege of occurrence in collocation" (p. 153). For example, *bright, hot*, *shine*, *light*, and *come out* belong to the same lexical set since they all collocate with the word *sun* (1966, p. 158).

Sinclair is also a Neo-Firthian linguist who mostly agrees with Halliday. In Sinclair's terms, a collocation is "a tendency for words to occur together" and it can be identifiable by frequency of occurrence (Sinclair, 1991:71). He stated that these tendencies "ought to tell us facts about language that cannot be got by grammatical analysis".

Jackson (1988:96) uses the term 'collocation' to refer to the combination of words that have a certain 'mutual expectancy', and his definition therefore excludes clichés which are 'ossified collocations', as it does of proverbs and idioms which are fixed expressions. There is always some degree of choice, however limited, where collocations are concerned.

Recently, the collocational behaviour of words has been examined not just from a traditional point of view which has only been in relation to grammatical structures, but it can be explored through studying their applications in lexical semantics, morphology, lexicography,

Language in India www.languageinindia.com
12 : 10 October 2012
Mohammad Reza Pahlavannezhad, Ph.D. and Shima Ebrahimi, M.A.
Assessing Lexical Collocations in the *Masnavi Manavi* by Maulana   500

terminology and natural language processing (Heid, 1994, p. 226). For instance, Porzig (1934) claimed that on the syntagmatic level, the choice of words is governed not only by grammatical rules, but by lexical compatibility. Therefore, collocations are not just restricted to the juxtaposition of verbs and adverbs, but it can be broadened to nouns and adjectives.

Baker (1992) has given a definition of collocation as the tendency of certain words to co-occur regularly in a language. She has indicated that words are not tied together at random in any language; on the other hand, there are always restrictions on the way they can be combined to convey meaning. She states that there is a specific relationship between different vocabularies of any language which can affect lexicography, any work associated with translation and language description. These relations cab be drastically effective in selected words in the process of language production. The concept of collocation is the most comprehensible reality of any language; therefore, structures' prediction can be achieved through linguistic universals.

According to Brown (2006, cited in Sinclair), collocation is a semantic phenomenon which happen between two or more vocabularies in speech chain and can be recognized by the high frequency of occurrence in a long piece of writing. So, meaning is obtained by two or more words grouped with each other.

3. Research Analysis

Owing to the fact that one of the most prevalent ways of assessing lexical collocations is corpus-based analysis, a literary corpus has been chosen in this research to assess the diachronic etymology of collocations. It should be also noted that some restrictions are always accompanied with these studies, so various interpretations and commentaries can be construed on the basis of the corpus's type and nature. Therefore, reliable and valid resources should be cited in determining lexical collocations. To achieve this goal, 143 couplets have been selected from total 3693 couplets in six books of the Masnavi by Maulana Jalalu-D-Din Muhammad I Balkhi, who is a poet of the seventh century A.H., and different sense relations such as synonym, antonym and semantic correspondence have been appraised. Some collocations applied by Maulana are nowadays very popular with other poets and ordinary people; therefore, the linguistic analysis of his poems is of considerable importance in Persian literature.

Language in India www.languageinindia.com
12 : 10 October 2012
Mohammad Reza Pahlavannezhad, Ph.D. and Shima Ebrahimi, M.A.
Assessing Lexical Collocations in the *Masnavi Manavi* by Maulana   501

3.1.   Classification and linguistic analysis of lexical collocations in Masnavi's poems

Mojtaba Namvar (2007), in his M.A. thesis has proposed five following classifications of lexical collocations in Persian Language: semantic, phonological, contextual, situational and cultural collocations. The authors of the present research have added two other categories of antonymous and Quranic collocations into the aforementioned ones.

3.1.1.   Semantic and corresponding collocations

In this kind of collocation, two or more vocabularies are grouped with each other due to their close semantic relationship. In other words, similar semantic features can make two or more words be often collocated with each other (Namvar, 2007:113).

This type of collocation can be regarded as synonymy. In other words, close association of words can be the result of their synonymy and focus on importance. Poet can focus on his statement and make it more graceful through using synonymous vocabularies. These collocations can be also used in dialogical speech between ordinary people. By using synonymy, one of the words can remind us of the other word and make it a fixed collocation. It can be also called as corresponding collocation which is the consequence of their close relation and correspondence. In semantic collocations, two juxtaposed vocabularies are mostly nouns and adjectives which means that two words that are grouped are often nouns or adjectives. Since their sense relation is based on synonymy, their grammatical gender should be the same.

The following examples, in which some semantic collocations have been used, have been chosen from the Masnavi.

اصل آن	چـون ز رنـجور آن حکیم ایـن راز یــافت
	درد و بــلا را بـاز یــافت

PF[1]: čon ze ranĵur ?ân hakim ?in râz yâft   ?sle ?ân dardo balâ râ bâz yâft

CT[2]: When the sage became aware of the patient's secret, he could find out the root of <u>pain</u> and <u>agony</u>.

مـشکل از تـو حل شود بـی **قـیل و قــال**	ای لـقــای تـو جواب هـر سوال

PF: ?ey leqâye to ĵavâbe har so?âl   moškel ?az to hal šavad bi qil-o qâl

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CT: If I become successful to see you, I won't have any other problem, and all my difficulties will be solved without any <u>noise</u> and <u>ruckus</u>

چون به عشق   هرچه گـویـیم عشق را **شرح و بـیـان**

آیـم، خجل بـاشم از آن

PF: har če guyim ?ešq râ šarho bayân   čon be ?ešq ?ayam, xeĵel bâšam ?az ?ân

CT: I can <u>explain</u> and <u>talk</u> much about love, but when it comes to practice, there is nothing but embarrassment.

سهل   نـه چو آن ابـلـه کـه یـابـد قـرب شاه

و آسـان درفـتـد آن دم ز راه

PF: na čo ?ân ?ablah ke yâbad qorbe šâh   sahlo-?âsân darfetad ?ân dam ze râh

CT: Not like that fool who could see the king with lots of adversities, but he missed the opportunity very <u>easily</u> and <u>simplistically</u>.

بـاز از وهمش همی   پـاک دانـستش از هر **غش و غل**

لـرزیـد دل

PF: pâk dânestaš ?az har qešoqel   bâz ?az vahmaš hami larzid del

CT: Although he knew that she was far from any impurity and dishonesty, he was afraid.

In the aforementioned couplets, it is totally obvious that the poet has been aware of the existing synonymy and correspondence between lexicons and taken advantage of them. The applied collocations in his poetry have been popular with most of the people. The poet gets advantage of the synonymy to extend his speech and preserve the couplet.

3.1.2. Antonymous collocations

In this kind of collocation, two words are the opposite of each other. The poet conveys a unified meaning through collocating two antonymous words in a collocation. Different types of antonomy such as bilateral, graded, directed and converse antonomy have been applied in Maulana's poetry. Both words in a collocation should be necessarily of the same grammatical gender, so both of them should be either nouns or adjectives.

قـدر پـشه مـیخورد آن پـیل تـن   فـجفجه افتـاد انـدر <u>مـرد و زن</u>

PF: faĵfaĵe ?oftâd ?andar mardo zan   qadre paše mixord ?ân pil tan

CT: A ruckus has been raised between <u>men</u> and <u>women</u>, since the champion ate just as much as a mosquito.

Language in India www.languageinindia.com
12 : 10 October 2012
Mohammad Reza Pahlavannezhad, Ph.D. and Shima Ebrahimi, M.A.
Assessing Lexical Collocations in the *Masnavi Manavi* by Maulana   503

شه طبیبان جمع کرد از **چپ و راست**   گفت جان هر دو در دست شماست

PF: šah tabibân ĵam? Kard ?az čapo râst   goft ĵâne har do dar daste šomâst

CT: The king gathered lots of medicine men together from <u>right</u> and <u>left</u> (different parts of the world), and told them that you would be responsible for their health and life.

گه **یمینش** می‌برد گاهی **یسار**   گه **گلستانش** کند, گاهیش **خار**

PF: gah yaminaš mibarad gâhi yasâr   gah golestânaš konad, gâhiš xâr

CT: Sometimes he took them to the right and sometimes left, sometimes in the rosary and sometimes in the wasteland

پادشاهی داشت یک برنا پسر   <u>ظاهر و باطن</u> مزین از هنر

PF: pâdešâhi dâšt yek bornâ pesar   zâhero bâten mozayan ?az honar

CT: King had a young boy, with lots of <u>outward</u> and <u>inward merits</u>

It should be noticed that antonymous words can mostly create collocations. Maulana has also taken much advantage of this strategy in his poetry and he could maintain his poems' rhyme and rhythm through antonymous collocations; therefore, this type of collocation is of great importance.

3.1.3. Situational collocations

Situational collocations are based on our knowledge about the situations and refer to those vocabularies which are often used in the same situations. It can be claimed that this type of collocation is not associated with language, but is in close relation to various situations in which two collocated words are accompanied with each other (Namvar, 2007, p. 114).

Identical usage of the vocabularies in the same situation can be the reason of their linkage. They are frequently of the same semantic domain or are applied in an identical semantic field; therefore, the grammatical gender of collocated vocabularies cannot be accurately defined, since they are closely associated with context and situation. Consider the following examples.

سر من از ناله من دور نیست   لیک **چشم و گوش** را آن نور نیست

PF: Serre man ?az nâleye man dur nist   lik češm-o guš râ ?ân nur nist

Language in India www.languageinindia.com
12 : 10 October 2012
Mohammad Reza Pahlavannezhad, Ph.D. and Shima Ebrahimi, M.A.
Assessing Lexical Collocations in the *Masnavi Manavi* by Maulana   504

CT: My secret is not irrelevant to my mourning, so my <u>eyes</u> and <u>ears</u> cannot see and hear as before.

<div dir="rtl">

بی ادب گفـتـند کـو **سـیـر و عـدس**   در مـیـان قـوم مـوسی چـند کس

</div>

PF: dar miâne qome musi čand kas   bi?adab goftand ku sir-o ?adas

CT: Some of the impolite men of Musa asked about <u>garlic</u> and <u>lentil</u>.

<div dir="rtl">

شرح **عـشق و عـاشقی** هم عشق گفت   عقـل در شرحش چو **خـر در گـل** بـخفت

</div>

PF: ?aql dar šarhaš čo xar dar gel bexoft   šarhe ?ešq-o ?âšeqi ham ?ešq goft

CT: reason was unable to explain it like a <u>donkey</u> in <u>mud</u>, just love can explain about <u>amour</u> and <u>love</u>

<div dir="rtl">

بـاز گفـت از جـای و از **نـان و نـمک**   خـواجـگـان و شـهـرها را یـک بـه یـک

</div>

PF: xâĵegân-o šahrhâ râ yek be yek   bâz goft ?az ĵâyo ?az nâno namak

CT: He named all dignitaries and their cities one by one, and explained about <u>bread</u> and <u>salt</u> (everything which happened between them, especially their dinner)

<div dir="rtl">

بـاز کـرده بیـهده **چـشم و دهـان**   زیـنت او از بـرای دیـگران

</div>

PF: zinate ?u ?az barâye digarân   bâz karde bihode čašm-o dahân

CT: Her beauty belongs to others, and it has opened their <u>eye</u> and <u>mouth</u> in vain (has made them surprised)

3.1.4. Quranic collocations

These are some couplets in which proper nouns such as Prophets' and Imams' names, their miracles or some verses cited in the Holy Quran about them have been mentioned as collocations. In Quranic collocations, grammatical gender of the collocated words should be the same; therefore, both words should be either proper nouns or adjectives, for instance "Harout" and "Marout" have been collocated with each other on the basis of a existing verse in Quran about them.

Maulana benefited from Quranic collocations by referring to the Holy Quran and made some innovative and creative collocations to transfer his meanings. The reasons of making such

Language in India www.languageinindia.com
12 : 10 October 2012
Mohammad Reza Pahlavannezhad, Ph.D. and Shima Ebrahimi, M.A.
Assessing Lexical Collocations in the *Masnavi Manavi* by Maulana   505

collocations can be also found in historical roots. Maulana intended to deliver the Quranic message to the people through a pleasant and melodious language which demonstrates that he has been very fond of the Holy Quran. In Maulana's poetry, it can be noticed that there is a distance between collocations. This characteristic has considerably enhanced their beauty and attraction. In this way, he can both focus on the Quranic story and put the collocated words at a distance from each other.

آنکه آن **اصحاب کهف** از نقل و نقل **سیصد و نه** سال گم کردند عقل

PF: ?ânke ?ân ?ahâfe kahf ?az naql-o qol   sisad-o noh sâl gom kardand ?aql

CT: Ashab e Kahf slept for 309 years.

The story of "Ashab e Kahf" or the "people of Kahf "(seven sleepers of Ephesus) is so important that has been allocated a complete surah to itself, so appraising its collocations is notably important. Long sleep of Ashab e Kahf is the main focus of interest between poets. In this couplet, not only their collocation of Ashab e Kahf has been mentioned, but also 309 years which they slept has been noted as if the whole story has been skilfully summarized in just one couplet.

ز آنکه **موسی** جادوی کرد و فسون   تا که **آب نیل** ما را کرد خون

PF: zânke musâ jâduy kard-o fosun   tâ ke ?âbe nile mârâ kard xun

CT: Since Musa performed a miracle, the Nile River killed us

من **عصا** ام در کف موسی خویش   **موسیم** پنهان و من پیدا به پیش

PF: man ?asâ ?am dar kafe musiye xiš   musiyam penhân-o man peydâ be piš

CT: My rod is in my Musa's hand, and my Musa is hidden in me

One of Musa's miracles happened when he struck his walking stick on the Nile River and a path was created like a bridge for him and his followers to cross over to the other side. Fir'awn and his men were drowned under the waters of the Nile River which closed over them after Musa and his men had safely crossed. The name of Musa can remind us of this miracle and the Nile River. It should be pointed out that in addition to this collocation, there are some other collocations of rod, Fir'awn and Musa in the Masnavi which can be the consequence of Musa's

Language in India www.languageinindia.com
12 : 10 October 2012
Mohammad Reza Pahlavannezhad, Ph.D. and Shima Ebrahimi, M.A.
Assessing Lexical Collocations in the *Masnavi Manavi* by Maulana   506

miracle when he fought Fir'awn's magicians and his rod had turned into a snake and swallowed the sorceries of Fir'awn's magicians.

هفـت سـال **ایـوب بـا صبـر** و رضا   در بـلا خـوش بـود بـا

ضیف خدا

PF: haft sâl ?ayyub bâ sabr-o rezâ   dar balâ xoš bud bâ zayfe xodâ

CT: Ayoub has stayed there for seven years patiently and satisfactorily, although he had difficulties, he was happy of being God's guest

The amazing patience of the Prophet Ayoub at the time of pain and agony has attracted lot of poets' attention and even Ayoub's patience had become an expression between Iranians and Arabs to show someone's great patience to tolerate different problems. In Persian Language, Ayoub is symbol of much patience, so these two vocabularies can be easily collocated with each other. It is interesting that in the West, Christian and Jewish culture, Ayoub is symbol of patience and poverty too. There is a story about Ayoub in Torah which aims to show us that poverty and agony are not always to punish somebody, it can be to test and purify him/her. Maulana repeated the collocation of 'Ayoub patience' many times in his poems since it is a Quranic story.

4. Conclusion

Lexical collocations, their underlying reasons and their description are of considerable importance in Persian Language. Collocations are closely associated with semantics and lexicography, and widespread researches in this field can be an indicative of its significance. The findings of different researches demonstrate that only individual vocabulary's meaning cannot determine a collocation, so there are some other effective criteria in determining lexical collocations and linguistics cannot impose restrictions on them, although they are going to be fixed by the high frequency of their application in different poets' and authors' works. Some of them are even used by ordinary people. The more the existing relations are stable between collocations, the more they can be similar to idioms and regarded as a general pattern; therefore, assessing underlying reasons of lexical collocations is so significant in any language.

One of the most prominent features of the Masnavi by Maulana is the existing harmony and relevance in syntagmatic axis which made his work outstanding. He combined different vocabularies in syntagmatic axis through Quranic verses and sense relations to prove his eminent artistry in composing poetry. The obtained findings of the research indicate that Maulana has

Language in India www.languageinindia.com
12 : 10 October 2012
Mohammad Reza Pahlavannezhad, Ph.D. and Shima Ebrahimi, M.A.
Assessing Lexical Collocations in the *Masnavi Manavi* by Maulana   507

been so skilful at using sense relations in his work and has benefited from all of them. It can be concluded that synonymy and antonomy are of significant importance in his Masnavi which were also repeated many times. In addition, it has been recognized that Maulana has been fully conversant with the Quranic issues which has made him capable of creating new lexical collocations to remind us the Quranic stories through a pleasant language.

It should be noted that the aforementioned classification can be also applied in lexicography and teaching specific Persian collocations to the foreign learners.

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Language in India www.languageinindia.com
12 : 10 October 2012
Mohammad Reza Pahlavannezhad, Ph.D. and Shima Ebrahimi, M.A.
Assessing Lexical Collocations in the *Masnavi Manavi* by Maulana   508

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Language in India www.languageinindia.com
12 : 10 October 2012
Mohammad Reza Pahlavannezhad, Ph.D. and Shima Ebrahimi, M.A.
Assessing Lexical Collocations in the *Masnavi Manavi* by Maulana   509