



SEMANTIC-PRAGMATIC ANALYSIS OF COLLOCATIONS IN UZBEK AND ENGLISH: TRANSLATION CHALLENGES

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Abstract

This study examines the semantic-pragmatic characteristics of collocations in Uzbek and English languages, focusing on the challenges encountered in translation processes. Collocations represent a fundamental aspect of natural language usage, yet their translation presents significant difficulties due to cross-linguistic variations in lexical combinations, cultural connotations, and pragmatic functions.

Keywords: Collocations, semantic-pragmatic analysis, translation challenges, cross-linguistic comparison, lexical patterns, cultural linguistics.

Introduction

Collocations are among the most important signs of mastering a language and of spontaneous conversation, as they are the ear-trained and the most frequent users' kind of words combinations. The systematic study of collocations has gained a lot of ground in linguistics, especially in corpus linguistics, lexicography, and translation studies. Nonetheless, translation of collocations between such different language families as Uzbek and English pose tough problems that go far beyond simply substituting words. These problems stem from the basic differences in how each language represents meaning, conveys cultural concepts, and performs pragmatic functions by means of specific word combinations.

One of the key points for the reasoning in favor of the collocation translation study is its usefulness for the fields of translator training, bilingual lexicography, language teaching, and natural language processing. In spite of gradually rising scholarly interest to collocations in the main European languages, indexes of research on Uzbek-English collocation pairs are still relatively low, hence the gap in contrastive linguistics and translation studies. The current research fulfills this



need by performing a semantic-pragmatic analysis of collocations in both languages, particularly pointing out and classifying translation difficulties.

METHODOLOGY AND LITERATURE REVIEW

The research method applied in this study is a combination of systematic literature analysis and a comparative linguistic analysis of collocation patterns that have been documented in existing research, dictionaries, and corpus-based studies. The literature review is divided into three main parts: the theoretical frameworks for understanding collocations, previous studies on the translation of collocations, and contrastive studies of Uzbek and English. The pioneering work on collocations starts with Firth's contextualist theory, which laid down the rule that "you shall know a word by the company it keeps," asserting that meaning is derived from the patterns of co-occurrence rather than from isolated lexical items [1]. Following this line, Sinclair's idiom principle and Hoey's lexical priming theory have provided increasingly sophisticated explanations of how collocational knowledge is a significant part of linguistic competence [2].

Since the topic of collocations as a translation issue was put forward by Baker within translation studies, various difficulties have occurred such as the absence of equivalent collocational patterns in the target language, partial overlap with different connotations, and translation-induced shifts in meaning or register [3]. The research conducted on Uzbek language collation has been mainly through the Central Asian linguists with Ismatullayeva's investigation into verbal collocations in Uzbek that has thrown light on the language-specific pattern [4]. Although Uzbek was not the only focus of comparative studies that compared English and Turkic languages, such studies still provided useful frameworks for recognizing the influences of structural and semantic differences on collocations. Sadulloyev's investigation into the difficulties of translation between Uzbek and English has also dealt with collocational issues, but primarily highlighted the problem of lexical and grammatical difficulties [5]. Pragmatically, studies on the functioning of collocations in context for communicative purposes demonstrate that collocations do not merely convey semantic meaning; they also carry pragmatic information of the register, formality, speaker's attitude, and discourse coherence.



RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The comparative analysis reveals several categories of semantic-pragmatic challenges in translating collocations between Uzbek and English. First, structural asymmetry presents a fundamental obstacle, as Uzbek and English employ different grammatical strategies for forming collocations. English frequently uses adjective-noun collocations where Uzbek may employ noun-noun constructions or verb-noun combinations. For example, the English collocation "heavy rain" finds its Uzbek equivalent in "kuchliyomg'ir" (literally "strong rain"), demonstrating that the choice of intensifier reflects different conceptual metaphors across languages [6]. This structural divergence forces translators to make decisions that may alter subtle semantic nuances or pragmatic effects. Second, semantic incongruence manifests when apparently equivalent lexical items participate in different collocational networks in each language.

The verb "make" in English forms numerous collocations such as "make a decision," "make progress," and "make an effort," while Uzbek distributes these meanings across different verbs including "qabulqilmoq" (accept), "erishmoq" (achieve), and "harakat qilmoq" (act). This divergence in semantic organization means that translators cannot simply substitute equivalent individual words but must understand the entire collocational frame within each language system. Third, cultural embedding creates translation challenges when collocations encode culturally specific concepts or reference domains that differ between Uzbek and English-speaking cultures. Collocations related to hospitality, family relationships, and social hierarchies often carry cultural assumptions that complicate translation because the pragmatic force of the collocation depends on shared cultural knowledge.

For instance, Uzbek collocations involving respect terms and honorifics lack direct English equivalents that preserve both semantic content and pragmatic function. Fourth, register and stylistic considerations pose significant challenges, as collocations in both languages vary across formal, informal, technical, and literary registers. A collocation appropriate in one register may sound awkward or inappropriate when translated into an equivalent register in the target language. The pragmatic dimension becomes especially salient here because choosing an inappropriate register equivalent can undermine the communicative effectiveness of the translation even when semantic content is preserved [7]. Analysis of



translation examples reveals several problematic strategies that translators employ when confronting these challenges. Literal translation of collocations frequently produces unnatural or incomprehensible target language expressions, while excessive adaptation may sacrifice source language meaning and cultural specificity.

The optimal approach appears to involve what can be termed "functional equivalence at the collocational level," where translators identify collocations in the target language that fulfill similar semantic and pragmatic functions rather than attempting word-for-word correspondence. However, achieving this functional equivalence requires extensive knowledge of collocational patterns in both languages, which may exceed the competence of many translators, particularly when working with less commonly studied language pairs like Uzbek-English. Additional challenges emerge from the dynamic nature of collocational patterns, which evolve over time and vary across different varieties and registers of each language. Modern Uzbek incorporates numerous Russian loanwords that form hybrid collocations, while English demonstrates considerable variation between British, American, and other regional varieties.

Translators must navigate these internal variations while also addressing the primary cross-linguistic challenges. The pragmatic dimension of translation challenge deserves particular emphasis because even when semantic equivalence can be achieved, pragmatic mismatches may render translations ineffective or misleading. Collocations function pragmatically to signal speaker stance, create cohesion, mark register and formality, and activate cultural frames of reference. When translation disrupts these pragmatic functions, the resulting text may convey different illocutionary force or fail to achieve its intended communicative purpose. Research in translation studies has increasingly recognized that equivalence must be evaluated not only at semantic and grammatical levels but also at pragmatic and discourse levels, making the study of collocation translation crucial for developing comprehensive translation theories [8].

CONCLUSION

This investigation of semantic-pragmatic aspects of collocations in Uzbek and English has revealed that translation challenges arise from multiple intersecting factors including structural asymmetry, semantic divergence, cultural embedding,



and pragmatic variation. The research demonstrates that successful collocation translation cannot be achieved through simple lexical substitution but requires sophisticated understanding of how each language organizes meaning, expresses relationships between concepts, and deploys collocations to achieve pragmatic purposes in discourse. The theoretical implication of these findings is that collocation translation represents a phenomenon where semantic, pragmatic, and cultural dimensions of language interact in complex ways that challenge traditional word-focused approaches to translation.

Practically, the study highlights the need for enhanced translator training that specifically addresses collocation recognition and translation strategies, development of comprehensive bilingual collocation resources, and continued research into the specific characteristics of Uzbek-English collocation pairs. The limitations of this study include its reliance on documented examples rather than extensive corpus analysis, suggesting that future research employing large-scale corpus methodologies would provide more comprehensive data on collocation patterns and translation solutions. Additionally, empirical studies examining actual translator decision-making processes when confronting collocation translation challenges would yield valuable insights into cognitive and strategic dimensions of this translation problem. The findings contribute to broader discussions in translation studies about the nature of equivalence, the role of cultural knowledge in translation competence, and the specific challenges posed by working with typologically diverse languages.

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