



# **DBB 408 TRANSLATION STUDIES IN A FOREIGN LANGUAGE**

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# Strategies used by professional translators

- ▶ **(a) Translation by a more general word (superordinate)**
- ▶ This is one of the commonest strategies for dealing with many types of nonequivalence, particularly in the area of propositional meaning.
- ▶ **(b) Translation by a more neutral/less expressive word**
- ▶ **(c) Translation by cultural substitution**
- ▶ This strategy involves replacing a culture-specific item or expression with a target-language item which does not have the same propositional meaning but is likely to have a similar impact on the target reader.

- ▶ **(d) Translation using a loan word or loan word plus explanation**  
This strategy is particularly common in dealing with culture-specific items. Following the loan word with an explanation is very useful when the word in question is repeated several times in the text.
- ▶ **(e) Translation by paraphrase using a related word**
- ▶ **(f) Translation by paraphrase using unrelated words**
- ▶ **(g) Translation by omission**
- ▶ **(h) Translation by illustration**

# Equivalence above word level

- ▶ In this chapter, we will go one step further to consider what happens when words start combining with other words to form stretches of language.
- ▶ Words rarely occur on their own; they almost always occur in the company of other words. There are always restrictions on the way they can be combined to convey meaning.
- ▶ We will address the difficulties encountered by translators as a result of differences in the lexical patterning of the source and target languages.
- ▶ Lexical patterning will be dealt with under two main headings: **collocation** and **idioms and fixed expressions**.

# Collocation

- ▶ We made a brief reference to **collocation** under **presupposed meaning** and defined it as 'semantically arbitrary restrictions which do not follow logically from the propositional meaning of a word'
- ▶ Another way of looking at **collocation** would be to think of it in terms of the tendency of certain words to co-occur regularly in a given language.

- The adjectives ***unblemished***, ***spotless***, ***flawless***, ***immaculate***, and ***impeccable*** can be thought of as synonyms or near synonyms, and yet they do not combine freely with the same set of nouns (see table 3.1).

*Table 3.1* Unpredictability of collocational patterning

|             | <i>unblemished</i> | <i>spotless</i> | <i>flawless</i> | <i>immaculate</i> | <i>impeccable</i> |
|-------------|--------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| performance | -                  | -               | +               | +                 | +                 |
| argument    | -                  | -               | +               | -                 | ?                 |
| complexion  | ?                  | ?               | +               | -                 | -                 |
| behaviour   | -                  | -               | -               | -                 | +                 |
| kitchen     | -                  | +               | -               | +                 | -                 |
| record      | +                  | +               | -               | ?                 | +                 |
| reputation  | ?                  | +               | -               | ?                 | ?                 |
| taste       | -                  | -               | ?               | ?                 | +                 |
| order       | -                  | -               | ?               | +                 | +                 |
| credentials | -                  | -               | -               | -                 | +                 |

+ = common/acceptable collocation

- = unacceptable/unlikely collocation

? - questionable/may be acceptable in some idiolects

- ▶ When two words collocate, the relationship can hold between all or several of their various forms, combined in any grammatically acceptable order.
- ▶ **Examples:**
- ▶ *achieving aims, aims having been achieved, achievable aims,* and *the achievement of an aim* are all equally acceptable and typical in English.
- ▶ On the other hand, it is often the case that words will collocate with other words in some of their forms but not in others.
- ▶ **Examples:**
- ▶ We *bend rules* in English but are unlikely to describe *rules* as *unbendable*. Instead, we usually talk of *rules* being *inflexible*.

- ▶ It would seem, then, that the patterns of collocation are largely **arbitrary** and **independent of meaning**.
- ▶ English – deliver a baby
- ▶ Arabic – yuwallidu imra'atan
- ▶ The Arabic expression «**yuwallidu imra'atan**» literally means something like '**deliver a woman**' or '**assist a woman in childbirth**'. In the process of childbirth, Arabic focuses on the woman, whereas English prefers to focus on the baby.
- ▶ This suggests that differences in collocational patterning among languages are not just a question of using. A different verb with a given noun can involve totally different ways of portraying an event.



- ▶ Some collocations are a direct reflection of the social environment in which they occur.
- ▶ **Examples:**
- ▶ ***Buy a house*** is a frequent collocation in English, but in German it is very rare because the practice of house-buying is very different in the two cultures.

# Collocational range

- ▶ The English verb **shrug**, for instance, has a rather limited collocational range. It typically occurs with **shoulders** and does not have a particularly strong link with any other word in the language.
- ▶ **Run**, by contrast, has a vast collocational range, some of its typical collocates being **company, business, show, car, stockings, tights, nose, wild, debt, bill, river, course, water**.
- ▶ Collocational ranges are not fixed. Words attract new collocates all the time; they do so naturally, through processes of analogy, or because speakers create unusual collocations on purpose.
- ▶ To sum up, we create new collocations all the time, either by extending an existing range or by deliberately putting together words from different or opposing ranges.

# Collocation and register

- ▶ Some collocations may seem untypical in everyday language, but are common in specific registers.
- ▶ **Examples:**
- ▶ ***dull highlights*** and ***vigorous depressions*** may sound odd in everyday English but are common collocations in the fields of **photography** and **meteorology** respectively.
- ▶ Being a native speaker of a language does not automatically mean that the translator can assess the acceptability or typicality of register-specific collocations.

# Collocational meaning

- ▶ What is the meaning of the word «**dry**»?
- ▶ We are likely to think of collocations such as **dry clothes**, **dry river**, and **dry weather**, which would prompt the definition '**free from water**'
- ▶ Try paraphrasing the meaning of **dry** in each of the following combinations:



dry cow

dry sound

dry book

dry bread

dry voice

dry humour

dry wine

dry country

dry run

- ▶ What a word means often depends on its association with certain collocates.
- ▶ A translator who translates **run a car** as '**drive a car fast**' would be misinterpreting **run** in this context.

# Idioms and fixed expressions

- ▶ Generally speaking, **collocations** are fairly flexible patterns of language which allow several variations in form. For example, ***deliver a letter***, ***delivery of a letter***, ***a letter has been delivered***, and ***having delivered a letter*** are all acceptable collocations. In addition, although the meaning of a word often depends on what other words it occurs with, we can still say that the word in question has an individual meaning in a given collocation.
- ▶ **Idioms and fixed expressions** are at the extreme end of the scale from collocations in one or both of these areas: **flexibility of patterning** and **transparency of meaning**. They are frozen patterns of language which allow little or no variation in form.

- ▶ A speaker or writer cannot normally do any of the following with an idiom:
  1. change the order of the words in it
  2. delete a word from it
  3. add a word to it
  4. replace a word with another
  5. change its grammatical structure
- ▶ As their name suggests, **fixed expressions** such as *having said that*, *as a matter of fact*, *Ladies and Gentlemen*, and *all the best*, as well as proverbs such as *practise what you preach* and *waste not want not*, allow little or no variation in form. In this respect, they behave very much like idioms.
- ▶ Unlike idioms, however, fixed expressions and proverbs often have fairly transparent meanings. The meaning of *as a matter of fact* can easily be deduced from the meanings of the words which constitute it, unlike the meaning of an idiom such as *pull a fast one* or *fill the bill*.

# The interpretation of idioms

- ▶ As far as idioms are concerned, the first difficulty that a translator comes across is being able to recognize that s/he is dealing with an idiomatic expression. This is not always so obvious. There are various types of idioms, some more easily recognizable than others.
- ▶ **Examples:**
- ▶ Easily recognizable:  
*It's raining cats and dogs*
- ▶ There are **two cases** in which an idiom can be easily misinterpreted if one is not already familiar with it.

- ▶ **a)** Some idioms are 'misleading'; they seem transparent because they offer a reasonable literal interpretation.
- ▶ **Example:**  
*take someone for a ride* ('deceive or cheat someone in some way').
- ▶ In this case, a translator who is not familiar with the idiom in question may easily accept the literal interpretation and miss the play on idiom.



- ▶ **(b)** An idiom in the source language may have a very close counterpart in the target language which looks similar on the surface but has a totally or partially different meaning.
- ▶ **Example:**
- ▶ For example, the idiomatic question ***Has the cat had/got your tongue?*** is used in English to urge someone to answer a question or contribute to a conversation, particularly when their failure to do so becomes annoying. A similar expression is used in French with a totally different meaning: ***donner sa langue au chat*** ('to give one's tongue to the cat'), meaning to give up.

# The translation of idioms: difficulties

- ▶ Once an idiom or fixed expression has been recognized and interpreted correctly, the next step is to decide how to translate it into the target language.
- ▶ **The main difficulties** involved in translating idioms and fixed expressions may be summarized as follows:

- ▶ **(a)** An idiom or fixed expression may have no equivalent in the target language. Like single words, idioms and fixed expressions may be culture-specific.
- ▶ **Example:**
- ▶ ***Yours faithfully*** and ***Yours sincerely*** have no equivalents in Arabic formal correspondence.
- ▶ The English expression ***to carry coals to Newcastle***, though culture specific in the sense that it contains a reference to Newcastle coal and uses it as a measure of abundance, is closely paralleled in German by ***Eulen nach Athen tragen*** ('to carry owls to Athens'). Both expressions convey the same meaning, namely: **to supply something to someone who already has plenty of it.**

- **(b)** An idiom or fixed expression may have a similar counterpart in the target language, but its context of use may be different.
- **Example:**
- ***To go to the dogs*** ('to lose one's good qualities') has a similar counterpart in German, but whereas the English idiom can be used in connection with a person or a place, its German counterpart can only be used in connection with a person and often means to die.

- ▶ **(c)** An idiom may be used in the source text in both its literal and idiomatic senses at the same time.
- ▶ **(d)** The very convention of using idioms in written discourse, the contexts in which they can be used, and their frequency of use may be different in the source and target languages.

# The translation of idioms: strategies

- ▶ The way in which an idiom or a fixed expression can be translated into another language depends on many factors.
- ▶ **1. Using an idiom of similar meaning and form**
- ▶ This strategy involves using an idiom in the target language which conveys roughly the same meaning as that of the source-language idiom.
- ▶ **2. Using an idiom of similar meaning but dissimilar form**
- ▶ It is often possible to find an idiom or fixed expression in the target language which has a meaning similar to that of the source idiom or expression, but which consists of different lexical items.
- ▶ **3. Translation by paraphrase**
- ▶ This is by far the most common way of translating idioms when a match cannot be found in the target language or when it seems inappropriate to use idiomatic language in the target text.

► **4. *Translation by omission***

- As with single words, an idiom may sometimes be omitted altogether in the target text. This may be because it has no close match in the target language, its meaning cannot be easily paraphrased, or for stylistic reasons.

## Dedikodu

## Rumours

## Gossip

(Şair: Orhan Veli Kanık)

(Çevirmen: Murat Nemet-Nejat)

(Çevirmen: Tâlat Sait Halman)

- 1 Kim söylemiş beni
- 2 Süheyla'ya vurulmuşum diye?
- 3 Kim görmüş ama kim,
- 4 Eleni'yi öptüğümü,
- 5 Yüksekaldırımında, güpegündüz?
- 6 Melahat'ı almışım da sonra
- 7 Alemdara gitmişim, öyle mi?
- 8 Onu sonra anlatırım fakat
- 9 Kimin bacağını sıkılmışım tramvayda?
- 10 Güya bir de Galata'ya dadanmışız;
- 11 Kafaları çekip çekip
- 12 Orada alıyormuşuz soluğu;
- 13 Geç bunları, anam babam, geç;
- 14 Geç bunları bir kalem;
- 15 Bilirim ben yaptığımı.
- 16 Ya o, Mualla'yı sandala atıp,
- 17 Ruhumda hicranın'ı söyletme hikâyesi?

- 1 Who says
- 2 I've fallen for Süheyla?
- 3 Who saw me, who
- 4 Kissing Eleni
- 5 On the sidewalk in the middle of the day?
- 6 And they saw I took Melahat
- 7 To Alemdar
- 8 Is that so?
- 9 I'll tell you about it later,
- 10 But whose knee did I squeeze on the streetcar?
- 11 Supposedly, I've developed a taste for the fleshpots of Galata
- 12 I drink, get drunk,
- 13 Then take myself there
- 14 Forget about these guys
- 15 Forget, forget about them.
- 16 I know what I'm doing.
- 17 And what about me
- 18 Supposedly putting Mualla on a rowboat
- 19 And making her sing out loud "My soul is yearning for you..."
- 20 In the middle of the harbour.

- 1 Who started the rumor
- 2 That I have a crush on Süheyla?
- 3 I dare you to tell who saw me
- 4 Kissing Eleni
- 5 On the Winding Steps in broad daylight?
- 6 Do they say I grabbed Melahat and took her to Alemdar,
- 7 Is that what they are saying?
- 8 Well, I'll explain that later, but
- 9 Whose bottom do they claim I pinched on the streetcar?
- 10 And what's the one about the Galata brothels
- 11 That I took loaded, the liquor goes to my head
- 12 And I rush down there?
- 13 Come off it, man?
- 14 Never mind all that,
- 15 I know what I'm doing.
- 16 And what's that story about my getting Mualla into a rowboat
- 17 And making her sing "Your grief is in my heart"?