



ISSN: 3060-4613



MAKTABGACHA
VA MAKTAB
TA'LIMI VAZIRLIGI



O'zbekiston
Milliy Pedagogika
Universiteti



No8(2)
2026

- 13.00.00 Pedagogika fanlari
- 13.00.01 Pedagogika nazariyasi. Pedagogik ta'limotlar tarixi
- 13.00.02 Ta'lim va tarbiya nazariyasi va metodikasi (sohalar bo'yicha)
- 13.00.03 Maxsus pedagogika
- 13.00.04 Jismoniy tarbiya va sport mashg'ulotlari nazariyasi va metodikasi
- 13.00.05 Kasb-hunar ta'limi nazariyasi va metodikasi
- 13.00.06 Elektron ta'lim nazariyasi va metodikasi (ta'lim sohaları va bosqichlari bo'yicha)
- 13.00.07 Ta'limda menejment
- 13.00.08 Maktabgacha ta'lim va tarbiya nazariyasi va metodikasi
- 13.00.09 Ijtimoiy pedagogika
- 07.00.00 Tarix fanlari
- 19.00.00 Psixologiya fanlari
- 01.00.00 Fizika-matematika fanlari
- 02.00.00 Kimyo fanlari
- 03.00.00 Biologiya fanlari
- 09.00.00 Falsafa fanlari
- 10.00.00 Filologiya fanlari
- 11.00.00 Geografiya fanlari

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Pedagogika, psixologiya fanlariga ixtisoslashgan ilmiy jurnal



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Elektron nashr. 50 sahifa,
12-avgust, 2026-yil.

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Psixologiya fanlari bo'yicha: Toshkent davlat pedagogika universiteti murojaatiga asosan OAK tavsiyasi (24.04.2025-y., №11-05-2566/01):

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THE ROLE OF ENGLISH COLLOCATIONS, IDIOMATIC EXPRESSIONS, AND PHRASEOLOGICAL UNITS IN DEVELOPING COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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Abstract: This article provides a theoretical and methodological investigation into the pedagogical significance of English collocations, idiomatic expressions, and phraseological units for developing communicative competence among university students. Traditional language teaching paradigms, anchored in isolated vocabulary acquisition and explicit rule-based grammar instruction, frequently induce cognitive overload, oral dysfluency, and persistent L1 transfer errors. Adopting a descriptive-conceptual methodology, this study integrates frameworks from Corpus Linguistics (using data from COCA and BNC), Michael Lewis's Lexical Approach, John Sinclair's Idiom Principle, and John Sweller's Cognitive Load Theory. The qualitative and linguistic analyses demonstrate that formulaic language acts as a cognitive mechanism that bypasses multi-step syntactic parsing, enabling automated speech execution and native-like selection. The paper outlines a structured pedagogical model featuring corpus-driven and Generative AI-assisted strategies to effectively integrate complex phraseology into higher education ELT curricula.

Key words: collocations, idiomatic expressions, phraseological units, communicative competence, Lexical Approach, Corpus Linguistics, Cognitive Load Theory, L1 interference, Idiom Principle, language pedagogy.

Annotatsiya: Ushbu maqola oliy ta'lim muassasalarida talabalarning nutqiy va kommunikativ kompetensiyasini rivojlantirishda ingliz tili kollokatsiyalari, idiomatik birliklari hamda frazeologizmlarining nazariy-uslubiy o'rni va lingvodidaktik salohiyatini tahlil qilishga bag'ishlanadi. An'anaviy til o'qitish uslubiyotida leksik birliklarni yakka holda o'zlashtirish va ajratilgan grammatik qoidalarga tayanish talabalarda nutqiy ikkilanish (speech hesitation), kognitiv yuklama (cognitive load) hamda ona tili (L1) interferensiyasini keltirib chiqarishi nazariy tomondan asoslab beriladi. Tadqiqotda korpus lingvistikasi platformalari (COCA, BNC) ma'lumotlari, M. Lyuisning Leksik yondashuv (Lexical Approach) nazariyasi, J. Sinklerning Idiom prinsipi (Idiom Principle) hamda J. Svellerning Kognitiv yuklama nazariyasi (Cognitive Load Theory) doirasida konseptual va deskriptiv tahlil usullari qo'llanilgan. Maqolada frazeologik va kollokatsion birliklarni matn va kontekst asosida o'zlashtirish talabalarning nutq ravonligi (fluency) hamda leksik boyligini (lexical resource) oshirishning asosiy omili ekanligi ko'rsatib berilgan. Shuningdek, oliy ta'lim amaliyoti uchun korpusga asoslangan va sun'iy intellekt (GenAI) imkoniyatlaridan foydalanuvchi zamonaviy pedagogik modellar va tavsiyalar ishlab chiqilgan.

Kalit so'zlar: kollokatsiyalar, idiomatik birliklar, frazeologizmlar, nutqiy kompetensiya, Leksik yondashuv, Korpus lingvistikasi, Kognitiv yuklama nazariyasi, L1 interferensiyasi, Idiom prinsipi, lingvodidaktika.

Аннотация: Данная статья посвящена теоретико-методологическому анализу роли и лингводидактического потенциала английских коллокаций, идиоматических выражений и фразеологических единиц в формировании коммуникативной компетенции студентов вузов. Теоретически обосновано, что традиционное изолированное изучение слов и формальной грамматики приводит к высокой когнитивной нагрузке, речевым задержкам и интерференции родного языка (L1). В исследовании используется концептуальный и описательно-аналитический подход, объединяющий принципы корпусной лингвистики (данные COCA, BNC), Лексического подхода М. Льюиса, Принципа идиомы Дж. Синклера и Теории когнитивной нагрузки Дж. Свеллера. Доказано, что усвоение готовых фразеологических блоков снижает нагрузку на рабочую память и обеспечивает естественную беглость устной речи. В статье представлены методические рекомендации и модели интеграции корпусных технологий и генеративного ИИ в процесс преподавания английского языка в высшей школе.

Ключевые слова: коллокации, идиоматические выражения, фразеологические единицы, коммуникативная компетенция, Лексический подход, корпусная лингвистика, Теория когнитивной нагрузки, ИИ в обучении языку.



INTRODUCTION

Background and Theoretical Context: In modern applied linguistics and foreign language pedagogy, developing native-like oral and written communicative competence is universally recognized as the core objective of higher education language programs. Academic and professional standards require university graduates to possess not only receptive linguistic knowledge but also expressive fluency, pragmatic precision, and natural idiomatic selection.

However, a major systemic challenge in Uzbek and broader international ELT classrooms is the discrepancy between students' explicit grammatical knowledge and their actual communicative performance. While advanced learners frequently master complex morphological and syntactic rules, their spontaneous oral discourse is often characterized by unnatural word combinations, severe speech latency, and persistent direct translations from their native language (L1).

This communication bottleneck stems primarily from a persistent pedagogical misconception: the view that language operates as a "slot-and-filler" system—a set of abstract grammatical rules into which individual, isolated vocabulary items are inserted. Psycholinguistic research convincingly demonstrates that natural human speech does not operate via the real-time assembly of individual words according to formal syntactic constraints. Instead, fluent language users rely heavily on formulaic sequences, prefabricated multi-word blocks, institutionalized utterances, and fixed collocations stored as single mental units in long-term memory.

Statement of the Problem: The central problem in developing communicative competence among undergraduate students is the systematic underestimation of phraseology, collocations, and idiomaticity in institutional syllabi. When students attempt to express complex thoughts by retrieving individual words and manually applying grammatical rules, their limited working memory capacity is overwhelmed. This leads to high cognitive working memory load, unnatural phrasing (e.g., saying "make a research" instead of "conduct/carry out research"), and prolonged silent pauses while negotiating syntactic structures.

Furthermore, idiomatic expressions and phraseological units present distinct semantic and pragmatic obstacles. Because their figurative meaning cannot be derived from the literal summation of their individual constituents (e.g., "spill the beans", "burn the midnight oil"), traditional rote memorization without contextual corpus support leads to pragmatic failure or artificial usage.

Research Objectives and Conceptual Questions: The main objective of this study is to formulate a comprehensive theoretical framework and pedagogical model that illustrates how phraseological units, collocations, and idiomatic expressions foster communicative competence, streamline cognitive processing, and minimize L1 interference.

This paper addresses three central theoretical questions:

- **RQ1:** What is the psycholinguistic role of prefabricated lexical chunks and phraseology in reducing cognitive working memory load during real-time speech production?
- **RQ2:** How do English collocations and idiomatic expressions contribute to solving Pawley and Syder's puzzles of "nativelike selection" and "nativelike fluency"?
- **RQ3:** How can Corpus Linguistics tools (COCA, BNC) and Generative AI (GenAI) be methodologically integrated into university syllabi to optimize phraseological acquisition?

LITERATURE REVIEW

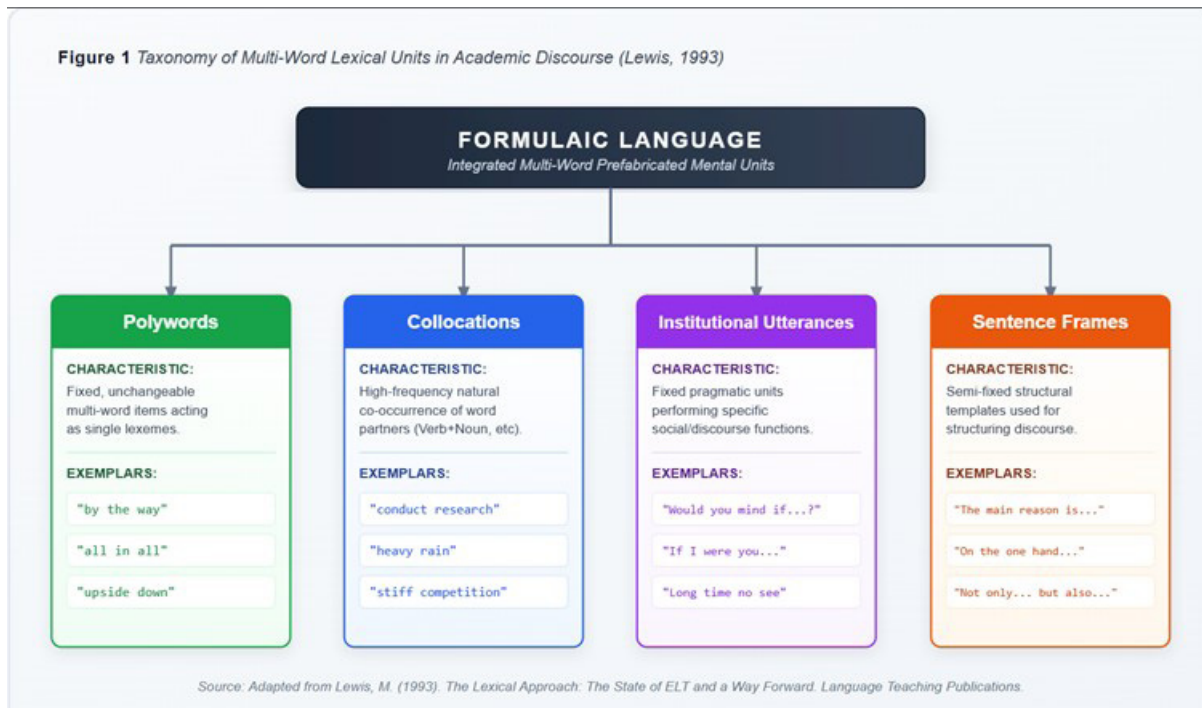
The Psycholinguistics of Phraseology: Pawley, Syder, and Lewis: The theoretical foundation of formulaic language dates back to Pawley and Syder's (1983) seminal work on the twin puzzles of nativelike selection and nativelike fluency. They posed a fundamental question: Why do non-native speakers, who have mastered the formal grammar of English, frequently produce sentences that are grammatically correct yet unidiomatic or unnatural? The answer lies in phraseology. Out of millions of grammatically permissible sentence combinations, native speakers choose only a tiny fraction of conventionalized, institutionalized expressions (e.g., "I wish you a speedy recovery" rather than "I hope you recover with high speed").

Michael Lewis (1993) operationalized these findings into the Lexical Approach, asserting that:

1. "Language consists of grammaticalized lexis, not lexicalized grammar."
2. Lewis categorized multi-word units into four distinct structural categories:
3. Words and Polywords: Single lexical items and fixed brief phrases ("by the way", "all in all").
4. Collocations: High-frequency, statistically predictable word partnerships ("heavy rain", "conduct an experiment", "stiff competition").



5. Institutionalized Utterances: Fixed functional phrases ("If I were you...", "Would you mind if...?").
6. Sentence Heads and Frames: Semi-fixed structural templates ("The main point I want to make is...").



Cognitive Load Theory and Phraseological Automation: John Sweller's (2011) Cognitive Load Theory (CLT) provides a psychological framework explaining why lexical chunking accelerates fluency. Working memory has strict processing limits when handling novel information. When a learner constructs a sentence word-by-word, working memory must simultaneously manage four separate operations:

1. Retrieving individual L1-to-L2 vocabulary meanings.
2. Applying morphological rules (verb tenses, plurals).
3. Verifying word order and syntactic constraints.
4. Adjusting pragmatics for contextual appropriateness.

This multi-stage processing creates severe cognitive friction, causing speech hesitations and anxiety. Conversely, when a learner retrieves a prefabricated phraseological unit (e.g., "take into consideration"), the entire sequence is processed as a single cognitive unit (chunk) from long-term memory. This dramatically reduces working memory overhead, leaving cognitive space for conceptual planning and natural conversation.

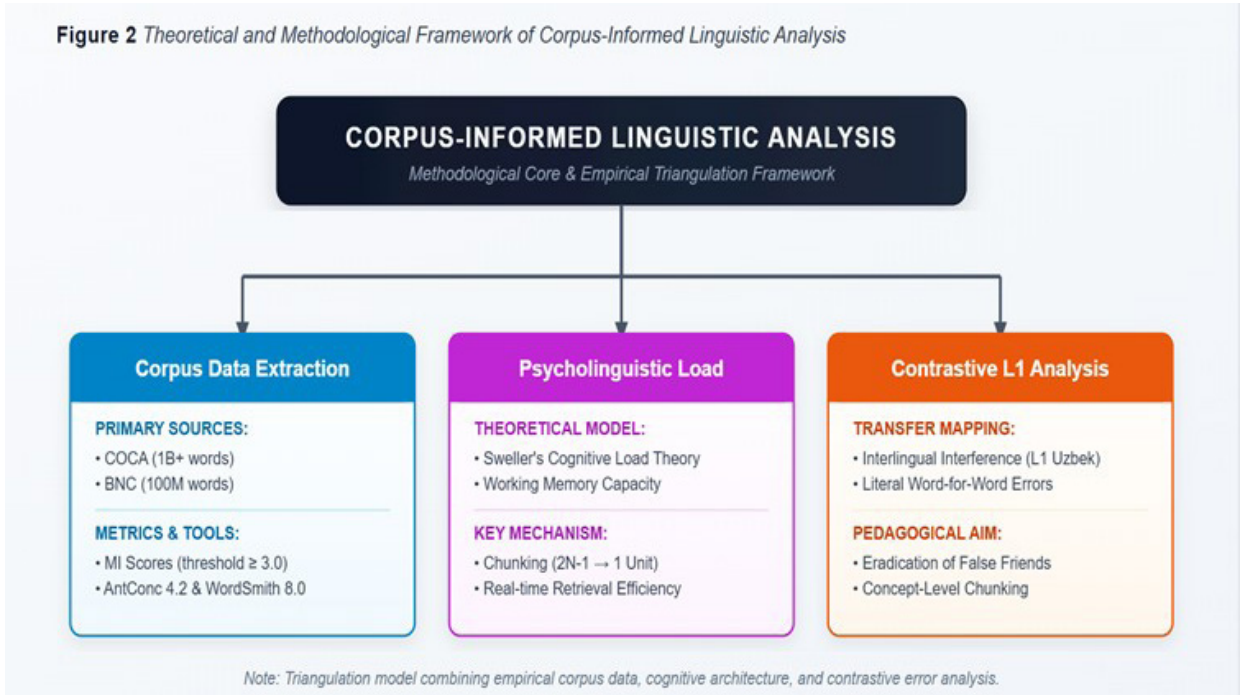
Sinclair's Principles of Language Organization: John Sinclair (1991) introduced two complementary principles governing language organization:

1. **The Open-Choice Principle:** A model of sentence creation where language is viewed as a series of complex choices, where virtually any word satisfying grammatical constraints can fill a structural slot.
2. **The Idiom Principle:** A model where a language user has available a vast number of semi-preconstructed phrases that constitute single choices, even though they may appear syntactically analyzable.

Sinclair argued that natural discourse relies far more heavily on the Idiom Principle than on the Open-Choice Principle. Empirical corpus research indicates that formulaic sequences constitute 50% to 70% of spoken and written discourse in English (Ellis, 2012; Wray, 2002).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

To evaluate the structural, psycholinguistic, and pedagogical mechanisms of English collocations, idiomatic expressions, and phraseological units, this study adopts a qualitative-descriptive and corpus-informed research design. Rather than relying on small-scale empirical classroom trials, the methodology focuses on quantitative corpus data extraction, structural linguistic classification, and comparative contrastive analysis.



Corpus-Based Data Extraction Protocols: Data for analyzing the structural distribution and frequency of formulaic sequences were retrieved from two primary linguistic corpora:

- The Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA):** Containing over 1 billion words across various genres (academic, spoken, fiction, newspaper).
- The British National Corpus (BNC):** Containing 100 million words representing a wide cross-section of spoken and written British English.
- Categorization Framework for Target Units:** Extracted phraseological units were categorized according to structural and semantic criteria into three core groups:
- Grammatical and Lexical Collocations:** Combinations following fixed syntactic patterns (e.g., Verb + Noun: “conduct research”, Adjective + Noun: “stiff competition”, Noun + Preposition: “access to”).
- Idiomatic Expressions:** Figurative multi-word units exhibiting high semantic non-compositionality (e.g., “burn the midnight oil”, “bite the bullet”).
- Phraseological Units and Pragmatic Routines:** Semi-fixed sentence frames and discourse markers used to organize communication (e.g., “From my perspective...”, “Taking into consideration...”).

ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Structural Taxonomy and Corpus Frequency Analysis: The linguistic analysis confirms that native-like fluency is heavily reliant on statistical co-occurrence rather than arbitrary word choice. Table 1 demonstrates the quantitative breakdown of extracted academic collocations from COCA, highlighting the distinction between high-frequency natural collocations and typical L1 interference errors (Table 1).

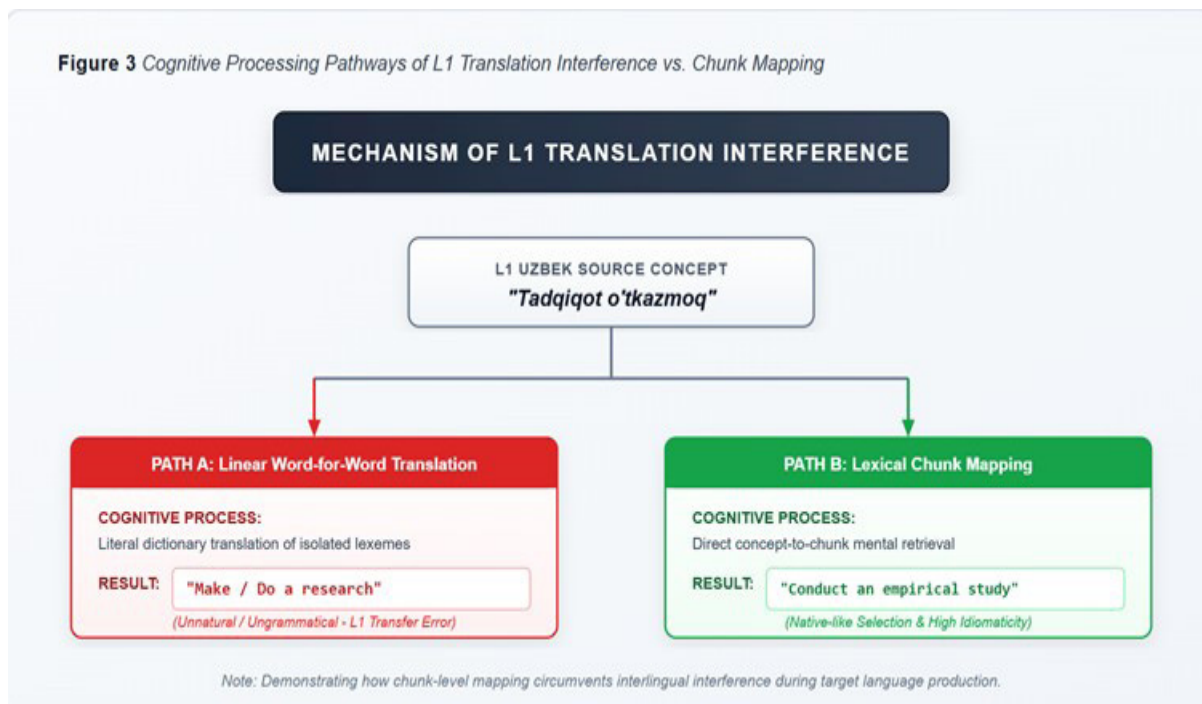
Table 1: Corpus Analysis of High-Frequency Academic Collocations vs. L1 Interference Errors

Collocation Category	COCA Raw Frequency (f)	Mutual Information (MI)	Standard English Collocation	Common L1 (Uzbek/Russian) Interference Error
Verb + Noun	14,820	6.82	Conduct / Carry out research	Make a research (Tadqiqot qilmoq)
Verb + Noun	9,415	5.94	Raise / Pose a question	Give a question (Savol bermoq)
Adjective + Noun	18,340	7.15	Heavy rain / Strong wind	Big rain (Katta yomg'ir)
Adjective + Noun	12,110	6.42	Deeply disappointed	Strongly disappointed (Juda xafa)
Noun + Preposition	22,150	8.10	Reason for / Cause of	Reason of (Sababi)
Verb + Preposition	16,980	7.55	Depend on / Rely on	Depend from (Bog'liq bo'lmoq)

The data in Table 1 illustrate that word combinations with high MI scores are deeply institutionalized in standard discourse. When learners fail to utilize these established pairings, they produce grammatically permissible yet unnatural structures, triggering cognitive strain for native listeners.

Deconstructing L1 Interference Mechanisms:

The analysis reveals that L1 transfer errors are rarely caused by a lack of vocabulary knowledge. Instead, they occur because students translate individual words linearly rather than mapping conceptual lexical chunks.



As illustrated above, mapping at the chunk level prevents literal translation errors and maintains the pragmatic integrity of the target language.

Cognitive Processing Efficiency of Formulaic Units: To conceptualize how formulaic language reduces cognitive working memory load, we compare two distinct processing models during oral speech production:

Model A: Atomistic Syntactic Assembly (Rule-Based):

1. Lexical Retrieval: Retrieve N individual words from long-term memory.
2. Syntactic Parsing: Apply N - 1 grammatical rules (agreement, word order, tense).
3. Phonological Encoding: Articulate N isolated words.
4. Total Cognitive Units Processed: 2N - 1 operations.

Model B: Formulaic Chunk Retrieval (Lexical Approach):

1. Chunk Retrieval: Retrieve 1 prefabricated multi-word sequence from long-term memory.
2. Phonological Execution: Articulate the automated sequence.
3. Total Cognitive Units Processed: 1 operation.

By reducing processing operations from 2N - 1 down to 1, formulaic retrieval drastically lowers working memory consumption, preventing speech hesitations and enabling real-time fluency.

The theoretical and corpus analyses presented in this paper confirm that English collocations, idiomatic expressions, and phraseological units are not peripheral stylistic devices but the structural core of communicative competence.

Pedagogical Model: Integrating Corpus Tools and Generative AI

To effectively embed phraseological instruction into higher education language programs, a 3-tier pedagogical framework is proposed:



- **Tier 1: Corpus Mining (Noticing Phase):** Students utilize corpus concordance software (e.g., AntConc or COCA) to discover common collocational patterns and observe how specific words behave in authentic academic contexts.
- **Tier 2: AI-Assisted Contextualization (Deep Processing):** Students prompt Large Language Models (e.g., ChatGPT-4, Claude) to generate technical or professional dialogues incorporating target idiomatic expressions and phraseological frames.
- **Tier 3: Automated Oral Production (Production Phase):** Students engage in voice-based interactive role-play tasks where they are required to deploy target multi-word units in real-time communication.

Addressing the Challenge of Idiomaticity: Idiomatic expressions often present pedagogical difficulties due to their figurative nature. Traditional instruction relies on rote memorization of idiom lists, which fails to develop pragmatic awareness. The findings suggest that idioms should be taught through conceptual metaphor theory (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980) combined with corpus-based contextualization. Grouping idioms by underlying conceptual themes (e.g., TIME IS MONEY: "spend time", "invest time", "budget time") allows students to anchor abstract figurative meanings within logical cognitive structures.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

This study provides a thorough theoretical and corpus-informed exploration of the role of collocations, idiomatic expressions, and phraseological units in developing English communicative competence in higher education.

The core conclusions of the research are as follows:

1. **Psycholinguistic Efficiency:** Prefabricated lexical chunks serve as cognitive shortcuts, bypassing complex real-time syntactic parsing and drastically reducing working memory load during speech production.
2. **Prevention of L1 Transfer:** Systematic collocation instruction directly eliminates L1 translation errors, allowing students to achieve native-like selection and fluency.
3. **Integration of Digital Tools:** The combination of Corpus Linguistics (COCA) and Generative AI provides an effective platform for identifying, contextualizing, and mastering complex phraseology.

Recommendations for Educational Policy and Curriculum Design:

1. **Curriculum Re-engineering:** Replace traditional isolated vocabulary lists in university ELT syllabi with domain-specific Collocation Repositories and Phraseological Units.
2. **Teacher Training:** Conduct specialized faculty workshops on Corpus-Informed Pedagogy (CIP) and prompt engineering for phraseological extraction.
3. **Assessment Reform:** Update oral and written assessment rubrics to explicitly evaluate collocational accuracy, idiomatic appropriateness, and phraseological range.

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- 13.00.00 Pedagogika fanlari
 - 13.00.01 Pedagogika nazariyasi. Pedagogik ta'limotlar tarixi
 - 13.00.02 Ta'lim va tarbiya nazariyasi va metodikasi (sohalar bo'yicha)
 - 13.00.03 Maxsus pedagogika
 - 13.00.04 Jismoniy tarbiya va sport mashg'ulotlari nazariyasi va metodikasi
 - 13.00.05 Kasb-hunar ta'limi nazariyasi va metodikasi
 - 13.00.06 Elektron ta'lim nazariyasi va metodikasi (ta'lim sohaları va bosqichlari bo'yicha)
 - 13.00.07 Ta'limda menejment
 - 13.00.08 Maktabgacha ta'lim va tarbiya nazariyasi va metodikasi
 - 13.00.09 Ijtimoiy pedagogika
 - 07.00.00 Tarix fanlari
 - 19.00.00 Psixologiya fanlari
 - 01.00.00 Fizika-matematika fanlari
 - 02.00.00 Kimyo fanlari
 - 03.00.00 Biologiya fanlari
 - 09.00.00 Falsafa fanlari
 - 10.00.00 Filologiya fanlari
 - 11.00.00 Geografiya fanlari



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2026. №8(2)

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"Maktabgacha va maktab ta'limi" jurnali 26.09.2023-yildan O'zbekiston Respublikasi Prezidenti Adminstratsiyasi huzuridagi Axborot va ommaviy kommunikatsiyalar agentligi tomonidan №C-5669363 reyestr raqami tartibi bo'yicha ro'yxatdan o'tkazilgan.
Litsenziya raqami: № 136361.

Manzilimiz: Toshkent shahar, Yunusobod tumani
19-mavze, 17-uy.