

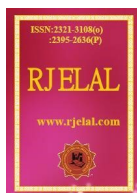


TRANSLATION OF COLLOCATIONS FROM ARABIC TO ENGLISH: A SEMANTIC AND
GRAMMATICAL ANALYSIS OF NAGUIB MAHFOUZ'S NOVEL
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Abstract

“Collocations represent a key constituent of the lexicon of natural language” and its appropriate translation for long has been considered a vital task by translators for a natural and smooth translation to occur. (Sughair 3) In this paper, I have dealt with the two main divisions of collocations i.e. on the grammatical and semantic level and have analyzed how the translation has occurred in terms of these in the novel *Thartharah Fawq Al-Nil* of Naguib Mahfouz. For the basic framework in assessing the transfer at the semantic level, I have used in the backdrop the guidelines of translation theorist Mona Baker, wherein she has dealt with marked and unmarked collocations in terms of their collocational range. The grammatical analysis is general and is based on comparing grammatical units of collocation in the translation against that of the source text. The overall method is also comparative in its nature as I have taken examples from the selected text with their respective translations and have explicated using them, the steps taken or avoided by the translator to produce a natural and accurate translation. I have provided alternative translations in cases where there was an error or a more appropriate choice was possible keeping in mind the restrictions present in the linguistic and grammatical aspects of Arabic and English. The paper sheds light on the complex process of translation in terms of the transfer of collocations from Arabic to English.

Keywords: Collocations, Arabic- English Translation, Semantic Analysis, Grammatical Analysis.

Literature Review

“Collocation occurs when two or more words combine forming together a lexical unit.” (Sughair 3) New research on collocations has pointed out their importance in the process of translation as they act as tools for the creation of fruitful conversations while also making the text cohesive in

its structure. (Sughair 3) Translation of collocations especially with regards to a cross-cultural context requires a very high degree of competence in both languages to the extent that even advanced learners and translators may fall into grave errors. (Sughair 5 and Obeidat 130)

Translation theorists have looked at collocations from different angles and defined them accordingly. Of them, the two most common ways are studying them are semantically and grammatically. Mona Baker has preferred a semantic approach wherein she divided the collocations as being either marked or unmarked. (Obeidat 131) McCarthy and Odell have made a grammatical categorization that demands grouping them as per their different grammatical units. (132) Hafiz, who wrote the first dictionary on the topic of Arabic collocations has also taken a grammatical approach to group collocations wherein he has proposed the equivalent translations of some common collocations in English. With regards to the studies done on the topic of Arabic collocations and their translation some of the recent researches are as follows:

Shakir and Farghal had conducted a study to determine the different ways of translating collocations. (Sughair 10) Another research was done in 2011 by Yusra Al-Sughair, to analyze the translation of lexical collocations mainly in literary texts. Apart from these, several case studies have been taken with one of the recent ones, on the novel *Awlad Haratuna* by Mahfouz to demonstrate translation errors. A very recent study done in 2021 has also dealt with lexical collocations in Arabic mainly with regards to collocational clashes and ranges. (Izzwaini 485)

This current study has a wider range to it, as it deals with highlighting the collocation transfer on both grammatical and semantic divisions together using comparative analysis between the source text and its translation. The goal here is not necessarily to show the translation errors but to highlight the complex translation process and the choices and decisions made in it, considering these two levels.

Introduction

The collocation "is the tendency of certain words to occur regularly in a given language" which can be or be not a result of the propositional meaning of both the words involved. (Baker 54) There are no specific rules like those available in Grammar that can give us appropriate collocates of

a word and the presence of this arbitrariness makes it a very tricky aspect to deal in translation. The complexity of the topic multiplies when there is a huge difference in the two languages at the linguistic, grammatical and cultural levels. (56) To deal with the complexity and the ambiguity involved in this topic, various translation theorists have proposed two main divisions of collocations which are on a semantic and grammatical level.

Grammatical Classification

This is done usually by the systematic classification of the grammatical units present in different collocations in a language. In the English language the most common types of collocations within this division are:

- 1) adjective + noun (e.g. an honest man)
 - 2) noun + noun (e.g. brain cells)
 - 3) verb + object (e.g. I ate food, I spoke dryly, I roared with laughter) (Collocations; Brashi 19)
- According to Hafiz in the Arabic language also, these distinctions exist and an example of them are as follows:

- 1) adjective + noun (e.g. بيت جميل)
- 2) noun + noun (e.g. غرفة النوم)
- 3) verb + object: (e.g. أكلت طعاما ضحك عاليا (بيرودة) (32)

Semantic division

Baker has categorized collocations in this division as being of two types which are marked and unmarked collocations.

Unmarked Collocations

All words in a language have a range within which they can be "compatible with to a greater or a lesser degree." (Baker 56) Collocations are said to be unmarked when that word is attached to another which normally or usually lies within the general collocational range of the other. (Baker 58) These collocations exist in every language and the list below provides some examples of these collocations in both English and Arabic language.

Examples in English: eat + food, narrow + escape and bitter + battle

Examples in Arabic: +موزة، عينان +شارب، قشر +قص جميلتان

Marked Collocations

These collocations involve a “deliberate confusion of collocational ranges to create new images.”(Baker 58) The marked combinations are “often used in fiction, poetry, humor, news reporting and advertisements to create unusual images, produce laughter or irony and catch the reader’s attention.”(58)An example of marked collocation in the English language is “waves of rebellion” in which the noun “wave” is unnaturally collocated with another noun “rebellion” for the purpose of adding beauty and another layer of meaning in a specific context. (Obeidat and Mahadi 137)An example in the Arabic language is سطوبة النوم where the noun النوم doesn’t lie in the natural collocational range of the noun سطوبة but is used so to create an unusual image of sleep assaulting a person’s physical appearance.

Accuracy and Naturalness in Marked and Unmarked Collocations

Naturalness is achieved, when an equivalent collocation is available in the target language which is considered fluent and smooth by the target users. Accuracy here refers to when in the process of translating collocations there is an accurate transfer of meaning from one language to another. Sometimes in translating a collocation both accuracy and naturalness can be preserved because of the presence of an equivalent collocation in the target language. (Baker 62) However, there are times when a translator can either restore naturalness or accuracy in translation which is when giving attention to one creates a loss in the other. (Baker 62) An example of a case when preferring naturalness leads to loss of accuracy is the English collocation “good law” which when translated with a preference to naturalness would mean “a just law” thereby providing a different meaning. (62)This struggle generally happens in unmarked collocations as in translating the marked ones the translator general replaces them with an equivalent marked collocation of the target language. (67)

The Analysis

(1) “فرماه بنظرة نافذة لاحت ...” (محفوظ 5)

Translation: “The Head gave him a piercing look”...(Mahfouz 1)

The Arabic sentence uses a noun-adjective collocation where the noun نظرة has been collocated with the adjective نافذة. This usage is an unmarked one as the adjective نافذة lies in the natural collocational range of the noun نظرة in Arabic. The literal translation of the collocation is “a piercing look.” The Arabs use this expression to talk about a “look” that is penetrating as if the looker is able to see through the mind of the one who is being looked at. (Almaany)The translation, in this case, uses a collocation “piercing look” which also comprises of a noun and an adjective with its meaning perfectly matching with the Arabic collocation نظرة نافذة. As the noun “look” lies within the natural collocational range of the adjective “piercing” the usage here is also unmarked. (Online Oxford) Thus the translation preserves the same grammatical elements along with the naturalness and accuracy. (2) “حملك أنيس ركي في رئيسه بعينين جامدتين” (محفوظ 5)

Translation: “Anis stared fixedly at his boss”...(Mahfouz 1)

The Arabic sentence consists of a noun جامدتين collocated with the adjective عينين. The adjective here lies in the natural collocational range of the noun عينين making this co-occurrence an unmarked usage. The literal translation of the usage is “frozen eyes” and would be considered unacceptable in English as the adjective “frozen” lies outside the natural collocational range of the noun “eyes” in English. (Online Oxford)The context in the text deals with a drugged individual looking at his boss. (Mahfouz 1) The Arabic collocation used is to denote eyes that are slow to react to anything and are expressionless. (Almaany) As there is a preposition attached to the noun عينين in the Arabic text, the translator has opted to change the grammatical units in the translation wherein he has substituted the preposition + adjective + noun combination with the adverb “fixedly” to make the translation more smooth and natural in English. (Dickins et al. 98) This adverb however doesn’t provide the meaning accurately as looking “fixedly” can mean looking at someone without moving or

blinking. (Fixedly) The English unmarked equivalent of the Arabic collocation in this context would be "lifeless eyes" or "expressionless eyes" which would transfer the meaning along with the replication of grammatical units.

3) "أي خطأ يمكن أن يتسرب إلي البيان الذي نقله بعناية خارقة." (محفوظ 7)

Translation: "What error could have crept into the report that he had taken such pains to compile." (Mahfouz 3)

This example presents a verb-noun collocation in which the noun خطأ has been collocated with the verb يتسرب. This collocation is marked in the Arabic language as the noun is outside the range of usual collocates of the verb يتسرب. Aside from making the expression literary, the marked usage here conveys a specific meaning which is of "an error" entering the report stealthily. (Wehr 405) The translation also uses a verb-noun collocation in which the noun "error" has been collocated with the verb "crept." The verb "crept" in this case acts as a marked collocate to the noun "error" and transfers the meaning of Arabic collocation accurately. Thus the translation here replicates the grammatical units of the Arabic collocation and is accurate and natural in the English language.

4) "الشمال كله دنيا سحرية مغطاة بالغابات لا تعرف النهار إلا دفعات من الضوء المتسلل من شبك الأوراق الغصون." (محفوظ 64)

Translation: "The North was an enchanted world, covered with forests that knew no day except spots of light glancing in through the lattice of leaves and branches." (Mahfouz 68)

In the Arabic text, the noun الضوء has been collocated with the adjective المتسلل which is a marked usage employed for highlighting the manner with which the light rays enter from between the branches in a descriptive literary style. The literal translation of this collocation in English would be "creeping light" which could be acceptable as a marked usage in this context. The Arabic collocation is used to emphasize the sneaky manner in which light rays enter from between the branches. The translation also contains a noun-adjective collocation which is also marked wherein the

participle "glancing" is used after the noun. The meaning of "glancing" however, is not the same as "creeping" as the former is used for taking a look while the latter is used generally for a stealthy movement or motion. The translation therefore semantically, compromises the accuracy while preserving the naturalness.

5) "و ذات يوم تراكضت السحب هاربة و حل الضيف الثقيل مشقق الجلد كالج الوجه اسمه جفاف." (محفوظ 64)

Translation: "And one day the clouds fled away and an unwelcomed guest with cracked skin and grey face appeared, whose name was drought." (Mahfouz 68)

In the Arabic sentence, the noun الضيف has been collocated with the adjective الثقيل which is an unmarked collocation in the Arabic language. The literal translation of the collocation would be "the heavy guest" which would be an unacceptable usage in this context in English. (Wehr 104) The meaning associated with الضيف الثقيل is a guest who is considered to be "غير مرغوب فيه" i.e. unwanted or unwelcomed. (Almaany) The translation also uses an unmarked adjective-noun collocation wherein the noun "guest" has been collocated with the adjective "unwelcomed." The English equivalent "unwelcomed" used has similar connotations and can be naturally used in the context. The translator has thereby swayed from the improper literal translation and has rendered the translation with both naturalness and accuracy.

6) "عندما تبدأ سهرة جديدة، يتكاثف الإحساس بالحضور..." (65)

Translation: "When a new evening begins, the feeling of immanence intensifies." (Mahfouz 70)

In the Arabic sentence, the verb يتكاثف has been collocated with the noun الإحساس. This is an unmarked usage with the literal translation of the collocation being "feeling thickens." The collocation is used to show an increase or heightening of sensation or feeling. The translation also uses a noun-verb collocation with the unmarked usage however for maintaining the naturalness of the text the translator has used the verb "intensify" which lies in the usual collocational range of the noun "feeling" instead of the verb "thicken" which would be unnatural and improper in the context. (Feeling)

The meaning conveyed by the verb "intensify" is equivalent to the meaning conveyed by **ينتكثف** in the Arabic sentence. Thus apart from the replication of the grammatical units in the translation, both the naturalness and accuracy are also preserved in the context.

(7) جاءت سمارة مرحمة نشيطة فصافحتهم بحرارة.. (محفوظ 114)

Translation: "Samara sauntered gaily in, and shook hands with them warmly"...(Mahfouz 124)

The Arabic example uses a collocation consisting of verb **صافح** along with the prepositional phrase **بحرارة**. The usage is unmarked in Arabic and can be translated literally as "shook hands with hotness." (Hafiz 32) The meaning of the collocation here is to shake hands with enthusiasm and friendliness. (Almaany) However, the literal usage is not natural and acceptable in the English language and the acceptable equivalent in English with the same meaning is the prepositional phrase "with warmth." The translator has instead used a verb-adverb collocation where the verb is joined with the adverb "warmly." The use of an adverb instead of a prepositional phrase is done to make the translation more stylistically acceptable in English. (Dickins et al. 98) Thus the translator has transferred both the accuracy and naturalness with regards to the meaning while changing the grammatical units used in the collocation.

(8) "أغلق الحقيبة وهو يغرق في الضحك." (محفوظ 84)

Translation: "Then he closed the bag, and began to shake with laughter." (Mahfouz 89)

The collocation **يغرق في الضحك** contains a verb and prepositional phrase and is used to denote a prolonged fit of laughter. The usage is unmarked but not very common in the Arabic language. Some of the common expressions used by Arabs for laughter are **انفجر ضاحكا، استغرق في الضحك،** etc. (Hafiz 32) The literal translation of **يغرق في الضحك** is he began to "drown in laughter" which is not acceptable and natural in the English language. The translator has, in turn, used an unmarked verb and prepositional phrase collocation which is "shake with laughter" which denotes being "consumed with uncontrollable laughter." (Shaking with Laughter) The translation, therefore, manages to replicate the

same grammatical units along with preserving both naturalness and accuracy in the context.

(9) "ماذ تريد يا رأس البلوى؟" (محفوظ 149)

Translation: "And what do you want to say, you root of all misfortune?" (Mahfouz 160)

This example presents a noun-noun collocation in a genitive construct. The collocation is unmarked as the noun **البلوى** naturally lies in the collocational range of the noun **رأس** in the Arabic language. The literal translation of the collocation would be "head of misfortune" which would be a marked construct in the English language and would be unnatural and unacceptable in the context. The meaning conveyed by the phrase **رأس البلوى** in Arabic is the main cause of misfortune. (Almaany) The translator has accordingly preferred an unmarked noun-noun equivalent in a genitive construction, where the noun "root" naturally collocates with the noun "misfortune" also conveying the meaning that the original collocation conveys in Arabic. Thus apart from using the same grammatical units in translation, the translator was also able to preserve the accuracy and naturalness.

(10) "ولما سكت الضحك استطرده" (محفوظ 94)

Translation: "and when the laughter had died down, he continued:" ... (Mahfouz 103)

In the Arabic sentence, the verb **سكت** is collocated with the noun **الضحك** which is a marked sequence in Arabic with its literal translation being "laughter became silent" which is an unnatural usage in the English language. The unmarked collocation used in Arabic to denote the above meaning is **توقف الضحك**. The literal translation of the collocation used is unnatural in the English language knowing which the translator has replaced it with an unmarked usage "died down" which is natural and preserves the accuracy in meaning in this context. (Laughter)

Conclusion

Translating collocations from Arabic to English is a task that involves considerations by a translator on multiple levels. In this paper, I have provided a short review of some of the major studies done on the topic of collocations so far especially in

relation to Arabic and English translation. In the introduction, I have defined collocations and expounded on the two major divisions possible of them i.e. semantic and grammatical. In the section of the analysis, I have used examples from the text with their translations and have pointed out how the translation has taken place considering the two mentioned levels and whether and how the accuracy and naturalness are preserved. Wherever required, I have provided alternative options which are more appropriate for the context in preserving naturalness and accuracy. This analysis would shed light on the translation methods involved in translating collocations mainly concerning the grammatical and semantic levels. Working on the model used in this study, future research can be done in the area of checking collocations transfer in the translation of poetry works from Arabic to English translation.

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