African Journal of Advanced Studies in Humanities and Social Sciences (AJASHSS)
المجلة الإفريقية للدراسات المتقدمة في العلوم الإنسانية والاجتماعية
Online-ISSN: 2957-5907
Volume 5, Issue 4, 2026
Page No: 354-362
Website: https://aaasjournals.com/index.php/ajashss/index
Arab Impact factor 2025: 0.83 **SJIFactor 2024: 6.856** **ISI 2025: 1.191**

Problems Encountered by University Students in Translating Collocations from English into Arabic

Dr. Abdelnaser Abushina *
English Department, Faculty of Arts, Elmergib University, Khoms, Libya

المشاكل التي يواجهها طلاب الجامعات في ترجمة المتلازمات اللفظية من الإنجليزية إلى العربية

د. عبد الناصر حسين أبوشينة *
قسم اللغة الإنجليزية، كلية الآداب، جامعة المرقب، الخمس، ليبيا

*Corresponding author: ahabushina@elmergib.edu.ly

Received: August 22, 2026	Accepted: November 05, 2026	Published: November 17, 2026

Abstract:
Collocations are the common and conventional combinations through which words acquire naturalness. Collocations are a persistent difficulty in English–Arabic translation because the two languages do not always combine equivalent words in the same way. This study investigates the problems that university students encounter in translating English collocations into Arabic. Twenty third- and fourth-year students of English at the Faculty of Arts, Elmergib University, Khoms, Libya, all native speakers of Arabic, took a one-hour translation test of 14 English collocations representing seven grammatical patterns: adjective + noun, verb + noun, noun + noun, adjective + adjective, adverb + adverb, noun + verb and verb + adverb. Dictionaries were not allowed. A qualitative, descriptive approach was adopted: the students' translations were compared with natural Arabic collocations, the types of deviation were identified, and the number of students producing each deviant rendering was recorded.

For 13 of the 14 collocations, between 5 and 16 of the 20 students produced a deviant rendering, an average of 10.5 students per item (52.7% of responses). Only ‘emergency room’ was translated naturally by all students. Deviation was highest for adjective + adjective collocations (72.5%), where 15 students rendered ‘sound in safe and sound’ as "voice" and 14 rendered alive and kicking as "alive and hitting", and lowest for noun + noun collocations (15%). Errors fell into three types: word-by-word translation, selection of the wrong sense of a polysemous word (sound, kicking, far), and unnatural choice of verbs and adverbs, as when 16 students used a general verb of healing instead of the verb conventionally used for wounds. Meaning-distorting items were mistranslated more often (59% of students) than merely less natural ones (47%). The study concludes that knowing single words does not ensure natural translation, and recommends explicit, context-based and corpus-informed teaching of collocations in translation courses.

Keywords: collocations; English–Arabic translation; translation problems; literal translation; collocational competence.

الملخص
تُعد المتلازمات اللفظية *(Collocations)* تركيباتٍ شائعةً ومألوفةً تجعل الكلام يبدوً طبيعياً. وتُمثّل هذه المتلازمات تحدياً مستمراً في الترجمة من الإنجليزية إلى العربية؛ نظراً لاختلاف الطريقة التي تُجمع بها الكلمات المتقابلة في اللغتين. تبحث هذه الدراسة في الصعوبات التي يواجهها طلاب الجامعات عند ترجمة المتلازمات اللفظية الإنجليزية إلى العربية. شارك في الدراسة عشرون طالباً من طلاب السنتين الثالثة والرابعة في قسم اللغة الإنجليزية بكلية الآداب بجامعة المرقب (الخمس، ليبيا) - وجميعهم من المتحدثين الأصليين للغة العربية - حيث خضعوا لاختبار ترجمة مدته ساعة واحدة، تضمن 14 متلازمة لفظية إنجليزية تمثل سبعة أنماط نحوية: (صفة + اسم)، (فعل + اسم)، (اسم + اسم)، (صفة + صفة)، (ظرف + ظرف)، (اسم + فعل)، و(فعل + ظرف)، مع منع استخدام القواميس اثناء الاختبار. اعتمدت الدراسة منهجاً وصفياً؛ إذ قورنت

 Copyright: © 2026 by the authors. Submitted for possible open access publication under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).

ترجمات الطلاب بالمتلازمات اللفظية الطبيعية في اللغة العربية، وجرى تحديد أنواع الانحرافات (الأخطاء) في الترجمة، مع رصد عدد الطلاب الذين وقعوا في كل نوع منها.
بالنسبة لـ 13 من أصل 14 متلازمة، قدّم ما يتراوح بين 5 و16 طالباً (من أصل 20) ترجمات غير طبيعية، بمتوسط 10.5 طالب لكل متلازمة (أي ما يعادل 52.7% من الإجابات). أما المتلازمة الوحيدة التي ترجمها جميع الطلاب بشكل طبيعي فهي "*emergency room*" (غرفة الطوارئ). وقد سُجّلت أعلى نسبة انحراف في نمط (صفة + صفة) بنسبة 72.5%؛ حيث ترجم 15 طالباً كلمة "*sound*" في عبارة "*safe and sound*" بمعنى "صوت"، بينما ترجم 14 طالباً عبارة "*alive and kicking*" ترجمةً حرفيةً تعني "على قيد الحياة ويضرب". في المقابل، كانت نسبة الانحراف أقل ما يمكن في نمط (اسم + اسم) بنسبة 15%. وقد تنوعت الأخطاء لتشمل ثلاثة أنماط: الترجمة الحرفية (كلمة بكلمة)، واختيار معنى خاطئ لكلمات متعددة المعاني مثل (*kicking*، *sound*، *far*)، واستخدام أفعال أو ظروف غير مألوفة في السياق العربي؛ فعلى سبيل المثال، استخدم 16 طالباً فعلاً عاماً للدلالة على "الشفاء" بدلاً من الفعل المخصص اصطلاحاً لوصف التئام الجروح. كما تبين أن العبارات التي تؤدي ترجمتها الخاطئة إلى تشويه المعنى كانت أكثر عرضة للترجمة غير الدقيقة (بنسبة 59% من الطلاب) مقارنةً بالعبارات التي كانت ترجمتها أقل طبيعية فقط (بنسبة 47%). وتخلص الدراسة إلى أن معرفة الكلمات المفردة لا تضمن تحقيق ترجمة طبيعية، وتوصي بضرورة تدريس المتلازمات اللفظية بشكل صريح، مع التركيز على السياق والاستعانة بالمدونات اللغوية (*Corpora*) ضمن مقررات الترجمة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: المتلازمات اللفظية؛ الترجمة من الإنجليزية إلى العربية؛ صعوبات الترجمة. ترجمة حرفية؛ كفاءة في استخدام المتلازمات اللفظية.

Introduction

This study is carried out among English students in University of Elmergib, faculty of Arts, Khoms, Libya. This study focuses on collocations in English and their Arabic translations. It examines selected collocation patterns and considers how their meanings can be conveyed naturally and accurately in Arabic. By identifying potential areas of difficulty, the study aims to contribute to a clearer understanding of English–Arabic collocational differences and to offer practical insights for learners, translators, and language teachers. Collocations are the combinations of words that commonly come together. Learning collocations is significantly important for fluent and natural language use. Unlike freely chosen word combinations, collocations are constructed by linguistic convention. For example, speakers say, ‘take medicine’ rather than simply combining any verb with the noun ‘medicine’. Recognizing and using such patterns helps language users make expressions that are accurate, idiomatic, and appropriate to context. Corpus-based research also treats collocations as observable patterns of word co-occurrence that can be examined in authentic language data.

Collocational knowledge is particularly important for learners and translators working between English and Arabic. A word-for-word translation may preserve the meanings of individual words but produce an unnatural or inaccurate expression because the two languages do not always combine equivalent words in the same way. Research on English–Arabic translation has documented difficulties involving collocations, including the selection of inappropriate equivalents and differences in how particular grammatical patterns are expressed across the two languages.

These challenges make collocations a useful focus for language and translation research. Studying common patterns such as adjective-noun, verb-noun, and noun-noun combinations can help identify which forms learners recognize and how effectively they translate them. Such analysis may also inform teaching by highlighting the value of learning words in context and practicing conventional combinations rather than studying vocabulary only as isolated items. Recent research on Arab EFL learners similarly emphasizes the importance of collocational competence for translation and language instruction.

Literature Review

Translation and Collocations

Collocations are a central concern in translation because meaning is conveyed not only by individual words but also by certain ways words are put together. Many expressions such as ‘make a decision’ or ‘heavy rain’ are grammatically possible combinations as their normal naturalness relies on established usage. A translator who understands each word but overlooks these connotations may provide a target text that is understandable but inappropriate or misleading. Collocational competence therefore involves recognizing conventional combinations in the source language and selecting target-language expressions that convey the intended meaning naturally and appropriately.

Collocations and translation equivalence

Translation of collocations is challenging because word combinations are language specific. A source-language collocation may have a direct equivalent in the target language, but it may also require a different grammatical structure, a different lexical choice, or a paraphrase. Word-for-word translation can preserve the source words

 Copyright: © 2026 by the authors. Submitted for possible open access publication under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).

while failing to reproduce the conventional expression in the target language. Conversely, a translator may need to depart from the source form to preserve its meaning, register, and communicative effect.

These challenges are relevant to English–Arabic translation. Differences in lexical preference, grammatical structures, and context can make a word for word transference inadequate. (Zinel'aabdin & Ahmed, 2017; Bahumaid, 2006) studied collocations in English–Arabic translation and highlighted the importance of considering how collocations function in context rather than translating them as isolated word pairs. Collocational translation consequently involves a search for functional equivalence, in other words, an expression should communicate the intended idea while sounding acceptable in the target language.

Translation choices also depend on context and text type. A collocation in an academic, literary, or technical text may have different conventions and constraints. The translator must identify whether a combination is literal or figurative, consider its surrounding discourse, and determine whether the target language uses a comparable expression. Obtaining meanings from a dictionary alone may not function successfully, since dictionaries may not fully represent variation in meaning, register, or usage.

Collocational Competence and Translation Quality

Collocational competence refers to the ability to recognize, interpret, and produce conventional word combinations. In translation, this competence is closely related to accuracy and fluency. It is an expression that may be semantically understandable but still sound unnatural if its lexical partners are not conventional in the target language. In their study on collocational competence and translation quality, Metwally & Hamad (2023) conclude that knowledge of lexical and grammatical collocations is associated with more adequate translation performance. Their study also finds recurring challenges among student translators, advocating the view that collocations require special attention in translation education.

Many studies involving English–Arabic translation learners similarly report challenges in recognizing collocations and selecting suitable Arabic equivalents. Habtoor and Al-Swaidan (2019), for example, investigated learners' awareness of English collocations and the techniques they adopted in translating them into Arabic. Their study finds that the relationship between collocational familiarity and translation performance and underscores the role of strategy selection. A recent study of Arab EFL learners by Altamimi & Sanosi, (2025) also found moderate accuracy in translating tested collocations. The study confirmed that knowing single words may not be sufficient to produce accurate translations of word combinations. These findings suggest that learners may benefit from developing explicit awareness of collocations in both languages.

The difficulties are not confined to lexical combinations such as adjective-noun or verb-noun pairs. Grammatical collocations, including combinations of words with particular prepositions or grammatical patterns can also pose problems. Al-Jarf (2022) examined student translators difficulties with English word-preposition collocations translated into Arabic. The study concluded that translation instruction should address both lexical partnerships and grammatical patterns, rather than treating collocation as a narrow matter of vocabulary.

Strategies for Translating Collocations

Translators may use several strategies depending on the relationship between the source and target languages. When a conventional equivalent exists, it can be translated directly. When close equivalent is not available, the translator may use a target-language collocation with a different lexical structure, paraphrase the meaning, or reformulate the sentence. The choice should be guided by the function and context of the expression, not by a presumption that the same words must be retained.

These strategies require balancing semantic accuracy and natural target-language usage. A literal rendering may be suitable when the collocation is shared across languages, but it may be inappropriate when the source combination is language specific. Paraphrase can preserve meaning when a direct equivalent is unavailable, although excessive paraphrase may reduce stylistic force or precision. The translator must therefore consider both what the collocation means and what role it plays in the text.

Recent research continues to study how Arab EFL learners translate collocations and what strategies they use. Altamimi and Sanosi (2025) used corpus-based analysis to examine translations produced by 176 students. They report moderate accuracy and no statistically significant difference in accuracy across the collocation types studied. This finding suggests that the challenge may be broad rather than limited to one structural category. Mekahli (2024) also examined strategies used by Algerian EFL learners in translating Arabic and English collocations, contributing to current research on learner approaches and cross-linguistic differences.

In literature, there is an overwhelming support towards teaching collocations as meaningful units in context, rather than presenting vocabulary only as isolated words. Translation students can compare English combinations with their Arabic equivalents, analyze examples in authentic texts, and discuss why a literal translation may or may not be appropriate. Bilingual dictionaries, and online translation resources can help learners identify usage patterns and assess possible target-language expressions.

Generally speaking, current research presents collocations as a significant component of translation competence. Adequate translation needs more than lexical knowledge; translators need to be aware of the conventional word

 Copyright: © 2026 by the authors. Submitted for possible open access publication under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).

combinations, interpret them in context, and select expressions that are precise and natural in the target language. This literature provides a basis for investigating learners' translation of collocations and identifying the types of difficulty and strategies reflected in their work.

Types of collocations

There are many types of collocations. The current study focuses on the most important ones that are recurrent and interest the student most. According to Cruse (1977) the classification of these types is mainly grammatical, depending on the grammatical groupings of word classes according to their occurrence together in language use. The grammatical structure of collocation makes them not only easy to follow, but also understandable and translatable. The following are the types of collocations investigated in this study. These examples are illustrative, in Methodology section, the actual collocations used in the test will be given.

1. Adjective + noun
- severe pain: ألم شديد
- high fever: حمى شديدة
- chronic illness: مرض مزمن
- healthy diet: نظام غذائي صحي

2. Verb + noun
- take medicine: يتناول الدواء
- measure temperature: يقيس درجة الحرارة
- examine the patient: يفحص المريض
- prescribe treatment: يصف العلاج

3. Noun + noun
- blood test: فحص الدم
- health centre: مركز صحي
- pain relief: تخفيف الألم
- patient record: ملف المريض

4. Adjective + adjective
- safe and effective: آمن وفعّال
- tired and weak: متعب وضعيف
- calm and comfortable: هادئ ومرتاح
- clean and dry: نظيف وجاف

5. Adverb + adverb
- very carefully: بحذر شديد
- quite slowly: ببطء شديد
- extremely well: بشكل ممتاز للغاية
- rather quickly: بسرعة إلى حدٍّ ما

6. Noun + verb
- the patient recovered: تعافى المريض
- the nurse arrived: وصلت الممرضة
- the medicine works: يعمل الدواء
- the pain increased: ازداد الألم

7. Verb + adverb
- breathe slowly: يتنفس ببطء
- walk carefully: يمشي بحذر
- respond quickly: يستجيب بسرعة
- sleep peacefully: ينام بهدوء

Methodology

This section describes the methodological procedures adopted to investigate the problems that university students encounter when translating English collocations into Arabic. Collocations are conventional word combinations whose acceptability depends on usage and not on the literal meaning of their parts (Baker, 2018). Any inquiry into how students render them therefore needs a design that shows what students actually produce when they translate without dictionaries. For this reason, the study adopts a qualitative and descriptive approach, which suits the identification of recurring error types and their interpretation in light of earlier research (Bahumaid, 2006; Altamimi & Sanosi, 2025). The data were collected through a written translation test of 14 English collocations representing several grammatical patterns. The participants were 20 third- and fourth-year students of English at the Faculty of Arts, Elmergib University, all native speakers of Arabic who learn English as a foreign language. The test was completed within one hour, without dictionaries, so that the responses would reflect the students' own collocational competence. After the test, each student's translation was marked against the natural Arabic equivalent of the English collocation and classified as acceptable or as an error. Errors were then categorized by

 Copyright: © 2026 by the authors. Submitted for possible open access publication under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).

type, such as word-by-word translation, polysemy-related mistranslation, and the choice of a general word where Arabic requires a restricted one. The errors were counted item by item, and the frequency for each collocation is presented in the tables of the Findings and Discussions section.

Ethical considerations were maintained by the researcher, participants received information before the test, explaining the purpose of the study, and their right to withdraw at any point without any consequences. Participation was voluntary, and only students who completed the translation test were included in the analysis.

The question was: translate the following English collocations into Arabic in an hour timeframe. Participants were told that the use of reference dictionaries was strictly not allowed:

- sound sleep
- physical activity
- keep an appointment
- perform surgery
- heart rate
- emergency room
- alive and kicking
- safe and sound
- quite well
- so far
- The wound healed
- The swelling disappeared
- cough violently
- heal completely.

Findings and Discussions

Introduction

This section presents and discusses the students' translations of the 14 English collocations in the test, grouped into seven grammatical patterns. Each table gives two items, the translation produced by the students, the natural Arabic collocation, and the number of students (out of 20) who produced that translation, so that each student represents 5% of the group. The patterns are discussed in the order of the tables: (adjective + noun), (verb + noun), (noun + noun), (adjective + adjective), (adverb + adverb), (noun + verb), and (verb + adverb).

Each translation was examined in three respects: whether the meaning of the English expression was preserved, whether the Arabic words chosen to combine conventionally, and what kind of deviation occurred. Three kinds were considered: word-by-word translation, selection of a wrong sense of a polysemous word, and failure to treat a fixed expression as a single unit. The findings are interpreted in light of earlier research on English–Arabic collocation translation, which has repeatedly identified literal translation and limited awareness of cross-linguistic differences as sources of error (Bahumaid, 2006; Baker, 2018).

Table (1): Translation of Adjective + Noun collocations

Type of English collocation Adjective + Noun	Number of errors	Student translation	Natural Arabic collocation
sound sleep	8	صوت النوم	نوم عميق
physical activity	11	نشاط جسدي	نشاط بدني

Table (1) presents two English adjective–noun collocations and their Arabic translations. The translation of "sound sleep" as (صوت النوم) reflects a word-for-word interpretation of sound as "voice/sound" rather than its contextual meaning of "healthy or undisturbed." The natural equivalent, (نوم عميق), conveys the intended sense of restful sleep and is more idiomatic in Arabic. The second collocation in this table is "physical activity", which student translated as (نشاط جسدي), communicates the general meaning, but (نشاط بدني) is the more conventional Arabic collocation in this context. Thus, the first example shows a clear semantic and collocational error, while the second is understandable but less natural in its lexical choice. This observation is consistent with research identifying cross-language differences in collocability as a challenge in English–Arabic translation (Bahumaid, 2006). These examples illustrate how translating individual words without considering context and target-language usage can produce unnatural or inaccurate collocations.

Table (2): Translation of Verb + Noun collocations

Type of English collocation Verb + Noun	Number of errors	Student translation	Natural Arabic collocation
keep an appointment	13	يحتفظ بالموعد	يلتزم بالموعد
perform a surgery	10	يؤدي عملية	يُجري عملية جراحية

 Copyright: © 2026 by the authors. Submitted for possible open access publication under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).

Table (2) examines verb–noun collocations. For item "keep an appointment", the students' translations were (يحتفظ بالموعد), which means in its literal sense retaining or possessing something. In this context, however, the intended meaning is to attend or honour a scheduled appointment, for which the more idiomatic and appropriate Arabic equivalent is (يلتزم بالموعد). Regarding the second item of this type of collocation, "perform a surgery" half of participating students translated it as (يؤدي عملية) which to an extent conveys the general idea but is less precise and natural than the conventional Arabic collocation (يُجري عملية جراحية). These examples indicate that the difficulty lies not only in understanding individual words but also in selecting Arabic verbs that conventionally combine with the corresponding nouns. This observation shows that there is a need to translate combinations according to context and target-language usage rather than relying on word-for-word equivalents.

Table (3): Translation of Noun + Noun collocations

Type of English collocation Noun + Noun	Number of errors	Student translation	Natural Arabic collocation
heart rate	6	معدل القلب	معدل ضربات القلب
emergency room	00	غرفة الطوارئ	غرفة الطوارئ

Table (3) shows different levels of translation accuracy for noun–noun collocations. Six students translated the first item "heart rate" as (معدل القلب) which conveys a general meaning related to the heart but omits the concept of beats. The more precise and conventional equivalent in Arabic is (معدل ضربات القلب). This indicates that some students have partial semantic understanding, with reduced medical specificity. However, by contrast, all students were able to translate the second item "emergency room" accurately. The conventional equivalent in Arabic is (غرفة الطوارئ) which matches the natural Arabic collocation and preserves the intended meaning. Thus, the first example illustrates both incomplete lexical rendering and an accurate, idiomatic translation. This pattern is consistent with research indicating that learners may translate some collocations appropriately while struggling with others because collocations depend on conventional lexical combinations, not just individual-word meanings (Abdelhamid, 2021).

Table (4): Translation of Adjective + Adjective collocations

Type of English collocation Adjective + Adjective	Number of errors	Student translation	Natural Arabic collocation
alive and kicking	14	حي ويضرب	حيّ وبصحة جيدة
safe and sound	15	امن وصوت	سالمًا معافى

Table 4 shows that students translated neither of the two adjective + adjective collocations into the conventional natural Arabic form. Both items are fixed English binomials whose meaning cannot be elicited from their parts. For the collocation three quarters of the participants wrote 'alive and kicking' as (حي ويضرب) which in English is (alive and hitting), whereas the actual natural Arabic version is (حيّ وبصحة جيدة) "alive and in good health". Students rendered kicking through its basic verb meaning, so the figurative sense of vigorous health was lost, and the result is semantically odd. The natural form also changes grammatical category, replacing the second adjective with a prepositional phrase, which word-for-word translation cannot produce.

Similarly, for safe and sound, students wrote (امن وصوت) matching sound to صوت "noise or voice" instead of its sense "unharmed". The natural Arabic collocation (سالمًا معافى) pairs two near-synonyms. This is a polysemy error; students chose the most frequent dictionary equivalent without checking the context. Safe is acceptable in meaning, but the pair is not.

Both errors reflect literal, word-by-word translation and a failure to find out the most appropriate expressions as units. This agrees with Bahumaid (2006), whose Arab translation instructors performed poorly on a collocation test, a difficulty he relates to collocations being very challenging to predict, varying widely across languages, and poorly covered by resources. A study of Jordanian students translating English binomials into Arabic likewise found only about 44% correct answers, with literal translation among the strategies used (Hussein & Lingwood, 2011).

Table (5): Translation of Adverb + Adverb collocations

Type of English collocation Adverb + Adverb	Number of errors	Student translation	Natural Arabic collocation
quite well	12	هادئ وجيد	بشكل جيد
so far	9	بعيد جدا	حتى الآن

The translations in table (5) demonstrate the difficulties in recognising the semantic and contextual functions of English adverbial collocations and conveying their meanings in conventional natural Arabic equivalents. In the first example 'quite well', half of the students' translations (هادئ وجيد) demonstrate lexical and semantic

 Copyright: © 2026 by the authors. Submitted for possible open access publication under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).

misinterpretation. The adjective (هادئ) which in Arabic means (quiet/calm) has no semantic correspondence with 'quite', while (جيد) which means (good) fails to preserve the adverbial meaning of 'well'. This reveals students' inability to identify the collocation's intensifying and manner-related functions. Similarly, the translation of 'so far' as (بعيد جدا) shows excessive reliance on the literal meanings of individual words. The students interpret far spatially and so as an intensifier, overlooking the temporal meaning of the fixed expression. These examples demonstrate that students tend to adopt word-for-word translation rather than contextual and collocational equivalence. Such errors demonstrate the importance of developing contextual awareness and sensitivity to cross-linguistic differences in collocational patterns. Baker (2018) emphasises that differences in collocational conventions frequently pose translation challenges, while Alwazna (2018) maintains the need to prioritise intended meaning and target-language naturalness over literal or direct correspondence.

Table (6): Translation of Noun + Verb collocations

Type of English collocation Noun + Verb	Number of errors	Student translation	Natural Arabic collocation
The wound healed	16	شفي الجرح	التأم الجرح
The swelling disappeared	6	ذهب التورم	اختفى التورم

The data in table (6) shows two distinct patterns of translating English noun–verb collocations into Arabic, highlighting the students' varying degrees of collocational competence. In the first example, the wound healed, the students' translation (شفي الجرح) is semantically accurate and grammatically acceptable. However, the suggested equivalent (التأم الجرح) represents a more conventional and contextually precise Arabic collocation for describing the physical healing of a wound. This difference illustrates that lexical accuracy does not necessarily guarantee optimal collocational naturalness. In the second example, 'the swelling disappeared' the students' translation (ذهب التورم) conveys the general meaning of disappearance but employs (ذهب) which means in Arabic (went), is less idiomatic in this medical context. By contrast, (اختفى التورم) demonstrates stronger lexical compatibility and more natural Arabic equivalent. The findings suggest that students tend to prioritise semantic transfer at the individual-word level without consistently considering the conventional lexical refernces governing Arabic verb–noun combinations. Abaker's (2021) observation found that learners' reliance on literal translation and insufficient awareness of cross-linguistic differences contribute to collocational errors. Furthermore, Sonbul et al. (2023) state that semantic transparency and cross-linguistic congruency significantly influence translators' ability to produce natural collocations. Therefore, these examples highlight the importance of developing students' awareness of target-language collocational restrictions, particularly in specialised medical contexts.

Table (7): Translation of Verb + Adverb collocations

Type of English collocation Verb + Adverb	Number of errors	Student translation	Natural Arabic collocation
cough violently	5	يكح بعنف	يسعل بشدة
heal completely	12	يتعافى بالكامل	يلتئم تمامًا

The data in table (7) demonstrates that the students encounter difficulties in achieving natural Arabic collocational equivalence, particularly in selecting contextually appropriate adverbs. In the first example, cough violently, the students' translation (يكح بعنف) conveys the intended meaning and is semantically comprehensible. However, the expression (يسعل بشدة) represents a more idiomatic Arabic equivalent in the medical context, as the verb (يسعل) and the adverb (بشدة) form a more conventional lexical combination. The student's choice of (بعنف) suggests a tendency towards direct lexical substitution without sufficient consideration of target-language collocational conventions. Similarly in the second item, 'heal completely', the translation (يتعافى بالكامل) communicates the general meaning of complete recovery but does not accurately preserve the collocational and semantic relationship in the original expression. The proposed equivalent (يلتئم تمامًا) is more precise when referring specifically to the complete healing of a wound. These examples highlight the importance of contextual interpretation, since (يتعافى) generally refers to recovery, whereas (يلتئم) specifically describes the healing or closure of a wound. Overall, the examples reveal that students show partial semantic competence but have not developed full awareness of lexical restrictions and conventional verb–adverb combinations in Arabic. These findings are consistent with many studies on collocation translation from English to Arabic. Altamimi and Sanosi (2025) for example identify literal translation and inadequate awareness of cross-linguistic differences as major sources of collocational errors. They found moderate accuracy among Arab EFL learners in translating English collocations, proposing the need for explicit collocational instruction.

 Copyright: © 2026 by the authors. Submitted for possible open access publication under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).

Conclusions and Recommendations

This study investigated the problems that 20 third- and fourth-year English students at Elmergib University encounter when translating English collocations into Arabic without dictionary support. The results show that their collocational competence in translation is limited. On 13 of the 14 test items, between 5 and 16 students (25% to 80%) produced translations that departed from the natural Arabic collocation, an average of 10.5 students per item (52.7% of responses). In the translation test, only one item 'emergency room' was translated naturally by all students.

From this study, the researcher draws four main conclusions. First, word-by-word translation was the main source of difficulty. Students transferred the dictionary meaning of each word instead of asking which Arabic words combine conventionally, as in 'alive and hitting' for the item (alive and kicking) 14 students, and 'voice of sleep' for item (sound sleep) 8 students. Second, polysemy led to distortion of meaning. Selecting the most frequent sense of sound, kicking, keep and far produced renderings that the English expressions do not carry. The six items in which meaning was distorted were mistranslated by 59% of students on average, compared with 47% for the seven items whose translations were understandable but less natural. Third, fixed and non-transparent expressions were the most problematic. The adjective + adjective binomials had the highest deviation rate (72.5%), with 15 students mistranslating safe and sound, and 9 students read so far spatially. Fourth, in verb-related patterns students chose general verbs and adverbs where Arabic requires restricted ones. The highest figure in the test was for the wound healed, where 16 students (80%) used a general verb of healing instead of the conventional one. Noun + noun collocations were the least problematic (15%), although this rests on two items, one of which, emergency room, has a close Arabic counterpart.

These findings agree with earlier research linking collocation errors to literal translation and limited awareness of cross-linguistic differences (Bahumaid, 2006; Abaker, 2021; Altamimi & Sanosi, 2025). They also fit Sonbul et al.'s (2023) finding that semantic transparency and cross-linguistic congruency influence the production of natural collocations, since the least transparent items fared worst. Altamimi and Sanosi (2025) found no significant difference in accuracy across collocation types. The variation across patterns observed here is descriptive only, because each pattern was tested with two items, but it suggests that fixed expressions deserve particular attention.

Based on the analysis and findings from data collected from the participants, the researcher has the following recommendations to the teaching staff and faculty managers:

1- Collocations need to be taught explicitly, as units. Translation courses should present collocations in groups by pattern, for example (verb + noun), (adjective + noun) etc., so that students learn them as single translation units and not as a group of separate words.

2- Engage students in routine studies involving corpora and collocation dictionaries. Students should be trained to check translations in bilingual collocation dictionaries and in English and Arabic corpora before attempting any translation activity, in place of relying on the first dictionary equivalent.

3- Train contextual sense selection and strategies beyond literal translation. Classroom tasks should require students to identify the sense of polysemous words such as sound, keep and far in context. In addition, other fixed binomials similar to the ones appeared in this study (safe and sound, alive and kicking) and adverbial phrases (so far) should be given priority, since they were the most problematic.

4- Use error analysis and feedback tasks. Instructors can collect students' own translations, such as 'alive and hitting' and 'voice of sleep', and have students compare them with natural Arabic collocations. Specialized verb and adverb collocations, for example in medical texts (the wound healed), should be included, because general verbs and adverbs were frequently chosen where restricted ones are required.

5- The author encourages extended research on the topic. Future studies should use larger and more varied samples, more items per collocation pattern, the Arabic-to-English direction, and think-aloud or interview data, in order to explain why students make these choices and to test whether differences between patterns are statistically significant.

Compliance with ethical standards

Disclosure of conflict of interest

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

المراجع

المراجع العربية

أبو نبعة، علاء عبد العزيز. (2020). تقييم الضوابط الرقابية في الإطار المهني الدولي لممارسة أعمال المراجعة الداخلية. *مجلة المراجعة الداخلية*، (11).

امعيقل، عمر منصور، والروياتي، عوض أحمد. (2021). مستوى فاعلية نظام الرقابة الداخلية المطبق وأثره على مستوى الأداء المالي في الشركة العامة للكهرباء في ليبيا خلال الفترة (2002–2010). *مجلة الأكاديمية للعلوم الإنسانية والاجتماعية*، (21)، 46–72.

 Copyright: © 2026 by the authors. Submitted for possible open access publication under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).

حمودة، خالد أحمد محمد، وحسن، فاطمة شادي هدية، وحمودة، زهرة عبد السلام محمد. (2018). دور المراجع الداخلي في تحسين نظام الرقابة الداخلية: دراسة تطبيقية داخل مؤسسات التعليم العالي التقني والفني. *مجلة دراسات الإنسان والمجتمع*، (5)، 1–56.
الصحن، عبد الفتاح، وسرايا، محمد. (1998). *الرقابة والمراجعة الداخلية*. الدار الجامعية.
هيئة الرقابة الإدارية. (2024). *التقرير السنوي لهيئة الرقابة الإدارية لعام 2023م*. طرابلس، ليبيا.
مهدي، مريم يعقوب اسحاق، والجبوري، أزهر صبحي عبد الحسين. (2026). أثر تقييم الضوابط الرقابية في كلفة الحوكمة. المجلة العراقية للعلوم الإدارية، 22(87)، 554–571. https://doi.org/10.71207/ijas.v22i87.5829

المراجع الأجنبية

Abuazza, W. O., Mihret, D. G., James, K., & Best, P. (2015). The perceived scope of internal audit function in Libyan public enterprises. *Managerial Auditing Journal*, 30(6/7), 560–581. https://doi.org/10.1108/MAJ-10-2014-1109

Almahuzi, A. S. (2025). The effect of internal audit on enhancing the quality of financial reports in the government institutions: Mediating role of risk management. *Risk Governance and Control: Financial Markets & Institutions*, 15(4), 43–53. https://doi.org/10.22495/rgcv15i4p4

Alzeban, A., & Gwilliam, D. (2014). Factors affecting the internal audit effectiveness: A survey of the Saudi public sector. *Journal of International Accounting, Auditing and Taxation*, 23(2), 74–86. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.intaccaudtax.2014.06.001

Arena, M., & Azzone, G. (2009). Identifying organizational drivers of internal audit effectiveness. *International Journal of Auditing*, 13(1), 43–60. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1099-1123.2008.00392.x

Chang, Y.-T., Chen, H., Cheng, R. K., & Chi, W. (2019). The impact of internal audit attributes on the effectiveness of internal control over operations and compliance. *Journal of Contemporary Accounting & Economics*, 15(1), 1–19. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jcae.2018.11.002

Committee of Sponsoring Organizations of the Treadway Commission. (2013). *Internal control — Integrated framework*. COSO.

DiMaggio, P. J., & Powell, W. W. (1983). The iron cage revisited: Institutional isomorphism and collective rationality in organizational fields. *American Sociological Review*, 48(2), 147–160. https://doi.org/10.2307/2095101

Hair, J. F., Black, W. C., Babin, B. J., & Anderson, R. E. (2010). *Multivariate data analysis* (7th ed.). Pearson Prentice Hall.

Henseler, J., Ringle, C. M., & Sarstedt, M. (2015). A new criterion for assessing discriminant validity in variance-based structural equation modeling. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 43(1), 115–135. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11747-014-0403-8

Institute of Internal Auditors. (2013). *The IIA global internal audit competency framework*.

Institute of Internal Auditors. (2017). *International standards for the professional practice of internal auditing*.

Jensen, M. C., & Meckling, W. H. (1976). Theory of the firm: Managerial behavior, agency costs and ownership structure. *Journal of Financial Economics*, 3(4), 305–360. https://doi.org/10.1016/0304-405X(76)90026-X

Kotb, A., Elbardan, H., & Halabi, H. (2020). Mapping of internal audit research: A post-Enron structured literature review. *Accounting, Auditing & Accountability Journal*, 33(8), 1969–1996. https://doi.org/10.1108/AAAJ-07-2018-3581

Lenz, R., & Hahn, U. (2015). A synthesis of empirical internal audit effectiveness literature pointing to new research opportunities. *Managerial Auditing Journal*, 30(1), 5–33. https://doi.org/10.1108/MAJ-08-2014-1072

Lin, S., Pizzini, M., Vargus, M., & Bardhan, I. R. (2011). The role of the internal audit function in the disclosure of material weaknesses. *The Accounting Review*, 86(1), 287–323. https://doi.org/10.2308/accr.00000016

Masoud, N. (2025). Moderating effect of sustainable innovation on internal audit effectiveness and sustainability auditing practices: Evidence from Libya's public sector. *International Journal of Financial Studies*, 13(2), Article 69. https://doi.org/10.3390/ijfs13020069

Mihret, D. G., & Yismaw, A. W. (2007). Internal audit effectiveness: An Ethiopian public sector case study. *Managerial Auditing Journal*, 22(5), 470–484. https://doi.org/10.1108/02686900710750757

Oussii, A. A., & Boulila Taktak, N. (2018). The impact of internal audit function characteristics on internal control quality. *Managerial Auditing Journal*, 33(5), 450–469. https://doi.org/10.1108/MAJ-06-2017-1579

Podsakoff, P. M., MacKenzie, S. B., Lee, J.-Y., & Podsakoff, N. P. (2003). Common method biases in behavioral research: A critical review of the literature and recommended remedies. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 88(5), 879–903. https://doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.88.5.879

Tabachnick, B. G., & Fidell, L. S. (2019). Using multivariate statistics (7th ed.). Pearson.

Disclaimer/Publisher's Note: The statements, opinions, and data contained in all publications are solely those of the individual author(s) and contributor(s) and not of **AJASHSS** and/or the editor(s). **AJASHSS** and/or the editor(s) disclaim responsibility for any injury to people or property resulting from any ideas, methods, instructions, or products referred to in the content.

 Copyright: © 2026 by the authors. Submitted for possible open access publication under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).