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Challenges and Strategies of Translating COVID-19 Adjective-Noun and Noun-Noun Collocations from English into Arabic

Sameer Naser Olimat [a*], Dana Mahadin [b], Nisreen Naji Al-Khawaldeh [c], Zakaryia Almahasees [d]

[a] *Department of English Language and Literature, Faculty of Arts, The Hashemite University, P.O. Box 330127, Zarqa 13133, Jordan. Email: solimat@hu.edu.jo*

[b] *English Language Department, Salt Faculty of Human Sciences, Al-Balqa Applied University, Jordan. Email: d.mahadin@bau.edu.jo*

[c] *Department of English Language and Literature, Faculty of Arts, The Hashemite University, P.O. Box 330127, Zarqa 13133, Jordan. Email: nal-khawaldeh@hu.edu.jo*

[d] *Applied Science Private University, Department of English Language and Translation, Faculty of Arts and Science, Amman, Jordan. Email: z_almhasees@asu.edu.jo*

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Abstract
Collocations are used extensively in the English language, but their rendition into Arabic may prove problematic for translators. Difficulties in translating collocations can be exacerbated by their novelty and the speed with which they enter the lexicon. The unprecedented increase in research on the current pandemic has been due to a big public demand for COVID-19 related information, and equally bigger demand for translating that information into a language that the public can understand. The translation of COVID-19 collocations into Arabic can be challenging for the trainee translators who are inundated with new terms and phrases. The present study aimed to investigate the difficulties and procedures trainee translators used while rendering the lexical COVID-19 collocations from English into Arabic. A sample of 72 bachelor students at two Jordanian universities was asked to translate 15 English COVID-19 collocations within contextual sentences into Arabic. The selected collocations were chosen from the WHO website. The findings show that the participants faced several translation difficulties due to cultural and linguistic disparities between English and Arabic as well as the participants' insufficient knowledge about the novel virus. Data analysis indicates that participants used several translation techniques, such as equivalence, literal translation, reduction, synonymy, paraphrase, transposition, and couplet. The study concludes that translator training programs need to pay closer attention to trainees' extra-linguistic skills with specific focus on cultural awareness.

Keywords: COVID-19; English-Arabic Translation; Collocation; Adjective-Noun Collocation, Noun-Noun Collocation

* Corresponding Author.
Email: solimat@hu.edu.jo
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Introduction

In January 2020, when the World Health Organization (WHO) proclaimed COVID-19 a global pandemic, voluminous information on the virus and ongoing scientific research was provided in public domain. It introduced new terms, neologisms, and collocations using various word-formation processes (Saleh, 2021). The COVID-19 explosion in information has been described as an infodemic (WHO, 2020), and has highlighted the instrumental role of translation in bridging the communication gap between languages and communities. Translation continues to be the vehicle that provides the general public with accurate health information in a language they understand to protect themselves against the disease.

The introduction of COVID-19 terms and collocations which require appropriate Arabic equivalents can be traced from the onset of the pandemic (Haddad Haddad & Montero Martínez, 2020). In WHO's bid to educate the public, COVID-19 was described as 'pneumonia of unknown cause', 'novel coronavirus', 'Coronavirus Disease 2019', and 'COVID-19' (Haddad Haddad & Montero Martínez, 2020). Although the role of translation in health crises has recently received growing interest, the pandemic has underscored its role in providing access to reliable health information in a language that the public can understand (O'Brien & Cadwell, 2017; Olimat & Mahadin, 2022). This has also been coupled with calls to better prepare language mediators to assist in the dissemination of information (Federici & o'Brien, 2019; Olimat & Mahadin, 2022).

Equal access to information in the 21st century assumes great importance as one examines the status quo where English is the lingua franca of science and technology (Drubin & Kellogg, 2012; Foyewa, 2015). In addition, English is the dominant language used on the internet (Kamel, 2020). Unlike Arabic content online, which stands at a meager 1-3%, English content, constitutes 65% of online content. Despite Arabic language's modest presence online, however, Arabic is spoken by over 400 million native speakers worldwide (Kamel, 2020), many of whom cannot speak or understand English. This means that Arabic speakers need to access COVID-19 reliable information in Arabic to safeguard themselves against the disease. This digital chasm raises questions on equal access to accurate COVID-19 health information on the internet. Additionally, it heightens the importance of translation as a vehicle to bridge this gap which is manifest in numerous translation studies (TS) and calls for initiatives to provide translated COVID-19 content to as many language speakers as possible (TICO-19, 2020; Way et al., 2020).

In addition to the wealth of data by the medical and scientific community on the virus, scholars from other fields have also engaged with the pandemic. Linguists, for example, have investigated the euphemistic and dysphemistic aspects of COVID-19 terminology (Olimat, 2020a), and have analyzed the discursive strategies used at COVID-19 daily press conferences (Sultan & Rapi, 2020). Other studies have explored COVID-19 metaphorical and rhetorical devices in presidential and governmental speeches as well as media texts (Alyeksyeyeva, Kaptiurova, & Orlova, 2021; Laongpol, 2021; Olimat, 2020a). Some studies have utilized a corpus-based approach to examine the media coverage of the pandemic (Kim, 2020; Yu, Lu, & Hu, 2021). Other studies have reported on the numerous COVID-19 neologisms, collocations, and word formation processes in different languages, such as English, Arabic, Italian, and Indonesian (Al-Dala'iena, Al-Daherb, Al-Rousanc, Al-Shbould, & Zabadie, 2022; Galal, 2022; Saleh, 2021; Suparno, Abshar, Mulyadi, & Iroth, 2021). The study at hand comes in response to calls highlighting the need to examine the translation of COVID-19 terms into different languages (Saleh, 2021), and the fact that TS research on COVID-19 remains scant.

There is however a dearth of research and analytical investigation on translations of COVID-19 collocations from English into Arabic. The current research aimed to fill this research gap and contribute to TS by providing fresh insights into the activity of translating English collocations into Arabic during an evolving health crisis, where new terms are continually being added into the lexicon. Moreover, this research would be beneficial for the community of translators and linguists, as well as the broad sector of Arabic-native professionals and the general public by producing appropriate Arabic translations of English COVID-19 collocations.

Literature Review

- ***Translation of Collocations***

In various studies (Bell, 1991; Catford, 1965; House, 2001), translation is described as a process of finding or reproducing a close equivalent of the original expression in another language. Translation is not seen as the literal rendition of single words or individual expressions, rather it is the activity of finding natural combinations of certain words occurring with other words in another language since each language has its own unique style, structure, and features. The possibility of translation between two languages remains, despite rapid technological developments, a major theme in TS debates (Baker, 2018; Bassnett, 1997; Bassnett, 2002; Bell, 1991; Catford, 1965; Chesterman, 2012; Hatim & Munday, 2005; House, 2001; Newmark, 1987; Nida, 1964; Pym & Turk, 2001; Snell-Hornby, 1988; Toury, 1980).

As a common linguistic device in language, collocation has been examined by many linguists and translation theorists for its role in maintaining coherence and structure; both in the source language (SL) and the target language (TL) (Baker, 2018; Firth, 1957; Halliday & Hasan, 1976; Leech, 1974; Lorscher, 1991; Newmark, 1987; Palmer, 1986; Sinclair, 1997, 2004; Vinay & Darbelnet, 1995). For Larson (1984), "collocation is concerned with how words go together, i.e., which words may occur in constructions with other words" (p.141). Similarly, collocation is important to language acquisition and comprehension, and various scholars have advocated focusing on larger chunks of language rather than separate words to enhance understanding of how words go together (Nattinger, 1980; Schmitt & McCarthy, 2008). This can also be relevant to translation activity, in which the success of meaning transfer relies in great part on the linguistic and cultural competence of translators (EMT, 2017), who endeavor to find or reproduce appropriate equivalents for target readers (Bell, 1991; Catford, 1965). The importance of collocations in TS is manifest in Newmark (1987) view of collocations as the "nerves of the text" (p.213) and their central role in linguistic communication (Abu-Ssaydeh, 2007).

Palmer (1986) contends that the intended meaning of collocations is often "idiosyncratic" (p.79); that is, it cannot be understood based on the propositional meaning of the associated words. Likewise, Baker (2018) underscores the difficulty of translating collocations into other languages since collocational patterns within or across languages are largely arbitrary and independent of meaning. Hence, translating collocations remains a problematic issue for translators since what can be combined lexically together or what can co-occur regularly in a given language may sound inappropriate in another language. Therefore, translating collocations between two discrete language systems, such as English and Arabic, is a tremendous challenge for translators (Bahumaid, 2006; Baker, 2018; Newmark, 1987). The successful transfer of the collocational meaning and structure requires recognizing the collocation combination as a meaningful unit, capturing the whole original connotative meaning, and finding a close target equivalent that considers linguistic and cultural variations (Hatim & Munday, 2005). A recent study recommended the development of a unified glossary of COVID-19 terminology in Arabic and English which could serve as a vital resource for translators to overcome linguistic and cultural disparities (Olimat & Mahadin, 2022).

The difficulty in translating collocations is clearly illustrated by Newmark (1987) who contends that rendering collocations from the SL into the TL is "a continual struggle to find appropriate collocations." (p.213) Similarly, Baker (2018) indicates that the collocational patterns of any language system often depend on their "unique meanings different from or exceeding the sum of the meaning of its individual elements" (p.60). This in turn results in unavoidable translation problems, such as "loss, addition, or skewing of meaning" (p.63). Thus, translating collocations based on separating them into singular lexical constituents could cause misunderstanding of the original meaning for two main reasons; first, the whole meaning of the collocation may be completely different from the meaning of its separate components. Second, each language has its own varied collocational structures which present unique linguistic features, figurative images, and expressive meaning.

Specifically, Badziński (2018) stresses that sufficient attention should be given to the translation of collocations in the language of medicine, since collocations constitute a commonly used device in medical and health communication. Translating medical collocations is challenging due to the density of specialized terminology and specific meanings, which are main features of the medical register (Gledhill, 2000). Specialized dictionaries may provide some help in recognizing new terms and collocations. Having said that, however, the fast-paced nature of medical research today, the large amount of published data, and the introduction of newly coined words and collocations make it difficult to find an acceptable equivalent in the TL. This is particularly true of the current pandemic which has seen unprecedented research and publication on COVID-19. Failure to find Arabic equivalents for English COVID-19 collocations may result in misunderstanding or misrepresentation of essential precautionary or medical information for Arabic-native speakers, which may be detrimental to health. Thus, reproducing attainable Arabic equivalents of English COVID-19 collocations is a priority, particularly as the pandemic continues to mutate, and demand for information continues to grow.

- ***COVID-19 Related Translation Research***

Although TS research is engaged with the COVID-19 pandemic, its focus has been limited to a few areas, such as translator training, information access, and word coinage. In terms of translators' training, studies have examined trainees' perspectives on assessment and online learning obstacles (AlOneen, 2020); explored electronic learning and teaching techniques of translation during the pandemic (Nugroho, Basari, Suryaningtyas, & Cahyono, 2020); and analyzed the most commonly used techniques by translation students to transfer English COVID-19 comics into Balinese Indonesian (Umiyati & Susanthi, 2020). However, no study has investigated trainees' treatment of COVID-19 collocations.

TS research has also highlighted the fundamental role of translation in facilitating quick access to information during the pandemic, where information flow is voluminous and unprecedented (Olimat & Mahadin, 2022; Olimat, 2019; Wang, 2019). Research has explored the role of translation in social media, specifically that of Facebook Translation Service (FTS) in providing accurate health information during the COVID-19 lockdown (Almahasees & Jaccomard, 2020). To address the dominance of English on the internet as the lingua franca of

science and medicine (Lee-Jahnke, 1998), TS has facilitated access to accurate multilingual COVID-19 content online. This has been made possible through training several Machine Translation (MT) engines to provide content in a number of languages online (Way et al., 2020). The drawback, however, is that these MT engines focus predominantly on European languages, such as German, French, Italian, and Spanish into English, while other languages, such as Arabic, tend to be overlooked (Olimat, 2020b).

The Translation Initiative for COVID-19 or TICO-19 is a globally inclusive project offering access to emergency COVID-19 information in 35 different languages, particularly those most vulnerable in Africa, South Asia, and South-East Asia. It popularized COVID-19 terminology accessible for language service providers (LSPs), the MT research community, professional translators, and even volunteers to enhance MTs consistency and accuracy (TICO-19, 2020). Providing translation of English COVID-19 information from multiple sources, such as PubMed and Facebook, the project underscores the vital role translation technology plays in crisis-related situations. Similarly, He, Wang, Thaker, and Zou (2020) facilitated information access and addressed term-mismatch problems through the development of a retrieval system to help lay people access the voluminous COVID-19 Open Research Dataset (CORD-19). This system relies for its operation on finding corresponding medical terminology of layman's keywords using the National Library of Medicine's Consumer Health Vocabulary and Centre for Disease Control's (CDC) FAQ questions. Despite its limited scope, it helped the general public to avoid problems related to term-mismatch and expedite their navigation of medical terms in scholarly collections.

New terminology poses significant challenges for translators during a pandemic as evidenced by Haddad Haddad and Montero Martínez (2020). This English-Arabic corpus-based study examined the metonymic use and communicative function of the term 'coronavirus' across English and Arabic media. The study found that the scientific research community used the name of the disease and its infectious viral agent accurately compared to the media's confusing use and misunderstanding of the term.

To conclude, although TS research has been engaged with the pandemic, the research remains limited, and there is an urgent need for further research that can illuminate the role of TS in times of crises. As the public's demand for information continues to grow in languages other than English, so does the need for translation. The current research contributes to TS by investigating translation trainees' difficulties and procedures in rendering English COVID-19 collocations into Arabic at a time where COVID-19 terminology is being produced at an unprecedented rate. The research findings can inform scientific translation training needs from English into Arabic, assist translator trainers in assessing the success of their teaching methods, and help translation trainees evaluate their translation techniques, research skills, and ability to handle new terminology which may have no Arabic equivalent.

Methodology

- ***Instrument of Research***

In the present study, a translation test was used as an instrument to investigate translation trainees' difficulties and procedures of transferring English COVID-19 collocations into Arabic. The translation test included 15 COVID-19 collocations divided into 7 adjective-nouns and 8 noun-nouns. These two lexical types of collocations were chosen for two main reasons. First, two-word collocations are commonly used in language (Benson, 1985) where the collocation classification is heavily dependent on the grammatical combination of word classes (Cruse, 1977). Second, the choice of such grammatical descriptions makes understanding and translating collocations easier for the study participants (Aziz, 1982). The high frequency of these two types seems clearly evident in previous TS studies (Cowie, 1998; Gledhill, 2000; Nesselhauf, 2005). The investigated 15 collocations were chosen randomly from WHO website. The collocations were part of complete sentences with sufficient contextual clues in order to assist the participants in deciphering their intended meaning.

A panel of three university professors from three different Jordanian universities with a wide teaching and research experience in translation and applied linguistics evaluated the test validity. The professors were asked to provide their comments and suggestions. Constructive feedback provided a number of changes. These included reducing the number of the investigated COVID-19 collocations in the translation test into half, i.e., 30 to 15. The rationale behind this change was due to the recentness of the disease which demands extensive research and knowledge. The panel also suggested limiting the investigation to the two prevalent types of lexical collocations in the scientific register, i.e., adjective-noun and noun-noun (Gledhill, 2000). All proposed changes were incorporated into the study.

The test reliability was evaluated through using a translation pre-test by three students, who were not part of the sample (Harkness, 2003). Their feedback provided useful and constructive comments. They were asked to determine the approximate time the participant would need to complete the translation test. Like the university professors, they acknowledged the novelty of the COVID-19 disease stressing that translating such English lexical collocations into Arabic requires general and domain-specific knowledge relevant to the virus. Consequently, the participants were given the translation test as a one-day homework assignment.

- ***Sampling and population***

The main objective of this study was to analyze translation trainees' difficulties and techniques in rendering COVID-19 collocations from English into Arabic. To achieve this, a sample of 72 undergraduate translation students at two Jordanian universities; including 38 participants from Yarmouk University and 34 participants from Petra University, for the academic year 2020/2021, was chosen to participate in the translation test. The two universities were selected as they included a high number of translation students from over the country due to their good reputation, and they offered a bachelor's degree in Translation.

All participants were graduates of the Jordanian education system and had studied English for at least twelve years at school. According to both university regulations, students are not allowed to enroll into translation courses until they had successfully passed the basic compulsory and elective English courses, such as Paragraph Writing, Listening and Speaking, Basic Grammar, and Reading Comprehension. In addition, all participants were native speakers of Arabic and had taken, at least, three Arabic language courses as a compulsory requirement of their study plan. This ensured to some degree that they had met the minimum level of language competence required for their translation courses. The enthusiasm and efficiency of both universities' students were evidently reflected in completing the translation tests. The general demographic information, such as gender and level of education, was obtained, but its influence on the translation quality and accuracy was not analyzed due to the limited size of the participants. The sample consisted of 17 males and 55 females. In terms of education level, the participants comprised 24 third-year and 48 fourth-year students.

- ***Research Procedure***

Before taking the translation test, all trainees had completed several translation courses and had the basic expertise in the use of various translator tools and aids including search engines, specialized glossaries, machine translation, and computer assisted translation tools (CAT). They were encouraged to use the internet to consult online terminological glossaries and collocational databases on COVID-19. They were also advised to refer to official websites of global organizations, such as WHO and CDC, to raise their awareness of COVID-19 information.

The translation techniques adopted by participants were examined in the light of Newmark (1987). The success or failure of the Arabic translation of English COVID-19 collocations was evaluated to find out whether the participants' translation choices conveyed the original meaning through using natural and appropriate equivalents (Baker, 2018; Nida, 1964). In analyzing the participants' translations, the research relied on Descriptive Translation Studies (DTS) (Holmes, 1972; Toury, 1980), which aims "to describe what translations actually are, rather than simply prescribing how they should be" (Pym & Turk, 2001). Product-oriented DTS analysis of the dataset provides an opportunity to examine the translation choices which students had made and highlighted the areas where further training was needed. In addition, the Arabic version of both the WHO website and Translator without Borders' glossary of COVID-19 terminology was consulted to help in checking the accuracy of the participants' translations and differences. Table 1 is the evidence of this difference:

Table 1: *Collocation Translation Cross Referencing*

English Collocation	World Health Organization Website	Translators without Borders (TWB) Glossary
Novel Coronavirus	فيروس كورونا المستجد	-----
Clinical Trials	تجارب سريرية	تجارب سريرية
Medical Masks	الأقنعة الطبية	الأقنعة الطبية
Key Workers	العاملين الأساسيين	------
Physical Distancing	التباعد الجسدي	التباعد الجسدي
Social Distancing	التباعد الاجتماعي	-----
Viral Shedding	التناثر الفيروسي	-----
Containment Measures	تدابير احتواء	-----
Incubation Period	فترة الحضانة	فترة الحضانة
Community Transmission	انتقال مجتمعي	انتقال العدوى داخل المجتمع
Hand Sanitizer	مطهر اليدين	معقم اليدين
Contact Tracing	تتبع المخالطين	تتبع المخالطين
Herd Immunity	مناعة القطيع المناعة المجتمعية	-----
In-person Services	الخدمات المقدّمة وجها لوجه	------
Droplet Transmission	انتقال العدوى عبر الرذاذ	-------

Results

The present study explores the difficulties of translating certain English COVID-19 collocations into Arabic encountered by translation trainees "as a result of differences in the lexical patterning" (Baker, 2018). It also addresses the most frequently used procedures for translating these lexical collocations. The data analysis and results of the study to be presented below are categorized according to the lexical type of collocation: adjective-noun and noun-noun.

- ***Adjective-Noun Collocations***

The participants were asked to translate 7 adjective-noun COVID-19 collocations from English into Arabic. Table 2 illustrates the frequency and percentage of the adopted translation techniques by the participants, followed by a comprehensive analysis of their translation choices.

Table 2: *The participants' translation techniques of adjective-noun collocations*

Adjective-noun Collocation	Literal Translation	Equivalence	Reduction	Paraphrase	Synonymy	Transposition	Omission	Unacceptable Translation
Novel Coronavirus	49 (67.8%)	7 (9.8%)	15 (21%)	-----	-----	-----	-----	1 (1.4%)
Clinical Trial	-----	67 (93.1%)	-----	-----	1 (1.4%)	-----	-----	4 (5.5%)
Medical Masks	-----	60 (83.3%)	-----	10 (13.9%)	1 (1.4%)	1 (1.4%)	-----	-----
Key Workers	-----	29 (40.3%)	43 (59.7)	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----
Physical Distancing	-----	63 (87.5%)	-----	-----	4 (5.6%)	-----	-----	5 (7%)
Social Distancing	-----	65 (90.2%)	-----	-----	7 (9.8%)	-----	-----	-----
Viral Shedding	-----	3 (4.2%)	-----	-----	2 (2.8%)	-----	3 (4.2%)	64 (88.8%)

Example 1: Novel Coronavirus

Out of 72 students sampled for the study, about two-third (49 participants), used literal translation when rendering *Novel Coronavirus* into فيروس كورونا الجديد. However, 15 participants resorted to reduction as a translation procedure where a TL noun was only used instead of a SL adjective plus noun (Newmark, 1987). They omitted the first part of the English collocation, i.e., adjective, in their translations, i.e., فيروس كورونا. They may have been influenced by the frequent use of this abbreviated term in daily language and social media. Only 7 participants provided an accurate Arabic equivalent, i.e., فيروس كورونا المستجد. One participant produced an unacceptable translation when rendering the collocation into كورونا الأول.

Example 2: Clinical Trial

The majority of the participants succeeded in translating this English collocation when using an Arabic equivalent, i.e., تجارب سريرية. One participant provided "a near TL equivalent" (Newmark, 1987) to substitute the SL adjective of the collocation, i.e., تجارب طبية. There are some subtle differences in the idiomatic use and collocational combination between طبية and سريرية in Arabic where the latter relates to the direct observation and treatment of the actual patient rather than theoretical or laboratory studies. For example, Arabic speakers can say طواقم طبية not طواقم سريرية, but they can say تجارب سريرية not تجارب طبية. Finally, 4 participants also provided an unacceptable translation, i.e., محاكمات سريرية.

Example 3: Medical Masks

The analysis shows that 60 participants succeeded in rendering this adjective-noun collocation by using a proper equivalent in Arabic, i.e., أقنعة طبية. One participant adopted a synonymous idiomatic expression commonly used in daily language, i.e., كمامات طبية. Another participant used a distinctive procedure, i.e., 'shift' (Catford, 1965) or 'transposition' (Vinay & Darbelnet, 1995), in which a grammatical change, such as singular instead of plural, from the SL to the TL was involved, i.e., قناع طبي. According to Newmark (1987), translators may adopt such a technique in order to produce a natural TT (pp.85-88). However, 10 participants provided a much more detailed explanation, i.e., paraphrase, أقنعة الوجه أو الكمامة.

Example 4: Key Workers

The data analysis shows that only 29 participants provided an Arabic equivalent, i.e., العاملين الأساسين. By contrast, 43 participants relied on reduction in their translations by limiting the intended meaning of the collocation to the workers in the medical sector. In more detail, 40 participants chose العاملين في مجال الصحة, and 3 others used a frequent idiomatic expression in Arabic, i.e., الطواقم الطبية. They may have resorted to such

incomplete translations due to the existence of medicine-related words in the original English sentence, such as *health, emergency, relief, treatments, and vaccines.*

Example 5: Physical Distancing

The analysis shows that 63 participants produced an equivalent translation in Arabic, i.e. التباعد الجسدي. The high percentage of this accurate rendition may be due to the frequent use of this collocation in the media advocating the importance of implementing physical distancing by people. The analysis shows that 4 participants provided a synonymous collocation in Arabic, i.e., المباعدة الجسدية. Newmark (1987) defined synonym as "a TL near equivalent to a SL word in a context, where a precise equivalent may or may not exist." (p.84). However, 2 participants failed to convey the original meaning when relying on the dictionary or denotative meaning of each single word in the collocation. They used النفور البدني 'bodily repulsion', which is not compatible with the context. Similarly, 3 participants might have misunderstood and hence mistranslated this lexical collocation when using another common collocation in Arabic التباعد الاجتماعي, which means 'social distancing' in English.

Example 6: Social Distancing

The data analysis reveals that 65 participants, constituting more than 90% of the sample, provided an appropriate equivalent, i.e., التباعد الاجتماعي. The high percentage of producing this correct translation is likely due to the prevalence of this collocational combination in social media platforms and global news channels highlighting the importance of maintaining safe social distance to minimize infections. The high success rate in translating this collocation supports findings on how such terms have gained "social currency" (Saleh, 2021), as they have become part and parcel of everyday life, rather than just dictionary entries. In the same vein, 7 participants used a close equivalent in Arabic, i.e., المسافة الاجتماعية, which may share most of the constituents with التباعد الاجتماعي, but they are still different in some respects (Baker, 2018; Nida, 1964).

Example 7: Viral Shedding

The analysis shows that 63 participants, constituting 88.8% of the sample, provided various unsuccessful translations, such as حضانة الفيروس، انتهاء الفيروس, الإصابة بالفيروس، تلاشي الفيروس، افرازات الفيروس، تساقط الفيروس and زوال الفيروس. They may have depended on the literal translation of this specialized collocation. Surprisingly, 3 participants resorted to a complete deletion of the collocation. According to Ivacovoni (2009), omission is a translation procedure in which a word or words from the original text are dropped due to cultural and linguistic clashes between the SL and the TL. Those participants may have used this technique because of the difficulty of such a recent collocation that may not have a full equivalent in Arabic. Finally, only 3 participants provided an appropriate equivalent in Arabic, i.e., التناثر الفيروسي while 2 participants offered a near correspondence, i.e., الانتشار الفيروسي.

- ***Noun-Noun Collocations***

The participants were asked to translate 8 noun-noun COVID-19 collocations from English into Arabic. Table 2 shows the frequency and percentage of the used translation techniques by the participants, followed by a comprehensive analysis of their translation choices.

Table 2: *The participants' translation techniques of noun-noun collocations*

Noun-noun Collocation	Literal Translation	Equivalence	Reduction	Paraphrase	Synonymy	Transposition	Couplet	Omission	Unacceptable Translation
Containment Measures	-----	56 (77.8%)	9 (12.5%)	4 (5.5%)	2 (2.8%)	-----	1 (1.4%)	-----	-----
Contact Tracing	5 (7%)	4 (5.5%)	-----	-----	55 (76.4%)	-----	-----	-----	8 (11.2%)
Herd Immunity	57 (79.2%)	-----	2 (2.8%)	6 (8.3%)	-----	-----	3 (4.2%)	4 (5.5%)	-----
In-person Services	71 (98.6%)	-----	-----	-----	1 (1.4%)	-----	-----	-----	-----
Incubation Period	-----	66 (91.7%)	-----	6 (8.3%)	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----
Community Transmission	-----	30 (41.6%)	-----	42 (58.4%)	7 (9.8%)	-----	-----	-----	-----
Hand Sanitizers	-----	72 (100%)	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----
Droplet Transmission	-----	71 (98.6%)	-----	1 (1.4%)	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----

Example 1: Containment Measures

The data analysis shows that 56 participants, more than three quarters of the sample, used an appropriate equivalent, i.e., تدابير احتواء. Another 2 participants provided synonymous expressions i.e., إجراءات احتواء and أساليب احتواء, even though these two expressions did not co-occur regularly or highly in the Arabic language. However, 9 participants deleted the first noun of this lexical English collocation, transferring it into أساليب or تدابير. In addition, one participant omitted the first noun of this collocation, but s/he added a synonymous word for the second noun, i.e., تدابير وإجراءات. This participant might have used this procedure to compensate for the loss of meaning that resulted from deleting the first part of the collocation (Newmark, 1987). Finally, 4 participants offered inappropriate translations and explanations of the collocation, such as تدابير سيطرة، طرق فعالة، and تدابير لازمة.

Example 2: Contact Tracing

Only 4 participants provided appropriate Arabic translations of this lexical collocation, i.e., تتبع المخالطين and تقصي المخالطين. However, 56 participants, constituting more than three quarters of the sample, offered a near synonym for the collocation, i.e., تعقب المخالطين. This near synonym may express certain nuances in Arabic in terms of meaning, implications, and connotations, but these nuances may have been disregarded by the participants. Therefore, translators should pay better attention to such subtle differences of meaning between the SL and the TL. Finally, 5 participants provided literal translations, such as اقتفاء أثر المخالطين and تحديد أثر المخالطين while 8 participants provided an unsuccessful translation, i.e., تتبع الاتصال.

Example 3: Herd Immunity

The analysis shows that 57 participants, comprising more than three quarters of the sample, relied completely on literal translation when rendering this collocation into Arabic. They produced a translation that is deemed socially unacceptable with derogatory connotations in the Arabic culture, i.e., مناعة القطيع, which is frequently used in western communities. Another surprising result is that 4 participants completely deleted this collocation in their translations, and 2 other participants overgeneralized the lexical meaning of the collocation by using a broader or more general term in Arabic, i.e., المناعة (Klaudy, 2003). Omission and generalization are translation techniques usually used to accommodate cultural and stylistic differences between the SL and the TL although they produce some amount of translation loss (Klaudy, 2003; Nida, 1964). However, 3 participants used a couplet approach (Newmark, 1987) combining a literal translation, i.e., مناعة القطيع, with an added scientific definition in brackets i.e. (أو ما يعرف بمناعة الجماعة التي تعرف بأنها شكل من أشكال الحماية غير المباشرة من مرض معد وتحدث عندما تكسب نسبة كبيرة من المجتمع مناعة لعدوى معينة). Participants may have used this procedure to compensate for loss of meaning as a result of cultural and social variations between Arabic and English (ibid). Finally, 6 participants provided two paraphrases or explanations, i.e., مناعة البشرية and مناعة الناس.

Example 4: In-person Services

The results indicate that 71 participants provided an inaccurate Arabic translation, i.e., الخدمات الشخصية. Those participants relied wholly on the literal translation approach although it may fail in conveying the intended meaning of many lexical collocations (Baker, 2018). The collective new meaning of this collocation is the services which are physically provided in person by the taxpayer, i.e., الخدمات المقدّمة وجهًا لوجه. Only 1 participant provided a near synonym, i.e., الخدمات المباشرة, which suggests a close, but incomplete rendition of the collocation.

Example 5: Incubation Period

The analysis reveals that 66 participants, constituting more than 90% of the sample, provided an accurate Arabic equivalent, i.e., فترة الحضانة. This correct translation may be influenced by the frequent use of this collocation in social media platforms, daily news conferences, global organizations' websites, and newspaper reports. However, 6 participants paraphrased it to فترة حضانة المرض adding more information to the target reader (Newmark, 1987).

Example 6: Community Transmission

The analysis shows that 30 participants provided an equivalent translation for this lexical noun-noun collocation when using انتقال مجتمعي. By contrast, 42 participants provided a short definition and explanation of the collocation, i.e., انتقال الفيروس أو العدوى في المجتمع المحلي. Newmark (1987) suggests that translation is not merely a process of transforming individual words into another language, but is a process of explaining, interpreting, and reformulating the source ideas in the TL (p.74).

Example 7: Hand Sanitizer

The data analysis reveals that 'hand sanitizer' is the only collocation which has been translated accurately by 100% of the sample. All participants produced equivalent translations in Arabic, such as مطهر اليدين and معقم اليدين, which is not surprising as the Arabic literal translation conveys the intended meaning of the English collocation. Literal translation can be a good option "if it secures referential and pragmatic equivalence to the original" (Newmark, 1987).

Example 8: Droplet Transmission

The data analysis shows that 71 participants reduced or limited the implied meaning of this collocation in their Arabic translations. In more detail, 60 participants used انتقال القطيرات, and 11 participants used انتقال الرذاذ. Those participants may have tried to translate the collocation based on combining the individual dictionary meaning of the two elements of the collocation. For Newmark (1987), reduction is likely to produce a poorly written translation. Finally, one participant paraphrased this specialized collocation. i.e., انتقال الفيروس بالجو (ibid). Similarly, the WHO offers a much-detailed translation in Arabic, i.e. انتقال العدوى عبر الرذاذ.

Discussion

This study examines difficulties and techniques of translating two common types of lexical collocations related to COVID-19 from English into Arabic, namely, adjective-noun and noun-noun. It also investigates translation trainees' competence in reproducing appropriate equivalents despite the recentness of COVID-19 terminology. Chesterman (2012) argues "if translation is defined in terms of equivalence, and since equivalence is unattainable, translation must be impossible" (p.10). Similarly, Bassnett (1997) contends that the "translated text will never be the same as the source text" (p.88). Translation from English into Arabic, in particular, constitutes an immense challenge because of linguistic dissimilarities, culture-bound expressions, and the divergent socio-cultural backgrounds of Arab and Western communities (Olimat, 2020a). Consequently, producing or finding identical COVID-19 collocations in Arabic depends to a large degree on the translator's linguistic competence, understanding of the connotations and structure of the English collocation, and extra-linguistic knowledge (Pacte et al., 2003).

The study sheds light on the significant role the translator plays in facilitating better access to accurate health information in a crisis (Way et al., 2020). When translators employ effective translation procedures, they ensure a successful translation of the source components of English COVID-19 collocations for Arabic-native speakers. The study also reveals that translators can use several translation techniques simultaneously to deal with a single COVID-19 collocation. This approach is clearly evident when translating the noun-noun collocation, 'herd Immunity'. Faerch and Kasper (1983) contend that using various translation techniques "emerge as soon as the translation cannot be carried out automatically" (p.286). Similarly, Arcos-Garcia (1996) argues that when translation difficulties are unavoidable, different translation procedures can be implemented at the same time to accomplish a successful transfer. Although the participants used varied translation procedures, such as equivalence, literal translation, synonymy, reduction, paraphrase, generalization, transposition or shift, and couplets (Newmark, 1987), not all of them produced successful TT translations.

The study indicates that many participants encountered difficulties in predicting the constituent source components of COVID-19 collocations. Therefore, they struggled with matching the appropriate adjective with the appropriate noun or the appropriate noun with the appropriate noun. This is evident in the participants' Arabic translations of collocations, such as 'key workers', 'contact tracing', and 'containment measures'. In the same vein, Baker (2018) pointed out that words "have quite different sets of collocates. English speakers typically *break rules*, but they do not *break regulations*" (p.54).

Despite the recentness of the pandemic, the participants were able to accurately translate some English COVID-19 collocations into Arabic without causing change, difference, addition, or loss of the original meaning. This may be attributed to the frequent use of such collocations in social media platforms, governmental daily speeches, and news channels reports. Another significant finding is that all of the 7 investigated English adjective-noun collocations were translated into the same lexical type in Arabic, i.e., novel coronavirus 'فيروس كورونا المستجد', clinical trial 'تجارب سريرية', medical masks 'أقنعة طبية', key workers 'العاملين الأساسين', physical distancing 'التباعد الجسدي', social distancing 'التباعد الاجتماعي', and viral shedding 'التناثر الفيروسي'. On the other hand, some English noun-noun collocations were translated into adjective-noun correspondences in Arabic, such as community transmission 'انتقال مجتمعي' and herd immunity ' المناعة المجتمعية' (Baker, 2018).

The study shows that several participants were unable to recognize the implied collective meanings of the elements of some COVID-19 collocations, and thus, produced poor, unnatural, and awkward translations

causing "meaningless strings of words, collocational clashes" Baker (2018); (Nida, 1964) (emphasized that the translator should recognize the "collocational meaning rather than substituting individual words with their dictionary equivalents" (p.60). One illustrative example that appears in this study is the numerous inaccurate translations of 'viral shedding'. While this may be due to the specificity of the term as a purely medical collocation, many students failed to utilize their research skills in specialised glossaries to find the appropriate equivalent in Arabic. This would support Mahadin (2018) on research training deficiencies where employers reported on trainees' weak research skills when entering the translation market. Training programs need to provide better training that focuses on developing trainees' research skills particularly that other incidents of inaccurate translations are found in this study. It also highlights the importance of providing trainees with practice on how to consult online reliable sources in their translation courses.

Another issue that requires further investigation where extra-linguistic skills are concerned is that pertaining to cultural differences between English and Arabic. This is evident in the literal translation of the noun-noun collocation 'herd immunity'. Although the majority of participants used مناعة القطيع as a translation of this collocation, this rendition is socially and culturally unacceptable since it implies some dysphemistic suggestions. The Arabic culture, which is influenced by the Islamic faith, suggests that the human race is graced by God, and extending animal-like qualities to humans tends to be used in a derogatory sense. As such, trainees' choice suggests a shortcoming in their cultural awareness and a need to address it in training. Research skills and better cultural awareness are central components in several translation competence frameworks and models (Pacte et al., 2003) (EMT, 2017) as they enhance trainees' overall skills and translation performance.

Conclusion

Even though the findings cannot be generalized beyond the selected sample, i.e., undergraduate translation trainees in two Jordanian universities, they provide fresh insights on the difficulties and techniques of translating lexical COVID-19 collocations from English into Arabic. Translating lexical collocation from Arabic into English does not rely on combining the dictionary or denotative meaning of the associated elements of the collocation. On the contrary, it requires skills in finding or reproducing an identical equivalent of the original expression by analyzing and comprehending the collective new meaning of the collocation. Participants were unable to recognize semantically arbitrary restrictions of COVID-19 collocations "which do not follow logically from the propositional meaning of a word" (Baker, 2018).

In their attempt to render COVID-19 collocations, participants have resorted to numerous translation techniques, such as equivalence, literal translation, reduction, synonymy, paraphrase, transposition, and couplet. Equivalence, literal translation, synonymy, and paraphrase have provided successful translations and mitigated loss of meaning due to linguistic and cultural disparities. These techniques are recommended to improve the translation students' skills when rendering such collocations. However, some participants came short in utilizing their research skills properly and failed to consider the cultural differences in many instances between English and Arabic. These shortcomings have resulted in loss of meaning and inaccurate translations. While this can be tolerated in a training context, the ramifications of such deficiencies would not be tolerated in the professional translation market, to which these trainees are being prepared.

Based on the study findings, university translation programs should be well developed to include some courses in specialized and technical language (Baker, 2018). In addition, translation trainees should be exposed to a wide variety of activities of translating English Arabic texts to develop their use of translation techniques, such as equivalence, literal translation, reduction, synonymy, paraphrase, transposition, and couplet. Furthermore, closer attention should be paid to develop trainees' research and extra-linguistic skills, including cultural awareness.

It is also recommended that translators should be continuously equipped with a wide variety of new SL and TL terminology since their extra-linguistic competence and skills can play a significant role in producing a natural rendition for target readers. COVID-19 collocations are register-specific collocations; they are rarely used in everyday language, but they are common in a specific register, i.e., medicine. Thus, collaboration among scholars in different areas, such as medicine, languages, and translation, under supervision of official and accredited translation organizations, may come a long way in providing an accessible, up-to-date compilation of a specialized Arabic glossary of COVID-19 collocations (Mahadin & Olimat, 2022).

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Appendix

Bio-notes:

Sameer Naser Olimat is an assistant professor of translation and linguistics at the Department of English Language and Literature at the Hashemite University, Jordan. He received his PhD in Translation Studies and Computational Linguists from the University of Leeds, UK, in 2019. He is interested in the areas of English-Arabic & Arabic-English translation, crisis translation, computational linguistics, and sociolinguistic. He is the founder of Leeds Corpus of Euphemisms in the Qur'an http://corpus.leeds.ac.uk/euphemismolimat/. He participated in national and international peer-reviewed conferences. He published several articles in peer-reviewed and specialized journals.

e-mail: solimat@hu.edu.jo

ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2767-6751

Dana Mahadin is an assistant professor of translation studies at the English Department at Al-Balqa Applied University, Jordan. She received her PhD in Translation Studies from the University of Leicester, UK, in 2018. Her research interests focus on translator training, the translation profession, and translation competence. She is actively involved in undergraduate translator training program development in Jordan.

e-mail: d.mahadin@bau.edu.jo

ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1488-0515

Nisreen Naji Al-Khawaldeh is an associate professor at the Department of English Language and Literature at the Hashemite University, Jordan. She received her PhD in Linguistics from the University of Bedfordshire, UK, in 2014. She is interested in General Linguistics, TEFL, Pragmatics, Sociolinguistics, Translation, and Discourse Analysis. She participated in different related conferences and has many publications in these fields.

e-mail: nal-khawaldeh@hu.edu.jo

ORCID: http://orcid.org/0000-0002-1562-7071

Zakaryia Almahasees is an Assistant Professor of Translation at the Department of English Language and Translation. He earned his PhD in Translation Studies, from The University of Western Australia, Australia (2020). His research interests include Translation Theories, Translation Evaluation, Comparative Translation, and Machine Translation

Email: z_almhasees@asu.edu.jo

ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4035-7165