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Akbarov A.

Suleyman Demirel University, Almaty, Kazakhstan
E-mail: azamatakbar@yahoo.com

Collocations with the word «voice» and their translation problems

Abstract. The choice of the word collocations in languages is more arbitrary than not. Why some languages say «at the station,» while others «on the station,» is yet to be understood. Again, while some languages use certain collocations with the words, the other languages do not recognize that usage. This leaves us with the blank space, or in best case, the circumlocution when translating the phrases from one language into another.

In our study, we have examined the collocations of four different languages and their equivalents in the English language. Arabic, Bosnian, Portuguese, Italian, Spanish and English were compared in terms of the word «voice» and its collocations. Italian, Portuguese, Spanish being three languages of the same – Latin family, and the Bosnian language and the Arabic language, which share a historical background were examined. The difficulties of translation due to the various reasons and (di)similarities were discussed.

Key words: collocations, voice, translation, English, Arabic, Spanish, Italian, Portuguese.

Introduction

Language is both a social behavior leading the individuals interact with the people around them and an important mean of communication. All world languages have influenced each other to a certain extent. Because of this interaction, they have gone through changes and influenced one another. These contributions were done mostly through borrowings, sometimes, via proverbs, phrases, idioms etc.

In recent years, many researchers interested in the field of translation have noticed the importance of examining collocations in order to increase the awareness of significance of their right equivalent use in different languages. Professional translators, as being bilinguals, have already certain difficulties holding their minds apart while working in two languages, due to the overlapping of the source and target language. A deeper problem, however, represents the lack of the equivalence in the target language.

The focus of this paper was the research of the most common English collocations for the word «voice» and suggest their equivalents in Bosnian, Arabic and three languages of the Latin family (Spanish, Italian and Portuguese). The corpus on which this research was based were texts of

newspapers in the presented five languages, where the main corpora used was corpus.bye.edu and Real Academia Espanola.

Definitions of the Key Terms

Collocation

A collocation is two or more words that often go together. These combinations just sound «right» to native English speakers, who use them all the time. On the other hand, other combinations may be unnatural and just sound “wrong». For example:

Let's give Mr Jones a **round of applause**.

The prisoner was hanged for **committing murder**.

We had to return home because we **had run out of money** [1, c.68].

Idiom

Idiom is an expression whose meaning is not predictable from the usual meanings of its constituent elements. [2, c.60]. For Example:

Right as rain: Needed, appropriate, essential, or hoped-for and has come to mean perfect, well, absolutely right. [3, c. 20].

From A to Z: Covering a complete range, comprehensively.

Italian expression for *collocation* is *collocazione*; Spanish – *colocación*, Portuguese

– colocação, Bosnian – kolokacija; but Arabic – ارتصاف (artasaaf). Since the term *collocation* originates from the Latin word *collocatus* (pp. of *collocare*): «to arrange, place together, set in a place», it is not strange that all languages of Latin family have similar words for this expression. [4, c.46].

For Bosnian language there are two possibilities: either this term (kolokacija) was borrowed from English in the age of expansion of this language, or (which is more possible option) it was brought along with Jewish refugees from Spain to Bosnia during the Spanish Inquisition in the 15th century. [5, c.80].

The root of Arabic term ارتصاف (artasaaf) is رصف (rasifa), which means, firm, tight, compact, solid (used often for the expression *even teeth* اسنان رصفة – asnaanrasifa), place next to each other in a correct manner, remain together, most convenient», etc. Another term used for collocation is التلازم اللفظي (attalaazimulafthiyyeh) [6, c.135].

Methodology

The aim of this research was to investigate translation problems of collocations related to the word «voice» from and to English language, in terms of five different languages. The study addresses the following questions:

(1) What are the most common collocations of the word «voice»?

(2) Do these collocations have equivalents in five different languages?

(3) How do translators solve the translation problems of non-equivalence of these collocations?

«Voice» Collocations in Other Languages

First collocations that come to our mind when mentioning the word «voice» are adjectives *beautiful, fine* and *good*.

a) The collocation *beautiful voice* has its equivalent in all of the languages mentioned: Bosnian (lijepglas), Arabic (جميلصوت – savtjameel) [7, c.120], Spanish (la vozbonita), Italian (la bella voce) [8, c.68] and Portuguese (umabelavoz), where in Bosnian and Arabic «voice» is masculine, and in languages of Latin family feminine.

Table 1 – Beautiful voice

Beautiful voice ¹				
Bosnian	Arabic	Spanish	Italian	Portuguese
Lijepglas	جميلصوت – savtjameel	La vozbonita	La bella voce	Uma belavoz

b) When analyzing the collocation *good voice*, which in the English language along with *beautiful voice* usually has musical connotations [9, c.236] (same in Spanish: la buenavoz; Italian: la buona voce, Portuguese: uma boa voz); in Bosnian language (dobarglas), the translators

in general. First meaning can (but it is seldom used) have the same connotations of an English expression (On/onaimadobarglas). The second (more common usage) is the meaning of a person who has good reputation (On/ona je nadobromglasu):

Table 2 – Good voice

Good voice				
Bosnian	Arabic	Spanish	Italian	Portuguese
Dobarglas	جيدصوت – savtjyyid	La buenavoz	La buona voce	Uma boa voz

We see differences in the Arabic language as well. The term (جيدصوت – savtjyyid) rather means that someone is able to speak (that he/she didn't lose his/her voice), than that his/her voice is pleasant for listening.

c) If we want to say that someone has a *harsh voice*, in Spanish language we will say (la vozronca); in Italian (la voce severa), where

the word (severo) stands for a *firm* voice as well. Other option is (la voce dura), which is a better equivalent. Portuguese translation would be (umavozáspera).

In Bosnian language again we have two options. The *voice* (glas) is either (grüb) or (oštar), depending on the situation and feelings of the one to whom we are speaking harshly.

Table 3 – Harsh voice

Harsh voice				
Bosnian	Arabic	Spanish	Italian	Portuguese
Grub/oštarglas	خشنصوت – savtkhashin	La vozronca	La voce dura	Uma vozáspera

For example, if the professor says something in the harsh way, the student will report:

(Njegovglas je bio veomaoštar). But if the student took professor's harshness too personally, he will rather say: (Njegovglas je bio veoma grub).

Arabic translation would be (خشنصوت – savtkhashin), where the term (خشن – khashin) has dual meaning of the *harsh voice* and a *sharp voice* as well, like in the sentence (دالماخشنصوته)

– savtuhukhashindaaima) – His voice is always harsh/sharp.

e) Also, for the term *loud-voiced*, it is hard to find the adequate expression: in Bosnian language the literal translation would be (glasanglas), but since in Bosnian language the repetition of the same word (or words of the same origin) is not present, this translation cannot be used.

The possible translation would be (visokglas), where (visok) means *high*.

Table 4 – Loud-voiced

Loud-voiced				
Bosnian	Arabic	Spanish	Italian	Portuguese
Visokglas	دالماخشنصوته – bisavt 'ali	-	-	-

In Spanish language there is no equivalent for the word. The term (envozalta), is a false friend, since it has same physical appearance, but the term means (aloud) like (El leyó el textoenvozalta) – *he read the text aloud*. The same thing is in Italian and Portuguese. So, instead of searching for the word, we can just say that it means that someone has an unusually *loud voice* (se utilize cuandoalguien tiene enormerango de la voz):

- *Loud voice*, la colocación que en Ingles representa la persona que tiene enorme rango de la voz es muy común en este idioma.

- *Loud voice*, è una collocazione nell'inglese che viene spesso utilizzata, e significa una voce alta.

- *Loud voice*, uma colocação frequentemente usada em Inglês, significa uma voz alta.

The Arabic equivalent is (عالصوت – bisavt 'ali), which is the same as English *loud-voiced*.

f) *Stentorian voice* (from a Latin origin, which means *of powerful voice*) in Bosnian language is

either (prodoranglas) or only (gromoglasan) – but, like I remarked above, Bosnian language doesn't support repeated words; and since (gromoglasan) already has (glas) in it: (gromo-**glas**-an), it stands on its own.

All the languages of the Latin family kept the original version: Spanish language – (la vozaguda/estentórea); Italian: (la voce stentorea). In Portuguese, as well, the word origin is kept, but accommodated to their pronunciation: (umavoztonitruante).

Arabic language has also an adequate equivalent: (كالرعدصوت – savtkaarr'ad).

On the other hand, for the *stentorian voice* in Arabic language a whole new expression can be used, which doesn't include the word (صوت – savt) or any adjective at all: (صيحة – sayha).

This word has the same meaning when translated into English, but still has a stronger connotation in Arabic language.

So, the translations would look like this:

Table 5 – Stentorian voice

Stentorian voice				
Bosnian	Arabic	Spanish	Italian	Portuguese
Prodoranglas	صيحة – sayha/ كالرعدصوت – savtkaarr'ad	La vozaguda/estentórea	La voce stentorea	Uma voztonitruante

g) Furthermore, when it comes to the collocation which follows the verb, we can rarely find the equal expression in languages.

For instance, *the voice* in Bosnian is not being *raised* or *lowered*, but it is being *lifted* and *put down*: (povisiti/spustitiglas).

The same situation we encounter in the Spanish language for *raise the voice* (levantar la voz = *to lift the voice*), while (bajar la voz) actually means *get the voice down*. Italian (alzare/abbassare la voce) and Portuguese (levantar/baixar a voz) have same connotation as in Spanish.

Table 6 – To raise/lower the voice

To raise/lower the voice				
Bosnian	Arabic	Spanish	Italian	Portuguese
Podignuti/spustitiglas	صوتكعلي – ‘allisavtek الصوتانخفاض – ankhafadi-ssavt	Levantar/bajar la voz	Alzare/abbassare la voce	Levantar/baixar la voz

In Arabic we face a whole different situation. While the term *raise the voice* is used with the collocation *increase the voice* (صوتكعلي – ‘allisavtek), the term for *lower the voice* (الصوتانخفاض – ankhafadi-ssavt) has more in common with the term *fear* (to do something out of the fear) than with *lower*.

h) For *whisper*, like in the sentence: *she could hear a voice whisper in her ear*, we can perceive a different perception of onomatopoeia usage inside the languages.

For instance, the Bosnian language uses the expression (glas je prošaputao). The word (prošaputati) comes from a noun (šapat), which, onomatopoeically, stands for something soft.

Table 7 – Voice whisper

Voice whisper				
Bosnian	Arabic	Spanish	Italian	Portuguese
Šaputanjeglasa	مخننات	La vozsusurró	La voce susurro	A vozsusurrrou

It is the same thing with Spanish. (La vozsusurró) comes from a word (sus), which also represents onomatopoeia: (sus = shhh). Italian language uses the same word, while Portuguese has different pronunciation: (a vozsusurrrou).

But Arabic language again has a whole new term: – (تنغم): which means: *the voice which whispers in such a soft manner*.

Conclusion

Despite the fact that many researchers interested in the field of translation have noticed the importance of What we need to bear in mind is that no matter

what collocation we are dealing with, if the target language will or will not have an equivalent; in the first place it depends on the culture.

This research support the assumption that unawareness of the importance of adequately translating collocations leads to poor translation results. This paper suggests that collocations should be more examined by translators, having in mind the cultural influences. More of these cultural influences we will notice in the further dealing with idioms of different cultures. Translating a language is an art worth learning all these similarities and overcome all the differences.

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