

COLLOCATIONAL ERRORS IN THE SECOND-DEGREE ENGLISH MAJORS' VIETNAMESE-ENGLISH TRANSLATIONS AT HANOI OPEN UNIVERSITY AND SOLUTIONS

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Abstract: *The study was conducted with an aim to know more about the causes and the patterns of the collocational errors that the second- degree English majors at Hanoi Open University often make when they do their Vietnamese- English translation. Different pedagogical solutions are suggested to both translation lecturers and students. The writer makes use of both quantitative and qualitative methods to do the research. The data for the study are the lecturer's and students' viewpoints, attitudes, in-class translational activities and practice in the results taken from a questionnaire, translation worksheets, mini-translation tests and (in-class, email) interviews with six translation lecturers and thirty-four second-degree English students. Causes and common collocational error patterns in Vietnamese-English translations have been found out side by side with the plausible solutions. The study will be useful for both lecturers and students to improve the quality of Vietnamese- English translations. In particular, the second- degree English majors will have improvements in making their Vietnamese- English translations more natural and better with collocations.*

Keywords: *collocational errors, translation, solutions, strategies, second-degree English majors.*

I. Introduction

Translation is not only an obligatory subject for students to study at present but it is also a means for students to practise their writing skills, to improve the language competence, to put forward career orientations and to support other subjects in the curriculum set by Hanoi Open University. It is thought that the quality of students' translations may not meet the requirements of the educational program. The number of

second- degree English major students who get good marks is not high. Many lecturers raise their concerns that in students' sheets of translation practice, there are still a lot of mistakes and errors in the use of collocations. The article is written with an aim to find out various causes and difficulties that the second- degree English majors at Hanoi Open University often encounter when they study the subject, translation as well as the suitable solutions. Previously, there

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have been some studies on the matter. In the most noticeable one, Angkana Mongkolchai (2008) said that the students' knowledge of English collocation is generally limited and most students are not aware of the popularity of the English collocations. Of the different points, Reham Bzour (2006) noted that translators who use more target text collocations in their translations will build a better translational competence and their translation versions will be of a more desirable quality than the ones with fewer target text collocations. Collocations are often used in many kinds of texts to show naturalness. The significance of the study is that both lecturers, researchers, readers and students will have a chance to know the various facts about the second-degree English majors' different patterns and habits of making collocational errors, their abilities of using English collocations, the suitable explanations for their violations on the use of English collocations and the possible solutions.

II. Theoretical background

2.1. What is a collocation?

According to Oxford Collocations Dictionary (2002), collocation is a language tool for combining words or phrases to produce naturalness in writing and speech. Sinclair (1991) considers that collocation is the notion of word co-occurrence, where a certain type of words stays side by side predictably. Of the same views, Lewis (2000) asserts that collocation is the occurrence of words that come together more usual than they are expected.

2.2. What is translation?

There are different understandings about translation. Baker (1992) made clear that "Translation is a process of rendering ideas, meaning, or messages of a text from one language to other languages." To put it more generally, Newmark (1988:5)

defined translation as "rendering the meaning of a text into another language in the way that the author intended the text".

2.3. Students' understandings on collocations

In an article, Peters (2016) reveals that students find collocations exciting to learn and use. Some students consider that collocations can make their translation versions more attractive, colorful, flexible, and more natural, but students cannot make use of them. Some students have no concepts of collocations in mind at all. Huang (2001) makes clear that many students cannot recognize the collocation in some certain areas or fields and sometimes they cannot interpret certain collocations that is why they cannot use collocations in the right place.

2.4. Properties of collocations

It is said that collocations are of several properties. It is very interesting that Nation (2001) mentions two main factors that impact the collocation range of the English words. They are as follows: 1. A level of specificity: it means that if a word is more general, the collocational range is more specific, broader and more restricted. 2. An item of a word may contain several senses. Baker (1992) indicates that it is very difficult to find out the real meaning of collocations because those may not be translated with the usage of the word for word method.

2.5. Types of collocations

In his research, Huang (2001) identifies several kinds of collocations. They are: 1. Figurative idioms: this type mentions a metaphorical meaning and it can be derived from literal understandings, 2. Restricted collocations: this kind is used in a certain type of a specific context and the number of collocations is not many, 3. Free combinations: this type of collocation means a combination of words sharing the

meaning from the literal meaning from each component, 4. Pure idioms: this kind contains only a unitary meaning and the users cannot predict any senses from its components.

2.6. The role of collocations in translation

Two advantages of collocations were mentioned in McCarthy and O'Neil (2017). First, they help learners to express their spoken or written ideas naturally and concisely as native speakers. Second, learners can acquire lexical knowledge and increase their vocabulary size.

2.7. Collocational errors

There are different researchers identifying collocational errors in various ways. Shitu (2015) states that the choices of wrong words and phrases or the misused collocations are the main types of collocational errors. Many students make errors of this kind. Moreover, the impact of the mother tongue was known as one of the internal factors that hinder students' collocation usage in translation versions.

Using English collocations in the right place and context is rather difficult for students. Le (2017) reports that students may acquire collocations automatically and they may understand or learn by heart many collocations but they meet difficulties using them. The most common errors that students often make are wrong use of parts of speech, omission of the article "the" and "a", omission of component words, omission of morpheme, addition of morpheme, and the word order.

2.8. The teaching of collocations

In the aspect of the pedagogical point, Lewis (1993) reports that lecturers should raise the students' awareness of collocation and it can be incorporated into the teaching activities and the learning process to widen students' collocational knowledge

effectively. That is why, collocation practice should be done again and again.

III. Methodology

3.1. Context of the study

The study was conducted at the English Faculty of Hanoi Open University. Most of the students belong to English majors and second- degree English majors. The second- degree English majors have their own peculiarities and challenges. They have to both work and study at the same time. Moreover, most of them get married that is why they have more burdens in studying English, especially studying "Translation course 2". Their translation results in the "Translation course 1" were not good. It is better for them to get more attention and help from lecturers.

3.2. Participants

In this study there are about 34 students who were randomly chosen out of 136 second - degree English majors. They studied the 'Translation course 2' at the English Faculty of Hanoi Open University. Two third of the participants are females. Most of them are over 30 years of age and they have different jobs and abilities in different fields. They are eager to study English for their own professions. Six teachers were invited to participate in the email- interviews for their viewpoints and discoveries on students' collocational errors in different translation versions. All of them are doing their translation teaching at the English Faculty of Hanoi Open University.

3.3. Methods of the study

The study was done with the combination of the quantitative and the qualitative method. All the data were dealt with via statistics, analysis and comparison and contrast. The Oxford Collocations Dictionary for Students of English and the online Word Reference English

Collocations dictionary were used to check the accuracy of the English collocations in students' translation worksheets and tests. All the calculations for frequency, percentage or average levels were done via algorithms on excel sheets.

3.4. Instruments for collecting data

Email- interviews and classroom interviews were conducted with the participation of 34 students and 6 translation lecturers in order to find out the common collocational errors that students often make and their (mis) understandings, attitudes, difficulties, habits and viewpoints on the usage of English collocations.

Twelve translation worksheets were used to find out students' frequency, types of collocational errors, the average levels as well as percentage.

One questionnaire and two translation mini-tests were done for the information about students' abilities and knowledge in translating texts with English collocations and the difficulties they faced while translating and how they solve different problems with their own solutions.

Table 4.1: Types of collocational errors in students' translation worksheets

Number	Types of collocational errors	Quantity	Percentage
1	Word order	273	11.12%
2	Non-existent collocation words	135	5.50%
3	Addition of morpheme	210	8.55%
4	Omission of morpheme	196	7.98%
5	Wrong use of the plural/ singular forms	252	10.26%
6	Omission of component words	277	11.28%
7	Addition of component words	298	12.13%
8	Wrong choice of component words	324	13.19%
9	Wrong use of parts of speech	344	14.01%
10	Omission of the article "the" and "a"	147	5.99%
11	Total	2456	100.00%

The statistics reveal that the types of the collocational errors that the second-degree students made vary according to students' attitudes, habits and aptitudes.

3.5. Data collection

The activities for data collection were conducted within twelve weeks. The data from the interviews with the six translation lecturers are done via email. The data from the interviews with the thirty- four students are collected at the beginning, during and at the end of each lecture. The mini-translation tests were done in the fifth and the tenth week. In each lecture, each group of students was asked to keep the statistics on their types of collocational errors from their translation worksheets under the lecturer's instructions. One questionnaire of 20 open and close questions was given to students with explanations and careful instructions from the lecturer in the breaktime after the lecture 11.

IV. Major findings and discussion

4.1. Students' collocational errors from the worksheets

There are about eleven translation worksheets for both in-class and homework practice. In each lecture, 34 students in different groups are required to count and keep statistics on the types of collocational errors they made in their translation worksheets within eleven weeks.

The highest percentage which falls on the errors of omission of component words, addition of component words, wrong choice of component words and wrong use

of parts of speech is respectively 11,28%, 12,13%, 13,19% and 14,01%. The lowest percentage which falls on non-existent collocation words, omission of morpheme, and omission of the article “the” and “a” is respectively 5,50%, 7,98% and 5,99%.

Table 4.2: Types of collocational errors in students' mini- translation tests

Number	Types of collocational errors	Quantity	Percentage
1	Word order	8	2.03%
2	Non-existent collocation words	9	2.28%
3	Addition of morpheme	49	12.44%
4	Omission of morpheme	57	14.47%
5	Wrong use of the plural/ singular forms	12	3.05%
6	Omission of component words	59	14.97%
7	Addition of component words	62	15.74%
8	Wrong choice of component words	66	16.75%
9	Wrong use of parts of speech	58	14.72%
10	Omission of the article “the” and “a”	14	3.55%
11	Total	394	100.00%

In the two students' mini- translation tests, it is clear that students are likely to make the most errors in the areas of omission of morpheme, omission of component words, addition of component words, wrong choice of component words and wrong use of parts of speech. The respective results of the percentage are 14.47%, 14.97%, 15.74%, 16.75% and 14.72%. The areas that they make the fewest errors are word order, non-existent collocation words, wrong use of the plural/ singular forms and omission of the article “the” and “a”. The respective results of the percentage are 2.03%, 2.28%, 3.05% and 3.55%.

4.3. Students' answers from the questionnaire

There are both open and close questions for students to answer. The questionnaire focuses on the usage of 9 popular types of collocations. The first one is ‘adjective + noun’ collocation. This type seems rather familiar for students but 74% of them can not remember using it in their translations. 26% of the students can use

4.2. Students' collocational errors from the mini-translation tests

There are two mini- translation tests conducted. Each time 34 students are given half an hour to complete their Vietnamese- English translation tasks.

this in translation versions but in the wrong word order. The second one is ‘adverb + adjective’ phrase. It is rather difficult for students to use this. 82% of the students cannot remember this type of collocation because it is rarely used. The third one is ‘adverb + verb’ collocation. 77% of the students said that they could manage most of the collocations in the text. The rest failed because of the wrong choice of component words. The fourth kind is ‘noun + noun’ collocation. This kind of collocation is not so difficult for them to manage their long-term memory so 86% of them can visualize and practice right away without hesitation. The next one is ‘noun + verb’ collocation. It is rather rare in the translation texts so students have few chances to use it. 95% of the students admitted that they met difficulties with this one. The sixth one is ‘verb + adverb’ structure. This type is popular in many cases so 89% of the students reveal that they can cope with it properly. The seventh one is ‘verb + noun’ collocation. For many instances, 98% of the students can use their imagination and

relate words in pairs without any efforts. This type of collocation is a bit easy for them to remember. The eighth one is 'verb + adjective' collocation. This type is also a common one. 64% of the students rely on their instincts to use collocation. 36 % of the rest apply their long-term memory to use it. The last one is 'adjective + adjective' collocation. This type is very difficult for students to remember and use it. 97% can not think of any related one during the translation process.

4.4. Causes of collocational errors (from interviews)

From the interviews with 34 students and the ones with six translation lecturers, it is found that some causes that the second- degree students often failed in using collocations in their Vietnamese-English translation versions. In general, there are two main groups of sources; internal factors and external factors.

The internal factors consist of ignorance of interlingual transfer, no long- term memory for collocations, misunderstanding the context of situations or culture, studying words separately (unattached to contexts), limited collocational usage, lack of lexical knowledge, shortage of grammatical knowledge, lack of collocational knowledge, passive learning strategies, paying too much attention to the source text patterns, shortage of motivation for learning and misunderstanding the source-text meanings.

The external factors are of few teachings of collocations, the complications of English collocation types, the native language's negative influence, the influence of translation techniques, the impact from accuracy and naturalness, the diversity of collocation types, the diversity of synonyms, the learning environment in class and at home, lecturer's levels of strict requirements, more patterns of

exercises of collocations and insufficient, useful clues for collocation usage.

Most of the students agree that they are still rather lazy and slow in studying translation skills, especially the use of collocations. Beside the study in class, they are so busy with other kinds of things such as household chores, homework and their own professional workload.

4.5. Suggested solutions to improve students' competence of using English collocations

With the causes of collocational errors, some very necessary and useful suggestions are introduced to both lecturers and the second- degree students as follows:

4.5.1. For students

1. Students are advised to consult a learner's dictionary and find more information on collocations. Try to learn by heart the examples containing the most common collocations provided in the dictionary. Students may also use a collocations dictionary e.g., Oxford Collocations Dictionary.

2. It is better for students to learn words and collocations on familiar topics and study collocational connections, synonyms in authentic materials.

3. Students should read books on collocations as much as possible and do collocational exercises more often.

4. It is necessary for students to learn by heart all the words in a certain order, in group and in context. Student can make use of the face-book, email, zalo, skype, messenger, ... and share their writings or exchange patterns of exercises with collocations.

5. Students should make an effort identify collocations whenever they do the reading or even listen to anything related in English.

6. Students should study collocations in groups so that their friends can check and correct their work or exchange knowledge on collocations.

4.5.2. For lecturers

1. Lecturers should encourage the second- degree students to use English collocation dictionaries. They are available online and it is very easy for students to download and use.

2. Lecturers have to create different academic groups in class so that the second- degree students will be given practice opportunities in which classmates will check and revise the usage of collocations with each other. It is the right way for lecturers to put theory into practice. With real life situation in class, the constant practice will minimize students' chances of making collocational errors.

3. Lecturers should encourage students to guess the meaning of a strange word from the context given and ask them to look up the difficult words. It is important for them to learn by heart some examples from the dictionary.

4. Lecturers should raise the second- degree student's consciousness of learning collocation via direct teaching methods. With direct instructions and conscious teaching, the second- degree students will gradually be aware of the collocational errors and try to correct them.

5. Doing exercises is a must and the types of practice can be: Doing the gap fillings with part of the collocations, finding collocations in paragraphs, matching exercises, identifying and correcting the collocational errors, completing each sentence with a collocation, doing multiple choice exercises with different collocations, choosing the correct collocation, giving some explanations for the confusable collocations, changing the underlined collocations with

the ones that have the opposite meanings, arranging the words given in order to make a sentence with a collocation,...etc.

V. Conclusion

The results of the study can be very useful for translation lecturers, researchers and students. It has been pointed out that there are some common patterns of the collocational errors in Vietnamese- English translations that the second- degree English majors at Hanoi Open University often make. Some of the causes and difficulties that students often encounter are also made clear. It is a hope that several pedagogical strategies to deal with the popular collocational errors in Vietnamese- English translations are necessary for both students and lecturers. Studying in groups should be given priority. Exercises on identifying collocations and correcting errors are very essential and should be done regularly.

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CÁC LỖI SỬ DỤNG KẾT NGỮ TRONG CÁC BÀI DỊCH VIỆT-ANH CỦA MỘT SỐ SINH VIÊN VĂN BẰNG 2 TIẾNG ANH TẠI TRƯỜNG ĐẠI HỌC MỞ HÀ NỘI VÀ GIẢI PHÁP

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Tóm tắt: Nghiên cứu được tiến hành nhằm tìm hiểu về nguyên nhân và hình thức mắc lỗi trong việc sử dụng kết ngữ mà sinh viên văn bằng hai Khoa Tiếng Anh, Trường Đại học Mở Hà Nội thường hay mắc phải khi dịch các văn bản từ Việt sang Anh. Một số giải pháp phù hợp đã được đề xuất cho cả giảng viên và sinh viên. Phương pháp nghiên cứu định lượng và định tính được kết hợp trong các hoạt động nghiên cứu. Dữ liệu nghiên cứu là các quan điểm, thái độ, các ghi nhận hoạt động thực hành dịch trên lớp được lấy từ kết quả của bảng câu hỏi điều tra, các phiếu làm bài thực hành dịch trên lớp, bài kiểm tra và phỏng vấn với sáu giảng viên dạy dịch và ba mươi bốn sinh viên văn bằng hai. Nghiên cứu đã tìm ra được các nguyên nhân và các loại hình lỗi sử dụng kết ngữ của sinh viên và cũng có các giải pháp phù hợp. Nghiên cứu sẽ là nguồn tham khảo hữu ích cho các giảng viên dạy dịch và các sinh viên học môn dịch đặc biệt là các sinh viên văn bằng hai để tiến hành dịch văn bản từ Việt sang Anh hay hơn và có tính tự nhiên hơn với các kết ngữ.

Từ khóa: lỗi sắp xếp, dịch thuật, giải pháp, chiến lược, văn bằng hai tiếng Anh.

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