Difficulties and Common Strategies in Translating English Collocations into Arabic in Poetic Texts

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Abstract

Collocations are a fascinating linguistic phenomenon that occurs in both language and translation. Collocations reflect textual linguistic, stylistic, and cultural characteristics. As a result, the importance of collocations in language in general, and particularly in poetic text translation, as well as the way(s) in which they are translated, is investigated in this research. Collocations are subject to different approaches used by translators when transferring them from the source text to the target text during the translation process. Four of English poetic works translated into Arabic are examined. The research seeks to shed light on how translators deal with collocations when transferring them to the target language, as well as whether or not the target text meets the linguistic and stylistic characteristics of the collocations. Three issues are investigated: What happens when collocations are translated? What strategies do translators use to deal with collocations? And how do they approach translating collocations in literary texts? The study attempts to provide answers to these questions. According to the findings, calque translation appears to be the most common strategy for translating collocation in poetic texts. Because collocations are

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modified during translation, both marked and unmarked collocations have unmarked translations. In some cases, collocations become non-collocations.

Keywords: collocations, poetic texts, calque translation, marked and unmarked collocations

1. Introduction

Words are an essential part of language; without them people cannot communicate with each other. Since human beings cannot live alone without social interactions with others, words do not exist in isolation from other ones. These words align in an order which constitutes strings of meaning units. This is what Baker (2003) says:

> 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

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always restrictions on the way they can

be combined to convey meaning. (p.46)

Verbal association is a linguistic phenomenon that exists in all human languages, and is not limited to a specific language. The verbal association is words that stick and join together to form fixed total units after they are frequently used and circulated among people, and therefore the words that make up those units do not come to mind in an individual form, but in the form of total units characterized by being intuitive and with fixed structures in most cases. The origins of verbal association in any language go back to multiple sources, including religious, historical, literary, cultural and linguistic, and may be just words, including phonetic homogeneity that people have become familiar with using in that form such as our saying in the Arabic language.

كفّي ووفّي ، وجهٌ جهيدٌ

Each language's vocabulary includes single words as well as multi-word expressions. Collocations are one type of multi-word expression. Many English and Arabic linguists, including Firth

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1957, Baker 2003, and others, propose various definitions of collocation. This sensitivity to collocations is due to their importance in both English and Arabic. Elsewhere (1971) believes that "collocations can, however, do more than define the words of a language and reveal aspects of its structure. Sometimes, of course, they are little more than stereotyped word groups or clichés that are empty of thought, if not of meaning". (p.160)

The current obsession with translating collocations stems from their importance in language. They are crucial to the coherence of the language structure. They are also the source of its allure and distinct flavor, enhancing its beauty, friendliness, and strength. Collocation translation is an ongoing battle to match proper nouns with proper verbs, proper verbs with proper nouns, or proper adjectives with proper nouns.

1.1 What is Collocation?

Collocations are a common phenomenon in both language and translation. Firth, a brilliant linguist, laid the groundwork for the

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field of collocational studies, which still refers to his concept of collocation as original, innovative, and pioneering. Firth (1969) states: "At this point in my argument,….. I propose to bring forward as a technical term, meaning by 'collocation', and to apply the test of 'collocability'" (p.194)

The concept of collocation has been defined in a variety of ways. Jones and Sinclair (1974) define collocation as "the co-occurrence of two items in a text within a specified environment". (p.19) In fact, because they suggest a limited number as "two items," this is a narrow and limited restriction of co-occurring items.

More recently, A. P. COWIE defines collocations as "a composite unit which permits the substitutability of items for at least one of its constituent elements (the sense of other element, or elements, remaining constant)." (p. 224) He asserts that the failure to recognize lexical, stylistic, and cultural aspects is to blame for the failure to translate collocations in literary texts. Collocations in literary texts, particularly poetic texts, bear on metaphorical

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meaning that must not be overlooked or the poem's overall impact will suffer. As a result, the significance of this research is clear.

1.2 What collocation is not

The meaning of collocations cannot be deduced from the surface meaning of the words that comprise them. As a result, understanding and translating them is a difficult task for the interpreter. Nida (1964) refers to what makes the task more difficult. He writes that "Since no two languages are identical either in meanings given or in phrases and sentences, then there can be no absolute correspondence between languages" (p.156). As a result, he contends a translation approach to collocation that is unique to him. His strategy is based on proposing two types of equivalence. He distinguishes between these two types of equivalence: formal equivalence and dynamic equivalence. Formal equivalence is "source-oriented; that is, it is intended to reveal as much of the form and content of the original message as possible" (p. 134). This means that a formal equivalent pays attention more to the source text and message rather than the TT.

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For example, the collocation **hard time** can be translated into

وقت صعب as a formal translation.

Collocations are a lexical phenomenon with linguistic and lexicographic significance, as well as statistical natural language paradigm utility. They cover word pairs and phrases that are commonly used in language but do not follow general syntactic or semantic rules.

Due to their widespread use, a speaker of the language cannot achieve fluency unless they incorporate them into their speech. On the other hand, because they defy classification, they have long been the subject of linguistic and lexicographic research in an effort to both define and include them in language dictionaries. They have been featured in many statistical approaches to natural language processing precisely because they are observable in language. Specific collocations can be acquired by identifying words that frequently occur together in a relatively large sample of language; thus, collocation acquisition falls within the broad category of corpus-based approaches to language. Collocations

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specific to a particular sublanguage can be identified and represented by applying the same algorithm to different domain-specific corpora.

2. Objectives of the Research:

The primary goal of this research is to investigate the possibility of translating English collocations in poetic texts using different strategies, including issues of untranslatability, cultural specificity, and lexical choice. The marginal goal is to present a suggested rendering for some collocations mentioned in the selected poems.

3. Problem of the Research:

This research investigates the problem of rendering collocations in poetic texts with particular reference to certain approaches to be applied to the selected translators' renderings in order to recognize and follow the translator's decision-making process. The researcher purposefully chose Venuti's domestication and foreignization, despite the fact that they are similar to Nida's dynamic and formal equivalence and Newmark's

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communicative and semantic translation, because Venuti is unique in choosing such expressing terms that gain ground quickly, and he is also unique in showing his own perspective, unlike some others. Furthermore, Venuti's terms are appropriate for literary translation, particularly poetry translation; in other words, they are appropriate for its nature.

4. Research Questions:

1. What happens when collocations are translated?

2. What strategies do translators use to deal with collocations?

3. how do they approach translating collocations in literary texts?

5. Hypotheses

- The following hypotheses have been proposed to answer the above-mentioned questions:

- Translators should translate the original collocation into the target language in order to transmit the poetic message. To overcome the problem of untranslatability of collocations in

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poetic texts, translators should employ specific strategies to avoid distorting the original collocation's meaning. The primary goal of this study is to investigate the possibility of translating English collocations in poetic texts using Venuti's concepts of domestication and foreignization, including issues of untranslatability, cultural specificity, and lexical choice.

For the use of all languages, rendering poetry is the most difficult type of translation. In other words, the translator is concerned with literary devices such as poetic diction, rhyme scheme, rhythm, and figures of speech such as imagery, epigraph, allusion, euphemism, irony, foreshadowing, metaphor, simile, metonymy, personification, synecdoche, and hyperbole, among others. Thus, the translator of poetic works will inevitably face such linguistic problems, because what is impressive and effective in one culture may be prosaic and insipid in the target culture. Poetry is translatable and can be translated well, though there is a loss in translation in terms of accuracy and style, but it is still translatable. Furthermore, how can we know great poets from

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English or Arabic culture if we accept poetry's 'untranslatability' as a fact?

6. Methodology

6.1 Data Collection

The current study provides answers to three questions.

1. What happens when collocations are translated?

2. What strategies do translators use to deal with collocations?

3. how do they approach translating collocations in literary texts?

To answer these questions, four English texts were chosen to generate data for this study. Each English text is paired with an Arabic text; both address the same topic and are of comparable length and complexity. It was thought that selecting texts based on such criteria, particularly those related to language complexity, would produce more reliable results. Later, the collocational expressions in each text were counted, and the number of such expressions in each English text was compared to the number of

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such expressions in its Arabic counterpart. While collocational expressions in English texts were classified as either lexical or cultural, those in Arabic texts were simply referred to as "collocations" (al-mutalaazimaat al-lafziya) because the relevant Arabic literature combines both categories. The researcher chose the aforementioned texts because they all dealt with broad topics. The researcher consulted some English and Arabic collocation dictionaries, including Oxford Collocations Dictionary for Students of English (2004) and Al-Hafiz Arabic Collocations Dictionary, to determine whether the linguistic collocational combinations found in each text, English or Arabic, were real collocations (Al-Hafiz, 2004).

6.2 Data analysis

The aim of this study is to examine the translatability of the different patterns of collocations that poet-translators use in rendering poetic texts and also shed light on the problems that face them in conveying the original meaning of the source text.

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Translating different patterns of collocations into another language seems to be difficult task. Does the problem or the difficulty of translating collocations emerge from the different cultural backgrounds of both Arabic and English language? Or is it a stylistic problem, as the poet uses certain types of collocations with particular lexical, metaphorical, grammatical, and phonological patterns?

Example 1:

William Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*

Act 4, Scene 1

Soliloquy by Portia

The quality of mercy is not strained.

It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven

Upon the place beneath. It is twice blest:

It blesses him that gives and him that takes.

'Tis mightiest in the mightiest; it becomes

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The throned monarch better than his crown.

His scepter shows the force of temporal power،

The attribute to awe and majesty

Wherein doth sit the dread and fear of kings;

ليس في الرحمة إلزام وقهر

إنها كالغيث يَنْهَلُّ رقيقا من سماه

دونما نهي وأمر!

بوركت تلك الفضيلة مرتين:

إنها تبارك الرحيم

مثلما تبارك المسترحم؛

وهي أزكى ما تكون إن أتت عن مقدرة

بل وأزهى من عروش المُلك والتيجان

إن يكن في الصولجان البطشُ أو ملك الزمان

إن يكن رمز المهابة والجلال

مكمن الرهبة والخوف من السلطان

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فهي أسمى من جلال الصولجان

عرشها في الصدر في قلب الملوك الرحماء!

(Enani's Translation)

Analysis:

This extract is taken from Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*. Enani here has neither committed himself to the correspondent number of lines strictly, nor stuck to the meanings that every line holds. Domestication approach exists to offer a poetic form in Arabic acceptable by TRs, because if the translator abided by moving the same form structure into Arabic, it will look like a prose that is not needed or required in that respect. On the one hand, the English version runs according to the "stress rhythm" meter, which is frequently used in Shakespearean English and in some modernist poets such as T. S. Eliot. On the other hand, the Arabic version follows "Al-Ramal" meter that is free for rhythmic aspects. Enani has made a rhyme in the translation, where Shakespeare did not, that is for aesthetic purposes in Arabic of course. Both Lefevere's metrical and rhythmical translation

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strategies are adopted in this paradigm. In this example, the reader can find different examples of collocations which are:

1. It droppeth as the gentle rain which Enani translated into إنها كالغيث يَنْهَلُّ رقيقا so he followed the domestication approach as well as the second one which is:

2. throned monarch which Enani also domesticated the original meaning and translated it into وأزهى من عروش المُلك .

Example 2:

A Little Learning

By Alexander Pope (1688-1744)

A little learning is a dangerous thing

Drink deep, or taste not the Pierian spring:

There shallow draughts intoxicate the brain،

And drinking largely sobers us again.

إياك أن ترضى برشفات صغار عند نبع المعرفة

بل عُبّ منه لترتوي أو فانصرف وانس الظلال الوارفة

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من ذاق كأس العلم لا يروي ظمأه سوف يسْكره المذاق

أما إذا نهل الرحيق وعبّ عبا سائغا منه أفاق

(Enani's Translation)

Analysis:

These four lines of the full poem fall under what is called "Distich" or "heroic couplet", where we can grasp the meaning out of the context, in other words, the reader does not need to read the entire poem to understand the meaning of the stanza. A good example in Arabic is Al-Mutannabi's best-known stanza "الخيل والليل والبيداء تعرفني – والسيف والرمح والقرطاس والقلم". Criticism calls that "the unity of the lines", because of their independence whether you read the entire poem or not. Enani utilizes the strategy of addition a lot, in order to earn the readers' acceptance and satisfaction while reading the lines separately. Domestication is so evident is this instance. Enani adopts both the metrical translation and rhymed translation strategies, which is not easy to do so. There is a good example of using the domesticated approach in translating the collocation of deep drink into بل عُبّ منه لترتوي أو.

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Example 3:

The Sick Rose

By William Blake (1757-1827)

O Rose thou art sick .

The invisible worm ،

That flies in the night

In the howling storm :

Has found out thy bed

Of crimson joy :

And his dark secret love

Does thy life destroy!

عليلة يا وردتي

فالدودة الخفية التي

تحوم في الليالي حين تعوي العاصفة

قد عثرت على فراشك الذي

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تحوطه أفراحه الوردية

لكن عشقها الدفين والعميق

يمتص من كيانك الرحيق

(Enani's Translation)

Analysis:

Unlike the previous instance, this poem is dependent, in other words, we cannot understand the meaning of the poem until reaching the last line. Syntactically, this process is called "periodic sentence structure" that gives some sort of suspense to the audience and this required a grammatical connection between the lines to seem as a linked one sentence. Enani uses relative pronouns to make the poem sound as one bloc. He adopts domestication and this is evident in joining the third and the fourth lines together in the translation and the additions of some words to match the rhyme scheme of the poem, all these alterations create a newborn poem, as it were, acceptable to target readers. Blank verse translation is adopted here.

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Also in this example Enani used the approach of domestication in translating different pattern of collocations like The Sick Rose into الوردة العليلة , crimson joy into أفراحه الوردية and dark secret love into لكن عشقها الدفين والعميق.

Example 4:

William Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*

Act 3 Scene 2

Line 219 : 225

ANTONY says:

I am no orator, as Brutus is،

But, as you know me all, a plain blunt man

That love my friend. And that they know full well

That gave me public leave to speak of him.

For I have neither wit nor words nor worth،

Action nor utterance nor the power of speech،

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To stir men's blood. I only speak right on:

لست خطيبا مفوها مثل بروتس

لكنني ـكما تعرفون جميعاـ رجل بسيط ساذج

يخلص الحب لصديقه، ولأنهم يعرفون ذلك خير المعرفة

سمحوا لي أن أتحدث معه أمامكم

فأنا أفتقر إلى البديهة الحاضرة، والألفاظ المنتقاة

والمكانة المرموقة، وبراعة الأداء، وحسن الإلقاء

وذلاقة اللسان التي تثير مشاعر الناس

لكنني أتحدث عفو الخاطر فحسب

(Enani's Translation)

Analysis:

This is an excerpt of Shakespeare's Julius Caesar. Foreignization is so manifest in the given instance, notwithstanding the added adjectives to the translated version. In fact, these additions are necessary; they are due to the discrepancies between the English and Arabic texture and structure and also due to semantic results

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of the words. Moreover, these additions depends on Enani's interpretation of the text itself because of the nature of the source text genre, which is called Verse Drama. He has transferred the same ST wording, which inevitably affects the form in the Arabic version consequently. Lefevere's interpretation translation strategy is adopted here by Enani.

As usual Enani followed the approach of domestication in translating collocation as the power of speech into حسن الالقاء.

7. Conclusion and Recommendations

Translation necessitates the translator's attention to detail in order to avoid delivering an awkward collocation and potentially incorrect meaning to the target audience. It is advised to avoid translating collocations in literary texts.

Calque translation as much as possible and instead opt for other strategies that aid in the production of dynamic equivalence in order to produce texts with literary style in the TL. Calque translation should only be used to reflect the source text style

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when dealing with marked collocations, as it tends to provide TL collocations with less literary colour.

Collocations are a fascinating phenomenon that occurs across all genres. Other types of texts that can be investigated include business, sports reporting, legal language, and science and technology.

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ملخص

تعدُّ ترجمة الشّعر إحدى أنواع التّرجمة الأدبيّة وأكثرها صعوبةً علي الإطلاق؛ ولذلك فقد أثارت ترجمة الشّعر جدلاً واسعاً لعدّة قرون، ولا يزال الأمر يثير الكثير من الخلافات. وتتمثَّل هذه الخلافات في أنّ الكثير من العلماء والباحثين في مجال ترجمة الشّعر يشيرون إلى صعوبة ترجمة الشّعر من الإنجليزيّة إلى العربيّة أو العكس، أو أنّ الشّعر غيرُ قابلٍ للتّرجمة، ومن الأفضل للمترجِم ألاّ يُجْهِد نفسَه ويحاول فعْلَ ذلك؛ لأنّه عندما يُتَرْجَمَ الشّعرُ فإنّه يفقد جماليّاته. كما يرى آخرون أنّه بإمكان الشّاعر فقط أن يُتَرْجَمَ الشّعرُ بطريقة جيّدة. فلذلك لا بد وأن يكون المترجم دقيقًا في انتقاء الألفاظ والعبارات بارعاً في تنسيقها حتى تأتي ترجمته بليغةً خاليةً من أي عُجمة أو إبهام،.ولبلوغ تلك الغاية،على المترجم أن ينتبه إلى عدة أمور، على رأسها المتلازمات(أو المتصاحبات) اللفظية (Collocations) التي يُقصد بها تكرار مجيء لفظ معين مع لفظ آخر أو أكثر. وهذا الاقتران اللفظي ظاهرةٌ لا تكاد تخلو منها لغة، وهو وجزءٌ لا يتجزأ من بلاغة اللغة وبيانها. ويُعرِّف د. حسن غزالة المتلازمات اللفظية بأنها "عبارات بلاغية متواردة مؤلفة عادة من كلمتين، وأحياناً من ثلاث أو أكثر تتوارد مع بعضها عادة وتتلازم في اللغة... فهي عبارات شبه ثابتة يستخدمها أهل اللغة بديهياً ولا يستشعرون وجودها إلا إذا أُسيء استخدامها". ومثال ذلك كلمة «طويل» التي يمكن أن يتكرر اشتراكها مع كلمات مثل: رجل، ونبات، وطريق ولكنها تستعص على الاقتران أو الاشتراك مع كلمة «جبل» فلا يمكن أن نقول: «جبل طويل»، ولكن يجب أن نقول: جبل عالٍ أو شاهق. ولا نقول في لغتنا العربية مثلًا «رجل جميل» لأن هذه الصفة لا تتفق مع كلمة رجل، وإنما تتفق مع كلمة امرأة، فنقول «امرأة جميلة ورجل وسيم»، كما نقول في الإنجليزية to make a journey ولا يمكن أن نقول to make a walk ولكن نقولto take a walk ، ولا علاقة لهذا بقواعد اللغة العربية أو الإنجليزية وإنما يرجع الأمر في ذلك إلى اتفاق المتكلمين باللغة واصطلاحهم على ذلك.

الكلمات المفتاحية: النص الشعري، المتلازمات اللفظية، الاقتران اللفظي

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