

## English Grammatical Collocations in Azeri

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**Abstract:** It is now widely acknowledged that collocations play an important role in second and foreign language learning as well as in translation. Collocations have the features of being largely arbitrary and independent of meaning within and across languages, consequently, collocations could pose a tremendous challenge in translation, particularly if the translator lacks the ability to identify and recognize such collocational patterns. This study aims at investigating the translation of English grammatical collocations to find the acceptable equivalents for them in Azeri. Based on Benson et al's classification of collocations, there are two types of collocations, lexical and grammatical collocations. In this research, the Azeri translations of grammatical collocations of noun + to-infinitive and predicative adjective + to-infinitive have been analyzed. Based on the analysis of data, it has been cleared that in Azeri, noun + to-infinitive and predicative adjective + to-infinitive are translated as "infinitive + noun" and "infinitive+ predicative adjective" respectively. This research is corpus-based study, both qualitative and quantitative.

**Key Words:** translation; translation problems; collocation; grammatical collocation; corpus-based study

### Introduction

Collocations, recurrent combinations of words whose co-occurrence probability is higher than chance, are frequent in natural languages. Collocation is a linguistic phenomenon worthy to be investigated in translating any text from one language into another one. Since bilingual dictionaries do not offer proper equivalents for most of such collocations especially, grammatical collocations, the majority of English learners as a second or foreign language and also translators may have difficulties and perform poorly when faced with collocations, and as a result the output quality decreases to a high degree. Moreover, translation between the very different languages like English and Azeri which belong to different language families and their grammatical structures are quite different is another reason which makes translation of collocations difficult. The Azeri language is derived from the Oghuz

family of languages and linguistically, it is most closely related to Turkish, Persian and Arabic. Regarding the grammar of Azeri, it can be said that it is an agglutinative language and frequently uses affixes and specifically suffixes. Most of them indicate the grammatical function of the word. Word order in Azeri, is generally subject-object-verb as in Korean and Latin but unlike English. In more complex sentences, the basic rule is that the qualifier precedes the qualified; this principle includes, as an important special case, the participial modifiers. The definite precedes the indefinite. It is possible to alter the word order to stress the importance of a certain word or phrase. The main rule is that the word before the verb has the stress without exception. Moreover, unlike English, since Azeri is a pro-drop language, the subject may not be mentioned in the sentence. Therefore, it can be concluded that Azerbaijani English learners and translators probably face difficulties while translating or

learning English collocations. On the other hand, although a considerable amount of material on collocation has been written in English yet by contrast, studies on Azeri collocations especially grammatical collocations, and their relation to translation have been regarded as quite limited. In this paper the Azeri translations of English grammatical collocations based on Benson et al's classification, have been analyzed in order to find the closest equivalent. The grammatical collocations which have been selected in this paper are: noun + to-infinitive and predicative adjective + to-infinitive. The reasons behind investigating these collocations are; first, they are not included in many dictionary, and second, due to insufficient exposure to these collocations in English-Azeri grammar books (according to the pilot study), Azerbaijanian translators and English learners may have problem in learning and translating of them appropriately. In this relation the research questions have been formulated as follows:

- (1). How is English grammatical collocation of noun + to-infinitive translated into Azeri?
- (2). How is English grammatical collocation of predicative adjective + to-infinitive translated into Azeri?

## COLLOCATIONS

Many scholars maintain that collocational knowledge differentiates native speakers from second language learners (Nesselhauf, 2007; Li, 2005; Higuchi, 2007; Hsu & Chiu, 2008). Erroneous utterances such as *\*the manager of the university*, *\*to take fish*, *\*heavy tea* and *\*to be bad in something* are not due to poor lexical or grammatical knowledge. These problems arise partly from lack of knowledge about the company that words keep, i.e., collocations. One form of collocational problem is when two words are synonyms or near synonyms like *baggage* and *luggage*, but only one of them can be modified by an adjective like *emotional*. This means that substitution of the words which are synonymous does not always produce acceptable combinations. This is an intralingual problem. The other type of problem is interlingual; that is, problems caused by the differences between

collocations from one language to another (Karimkhanlui, 2008). Pearce (2001) gives an example of this problem: *a clear road* in English is *a free road* in Greek. Similarly, *a heavy drinker* in English is *a strong glass* in Greek. This problem occurs because of the negative transfer of L1 features (ibid). Generally, collocations have been approached from three main angles. These include the semantically-based approach, the frequency-oriented approach, and the pragmatic approach. Siepmann claims that the semantically-based approach emphasizes the lexical relationship between the collocational constituents. The frequency-oriented approach looks at statistically significant co-occurrences of two or more words. In the pragmatic approach, the grammatical irregularities and non-compositionality of such expressions are functionally subordinate to pragmatic regularities which determine the relationship between the situational context and linguistic forms (Feilke, 2003, cited in Siepmann, 2008). Crystal (1988) defines collocation as a term used in lexicography to refer to the habitual co-occurrence of individual lexical items in a syntagmatic lexical relation. However, Newmark (1988) suggests a paradigmatic relation as well, consisting of words belonging to the same semantic field which may substitute for each other or be semantic opposites. According to Greenbaum (1996) choices of collocating words are lexical rather than semantic, i.e. to do with words and not meaning. He gives as an example the word *black* which collocates with the word *coffee*, he says that there is nothing in the meanings of *black* that makes it more suitable than *brown* to collocate with *coffee*. Williams (2002) defines collocations as two or three word clusters which occur with a more than chance regularity throughout spoken and written English. McKeown and Dragomir (2002) mention that collocations are typically characterized as arbitrary and language-specific, and that the notion of arbitrariness captures the fact that substituting a synonym for one of the words in a collocational word pair may result in an infelicitous lexical combination. Based on Benson et al's belief (1997), "collocations are arbitrary and unpredictable" and that makes it difficult for non-native speaker to cope with

them". They further mention that collocations could be sorted systematically into two major groups-lexical collocations and grammatical collocations. A lexical collocation could be made up of nouns, adjectives, verbs, or adverbs, like warmest regards, file an affidavit, strictly accurate, etc. In their taxonomy, there are seven types of lexical collocations, labeled from L1 to L7, whose structures and examples have been given in Appendix. On the other hand, a grammatical collocation is made up of a dominant word, such as a noun, an adjective, or a verb, and a preposition or grammatical structure like an infinitive or a clause. Benson et al. (1997) further categorized the grammatical collocations into eight small groups, marked as G1 to G8, among which, G8 collocations contain nineteen English verb patterns (Appendix). It can be concluded that collocation can be defined as a combination of words in a language, which happens very often and more frequently than would happen by chance. Therefore, collocation is a linguistic phenomenon found in any language.

## TRANSLATION OF COLLOCATIONS

Different languages have their own collocations and their own ways in dealing with them. The significant role played by collocation in language as well as in translation has been acknowledged by some linguist. In this respect, Newmark (1988, p.213) considers collocations as the "nerves of the text and lexis is the flesh". He also talks about acceptability of collocations. He acknowledges where there is an accepted collocation in the source language, the translator must find and use its equivalent in the target language if it exists. Beekman and Callow (1974) define collocational clashes and argue that collocational clashes are the result of conflict of meaning components. In a collocational clash there is a conflict of meaning components within a text carried by both the grammar and the lexical choices made. Similarly, Abadi (2009) indicates that the "interest" and "awareness" of research in the area of collocation is due to the significant role played by collocations as "central to the process of foreign language learning and translation". Smadja (1995) mentions three main

reasons for the importance of providing a translation for collocations. First, they are opaque constructions which cannot be translated on a word by word basis. Second, collocations are domain dependent. In each domain, there exists a variety of phrases that have specific meanings, and translations should apply only in the given domain. Finally, correspondences between collocations in bilingual dictionaries, even for widely studied languages, are largely unexplored. Larson (1984) even talks about collocational clashes describing lexical collocational errors committed by people who speak a language which is not their mother-tongue. He distinguishes between collocational clashes and cultural clashes saying that the latter should not affect the former. He adds that the translator must be alert to the potential pitfall of collocational clashes. Baker (1992) mentions that some problems and pitfalls in translation are related to collocations due to the engrossing effect of the SL text patterning, misinterpreting the meaning of the SL collocation, the tension between accuracy and naturalness, and the existence of culture-specific collocations. She also states that a further consideration to bear in mind when dealing with collocation in translation is specificity; the more specific a word is, the shorter its collocational range. The correct choice of a collocate across two languages should also be influenced by register or genre (ibid); collocations that are valid in one area of discourse may not be so in another. For example, in a religious text, a *swerving cross* or a *long* or *short cross* may not function as credible collocates, but they would be considered unmarked in a text on football. Certain collocational combinations give the combination as a whole a meaning different to that of its individual components. For example, *sharp eyes*, would be mistranslated if the translator failed to recognize that the word *sharp*, when collocating with *eyes*, needs to be rendered as *keen* or *especially observant* (ibid). Since every language has its own words and structures which are peculiarly organized, the translator must be keen on the word relations and grammatical systems of the SL while translating collocations into the TL. Otherwise there would be a loss of meaning in translating collocations (ibid).

## THE ROLE OF CORPUS-BASED STUDIES IN TRANSLATION OF COLLOCATIONS

It is postulated that collocations particularly grammatical collocations present a major hurdle for translators when translating them into Azeri since Azeri and English belong to different families definitely Azeri and English grammars are different and each language has its specific grammatical rules, elements, categories, and features. This variation also causes many problems to Azerbaijanian English learners when they translate grammatical collocations. On the other hand, as mentioned, grammatical collocations are not included in many dictionaries, therefore, it can be said that one of the basic method for studying and finding equivalent for them, is corpus-based studies. In recent years many researchers and trainers in the field of translation studies have tried to integrate the analysis of corpora into translator education. In fact, recently, large monolingual, comparable and parallel corpora have played a crucial role in solving various problems of linguistics as well as computational linguistics such as language learning and teaching translation studies, lexicography, information and retrieval, statistical machine translation, word sense disambiguation and the like (Mosavi Miangah, 2010). Many approaches to solving linguistic problems specially translation ones make use of large parallel corpora to discover the proper translation of an input string. These corpora have been mainly aligned at sentence level or to some lesser degrees at word level. Obviously, for such approaches to work well, it is necessary that a huge sum of bilingual texts be available.(ibid). In fact, corpus-based methods mainly rely on large corpora of monolingual and multilingual authentic texts. It has now become common practice to use bilingual parallel corpora or translation corpora as practical tools in order to throw light on particular translation problems and to train translators. These corpora are defined in Baker (1992) as being composed of original source language texts in language A and their translated version in language B. They can be employed to study the translation equivalents

used in parallel corpora, to offer an insight into linguistic systems of two languages or as Barlow (1995) puts it the result of a search can be examined in an attempt to find out how the second language expresses the notion captured by the search term in the first language, to examine and verify the validity of theoretical linguistic claims and to train translators (Afzali,2008). However, it should be mentioned that since large aligned bilingual corpora are hard to obtain, some researchers have tried to exploit translation knowledge from non-parallel corpora such as comparable corpora or monolingual corpora.(Mosavi Miangah,2006). According to Olohan (2001), "while translations have been seen as useful in parallel or multilingual corpora, this has usually been for contrastive linguistic analysis which has studied the relationship between source and target language systems or usage". Since collocations especially grammatical collocations are not included in many dictionary, corpora are valuable resources which contain a huge collocation of authentic, naturally occurring linguistic data. They can help a translator to find suitable collocational patterns in target language (Kennedy, 1998, p.98).

## METHOD

The purpose of this study is to investigate and analyze the Azeri translations of English grammatical collocations of noun + to-infinitive and predicative adjective + to-infinitive. To investigate the research questions posed above, the following null hypothesis was also set forth to be studied as follow:

"There is no significant difference between observed and expected frequencies of using infinitive and gerund in the Azeri translation grammatical collocations of noun + to-infinitive and predicative adjective + to-infinitive .

## MATERIALS

This research deals with the analysis of data which have obtained from five English novels along with their Azeri translations. They are:

1. "For Whom the Bell Tolls"; "A Farewell to Arms": Ernest Hemingway
2. "The Alchemist"; "By the river Piedra I sat down and wept": Paulo Coelho
3. "Dubliners": James Joyce.

## PROCEDURES

To achieve the goals of the study, the collected data obtained from mentioned materials, were classified and summarized based on their frequencies for further analysis which come as follows.

■ English grammatical collocations of noun + to-infinitive and their translations in Azeri:

Based on the Azeri translation of 78 sentences involving this grammatical collocation, it has been cleared that in Azeri, only in 14 sentences to-infinitive has been translated as gerund (indiki zaman feli sifət in Azeri) and in most of the sentences "infinitive" has been used, as infinitive (məsdər) such as following examples:

\*They made an effort to find violin. "Onlar skripkamı **tapmağa** cəhd etdilər".

\*It is a pleasure to play piano. "Piano **çalmaq** məmnunluqdur".

\*It is a pleasure to teach Elizabeth. "Elizabeti **öyrətmək** xoşdur".

\*They had permission to send the report. "Onlara məlumatı **göndərmək** üçün icazə verilmişdir".

\*They felt a need to bring him. "Onlar onu **gətirməyə** ehtiyac olduğunu hiss etdilər".

Table 1. The frequency of the Azeri translation of English grammatical collocation of noun + to-infinitive

	Frequency	Percentage
Sentences involving infinitive	64	82%
Sentences involving gerund	14	18%

■ English grammatical collocation of predicative adjective + to-infinitive and their translations in Azeri: The analysis of Azeri translation of 66 sentences showed that in 18 sentences, gerund, instead of infinitive, has been used. In 48 translated sentences infinitive has been translated as infinitive. The examples are:

\* It was difficult to go to school. "Məktəbdə **oxumaq** çətin idi".

\*We were sorry to leave the marvellous town of Paris. "Paris şəhərini **tərk etmək** bizdə təəssüf doğurdu".

\*Poetry is very hard to translate. "Poeziyanı **tərcümə etmək** olduqca çətinidir".

\*They are not easy to learn. "Onları **öyrənmək** asan deyil".

\*It is difficult to obtain whiskey. "Viski **tapmaq** çətinidir".

Table 2. The frequency of the Azeri translation of English grammatical collocation of predicative adjective + to-infinitive.

	Frequency	Percentage
Sentences involving infinitive	48	73%
Sentences involving gerund	18	27%

In order to examine the mentioned null hypothesis, Chi-Square test has been used. According to most of English-Azeri grammar books such as Turksevar (2007); Arabova & Solymanova (2009); and Gurbanova (2004), it has been expected that English to-infinitive translated as gerund (indiki zaman feli sifət) in Azeri, therefore, it has been expected that at least half of the sentences translated as gerund, as a result, the expected frequency for using gerund in each of these grammatical collocations regarded as half of the number of sentences.

Table 3. Observed and expected frequencies in the Azeri translations

Grammatical collocations	Observed Frequencies	Expected Frequencies
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<b>Noun + to-infinitive</b>	14	39
<b>Predicative adjective + to-infinitive</b>	18	33

$$X^2 = 22.83$$

$$\text{Critical } X^2 = 3.84 \quad (P=.05, df.1)$$

Results of data analyses (table3) indicate that there is a significant difference between obtained chi-square (22.83) and critical  $\chi^2$  (3.84), therefore, the mentioned null hypothesis is rejected.

#### 4. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

In contrast to most of the English-Azeri grammar books mention that English infinitive is translated as gerund (indiki zaman feli sifət) in Azeri, the results of the present study showed that in the Azeri translation of English grammatical collocations of noun + to-infinitive and predicative adjective + to-infinitive, infinitive has been used much more than gerund. Moreover,

based on the results of this paper it can be said that English grammatical collocation of noun + to-infinitive, in Azeri, is used as “infinitive + noun”, i.e. infinitive translated as infinitive. Regarding English grammatical collocation of predicative adjective + to-infinitive the results of this study indicate that it is used as “infinitive + predicative adjective in Azeri.

Table 4. The Azeri translation of English grammatical collocations of noun + to-infinitive and predicative adjective + to-infinitive

<b>Grammatical collocations in English</b>	<b>Grammatical collocations in Azeri</b>
Noun + to-infinitive	Infinitive + noun
Predicative adjective + to-infinitive	Infinitive + predicative adjective

In this study it was tried to show how are English grammatical collocations of noun + to-infinitive and predicative adjective + to-infinitive translated into Azeri, moreover, how a corpus analysis tool can be a useful performance-enhancing aid in translating. Furthermore, the fact that collocations are a problematic area for L2/LF learners should be taken into consideration. From a purely linguistic perspective, it seems reasonable to assume that the arbitrary nature of collocations especially grammatical collocations, is the main cause of the attested difficulties of non-native speakers in learning of L2/LF as well as in translation. This study suggests that translators closely observe collocations in the process of translation, otherwise, their translation embody collocational clashes. It seems that in translating texts, it is the duty of translators to be careful in translating grammatical collocations and in rendering them into another language. Since each language has its specific grammatical rules, elements, categories, and features. This

variation causes many problems to students and translators when they translate. It is clear that grammar is very important in any language in the world. As Leech(1997) said: “Grammar [is] a part of language which relates sound and meaning. The meaning conveyed by language has to be converted into words [...] put together according to grammatical rules.” So, grammar relates phonology and semantics because it relates sound and meaning. Grammar includes morphology and syntax. Morphology refers to the structure of words; it studies the way in which words and morphemes are built. Syntax refers to the structure of sentences, i.e. the combination of units such as words into phrases and sentences, and also concerns word classes. Therefore, the learners and translators must not confuse grammatical collocations of source language with target language. Mistranslation of words or phrases in a collocation either lexical or grammatical collocation will lead to a vague and ambiguous translation. Another point that should

be considered by the learners and translators is that one of the basic method in translation, is a comparative one. Thus, by a comparative analysis of the ST and the TT, focusing on the similarities and dissimilarities of grammatical collocations, the translating strategies are identified. On the other hand, the suggestion here is that corpus-based studies should find their proper place in translator workbenches, and this ideal can be achieved provided that more information are accessible to L2/LF learners, translators and translation trainees. Using corpus-based studies can help L2/LF learners, translators and translation trainees solve the problem of learning and translating of both lexical and grammatical collocations.

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## Appendix

### ***BBI Dictionary classification of collocations – lexical collocation***

- L1 *verb + noun/pronoun* , make an agreement  
 L2 *verb + noun* ,reject an appeal  
 L3 *adj + noun*, strong tea  
 L4 *noun + verb* , alarms go off  
 L5 *noun<sub>1</sub> of noun<sub>2</sub>* , a swarm of bees  
 L6 *adverb + adjective* ,deeply absorbed  
 L7 *verb + adverb*, affect deeply

### ***BBI Dictionary classification of collocations – grammatical collocation***

- G1 *noun + prep*, blockade against, apathy towards  
 G2 *noun + to-inf* , a pleasure to do it, the foresight to do it  
 G3 *noun + that-clause* , we reached an agreement that she would represent us in court  
 G4 *prep + noun*, by accident, in advance  
 G5 *adj + prep* , angry at everyone, afraid of him  
 G6 *pred adj + to-inf* , it was necessary to work, she is ready to go  
 G7 *adj + that-clause* , she was afraid that she would fail the exam  
 G8  
 A *verbs (trans) that allow dative movement transformation* , he sent the book to his brother→ , he sent his brother the book  
 B *verbs (trans) that do not allow dative Movement* , they described the book to her  
 C *verbs (trans) used with 'for' that allow dative movement transformation*  
 , she bought a shirt for her husband → she bought her husband a shirt  
 D, *verb + prep* , act as, adhere to the plan  
 E *verb + to-inf* , they began to speak, he decided to come  
 F *verb + inf without 'to'* , we must work, he had better go  
 G *verb + v-ing* , they enjoy watching TV

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H *verb (trans) + obj + to-inf* , she asked me to come, we forced them to leave

I *verb (trans) + obj + inf without 'to'* , she heard them leave, we let the children go to the park

J *verb (trans) + object + v-ing* , I caught them stealing apples

K *verb (trans) + poss + gerund* , please excuse my waking you so early, this fact justifies Bob's coming late

L *verb (trans) + that-noun clause* „they admitted that they were wrong

M *verb (trans) + obj + inf 'to be' + complement (adj/past part/noun/pronoun)*we consider her to be well trained

N *verb (trans) + obj + complement (adj/past part/noun/pronoun)* she dyed her hair red

O *verb (trans) + obj + obj* , the teacher asked the boy a question, the police fined him fifty dollars

P *verb + adverbial* , he carried himself well, the meeting will last two hours

Q *verb + wh-word* , he asked how to do it, we told them what to do

R *subj (it) + verb + to-inf or that-clause* , it puzzled me that they never answered the telephone

S *verb (intrans) + complement (noun or adj)* , she became an engineer, she was enthusiastic  
 Verb (intrans) + *pred adj* , she looks fine, the flowers smell nice

## BİODATA

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