A Comparative Analysis of Lexical Collocations in Molavi's Mathnavi and Its Translation

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Abstract: Molavi is one of the Iranian poets who has a considerable impact on western scholars not only in previous decades known as the period of colonization but also in recent decades. His works has been translated to European languages either completely or selectively. Linguistic subtleties applied in Molavi's verses have an undoubted connection with sublime and edifying concepts in his poems. These subtleties are prone to effacement when translated into other languages with systems of thoughts totally different from Persian one. One of these subtleties worthy of attention is collocation. Appearing in almost every poet in the world as one of the linguistic tools, collocations help the poets to apply brevity in their verses. The point is that collocations are different structurally and conceptually from one language to another and a translator should deal with them carefully in order to render them as meaningfully in the target language as possible. The present article seeks to compare collocations in Mathnavi Manavi by Molavi and their corresponding translations in order to discover faults and merits of techniques used by a translator and the lost and gains resulted by these techniques.

Keywords: lexical collocation, translation, limitations of translation, structural and conceptual collocations

1. Introduction

Persian poets have been praised recently by western scholars for the concepts associated with east such as spirituality, heaven, mystical poetry, religion, peace and the like which are mostly ignored in western literature. In the era of colonization, missionaries sent to Middle East also helped western scholars to heighten their knowledge about the east. Translation has certainly been of significant role to aid them in this. Among all the poets translated into European languages, Molavi is the most celebrated one especially in recent years. Europeans began to know Molavi in Early twentieth more than ever. Coleman Barks was the first person who publishes a translation of Molavi in his book *The Essential Rumi in* 1995 which was widely welcomed by the public. Others in Germany and France too translated selected verses from Molavi's works. According to Azar (1387, p.316) most of the translators of Rumi's works were

religious figures. Therefore, it is expected that different religious views put obstacles in the way of these translators to have an exact understanding of Molavi's works. Azar states that the translations and most of what quoted from Molavi are either incomplete or lack the perfect legitimacy they require to have.

There are repeating concepts in verses of Rumi which has attracted translators' attentions. Among them are spiritual love, sublime wisdom, pantheism, respecting all religions and attention to a diversity of traditions. These concepts form the very foundation of Molavi's works and are obvious in all levels of his language including collocations. In this article a sample of his verses displaying these ideas is presented and the difficulty of translating related collocations is studied.

Translation of poetry has grabbed attention of many scholars of translation studies and the debate over translatability and untranslatability of poems as a form of language in which form and function is intermingled is still going. One of the problems when dealing with translation of poetry is due to the application of linguistic tools in a way that is totally different from the way speakers use their language. These linguistic tools are different from language to language and culture to culture. Collocations as one of these tools and should be dealt with carefully when translated into another language.

2. Review of the literature

2.1. The concept of collocation

Semantic relations are one of the universals which exist between groups in every language. Those groups and words which are closely related in terms of semantic relations can be used together or in some cases can be used interchangeably (Afrashi, 2002, p.18). Collocation is one of these kinds of semantic relations which is a kind of relationship among the words and makes it possible to predict the next word when seeing one of a pair. Collocational relations are the kind of relations that each unit of language possesses due to its combination (as a syntactic unit or a construct) with other units at the same level. Collocational relations are concerned with the way words appear together and being aware of this point is a substantial part of understanding them in text as well as translating them.

J. R. Firth is the first person who discusses the matter of collocation in his semantic theory and he is considered as the one who coined the term "collocation". He states that using the word "meaning" is related to a general rule based on which every word is a new one when appearing in a new context (Firth, 1975, p. 190). This view of Firth has been generated from Malinowski's opinion in based on which the meaning of linguistic forms should be explained according to their situational context. He believes that meaning of collocations is a type of abstraction at the level of collocating and is not directly related to conceptual or ideal approach to the meaning of words (Meshkatodini 1994, pp.112-193).

2.2. Structure of collocations

Haussmann (1984) calls collocations "Binary word combinations" in which one word as the base has an independent meaning and the other word is the collocate obtaining its meaning from collocating with the other word. He classifies types of collocations according to the syntactic category of their elements. He believes, however, that syntactic features alone cannot distinguish collocations from free combination and idioms and a semantic criterion is required for this (Haussman, 1989). He also believes that collocation is placed between two levels of free combinations and idioms. This semi-combinational meaning of collocations causes Hausmann to know them as "bound collocations" (Heid, 1994, pp. 232-233)

Brown (2006) cites Sinclair stating that collocation is a meaningful concurrence of two or more words in the word chain with a frequency of appearing much more than expected and closer than lexical relations in situational context recognition of whose units is possible with the aid of a long text. It means that meaning is created with the choice of two or more words together at the same time (Brown 2006, p.597)

2.3.The role of collocations in translation

Several researches have been carried on the subject of collocations in translation. According to Newmark (1988, p.46) difficulty in translation of collocations is due to two major reasons; first, there is only an arbitrary relation between components of a collocation and its meaning and second, at least one of these components has secondary meaning.

Baker (1992, pp. 74-60) likewise refers to the arbitrary relation between elements of a collocation and the whole meaning of it. She believes that "there is no such thing as impossible collocations" and the reason is that words are gathered together and create collocations and it is an ongoing process which exists naturally in any language. She also mentions that the difficulty of translating collocations lays in the fact that the collocational patterning of source and target language are different. The following are the most common pitfalls she mentions that a translator may face when translating collocations; the engrossing effect of source text patterning, misinterpreting the meaning of a source language collocation, the tension between accuracy and naturalness, culture-specific collocations and marked collocations in the source text.

Shahriari is among the Iranians who have studied collocational restrictions. She has examined different types of corresponding collocations in languages (Shariari, 1997). The result of her research shows that these studies are fruitful in the field of translation in terms of producing standard and nonstandard combinations.

Ghayumi carries a similar research titled "role of collocations in translation" and concludes that well-formed combinations in chains of words may become ill-formed when translated into target

language and this abnormality in lexical combination is due to semantic-structural differences between source and target languages. (Ghayumi 2004, p.65)

3. Analysis of the data

One way to analyze collocations is to collect a proper language corpus. Yet, to use corpus based study of collocations requires considering limitations of the method which depends on the quantitative mass of the corpus. Therefore, based on the type and nature of the corpus it is possible to present a diversity of explanations. So, it is of great importance to refer to valid sources in collection of the data when using this method. In order to assure the validity the collected data, all the collocations of chapter 6 of Mathnavi with 3693 verses have been gathered and compared to the translation of the work.

3.1.Collocations related to religious context

In these collocations some references exist to prophets and Quranic allegories related to them in addition to some Islamic traditions or any other word which has originated from religious views. When these words are collocated with other words it is expected that the whole collocation gains a secondary meaning which makes them even more difficult to translate. After examining these kinds of collocations it is revealed that most of these combinations have one of these patterns; noun+ noun or noun+ adjectives. Either the adjective or the noun or both allude to religious views.

Molavi, having a rich body of knowledge from Islam and Quran, has made use of these references. The poet's intention is to transfer religious messages in a delicate way with a higher degree of effectiveness. In most cases there is an interval between the components of collocations. The following is some of the examples of this type of collocations used in Mathnavi:

نوح اندر بادیه کشتی بساخت   صد مثل گو از پی تسخر بتاخت

PF[1]: Nuh ?andar bâdiye kašti besâxt   sad masal gu ?az peye tasxar betâxt

CT[2]: Noah built an Ark in the desert: a hundred speakers of parables ran up to ridicule (him)

چون رسید اندر سبا این نور شرق   غلغلی افتاد در بلقیس و خلق

PF: čon resid ?andar sabâ ?in nur-e šarq   qalqali ?oftâd dar belqeis-o xalq

CT: When this orient light (from Solomon) reached Saba, a tumult arose in Bilqis and brag in account of it.

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[1]Phonetic Form
[2] Couplet Translation

لشکر <u>بلقیس</u> آمد در نماز   ای <u>سلیمان</u> مسجد اقصی بساز

PF: ?ey <u>Soleimân</u> masĵed-e ?aqsâ besâz   lašgar-e <u>belqeis</u> ?âmad dar namâz

CT: (God said) "O <u>Solomon</u>, build the Farther Mosque: the army of <u>Bilqis</u> has come into (has adopted) the (ritual) prayer."

It is obvious in the above verses and their translations that when an interval happens between the parts of a collocation. Word for word translation is the easiest means to transfer the meaning and no problem may be caused in the way of understanding of them

پیششان یک روز بی اندوه و لهف   <u>سیصد و نه سال آن اصحاب کهف</u>

        PF: <u>Sisad-o noh sâl ?ân ?ashâb-e kahf</u>   Pišešân yek ruz bi ?anduh-o lahf

CT: <u>The three hundred and nine years of the Men of the Cave</u> seemed to them one day (that passed) without grief and woe

Due to the fact that the meaning of a collocation cannot be perceived through understanding the meaning of individual vocabularies which constructed the collocation, a translator cannot transfer the collocation's message through a literal translation. For example, in the aforementioned line, "?ashâb-e kahf" is a collocation which has been translated as "the Men of the Cave". But, "?ashâb" carries some specific semantic features like "friendship" or "other positive connotations" which "men" does not imply. Probably, "fellow" can be a better equivalence for "?ashâb"

3.2. Semantic collocations

3.2.1 Antonymy and Synonymy

In this type of collocations, similar or different semantic relationships which exist between two vocabularies and cause synonymy or antonymy are of considerable importance. These collocations are mostly fixed in colloquial speech and so associated that mentioning one of the words can remind us of the other word. They can be also alleged as corresponding collocations which are the consequence of their close relations and correspondences. In semantic collocations, two juxtaposed vocabularies are mostly nouns and adjectives. In other words, two words that are grouped are often nouns or adjectives, and owing to their synonymy, their grammatical categories should be the same.

کی بود سیری و پیری و ملال؟   چون نباشد <u>روز و شب یا ماه و سال</u>

PF: čon nabâšad <u>ruz-o šab yâ mâh-o sâl</u>   key bovad siri-o piri-o malâl?

CT: When there is no <u>day and night and month and year</u>, how should there be satiety and old age and weariness?

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پادشاهی چون کنی بر نیک و بد؟   پادشاهی نیستت بر ریش خود
</div>

PF: Pâdešâhi nistat bar riše xod   pâdešâhi čon koni bar <u>niko bad?</u>

CT: (If) thou have not sovereignty over thine own beard, how wilt thou exercise sovereignty over <u>good and evil</u>?

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روز <u>خاص و عام</u> را او حارس است   نور این شمس شموس فارسی است
</div>

    PF: Nur-e ?in šams-e šomus-e fârsi ?ast   ruz-e <u>xâs-o ?âm</u> râ ?u hâres ?ast

CT: The light of this one who belongs to the Sun of suns is riding (in majesty): by day he is guarding <u>high and low</u>.

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در طلوعش <u>روز و شب</u> را فرق نه   جز روان پاک او را شرق نه
</div>

    PF: ĵoz ravân-e pâk-e ?u râ šarq neh   dar tolu?aš <u>ruz-o šab</u> râ farq neh

CT: It has no Orient but the pure spirit: in (respect of) its rising, there is no different between <u>day and night.</u>

When words which construct a synonymous or antonymous collocation are juxtaposed near each other and do not have any metaphorical meaning, translator can easily get the collocation's meaning and transfer it through a literal translation.

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کرده مغرب را چو شرق نورزای   <u>مغربی را مشرقی</u> کرده خدای
</div>

    PF: <u>Maqrebi râ mašreqi</u> karde xodây   karde maqreb râ čo šarq nurzây

CT: God made the <u>Maghribi</u> a <u>Mashriqi</u>: He made the place of sunset (Maghrib) light-producing like the place of sunrise (Mashriq)

As it is noticed, Maulana changed the structure of "maqrib" and "mašriq" by adding an "i" to the end of the words and fashioned them into the attributive adjectives of "maqribi" and "mašriqi", but still a directional opposition can be seen between two vocabularies. The translator could not get this opposition and was not successful in choosing appropriate equivalences for them, so he translated them as proper nouns.

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کز میان جان کنندم صفدری   خود رها کن لشکر <u>دیو و پری</u>
</div>

    PF: Xod rahâ kon lašgar-e <u>div-o pari</u>   kaz miyân-e ĵân konandam safdari

CT: Let alone the army of demons and genies who, (devoted to me) from the core of their hearts, cleave the ranks (of enemies) for me.

The collocation of "div-o pari" which is translated as "demons and genies" is consisting of an antonymous relationship. But this relationship has not been in its translation, since "genie" is not

equivalent with "pari", so this translation does not imply the existing antonymy and semantic features of "pari" in the original poem. The collocation of "div-o pari" is the symbol of "goodness and badness".

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طقطقی و <u>های و هوی</u>شب ز بام   بر سر تختی شنید آن نیک نام

</div>

   PF: Bar sar-e taxti šenid ?ân niknâm   taqtaqi-<u>o hây-o huy</u>-e šab ze bâm

 CT: (Reclining) on a throne, that man of good name heard at night a noise of tramping and shrill cries from the roof.

"Hây-o huy" is onomatopoeia, and the translator has considered it as two separate words and tried to find two equivalences for "hay" and "huy". Therefore, he has chosen "shrill" for "hây", and "cries" for "huy". Semantically, his translation is roughly equivalent to the original but in the original form, there is the conjunction of "and" between "hây" and "huy" which does not exist in the translation.

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<u>شاخ و برگ</u> دل همی گردند سبز   زان ندا دینها همی گردند گبر

</div>

    PF: zân nedâ dinhâ hami gardand gabr   <u>šâx-o barg</u>-e del hami gardand sabz

CT: At (the sound of) that voice (men's) religions wax great; the <u>leaves and boughs</u> of the heart become green.

"šâx-o barg", which means "boughs and leaves", is a collocation that has a high frequency in Persian language and implies a metaphorical meaning. This collocation is accompanied with a simile that the translator could not perceive it, so he translated it literally. In addition, he has changed the place of "boughs" and "leaves". It can be assumed that the translator was not aware of the application of these words as a collocation in Maulana's poetry.

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بر زمان رفته هم افسوس خورد   چونکه بلقیس از <u>دل و جان</u> عزم کرد

</div>

     PF: čonke belqeis ?az <u>del-o jân</u> ?azm kard   bar zamân-e rafte ham ?afsus xord

CT: When Bilqis set out (from Saba) with <u>heart and soul</u>, she felt remorse too for the bygone time,

"Del-o jân" is a collocation which means "wanting or doing something eagerly and wholeheartedly". This collocation has been translated as "with heart and soul"; therefore, the translator could be adequately successful in finding an appropriate equivalence.

شد زمین و آسمان، خندان و شاد   کین چنین شاهی ز ما دو جفت زاد

PF: šod zamin-o ?âsemân xandân-o šâd   kin čenin šâhi ze mâ do ĵoft zâd

CT: Earth and Heaven laugh and rejoice, saying 'from us two (who are) joined in wedlock such a king is born!

The collocation of "šâd-o xandân" is often used in Persian, but Maulana changed it into "xandân-o šâd" to preserve his poem's rhythm. The meaning of the collocation is "happy and delighted" which are both adjectives, but the translator has altered the structure of both vocabularies into verbs and translated them individually. So, the translator, by considering word as his translation unit, has wrongly reduced lexical relationship which existed in the original collocation.

نقش آدم لیک معنی جبرئیل   رسته از خشم و هوا و قال و قیل

PF: Naqše ?âdam lik ma?ni ĵebre?il   raste ?az xašm-o havâ-o qâl-o qil

CT: The form (of such a one is that of) Adam, but the reality is Gabriel: he has been delivered from anger and sensual passion and (vain) disputation.

"qil-o qâl" is another Persian collocation which implies "arguing and disputing". Here, the place of two words has been changed to maintain the poem's rhythm. As it can be observed, the translator has inadequately sufficed to transfer the meaning of the collocation.

پادشاهی داشت یک برنا پسر   ظاهر و باطن مزین از هنر

PF: Pâdešâhi dâšt yek bornâ pesar   zâher-o bâten mozayan ?az honar

CT: A certain King had a young son, adorned with excellence within and without

"Zâher-o bâten" is a collocation which is made of two antonymous vocabularies which mean "outside" and "inside". The translator has attempted to retain the collocational structure through using "within and without" that both indicate a rhythmical relationship between two words and the existing antonymous relationship. Although "without" is not applied with this meaning as frequently as "outside", it is more fitting and can be easily inferred by English readers.

3.3. Culture-bound Collocations

Culture-bound collocations are made of vocabularies which closely associated with the culture of source language. They are repeatedly used in colloquial language and can be only understood in source language; therefore, translator encounters some adversities when translating them.

ترک آن گیرید گر ملک سبا ست   که برونِ <u>آب و گل</u> بس ملکهاست

PF: tark-e ?ân girid gar molk-e sabâst   ke borun-e <u>?âb-o gel</u> bas molkhâst

CT: Abandon (all) that, (even) if it is the kingdom of Saba, for beyond (this) <u>water and earth</u> there are many kingdoms.

"?âb-o gel", which literally means "water and mud", is a collocation consisting of two culture-bound vocabularies. Another meaning which can be gotten from this collocation is mortal life. So, translator has faced two problems: the first one is translating a collocation, and the second one is translating culture-bound words. Nicholson[3], the translator of these lines, has literally translated "?âb-o gel" into "water and earth", but he has put "this" in parentheses which is symbol of this life or transient life and added "beyond" which is indicative of "what comes after this life". Through the addition of these words, he could transfer the intended meaning in the original poem to English and compensate for the collocation's meaning, but he could not preserve lexical collocation existing in the original form.

<u>آب و گل</u> میگفت خود انکار نیست   بانگ میزد بی خبر که اخبار نیست

PF: <u>?âb-o gel</u> migoft xod ?enkâr nist   bâng mizad bixabar ke ?axbâr nist

CT: The <u>water and clay</u> was really saying, "There is no denial" (was really making an affirmation): it was crying, "There is no affirmation" (was uttering a denial) unaware (of the fact that its denial was an implicit affirmation).

In Maulana's poetry, the collocation of "?âb-o gel", which means "water and mud", mostly refers to the human beings' nature. For instance:

نسبت اصلم ز خاک و <u>آب و گل</u>   <u>آب و گل</u> را داد یزدان جان و دل

PF: Nesbat-e ?aslam ze xâk-o <u>?âb-o gel</u>   <u>?âb-o gel</u> râ dâd yazdân ĵân-o del

CT: I'm originally made of clay, water and mud. God donated soul and spirit to me.

In the above line, a singular verb has been used for both "?âb-o gel". It is a meaningful and accepted structure to Persian speakers, but it is unlikely in English.

مثنوی اندر <u>فروع و در اصول</u>   جمله آن تست، کردستی قبول

PF: Masnavi ?andar <u>foru?-o dar ?osul</u>   ĵomle ?âe tost, kardasti qabul

CT: The whole Mathnawi in its <u>branches and roots</u> is thine: thou hast accepted (it).

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[3] R. A. Nicholson was the first to make a full translation of all six books into English. It was published in three volumes (Books I and II, 1926; Books III and IV, 1930; Books V and VI, 1934).

"Foru?" and "?osul" are two religious vocabularies which have been literally translated as "branches" and "roots" in Nicholson's translation. It is obvious that connotative cultural and religious meanings of these vocabularies could not be transferred at all.

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میل ناقه پس، پی کره روان   میل مجنون پیش آن لیلی روان

</div>

PF: Meyl-e maĵnun piše ?ân leyli ravân   meyl-e nâqe pas, pey-e korre ravân

CT: Majnun's desire is speeding to the presence of that (beloved) Layla; the she-camel's desire is running back after her foal.

"Leyli and Maĵnun" is a very popular collocation in Persian poetry which is symbol of "love". All poets and speakers are aware of it, since it has strongly taken root in their culture. But, the English translator has regarded it as proper nouns and neglected the connotative meaning of the collocation due to his unfamiliarity with Persian culture and presuppositions.

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عاشق از معشوق حاشا که جداست   پیش من آوازت آواز خداست

</div>

PF: Piš-e man ?âvâzat ?âvâz-e xodâst   ?âšeq ?az ma?šuq hâšâ ke ĵodâst

CT: To me thy voice is the voice of God: Heaven forfend that (I should say) the lover is separate from the Beloved

Substituting "lover and Beloved" for "?âšeq", mašuq" is an appropriate way to demonstrate the difference between physical love and spiritual love, since using capital letter is a familiar way for an English person to show spiritual love. English speakers consider a difference between god and God, the former refers to the only God while latter refers to mythological goddesses.

<div dir="rtl">

بودم اندر عشق خانه بی‌قرار   دیدم اندر خانه من نقش و نگار

</div>

PF: Didam ?andar xâne man naqš-o negâr   budam ?andar ?ešq-e xâne biqarâr

CT: I saw (beautiful) pictures and paintings in the house: I was without self-control in (my) love of the house.

"Naqš-o negâr" is a collocation whose meaning is a little bit different from "pictures and paintings". It is a known term in Iranian art which refers to delicate paintings with various colors and complicated designs. But, an English speaker cannot infer such meaning from "paintings and pictures". It is better to elaborate such culture-bound vocabularies in footnotes to help readers of Maulana's poetry.

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زان شناسی باد را گر آن صباست   یا دبورست این بیان آن خفاست

</div>

PF: Zân šenâsi bâd râ gar ?ân sabâst   yâ daburast ?in bayân ?ân xafâst

CT: By that (means) you know whether the <u>wind</u> is the east-wind or the west-wind: this (movement of the lion) is the explanation of that occult matter

"Sabâ wind" is a wind coming from the East and symbolizing lovers' message. Persian speakers are commonly familiar with this collocation and there is no need to differentiate between the east and the west wind for a Persian person. But, an English person is not aware of the reason of this juxtaposition; therefore, the translator had to wrongly mention both of them, since "Sabâ wind" comes from the East and it shows that the translator did not thoroughly get the meaning.

4. Conclusion

The aim of this study is to compare verses of Mathnavi as a Persian work which contains a large number of cultural and religious references with its English translation. The article has been limited into the subject of collocations as linguistic tools with a different application when used in poetry. The results show that the degree of difficulty in translating collocations is depended on the type of collocation and the existence of similar views in target language. Collocations related to religious contexts appear to be the most difficult ones. Translator takes several approaches to deal with them. S/he may change them into more familiar ones for the reader which happens when translator tends to domesticate the text. In some cases the translator prefers a word for word translation and adds footnotes to explain the terms. Other difficult collocations include those related to the culture. When there is an equal collocation in the target language with the same meaning no problem appears. But in most cases the meaning or form has to be changed to become understandable for the target reader. The third type which is easier in relation to previous types includes collocations with semantic relations between them. Most of the time they pose no serious problem and even a word for word translation might be adequate. But sometimes they go beyond their primary meaning and adopt a secondary meaning and play the role of a literary device such as metaphors which demands translator's attention when dealing with.

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