NON-EQUIVALENCE OF SERBIAN AND ENGLISH COLLOCATIONS IN LITERARY TRANSLATION

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Abstract. We shall comment on the treatment of collocations in published English translations of a sample of Serbian literary texts, which has been analysed with a consideration of consistency in the transfer of the content of source text (ST) collocations into the target text (TT). We have focused on non-equivalent pairs of ST and TT collocations, which suggest that collocational non-equivalence is the result of a) inconsistency in content, b) non-observance of the established collocational patterns in the target language, c) breach of collocational restrictions and/or d) disregard for semantic prosodies of the words combined.

Key words: collocation, equivalence, congruence

1. COLLOCATIONS IN TRANSLATION THEORY

Recent translation research and evaluation has rarely addressed the issue of translation of collocations, presumably owing to the overall abandonment of micro-linguistic translation concerns. The reason may also be found in the criticism of the concept of translation equivalence, and the upsurge of debates about what should constitute the equivalent relation between the ST and the target TT. The overt objections to translation as a process of establishing equivalence between SL and TL on the micro-linguistic side seem to have provoked a disregard for collocations in translation. Nevertheless, we believe that the possibilities of translating ST lexical patterns into another language should be carefully weighed, especially in the appreciation of literary texts, in which lexical variety is exceptional. Mistranslations at word level may produce unnatural or unacceptable collocations in the TL, and Fawcett (1997: 8) rightly emphasizes that unreasonable divergence from the accepted collocations of TL "thwarts reader's expectation and causes a momentary disruption in text processing". Furthermore, in literary translation, mistranslations may lead to a lexical impoverishment of the TT and obscure the eloquent design of the ST.

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We are here concerned with the equivalence between the ST and TT collocations in literary translation. We shall define collocational equivalence as the equality in content between ST and TT collocations within a given sentential and situational context. Although there prevails the opinion that translation equivalence should extend beyond the linguistic sign, Baker (1992: 6) believes that, since a text is a unit of meaning realized through forms, the meaning of individual forms is crucial for the interpretation of the text as a whole. Taking collocations into account, this is to say that the violation of collocational norms in TL may also mean a failure to transfer the content of ST collocations and the message on the whole. In view of that, Baker (1992: 53) explains that combinations of words are the contexts in which their meanings should be interpreted, so that in instances when a translation is criticized as inaccurate or inappropriate, this may refer to the translator's failure to recognize a collocational pattern with a meaning different from the sum of meanings of its elements. In Baker's (1992: 53) example, if *dry voice* were taken to mean *[A VOICE WHICH IS NOT MOIST]*, its content would be misinterpreted, since the content of the noun *voice* presupposes the figurative meaning of the adjective *dry* *[NOT EXPRESSING EMOTION]*. For that reason, the equivalent to *dry voice* is the Serbian collocation *hladan glas* (*suv glas*), which refers to someone speaking in an unfriendly or unsympathetic way.

The pedagogical approach to collocations states that a collocation in SL for which there is a direct equivalent in TL poses no difficulties in translation. Absolute equivalence in such cases rests on the assumption that both collocates of collocations contrasted are words with identical content in the two languages respectively, e.g. Eng. *dry hair* – Ser. *suva kosa*, Eng. *dry weather* – Ser. *suvo vreme*, Eng. *dry wine* – Ser. *suvo vino*. However, these instances can be misleading, as there are no languages the lexical patterns of which agree exactly and the collocational ranges of equivalent SL and TL words are not absolutely identical. Consequently, as Baker (1992: 54) suggests, literal translation may be the effect of confusing source and target collocations, which is actually the negative transfer of SL lexical patterning into the TT. The example from Baker (1992: 54) is *réparer ses chaussures* taken to be the equivalent of *shoe repairs* in the French translation of *A Hero from Zero*. She explains that, in the French language, *réparer* collocates with nouns for machines, such as a fridge or car, so that a more natural collocation would be *ressemeler ses chaussures*.

2. TRANSLATING COLLOCATIONS

With regard to the differences between the standards of lexical patterning in the SL and TL, translation criteria should rest on the content of a ST collocation, the situational context and collocational norms of the TL. Collocational patterning of the SL could be distinctly different from that of the TL, so that words in the two languages of the same semantic features do not necessarily presuppose identical collocational ranges. For instance, there is no analogy between *spavati čvrsto* and *sleep firmly*, and the Serbian collocation (Eng. *sleep deeply*) does not translate literally into English, because of the variances in the collocational ranges of the words combined in the two languages. Similar Serbian and English examples which defy the applicability of the literal translation method are *pokrenuti diskusiju* (*start a discussion*) – *raise a discussion*, *seć drva* (*cut wood*) – *chop wood*, *odbiti glatko* (*reject smoothly*) – *reject flatly*, *gruba greška* (*rough mistake*) – *gross mistake*, *komad zemlje* (*piece of land*) – *patch of land*. 
Although not as rigid or exact as grammatical rules, the principles of lexical patterning are not flexible either, except in creative language use. Even if it may seem an intuitive matter of course, the formation of collocations follows the explicit rules of morphology and syntax, implicit criteria based on the meanings of words and conventions in language use. Accordingly, there are three underlying controlling factors in lexical patterning: (1) formal, determined by the morpho-syntactic system of a language, (2) semantic, conditioned by the semantic features of words, and (3) pragmatic, implied in the extra-linguistic circumstances of language use. All of these factors should be observed when translating collocations, especially when the TL has an extraordinary lexical variety. Non-observance of the aforementioned factors most probably results in the following translation errors, which will be discussed in the corpus analysis below:

(a) a collocation which is atypical in the TL even though the semantic properties of words combined do not indicate incompatibility;
(b) a collocation which is acceptable in the TL, but whose content is different from the content of the ST collocation;
(c) a collocation which is not acceptable in the TL due to the incompatibility of the words combined; the incompatibility may be the result of restraints imposed by (1) semantic restrictions, which dismiss the combination of two words of contradictory meanings; (2) pragmatic restrictions, which include language use, inferences drawn from the extra-linguistic environment and the circumstances of the speech act; and/or (3) semantic prosody of a word, which is its tendency to collocate with words of either positive or negative meaning (cf. Louw 1993).

3. SERBIAN TO ENGLISH TRANSLATION DATA

In a sample of English translations of Serbian literary texts we examined the relation of equivalence between the pairs of ST and TT collocations by assessing a) the equality of their content and b) the standards of TL lexical patterning. The stand we take here is not prescriptive, and the study is based on a descriptive qualitative analysis in which we have made critical judgments as to what was done and could have been done in respect to translation equivalence at word level. Furthermore, we do not wish to stipulate a ready-made inventory of translational pairs of Serbian and English collocations or prescribe a translation practice. We are concerned with 1) the extent to which the proposed TT collocations transfer the content of the ST collocations and 2) the aspects in which the treatment of collocations in translation should be carefully reconsidered regarding the patterning norms in the TL. We have examined the following types of relations in the sample:

a) Non-equivalence/congruence between ST collocations and TT collocations – the TT collocations are not equivalent to the ST collocations owing to 1) differences in content, 2) breach of the collocational restrictions and/or 3) non-observance of the semantic prosody of the TT words; the collocations are congruent in structure, as their collocates belong to the same rank; and

b) Non-equivalence/incongruence between ST words and TT collocations, which derives from translation shift as a departure from formal correspondence (cf. Catford 1965: 73-82) – the TT collocations are not equivalent to the ST words due to the disparity of content and they are incongruent since they belong to a different rank, as the result of the upward rank shift.
In the course of analysis, we shall propose TL collocations which have the equivalent content and which adhere to collocational restrictions of the TL. We have referred to the British National Corpus (BNC) for the distribution of English words.

3.1. Sample analysis

3.1.1. Non-equivalence + congruence

(1) Zavese na prozorima se zanjihaše, u dvorištu stari orah jeknu od udara vetra.

The curtain billowed before the windows, and the old walnut tree in the courtyard creaked in the wind.

Čosić (1978; 1981)

In the collocation orah je či, an inanimate object is personified as a human being crying when in pain and endowed with a human attribute. Figuratively speaking, the tree is in pain under a sudden rush of wind, but the English verb creak is not appropriately forceful in this particular context, as it denotes the production of a high-pitched sound of a wooden object when moving, such as a door, stair or bed. Instead, we assume the collocation tree shrieks [PRODUCE A SHRILL CRY] would be consistent with both the content and stylistic effect of the ST collocation.

(2) Kada je pogledao preko tih stubića, Koenu se otvorio vidik u daljinu i slobodan prostor na dnu kojega je negde na mesečini hučalo more.

Looking over these small pillars, Cohen could see into the distance and the open space; down below, the sea rumbled somewhere far away in the moonlight.

Pavić (1990; 1996)

The verb rumble has the same primary meaning as the verb tutnjati in Serbian – they denote the action of producing a low, continuous noise. Their collocational ranges comprise nouns for means of transport, such as train / lorry and voz / kamion. We believe that a more appropriate English verb would be roar [PRODUCE A CONTINUED RESONANT SOUND], which should add more to the consistency in word distribution in the TL, as it frequently collocates with nouns sea and water in written English.

(3) Hajduk je imao grozni čavu potrebu da govori, kao da time produžava vek, a Živan je htio da pokže svoju silu i brani svoj ugled pred društvom, i ko zna dokle bi se njih dvojica tako objašnjavali da ih komandir nije prekinuo.

The bandit had a fevered need to talk and mark time, while Živan wanted to assert his authority and buttress his reputation before the company, and who knows how long the two of them might have dickered in this fashion if the commandant had not interrupted them.

Andrić (1962; 1986)

Silica should be interpreted as one's mental strength and force of character, and not as a right to command or control. The appropriate English noun would be power, which collocates with the verb assert, but more commonly with exercise and wield.

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The verb *augur* [BE A SIGN THAT THINGS WILL GO WELL OR BADLY] collocates with adverbs *well* and *badly*, and is not transitive, so that its syntactic restrictions are not met in the English sentence. We propose the verb *presage* [SIGNIFY BEFOREHAND] instead, as an equivalent to Serbian *navesti* [NAJAVITI]. The English verb has a negative semantic prosody, as it recurrently collocates with nouns for incidents, such as *loss / illness / decline / shipwreck*, and thus may co-occur with the noun *death*.

The verb *invigorate* should be treated as polysemous, with regard to two collocational ranges, one for the meaning [MAKE MORE ENERGETIC], and the other for [MAKE MORE EFFECTIVE]. In language use, the former is restricted to nouns for human beings, whereas the latter co-occurs with nouns for situations and processes (campaign, economy). The verb *obnoviti* is used here with the meaning [CHANGE FOR BETTER], and its equivalent would be the verb *revitalize* [RESTORE TO VITALITY], whose collocational range includes nouns for body conditions, such as *health*.

*Kriška* is a partitive word and typically collocates with nouns for solid food (*kriška sira / limuna*) in Serbian. In the collocation *kriška plavetnila*, it emphasizes the isolated patch of clear sky. Judging by the data in the BNC, the English noun *section* is restricted to scientific register, in which it denotes a separable segment of a whole (*section of society / circle*). We shall suggest the noun *sliver* [A SMALL PART/AMOUNT], which is equivalent to the Serbian noun in both meaning and usage, since it collocates with nouns for solid food (*sliver of cheese/lemon*), as well as with nouns for natural phenomena such as *moon*.

In a faltering voice he ordered his platoon to set out, keeping a distance at five paces between each man, then moved off himself to the killing. Shambling downhill into the even denser *buzz of bullets* and the stench of battle and fires, he formed the platoon
on Dušanova Street, thinking of Wren, cut through by a toothed bayonet, but perhaps still alive in a pool even now.

Čosić (1978; 1981)

In the broad semantic field of SOUND, the differences between the synonymous words lie partly in the intensity of the sounds they denote. The meaning of the noun buzz [A SIBILANT HUM, SUCH AS IS MADE BY BEES] does not correspond to the meaning of the Serbian noun zuka, as the latter denotes a sound shriller than a buzz. The appropriate nouns could be whizz and whistle, which equally depict an object moving swiftly through the air.

(8) Kad u našim liturgijama peva hor, kad ljudi pevaju u hramu, mene obuzme neka bezmerna tuga.

When the choir sings during our liturgy, when the people sing in a cathedral, I'm seized by an immeasurable sadness.

Čosić (1978; 1981)

The meaning of the adjectives bezmeran and immeasurable is [EXTREME IN STRENGTH OR DEGREE]. Both adjectives collocate with abstract nouns. However, the boundary of semantic prosody of the English adjective was overstepped in the TT, since its collocational range includes nouns for positive emotions, such as joy. Therefore, we suggest the word profound as a more appropriate adjective, which collocates with nouns for negative feelings, such as disappointment.

(9) Taj govor poslednjih dana često izgovara u sebi, kiti ga krupnim i uzbudljivim rečima.

In the past few days he had often delivered this speech to himself, embellishing it with grandiose and moving words.

Čosić (1978; 1981)

The collocation krupna reč in this context should be interpreted as a powerful and convincing word. The English collocation grandiose word carries derogatory association, since the meaning of the adjective grandiose is [EXAGGERATED/POMPOUS]. More appropriate adjectives would be weighty and striking, commonly used to describe the force of spoken/written words.

(10) Nastaje jarosna galama, svade i pretnje Pašiću.

A tremendous clamor broke out, with arguments and threats aimed at Pašić.

Čosić (1978; 1981)

The adjective jarostan is used to describe somebody as enraged. The English verb tremendous has a wider meaning [EXTRAORDINARILY GREAT], and does not imply resentment or anger. Considering the extra-linguistic context of an unfavourable situation described, we propose the adjectives fuming and raging, which hint at a negative position of the character in the circumstances.

(11) Čas je da strahom potkrepi i pokolebani i smračeni duh svoje vojske.

It was time to strengthen the vacillating and despondent spirit of his army with fear.

Čosić (1978; 1981)
The adjective *despondent* [VERY UNHAPPY] is used to describe people, and not abstractions. Consequently, the noun *spirit*, interpreted as disposition and vigour in actions, denotes a state of mind, which cannot be described as unhappy. An appropriate adjective could be *flagging* [DEPRIVED OF VIGOUR/WEAKENED], co-occurring with nouns *morale*, *energy* and *courage*.

(12) *Sa svojom krhkom lepotom*, svojim evropskim odelom i opremom, ona je izgledala kao luksuzna, sitna stvar koju su izgubili neki putnici, prelazeći preko ovog planinskih visa, na putu iz jednog velikog grada u drugi. *With her brittle beauty*, her Western dress and outfit, she was like a precious and frail thing missed on the mountain heights by some travellers en route from one great city to another.

Andrić (1962; 1986)

The primary meaning of *krhak* is [EASILY BROKEN], whereas its figurative meaning is [PERISHABLE/OFT WEEK CONSTITUTION]. The adjective *brittle* in its primary meaning [EASILY BROKEN] collocates with nouns for objects liable to break (*bone/twig*), but its figurative meaning [UNSTABLE] is restricted to nouns for relations or conditions (*peace/truce*). Neither of the meanings allows for a combination with the noun *beauty*. Judging by the patterns in the BNC, we suggest the adjective *fragile* [EASILY DAMAGED].

(13) *Sašenjka, tako si uvek bio nemaran prema – govori ona sinu – najlepši i najsrećniji časovi u mom životu skočani su bili s tako užasnim naporom, da ih se još uvek sećam.* "Sashenka, you always neglect me so", she says to her son. "The finest and happiest hours of my life were connected with such excruciating effort that I remember them still."

Pavić (1990; 1996)

The adjective *excruciating* [CAUSING EXTREME BODILY OR MENTAL PAIN] exaggerates the quality of effort beyond the degree implied by the adjective *užasan* in the Serbian text. Most probably, Serbian adjective was interpreted as [HORRIBLE] or [PAINFUL]. We suggest the adjective *valiant* [CHARACTERIZED BY THE USE OF STRENGTH], which recurrently collocates with the noun *effort*.

3.1.2. NON-EQUIVALENCE + INCONGRUENCE

The sample of formally incongruent units includes pairs of ST words and TT collocations. We have found that the equivalence is debatable in the following examples:

(1) *Ona vide sebe kraj tog u stvari još nepoznatog mladića na kalemegdanskoj klupi, vide sebe kako bira reći koje će reći da mu objasni zašto ga je sve zvala, ali tako da mu sve lepo objasni, zainteresuje, zaintrigira, zaludi, pa da on prvi počne.* She could just see herself on a park bench beside that still unknown young man feeling for the words to explain to him why she had so persistently summoned him here, striving to do it in such a pleasant way that she might engage his interest, prompt his curiosity, turn his head indeed, so he might take the first step.

Davić (1952; 1959)
In general terms, the verb *zaintrigirati* [INTRIGUE] denotes a process of causing somebody to experience inquisitiveness and earnest direction of the mind. The proposed English verb *prompt* [STIR/PROVOKE/ENCOURAGE], however, does not collocate with nouns for mental capacities, as these cannot be incited to action. We suggest the verb *arouse* [CAUSE TO HAVE A REACTION OR EXPERIENCE A FEELING], which would be compatible with the noun *curiosity*, since its collocational range includes nouns for emotional conditions and mental responses, e.g. envy, sympathy, interest.

(2) Tvojim pričama o Vilinom Konjicu. Prvom kojom si je *zagolicao*, drugima kojima si htio da ugasni plamen.

By all that silly talk of yours about a "Mayfly" he told himself, bitterly, the first time he called Mitia that, doing so to *awake Anna's interest*, then going on playing with the comparison in an attempt to quench the flame.

Davićo (1952; 1959)

The verb *zagolicati*, in its figurative meaning [AROUSE INTEREST], denotes an action of moving someone to a feeling of curiosity through something puzzling or fascinating. Instead of the collocation *awake interest*, we propose *spark interest*, because this collocation would be likewise vivid.

(3) Jedan general po prirodi svoga posla ima pravo na nepamćenje pa sme da zaboravi, ali jedan profesor koji predaje istoriju duhovnog stvaralaštva, istoriju umetnosti, nema pravo na nepamćenje i ne sme da zaboravi da su nas oduvek varali oni moći, Rusi i Englezi.

In the nature of his job a general has the right to a *poor memory* and could forget, but a professor who lectured on history of spiritual creativity, the history of art, had no such right and must not forget that we have always been betrayed by the powerful, the Russians and the British.


In English, there is no word with a meaning equal to that of *nepamćenje*; the potential equivalent *forgetfulness* corresponds to the noun *zaboravljanje*. In the given context, the negative prefix *ne-* serves to deny the existence of the denotatum of the noun. Moreover, *nepamćenje* does not refer to one's inability to retain the thought of things past, but emphasizes one's neglect, disregard and suppression of what one has experienced or learnt. Since the collocation *poor memory* means [INADEQUATE CAPACITY TO REMEMBER], we suggest *short / failing memory*, which would also lay stress upon one’s disposition to commit things to oblivion.

4. CONCLUSION

The objective we set for our assessment was an appraisal of translation action regarding (a) the interpretation of the content of ST collocations and the interrelation between the denotation/connotation of the words combined and (b) the formation of collocations in the TT with a view of achieving equivalence by lexical choices in accordance with the collocational restrictions and ranges of the TL words. Pursuing this line of ar-
gumentation, the research has brought into focus the significance of attentive thought on collocations in the process of translation, and it may serve as a commentary on what difficulties may arise in translating at word level. Even though we have challenged the shortcomings of the translation decisions in the analysis, we did not wish to estimate the TTs concerning their excellence or worth, nor did we attempt to postulate practice proper to translation at word level.

Notwithstanding that rendering of the ST collocations examined above produced formally congruent collocations in the TT in most cases, the pairs have not proved to be of equivalent content. Furthermore, some of the TT collocations are not in accordance with the norms and potentials of collocability in the TL, which we believe to be a crucial parameter in translating collocations, since an anomalous lexical pattern cannot be an instrument of equivalence. In cases of formal incongruence, which is a result of translation shift, SL words were translated by TT collocations, whose equivalence is, yet, debatable, also for the aforementioned reasons. We hold that formal congruence in translation is not of high priority, as translation shifts may be the translator's attempt to achieve equivalence by opting for a form different than that of the ST unit.

With respect to the non-equivalence of collocational content and non-compliance with the collocational restrictions and ranges of the words in the TL, the analysis has indicated two types of collocational errors in translation:

1) Non-transference of the content of a ST collocation, which may be the result of oversight in the interpretation of its content or in the interpretation of the denotative/connotative meaning of the words combined;

2) Unconventionality or irregularity of the TT collocation which does not meet the requirements of collocational restrictions, collocational ranges and/or semantic prosody of the TL words.

In addition, we find that a corpus of authentic TL use, such as the BNC, should be an indispensable translation tool which may enable translators to check their decisions against reliable evidence of TL patterning routines, especially in cases when they differ substantially from those of the ST. Despite the want of precision in collocability principles, authentic corpora should reveal regularity in TL lexical patterning which the translator should be mindful of to avoid turning aside from typical distribution of words in the TL. Through an in-depth analysis of factual lexical patterns, the translator can infer the factors by which certain words recurrently collocate in the TL. The awareness of operative SL and TL collocability frameworks together with an endeavour to reproduce the content of SL collocations in the TT should be the driving force behind the act of translation at word level.

REFERENCES

**NEEKVIVALENTNOST SRPSKIH I ENGLESKIH KOLOKACIJA U KNJIŽEVNOM PREVOĐENJU**

Violeta Stojičić

Rad prikazuje istraživanje koje smo sproveli na kolokacijama u objavljenim engleskim prevodima srpskih književnih tekstova. Analizu paralelnog uzorka izvršili smo s osvrtom na doslednost u prenošenju sadržine kolokacija u izvorniku u tekst prevoda, u procesu postizanja prevodne ekvivalentnosti na nivou reći. Uzorak koji smo ovdje ispitali obuhvata primere odnosa neekvivalentnosti među kolokacijama izvornika i prevoda. Ispitane kolokacije u prevodu ukazuju na to da neekvivalentnost nije samo rezultat nedoslednosti u sadržini, već i nepoštovanja tipičnih kolokacijskih obrazaca u jeziku prevoda i zapreka koje nameću opsezi kolociranja i/ili semantička prozodija udruženih reći.

Ključne reći: kolokacija, ekvivalentnost, kongruentnost