

Lexical collocations as translated in literary texts. A statistical approach

PhD ALKETA PEMA THANASKO

Foreign Languages Faculty
University of Tirana, Albania
Email: alketa.pema@unitir.edu.al

Abstract

Collocations are considered one of the major 'trouble spots' for translators. This is due to the difficulty in anticipating the constituent elements of a collocation, the considerable variation in collocability across languages and the lack of suitable resources on collocations. However, few empirical studies have been made so far on the types of collocations that are particularly problematic to the translator, the specific sources of the problem and the procedures that translators refer in handling such collocations. The present paper aims at investigating the translation of English lexical collocations into Albanian and analyzing lexical collocations in a given literary text, by showing differences and similarities in bringing together the two texts. Also the study takes into account the frequency of occurrence and translation strategies. A set of collocations are selected to be translated and analyzed, basically the patterns adjective + noun" verb + noun; adverb + adjective" and noun + noun, in a literary text which are the basic combinations observed. It is important to pay attention to the phenomenon of collocations and to what extent the frequency of lexical collocations as they constitute an important and vital aspect of productive vocabulary for translators and interpreters in recognizing and properly translating literary texts.

Keywords: literary translation, lexical collocations, context, arbitrary, cohesiveness.

INTRODUCTION

The notion of collocations has been one of the cornerstones of linguistic and has been the subject of significant empirical research. Collocations are considered as inevitable sources of loss in translation in SL and TL. It is needed sufficient knowledge on all collocations and their types in order to gain an acceptable or accurate translation. The translation of collocations creates many difficulties because the meaning of the word changes when it combines with other words. They cannot be translated as word for word. Translating collocations is considered to be one of the main barriers that translators face, even though in most of the cases it is difficult to find the accurate equivalences due to the fact languages form their collocations in different, unique and even arbitrary ways. The influence of the ST, cultural and language specific collocations, being natural versus accurate are factors that affect the translation of collocation, yet they are not so easy to be handled.

AIM AND METHODOLOGY

The aim of the research is to explain how lexical collocations are translated when transferred into the target language, and whether the target text (TT) has met the

linguistic and the stylistic characteristics of the collocations or not. It aims at identifying, classifying and analysing lexical collocations. As a result, these questions will be investigated:

- What happens to collocations when they are translated?
- How do translators deal with collocations?
- What strategies do they adopt in translating collocations in literary texts?
- Which type of lexical collocations under study is mostly used (frequency of lexical collocations).

It is worth mentioning that English collocations will not be equal because transferring collocations from one language into another means transferring from one linguistic system to another and from culture to culture (Heliel, 2002:62). Collocations and their translations were checked for their stylistic features and strategies being used.

The literary text under study is *"The portrait of Dorian Gray"* by Oscar Wilde and its two translated versions in Albanian, respectively the first book "Portreti I Dorian Greit" is translated by the translator Klodian Briçi, (February, 2001) Published by " Naum Vqeilharxhi" and the second version of "Portreti i Dorian Greit" is translated by Nikoleta Kalldremxhi (January, 2006) published by "TOENA",second edition. The procedure was simple: read the ST carefully, then read the translated versions of both books. At the same time all the lexical collocation in the ST were divided according to their category, also underlined all the translated versions of ST collocations into the TT one. Dealt with the detection of each category, listed them in a table to make the work easier and visible. They were categorised according to their frequency. Lexical collocation were counted.The site provides about 756 examples of collocations. From this 583 are adj + n; 106 adv + adj; 93 verb + noun; 75 noun + noun. This number is converted into a percentage to show their frequency. The result is that adjective + noun collocations are mostly used in this literary text.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

The translation of collocation is defined by Chang (1997) as one of the most problematic lexical cohesion when checking grammatical and lexical cohesive devices used in learners writing. Furthermore many learners will use the literal translation to produce acceptable or unacceptable collocations and sometimes they rely on their intuition to translate a collocation and to use textual equivalence rather than literal translation. (Liu, 2000b). However it does not always work as it may lead to an incorrect translation. A considerable amount of attention has been given to the collocational meaning by Baker (2001: 53) who made it clear that there is a big difference between *the individualistic or isolated meaning* of the word and its contextualised or collocational meaning. The meaning of one word is not extracted out of its own isolation, rather it is evoked by its association with co-occurring collocates. "knowing which words go together is an important part of understanding the meaning of the text and translating it well".

Baker (1992) mentions that some problems and difficulties in translation are related to collocations due to the attractive effect of the SL text patterning, misinterpreting the meaning of the SL collocation, the tension between accuracy and naturalness, and the existence of culture-specific collocations. Jaber (2005, p. 158-168) observes that there are eight translational methods that deal with translating sentences and smaller units in literary texts. One of these methods is literal

translation, i.e. translating word for word from the ST to the TT. It is not considered a perfect method, as Vinay and Darbelnet (1995) argue, because it could be “unacceptable,” giving contradictory or inappropriate meaning to statements. This would lead to a fully different style of language for example: *turned pale-----u zverdh si limoni*. On the other hand, it could be helpful, as Newmark advocates that it could be a good method when literal translation means translating meaning for meaning, for example: *destroys the harmony----shkatëron harmoninë*. Literal translation (word for word) is not recommended in translating literature because it does not give the TT the artistic color and effect of the original. This is because translating literary texts is a special case and that literary text has special features that distinguish it from other kinds of texts. Jaber notices that collocations are widely used in literary text such as novels and that the translator job is to deal with them.

Linguistics such as Newmark, 1988; Baker 1992; Bahumaid, 2006 have revealed various problems that translators have to deal while translating collocations. Baker, 1992 like others deals with problems bound to cultural and linguistic collocability between SL and TL. These problems rise due to collocability of lexemes from one language to another, meaning that what collates in one meaning does not necessarily collate in another. In addition we can say that collocations reflect preference of the specific language. Bahumaid (2006) gives the example of collocational range of words which may be different in SL and TL while Newmark (1988) believes that the difficulty of translating collocations lies in two facts.

- 1) First, the fact that there is an arbitrary relation between the collocates.
- 2) Second, at least one of the components has a meaning not in a primary sense but in a secondary sense.

Whereas Baker states the feature of collocations as being "largely arbitrary" and independent of meaning. Each of the lexemes contributes to the meaning of the whole collocation. She believes that we cannot talk of an impossible collocation since they can be frequently created. English learners may face various problems in dealing with collocations because of their arbitrariness. for example *blonde* collocate only with *hair*, it is unlikely to talk about *a blond door* or *a blond dress* even if the color is similar to that of blonde hair (Palmer1976:77). So there are always restrictions on the way collocations are combined together. (Palmer 1976:76, Baker 1992:47, and Thornbury 2002:106)-- According to her, unusual combinations occur naturally because words tend to attract new collocations all the time.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

These are the most frequent types of lexical collocations in the novel "The portrait of Dorian Gray"

Table 1: The translation of Adjective + Noun collocation from source text into two respective target texts.

Adjective +Noun collocation	"Portreti I Dorian Greit" by Klodian Briçi	"Portreti I Dorian Greit" by Nikoleta Kalldremxhi
Rich odour of roses	Aromën e dëndur të trëndafilave	Aromën e fortë të trëndafilave
Fantastic shadows	Hijëzimet e shkëlqyera	Hijet e flatrave
The long unmown grass	Në barin gjatosh pîrg	Barit të lartë të pakositshtëm
Heavy scent of lilac	Duhma e rëndë e jargavanëve	Era e fortë e lilakut
Gracious and comely form	Trajtës së hirëshme dhe magjepsëse	Formën e bukur e të hijshme
Curious dream	ëndrra kundërshtjellëse	Ëndërra misterioze

Table 2: The case of Adverb + adjective translation from the two translated versions

Adverb + Adjective	"Portreti I Dorian Greit" transl. Klodian Briçi	"Portreti I Dorian Greit" transl. Nikoleta Kalldremxhi
Hardly able	Me zor sa	Mezi e mbanin
Too large	Shumë e madhe	Shumë e madhe
Too vulgar	Tepër e trashë	E rëndomtë
Quite jealous	do tu shtinte Zilinë	xhelozë
Perfectly hideous	Hileqarë	Sa të shpifur

Table 3: The case of Verb + Noun collocation and their translation from both translated versions

Verb + noun collocation	"Portreti I Dorian Greit" by Klodian Briçi	"Portreti I Dorian Greit" by Nikoleta Kalldremxhi
Catch the gleam	Kapte rrezet	Të shihte
Gave rise	U pat dhënë hov	U ngritën
To gain a reputation	(Per të) fituar bujë	(Për të) Fituar famë
Becomes all nose	Merr frymë thell me hundë	Gjithçka bëhet me hundë
Chill our intelligence	Freskoj mendjen	Freskoj mendjet
Bring ruin	U bëjnë keq të tjerëve	Sjellin problem

Table 4: The case of Noun + Noun collocation and the translated versions from both books.

Noun +Noun collocation	"Portreti I Dorian Greit" by Klodian Briçi	"Portreti I Dorian Greit" by Nikoleta Kalldremxhi
Public excitement	Shqetësim	Zhurme
Smile of pleasure	Pasqyrim I vërtetë	Buzëqeshje kënaqësie
Mode of exaggeration	Një mënyrë e tepëruar	Barrë
Dearest friend	Mikun më të shtrenjtë	Mikun më të mirë
Dearest friend	Mik për kokë	Miku im më I mirë

Table 5. Frequency of collocation type in the ST

Type of collocation	Frequency of collocation type (times)	Frequency of collocation type in percentage (%)
adjective + noun	583	68%
adverb + adjective	106	12%
verb + noun	93	11%
noun + noun	75	9%

The table represents types of collocations and the frequency for each category. Ten (10) of twenty (20) chapters were taken into consideration for this study. As the table shows the highest number of collocations in this work is that of adjective + noun with 583 cases and the lowest number is that of noun + noun with 75 cases. The frequency for each category is expressed in percentage.

CONCLUSIONS

The difficulties of translating lexical collocations stand on their arbitrariness, they are not directed by semantic or syntactic rules. The overuse of literal translation is also responsible for these problems. A lot of problems can be avoided by avoiding the use of literal translation which may be misleading in giving the proper TL collocation. Literal translation (word for word) is not recommended in translating literature as it does not give the TT the artistic color and sublimity and effect of its original language. This is because translating literary texts is usually a special case since the literary text has special features that distinguish it from other kinds of texts.

In both books the translations are nearly the same, there have been cases of untranslatability or omission of words. The adj + noun collocation are that kind of collocation that is used more in this literary work and gives a flavor to the text. They occur in a high frequency than other collocations. As mentioned, the whole text is a descriptive one, In this literary text from the four frequent categories of lexical collocation the most used is that of adjective+ noun collocation. They are of great importance as they describe the characters, the events, the environment, setting in detail, that's why the use of adj + n collocation is overused because adjectives in general describe people, places, event. In v + n collocation the translation is nearly the same in both books with a slight difference in the second translation. Mostly the translation is reached through a literal method which is easily recognizable and both translators has maintained the same structure. The distinction is made between the use of other collocation especially of adj + n & adv + adj where the demand is greater from the part of the translator.

A distinction in word choice is noticed in both translations, meaning that each author has used his /her own style, diction, sentence structure and this is reflected in the translation of lexical collocations under study. Depending on the category of the collocation they experience radical changes,(where the collocation has been translated in a totally different manner) slight changes(where the translator has not translated the whole collocation but partially)or no changes at all (literal translation, the collocation is translated as it is in the ST). In the translation of collocations exist certain principles and if the translator does not maintain them, problems and mistakes may occur. Competence of collocations increases and strengthens translators language in general. Translators must integrate more suitable TL collocations into their translations to produce attractive and expressive writings rather than simple translations that transform ST words into the TL one.

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