

COLLOCATION TRANSLATION ERRORS FROM ARABIC INTO ENGLISH: A CASE STUDY OF NAGUIB MAHFOUZ'S NOVEL "AWLAD HARATINA"

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Received date: 03-09-2019

Revised date: 18-09-2019

Accepted date: 22-09-2019

Published date: 23-09-2019

To cite this document: Obeidat, A. M., & Mahadi, T. S. T. (2019). Collocation Translation Errors from Arabic into English: A Case Study of Naguib Mahfouz's Novel "Awlad Haratina". *International Journal of Humanities, Philosophy and Language*, 2(7), 129-138.

DOI: 10.35631/ijhpl.270011

Abstract: The purpose of this analysis is to understand the notion of translation errors while translating collocations from Arabic into English. The translation errors are found in the Arabic novel "Awlad Haratina" which is written by Naguib Mahfouz. The problem of translating collocations and the reasons behind those problems are studied based on Baker's model of collocational errors which are the engrossing effect of source text (ST) patterning, misinterpreting the meaning of ST collocations, the tension between accuracy and naturalness, cultural-specific collocation and marked collocation in the source text. descriptive qualitative method is used as the method of this study. 71 errors are examined accordingly to find out the reason behind committing translation errors while translating collocation. The study reveals that the tension between accuracy and naturalness, cultural-specific collocation are the main reasons behind committing errors. As a result, the study finds that translators should pay more attention to the notion of collocation before the process of translation.

Keywords: Translation, Collocations, Errors, Collocational Meaning, Culture

Introduction

Collocations are defined as lexical items that have the tendency to co-occur within each other in utterance (Kharma and Hajjaji, 1997). *Oxford Collocations dictionary* (2002, p. vii) defines collocation as "the way words combine in a language to produce natural-sounding speech and writing". Thus, words accompany is not just a matter of word choice. It is the way to elaborate how the language is used by its speakers to convey a message.

Collocations are considered as one of the essential cohesive devices in any text. In literary texts, collocations play a vital role in the text cohesion, in addition to the fact that collocations reflect a part of culture. According to Shunnaq (1997), literary texts have an influence on the recipients due to the cultural, religious and translational principles they have. Thus, paying more attention to the translation of literature is a must since it helps in bridging the gap between cultures.

This important duty of translation requires to have well-skilled translators who should be not only bilingual, but bicultural. The importance of collocation in literary text arises from the fact that collocations are one of the fixed expressions that are used by authors or writers to express figurative meanings, traditions, religious beliefs and ideology. The translation of the unqualified translators may result in mistranslate the collocation, meaning loss and producing a collocation that looks odd for the recipients (Obeidat & Mahadi, 2019).

By investigating the collocations in a literary work and its translation, the present study aims at discussing the reasons behind the translation errors of collocations that are committed by two translators. The study tends to apply the collocational errors model suggested by Baker (1992), which reveals the reasons behind translation errors of collocations.

Literature Review

Translation of Collocations

Translating collocations is considered a real challenge for translators. This difficulty of translation is due to the linguistic and semantic features that the collocations have. A translator needs to have a wide knowledge of the linguistics of the two languages. Otherwise, translation errors may occur. Translators tend to apply different translation procedures to overcome the problem of translation collocation. Some of them adopt free translation, literal translation, cultural equivalents, formal equivalence, paraphrase, reduction, omission and others. Those are the most used procedures of translating collocation (Shaker and Farghal, 1991).

Catford (1965) believes that translation is an act of replacing linguistic units from the source language (SL) into target language (TL). However, translators have to bear in mind the difference between the lexical, syntactic and semantic systems between the two languages. Hatim and Munday (2004) state that translating collocations starts by recognizing them in the ST then to find the appropriate equivalence in the TL. Newmark (1988) states that the main difficulty of translating collocations is “the continual struggle to find the appropriate collocations”. He also believes that “the sensitiveness to collocation is most useful when considering source language collocations and relating them to transparent TL collocations”. (p. 213).

Finding the exact equivalence of collocation in the TL is one of the major problems that the translators face. (Hatim and Mason, 1990). They add that even experienced translators are always in a danger of having unnatural and unnoticed TL collocations due to the SL interference. In this regard also, McCarthy (1994) argues that even advanced learners of a language make inappropriate or unacceptable collocations.

Since collocations are habitually occur together, they sound natural to native speakers of a language, but they may not be acceptable to language learners or translators. The duty of the translator is to facilitate this strangeness of the ST collocation to sound natural to the TL

readers. Halliday (1996) proposes the Arabic collocation, *شاي ثقيل*, as an example of being odd if translated literally. He argues that this collocation is acceptable if translated as *heavy tea* or *strong tea*. However, translating this collocation as *powerful tea* sounds strange and incorrect.

The importance of collocations in language learning, texts' cohesion and translation arises the need of investigating this notion more deeply. Thus, scholars propose many theories, models and approaches to classify collocations. Some of them classify collocations lexically or grammatically as those suggested by McCarthy and O'dell (2005), who state that collocations in English have specific patterns as verb+ noun, noun + noun, adjective + noun, etc. Other studies classify collocations semantically as those suggested by Baker (1992) as marked and unmarked collocations. The unmarked collocation refers to the usual combination between words. On the other hand, marked collocations are unusual combination of lexical items. She argues that translating marked collocations is considered a real challenge for translators. Moreover, she believes that such marked collocation should be translated into marked collocation in the target text (TT). Semantically also, Lewis (2000) classifies collocations into four groups: unique, strong, weak and medium. Finally, Howarth (1996) states that a collocation even open or restricted. He argues that the open collocation has always a figurative meaning of one of its components. While in restricted collocation, one of the components keeps its literal meaning.

In most recent studies, Bartan (2019) conducts his study to explore the collocational errors in literary texts from Turkish into English. The study aims to identify the students' errors of translating lexical collocations (verb + noun) in terms of restriction and collocability. The study reveals that more restrictions of collocations cause poorer collocation production. It also finds that students, as translators, spend a lot of time and energy of translating restricted collocations due to the lack of collocational competency of the TL.

Faris & Sahu (2013) examines the students' ability of translating English collocations into Arabic. The study hypothesis that students encounter difficulty in translating collocations. The result reveals that 70% of the students face difficulties in the translation of English collocations into Arabic due to different reasons such difficulty of generalization, variability of collocations and cultural idiomatic collocations.

Jabak, Abdullah & Mustapha (2016) conduct their study to explore the difficulty in translating collocations from Arabic into English. the study data reveals that the majority of the students could not translate collocations correctly because they adopted literal translation. moreover, students have little knowledge of the concept of collocations in both languages.

Problems of Translating Collocations

As previously mentioned, collocations play a vital role in translation. translators should pay more attention to this notion to avoid mistranslation or producing unnatural collocations in TL. This importance arises the question of: why translators face difficulty in translating collocations?

One of the problems of translating collocations refers to the inability to read the collocation as one meaningful unit (Baker, 1992). Thus, the meaning of a word should not be translated in isolation with the words surround it. For example, the meaning of the word *dry* depends largely on the collocating words to it such as: *dry cow*, *dry bread*, *dry wine*, *dry sound*, etc.

Hence, translators should pay more attention to the collocational meaning rather than substituting lexical words to their equivalents (Baker, 1992).

The second problem of translating collocations refer to the arbitrariness of collocations, which means that choosing words to collocate together is decided by linguistic conventions. Palmer (1967) indicates that the adjective *rancid*, can be collocated only to *bacon* and *butter*, but not with *brains* and *eggs*. Another example is the adjective *blond*, which can be collocated to the lexical item *hair* or *skin*, but not to *door* or *dress*. Thus, *blond door* or *blond dress* are unacceptable collocations in English.

The third problem is the uneasy predictability and low generalizability of collocations. Especially, when dealing with synonyms or near synonyms. Baker (1992) states that *carry out*, *undertaken* and *perform* are synonyms that look as they may collocate to the noun *visit*. However, English speakers use *pay a visit* and not *perform a visit*. Thus, translation difficulty starts again with synonyms that are not acceptable in a language to collocate. In Arabic for example, the translation of the English collocation *breaks the law*, should not be translated literally or by using synonyms as *يكسر القانون، يلوي القانون*. This collocation has an equivalence in Arabic which is *يخرق القانون*.

The fourth difficulty of translating collocations is the cultural setting of a collocation. Which means that a collocation includes cultural aspects or signs. Such collocation is very difficult to translate due to the cultural gap between languages. Even some cultural signs may be shared between two cultures, but the way of using this cultural sign may differ accordingly. For example, the English collocation, *deliver a baby*, is a universe cultural signs that exist in all cultures. However, translating this collocation into Arabic is completely different as the word *baby* is substituted by *women* to fit the cultural use in Arabic. Thus, translating this collocation into Arabic is: *يولد امرأة*.

Finally, it is worth saying that translating collocations is a challenging task for students or even for experienced translators. This study investigates this difficulty of translating collocation by discussing the translational errors that found in a literary text. the study adopts Baker (1992) model of collocational errors which will be illustrated more in the following sections.

Methodology

The researchers in this study follow the analytical descriptive method in this qualitative kind of research. The researchers collect and analyze the collocational errors that are mentioned in the Arabic novel "*Awlad Hartna*", which is written by Naguib Mahfouz. The collocations are examined to the accuracy of their translation, then the researchers find out the collocational errors based on the collocational meaning. The study adopts Baker's (1992) model of collocational errors which indicate that translators commit errors in translating collocations due to five main reasons: (1) the engrossing effect of the source text patterning, (2) misinterpreting the meaning of a source -language collocation, (3) the tension between accuracy and naturalness, (4) cultural specific collocation, and (5) marked collocation in the source text. The found errors of the translated collocations relate to the error of conveying the collocational meaning that might be non-translated, slight change in meaning, significant change in meaning and distortion of meaning. To provide the study validity, the meaning of each ST collocation is studied according to Almaany Dictionary (2018), which provides the meaning of Arabic – Arabic words and phrases by using many Arabic – Arabic dictionaries.

The study attempts to explore the reasons behind committing errors by discussing the found errors in this novel.

The researchers adopt the following procedures for the present study:

- 1- Reading the ST and highlight its collocations manually.
- 2- Reading the TTs and highlights the equivalents of the ST collocations manually.
- 3- Comparing the meaning of the ST collocation with its equivalence in the TTs.
- 4- Extracting the errors that the translators commit in their translations.
- 5- Categorizing the found errors based on Baker's model of collocational errors.

Data Analysis

In this part, the sample of collocation errors are analyzed. The study finds that the ST has 726 collocations of different types. By examining the found collocations with the translations, the study finds that translators commit 71 different errors in their translations. These 71 errors and their translations are categorized according to the translation error commit in each version of translation. The Arabic collocations are collected from the Arabic novel "*Awlad Hartna*". While the English translations are collected from the two versions of the translated novels. The first translated novel is called "*Children of Gebelawi*" by Philip Stewart in 1981. The second translated text is "*Children of the Alley*" by Peter Theroux in 1988.

By investigation, the analysis shows that the errors are committed whether by avoiding translating the collocation (delete the ST collocation), translation with slight change in meaning, translation with significant change in meaning or translation with distortion of meaning. the following table illustrates those errors by figures:

Table 1. The Frequency of The Found Errors

Type of Error:	Frequency:
Non-Translated Collocations	25
Slight Change in Meaning	30
Significant Change in Meaning	12
Distortion of Meaning	4
Total	71

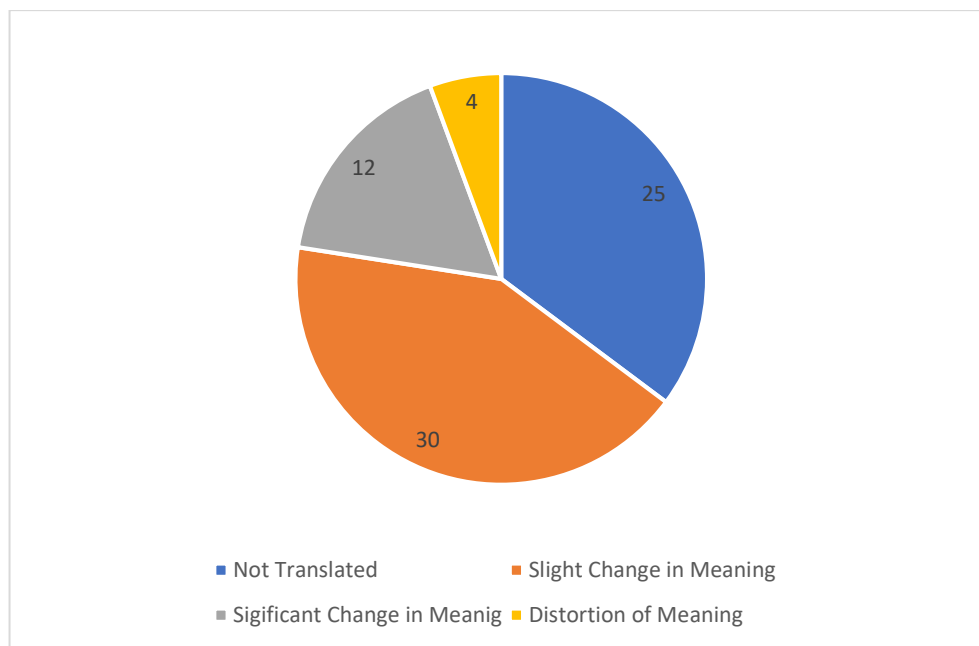


Figure 1. Frequency of Errors

According to Baker (1992) the committed translation errors due to the misinterpreting of the meaning of the ST collocation is common errors. However, studies of collocations should investigate more other reasons. Accordingly, the following discussion will provide a critical analysis of the reasons stand for committing errors in literary texts.

The Engrossing Effect of The Source Text Patterning

In this category, translators fail to translate a collocation because they are affected by the ST patterning. This means that the translators fail in finding an appropriate adjective for a noun or choosing an appropriate verb for a noun. Mostly, such category results from using literal translation or word to word procedures. Another reason of such errors is using synonymy to translate adjectives or adverbs which makes the collocation sounds unnatural. Consider the following examples:

Example:

وحد الله يا رجل، انت لا تدري ماذا تقول ولا تفهم ما يقال (ص. 242)

Transliteration: waHHid Allah ya rajul, ?nta la tadry ma taqool wa la tafham ma yuqal.

1st Translation: **for God's sake**, man; you don't know what you are saying, and you do not understand what is said to you (p. 156).

2nd translation: **by the unity of God**", exclaimed Umm Bakhatirha, "you don't know what you are saying, or understand what other say!". (p. 199).

In this example, the translation errors occur because of using literal translation to translate this collocation, وحد الله. The second translator is affected by the ST collocation pattern and tries to convey this collocation literally. However, the TL collocation looks strange and odd for the TT readers. Moreover, the meaning itself is lost and contain a significant change in meaning. in the first translation, it is obviously shown that the translator succeeds in rendering this collocation appropriately.

Example:

اتجهت الابصار نحو رجل كهل قصير مدمج الجسم (ص. 155)

Transliteration: *itajahat alabSar naHwa rajulin kahl qasyir modmag aljesm.*

1st Translation: all eyes turned to an **elderly man**, short and stocky (p. 100)

2nd translation: everyone looked at this short, compact **middle-aged man** (p. 126)

In this collocation, the first translator is affected by the ST collocation. He reads the ST collocation as being an *elderly man*. However, the context of this collocation provides a contrary meaning. The man has a well-built strong body. Moreover, the meaning of this adjective, كهل, in Arabic dictionary is *a man who is neither young nor elder*. Thus, the first translation has a significant change in meaning due to this affecting of the ST collocation.

Misinterpreting the Meaning of a Source-Language Collocation

In this category, translators fail to read the meaning of the ST collocation. Accordingly, the translated collocation contains a change of meaning or even a distortion of meaning. misinterpreting of the St collocation also may result in having unnatural or odd collocations in TT. A translator may misinterpret the meaning of a collocation due to many reasons like the interference of the ST language.

Example:

وراح يحيى يداعب قصّة قاسم ويتأمل وجهه الوسيم ثم يتساءل: (ص. 314)

Transliteration: *wa raH Yahya yuda3ebu qusata Qassim way at?amlu wajhahu hgwaseem tumma yatasa?al:*

1st Translation: Yahya began **guessing at Kassim's story** and studying his attractive face. (p. 202)

2nd translation: Yahya **ruffled Qassem's thick hair** and considered his handsome face. (p. 257).

The domain component of this collocation is the word, قصّة, which literally means *Forelock* in English. The first translator fails in reading this word correctly as the same word has another meaning in Arabic which literally means *story*. Thus, the first translation destroys the meaning completely due to misinterpret the meaning of the ST collocation. In the second translation, the translator is aware of the meaning of this domain word, قصّة, and he translates it appropriately into the TL.

The Tension Between Accuracy and Naturalness

The accuracy of translating a collocation means to only focus on the ST collocation which results in producing unnatural or odd collocations in the TL. On the Other Hand, naturalness means to focus on the TL collocation which results in destroying the meaning of the ST collocation or producing a collocation with a meaning loss. The tension between accuracy and naturalness may produce three types of translation: natural & not accurate, accurate & not natural or inaccurate and unnatural. If a collocation is translated as natural and accurate, then it is not an error.

Example: انتبه الى نفسك وهلم ندفنه والا قامت القيامة (ص. 139)

Transliteration: *intabih ?la nafsik wa halluma nadfinhu wa ?lla qamat alqeyamah.*

1st translation: come to your sense, let's bury him now, otherwise **there will be a trouble**. (p. 89)

2nd translation: be sensible. Let's bury him before all **hell breaks loose**. (p. 113)

The mentioned example is a good example of how a translation of collocation might be inaccurate and natural. The first translator tends to reduce the strangeness of the ST collocation by producing a phrase which is natural for the TL recipients. However, the translation is not accurate as stated in the ST context. The ST collocation, قامت القيامة, literally means that the hell will break out, to exaggerate the disaster of killing someone. Thus, the 1st translation fails in rendering this exaggeration in the TL, which results in meaning loss. The second translator reads this collocation correctly and he finds a cultural equivalent for the ST collocation. Thus, the second translation is considered as natural and accurate.

Cultural- specific Collocation

Translators commit errors in translating cultural – specific collocations due to the cultural differences between languages. A cultural collocation relates to the collocation that has one cultural word of its components or the collocation itself is a cultural sign. This include material cultural, social culture and concepts, etc. translators of literally text deals with cultural collocation with less attention, they either delete it or using reduction procedure to translate it. In both cases, such translation is considered as a translation error as cultural collocations are a part of the ST culture which should be rendered into the TL culture.

Example:

حتى غادر الدنيا دون ان يحيد عن الحق قيد أنملة (ص. 209)

Transliteration: *Hatta gadara aldunya doon ?n yaHeed 3an alHaq qayd ?nmolatin*

1st translation: until he died without swerved **an inch** from his path. (p. 135)

2nd translation: until he left the world, without having ever deviated from his path. (p. 171).

This collocation is a metaphorical collocation that is used by native speakers of the SL to describe someone that shows commitment to his principals or who is strict in doing something. The domain word in this collocation is أنملة, which means *the top part of a finger*. The first translator uses reduction procedure to translate this collocation by translating it into, inch, the second translator uses deletion procedure as he finds it difficult to find an equivalent to such cultural collocation. As a result, both translations fail in rendering this collocation into a collocation, but the first translation indicates a part of the SL collocational meaning.

Marked Collocation in the ST

As early mentioned in the literature review, the marked collocation as defined by Baker (1992) is unusual combination of two words. Authors or speakers use such type of collocations to produce figurative image in the SL. Baker states that such marked collocation should be translated into a marked collocation to produce the same impact of the SL in the TL and maintain the ST beauty image. Translators tends to translate such collocation by literal translation, which sometimes works as an efficient procedure in translation, or they delete it completely.

Example:

لذلك نفذ صبر ال حمدان واصطخبت في حيهيم امواج التمرد (ص. 129)

Transliteration: *lidalika nafada Sabru aal Hamdan wa iSTaXabat fi Hayyehim amwaju altamarrod*

1st translation: And so, the patience of Hamdan's people was at an end

2nd translation: and their exhausted patience sent the **waves of rebellion** raging through their neighborhood.

This collocation is a marked one since the word, امواج (waves), is not one of the collocating words of التمرد (rebellion). The writer uses it as figure to add a beauty to the text and to explain the huge anger of the people which is like the sea waves. The first translator ignores this important collocation and delete it completely, which is considered as an error. The second translator translates it literally and this translation succeeds in conveying the SL message.

At the end of this discussion of those five reasons of committing translation errors of collocations, the researchers find that the frequency of each reason is as stated in the following table:

Table 2. The Frequency of Reasons of Errors

Category:	Frequency:
The engrossing effect of the source text patterning	14
Misinterpreting the meaning of a source language collocation	4
The tension between accuracy and naturalness,	21
Cultural- specific collocation,	25
Marked collocation in the source text	7
Total:	71

Conclusion

The present study is designed to determine and examine the collocational errors in Arabic – English translations of literary texts. The data were collected and examined manually, and the study finds that the translators committed 71 errors. The discussion reveals that collocation should not be translated by only substituting words from ST into TT. It also reveals that translators commit errors due to many reasons as mentioned in the methodology. However, the study finds that the tension between naturalness and accuracy and the cultural- specific collocations in the ST play the vital role in committing translation errors in translating collocations from Arabic into English. The high frequency of errors due to those reasons are due to the different syntactic structures between Arabic and English and the cultural gap between the two cultures. The researcher suggest that translators should pay more attention to the notion of collocations; and they should read the meaning of a collocation correctly before translating it. Other studies can be conducted to observe how the tension between Naturalness and Accuracy may result in translation errors by discussing the three types of errors under this category that are mentioned in the discussion.

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