Techniques for Interpreting Abstruse English Collocations into Arabic

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Abstract: *This study is part three and follows the other two previous already published parts of the project. Since part one of the study that was entitled Techniques for Interpreting English Proverbs into Arabic and was published in International Journal of Language and Literary Studies, IJLLS, Volume 1, Issue 1, 2019, part two of the study was entitled Techniques for Interpreting Abstruse English Idioms into Arabic and was published in this honorable peer-reviewed journal, Volume 8 Issue 12, December 2019. And now this is the third part of the collection. Part four is going to be entitled Techniques for Interpreting Abstruse English Phrasal Verbs into Arabic. Part five is going to be entitled Techniques   Abstruse English Fixed Expressions into Arabic which is going to be the final to complete the series. By and large, collocations simply means a group of two or more words that are almost always used together. Here are some examples: Heavy rain. Big decision. Break a* habit. *Make a mistake. It would sound strange and odd if someone said,* *huge rain /*large decision /*finish a habit or *do a mistake. *Most people would understand the meaning, but native speakers would never combine words in that way. We would not say, for instance, "I hope to hear about the *large decision later today." The point is that some words go together in English while others do not. There is no* grammatical *reason why. And that sometimes makes collocations difficult for English learners. If you don't know, for example, that big decision is a collocation, it is not so easy to* guess. *Consequently, collocations refer totwo or more words that often systematically go together, such as* light sleeper *or* early riser. *It is said* Strong coffee *but not* **powerful coffee** *since the word strong rather than powerful collocates with the word coffee. They are very much alike of idioms. But they are structurally and slightly different of idioms, viz. in the aspect of translation and the process of interpreting depending on the various cultures around the globe. These conventional sequences are instantly recognizable to native speakers of a language, but remain difficult for second / foreign language learners to acquire and use properly. This study investigates the techniques of interpreting abstruse English collocations into Arabic. The data of the study are collected and analyzed from a number of specific and well-known dictionaries. They are :Dar EL-IlM's Dictionary of Collocations: A Comprehensive English-Arabic Dictionary of Accuracy of Word Combination and Usage, Longman Dictionary of English Language and Culture, Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English and A Dictionary of English idioms : English – Arabic. The data analysis of this study reveals that there are many techniques can be used to help interpreters while interpreting English collocations into Arabic. These techniques are selected and graded according their own priorities.*

Keywords: Technique, Interpreter, Equivalence, Collocation

1. Introduction

The term 'collocation' has its roots in a Latin verb 'collocare' which means "to set in order / to arrange" Hsu(2007, p. 109), Mahvelati & Mukundan, (2012, p. 205).

Whereas Longman Dictionary of English Language and Culture (1992,p.243) defines collocation as "The way in which some words regularly collocate with others. It is a habitual combination of words which sounds natural", Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (2005,p.281) refers to the term as " A combination of words in a language that happens very often and more frequently than would happen by chance. It indicates to two or more words often being used together". In other words, the latter definition, i.e. of Oxford dictionary agrees with the former one of Longman, in the way that both refer to the process as a combination of words, but the Oxford's definition adds that it is not necessarily the process of combination to take place between just two words, rather it can be used between more than two words.

Yan (2010, p.794) defines the term as "the fellowship of one word". Crystal (2008,p.68) defines the process as "the habitual of the co-occurrence of individual lexical items". Crystal is in agreement with Halliday & Matthiessen (2004, p.577) and Lewis (1997, p.51) by using the word co-occurrence in their definition. Whereas Halliday &

Matthiessen (2004, p.577) term collocation as the co-occurrence tendency of items which are associative, Lewis (1997, p.51)indicates to collocation as a predictable co-occurrence of lexical items such as *fast food*, *human errors, do homework, make friends* etc. According to Herbst (1996,p.380)"Collocations are seen as a type of word combinations, most commonly as one that is fixed to some degree but not completely". Regarding the process of interpreting, Dickins, Hervey and Higgins (2002, p.71) describe collocation as "an occurrence of one word in close proximity with another". Ghazala's definition is in line with Herbst's definition in using the word combination. To quote Ghazala "A combination of two or more words that always occur together consistently in different texts and contexts."(2008, p. 106)

In addition, Ghazala (2007,p.6)assures that the meaning of systematic combination is not necessarily to mean a compulsory combination, rather this process is a convention spontaneously carried out by various speech communities around the whole world. Moreover, he indicates that one collocation in one language, English as an example, may have up to five equivalences in the other language, such as Arabic. To support his opinion, Ghazala (2007,p.7) gives the example of the English collocation *good reason* may be interpreted into Arabic as follows: سبب قوي / سبب وجيه / سبب منطقي / سبب معقول / سبب مقبولwhich can be literally rendered into English as follows :acceptable reason / reasonable reason / logical reason / valid reason and strong reason

respectively. Furthermore, Ghazala(2007,p.9) indicates that it is not an easy process to document the references regarding Arabic collocations, this is so due to two basic reasons. Firstly due to the lack of necessary references of Arabic collocations, and secondly due to the differences of Arabic bibliographies since Arabic has expanded and contained many and various dialects which itself had contained various dialectical Arabic collocations. But he goes on by arguing that does not mean that there are no documented references in Arabic regarding collocation, on the contrary, there are three basic original documented references that contain Standard Arabic collocations. They are as follows:

1) The Holy Qur'an. The book of Muslims that contains many graceful and attractive collocations which are being used in standard Arabic and even in many dialects around the Arab world.
2) Sunna. The narratives of Muhammad, the prophet, peace be upon him, which contains many Arabic collocations still be used at our present time.
3) Old and new Arabic dictionaries.

Ghazala (2008, p.107) encourages to finding a suitable equivalent collocation in TL. That means, he calls for a rendering of a collocation from one language into another ready-made collocation into the target language. To quote him "an English collocation is better be rendered into an appropriate collocation in Arabic".

But an open question is asked here which is : How English collocations, viz. the abstruse ones, can be interpreted into Arabic? In other words: What are the applicable specific techniques that can be operated in order to help professional interpreters to translate abstruse English collocations into Arabic orally? This paper tries to give an answer for this open question.

Why do Second / Foreign Language Learners Need to Learn Collocations Instead of Individual Words?

It is of paramount significance to indicate that collocations arevery important to use by native speakers and to learn by second /foreign language learners as well. Consequently, collocations are a must to be acquired by native speakers as well as to be learnt by foreign / second language learners for the following reasons:

1) They will help you understand how to use vocabulary in a sentence correctly.
2) Your language will sound more natural to be produced and more easily to be understood.
3) Second / foreign language learners will have alternative and richer ways of expressing themselves.
4) It is easier and more useful for our brains to remember and use language in chunks or blocks rather than as single words. Since many people learning a second / foreign language, studied numerous hours to learn thousands of vocabulary. They understand the meaning of a single word by learning it from a dictionary, but in the end, they still have a problem using the word in a sentence, English is a case in point.
5) If second /foreign language learners master collocations, their language will be more idiomatic and more graceful,

that is, more similar to the way it is spoken and written by native speakers.

Types of Collocations
Collocation can be classified into seven types. They are as follows:
adverb + adjective: *completely satisfied* (NOT * ~~downright~~ satisfied)
adjective + noun: *excruciating pain* (NOT *excruciating ~~joy~~)
noun + noun: *a surge of anger* (NOT *a ~~rush~~ of anger)
noun + verb:*lions roar* (NOT *lions ~~shout~~)
verb + noun: *commit suicide* (NOT * ~~undertake~~ suicide)
verb + expression with preposition: *burst into tears* (NOT * ~~blow up in~~ tears)
verb + adverb: *wave frantically* (NOT * wave ~~feverishly~~)

Let us give more examples to the seven classifications already mentioned to illustrate the point.
1. adverb + adjective
- Invading that country was an *utterly stupid* thing to do.
- We entered a *richly decorated* room.
- Are you *fully aware* of the implications of your action?
2. adjective + noun
- The doctor ordered him to take *regular exercises.*
- The Titanic sank on its *maiden voyage*.
- He was writhing on the ground in *excruciating pain*.
3. noun + noun
- Let's give Mr. Jones a *round of applause*.
- The *ceasefire agreement* came into effect at 11am.
- I'd like to buy two *bars of soap*, please.
4. noun + verb
- The *lion* started *to roar* when it heard the *dog barking*.
- *Snow was falling* as our *plane took off*.
- The *bomb went off* when he started the car engine.
5. verb + noun
- The prisoner was hanged for *committing a murder*.
- I always try to *do my homework* in the morning, after *making my bed.*
- He has been asked to *give a presentation* about his work.
6. verb + expression with preposition
- We had to return home because we *had run out of money.*
- At first her eyes *filled with horror*, and then she *burst into tears.*
- Their behaviour was enough to *drive anybody to crime.*
7. verb + adverb
- She *placed* her keys *gently* on the table and sat down.
- Mary *whispered softly* in John's ear.
- I *vaguely remember* that it was growing dark when we left.

2. Problem Statement

It must be noted that the process of interpreting is much more difficult compared with the process of translating. Whereas a translator, while doing the process, has more time and has necessary procedures such as general and specific paper and electronic mono-lingual and bi-lingual dictionaries to consult and also has enough time and ability to use digital translation of unlimited programs in order to

save time and effort, moreover, he / she has the ability to use Google search, Google images for the process of translation by illustration and even he / she can consult Google translate and then doing the necessary editing in order to enhance and improve his / her target text, TT, the interpreter suffers of lack of all these merits enjoyed by the translator. The interpreter, while doing the process, has no enough time, no necessary tools such as dictionaries of all types of the papers and electronic devices, no Google search, no Google image, no Google translate and no any other instruments that can offer him / her any help. His / her only two weapons are firstly to be speedy in order to follow up the speaker and secondly to have a great memory to rely on during the process. The same happens here, in interpreting collocations, which is more difficult, compared with translating them. And to make the matter worse, some collocations are very difficult and abstruse in translating by using the already mentioned procedures, so how about in case of interpreting them without using all these already mentioned weapons?

The problem of this study is to find an answer to the following question: What are the suggested applicable techniques which might help professional interpreters in interpreting abstruse English collocations into Arabic? This paper tries to investigate an answer for this problem.

The Applicable Proposed Techniques for Interpreting Abstruse English Collocations into Arabic. Six applicable techniques have been suggested by the researcher in order to help professional interpreters to interpret English collocations into Arabic. These techniques are selected and graded according their own priorities. They are listed as follows:
1) The technique of finding a literal ready-made TL equivalence.
2) The technique of finding a semi-literal ready-made TL equivalence.
3) The technique of paraphrasing.
4) The technique of partial omission.
5) The technique of combination of techniques.
6) The technique of literal simultaneous interpreting of SL collocations into TL but this could be carried out as a last resort.

It should be noted that since the process of rendering here is interpreting, not translating, in which the former is much more difficult than the latter, all these proposed techniques should be worked out in a fast speed and the interpreter should take the alternatives above so quickly in his / her mind.

3. Methodology

3.1 Data Collection

This paper follows the qualitative approach for collecting and analyzing data. It investigates the techniques of interpreting abstruse English collocations into Arabic. The data of the study are collected and analyzed from a number of specific and well-known accredited dictionaries. They are :*Dar EL-IlM's Dictionary of Collocations : A Comprehensive English-Arabic Dictionary of Accuracy of Word Combination and Usage, Longman Dictionary of*

English Language and Culture, *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* and *A Dictionary of English idioms : English – Arabic.* The data analysis of this study reveals that there are many techniques can be applied to help professional interpreters for interpreting English collocations into Arabic. These techniques are selected and graded according their own priorities.

3.2 Data Analysis

Since an English collocation is best be rendered into a collocation in Arabic, the first and the most important applicable technique suggested by the researcher is using a literal ready-made TL equivalence. As already mentioned, this technique should be given a priority. For example, the English collocation *Brain Drain*, which means the loss a country suffers when many of its scientists, teachers, and other skilled and professional workers leave it and go to a country where there are better wages and conditions of work. (Mowafi, et al, 1985, P.32). Its literal ready-made equivalence in Arabic is هجرة الادمغة / العقول.(hijaratu al admegha / alo'qool), literally means the migration of the minds. Another example, the English collocation *lawful act,* which means an action that is allowed by the law, has its TL counterpart in Arabic which is إجراء قانوني. (egraqanoni).

But in case the first technique does not work or the interpreter forgets it, then he / she can go to the second technique which is finding a semi-literal ready-made TL equivalence for the required collocation. In other words, the SL English collocation can be interpreted into Arabic by finding a ready-made TL collocation slightly different in form of the SL collocation. For example, the SL English collocation *Pay a visit* can not be literally interpreted into Arabic * يدفع زيارة , because in Arabic a visit can not be payed. Consequently, the better semi-literal ready-made equivalence in Arabic is يقوم بزيارة / يزور (yaqoomobezyaraten / yazoro) literally means to visit. Likewise, *to make a fire*, *to make a speech*, *to make a promise* and *to make a decision*,all these collocations can not be interpreted into Arabic literally like: يصنع *يصنع نارا *يصنع قرارا *يصنع وعدا ، *خطبة ، because these are unacceptable collocations in Arabic. The acceptable Arabic equivalences for them are : ، يشعل نارا ، يلقي خطبة ، يقطع وعدا يتخذ قرارا (yatakhedoqararan, yaqata'wwa'dan, yolqeekotabatan , yosh'lonaran) respectively. Moreover, Ghazala (2008, P.946) offers the example of *Infinite Patience* as a case in point, and its best TL Arabicisصبر أيوب literally means Ayoob patience.It is a religious collocation in Arabic, since Ayoob, in Holy Qur'an, is a prophet, when God tested him, he represented a great patience.

Again, in case the second technique does not work, the interpreter can move directly to the third technique which is paraphrasing. This technique is similar to the second one, the only difference between them is that, whereas the process of interpreting via the second technique takes place by partly changing the TL Arabic collocation, in the third technique the change is carried out completely in the TL. To make the point clear, I give the example of the English collocation *Smell a rat* , which is said when something goes wrong, here literal equivalence will never work, since rat is

not crucial to the message, its acceptable TL Arabic equivalence is في الأمرين (fi alamrena). The point is that all SL English words completely changed while interpreting them into Arabic. Furthermore, this technique of paraphrasing can also be carried out by extending the TL Arabic vocabulary from one word into two or more. Take the following example, The Palestinian case is the *crux* in the Middle East. The SL English word *crux* can be paraphrased and extended into two words in Arabic as جوهر الصراع (Jawharaseera') literally means (essence of the conflict), so the acceptable TL Arabic for the previous SL sentence is : إن القضية الفلسطينية هي جوهر الصراع في الشرق الأوسط . . (Ghanim, 2015, P.12).Another example for this technique: The patient *ravedatthe nurses*. The verb *rave* here means to speak wildly, the best Arabic collocation via the technique of paraphrasing is هاج و ماج (hagawamaga). (Ghazala, 2007, P.8). Another example the English collocation *As easy as ABC can be paraphrased into Arabic as* أسهل من شرب الماء. *(ashal minShorb alma)* literally means (easier than drinking water).

In case the third technique of paraphrasing does not work, the interpreter should not hesitate to use the fourth technique which is the technique of partial omission. This technique can be applied when the collocations include semantic repetition. By semantic repetition, I mean the repetition of words that have the same or almost the same meaning of the SL collocation. In such a case the interpreter can delete the repetitive words. For example, Our students have *creative minds* and *inventive energies.* لدى طلابنا عقول مبدعة وطاقات خلاقةThe interpreter may interpret it as our students have *creative minds,* and omit the second part of the collocation. Or he / she may interpret it as our students have creativity. Interpreting only one collocation of this phrase did not mean that the intended meaning was not conveyed. On the contrary, interpreters, viz. simultaneous interpreters succeeded in transferring the gist of these repetitive expressions. Another example, the English word Amaze يذهل and Surprise يدهش in the following example: The students *amazed and surprised* their teacher. Since both words of amaze and surprise mean almost the same thing, the interpreter can omit one and keep the other and the meaning is still conveyed. The same story takes place in the English collocation: Its *security and stability*…., the interpreter can keep one and omit the other or he / she can combine the two words in one that refers to the same meaning like the English word "*destabilize*". Interpreting by merging the words that mean almost the same thing does not affect the ability to convey the intended meaning; on the contrary, it saves time allowing interpreters to hear the next part of the speech. It should be noted again all these techniques must be worked out so quickly and automatically in the interpreter's mind.

Again, in case the fourth technique does not work or the simultaneous interpreter can not remember it, he / she may spontaneously rely on the fifth technique which is combination of techniques. This means that all the previous techniques already mentioned and discussed can be adopted by the interpreters for the same speech he / she is dealing with.

The final technique which is literal simultaneous interpreting of SL collocations into TL is arrived at as a last resort. Of course, the TL Arabic resulted from this technique may be ugly and not graceful but at least it should be communicative. I think to give an ugly but communicative equivalence is better than misunderstanding the SL message and give wrong equivalence and say things the speaker/s did not say or mean. Nida and Taber(1982)refer that "We are not content merely to translate so that the average receptor is likely to understand the massage; rather we aim to make certain that such person is very unlikely to misunderstand it". In addition, sometimes literal interpreting of SL collocations works well. Take the following example, He was *in a trouble*. Of course, it is better be interpreted by using another ready-made Arabic collocation which is كان في حيص بيص (kana fi haisbais) but also can be literally interpreted into Arabic (كان في مشكلة / ورطة). The point is that applying the first five techniques must be given a priority and the final one is to be applied as a last resort. The table below clarifies ready-made collocations in TL Arabic and their literal collocations. Notice, though the ready-made collocations are better and more graceful, the literal collocations are still workable and communicative.

Ghazala, (2007, P.8)

Ready-Made Collocations	Literal Collocations	Back Translation of Literal Collocations	Literal Translation of Ready-Made Collocations
أوهن من بيت العنكبوت	ضعيف جدا	Very weak	Weaker than the house of the spider.
ثابت القلب و القدم	شجاع	Brave	Fixed in heart and foot.
سليط اللسان	فاجر	Dissolute	Has an oily Tongue
هزيم الرعد	صوت الرعد	Sound of thunder	Thunder defeater
هزيمة نكراء	هزيمة كبيرة	A big defeat	A detestable defeat
يناصب العداء	يعادي	To attack	To oppose
اقضى مضجعه	أقلقه	He made him worried	

Note: Two points are to be noted. Firstly, the literal translation of ready-made collocations in the table above are not necessarily perfect equivalences, but they are put just to show to non-Arabic readers the differences between ready-made collocations and literal collocations in Arabic. Secondly, to show non-Arabic readers how literal collocations, though are not graceful, are still workable and communicative.

4. Conclusion

This paper might be concluded by refereeing to six basic techniques that can be applied in interpreting English collocations into Arabic simultaneously. These techniques are as follows:
1) The technique of finding a literal ready-madeTL equivalence.
2) The technique of finding a semi-literal ready-made TL equivalence.
3) The technique of paraphrasing.
4) The technique of partial omission.

5) The technique of combination of techniques.
6) The technique of literal simultaneous interpreting of SL collocations into TL but this could be carried out as a last resort.

It must be noted that all these applicable techniques are systematically selected and graded according their own priorities.

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