ISLAMIC AZAD UNIVERSITY
AT CENTRAL TEHRAN
GRADUATE SCHOOL
ENGLISH DEPARTMENT

A thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfilment for the Requirement of the Degree of Master of Arts in Translation Studies

Strategies Applied in Translating Quranic Lexical Collocations
(A Corpus-Based Study on Chapters 2,3,4,6 and 7)

Advisor:

Dr. Mansour Fahim

Reader:

Dr. Behdokht Mall Amiri

By:

Atefe Roozegar

January 2012

In the Name of Allah,
Most Gracious, Most
Merciful

Dedicated to:

My wonderful mother and father

for their love and measureless support

Acknowledgements

Table of contents

List of Tables

Abstract

Translating religious texts has always been a difficult task because these texts are peculiar in that in addition to their having a sacred as well as legal nature, they address the minds together with the hearts of their audience. Among the difficulties of translating religious texts in general and the Holy Quran- Muslims religious Book- in particular, collocations which occur in are the most notorious for the creation of problems with finding equivalents. The present research investigated the strategies applied by the English translators of the Glorious Quran in translating lexical collocations. For this purpose, seven versions of the Holy Quran (by Abdullah Yusuf, Al Hilali and Muhsen Khan, Irving, Nikayin, Pikthall, Shakir and Starkovsky) were selected and some verses which contained lexical collocations were extracted. The researcher limited the research to lexical collocations according to the Larson's theory of words' relationship, and investigated just five chapters of the Holy Quran. Then based on the framework proposed by Newmark (1988a:81-93), the analysis was made. Moreover, the study indicated that using "literal translation" was the most frequent and using "reduction" strategy was the least frequent strategy applied by all the translators.

Chapter I

Introduction

1.1 Overview

Translation, no doubt, has always been a controversial issue through the history of mankind. It is considered a kind of activity, which "inevitably involves at least two languages and two cultural traditions" (Toury, 1980:200). Since no two languages are similar in meanings and structures, there can be no absolute correspondence between languages. As these statements imply, translators are permanently faced with various translation problems such as, finding the exact lexical equivalents in the target language, dealing with the cultural aspects implicit in a source text , conveying the intended semantic message in the SL to TL and finding the most appropriate strategy of successfully conveying these aspects in the target language.

"Since collocations are the most powerful contextual influence on translations" (Newmark, 1988a,69), from a wide variety of translation problems, generally in translating religious texts and particularly in translating the Holy Quran, rendering Arabic collocations in to English is controversial. Because collocations are "in fact a direct reflection of the cultural setting in which they are embedded"(Baker, 1992: 49).

Since the Holy Quran is a Divine Book, translating the meanings of this Holy Book seems to be an indispensable task. In fact translation and linguistic knowledge play a very important role in rendering the words of God. In translating this Holy Book, prevention of using semantically

unacceptable ill-formed sequences of lexemes and the ill-formed co-occurrence of two lexical items is necessary.

The task of translating Quranic collocations into English is further complicated because these religious collocational patterns are of theological nature characterized as being so specific and culture bound. Moreover, these collocational constituents have a set of intrinsic semantic features that condition their selectional restrictions.

Therefore, searching for acceptable collocations requires a considerable effort on the part of the translator, who should at least try to provide a TL translation that is equivalent in both meaning and use to the SL collocations. Nevertheless, the translators should be creative in dealing with the hindrance of not finding a corresponding TL equivalent for the SL lexical item. In fact they should resort to several strategies to overcome the problems encountered.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Based on the previously mentioned facts, regarding the translation of the Holy Quran, it is obvious that the translators of this Nobel Book have to apply certain strategies in order to convey, as adequately as possible the niceties and beauties of the form as well as the depth of the meaning latent in every single verse.

Translation of collocations is among the most demanding parts of translation task. Hatim and Mason (1990:204) state that "achieving

appropriate collocations in the TL text has always been one of the major problems a translator faces". When the subject of translation is a sacred text - like the Holy Quran which is widely believed by Muslims and non Muslims as the very word of or "verbatim" spoken by God- the translation task becomes difficult. The difficulty originates from the fact that in dealing with a text like the Glorious Quran, two contrasting poles of the task; the form and the content, are very important.

This research intends to find the strategies which were mainly applied by seven famous translators of the Holy Quran in translating the lexical collocations of five randomly selected chapters. Finally presenting the frequency of these strategies was the aim of this research.

1.3 Statement of the Research Questions

1. What is the most frequently used strategy among the English translators of the Holy Quran in dealing with Quranic lexical collocations?

2. What is the least frequently used strategy among the English translators of the Holy Quran in dealing with Quranic lexical collocations?

3. What are other strategies between these two ends?

1.4 Significance of the Study

Interpretation of collocations could appear as a source for semantic or cognitive problems within a particular language and sometimes there are different interpretations from a single text that contains such collocations.

Collocations can be problematic either at the stage of ST comprehension or at the stage of TT production; it is because of the different cultural and linguistic backgrounds. These different disagreements within a sacred text can lead to chaos in ideological system of the potential believers of a religion. These ideological chaoses mislead or disappoint potential believers. With regard to these factors, adequate transference of the collocations becomes more important within translation of religious texts in general and Holy Quran in particular. This research tried to make a small contribution in handling the above mentioned problems to translation of the Glorious Quran.

1.5 Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework of this research is the strategies proposed by Newmark (1988a:68-91). According to him there are eleven strategies for translating collocations:

Literal Translation: the primary senses of the lexical words of the original are translated as though out of context, but the syntactic structure of the target language is expected. it goes beyond one to one translation and ranges from one word to one word ('hall', *Saal, sale, sala, zal*), through group to group (*un beau jardin*, 'a beautiful garden'), collocation to collocation ('make a speech', *faire un discours*), clause to clause ('when that was done', *quand cela fut fait*), to sentence to sentence ('The man was in the street', *L'homme était dans la rue*). Literal translation does not respect context or the TL cultural aspects and it is loyal to

the norms of the source language. Therefore, in some cases this strategy leads to foreign and unnatural translation in the TL. [examples: "الليل و النهار" is translated to " night and day" or "الاعمى و البصير" is translated to "blind and the seeing"].

(Lexical) Synonymy: it is a "near TL equivalent to an SL word" in the context, where a precise equivalent may or may not exist. This strategy is used for a SL word where there is no clear one to one equivalent. For example; "puny effort, *effort faible*". A synonymy is only appropriate where literal translation is not possible. [examples: "بالباساء و الضراء" is translated to "suffering and adversity"].

Through-translation: it is the literal translation of common collocations, names of organizations and components of compounds and perhaps phrases; to transfer a SL word or expression into the Target Text using a literal translation of its component elements (Delisle) *superman (Übermensch)*, *compliments of the season (compliments de la saison), marriage of convenience (marriage de convenance), skyscraper* (آسمانخراش), peaceful co-existence (همزیستی مسالمت آمیز). It can also be called calque or loan translation.

Transference: it is the process of transferring an SL word to a TL text. Either because the TL does not have a lexicalized correspondence, or for stylistic or rhetorical reasons. It is the same as Catford's transference, and includes transliteration, which relates to the conversion of different alphabets: e.g. Russian (Cyrillic), Greek, Arabic, etc. in to English. Actually, this operation usually concerns proper names that do not have equivalents in the TLT. [examples: "الزكوة" is translated to "zakat", "ابراهيم" is translated to "Ibrahim"].

Naturalization: it adapts the SL word first to the normal pronunciation, then to the normal morphology (word-forms) of the TL, e.g. *Edimbourgh*, *humeur*, redingote, *thatcherisme*. Note, for German, *Performanz*, *attraktiv*, [and in Abraham for the word "ابراهیم"]

Descriptive equivalent: in this procedure the meaning of the collocation is described in several words. [examples: "الذین كفروا" is translated to "those who reject Faith"].

Cultural equivalent: is an approximate translation where a SL cultural word is translated to an equivalent TL cultural word. (e.g. American English: coffee break = British English: tea break = Filipino: merienda)

Paraphrase: in this procedure the meaning of the collocation is explained. Here the explanation is much more detailed than that of descriptive equivalent. [example: "استكبروا، استضعفوا" is translated to "the leaders of the arrogant party, those who were reckoned powerless].

Couplets / triplet: it occurs when the translator combines two or three of above-mentioned strategies, respectively for dealing with a single problem.

Notes: notes are additional information in a translation. It is normally cultural (accounting for difference between SL and TL culture), this additional information can place within the text or at the bottom of page as footnotes.

Reduction: is related to the elimination of either one constituent or both constituents of the collocation. An example of reduction in translation is 'science politique', 'politics'. Here, the SL adjective plus noun becomes a general noun (politics) in the TL. [Or the collocation "مثقال ذره" is translated to "a bit"].

1.6 Definition of the Key Terms

Strategies of Translation: Venuti (cited in Baker, 1998: 240) defines strategies of translation as "involving the basic tasks of choosing the foreign text to be translated and developing a method to translate it. Both of these tasks are determined by various factors; cultural, economic and political".

The Holy Quran: According to Mustapha (cited in Baker, 1998:200) Quran is the Holy Book of Islam and the most important of the three sources of authority which underpin Muslims religious life, the other two being the revelation recited by the Prophet Mohammad during his life (Hadith, "sayings") and the Prophet's own practice(Sunna "tradition"). The importance attached to the Quran stems from the belief that it contains, verbatim; the word of God as revealed piecemeal to Muhammad by the Angle Gabrial between 610 and 632 AD."

Translation: Based on the definition given by Kaplan (2002:429), translation is a polysemous word, which is often used in different senses, even in the same text. First, it stands for the act or operation of transferring a message from one language to another. Second it refers to the product of the act of translating. Third, it designates the profession practiced by those performing the act or operation just mentioned. Finally, it has also been used for the academic discipline that studies or examines the operation or products of translation.

Collocation: Newmark (1988a:212) states the definition of collocation as follows: "the habitual co-occurance of individual lexical items". "It may be syntagmatic or horizontal, therefore consisting of a common structure; or paradigmatic or vertical, consisting of words belonging to the same semantic field which may substitute for each other or be semantic opposites" Newmark (1988b:114).

Lexical collocation: According to Benson, E., Benson, M., and Ilson (1986: 253-54) lexical collocations are the arbitrary recurrent word combinations which are classified as follows:

verb + noun (wind a watch, quench one's thirst)

adjective + noun (torrential rain)

noun + verb (volcanoes erupt)

noun1 + of + noun 2 (a school of whales)

adverb + adjective (closely acquainted)

verb + adverb (apologize humbly)

1.7 Limitations and Delimitations of the Study

There are many different translations of the Holy Quran in English. Concerning the scope of research at this level and in order to make the research a manageable task, seven translations of the Holy Quran translated by seven translators were examined. For the same rationale, instead of the whole text of the Holy Quran, the survey was limited to 5 purposefully selected chapters; in addition, among different types of collocations, just

lexical collocations which were categorized according to Larson (1984, 73-87) four types of lexemes relationship (generic-specific, part-whole, synonyms, antonyms) were investigated.

Chapter II

Review of the

Related Literature