THE TENSION BETWEEN NATURALNESS AND ACCURACY IN TRANSLATING LEXICAL COLLOCATIONS IN LITERARY TEXT

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is to find out the errors that may be resulted when translating lexical collocations due to the translators' tension between naturalness and accuracy when translating literary texts from Arabic into English. The study adopts the analytical descriptive qualitative research design which concludes that the translators may produce three types of errors due to the tension between naturalness and accuracy, which are: natural – inaccurate, unnatural – accurate, and unnatural – inaccurate. The results show that the two translators commit 24 errors due to this tension, and that the errors of having natural-inaccurate translation consist most of the total errors found. The study concludes that translator should pay more attention to the concepts of naturalness and accuracy when dealing with collocations. Otherwise, the translated collocation will be either unnatural and being odd for the target text readers or causing a meaning loss or distortion. The scientific novelty of the present study lies in discussing the problem of tension between naturalness and accuracy when translating lexical signs in the form of collocations. Findings of the study have pedagogical implications for translators in general, translators of literature, translation students, and teachers. Findings of the lexical analysis of collocations also presents an essential resource for researchers of lexical and semantic studies to translate between Arabic and English.

Keywords: collocation, lexical collocation, accuracy, translation, literary texts

INTRODUCTION

Collocations are considered as one of the key cohesive devices for any text (Halliday & Hassan, 1976). Authors and speakers use collocations naturally as a sign of a language proficiency. Seretan (2013) pints out that lexical collocations are a key issue for natural language processing systems because they don't follow the form of word-for-word processing. This importance of collocation in any text arises the importance of them in translated texts. Noura (2012) states that one of most important problem in translation are collocations. Hatem and Mason (1990) state that translation is a channel to exchange ideas and cultures between two languages. Texts are normally formed with many cultural elements as references to culture-specific items, and other linguistic features such as idioms, proverbs, metaphors and collocations. Therefore, translating such texts require the translators to be aware of the cultural, grammatical and linguistic features included in a text. This process requires that translators also to be accurate in transferring the source text (ST) aspects of meaning and, at the same vein, to make the target text (ST) to look natural for its readers.

For this, translators have to understand the message of the source language (SL) accurately before conveying it into the target language (TL). In the process of translation, a translator has to bear in mind three qualities which are accuracy, naturalness and clarity. Newmark (1988) states that the level of naturalness of translation is the natural usage of

grammar and lexis. This means that the translation should be written in the common grammar and language structure, using common lexis that sound natural. As a result, the reader of the TT can accept and understand the ST message clearly. According to Larson (1998), accuracy in translation relates to the studying of the meaning of lexicon, cultural elements, communication situations and grammatical structure of the ST, then analyzing it to reconstructing the same meaning of them in the TT. Thus, accuracy includes various dimensions which are communications structure, cultural contexts, grammatical structure and lexicon. Hence, the translation process is not just the transferring of meaning but also the changing of a language system (Shavit, 1986). As a result, a natural translation is the one that sound like not a translated work. Translators face a difficulty to make their translations natural and accurate when translating literary texts. Those problems are due to many factors such as the communicative concepts, cultural concepts, figures of speech, fixed expressions, expressive values, writer's style, and the language system. This study aims at studying the naturalness and accuracy of translating a type of fixed expressions, i.e., collocations, that are used in a literary text. The study is an attempt to investigate the ability of the translators to translate collocations in an appropriate way that may sound natural and accurate to the TT readers, especially that collocations are considered expressive values which may contain cultural elements in addition to being a cohesive device in any text. The objective of this study refers to discuss one of the most frequent reasons of committing errors when translating lexical collocations. It shed lights on the concepts of naturalness and accuracy and the relation between them when dealing with lexical collocations.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The term collocation is mainly a co-occurrence of two words or more to have a certain meaning. It is first introduced by Firth (1957) who believes that the meaning of a collocation is a lexical meaning. Firth (1966) suggests tackling the aspects of meaning based on the tendency of words to combine together. Firth's point of view was expanded by many scholars to define collocations as fixed expressions. Crystal and Davy (1969) states that a collocation is the habitual co-occurrence of words in regular patterns. Sinclair (1991) defines collocations as "the occurrence of two words or more within a short space of each other in a text" (p. 170). Benson (1986) states that a collocation is "a group of words that occurs repeatedly i.e. recurs, in a language" (p. 61).

A collocation usually consists of a node and a collocates. The node is usually the lexical item under investigation and the collocates are the collocating lexical item/items, for example, the word (القانون القانون alqanoon" literally: law") in Arabic is a node, where examples of collocates can be a verb like يخرق yaXreq, a noun like (الجنايات, aljenayat), an adjective like (عام). Thus, from this node, i.e. (القانون الجنايات yaXreq alqanoon) we can have more than one collocation as: يخرق yaXreq alqanoon, (literally: break the law"), قانون الجنايات yaXreq alqanoon, (literally: break the law"), قانون الجنايات ganoon aljenayat, (literally: criminal law), القانون مدنى panoon madany (literally: civil law). Collocations also have a range, which means that that a node has limited collocates to constitute a collocation. The range of a collocation can be explained by the famous example by Firth (1957, pp. 194-195) who shows that part of the meaning of the word "ass" can be by a collocation:

- i. An ass like Bagson might easily do that
- ii. He is an ass
- iii. You silly ass
- iv. Don't be an ass

Firth (1957) states that "you shall know a word by the company it keeps" (p. 194), Therefore, one of the meaning of "ass" in this example, is its habitual association with "silly". However, none of the other phrases is considered a collocation. As a result, it should be stated that the meaning of a word in a collocation, is not the same of a word in a contextual situation. For this vital role of collocations in a language, scholars propose various theories to classified collocations semantically and syntactically. At the syntactic level, Benson, Benson and Ilson (1997) classify collocations into lexical and grammatical. The former is the co-occurrence of content words (none, verb, adjective, adverb) such as, deliver a speech. While the latter refers to the combinations comprising a content word with a function word, i.e. a preposition such as, filled with honor. Newmark (1988) classifies the patterns of lexical and grammatical collocation into different patterns such as adj+ noun, noun+ noun, verb+ noun, etc. Izwaini (2015) argues that more attention should be given to lexical collocations because grammatical ones have been visited repeatedly by the grammarians and lexicographers. From this importance of lexical collocations, this study aims at studying the concepts of accuracy and naturalness of translating lexical collocations in a literary text. The study is an investigation of the translators' ability to recognize lexical collocations at the first phase, then translating them appropriately at the second phase.

Translating Collocations

Hatim and Munday (2004) say that translating collocations starts by recognizing them in the ST, then rendering them conveniently. In this regard, Newmark (1988) states that "translation is sometimes a continual struggle to find appropriate collocations" (p. 213). Shakir and Farghal (1991) discuss that collocations are a major problem in translation; therefore, a translator's memory should be a bank of collocations that help him/her in the translation process. Baker (1992) states that the main challenge of translating fixed expressions like collocations and idioms, is that the translator does not deal with single words meaning, but a meaning above word level. Translators may apply various strategies to translate collocations due to the essential role of collocations in a text. The variety of using different strategies is due to the fact that translating collocations does not mean to translate the meaning of its components, but to translate its semantic and cultural aspects. Baker (1992) states that the collocational meaning is a "presupposed meaning" (p. 52), which include some restrictions that do not follow a logical meaning from the propositional meaning of the words. At the same Vein, she states that this meaning cannot be conveyed in isolation of its context. She proposes a model of the problem that the translators may face when translating collocations. She suggests five main reasons as following: (Baker, 1992, pp. 58-60).

i. The engrossing effect of the source text patterning

In this problem, the translator may find an equivalent for a collocation, but the problem is in the differences in the surface patterning between the two languages. For example: *break the law* is an acceptable collocation in English, but the law in Arabic is contradicted and not broken.

ii. Misinterpreting the meaning of a source language collocation

This problem relates to the translator's ability to master the two languages. Another reason is when a translator misinterprets a collocational meaning due to the interferences from his native language. A collocation may look easy to be translated, but it has a hidden meaning.

iii. The tension Between accuracy and naturalness

At this point, the ability of translator to translate unmarked- collocations into a TL typical collocation cannot be always achieved. This failure is due to the translator's tension between what is typical and what is accurate. I most cases, the nearest acceptable collocation in the TL will often involve some change in meaning. This change in meaning may be minimal or not particularly significant in a given context. For example, a *good* or *bad law* in English is typically *justice* or *unjust law* in Arabic. In this case, a certain amount of loss, addition or skewing in meaning is often unavoidable in translation. The degree of acceptability or non-acceptability of a change in meaning depends on the significance of this change in a given context. In this case a translator has to pay more attention to use the common target language patterns which are familiar to the target reader. As a result, a translated collocation may be at one of four types of this tension: (1) natural-Inaccurate, (2) Unnatural - Accurate (3) Unnatural - Inaccurate translation.

iv. Cultural- Specific Collocations

In this category, a translator deals with collocations that reflect culture, especially if the two language are originated from two different origins like English and Arabic. Such culture-specific-collocations express ideas are unexpressed in the target language. The translation of culture—specific—collocation involves a partial increase in information. Obeidat and Mahadi (2019) state that "the vital role of cultural collocations requires the translators to apply effective translation strategies" (p. 155).

v. Marked Collocations in the ST

The marked collocation is unusual combination of words, which is usually used to create new images in a text (Baker, 1992). The problem of translating marked collocations is that the translator has to translate it into a marked collocation in TT. This, of course, may produce a difficulty for any translator.

Naturalness in Translation

Naturalness in Translation is the reproducing of the ST message in a way that the TT readers do not realize that it is a translated version. Nida and Taber (2005) state that the main goal of translation process is to reproduce a text in the receptor language in the closet natural equivalence of the ST in terms of meaning and style. To do so, a translator has to master and understand the ST message, then finding its equivalence and restructure the message in the TL. Thus, a natural translation can be shown in the appropriate use of TL expressions and structure. Nida (as cited in Venuti, 2012) highlights that the term naturalness covers three Ares: (1) the receptor language and culture as a whole, (2) the context of the particular message, (3) the

receptor language audience. In terms of collocations, naturalness is studied based on the ability of the translators to recognize the collocation as one meaningful unit, understand the collocational meaning, finding a collocational equivalence that looks natural for the TT receptors, as collocations should be translated into collocations (Baker, 1992).

Accuracy in Translation

Accuracy in translation means the studying of lexicons, grammar structure, communication situation and cultural contexts of the ST in the TT. The main purpose here is the meaning of the ST message by reconstructing this meaning using a lexicon and grammatical structure of the TL. Larson (1998) suggests a test for the accuracy of a translation by following those steps:

- i. compare the translation result with the source text at several points in the total project during the translation process,
- ii. after the comparison complete, do one more careful comparison,
- iii. when checking for equivalence of information context, make sure that the information is included nothing omitted, nothing added and nothing different,
- iv. after checking to be sure that all of the information is there, make another comparison of source language and target language text. Larson also said that maintaining the dynamics of the original source text means that the translation is presented in such a way that it will, hopefully, evoke the same response as the source text attempted to evoke.

As a result, it can be stated that if the translation does not match with the meaning of the ST message and context, then it is not accurate.

From the above discussions of translating collocations and the concepts of accuracy and naturalness, this study aims at exploring the types of errors that can resulted due to the tension between naturalness and accuracy when translating lexical collocations. The study main focus will be at the translators' ability to produce natural lexical collocations which convey the ST collocational meaning accurately. Therefore, the study objective is to answer the following question:

i. What type of errors that may be resulted due to the tension of naturalness and accuracy when translating lexical collocations in literary texts?

METHODOLOGY

Study Framework

The researchers follow the analytical descriptive method in this qualitative research. The study adopts Baker's (1992) model which suggests that a translator may commit an error when translating lexical collocations due to the tension between naturalness and accuracy. A translator, in this case, is confused to make the translation natural and to be faithful to the TT, or to convey the meaning accurately and be faithful to the ST. This confusion either makes the translated collocation to be odd for the TT readers, or it cause a loss in the accuracy of the meaning.

Materials

The corpus of this study consists of the Arabic novel "Awlad Haratina" by Naguib Mahfouz (1959) and its two English Translation: the 1st translation is "Children of Gebelawi" by Philip Stewart (1981) and the 2nd translation is "Children of the Alley" by Peter Theroux (1988). This novel is chosen because it is a famous cultural novel which is presented in a narrative framework in an Egyptian alley to describe the spiritual and social mankind conflict from Genesis to the present day. Youseff (2011) states that ""The Swedish Academy describes Mahfouz's novel as an allegory of humanity's historic destiny under the great monotheistic founders of religion" (p. 97). The author of the novel is also one of the best, if not the best, writers in the modern Arabic literature. This novel is one of forth literary works that help Mahfouz to won Nobel Prize in 1988. Almaany online dictionary (https://www.almaany.com/ar/dict/ar-ar/) and Oxford Collocations Dictionary (http://www.freecollocation.com/) are used as the sources to examine the existence of collocations in Arabic and English.

Procedures

The procedure of analysis consists of the following stages:

- i. reading the ST (The Arabic Novel: (Awlad Haratina) to highlight the lexical collocations.
- ii. Reading the TTs (The English Translations: *Children of Gebelawi and Children of the Alley*) and highlights the translations of the found ST lexical collocations,
- iii. comparing the ST lexical collocations with their TTs equivalents and examine them according to Oxford Collocations Dictionary to determine if they translated as collocations or not.
- iv. Finding the collocational errors that the translators committed when translating lexical collocations in terms of naturalness and accuracy.
- v. Discussing the found errors which are resulted from the tension between naturalness and accuracy.

RESULTS

The study finds that the ST has a huge number of lexical collocations because it consists of 586 pages and 112 chapters. Therefore, 1000 collocations have been collected and examined in their meaning and naturalness to the target readers. By analysing, it is found that the two translators have committed the total of 89 errors in their translations of lexical collocations. The analysis shows that the two translators commits 24 errors due to the tension between the naturalness and accuracy. The other errors are distributed to the other reasons according to Baker's model, which are: the engrossing effect of the source text patterning, misinterpreting the meaning of a source language collocation, cultural- specific collocations and marked collocations in the ST. The following tables and figures show the results of the data in figures:

Table 1: The frequency of errors by each translator according to the reason of this error

Reason:	Errors in the 1 st TT:	Errors in the 2 nd TT:	Total:	Percentage:
The engrossing effect of the source	6	9	15	%17
text patterning				
Misinterpreting the meaning of a	2	3	5	%6
source language collocation				
The tension between naturalness and	11	13	24	%27
accuracy				
cultural- specific collocations	20	15	35	%39
Marked collocations in the ST	4	6	10	%11
Total:	43	46	89	%100

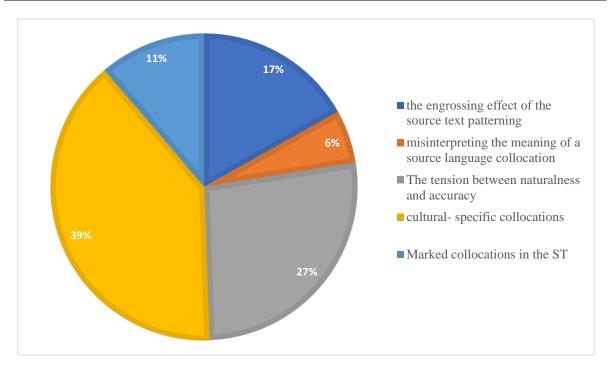


Figure 1. The frequency of errors by each translator according to the reason of this error:

Table 2: The distribution of errors due to the tension between naturalness and accuracy

Sub-category:	Frequency:	Percentage:	
Natural- Inaccurate	13	%54	
Unnatural - Accurate	7	%29	
Unnatural – Inaccurate	4	17	
Total:	24	%100	

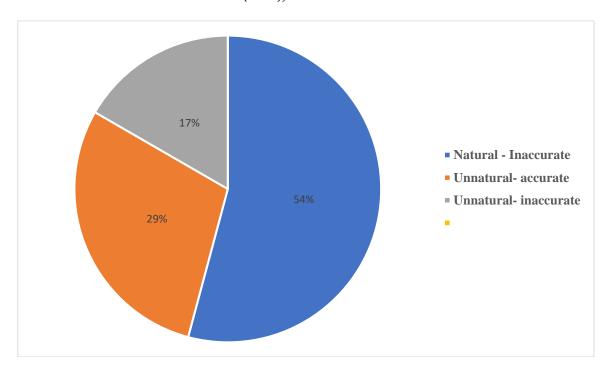


Figure 2. The distribution of errors due to the tension between naturalness and accuracy

DISCUSSION

As the result shows, the two translators have committed 24 errors due to the tension between naturalness and accuracy. Those errors are distributed into three sub-categories which are natural – inaccurate, unnatural – inaccurate and unnatural- inaccurate. The following examples discuss each sub-category separately by giving an example from each translation. Hence, the first example under each sub-category is the error that is committed by the first translator and the second example is the error that is committed by the 2^{nd} translator.

Natural - Inaccurate

Example 1:

انتبه الى نفسك و هلم 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 ST collocation is a common lexical collocation in the SL that is used for exaggeration of having a disaster. It literally means that the Judgment Day will start. In this context, it is used to express the speaker's fear of the consequences of killing a man. In the first translation, the translator makes his translation to be natural and understood by the TT readers. However, the translation is not accurate and does not convey the meaning appropriately. The second translation is more natural and accurate and conveys the meaning equivalently.

Example 2:

وانعقدت في سماء الحجرات سحب الحشيش ورقصت تمر حنه حتى انحل وسطها (ص. 201)

Transliteration: wa in3aqadat fi sama? alHojorat soHob alHa<u>s</u>yi<u>s</u> wa raqaSat Tamr Hinna Hatta inHal Wistoha.

1st Translation: the smoke of the hashish grew thick indoors. Tamarind **danced till she was** stiff. (p. 130)

2nd translation: and huge clouds of hashish smoke rose to the rafters of every room. Tamar Henna **danced till she was nearly thin**. (p.164)

This ST collocation is considered as a cultural collocation which is used in the Egyptian culture to describe a woman who is tired of dancing. It literally means "the waste is fell apart". Translating such collocation requires the translator to be aware of the cultural reference it has. The first translator understands the meaning of this collocation and conveys its meaning equivalently in a natural way for the TT readers. The second translator translates this collocation in a natural way in the TL. However, the meaning of this collocation is not transferred accurately. The translator reads the word النصل hall (literally: fell apart) as a verb of the Arabic word نحيل naHeel (literally: thin). Therefore, he fails to convey the meaning appropriately.

Unnatural – Accurate

Example 1

وحدوا الله والمسامح كريم (ص. 251)

Transliteration: waHiddo Allah walmosameH kareem/

1st translation: say there is no God but God, be tolerant. (p. 205)

2nd translation: **for God's sake**, tolerance is a virtue (p. 162)

This is another cultural collocation that has religious connotations, and which needs to be understood first before conveying its meaning. The speaker, in this sentence, asks the people around him to say the word of "Tawheed" which is a religious word in the ST and which means "there is no God but God". It seems that that first translator translates this collocation literally which makes the translation to be odd for the TT readers because the TL has no equivalents for such religious collocation. However, the meaning that is intended in the ST is conveyed appropriately. Thus, it can be stated that the first translation is unnatural but accurate. The second translation is more natural and accurate since this translation works as a cultural equivalent of the ST collocation.

Example 2:

فدققت المرأة فيه بنظرات وتسائلت: " ابن مين يا روح امك؟ " (ص؟ 450)

Transliteration: fadaqqaqat almar?atu feehi binaDaratin wa tsa?alat: ibn meen ya rooH ?mmuk?

1st Translation: the woman eyed him sharply. "whose son are you, **mother's boy**?" (p. 289) 2nd translation: she stared at him closely. "whose son are you? **You must be your mother's favorite**." (p. 366)

This collocation can be easily understood if it is translated literally. However, it has cultural connotations that may not exist in the TT culture. A man in the Egyptian culture, i.e. ST culture, always refer to his farther and not his mother. Therefore, this collocation is used scornfully to insult a man by referring him to his mother. It literally means "the soul of your mother". The first translation looks natural and it conveys the intended meaning of the ST

collocation, even if there are differences in the cultural connotations. The second translation also conveys this meaning partially. However, the translation itself is considered unnatural since such collocation does not exist in the TT culture.

Unnatural – Inaccurate

Example 1

وأخشى ما أخشاه ان تتداخل النبابيت في الامر فتهلكوا جميعا وبأكلكم قاسم لقمة سائقة. (ص. 434)

Transliteration: wa $aX\underline{s}a$ ma $aX\underline{s}a$ an ttadaXal alnababeet fi al?mr fatahlakow jami3an wa y?kolakam qasim loqmatan sa?egah.

1st Translation: my greatest fear is that you will bring your cudgels into it and all be killed, making the alley an **easy prev** for Kassem (p. 280).

2nd translation: the worst thing would be for the thing to be settled with clubs. You would be all ruined, and Qassim would **eat you for breakfast**. (p. 352)

The ST collocation is a metaphorical collocation that literally means "an easy bite". The speaker here warns his people of giving Qassim the chance to kill them all. The first translator translates this collocation into a collocation which conveys this metaphorical meaning. Therefore, the first translation is natural and accurate. However, the second translation seems to be unnatural and inaccurate because there is no relation between the translated collocation and the previous context. On the other hand, it is inaccurate because it fails to convey the denotations and connotations of the metaphorical meaning of the ST collocation.

Example 2

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)

The ST collocation is another cultural collocation that has religious connotations. Translators should avoid translating such collocations literally. Otherwise, the intended meaning will be destroyed, and the translated collocation will be unnatural for the TT readers. It can be noticed, in this example, that the 2nd translator uses literal translation procedure to translate this collocation, which results in destroying the meaning and having unnatural collocation or even unnatural phrase in the TL. On the other hand, the first translator has found a cultural equivalent for this collocation, which make his translation more accurate and natural.

CONCLUSION

As a conclusion, it can be noticed that the translators have committed 24 errors due to the tension between naturalness and accuracy. Those errors are divided into three types which are: natural – inaccurate, unnatural- accurate, and unnatural and inaccurate. The study finds that %54 of those errors related to the category of being natural – inaccurate. The translators commit such errors due to their attempt to have a natural translation to the TT readers, which causes a loss of meaning of the translated meaning and reducing its accuracy. It can be stated that lexical collocations should be given more attention to produce natural collocations in the TT which

convey the meaning accurately. Finally, this study and the information gained from its results may help translators, translation teachers and translation students to pay more attention to the concepts of collocation and avoiding the tension that is resulted from the naturalness and accuracy of the translated versions. This study can be used as a platform for further research to investigate more the errors that may occur when translating collocations in literary text. Further studies to investigate the translation of collocations with cultural signs are recommended.

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