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Some Problems in Translating English Collocations into Arabic

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الخلاصة

بعض المشاكل في ترجمة المتلازمات اللفظية الانجليزية الى اللغة العربية

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى اختبار مشاكل ترجمة المتلازمات اللفظية الإنجليزية إلى اللغة العربية بين الطلبة الليبيين، أربعة عشر طالباً من الفصل السابع بقسم اللغة الإنجليزية يتم اختبارهم في هذه التجربة خلال الفصل الدراسي الخريف 2020. يدرس الطلبة اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية ولغتهم الأم اللغة العربية. إجراء البيانات كان اختبار لعدد أربع عشرة من المتلازمات اللفظية الإنجليزية الواسعة الانتشار، طُلب من الطلبة ترجمتها في ساعة واحدة من الزمن. أظهرت النتيجة أنّ المشاركين غير أكفاء في فهم وترجمة المتلازمات اللفظية الإنجليزية إلى اللغة العربية. نهدف أيضاً إلى مدى معرفة الطلبة بها والمشاكل المختلفة التي يواجهونها عند ترجمة الأنواع المختلفة من هذه المتلازمات. سنحاول اختبار وتقييم وعيهم بفحص ترجمتهم للمتلازمات اللفظية الإنجليزية إلى اللغة العربية، وبالعكس أظهرت نتائج هذا البحث سببين رئيسيين لأخطاء الطلبة في ترجمتها. أولاً: أنّ الطلبة يتبعون الترجمة الحرفية كطريقة رئيسية، ثانياً: لم يعط الطلبة اهتماماً كافياً للمتلازمات اللفظية التي تخص ثقافة ولغة أخرى، والنتيجة الرئيسة هي أنّ المتلازمات اللفظية مسألة ثقافية ولغوية في آن واحد، وليست مجرد موضوع استبدال كلمات بمكافئ لها في لغة أخرى.

Abstract

The purpose of this study is to examine the problems of rendering English collocations into Arabic among the Libyan students. Fourteen students of the seven semester in English department are to be examined in this experiment during the academic semester Fall 2020. All the students are learning English as a foreign language and they are native Arabic speakers. The data procedure was a test of fourteen widespread English collocations. We asked the students to translate them in one hour. The result showed that the participants were not competent in understanding and translating English collocations into Arabic. Also, our aim is to have some insights about the students' awareness of collocations and the different problems which the students may face when translating various types of collocations. We will try to test and evaluate their awareness by examining their translation of English collocations into Arabic, and vice versa. The results of this research reveal two main causes of students' errors in translating collocations. First, students adopt literal translation as the main method. Second, students do not give enough importance to collocations which belong to another culture and language. The main conclusion is that collocations are both a linguistic and a cultural issue and are not just a matter of substituting words by their equivalent in another language.

Introduction

Collocations are simply the way specific words usually occur together ,i.e., a combination of two or more words in different context in a language. For instance, a particular verb collocates with a noun "attend a lecture" (يحضر محاضرة) a noun with a noun, e.g. "good and evil" (الخير و الشر) a noun with an adjective, e.g. " black market" (سوق سوداء); etc. It can be noticed that most collocations are of two words.

Collocations are considered to be the beautiful part of languages and they play in it a very significant role. They usually occur inevitably in any sort of text. Therefore, they are important and plays an essential part in translation. Students in order to give the Arabic translation the same prettiness of the English text, they are in need to attend to collocations in Arabic seriously.

Learning collocations in a foreign language is not an easy task because cultural differences can impact the nature of lexical relevance. Thus, there will be many problems appear when translating collocations because of the contradiction in the linguistic and cultural structures between English and Arabic. Due to English and Arabic are from different families of languages, Indo-European and Semitic. Therefore, They have many differences in their grammars besides different systems and lifestyles that add colloquial deduction to the quality of collocations.

Baker (1992) argues that collocations are a wonderful part of language and shed on it an active spirit. They are unavoidable in any context and will exist at all times. Al Kasimi (1993) states that collocations in Arabic must be really understood by learners in order to translate English collocations by the same magnificence that they add to their language. This means that neglecting translation of English collocations into Arabic will outcome in bad, weaken content in Arabic. It is known that most of English and Arabic dictionaries do not deal with this situation. Lexicons of English and Arabic mange phrases not collocations. In addition, when learners are not provided for remembering collocations equivalents in the target language, they cannot understand collocations in the source language.

Collocation refers to the mix of two or more words that dependably appear together in common language. For example, a particular noun regularly occurs with the same adjective e.g. 'heavy meal' (وجبة دسمة), a verb frequently occurring with the same noun, e.g. 'catch the meaning' (يفهم المعنى), a noun with a noun, e.g. some

collocations can be translated (in a direct way very appropriately), as some collocations of the current test prove. After all, learners should be wary and reject to surrender from the first endeavor to the direct translation of any collocation. (Faris & Sahu, 2013) Collocations appear to be significant in taking in a language in light of the fact that words are found out and utilized as a part of connection, and without knowing the fitting setting in which a word can be utilized, one can't make a claim that he or she has comprehended that word (Agah & Soori, 2015).

Because of the significance of collocations in language learning and practice, collocation word references in diverse languages have turn out to help learners over come difficulties that face them (Galal, 2015).

On a basic level, settled expressions and representations of various types can be defined under the umbrella of collocations (Hedad, 1987). The majority of English and Arabic lexicons do not deal with the matter. English and Arabic lexicons manage phrases, however

not with collocations. Additionally, learners cannot comprehend a collocation in the SL when he or she is not equipped for recalling its equivalent in the TL.

The student's disappointment during such an attempt will typically reveal his selection of systems for lexical improvement, such as reduction, synonymy, reparation, summarizing, and exchange. In these situations, unless the collocation example becomes part of the memory bank of the understudy, translator or learner,

correspondence is destined to be limited. Generally, this disappointment is a direct result of the language instructor or educator's inclination to teach words exclusively rather than collectively. Therefore, syllabus planners should consider collocation, harnessing L2 learners' thoughtfulness regarding the methods in which collocational divergence occurs between source language and target language. Collocations, rather than expressions, are not given due consideration by etymologists (Nofal, 2012).

2. Statement of Problem

Collocations consume a large portion of everyday language and add an additional source of flare and uniqueness to language, which increases the pleasure and fascination learners can obtain from adequate comprehension. However, translating collocations can prove to be an endless battle for second language learners, with difficulties experienced in the correct selection of accompanying verbs, nouns and adjectives. The delivery of correct English lexical collocations has generally proved to be a problem for students learning English (Howarth, 1998; Hussain, 1998; Nesselhauf, 2003; Mahmoud, 2005; Falahi, 2012; Sadighi, 2013). Collocations are considered difficult for learners of a foreign language due to the unexpected instruments used. These problems can be credited to the similar qualities that both English and Arabic collocations show: low level of speculation, unpredictability, and

variability. Interpretation of collocations can cause troubles for non-local speakers. Some collocations will be particular in the sense that they will be unexpected in terms of syntactic or semantic highlights. Additionally, "an interpreter can without much of a stretch misjudge a collocation in the source message because of obstruction from his/ her local language" (Baker, 2011, p. 59). Therefore, learners are obliged to be particularly sensitive to collocations and profoundly intrigued in discovering the equivalent collocation in Arabic, when it is accessible. Despite the fact that the translation of English collocations into Arabic by Arab learners has been examined,

specific issues for Libyan learners have not been highlighted. Therefore, this study aims to address specific issues of translating English collocations into Arabic for Libyan EFL (English as foreign language) learners at Benghazi university, and how

the translations influence the English translation into Arabic. This research endeavours to diagnose the challenges by examining the test results of an exam comprising a number of sentences, each containing a collocation.

3. Research Objectives

These are the main objectives of this study:

- 1) To examine the difficulties encountered by a number of Libyan students in English department, in translating English collocations into Arabic.

2) To investigate the effect of mother tongue interference on the translation of English collocations into Arabic among Libyan students.

4. Research Questions

Bearing in mind the objectives stated above, the following research questions are posted:

- 1) What are the difficulties encountered by Libyan students in translating English collocations into Arabic?
- 2) How does the mother tongue influence the translation of English collocations into Arabic among Libyan EFL students?

5. Significance of the Study

The significance of this paper is that it will further add to the body of knowledge of linguistic investigation. It will explore the nature of collocation in the English language as well as examine some of the related and interlocking fields of study surrounding collocation. Research up until this point in time is limited, and there are

gaps in knowledge. Therefore, it is hoped that this study will contribute new information to this field of study, as well as confirm and further enhance previous research. It will present a clear definition of collocation and a thorough analysis and description of its uses in English study. A study involving the use of English by native

Arabic speakers will be introduced as a means of further explaining the theories and testing the research evaluation.

6. The Concept of Collocation

A collocation is a lexical connection and is not subject to standards, more so to inclinations. Firth (1968) uniquely defines it as “the organisation that words stay with” or “actual words in on-going” adequately joined the significance of this “level of signifying” and proposed the set-up of different collocational levels of investigating dialect, notwithstanding the situational, syntactic, phonological and different levels. Halliday (1966) framed the idea of collocation, yet did not include Firth’s concept of independent levels of collocation. In Halliday’s (1966) hypothesis, syntax and lexis are two particular, however interrelated, levels of semantic structure, with each level possessing its own unique syntagmatic and paradigmatic relations, such as structures and framework in punctuation, collocations and groups in lexis. Lyons (1966) argues that a complete theory of semantics cannot be achieved as the application of Firth’s contextual theory of meaning and the analysis of patterns of co-occurrence without giving consideration to their semantic compatibility will not sufficient. Mitchell (1965, p. 143) further delivers on this point, and offers an extended definition of collocation. He states that collocation is an association of the roots or the potential lexical meaning of words rather than the actual words themselves. He further states that “a linguistic item or class of items is meaningful not because of inherent properties of its own, but because of the contrastive or differential relationship it develops with other items or classes.” Further to this, Mitchell (1965) also details the continuous nature of collocations. He states that they cannot run across sentence boundaries, which further stresses the continuously syntagmatic nature of Firthin, or “lexical” approach to linguistic analysis.

Translation and collocations

Catford (1965) suggests a linguistic approach and viewed translation as "an operation performed on languages". He defines translation as "the replacement of textual material in one language (SL) by equivalent textual material in another language (TL)". According to Catford, this replacement can be achieved by the structure of a language. Thus, translation is regarded as a transfer at the linguistic level besides the cultural level. Munday (2009) argues that transposition concerns grammatical shifts in the target language without altering the meaning of the source text segment. House (2016) defines translation as "the replacement of a text in the source language by a semantically and pragmatically equivalent text in the target language, and an adequate translation is pragmatically-semantically equivalent one.

Learning collocation is not an easy task when learning a foreign language because cultural differences can influence the nature of lexical relationships. Therefore, translating collocation is considered to be an area of great difficulty. There are some problems when translating collocation from one language to another. This is due to the discrepancies in the linguistic and the cultural structures between the SL and TL. English and Arabic are from different language families, so in case of translation between them the problem will be greater. Understanding the exact text equivalent led to an accurate translation. Catford (1965, p. 50) argues that "translation equivalence occurs when a SL and TL text or item are relatable (or at least some of) the same features of substance". This is, translating collocations can be inaccurate or difficult when a translator fails to distinguish the equivalent TL lexical item which correlates to the lexical item within the SL. This can in the end result in unnatural type of collocations (Al-Rawi 1994).

Collocations are simply a combination of two or more certain words that usually occur together regularly in different contexts in language. They play a very significant role in language. However, these combinations are often difficult for language learners and they have to make particular efforts to learn them because they are not easy to guess. On the other hand, they sound natural to native speakers. Baker (1992) states that collocations are language's beautiful part and insert a refreshing spirit in it. Collocations are existing at all times in any kind of text with no special case. Hence, their importance in translation process. Al Kasimi (1993) argues that collocations in Arabic must be understood by learners in order to render the same magnificence that added to the English language by collocations.

Types of collocations

Suitable identification of research participants is critical to the science and practice of psychology, particularly for generalizing the findings, making comparisons across replications, and using the evidence in research combinations and secondary data analyses. If humans participated in the study, report the eligibility and exclusion criteria, including any restrictions based on demographic characteristics.

Collocations are categorized into several types. The study mostly focuses on the most important and recurrent collocations that interest the students who are tested. Aziz (1982) argues that it will be easy to follow and understand collocations if grammatical descriptions are followed, and therefore the translation into Arabic is easier. Cruse (1977) also states that depending on the grammatical structure of collocations makes them simpler to understand and then to translate. Here are some examples:

1- Adjective + noun collocation

1. "Big mistakes" (اخطاء فادحة)
2. "Black market" (سوق سوداء)

3. "Wrong claim" (ادعاء خاطئ)
4. "Warm reception" (استقبال ساخن)
5. "Net weight" (الوزن الصافي)

This is the most popular type of collocation in both English and Arabic. Usually these collocations are translated into identical Arabic collocations (noun + adjective).

For instance, the sentence: He gave me a warm reception. The collocation "warm reception" was translated as "استقبال ساخن". The students used the adjective (ساخن) instead of (حار) which is the more appropriate equivalence for this collocation.

2- Verb + noun collocations

1. "Order food" (يطلب طعاماً)
2. "Seize opportunity" (يبتذل الفرصة)
3. "Run a company" (يدير شركة)
4. "Pay attention" (يلفت الانتباه)
5. "Shake hands" (يصافح)

The main problem for the students with these collocations is to find out the appropriate verb in Arabic that matching a certain noun (as the above the examples show).

The sentence: She must seize the opportunity. Most of the students translated this sentence literally which can sometimes work but, in this case it is incorrect to use word-for-word translation "يمسك الفرصة" whereas, the most appropriate and correct translation "يبتذل الفرصة".

3- Noun + noun collocations

1. State university" (جامعة حكومية)
2. "Death sentence" (حكم الإعدام)
3. "Brain drain" (هجرة الأدمغة)
4. "Air attack" (هجوم جوي)
5. "Vice and virtue" (الفضيلة والريضة)

Ghazala (1995) states that the collocations will usually have an Arabic equivalent, but by using different grammatical structure. The two most dominant structures are used in Arabic language are: (a) "noun + adjective" (1 + 4) and "noun + noun" genitive construction (2 + 3 + 5). Actually, almost all the students translated these English collocations into correct Arabic ones. Owing to these expressions have their identical Arabic collocations.

4- Noun + verb collocations

1. "Trees rustle" (حفيف الشجر)
2. "Birds song" (تغريد الطيور)
3. "Dogs bark" (نباح الكلاب)
4. "Bills ring" (رنين الأجراس)
5. "Cats mew" (مواء القطط)

Benson (1985) states that these collocations are not difficult to translate them into collocations in Arabic. The main problem for learner is to be able to perceive and distinguish the required sound in the example. It can be noticed that the English structure is "verb + noun" whereas "noun + noun" (i.e. genitive) in Arabic. For example, the sentence: They get alarmed by cat's mew. The collocation "cat's mew" caused a problem for most participants as they did not know the cat's sound in the target language. Arabic grammatical structure of this collocation should be "noun + noun" "مواء القطط", not "noun + verb" as it is in English language

5- Verb + adverb collocations

1. "Agree completely" (يتفق تماماً)
2. "Rely heavily" (يعتمد بشكل كبير)

This type of collocation is common in both Arabic and English. The difficulty in translating them is how to find out the appropriate Arabic equivalent. The participants translated; "completely" into "الجميع" rather than "تماماً" which is not the equivalent Arabic collocation. Also, translated "heavily" into "يتناقل" instead of "بشكل كبير" which is not an appropriate Arabic translation for this word in this context.

6- Adjective + Adjective

1. "Wealthy and well" (بصحة و عافية)
2. "Alive and kicking" (حي يرزق)
3. "Hale and hearty" (بصحة جيدة)
4. "Well and good" (على خير ما يرام)
5. "Right and proper" (في أحسن حال)

The problem in rendering such regular collocations into Arabic due to; the grammatical structure is both diverse and very unusual. So, "preposition + noun + noun" (1 + 3 + 4 + 5); whereas "noun + verb" (2). For instance, the fourth collocation, in the sentence; we feel well and good. It proved difficulty among most of the students. The phrase "well and good" which has a different grammatical structure in the target language. So. It should be translated into "preposition + noun + noun", "على خير ما يرام".

7- Adverb + adverb collocations

1. "Willy and nilly" (رغم أنه)
2. "Highly unlikely" (احتمال ضعيف)
3. "Wholly and heartedly" (بالتمام و الكمال)
4. "Secretly and publicly" (سراً و علانية).

The problem that faced the students in translating this type of collocations is cultural equivalent. It can be noticed that the above Arabic translations have diverse grammatical structure.

For example: The sentence. They will stand with us secretly and publicly. The collocation "secretly and publicly" the Arabic translation has different grammatical structure from the English one. The English collocation looks like "adverb + adverb" which differs from the Arabic which is "adjective + adjective" "سراً و علانية" or "preposition + noun + noun" "في السر و العلن"

Methodology

The participants of this research were fourteen Libyan students in English department, faculty of education/Ghemines, at Benghazi university. They are undergraduate seventh semester students. All the students were learning English as a second language. A test was considered to be a good methodology to find out how the students could translate English collocations into Arabic. The test was of fourteen common English collocations. The authors instructed the participants to make sure that they were aware of the purpose of the testing. The students were asked to translate the following fourteen English collocations into Arabic within thirty minutes. Using reference dictionaries was strictly forbidden.

- 1- Bright victory
- 2- Good news
- 3- Shake hands
- 4- Run a company
- 5- Bread and butter
- 6- War crime
- 7- Dogs bark
- 8- Bees buzz
- 9- Agree completely
- 10- Rely heavily
- 11- Alive and kicking
- 12- Hale and hearty
- 13- Willy and nilly
- 14- Highly unlikely

The researchers checked the students translations of collocations. They analyzed the test marks which were recorded as the result of the test. The reasons of common misuse of collocations were examined, besides examining the results of the test.

Results

The first type is adjective and noun collocation is considered to be the popular one in both English and Arabic. Usually, this type of collocation is translated into its identical Arabic collocation. (noun + adjective). The students main problem in translating this type occurs when capturing the proper Arabic collocation. For instance, they translated the adjective "bright" literally into "ساطع" instead of "باهر" and good" into "جيدة" rather than "سارة". As a matter of fact, it is the right Arabic equivalent, but it is not the right Arabic collocation.

Adjective + noun collocation

Adjective + noun	Students translation	Natural Arabic collocation
Bright victory	انتصار ساطع	انتصار باهر
Good news	أخبار جيدة	أخبار سارة

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The second type is verb and noun. The students translate the verb "shake" into the Arabic equivalent "يهز" rather than "يصافح" and the verb "run" literally into the Arabic equivalent "يجري" instead of "يدير". The verbs were translated by all the students into the their common equivalent Arabic, but not into the appropriate collocations.

Verb + noun

Verb + noun	Student translation	Natural Arabic collocation
Shake hands	يهز الأيدي	يصافح
Run a company	يجري بالشركة	يدير شركة

The third type of English collocations is noun and noun. Most students translated "bread and butter" literally into "الخبز والزبدة". It is the literal equivalent, but we do not have this collocation in Arabic. The most appropriate translation is the Arabic collocation "الخبز و الملح". The second collocation in this type is "war crime". Nearly all the students translated this English collocation correctly into its Arabic counterpart "جرائم حرب". Because this English expression has already an identical Arabic collocation.

Noun + noun

Noun + noun	Student translation	Natural Arabic collocation
Bread and butter	الخبزة و الزبدة	الخبز و الملح
War crime	جرائم حرب	جرائم حرب

The fourth type of English collocation is noun and verb. The students translated the verb "bark" into "نباح" because they know the dogs sound, so their translation was correct. The problem was in translating the second English collocation. They may know the noun "bees" but failed to catch the verb "buzz" that collocated with it. Therefore, they translated the verb "buzz" into Arabic "طنين" instead of "دوي".

Noun + verb

Noun + verb	Student translation	Natural Arabic collocation
Dogs bark	نباح الكلاب	نباح الكلاب
Bees buzz	طنين النحل	دوي النحل

The fifth type is verb and adverb collocations. This type of collocations is very common in both English and Arabic. The problem in translating them is to find out the appropriate Arabic equivalent. The adverb "completely" is translated by the students into "الجميع" instead of "تماما" which is not the suitable equivalent Arabic collocation. Also, the students translated "heavily" into "يتناقل" rather than "بشكل كبير" which it should not be rendered in this unnatural collocation

Verb + Adverb

Verb + adverb	Student translation	Natural Arabic collocation
Agree completely	يتفق الجميع	يتفق تماماً
Rely heavily	يعتمد بشدة	يعتمد بشكل كبير

The sixth type of English collocation is adjective and adjective. The main problem of translating such everyday collocations into Arabic is that, the grammatical structure between the two languages is different and unpredictable. For instance, the students failed to translate the two English collocations because they did not grasp the natural Arabic collocation and due to the two languages different structure. They translated "alive and kicking" literally into "حي و يرزق" instead of "حي يرزق". Also, "hale and hearty" into "قلبا و قالبا" rather than "بصحة جيدة". Typically, literal translation avoids any additions, omissions, reduction or paraphrasing (Byrne 2012).

Adjective + adjective

Adjective + adjective	Student translation	Natural Arabic collocation
Alive and kicking	حي و يموت	حي يرزق
Hale and hearty	قلباً و قالباً	بصحة جيدة

The seventh type of collocation is adverb and adverb. The students failed to find out the natural equivalent to translate correctly because of the difficulty faced them in getting the cultural equivalent. So, the student translated "willy and nilly" literally into "الرغبة المدمومة" instead of "رغم أنه" or "طوعاً أو كرهاً". they translated "hilly unlikely into "الشبه الكبير" rather than "احتمال ضعيف".

Adverb + adverb

Adverb + adverb	Student translation	Natural Arabic collocation
Willy and nilly	الرغبة المدمومة	رغم أنه
Hilly unlikely	الشبه الكبير	احتمال ضعيف

Conclusion

Learners of English language had difficulties to translate English collocations correctly into Arabic. Using literal translation from English into Arabic was the common mistake that led to very poor translation. Relying heavily on this strategy which is literal translation between the two languages and the Arabic version was poor and not natural Arabic collocation. Despite the fact that literal translation can sometimes work, but many students failed to identify the appropriate equivalent collocation in Arabic. The other reason is that, students were not

competent in English collocations and they do not pay attention to their importance as an essential part of learning a foreign language. Therefore, it is necessary to raise students' awareness of the process of translating English collocations because it is not mere a replacement of word-for-word between the two languages. Besides, the learning process of English collocations; linguistically and culturally. Properly producing collocations either in English or Arabic depends frequently on cultural knowledge rather linguistic and semantic ones. English and Arabic came from different language families, so the linguistic and cultural differences between them represent a real challenge in the process on translating collocation. The results showed that Ghemines Faculty of Education EFL students were incompetent in translating English collocation into Arabic. This is evident in the fact that 75% of the students failed to achieve the pass mark, and only 25% of them showed an acceptable level of translation. In several cases, errors were made due to the tendency translating the texts literally. Also students did not pay attention to the importance of English collocations and their essential role in learning a foreign language. Collocations reveal naturalness and cohesiveness of the text ,so they are very important in understanding a language indeed. My recommendation concerns the strategies of learning and teaching English collocations; Teachers of English language and their student should go hand in hand with collocations and translation. Besides, teachers and their students should shed light on the two languages linguistic and cultural similarities and differences. Also, teachers of English language in Libyan schools should pay great attention to collocations during the stage of translation.

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