

**An Analysis of Translation of Arabic Lexical Collocations into English  
With Special Focus on Season of Migration to the North**

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**ABSTRACT:**

The present study focuses on an analysis of the strategies adopted in translating the lexical collocations in two chapters of Tayeb Salih's Season of Migration to the North. The main objective of this study is to illuminate strategies used by the translator while transferring lexical collocations into the target language. For purpose of this study, only two types of lexical collocations: verb + noun collocations and adjective + noun collocations have been selected. The examined data consist of relatively short sentences including contextualized lexical collocations. A descriptive quantitative method has been used in this study. The findings have shown that the translator has resorted to various strategies in order to overcome the problems of rendering these lexical collocations. The employed strategies were idiomatic translation, literal translation, calque, modulation, equivalence, transposition and paraphrasing. Moreover, the study indicates that in some cases, non- collocations end up as collocations in the target text. It is recommended that literal translations should be avoided and strategies which help convey the implied message and producing dynamic equivalence should be used.

**KEYWORDS:** strategies, calque, modulation, equivalence, transposition, paraphrasing.

**المستخلص:**

تركز هذه الدراسة على تحليل الطرق المستخدمة بواسطة المترجم عند ترجمة المتلازمات اللفظية في الفصلين الاولين من رواية الطيب صالح موسم الهجرة الي الشمال. كما أن الهدف الرئيس لهذه الدراسة هو تسليط الضوء على الاساليب التي استخدمها المترجم عند ترجمة المتلازمات اللفظية الى لغة الهدف. ولغرض هذه الدراسة، أُختير نوعان فقط من المتلازمات اللفظية، هما:

متلازمات فعلية اسمية ومتلازمات اسمية وصفية. أُستخدم في هذه الدراسة المنهج الوصفي التحليلي. و شملت مادة الدراسة جمل قصيرة الي حد ما تحتوي في سياقها على متلازمات لفظية. وقد اظهرت النتائج ان المترجم لجأ الي طرق مختلفة من أجل التغلب على مشاكل ترجمة هذه المتلازمات. وقد تمثلت الاساليب التي أُستخدمت في ترجمة هذه المتلازمات الترجمة الاصطلاحية، الترجمة الحرفية ، النحل، القياس، التكافؤ، ، الإبدال، التفسير. علاوة على ذلك تشير الدراسة الى أنه في بعض الحالات ينتهي المطاف ببعض الالفاظ الى متلازمات. وأوصت الدراسة بتجنب الترجمة الحرفية واستخدام الأساليب التي تساعد في نقل المعاني المستترة ولبراز التكافؤ الديناميكي.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** الاساليب، النحل، القياس ، التكافؤ، الإبدال، التفسير.

**INTRODUCTION:**

Literary translation is one of the hotly debated fields far from reaching a consensus as to whether a work of literature is translatable or untranslatable. The major problem in

translating a piece of literary work especially a novel (in our study), is unconventional linguistic devices employed by a writer to make it different from other ordinary texts.

These devices are mostly unique and specific and can be derived from a particular culture, religion, belief and so on.

Therefore, collocations are considered to be the mechanism that provides cohesion to a text. The importance of collocations in language is confirmed by Sarikas (2006 mentioned in Alsughair, 2011) “*collocations are important combinations of words that endow the language with natural sounding speech and writing.*” Moreover, this trend is consolidated by Mitchell’s (1965) approach which adds a further dimension to understanding the way collocations occur. This goes to the earlier notion of language existing in ‘chunks’, but with considerable amount of variability. It presupposes that collocations exist in as variant form of meaning forming structures used in expressed language to create nuance.

Recent studies and research on translation of English collocations into Arabic and vice versa have shown that, this vital area, needs to be investigated and probed thoroughly. Collocation as an integral constituent of linguistic knowledge, represents a significant area of research since they are considered to be one of the subtleties of language. This feature of collocations makes them complex and difficult for grasping. Another reason for complexity of collocations lies in various techniques (strategies), which can be used in their translation.

However, the translation of English lexical collocations represents a constant problem for both translators and interpreters. This problematic nature seems to be inherent in the process of translating collocations due to a multitude of factors including sentence structure, semantics, interference of L2, call up of appropriate equivalence, cultural heterogeneity and unavailability of proper target language

equivalents in general and bilingual dictionaries.

Furthermore, rendering Arabic collocations into English constitute a major linguistic and cultural hindrance due to several reasons: the most significant reason is the wide linguistic and cultural gap between Arabic and English, which consequently leads to the lack of equivalence of culture - specific and bound collocational patterns. Hence, the meaning of collocations has to be communicated from Arabic culture by its linguistic system into English culture. This process of communication could be complicated and hindered because collocations are “*in fact a direct reflection of the cultural setting in which they are embedded*” (Baker, 1992). This suggests that collocational patterns among languages reflect the preferences of those specific languages. Thus, what is considered culturally acceptable in one language may be regarded as totally strange and mysterious in another (Dweik, 2000).

Additionally, lack of collocational competence appears to pose serious problems and difficulties for translators when translating collocations. These problems and difficulties lie in finding the proper equivalent collocations and matching them up with appropriate nouns, adjectives and verbs in both English and Arabic.

Though there is a controversy over definition of the concept of collocation, however, many scholars have defined collocation according to their perspectives. Firth defines collocations as a linguistic phenomenon to be meaning- based rather than grammar- based. Firth (1968), Halliday and Hassan (1976) claim that collocations are a group of words used to develop lexical cohesion of text and contain “*a cohesive force*”.

Furthermore, to Halliday, collocations are examples of word combinations; which cut across grammar boundaries. For instance, *he argued strongly* and *the strength of his argument* are grammatical transformations of the initial collocation *strong argument*.

Hatim (2000) defines collocations as “*the way in which words are found together conventionally.*” He maintains that collocations exist together usually and naturally. In the same line, Baker (1992) defines collocations as “*semantically arbitrary restriction, which doesn't follow logically from the propositional meaning of a word*”. This is another way of looking at collocation in terms of tendency of certain words to co-occur regularly in a given language.

However, Newmark (2000) has paraphrased Crystal's definition by stating that collocation is the “*habitual co-occurrence of individual lexical items*”. To him (ibid: 213), “if grammar is the bones of a text, collocations are the nerves, more subtle and multiple and specific in denoting meaning and lexis is the flesh”. For more clarification, he mentions examples such as: *heavy labor*, *nerve cell* and *pay a visit*.

Similarly, Stubb (1976) rearranges the Firthian definition of collocation as “*the company a word keeps*”. Therefore, to him, collocations are “*actual words in habitual company*”. This re-echoes his (ibid1995) own definition of collocation by stating that “*by collocation I mean the habitual co-occurrence of words*”. This has also been recollected by Palmer (1995), who has reiterated the Firthian definition “*you shall know a word by the company it keeps*”.

According to *Encyclopedia of Applied Linguistics*, collocation is defined as “*multi-word unit consisting of two or*

*more words that constitute a whole unit of meaning and which particular discourse communities repeatedly use in spoken and written communication*”.

Likewise, Oxford Advanced Learners' Dictionary (2005:p293) defines collocation as “*a combination of words in a language that happens very often and more frequently than would happen by chance: 'responding success' and 'crying shame' are English collocations*” words.

Based on the previous definitions, in this study, collocation is defined as “*the tendency of certain words in a language to combine with one another, as against others that do not have this tendency of coming together and the meaning of which can be deduced from at least one of the components of the collocation*”, (Benson, 1986 in Brashi, 2005).

#### **RATIONALE OF THE STUDY:**

Season of Migration to the North (1969) is Tayeb Salih's best – known work. It was declared “the most important novel of the twentieth century” by the Arab Literary Academy in Damascus in 2004, and forms part of university curricula in a number of countries. It has been translated into more than thirty languages and has been discussed in high-profile theoretical works such as Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's *Death of a Discipline*. This global interest in *Season of Migration to the North* grows from the novel's globally-oriented themes and expressions. In comparison with Salih's other long works of fiction, *The Wedding of Zein* and *Bandar shah*, *Season of Migration to the North* is remarkable both for its use of classical Arabic in both narration and dialogue, and for its intertextual relationships with works of Western writers such as Shakespeare, Conrad and Freud.

### OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

The overarching objective of the present study is to systematically illustrate the particular strategies with which translation can transmit, strengthen and manipulate lexical collocations for their receivers. The study also aims to investigate how translators deal with literary lexical collocations when translating them into the target language.

Further, the present study also aims to determine how literary lexical collocations are translated and to discover whether translators adopt strategies that reflect their collocational knowledge. Finally, the study seeks to find out whether the target text has fulfilled the linguistic and stylistic characteristic of the lexical collocations or not.

### STUDY QUESTIONS:

Given these aims, the present study focuses on answering specific questions, which can help unveil similarities and differences between the original lexical collocations and their translations. These questions are:

1. What happens to literary lexical collocations when they are translated?
2. What are the translation strategies adopted in translating the literary lexical collocations (the selected data) from Arabic into English?
3. To what extent, does the translator succeed in conveying the ST literary lexical collocations?

### METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY:

This study draws its data corpus from Tayeb Salih's *Season of Migration to the North* (1967), translated by Denys Johnson Davies. This novel heavily hinges on the use of literary devices, imagery, unique language and styles, emotive overtones and connotations, presenting ideas, customs and beliefs deeply rooted into the Arab culture.

Researchers believe that the focus of the novel in this study is a good representation of the refined contemporary Arabic literary style, cultural beliefs, political situations, cognitive attitudes, and the social customs and traditions of the Arab world. Therefore, it is interesting from a translational viewpoint as it can be an excellent source of literary, ideological and cultural issues. It is worth mentioning that the author is a renowned pioneer in contemporary Arabic literature, and is among the most remarkable writers in the Arab world.

In this study, a descriptive quantitative study of the translation of literary lexical collocations from English into Arabic has been used. It makes use of techniques of corpus linguistics to account for frequencies of occurrence and translation strategies. Moreover, the study aims at analysing the translation of literary lexical collocations. The data were chosen from chapter one and chapter two.

Lexical collocations were specified in the chosen chapters and then verified by consulting *The BBI Dictionary of English Word Combinations* (Benson et al., 1997) and Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (1995). The Arabic collocations were also checked and verified in *Dar El-ilm's Dictionary of Collocations* (Ghazala, 2007), *Elias Modern Dictionary: English – Arabic* (Elias. A. Elias & ED.E.Elias, 1988) and *Al- Mawred: English – Arabic Dictionary* (25<sup>th</sup> ed) (Balabakki, 1991).

As mentioned above, this study aspires to examine various lexical collocations (*verb + noun* and *noun + adjective* collocations) along with their translations. In addition, to perceive how the translator dealt with these collocations, how he represented them in the TT and what kind of strategies he adopted in the translating process.



Moreover, these lexical collocations and their translations were checked for their idiomaticity, stylistic and cultural features. Then, they were categorized according to the translation strategy that was adopted, i.e. whether they translated literally, by calquing, or by other strategies, using the strategies proposed by Vinay and Darbelnet (1995). Direct translation includes borrowing, calque and literal translation. Oblique translation consists of modulation, transposition, equivalence and adaptation (Munday, 2012).

The collocations translated by each strategy were identified and ranked according to their frequency. The most used strategy is determined as the most frequent strategy used in translating collocations in these two chapters. Finally, conclusions are drawn to provide a general and informative view of strategies manipulated to translate collocations as well as to provide recommendations for how to deal with them.

#### LITERATURE REVIEW:

Extensive survey of research and studies were conducted on translation of collocations. Most of these research and studies on translation of collocations were carried out empirically from error analysis perspectives by giving translation texts to students and translators to translate them from English into Arabic and vice versa and then analysing the errors to find out problems translation may have encountered (Farghal & Shunnaq 1992; Brashi, 2005; Abdul- Alfattah, 2011).

However, the translation of collocations has been widely investigated by linguists (Newmark, 1988; Baker, 1992; Ibrahim, 2003; Bzour, 2006; Nofal, 2012). These studies

focus on the correlation between the strategies adopted by translators and the problems and difficulties encountered in the translating process. As confirmed by previous studies, resorting to different translational strategies is considered to be a solution for handling translation problems.

Newmark (1988) has acknowledged the problems, which translators have to face at different levels and proposed certain strategies, which would help translators overcome these problems. To Newmark, finding the appropriate collocations in translation is a “*continual struggle*”. Moreover, Newmark suggested a number of methods of translation based on understanding of strategies. These strategies are: word-for- word translation, literal translation, faithful translation, semantic translation, adaptation, free translation, idiomatic translation and communicative translation.

On the other hand, Baker (1992) has referred to translation strategies as description of handling “*various types of non- equivalence*”. Baker has also listed eight strategies of coping with lack of equivalence at a phrase level. These strategies include superordinate by using a more general word or by more neutral or less expressive word. Cultural substitution translation, which uses a loan word with a subsequent explanation such as footnotes; by deleting information and omission. Finally, translators can lengthen the target text paraphrase.

Furthermore, Baker (1992) believes that the main challenge which the translator faces while translating collocations, idioms, and fixed expressions is achieving an equivalence above the word level.

In addition, she maintains translators should work hard to reduce translation loss to an acceptable minimum by knowing which feature in the SL should be valued and which can be ruled out.

Ibrahim (2003) surveyed the major problems of translating English collocations into Arabic and the possible solutions embodied in the translational strategies. He also discussed different translational strategies implemented as mechanisms to render collocations to TL readers more accurately, and naturally. These strategies are: substitutability, expansion, contraction transposability, predictability and lexical collocation cohesion.

Bzour (2006) explored the use of collocations as a measure of translation quality and of the translator's competence. She also studied the significance of using more acceptable and suitable TL collocations in translation. Bzour also assessed the quality of two translated works of the same novel (*Jane Eyre*). Furthermore, she evaluated the translators' competence by implementing the required collocations, which may convey the intended message to the TL reader.

In the same line, Nofal (2012) conducted a comparative study to analyze collocations in both English and Arabic. The aim of the study was to correlate collocations with lexicography, translation, interpretation and teaching and learning process. He also studied the inappropriate handling of collocations in the curriculum and the poor treatment of collocations in most English and Arabic monolingual and bilingual dictionaries.

#### DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS:

This part of the study intends to discuss and analyse the translation of collocations extracted from the data of this study (the two chapters) as well as the translation

strategies used in the translating process. Examples were cited from ST collocations along with their translated equivalents.

It is needless to say translators approach collocations differently. They manipulate numerous various strategies to render them. This relies on the type of the source text collocation and the type of the target language collocation at the translator's disposal. Therefore, choices made range from literal or idiomatic to non-collocation and paraphrase.

Having reviewed the lexical collocations in the above mentioned chapters, it is clear that the translator has manipulated a number of strategies in the translating process in order to achieve his goals. These identified strategies in the data of the study were as follows:

#### 1. Idiomatic approach:

Idiomatic translation means opting for a typical target language collocation that is chosen as an equivalent for the source language collocation. The collocation خوار ثور is translated into *the lowing of an ox*. Idiomatic means that the chosen translation is an established target language equivalent. Other examples of idiomatic translation were: هديق حمار، هديق القماري، ظلام الليل، انين السواقي وجيوش الاحتلال. They were translated into *the braying of a donkey, the cooing of the turtle-dove, darkness of night, the thrusting of the water-wheel and armies of occupation* respectively.

#### 2. Literal approach:

A literal approach (word for word) tends to be used in dealing with many collocations. It could be successful in some cases, for example, the collocation ضفة النهر was translated into *the river bank*. This translation is successful because the context allows this kind of translation.

Other examples are: ظهر الثور، صفحات بيضاء، يحملون احلاما، ارها بوضوح ودفعني بعنف which were translated into *they dream dreams, I see her clearly, pushing me violently, the back of an ox and white pages.*

3. Non- collocations into collocations:

There are some contexts and situations where translation decisions made by translators are a change from a non- collocation (one word) to a collocation. This is due to availability of TL equivalent and the translation is basically a combination of words rather than one word. The examples are: تأوه، اعزي، اهنتي، يثمر، اعجوبة، نحنحة، تعكر، الأدب و الطمأنينة which were translated into *a faint cough, a shadow of displeasure, formal politeness, a feeling of assurance, a deep sigh, to pay my condolences, offer my congratulation and a veritable miracle.* It seems the contexts and how to deal with the collocations make translators render one word into a collocation. Therefore, the context and the structure of the text allow this kind of translation.

4. Calque:

Calque translation is rendering a collocation by direct translation of its elements. It means that the source language structure is translated by a literal translation. Examples are شوق عظيم، رجل وسيم، افكار كثيرة into *a great yearning, a handsome man, strange thoughts and many horizons.* Calque translation provides a formal equivalence in the target text.

5. Modulation:

In this study, the focus on modulation is at the lexical level. Modulation means

to change the semantic and the point of view of the collocation. It can be obligatory modulation in case of يكونوا قدوة حسنة which was translated into *to set a good example.* On the other hand, optional modulation means to choose one alternative out of two (or more) translations available in the target language. For example, الحياة الطيبة was translated into *life is good.* The translation could also be *good life.* Both translations are successful, but this choice goes back to the preferred structure in the target language. Other examples are الحياة غالية ام رخيصة، قلبي متفائل، عينيه الزرقاوين، لم اعزي، تنهمر دموعي وقمة الجبل which were translated into *life is expensive or cheap, my heart is optimistic, blueness of hid eyes, I spilled no tears.*

6. Equivalence:

Equivalence is used here as a translation strategy to refer to selection of an established collocation or expression in the target language. Equivalence can be said to seek dynamic equivalence for source text collocations. The collocation is translated into *it gives and it takes.* This translation is the actual collocation used in the target language. Other examples are كلبا ينبح، طائرا يغرد، ومزيج من القوة والضعف which were translated into *a dog bark, a bird sing and combination of strength and weakness.*

Explicitation:

This strategy is defined as the process of introducing information into the target language, which is present only implicitly in the source language, but which can be derived from the context or the situation (Klaudy, 2001 cited in Alsughair, 2007).

Explicitation is used in translation to make up for the loss of meaning or to have a more target language- oriented structure. Moreover, explicitation is also used to make implicit information in ST explicit in the TT. Examples of explicitation are translation of *تثمر، تأوه، ونحنة* into *to bear fruit, a deep sigh, formal politeness and a faint cough*.

#### 7. Transposition:

Transposition means changing the word class in a way that does not change the meaning of the message. Further, transposition is divided into two types: obligatory transposition and optional transposition. In obligatory transposition, a change in the word class is needed to maintain the actual meaning of the ST message and to provide a collocation which has more target language character. One example is translation of *اتصنع التواضع* into *an act of humility*, where the source text *verb* was translated into *a noun*. This seems to be obligatory since maintaining the structure of the original collocation would produce an unacceptable TT.

However, optional transposition is where change or non- change of the word class does not affect the meaning. The collocation *أهنئي* was translated into *offer my congratulation*, where the verb *offer* can be deleted and the noun *congratulation* could be changed into a verb to *congratulate* and still the translation can be acceptable and successful.

#### 8. Paraphrase:

This strategy is used to give an explanation of the utterance or expression in the target language in order to produce the actual meaning of the statement in the source language

expression. The collocation *ضجوا حولي* was translated into *made a great fuss*. This translation adds more explanation according to the context.

#### CONCLUSIONS:

As mentioned earlier, this study aims at investigating the translation of lexical collocations in Season of Migration to the North. The data of this study was collected from the first two chapters of the novel. Collocations were extracted and checked using The BBI Dictionary and Dar El-ilm's Dictionary of Collocations. Then, the lexical Collocations were discussed and analyzed according to the translation strategies.

The study endeavored to answer the above mentioned questions. The answer to the first question (What happens to literary lexical collocations when they are translated) is that they reproduced either idiomatically or literally in translation. They are also modified using modulation, transposition, explicitation, equivalence or paraphrasing. In some cases, non- collocations end up as collocations in the target text.

The answer to the second question (What are the translation strategies adopted in translating the literary lexical collocations (the selected data) from Arabic into English?) is that translators opt for many strategies including calque, modulation, equivalence, deletion, explicitation, transposition and paraphrasing. They also resort to literal and idiomatic approaches.

The answer to the third question (To what extent, does the translator succeeds in conveying the ST literary lexical collocations?) is that translators deal with collocations differently and opt for different strategies when translating them.



This depends on the kind of the source text and the kind of the target language collocation, which the translator could call up. The choices made by translators range from literal to idiomatic rendition.

It goes without saying that there are no fixed translation strategies, which translators can adopt when rendering SL lexical collocations into Arabic. While some strategies are helpful, others turn out to be of little avail. Consequently, the translator may utilize particular strategies which can be asserted to be effective where connotations and implied meanings are significant.

In the light of the findings of the study, it's recommended that:

- 1.The translation of collocations in literary texts should avoid literal translation as much as possible.
- 2.Other strategies, which help producing dynamic equivalence with literary style in TL should be used.
- 3.The most indispensable strategy dealing with collocations is the one which is concerned with conveying the implied meanings of the message and not merely with words.
- 4.Other types of texts such as business, legal language and science need to be investigated.

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