

THEORETICAL ASPECTS OF COLLOCATIONS AND PROBLEMS ARISING IN TRANSLATION

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Abstract: Collocations, the habitual combinations of words, play a significant role in language fluency and translation. Theoretical perspectives from lexical semantics, phraseology, and cognitive linguistics explain their nature. However, translators often face challenges due to language-specific collocations, cultural nuances, and syntactic differences. This study investigates these theoretical aspects and translation-related problems, analyzing practical examples from English-Uzbek translation to propose effective strategies for improving translation quality.

Key words: Collocations, lexical semantics, phraseology, translation problems, cognitive linguistics, English-Uzbek translation.

1. Introduction

Collocations are word combinations that frequently co-occur and have a degree of fixedness determined by semantic preference and habitual usage [1:12]. Unlike free combinations, collocations create challenges in translation because their meanings and usages are often language- and culture-specific. Translating collocations literally can lead to unnatural or incorrect renditions in the target language, which prompts the importance of understanding their theoretical foundations and addressing related translation difficulties.

The theoretical underpinnings of collocations in linguistics.

The typology and characteristics of collocations. Common problems faced by translators in handling collocations. Strategies to improve translation outcomes with specific reference to English and Uzbek.

2. Methods

This qualitative study employs a literature review and comparative analysis to explore collocation theory and translation challenges. The methodology comprises:

1. Reviewing seminal works on collocations from lexical semantics, phraseology, and cognitive linguistics.

2. Classifying collocations based on established taxonomies (verb-noun, adjective-noun, etc.).

3. Analyzing English-Uzbek translation examples collected from bilingual corpora and prior studies.

4. Identifying common translation challenges through descriptive and contrastive analysis.

5. Proposing translation strategies based on linguistic theory and practical solutions documented in the literature [14:41].

3. Results

The findings highlight several key theoretical and practical points:

3.1 Theoretical Insights

Collocations are preferred lexical combinations constrained by semantic compatibility and syntactic patterns [3:88]. For example, “make a decision” is preferred over “do a decision” due to collocational norms.

Phraseology categorizes collocations as semi-fixed expressions that differ from fully fixed idioms but have limited lexical variability [4:105].

Cognitive linguistics emphasizes collocations as mental associations shaped by language experience and cultural context [5:65].

3.2 Types of Collocations Identified

Classification reveals common forms such as verb+noun ("commit a crime"), adjective+noun ("heavy rain"), and adverb+adjective ("deeply concerned"), which are crucial markers of naturalness in language [6:34].

3.3 Translation Problems

Analysis of English-Uzbek corpora uncovers typical issues:

-Absence of direct collocational equivalents leads to semantic loss or awkward paraphrasing .

-Cultural and pragmatic differences complicate cross-lingual transfers of meaning and acceptability.

-Syntactic divergence requires structural modifications in the target language, making literal translation often inappropriate.

Translators, especially novices, may fail to identify collocations, producing unnatural translations.

3.4 Case Examples

For instance, the English collocation "heavy rain" serves as a typical example where literal translation into Uzbek may fail to convey the precise intensity or naturalness of the expression due to differing cultural and linguistic conceptualizations of weather phenomena. In English, "heavy rain" succinctly communicates a significant amount of rainfall, commonly understood and frequently used by native speakers. However, in Uzbek, direct word-for-word equivalents may not carry the same connotations or emotional impact. Instead, native speakers might use alternative expressions, such as "qattiq yomg'ir" (literally, "strong rain") or even more descriptive phrases that emphasize duration or effect, thereby better capturing the intended meaning. This discrepancy arises

because the perception and linguistic encoding of natural phenomena like rain differ between cultures and languages, rendering literal translation insufficient.

Moreover, complex verb+noun collocations in English often involve straightforward combinations, such as "make a decision," "take a break," or "commit a crime," where the verb and noun collocate naturally without additional support. In contrast, Uzbek grammar and syntax frequently require auxiliary verbs, verbal affixes, or postpositional phrases to convey these concepts with similar clarity and fluency. For example, the English phrase "make a decision" may translate into Uzbek as "qaror qabul qilmoq," where "qabul qilmoq" functions as a light verb construction incorporating an auxiliary element to form a natural collocation. Similarly, "take a break" becomes "dam olmoq," literally "to take rest," demonstrating that the collocational patterns and their syntactic realization in Uzbek involve processes beyond simple substitution. These structural differences necessitate not only lexical substitution but also syntactic adaptation to maintain the naturalness, coherence, and clarity of the translated text.

Consequently, translators must carefully analyze the collocational norms of both source and target languages and apply culturally and linguistically appropriate equivalents rather than relying on literal renderings. Failure to do so can result in translations that sound awkward, unnatural, or even obscure the intended meaning, adversely affecting communication effectiveness.

4. Analysis

This section provides a detailed examination of specific collocation examples and the issues encountered during translation from English into Uzbek. Through qualitative analysis of authentic bilingual texts and corpora, we identify patterns of collocational difficulties and their underlying causes.

4.1 Collocational Incompatibility and Semantic Gaps

A primary observation in the analysis is the frequent absence of direct collocational equivalents across the two languages. For example, English often employs straightforward adjective+noun combinations like "heavy rain," "strong wind," or "high temperature."

However, Uzbek may not possess identical adjective-noun pairings due to different semantic categorizations of sensory and environmental phenomena. Instead, Uzbek speakers tend to use descriptive phrases or light verb constructions that emphasize the effect or experience of the phenomenon rather than reproducing the English collocational pattern literally. This semantic gap illustrates that conceptual metaphors and environmental perceptions differ, requiring translators to opt for functionally equivalent expressions rather than form-based correspondence.

4.2 Structural Differences in Verb-Noun Collocations

Verb + noun collocations present another area of challenge. English phrases such as "make a decision," "take responsibility," or "pay attention" are often syntactically compact and idiomatic. Uzbek, on the other hand, frequently employs complex verb constructions with auxiliary verbs and verbal affixes to render these meanings. For instance, "make a decision" translates as "qaror qabul qilmoq," where "qabul qilmoq" (literally 'to accept') acts as a light verb construction. This syntactic complexity requires translators to be sensitive to grammatical and collocational conventions of Uzbek, adapting the collocation structure appropriately rather than translating verbatim.

4.3 Identification and Recognition Issues

The analysis also reveals that translators—especially those less experienced or non-native speakers—may fail to identify collocations effectively. They tend to translate component words literally without recognizing their habitual co-occurrence, which can lead to unnatural phrases or semantic distortion. For example, translating "strong tea" directly into Uzbek using a literal equivalent of "strong" can produce awkwardness, as Uzbek may prefer "kuchli choy" or other contextually natural alternatives. This difficulty underscores the need for enhanced collocational competence and resource consultation, such as monolingual and bilingual collocation dictionaries.

4.4 Cultural and Pragmatic Considerations

Cultural factors further complicate collocation translation. Certain collocations carry pragmatic or cultural meanings that are implicit in the source language but absent or

differently expressed in the target language. For example, some English collocations linked to legal or business contexts may embed culturally specific connotations that Uzbek expressions do not replicate directly. Translators must therefore apply pragmatic analysis and occasionally restructure or paraphrase to ensure the translation maintains relevance and acceptability within the target culture.

4.5 Corpus-Based Evidence

Using parallel corpora and bilingual dictionaries to analyze common collocations shows that successful translations typically involve a balance of semantic equivalence and syntactic adaptation. The corpus examples demonstrate that translators who consult these resources produce more idiomatic and contextually appropriate collocations. This finding supports the advocacy for integrating corpus linguistics tools into translator education and practice.

5. Discussion

The study confirms that collocations strongly influence translation quality. Theoretical understanding is indispensable for translators to recognize and render collocations effectively. The challenges identified support previous research emphasizing the inadequacy of literal translation practices [7:77].

Strategies derived from the findings include:

- a) Using comprehensive bilingual collocation dictionaries to identify target equivalents.
- b) Conducting contextual and pragmatic analyses to select suitable renditions.
- c) Consulting native speakers and corpus data to ensure natural usage.
- d) Applying dynamic equivalence techniques and paraphrasing when no direct collocation exists.

Moreover, the differences between English and Uzbek collocational patterns, influenced by typological and cultural factors, illustrate the necessity for translators to adapt strategies to specific language pairs.

Conclusion

This study has highlighted the critical role collocations play in both linguistic theory and the practice of translation. Theoretical frameworks from lexical semantics, phraseology, and cognitive linguistics together provide a comprehensive understanding of collocations as semi-fixed, preferential word combinations that contribute significantly to natural language fluency.

The investigation into translation problems reveals that collocations present complex challenges due to the lack of direct equivalents, cultural and pragmatic variations, and syntactic differences between source and target languages. The analysis of English-Uzbek collocations illustrated specific issues that arise from language typology and differing conceptualizations.

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