Problems Faced by English Majors in Translating Collocations from English into Arabic

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المشكلات التي يواجهها طلاب اللغة الإنجليزية في ترجمة المتلازمات اللفظية من الإنجليزية إلى العربية

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Abstract:

The translation of collocation is tough for non-native speakers of a language and creates many problems for students, teachers and translators. The present study aimed to determine, examine and investigate the strategies and techniques adopted by students in translating collocations from English to Arabic. The data examined here, consisted of a translation test that comprised 9 relatively short sentences of a contextual collocations selected from different sources. Students were required to translate these collocations from English to Arabic according to Newmark approach (semantic & communicative approaches). So, the findings and results have shown that, students used or resorted various strategies in order to overcome the problems of rendering certain collocation expressions. In addition, the knowledge of collocation leads to the improvement of oral proficiency, listening comprehension, and reading speed.

Keywords: Collocation, English Majors, Translation, Semantic translation, Communicative translation.

الملخص

تعد ترجمة المتلازمات اللفظية صعبه على متعلمي اللغة الثانية (الغير ناطقين بها)، وتسبب العديد من المشاكل للطلاب والمعلمين والمترجمين. هدفت هذه الدراسة إلى تحديد وفحص والتحقيق في الاستراتيجيات والاساليب التي يتبعها الطلاب في ترجمة المتلازمات اللفظية من اللغة الانجليزية إلى اللغة العربية. تتكون البيانات التي تم اختبارها هنا على عدد تسعة جمل قصيرة نسبيا، كل جملة من هذه الجمل تحتوي على متلازمة لفظية. حيث تم اختيار هن من مصادر مختلفة. ' طلب من الطلاب ترجمة هذه المتلازمات طبقا لنموذج نيومارك في الترجمة (الترجمة الدلالية – الترجمة التواصلية). أظهرت النتائج التي تم الحصول عليها، أن الطلاب استعملوا أو لجأوا إلى طرق وأساليب متنوعة للتغلب على مشاكل ترجمة بعض تعبيرات المتلازمات اللفظية. بالإضافة، إن معرفة المتلازمات اللفظية، يجعل الطلاب قادرين على تحسين واستيعاب وسرعة التواصل الشفوي والاستماع والقراءة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: المتلازمات اللفظية، طلاب اللغة الإنجليزية، الترجمة، الترجمة الدلالية، الترجمة التفاعلية.

Introduction

The history of translation knowledge dates back to the beginning of history of human beings. The 20th century has been called the age of translation. Development communication between groups gradually increased and translation method improved to be a science. translation science is a knowledge which studies the act of

transferring a text from source language to target language, translation science activity is not only a mechanical transfer but it is also a creative method and cultural transmission. Translation is the technique of rendering aspects and features of a target text semantically, culturally, and pragmatically into another language. Translation as a thought bears several definitions which all turn around the same idea of shifting a message with all it contains of ideas and thoughts from one language into another.

Munday (2008:15) points out that, the term of translation refers to several meanings: "the general subject field, the product and the process, where the process of translation involves the translator changing an original written text (the source text or ST) in the original verbal language (the source language SL) into a written text (the target text or TT)". In this process, the translator encounters may difficulties where s/he should always be prepared to produce a high-level quality of the product. Translator depending on the source text deals with the text within the discourse facilities in his own language or may present the text with a different form of expression which is unfamiliar to the reader of his mother tongue.

Words are an essential part of any language; without them cannot communicate with each other. Then, human beings cannot live alone deprived of social interactions with others. Words do not occur in isolation from other ones. These words align in an order which constitutes strings of meaning units. During the last decades, the need for highlighting on collocation has received increasingly attention in the field of EFL teaching learning methods. Many researchers pointed out that, the benefits of learning collocations such as increasing learners' language competence, enhancing learners' communicative competence , and being toward native-like. Collocations are found in every language to give especial meaning and without it, the meaning will lose. It is not an easy task for students to know the words that combine with each other, or in many cases in English when it is difficult to know which word go well with the other word you want to use, because there are not a clear and fixed rule.

Collocations are blend of words in a sentence. It is an association between pair or small group of words. Some collocations are typical, this means that, the words combine in a way that feel natural or correct. Other collocations are untypical, this means that the words do not go together naturally and therefore often sound strange or incorrect. English is not considered as ordinary, natural, or fluent without the competence in collocations. Collocation knowledge is crucial for EFL learners and collocation instruction in EFL courses is required for every student who is dealing with English language.

2- Problem Statement

Problems of translating collocations raises to the incapability to read the collocation as one meaning component (Baker, 1992). The additional struggle of translating collocation is the cultural setting of a collocation, which means that, a collocation contains cultural properties or hints. Such collocation is problematic to render due to the cultural gap between languages. The concluding obstacle is the troubled predictability and low generalizability of collocations. Particularly, when dealing with alternative words or near synonyms. for instance, "The pilot stayed as cool as a cucumber during the emergency landing". ,students translated it into, semantic translation, which translated literally in Arabic like:

ظل الطيار هادئا كالخيار أثناء الهبوط الاضطراري".

This translation was literal meaning of the original sentence, unusual, unacceptable in Arabic language and did not provide the same message by the speaker.

3- Objectives of the Study

The study aims to:

3-1- Examine the strategies used by students in translating English collocations into Arabic.

3-2- Investigate students' awareness of collocations.

3-3- Identify common difficulties and suggest pedagogical solutions.

Hypothesis

The study hypothesizes that, English major students face significant difficulties in translating English collocations into Arabic, primarily due to problems in identifying appropriate equivalents and cultural differences.

5- Definition of Terms

5.1 Collocation: is the way in which words co-occur in a natural text in statistically significant ways (Lewis, 2000). The co-occurrences of words and phrases are common and they sound correct to the native speakers such as bitter chocolate.

5.2 Collocate: is alternative word or words which often take place with a particular word. For example, bitter chocolate, and , chocolate bar, bitter and bar are collocating.

5.3 Node: refers to a precise word or phrase. It is the central word in a collocation pattern. The nod is commonly introduced with other words to the right, left, or what are called collocates (Sinclair, 1991) such as in bitter chocolate or chocolate bar, chocolate is a node.

6- Literature Review

6.1 Definition of Collocation

Firth considered as the father of collocation, who is first mentioned it in (1957) as, " a word by the company it keeps". Factually, the notion of "collocation" as a technical term in linguistic is credited to the contributions of Palmer (1965), who is regarded as a pioneer in studying and classifying collocations. Palmer (1965:5) defines collocation as " a succession of two or more words that must be learned as an integral whole and not pieced together from its component part". Brown (1974), was one of the first creators to propose the combination of collocations in the EFL class room. She emphasized that learning collocations not only increases EFL learners' knowledge of collocation but also improves learners' oral fluency , listening comprehension, and reading speed. Furthermore, Brown pointed out that learning collocation permits learners gradually to realize language amounts used by native speakers in speech , writing and to get the feel of using words in natural arrangement with other words too. For instance, Halliday and Hasan (1976), believed collocation as lexical cohesion , which is the organized influence achieved by the choice of the lexicon.

Many linguistics tried to defined this term from different views, Sinclair (1991:170) defines collocation as , " the occurrence of two words or more within a short space of each other in a text". Moreover, he argues that words usually do not move their meanings independently from each other. According to him, the single words meanings include just parts of the entire meanings expressed through the word combinations that structure the text. In another hand, words meanings are determined according to the textual context or environment in which they are used. This is what Baker said, (1992: 46) " it goes without saying that words rarely occur on their own. They almost always occur in the company of other words. But words are not strung together at random in any language; they are always restrictions on the way they can be combined to convey meanings". Celce & Olshtain (2000), refers to collocation as " words come together or chunks that native speaker can access for comprehension or production". Generally, collocation refers to the typical co-occurrence of forms of words (Xiao& McEnery,2006).

6.2 Classification of Collocation

At the beginning, various forms of collocations have been suggested by different researchers. Many scholars classified English collocations into two major groups: lexical collocations and grammatical collocations. Lexical collocations are further divided into seven types, whereas, grammatical collocations are divided into eight kinds. Lexical collocations contain nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs. Lexical collocations may be verb+ noun, adjective + noun, noun + verb, adverb + adjective , and verb + adverb. On the other hand, grammatical collocations are phrases containing a dominant word, such as a noun, an adjective, or a verb and a preposition or grammatical structure like an infinitive or clause. In the lexical approach, Lewis (1997:35) pointed out his methodological implications to teach collocation, "early emphasis on receptive skills, especially listening, is important, de-contextualized vocabulary learning is a completely appropriate strategy, the role of grammar as a receptive skill must be recognized, the importance of contrast in language awareness must be recognized, teachers should employ extensive, comprehensive language for receptive purposes. Extensive writing should be held as long as possible. Nonlinear recording formats , such as collocation tables, word trees, are central to the lexical approach, teachers' reformulation should be the natural response to student error, teachers should always react primarily to the content of student language, and pedagogical chunks should be a frequent class room activity".

7. Methodology

7.1 The Sample and the Description of the Test

The study was conducted in 2024. It combines a test of nine sentences , each one indicates a collocation .The test was composed of fifteen students, randomly selected from third year at the department of English language, Faculty of Arts and Science in Mizda, University of Gharyan. They comprised of three male students and twelve female ones, their aged between 21 and 22 years. All of them are Libyan, and native speakers of Arabic language. They had studied translation for three years, according to the curriculum and syllabus of learning translation in the department, they studied the following themes: definitions of translation, their types, theory of Newmark in translation, strategies and techniques of translation, problems and solutions when translating from English into Arabic according to Ghazal's book. It would be supposed that a high level of English awareness and full understanding may be fully gained.

7.2 Data Analysis and Discussion

In the following section, the translations of each collocation were analyzed within a table (1), showing weather a translation is semantic or communicative**.** Communicative translation focuses on delivering the message of the source text in a way that is natural, effective, and easily understood by the target audience. It prioritizes readability and cultural adaption over strict adherence to the original structure. Semantic translation is staying faithful to the original text. The translator tries to preserve the exact meaning and structure as much as possible, even if the result is a bit awkward in the target language. The main purpose in semantic translation is for accuracy and fidelity. It attempts to render, as closely as the semantic and syntactic structures of the second language allow, the exact contextual meaning of the original. (Newmark, 1981:39). This collocation is widely recognized and used in both formal and informal contexts.

Table 1: Distribution of Students' Translation Strategies for English Collocations (N=15).

No	English Collocation	Semantic Translation	Communicative Translation	Incorrect / No Translation
1	warm reception.	9 (60%)	6 (40%)	0 (0%)
2	as cool as a cucumber	6 (40%)	5 (33.33%)	4 (26.67%)
3	seize the opportunity	8 (53.33%)	4 (26.67%)	3 (20%)
4	pretty as a picture	7 (46.67%)	6 (40%)	2 (13.33%)
5	stand with you	0 (0%)	14 (93.33%)	1 (6.67%)
6	hour of decision.	9 (60%)	5 (33.33%)	1 (6.67%)
7	door's creak.	6 (40%)	7 (46.67%)	2 (13.33%)
8	keeps his promises.	4 (26.67%)	11 (73.33%)	0 (0%)
9	breaking the rules.	8 (53.33%)	6 (40%)	1 (6.67%)

The collocation in the first sentence is " warm reception". The structure of the collocation is adjective (warm) + noun (reception), together, they form a phrase that conveys a specific meaning (a friendly or enthusiastic welcome). It is fixed and widely recognized in English language. 60% of the students translated the sentence into Arabic language like: ,which means "استقبال الجمهور المتحدث استقبالا حارا"semantic translation. Indicating that, they value preserving the exact closely to the source text. Whereas, 40% of the students translated sentences like communicative translation, which is in Arabic language:

"استقبل الجمهور المتحدث بحفاوة ".

reflecting their focus on communication with the target language. This is more natural in Arabic version, using "حفاوة " to convey the idea of a warm reception in a way that supports with Arabic expression. This collocation is widely recognized and used in both formal and informal contexts.

In the second sentence, the phrase "as cool as a cucumber" is a collocation . It is a fixed expression in English language, that means someone remains very calm and composed, especially in a stressful situation. Structure of the collocation adjective (cool)+ prepositional phrase (as a cucumber) : this structure is idiomatic and culturally specific to English.40% of students translated it into, semantic translation, which translated literally in Arabic like:

" ظل الطيار هادئا كالخيار أثناء الهبوط الاضطراري"

This translation stays close to the literal meaning of the original sentence, preserving the imagery of the cucumber "هادئا كالخيار ". However this might sound unusual in Arabic language, because the idiom is not commonly used in Arabic culture. whereas, 33.33% of students translated it, into Arabic language like:

."حافظ الطيار على رباطة جأشه تماما أثناء عملية الهبوط الاضطراري"

This translation is a communicative translation, which focuses on conveying the intended meaning (calmness under pressure) in a way that is natural and culturally appropriate for Arabic audiences or speakers. The phrase "حافظ على رباطة جأشه",
is a common Arabic expression that conveys the same idea effectively. 26.67% of students did not interpret the collocation, suggesting potential difficulties with idiomatic expressions or cultural degrees.

The third sample, " We must seize the opportunity, when it comes" , it has a collocation, which is, " seize the opportunity". Structure of the colocation is a verb (seize) + noun (the opportunity), which means to take advantage of a favorable moment. 53.33% of pupils who transferred into Arabic language like:

"يجب أن نستغل الفرصة عندما تأتي".

This translation is semantic approach. It stays very close to the original sentence in terms of structure and meaning, even if it sounds slightly formal or less idiomatic in Arabic. semantic approach focused on maintaining the literal meaning of the sentence, ensuring that the idea of "seizing the opportunity" is conveyed exactly as it is in the source text. While the meaning is preserved , the translation is sound less natural or idiomatic in the Arabic language, especially if the phrase " seize the opportunity" does not have a direct meaning. However, 26.67% of students translated it into Arabic language like:

"يجب أن ننتهز الفرصة فور ظهورها".

This translation is a communicative translation, which adapts the sentence to sound more natural and fluent in Arabic, while it stills conveying the same core message. This translation is a communicative translation, which adapts the sentence to sound more natural and fluent in Arabic, while it stills conveying the same core message. Communicative translation has used more idiomatic or contextually relevant expression to convey the idea of taking advantage of the opportunity. Yet, 20% of students have found the phrase challenging to translate due to its abstract nature or lack of a direct equivalent in the Arabic language. They had struggled with the concept of " seizing the opportunity" or lacked confidence in their ability to convey the idea effectively.

The collocation in the fourth example is " pretty as a picture". The structure of the collocation is adjective (pretty) +As (a comparative word used to draw a similarity) + noun (a picture), forming a fixed and idiomatic simile. (46.67%) of students who translated collocation into sematic translation in Arabic version like:

"هي جميلة كالصورة".

This translation is literal and maintains the original meaning but may sound slightly less natural in Arabic compared to idiomatic expressions. (40%) of students translated the collocation into Arabic language like: "هي جميلة بشكل أخاذ." This translation is a communicative translation, which adapts the target language and culture. It avoids the simile altogether and replaces it with a natural Arabic phrase

"بشكل اخاذ"

,which conveys the same idea of beauty in a way that resonates better with Arabic speakers. The preference for semantic (46.67%) and communicative (40%) translation is relatively balanced. Only 13.33% of students did not translate the collocation, which is lower than in the previous examples (26.67% and 20%). This indicate that the collocation " pretty as a picture" is slightly easier to translate or more familiar to students compared to the previous collocations.

The collocation in the sentence, "I will stand with you secretly and publicly", is "stand with you". The structure of the collocation is verb (stand) + preposition (with) + pronoun(you), this structure is a common in English language. About (93.33%) of Students translated it into Arabic like:

" سأدعمك سرا وعلنا"

This translation is a communicative translation. The overwhelming majority of students selected the communicative approach , which indicates that, they highlighted making the sentence clear, natural and culturally appropriate for the target audience. The single student (6.67%) who did not translate the collocation might have found the phrase challenging due to its abstract nature or the difficulty of finding an equivalent expression in the target language.

In the sentence " It is hard to learn about the hour of decision", the collocation is " hour of decision". The structure of the collocation is : Noun "hour" + Preposition "of " + Noun "decision". Majority of students 60% translated the sentence into semantic translation, which translates into Arabic as in:

"من الصعب العلم بساعة القرار".

While 33.33% of students translated it into communicative translation, which means in Arabic like:

"من الصعب تحديد متى ستأتي لحظة اتخاذ القرار أو ساعة الحسم".

However, only one student 6.67% did not translate the collocation, indicating that a small minority found the phrase challenging due to its abstract nature.

The collocation in the sentence, " My son gets alarmed by the door's creak", is " door's creak''. Creak is the most typical and natural word to use when describing the sound, a door makes when it opens or closes stiffly. Structure of the collocation is verb (get) + adjective (alarmed) is typical for expressing emotional or physical state in English. 40% of students translated the sentence into Arabic language like:

"ابني ينزعج من صرير الباب"

This translation focuses on the exact meaning and form of the original text, which is semantic translation, this translation preserves the literal meaning of the sentence, focusing on the son's reaction to the door's creak. Whereas 46.67% of students chose communicative translation, which is in Arabic language like:

"ابني يفزع من صوت الباب عندما يصر"

This translation adapts the sentence to sound more natural in Arabic, emphasizing the son's alarm and the sound of the door, while the percentage of students who did not translate collocation (13.33) is consistent with previous examples.

The collocation in the sentence "He always keeps his promises.", is "keeps his promises", which is verb (keeps) + noun phrase (his promises) , this is a fixed expression meaning " to fulfill what someone has pledged". Only (26.67%) of students translated it in to semantic translation, which is in Arabic language:

"هو دائما يحافظ على وعده"

This could indicate that the phrase does not contain idiomatic or culturally specific language that requires literal translation. This translation stays close to the original English structure, preserving the literal meaning. Whereas, 73.33% of students chose communicative translation, which is in Arabic language like:

"هو يفي بوعوده/ هو لا يخلف وعدا أبدا".

Most students translated the collocation, indicating that, the phrase was relatively easy for students to handle, possibly because it is more abstract and less dependent on cultural context.

The phrase " breaking the rules" is a collocation in the last example, the structure of this collocation is verb (breaking) + noun phrase (the rules). students who chose semantic approach are (53.33%) focused on preserving the literal meaning of the sentence.

" عُوقب لكسره القواعد"

while, 40% of students translated the collocation communicatively , which means that, they did not convey with a text.

"تمت معاقبته لأنه خالف القوانين"

Whereas, only one student (6.67%), who did not translate the collocation.

8- Pedagogical Implications

The findings of this study demonstrate that translation pedagogy for Arabic –speaking- English majors should move beyond literal word-for-word translation. Firstly, instructors should emphasize collocational competence as a core component of language proficiency, rather than an optional skill. Second, translation curricula should incorporate Newmark's communicative approach to help students recognize when a literal (Semantic) translation fails to convey the natural equivalent in Arabic. finally, the use of bilingual dictionaries should be integrated into classroom activities to help students identify "natural" word pairings and avoid the interference of their native language.

9- Conclusion

The percentages and analyses demonstrate that, translating collocations require a nuanced understanding of both the source and target languages. For instance, the collocation "as cool as a cucumber " is culturally specific to English and does not have a direct equivalent in Arabic and cannot be directly translated word-for-word into Arabic without losing its idiomatic meaning. Therefore, the communicative translation is more effective for conveying the intended meaning in Arabic language. The choice between semantic and communicative translations depends on the nature of the collocation, it is familiar, common, or rarely used. While semantic translation preserves the original meaning, in many examples, a significant percentage of students (ranging from 40% to 60%) especially, for phrases with clear meaning or culturally universal. Communicative translation was chosen by a significant percentage of students (ranging from 26.67% up to 73.33%), especially for phrases that require cultural adaptation or simplification. Communicative translation is essential for ensuring clarity and cultural relevance. The small and but consistent percentage of students (ranging from 6.67% to 26.67%) who did not translate certain collocations. It also underscores the need for further training and exposure to collocations and culturally specific expressions. significant challenges for students highlight the need for more practice and exposure to such collocations. Understanding the cultural and linguistic context is crucial for effective translation of both the source language and target language.

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Appendix

Collocation Test

The Test to Discover the Strategies that used in Translating Collocations from English to Arabic Language .

Dear students:

I am doing research entitled " Problems Faced by English Majors in Translating Collocations from English into   Arabic". This research aims to find out the problems that most students may face . This test will take about 15 up to 25 minutes. Hopefully, the findings I get from this project contribute a small part to help students with better translating collocations. I would really appreciate if you spare your valuable time to fill in this test.

Researcher: Abdulmunam Ramadan

The test is contained only from one part.

Participant's name:... , Level: advanced ,Year:3rd year

Age:... ……………… Gender:.....................................

Q1- Translate the following sentences from English into Arabic, which every sentence has a collocation.

1- The audience gave the speaker a **warm reception.**

....

2- The pilot stayed **as cool as a cucumber** during the emergency landing.

....

3-We must **seize the opportunity** , when it comes.

....

4- She is **pretty as a picture**.

……………………………………………………………………………

5- I will **stand with** you **secretly and publicly.**

……………………………………………………………………………

6- It is a hard to learn about **the hour of decision.**

....

 7- My son gets alarmed by **the door's creak**.

....

8- He always **keeps his promises**.

....

9- He was punished for **breaking the rules.**

……………………………………………………………………………