

## The problems encountered by English language students of Azzytuna University in translating English collocations into Arabic

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### المشاكل التي تواجه طلبة اللغة الإنجليزية بجامعة الزيتونة في ترجمة المتلازمات اللفظية من اللغة الإنجليزية إلى اللغة العربية

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#### Abstract:

In life usage of language, people use collocations in their written as well as spoken language. Collocations are very important to produce correct and understandable language, thus collocations became the main concern of many researches. Therefore, this study aims to investigate the challenges encountered by English language students at Al-Qasi'a Collage when translating English collocations into Arabic. The experiment will involve eighteen sixth-semester students of English department during Spring 2025. These students, who are native Arabic speakers, are studying English as a foreign language. The research methodology includes a test comprising sixteen common English collocations, which the students are required to translate within one hour. The findings indicate a lack of proficiency among the participants in comprehending and translating English collocations into Arabic. The study also seeks to gain insights into the students' understanding of collocations and the difficulties they encounter when translating different types of collocations. The research will assess their awareness by examining their translations of English collocations into Arabic. The difficulties encountered in translating collocations were attributed to a variety of causes, including linguistic and cultural barriers, mistranslations of collocation definitions, and a tendency to rely on literal translations and word-for-word approaches. Notably, the findings suggested that the effectiveness of the university's translation education framework might play a role in the difficulties encountered in collocation translation, potentially highlighting deficiencies in the curriculum, teaching approaches, or student resources in terms of collocation translation abilities. The results highlight the main reasons for students' translation errors in collocations: a tendency to use literal translation and insufficient consideration of collocations specific to another culture and language. The key conclusion drawn is that collocations involve both linguistic and cultural aspects and go beyond mere word substitution in translation.

**Keywords:** collocations, literal translation, written and spoken language, university's translation education.

#### المخلص:

في سياق الحياة اليومية، يستخدم الناس المتلازمات اللفظية في لغتهم المكتوبة والمنطوقة. وتعد المتلازمات اللفظية بالغة الأهمية لإنتاج لغة صحيحة ومفهومة، ولذلك أصبحت الترابطات اللفظية الشغل الشاغل للعديد من الباحثين. لذا، تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى دراسة التحديات التي يواجهها طلاب اللغة الإنجليزية في كلية القصبة عند ترجمة المتلازمات اللفظية الإنجليزية إلى اللغة العربية. ستشمل التجربة ثمانية عشر طالباً من قسم اللغة الإنجليزية في الفصل الدراسي السادس خلال فصل الربيع 2025. هؤلاء الطلاب، وهم ناطقون أصليون بالعربية، يدرسون اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية. تتضمن منهجية البحث اختباراً يتضمن ستة عشر متلازمة لفظية شائعة في اللغة الإنجليزية، يُطلب من الطلاب ترجمتها خلال ساعة واحدة. تشير النتائج إلى ضعف في إتقان المشاركين في فهم المتلازمات اللفظية الإنجليزية وترجمتها إلى العربية. كما تسعى الدراسة إلى فهم الطلاب للمتلازمات اللفظية والصعوبات التي تواجههم عند ترجمة أنواع مختلفة منها. سيقم البحث مدى وعيهم من خلال دراسة ترجماتهم للمتلازمات اللفظية الإنجليزية إلى اللغة العربية. وقد حددت الصعوبات التي واجهتها ترجمة التراكيب اللفظية إلى مجموعة متنوعة من الأسباب، بما في ذلك الحواجز اللغوية والثقافية، والتفسيرات الخاطئة لتعريفات التراكيب اللفظية، والميل إلى الاعتماد على الترجمات الحرفية والنهج الحرفي. تجدر الإشارة إلى أن النتائج أشارت إلى أن فعالية إطار تعليم الترجمة في الجامعة قد تلعب دوراً في الصعوبات التي تواجه ترجمة المتلازمات اللفظية، مما قد يبرز أوجه القصور في المناهج الدراسية، أو مناهج التدريس، أو موارد الطلاب فيما يتعلق بقدراتهم على ترجمة المتلازمات اللفظية. وتُبرز النتائج الأسباب الرئيسية لأخطاء الطلاب في ترجمة المتلازمات اللفظية: الميل إلى الترجمة الحرفية، وعدم مراعاة المتلازمات اللفظية الخاصة بثقافات ولغة أخرى بشكل كافٍ. والاستنتاج الرئيسي المستخلص هو أن المتلازمات اللفظية تنطوي على جوانب لغوية وثقافية، وتتجاوز مجرد استبدال الكلمات في الترجمة.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** المتلازمات اللفظية، الترجمة الحرفية، اللغة المكتوبة والمنطوقة، تعليم الترجمة في الجامعة.

## 1. Introduction

Collocation is the way certain words typically occur together, that is, when two or more words are combined in a distinct context within a language. For example, a certain verb collocates with the noun "attend a lecture." (in conjunction with another noun, such as "good and evil"); (in conjunction with an adjective, such as "black market"; etc.). It is evident that the majority of collocations consist of two words. Collocations are regarded as the most attractive aspect of languages and are very important to them. They typically appear unavoidably in texts of any kind. As a result, they are significant and crucial to translation. Students must pay close attention to Arabic collocations if they want the Arabic translation to have the same beauty as the English original.

Cultural differences can affect the nature of lexical relevance, making it difficult to learn collocations in a foreign language. Because Arabic and English have different linguistic and cultural systems, there will be numerous issues when translating collocations. Due to the fact that Arabic and English belong to distinct language families. Therefore, in addition to having diverse systems and lifestyles, they also have many varied grammars, which contributes to the quality of collocations through colloquial deduction.

Collocation refers not just to the regular pairing of specific words but also to how native speakers utilize them to create fluent speech and writing. When words are frequently heard together or regularly used in combinations, they become fixed and may no longer be altered. Consequently, any changes in the arrangement of a collocation might seem odd to native speakers. The expression "Ladies and gentlemen" serves as a prime illustration. It is often heard repeatedly, and the arrangement of each word becomes fixed and never alters again. Moreover, if the sequence of words were flipped, such as Ladies and gentlemen, it would seem awkward in the English context. This example illustrates that collocation is essential for language learners.

### 1.1 Statement of the Problem

The study looks into collocation issues and discusses collocations and their translation. The language demonstrates a propensity to collide with other vocabulary; it is structured within structures to create cohesive semantic units, where the vocabulary is examined separately and in its own manner to extract the general meaning of the lexical structure, which is frequently distinct from the meaning of the singular.

### 1.2 Research questions.

The following questions are intended to be addressed by this study:

1. What qualities do collocations have?
2. What are the challenges faced by English language learners while attempting to translate English collocations?
3. What primary factors are causing these challenges?
4. Which solutions need to be modified in order to translate English collocations into Arabic?

### 1.3 Study hypotheses

This study's hypotheses are as follows:

- 1-There are certain difficulties while translating collocations.
- 2-Collocations have unique properties.
- 3-Collocations are classified into various categories.
- 4-These challenges have practical solutions.

### 1.4 Aims of the study

This observe is restrained to research the problems that come across English language students in translating English collocations into their Arabic language. It is limited to college students who are proficient in two languages and are studying translation as part of their required coursework for obtaining a license in the English language. In addition, it aims to investigate different types of the collocations and show how to translate collocations for reaching a precise translation, the research is conducted during the academic year 2024-2025.

### 1.5 Significance of the Study

The significance of this observe stems from the reality that it explores students' consciousness of translating English collocations into their Arabic equivalence. It may also gain the scholars with Arabic history who are pursuing their fundamental License in English language. It will equip the scholars with talents that permit them to increase their understanding of collocations independently of the teacher. It may even gain translation instructors who are engaged in teaching English-Arabic translation courses. Finally, the results of this study will give syllabus designers insight into creating translation packages that could meet tertiary students' needs.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Meaning of Collocation

Collocation is derived from the Latin verb 'collocate'. It means to arrange or put in order (Martynska, 2004:2). Firth, a British linguist, was the first to use this term to describe the persistent co-occurrence of lexical terms (Firth, 1957:196).

On his part, Meyer (2009:223) he absolutely agrees that collocation is defined as words that frequently occur together, similar to the sentence. It consists of two lexical elements: firmly and agree. They frequently coexist in such settings. Some words are used to communicate opinions, such as disagree or dislike, which may follow strongly, but are less usually used than agree.

Cruse, A. (2006) identifies two main ways in which collocation is employed. The initial usage pertains to any grammatically accurate arrangement of words that connect smoothly without unease, like a *excellent performance*. For instance, we state that *excellent* 'co-occurs with' *performance*, indicating that they naturally pair together; we can also assert that *excellent* is 'a typical collocate' of *performance*. The alternative usage is to indicate a sequence of words that is compositional (as opposed to a prototype idiom, for instance), but still acts as a unit in some manner. This may just be due to their frequent co-occurrence, although the arrangement often possesses significant coherence. For instance, one or more of the individual words might possess a specific meaning that is only present in that arrangement or in a restricted group of related arrangements. The subsequent phrases serve as examples of collocations in this regard: *a high wind, high seas, high office, have a high opinion of*. In every example, the word *high* carries a specific meaning, different from the standard interpretation seen in, for example, *a high wall*

Dictionary (2003). "A combination of two or more words that always occur together consistently in different texts and contexts in language" is another possible description. In other words, a certain noun and an adjective occur together.

ثقة عمياء (blind confidence)

Simply, it relates to the way words connect with each other in language. Many collocations are made up of two words in each phrase

### 2.2 Types of Collocations in English

In English, collocations can be classified into numerous types. However, the focus here is solely on the most important ones, which are quite common in language use and are of greatest relevance to students and translators. The classification of these categories is according to Benson, Benson, and Ilson (1986) is completely grammatical, relying on grammatical groupings of word classes based on their occurrence together in language use. There are different types of collocations that presented as follows:

Nonetheless, the emphasis in this context is exclusively on the key ones, which are fairly prevalent in language application and hold significant importance for students and translators. According to Benson, Benson, and Ilson (1986), the categorization of these classifications is entirely grammatical, depending on the grammatical arrangements of word classes based on their co-occurrence in language. Various categories of collocations are outlined as follows:

#### 1. Collocations between Adjectives and Nouns.

*Idle threat, vain hope, plain truth, deep sleep.*

#### . 2. Collocations between Nouns and Nouns

*A spate of attacks, a snippet of information, round of applause.*

#### 3. Collocations between Verbs and Nouns.

*Break a leg, get the message, keep a secret.*

#### 4. Collocations between Verbs and Adverbs.

*Act rashly, speak loudly.*

#### 5. Collocations between Adverbs and Adjectives.

*happily married, fully aware, blissfully unaware*

6. Collocations between Adjective and Adjective.

*healthy and well, alive and kicking, right and proper.*

7. Collocations between Adverbs and Adverb.

*willy nilly, wholly and heartedly.*

8. Collocations between prepositions.

a. Collocations between noun and preposition.

*ignorance of, a protest against.*

b. Collocations between preposition and noun.

*on call/duty (doctor)*

c. Collocations between Adjective and preposition.

*famous for, certain about, delighted to.*

d. Collocations between Verb and preposition.

*Run out of time, filled with awe, prepared for.*

2.3. Types of Collocations in Arabic

Collocations are not only restricted to English but also to Arabic. Though the notion of collocation is more complicated in Arabic language than in English, a little has been written about this concept in Arabic. It is named in Arabic as:

المتلازمات

Al-Jahidh (1948, cited in Al-Rawi, 1994:58) admits that the idea of "collocation" refers to how one lexical item is more likely to appear with a specific item than with others, regardless of syntactic requirements. He also adds that collocation represents one of the meanings of a lexical word, to be the same as Firth's "meaning by collocation", for example he says that one of the meanings of jaoa (hunger) in Glorious Quran is its collocability with khaof (fear)

جوع و خوف

IbnJinni (1952) claims that form and meaning should be consistent. He also discusses the importance of syntactic and semantic limitations on how lexical elements are grouped together in a particular context. (Al-Rawi, 1994:59).

Al-Jurjani (1978) states the significance of the syntagmatic relationships between objects. He asserts that a lexical word can only have meaning when used in conjunction with other elements in a certain context. (Brashi, 2005:60).

Hafiz (2002, as reported in Brashi, 2005: 44-45) divides Arabic collocations into twelve categories based on lexical and grammatical trends. They are listed below:

1. Verb + noun, regardless of whether the noun serves as subject, object, or condition, e.g

يدير شركة، يسن قانونا، يلقي درساً

2. Phrase of verb + prepositional noun, e.g

إنهى من العمل

3. Phrase of Verb + prepositional noun, where the phrase acts as an adverb, e.g

بكي بحرقة

4. Phrase of Verb + noun, where the noun is in the form of an adverbial-condition, e.g.

يخوض حرباً، يأكل تمرًا

5. Phrase of Verb + conjunction + verb, e.g.

يعني من، يمد بالمال

6. Phrase of Noun + noun . e.g.

شهر العسل، الوضع الراهن، حكم الاعدام

7. Phrase of Noun + conjunction + noun, e.g.

عزم وثبات

8. Phrase of Noun + adjective, e.g.

سبات عميق، كلام فارغ

9. Phrase of Noun + prepositional noun phrase, e.g.

في منتهى الأدب

10. Phrase of Noun + preposition, e.g.

وقوف على الحقيقة

11. Phrase of Adjective + noun, e.g.

علم نافع، ماء عذب، بحر هادئ

12. Phrase of Adjective + adverbial phrase, e.g.

متالم بشدة

### 3. Problems in Translating Collocations

Since words and phrases naturally pair differently in the source language and the target language, translators have significant challenges when translating collocations. While the English word "drink" frequently collocates with "milk" and "juice," it does not usually pair with "soup," unlike the Arabic verb. This discrepancy shows how different languages have varied patterns of collocability, showing that words that pair naturally in one language might not pair in another.

The difficulty of translating collocations is exacerbated by the fact that word pairs vary greatly between languages. This intricacy is especially noticeable when translators find it difficult to spot and understand collocational patterns, particularly when the figurative meanings of the word pairings differ from the literal meanings of the individual words. One example of such difficulties is the adjective "addled," which only collocates with "egg" and not "brain" or "milk." Likewise, the word "blond" matches with "hair" to create the phrase "blond hair," highlighting the subtleties of collocational placement.

Collocation can be challenging to translate since word collocation varies from language to language. The translator may have significant difficulties if they are unable to notice and distinguish the different collocational patterns due to their unique meaning, which differs from the sum of meaning of individual words.

The arbitrary of collocations, which are controlled by language rules, is one of the major issues in translating collocations. For instance, the adjective "addled" can only be spoken with the word "egg," but not with "brain" or "milk." Another illustration would be the term "blond," which can only collocate with the word "hair" to form "blond hair."

Collocations are difficult to anticipate. When the verb pay is combined with the word visit, English speakers say "pay a visit" rather than "perform a visit." Therefore, incompatible synonyms to collocate in a language cause translation problems once more. Collocations are nothing more than the method in which particular words are frequently used together. However, because certain combinations can be hard to discern, language learners must work extra hard to master them even though they seem natural to native speakers. It is possible to transfer certain collocations from one language to another without experiencing any changes. However, there are numerous additional kinds of collocations that vary depending on the language and culture.

According to David Crystal (1987: 105) "collocations differ greatly between languages and provide a major difficulty in mastering foreign languages".

the following examples given by Husamaddin (1985:258)

To cut hair قص الشعر –

To cut one's nose جد أنفه –

To cut one's ear حلم أذنه -

To cut one's lip شرم شفته -

To cut one's eyelid شتر جفنه -

To cut one's hand جزم يده -

In these examples, 'cut' is the only verb in English that collocates with cutting different parts of the body; yet, in Arabic, there is a whole new set of verbs that collocate with each part of the body.

#### 4. Methodology

The participants of this research were eighteen Libyan students in English department, faculty of education/ Alqisiaa, at Azzytouna university participated in this study. They are sixth-semester undergraduates. English was being studied as a second language by all of the participants. To determine how well the students could translate English collocations into Arabic, a test was thought to be an effective tool. Sixteen frequent English collocations were tested. The participants were advised by the authors to ensure that they understood the objective of the test. The students were required to translate the sixteen English collocations listed below into Arabic within thirty minutes. The use of reference dictionaries were not allowed.

#### 5. Results and Discussion

**Table 1:** Students' scores of conveying the meaning of English collocations into Arabic.

No.	Collocation in English	Equivalence in Arabic	Correct Translation N (%)	Incorrect Translation N (%)
1	Wide public	جمهور واسع	14 (77%)	(23%)4
2	black market	السوق السوداء	16 (89%)	2 (11%)
3	good and evil	الخير والشر	16 (89%)	2 (11%)
4	draw a sword	يشهر / يستل سيفاً	11 (61%)	7 (39%)
5	brain drain	هجرة الأدمغة / العقول	14 (77%)	4 (23%)
6	smashing victory	انتصار ساحق	10 (56%)	8 (44%)
7	lukewarm reception	استقبال فاتر	10 (56%)	(44%)8
8	raging storm	عاصفة هوجاء	7 (39%)	11 (61%)
9	essay bank	بنك المعلومات	18 (0%)	0 (100%)
10	win confidence	كسب الثقة	11 (61%)	7 (39%)
11	exert an effort	ي بذل جهداً / مجهود	14 (77%)	4 (23%)
12	whispered softly	همس بلطف	7 (39%)	11 (61%)
13	smile proudly	ابتسم بفخر	16 (89%)	2 (11%)
14	happily married	متزوج بسعادة	8 (44%)	10 (56%)
15	alive and kicking	حي يرزق	9 (50%)	9 (50%)
16	right and proper	في احسن حال	18 (0%)	0 (100%)

Table 1 shows the students' frequencies and percentages of collocations that students translated from English into Arabic. These percentages show that the majority of participants were able to correctly translate most English collocations into Arabic.

Collocations (1, 2, 6, 7 and 8) have English grammatical structures (Adjective + noun), most of the students rendered the collocations correctly into Arabic.

77% of participants translated "wild public" as

(جمهور واسع).

which is acceptable translation in Arabic.

89% of participants translated the collocation "black market " as

(السوق السوداء).

56% of the participants translated the collocation "smashing victory" as

(انتصار ساحق).

56% of the participants translated the collocation "lukewarm reception" as

(استقبال فاتر).

And 39% of the participants translated the collocation "raging storm" as

(عاصفة هوجاء).

Collocations (3, 5, and 9) have English grammatical structure as (noun + noun), most of students rendered them correctly into Arabic except collocation 9 which posed the major difficulties for all the participants.

89% of the participants translated the collocation "good and evil " as

(الخير والشر).

77% of the participants translated the collocation "brain drain " as

(هجرة الادمغة / هجرة العقول).

100% of the students failed to find equivalence for the collocation "essay bank " and translated it into

(بنك المقالات / مكتبة المقالات).

which is not acceptable and considered wrong translation in Arabic.

Collocations (4, 10, and 11) have English grammatical structure as (verb + noun),

61% of the participants translated the collocation "draw a sword " as

(يستل / يشهر سيفاً).

61% of the participants translated the collocation "win confidence " as

(كسب ثقة).

77% of the participants translated the collocation "exert an effort " as

(ي بذل جهداً / مجهوداً).

Collocations (12, and 13) have English grammatical structure as (verb + adverb),

39% of the participants translated the collocation "whispered softly " as

(همس بلطف).

89% of the participants translated the collocation "smiled proudly " as

(ابتسم بفخر).

Collocation ( 14) have English grammatical structure as (adverb + adjective),



44% of the participants translated the collocation "happily married " as

(متزوج بسعادة).

Collocations (15, and 16) have English grammatical structure as (adjective + adjective),

50% of the participants translated the collocation "alive and kicking " as

(حي يرزق).

While 100% of the participants failed to find equivalence for the collocation "right and proper " and translated it into

(الصواب والخطأ / مناسب وملئم).

which is not acceptable and considered wrong translation in Arabic.

The study's findings showed that, for a number of reasons, the students' proficiency in translating English collocations into Arabic was somewhat low. Their translation test attempts yielded a variety of translations, the majority of which had nothing to do with the precise or even near intended meaning. Because the learners used literal translation techniques, which are ineffective for translating collocations because they fail to express the intended meaning, these issues emerged.

The result is that most students struggle to translate English collocations. They are unable to use efficient techniques to get over the challenges associated with translating collocations. Accordingly, the primary cause is that the respondents were not aware that collocations are a fundamental component of language, nor were they knowledgeable of the nature of collocations and how they are translated. As a result, students relied on literal translation, which is unable to capture the collocation's intended meaning. When translating, students must abandon literal translation and realize that learning how to successfully use English collocations is necessary.

## 6. Conclusion

It is clear that students struggle to translate English collocations into Arabic, which results in serious linguistic problems that are influenced by a number of factors. These translation issues, which impact students' proficiency and performance, are mostly caused by a lack of enthusiasm in translation as well as misinterpretations and abuses of collocations. The use of guesswork and literal translation by many students impairs their ability to translate culturally specific terminology like collocations. Furthermore, there is a clear cultural difference between Arabic and English; even when students get the meaning of a collocation, they find it difficult to properly express it in their mother tongue. Finding ways to assist students in developing their language skills is therefore crucial, as this will undoubtedly affect how well they translate. It is important to note that the translations in this study showed that English language learners often had difficulty correctly translating English collocations. A common issue was their reliance on literal translation, which led to poor translations that did not convey the intended meaning. Based on the findings, the study ends with the following recommendations to assist in translating collocations correctly or at least in a way that is acceptable.

## 7. Recommendations

The findings of the study lead to the following suggestions:

- Participation in Translation Programs: Throughout their academic careers, students ought to actively participate in a variety of translation programs. Collocations should receive particular attention, emphasizing both their significance in language and the subtleties of translating them between Arabic and other languages.
- Collocation Awareness and Training: Students must comprehend that translating collocations differs greatly from other forms of translation. They must to be trained in the best practices and strategies for translating these particular linguistic components.
- Understanding Cultural Context: Students need to gain a thorough understanding of the language and cultural context of the source material. Accurate and successful translation of collocations frequently necessitates consulting native speakers of the source language.
- Integration into Translation Courses: Collocations should be included in general translation courses, such as introductory translation classes, to help students recognize and become familiar with them and learn how to translate them.



- Collocation Instruction: University translation professors ought to train their students on the characteristics of collocations and their translation. This can be accomplished by giving students translation activities and model translations to assist them practice and master collocation translation.
- Teaching Different Translation Techniques: Teachers should go over different translation techniques such adaptation, semantic translation, and idiomatic translation. In addition to encouraging students to employ more appropriate techniques for translating complex language features such as collocations, this will assist them in realizing the limitations of literal translation.

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