

## An Analysis of Lexical and Grammatical Collocations in Oscar Wilde's "The Selfish Giant"

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### Abstract

Oscar Wilde is a poet, dramatist, and short story writer. His "The Selfish Giant" is one of popular short stories. The message of the story is co-existence and spreading love. In recent years, collocation has emerged as an important category of lexical and grammatical patterns, and it is fast becoming an established unit of description in language teaching courses and materials. The arbitrary nature of collocation is ideally suited to independent language learning and that teachers need to equip students with skills to enable them to develop their knowledge of collocations independently of the teacher. This paper also analyses lexical and grammatical collocation words found in Oscar Wilde's "The Selfish Giant." In particular, words are related to the concepts of Building/Place and Emotions/Feelings.

**Keywords:** collocation, short story, lexical, grammatical and selfish

### Collocation

"For many students, learning more vocabulary simply means learning new words." (Lewis 2000: P (31)) Teachers make students aware that learning more vocabulary is not just learning new words; it is often learning familiar words in new combinations. Collocation is a combination of words in a language that happens very often and more frequently than would happen by chance. A collocation is a group of two or more words that are almost always put together to create a specific meaning. Collocation is a predictable combination of words. For example, one can say "heavy rain" but "strong wind" because it does not sound right likewise one can say "do exercise" but not "make exercise".

### Types of Collocation

Collocations can be made up of words such as verbs, nouns, adverbs and adjectives. There are five main types of collocation:

1. **Noun Entries** - noun+noun, noun+verb, noun+preposition
2. **Verb Entries** – verb+noun, adverb+verb, verb+adverb, verb+preposition
3. **Adjective Entries** - adjective+noun, adverb+adjective, verb+adjective, adverb+adjective+noun, adjective+preposition
4. **Everyday Verbs** – have, give, do, pay, take, make
5. **Fixed Forms** – idioms, phrases, register, binomial, phrasal verbs.

### Oscar Wilde

Wilde's parents were Anglo-Irish intellectuals in Dublin. In his youth Wilde learned to speak fluent French and German. At university, he read Greats; he demonstrated himself to be an exceptional classicist, first at Trinity College Dublin, then at Magdalen College, Oxford. He became associated with the emerging philosophy of aestheticism, led by two of his tutors, Walter Pater and John Ruskin. After university, Wilde moved to London into fashionable cultural and social circles. He tried his hand at various literary activities: he wrote a play, published a book of poems, lectured in the United States and Canada on the new "English Renaissance in Art" and interior decoration, and then returned to London where he lectured on his American travels and wrote reviews for various periodicals. Known for his biting wit, flamboyant dress and glittering conversational skill, Wilde became one of the best-known personalities of his day. At the turn of the 1890s, he refined his ideas about the supremacy of art in a series of dialogues and essays, and incorporated themes of decadence, duplicity, and beauty into what would be his only novel, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890). Wilde returned to the drama, writing *Salome* (1891) in French while in Paris, but it was refused a license for England due to an absolute prohibition on the portrayal of Biblical subjects on the English stage. Undiscouraged, Wilde produced four society comedies in the early 1890s, which made him one of the most successful playwrights of late-Victorian London.

### Extract of “The Selfish Giant”

“The Selfish Giant” opens with children enjoying the garden of the Giant while he is away for a long time. The children's presence in the garden causes it to be spring in the garden, irrespective of the time of year outside the garden. When the Giant returns from his visit to a friend (the Cornish Ogre), he hears the children playing in the garden and is irritated that they are in his place. He scares the children away, builds a wall, and displays a “no trespassing sign.” The Giant did not know that without the children, his garden would always be in a state of winter and loneliness. One day, the Giant hears a bird chirping from his bed. Thinking that it is finally spring, the Giant discovers that children are in his garden. He recognizes that he has been selfish and sees a child crying because he cannot climb a tree and that corner of the garden is still in winter. When the Giant assists the child into the tree, the tree immediately bursts into bloom, and the child vanishes. The Giant opens his garden to the children and is no longer selfish. Years later, the Giant sees the small boy again. This time, the boy has wounds on his hands and feet and offers to take the Giant to his garden in "Paradise." The children find the Giant has died, but he is covered in blooms.

### Collocation Words in the Story

**Time** - every afternoon, spring time, in the autumn, one day, seven years, three hours, all day long, in the evening, winter morning

**Metaphor** - trees silver, great white cloak, frost painted, spring asleep, wander round, dressed in the grey, cold white garden, tree quite covered, golden and silver fruit

**Place/Building** - large lovely garden, own castle, in the garden, own garden, built a high wall, beautiful garden, garden inside, delightful spot, little hole, in the wall, most beautiful garden, on the roof, of the castle

**Environment** - under the tree, many beautiful flowers, poor tree, lovely scene, green grass, every tree, little blossoms, on the road, very dusty, full of hard stones, most wonderful sight, marvellous sight, lovely white blossom

**Binomial** - pink and pearl, snow and frost, round and round

**Phrasal verb** - broke out, came back, put up, looking up, reach up, looked out, knock out, ran away, put him up, broke at once, knocked down, put into, hung down, smiled on, ran in, blew chimney pots down, dancing over, jumped out of

**Personality** - very selfish giant, too selfish, very kind

**Age** - poor children, little child, old and feeble

**Emotion/feelings** - great joy, so frightened, full of tears, so glad, twittering with delight, crying bitterly, very sad, heart melted, child smiled, giant loved, so sweetly, how happy, so sweet, quite softly

**Music** - lovely music, king's musician, sang on it, very gruff voice, linnet singing

**Activities** - on a visit, wave arms gently, stretched out, giant lying, delicate blossom

**Way of speaking** - talk about, so sorry, very sorry, crept downstairs

**Walking** - slipped back, passing by

**Food** - rich fruit, golden fruit

**Fashion** - delicious perfume

**Tools** - big sword, great axe

**Relationship** - little companion

**Size** - so small, huge arm chair

**Animal** - little birds, little linnet

**Parts of the body** - on the palms, two nails, on the little feet

### Grammatical Structures

#### Noun Entries

**Noun+Noun:** spring time

**Noun+Verb:** heart melted, frost painted, Giant loved, spring asleep, linnet singing, North wind ceased, children ran, Giant lying, child smiled

**Preposition+Noun:** in the autumn, in the evening, in the garden, in the wall, under the tree, on a visit, on the road, on the roof, of the castle, on the palms, on the little feet, with delight, garden inside.

#### Verb Entries

**Verb+Noun:** wave arms, wander round, blew chimney pots down, built a wall, wander round

**Adverb+Verb:** quite covered

**Verb+Adverb:** crying bitterly, wave arms gently

**Verb+Preposition:** sang on it, stretched out, talk about, crept downstairs, slipped back, jumped out

#### Adjective Entries

**Adjective+Noun:** every afternoon, one day, seven years, three hours, winter morning, large lovely garden, own castle, own garden, beautiful garden, delightful spot, poor tree, lovely scene, green grass, every tree, little blossoms, poor children, little child, great joy, lovely music, rich fruit, golden fruit, delicious perfume, big sword, great axe, little companion, delicate blossom, , little birds, huge arm chair, marvellous sight two nails, little hole, how happy, little linnet

**Adverb+Adjective:** too selfish, very kind, very selfish, so frightened, so glad, very sad, very dusty, very sorry, so small, so sweetly, so sweet, quite softly

**Verb+Adjective:** built a high wall

**Adverb+Adjective+Noun** - lovely white blossoms, very selfish giant, very gruff voice, many beautiful flowers, most beautiful garden, cold white garden, most wonderful sight

#### Regular Verbs

1. **Give:** gave golden fruit, gave none

2. **Take:** took him gently, took a great axe, take my big sword

3. **Have:** had covered themselves, have many beautiful flowers, have love

#### Fixed Phrases

1. **Binomial:** pink and pearl, snow and frost, round and round, old and feeble

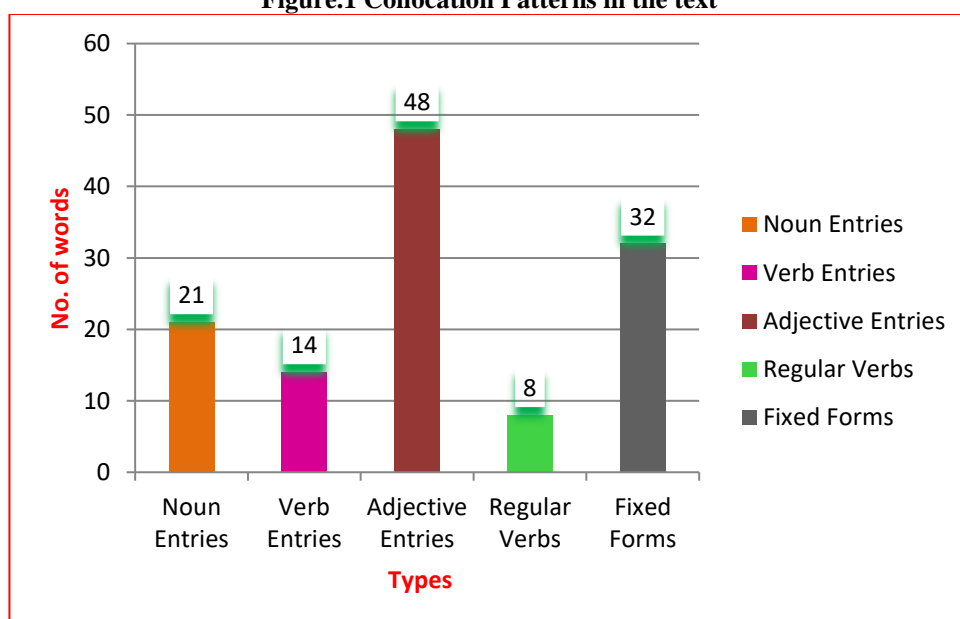
2. **Metaphor:** trees silver, great white cloak, as fast as(simile), frost painted, spring asleep, golden and silver fruit.

3. **Phrasal Verb:** broke out, came back, put up, looking up, reach up, looked out, knock out, ran away, put him up, broke at once, knocked down, put into, hung down, smiled on, ran in, blew down, dressed in, passing by, dancing over, jumped out of.

4. **Phrase** – full of tears, full of hard stones

After the study corpus were examined and analysed, the overall numbers of lexical and grammatical collocations throughout five categories were shown in the Figure 1. The figure illustrates the usage and patterns of lexical and grammatical collocations found in Oscar Wilde's "The Selfish Giant."

**Figure.1 Collocation Patterns in the text**



As obviously seen in the figure, Oscar Wilde has used various collocation patterns in "The Selfish Giant." In this short story, Adjective Entries are the pattern with the highest number of collocation usage (48 words). Fixed Forms are the second highest number of collocation usage (32 words). Noun Entries are the third with 21 words. Verb Entries are in the fourth one with 14 words. Regular Verbs are the pattern which holds the lowest number of collocation usage (8 words).

#### Words related to Emotions/feelings and Building

"... and had never seen him before; and the Giant felt very sad." (18)

1. **very sad** – adverb+adjective

**Sad** (adjective) - unhappy

**adverb+sad** - extremely, fairly, very, etc. all, desperately, immensely, particularly, profoundly, unbearably, a little, slightly, etc. strangely

eg: I called Dad, sounding all sad and pathetic.

**“Downstairs ran the Giant in great joy, and out into the garden.” (19)**

**2. great joy – adjective+noun**

**joy(noun)**

**adjective+joy** – pure, real, sheer, true, unadulterated, unalloyed, utter, ecstatic, great, overwhelming, wild, unbridled, unfettered, unrestrained, indescribable, inexpressible, simple, childlike, sudden, inner(AmE)

eg. 1. His childlike joy was infectious.

2. The tears to come will be of unbridled joy.

**“But when the children saw him they were so frightened that they all ran away....” (18)**

**3. so frightened – adverb+adjective**

**frightened(adjective)** – fear

**adverb+frightened** – extremely, fairly, very, etc. badly, genuinely, terrible, almost, a little, slightly, etc. suddenly.

eg. 1. Simon was badly frightened at the result of his action.

2. She was slightly frightened that the glass would break.

**“The Giant was very kind to all the children, yet he longed for his firs....” (19)**

**4. very kind – adverb+adjective**

**kind(adjective)** – caring about others

**adverb+kind** – extremely, fairly/ very, etc. especially, genuinely, most, particularly

eg. 1. Sudha is a genuinely kind person who is always trying to help people.

2. She is a very kind and thoughtful person.

**“He is too selfish,’ she said.” (17)**

**5. too selfish**

**Selfish(adjective)** – Ecocentric

**Adverb+selfish** - extremely, fairly/ very, etc. incredibly, completely, entirely, purely, totally, utterly, a little, slightly, etc.

Eg. 1. These people are completely selfish.

2. You are extremely selfish.

3. He behaved coldly and slightly selfish towards his wife and children.

**“In every tree that he could see there was a little child.” (17)**

**6. little child – adjective+noun**

**Child(noun)** – a boy or girl who is not yet an adult

**Adjective+child** – little, small, young, newborn, teenage, preschool, school-aged, adult, grown, grown-up, good, obedient, well-behaved, aggressive, delinquent, difficult, disobedient, fraction, mischievous, naughty, problem, sulky, unruly, wayward, willful, bright, gifted, intelligent, precocious, dull, slow, abandoned, abused, at-risk, maltreated, neglected, disadvantaged, needy, starving, underprivileged, spoiled, sickly, asthmatic, autistic, disabled, dyslexic, hyperactive, etc. special-needs, innocent, loving, only, eldest, first-born, fatherless, motherless, orphaned, adopted, bastard, illegitimate, unborn, dependent, street, biracial, mixed-race, minority.

Eg. 1. My father died while I was still a small child.

2. We have three teenage children.

3. Teaching is particularly difficult when a class contains both slow and bright children.

**“It was a large lovely garden, with soft green grass.” (16)**

**7. large lovely garden/beautiful garden/most beautiful garden – adjective+noun**

**Garden(noun)** – the area of land next to a house, where there are flowers, grass, and other plants.

**Adjective+garden** – beautiful, lovely, pretty, lush, landscaped, manicured, big, large, small, tiny, back, front, backyard, flower, herb, kitchen, rose, vegetable, rock, water, cottage, country, formal, town, walled, community, private, public, botanic, botanical, beer.

Eg.1. They hang out washing in their back gardens.

2. Walled gardens are good for growing fruit trees, because they protect the trees from the wind.

3. Alpine plants are suitable for rock gardens.

**“... and he determined to return to his own castle.” (16)**

**8. Own castle – adjective+noun**

**Castle(noun)** – large building with high walls and towers

**adjective+castle** – grand, great, magnificent, splendid, turreted, walled, historic, ancient, medieval, royal, ruined, fairy-tale, fantasy

Eg. 1. There used to be a great castle on that hill.

2. I halt just short of the town to explore a ruined castle.

3. He has just bought himself a fairy-tale, turreted castle in southern Germany.

“This is a delightful spot,’ he said, ‘we must ask the Hail on a visit.’” (17)

**9. delightful spot – adjective+noun**

**Spot**(noun) – place/area

**Adjective+spot** – exact, particular, precise, convenient, good, ideal, perfect, right, suitable, beautiful, beauty, idyllic, lovely, pleasant, favorite, popular, deserted, desolate, isolated, lonely, remote, quiet, secluded, shady, sheltered, sunny, holiday, tourist, vacation, picnic, skate, surf, parking, sore, tender, sensitive(often figurative), sweet(informal), vulnerable, weak, blind danger, hot, trouble, bald.

Eg. 1. Take the time to find the right spot to pitch your tent.

2. He is usually wears a hat to hide his bald spot.

3. It is beautiful spot to relax and enjoy the peaceful surroundings.

“Through a little hole in the wall the children had crept in, and they were witting in the branches of the trees.” (17)

**10. Little hole – adjective+noun**

**Hole**(noun) – an empty space in something solid

**Adjective+hole** – big, deep, gaping, great, huge, large, massive, yawning, small, tiny, circular, round, jagged, ragged, bullet, drill, screw, drainage, mouse, rabbit, etc.

Eg. 1. The missile had torn a jagged hole in the side of the ship.

2. The wall was full of bullet holes.

3. There was a big hole in the middle of the field.

“Every day for three hours he rattled on the roof of the castle....” (17)

**11. on the roof – preposition+noun**

**roof** (noun) –the part of a building which covers the top of it.

**preposition+roof** – in the roof, in a roof, on a roof, on the roof, under your roof

eg. 1. There are small windows in the roof

2. There’s a cat on the roof.

3. I won’t have that man under my roof again.

“The Snow covered up the grass with her greatwhite cloak, and the Frost painted all the trees silver.” (17)

**12. great white cloak– Metaphor**

**cloak** (noun)– a thing that hides something else.

eg. 1. The river is often cloak in mist in the early morning.

**13. trees silver – Metaphor**

**trees silver** – trees are look like silver painted

eg. 1. He beat the rugs and polished the silver.

“Years went over, and the Giant grew very old and feeble.” (19)

**14. old and feeble – Binomial**

eg. 1. He told them he was old and feeble and was not able to walk so far.

“... he took a great axe and knocked down the wall.” (18)

**15. knocked down – phrasal verb**

**knocked down** – to hit someone and make them fall to the ground .

eg. 1. He knocked his opponent down three times in the first round.

2. He died in hospital after being knocked down by a car.

**Conclusion**

Reading short stories could improve the students’ vocabulary; the problem in reading English text is that the students often misunderstand the text due to the vocabulary. Teaching short stories may help students to enrich their vocabulary. Hence, the article has discussed the concise summary of “The Selfish Giant” authored by Oscar Wilde by systematically analyzing types and structures of words found in the story.

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