

A study of English grammatical collocations of gerund and their translations in Azeri: A corpus- based contrastive analysis

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Abstract: Collocations have been high on the agenda of linguistic researches these last few years, driven by second language teaching and learning researches on the one hand and lexicography ones on the other. Yet, it would be erroneous to think collocations especially grammatical collocations do not pose problems in translation between the very different languages like English and Azeri which belong to different language families and their grammatical structures are quite different. This paper sets out to find out the closest equivalent of English grammatical collocations of gerund in Azeri. This research is corpus-based, both qualitative and quantitative study. Based on Benson et al's classification of grammatical collocations of gerund, there are three types of collocations of gerund: verb +verb-ing; verb (transitive) + object + verb-ing; and verb (transitive) + possessive + gerund. The analysis of Azeri translated data showed that gerund mainly translated as infinitive in Azeri. Moreover, verb +v-ing, translated as “infinitive+ verb”, verb (transitive) + object + verb-ing used as “object+ infinitive +verb(transitive)” and the closest equivalent for grammatical collocation of verb (transitive) + possessive + gerund, is “possessive+ infinitive+ verb(transitive).”

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1. Introduction

The syntactic patterning of words in English frequently helps determine their meaning, and thus knowledge of grammatical collocation is an important component of effective usage. Many learners of English as a second or foreign language, however, appear to lack such knowledge to the degree that they do not recognize grammatical collocations have an arbitrary nature. Moreover, they display dramatic levels of incompetence in performing and self-evaluating tasks involving applications of grammatical collocation. Generally, natural languages are replete with collocations-recurrent combinations of words whose co-occurrence probability is greater than chance. Therefore, the translation of collocations is a constant problem. What creates this problem is that different languages have different patterns of collocations.

According to Larson(1984) “combination of words will often differ from language to language, for example the word “have” collocates with the word “dream”. We say I have a dream. However in Russian this combination would not be used. Rather one would say I saw (in) a dream. Translators would sometimes make mistakes because they collocate words together which go together in their own language but not in another language”. Based on the above statements one may conclude that the translator’s ignorance of this idea may result in a kind of vague translation. Furthermore, Newmark (1988) 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. He further mentions that a collocation consists basically of two or more lexical /grammatical words, e.g. mental illness. The collocates within a collocation define and delimit each other by eliminating at least some of their possible meanings. The definition may be mutual and equally balanced, thus to “pay attention” is a collocation since it reduces the number of senses in which “pay” can be used to one. Besides, Newmark (1988) emphasizes the importance of collocations by describing them as the nerves of a text. He says if grammar is the bones of a text, collocations are the nerves, more subtle, multiple and specific in denoting meaning.

According to Benson et al (1986), collocation 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. (1986) further categorized the grammatical collocations into eight small groups, marked as G1 to G8, among which, G8

collocations contain nineteen English verb patterns. (Appendix). Basically, it will have attained this fact that grammatical collocations play an important role in translation since linguistic accuracy is an important feature in the quality of translation. On the other hand, syntactic differences existing among languages may cause problem in translation of them. Therefore, some collocations may sound strange and be misapplied when translated (Zaghoul&Abdul-Fattah, 2003). Undoubtedly, a translator needs to be able to analyze the lexical and grammatical collocations of the source text in order to translate them. This means that having enough knowledge over the syntactic structures of both source and target languages is necessary for a translator in order to produce an acceptable translation. Moreover the grammatical meaning is more significant, less precise, more general and sometimes more elusive than lexical meaning (Newmark, 1988). And since word classes, grammatical relations, word order, style and pragmatic features are different from language to language, the translator may encounter some problems in translation particularly when two languages belong to the different family groups (Nida, 1975, p.45). Here it seems necessary to point some characteristics of the Azeri language because it does not belong to the family of Indo-European languages and its grammatical structure is quite different from English that is a Germanic language belonging to Indo-European languages.

The Azeri language, which is also known as Azeri, Azeri Turkish and Azerbaijani, is the Republic of Azerbaijan's official language, though some dialects of the language are spoken in several parts of Iran. The Azeri language can be heard in parts of eastern Turkey, northern Iraq, and in southeastern area of the Republic of Georgia. Worldwide, there are about 27 million native speakers of this language. The Azeri language is derived from the Oghuz family of languages and linguistically, it is most closely related to Turkish, Persian and Arabic. As part of the Oghuz family of languages, it was brought from central Asia by Seljuk Turks and in the Middle East it was greatly influenced by the vocabulary and grammar of Persian and Arabic. Eventually, it replaced Tat, Old Azeri and Middle Persian in Iran and became the most dominant language in a multi-lingual area by the 1500s. 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 as Azeri is a pro-drop language, the subject may not be mentioned in the sentence. All above mentioned literature show the importance of collocation in translation, however, there has been little empirical research into the way collocations especially, and grammatical collocations are dealt with in translation. Moreover, they are not included in many dictionaries, so the best way to study them, as Kennedy (1998) believes, is corpus-based studies.

Corpus-based research in translation is concerned with revealing both the universal and the specific features of translation, through the interplay of theoretical constructs and hypotheses, variety of data, novel descriptive categories and a rigorous, flexible methodology, which can be applied to inductive and deductive research, as well as product- and process-oriented studies. As Olohan (2001) puts: "It is a relatively new area of research within translation studies, motivated by an interest in the study of translated texts as instances of language use in their own right. This is in contrast to the not uncommon perception of translations as "deviant" language use, a view which has generally led to the exclusion of translated texts from most "standard" or "national" corpora (Baker, 1993, p.193). While translations have been seen as useful in parallel bilingual or multilingual corpora, this has usually been for contrastive linguistic analysis which has studied the relationship between source and target language systems or usage."

This study has devoted special attention to grammatical collocations. In this research, the researcher studies the Azeri translation of grammatical collocations of gerund on the basis of Benson et al's categorization of grammatical collocations, i.e. Verb +v-ing, verb(trans)+ object + v-ing , and verb (trans) + poss + gerund . (Appendix).In their categorization of gerund collocations, in G pattern,(Appendix) verbs are followed by a second verb in -ing. Typical examples of this construction are: they enjoy watching television, he kept talking and etc. In J pattern, verbs are followed by an object and a verb form in-ing. Typical examples of this construction are: I caught them stealing apples, we found the children sleeping on the floor, and so on. Pattern K deals with verbs can be followed by a possessive (pronoun or noun) and a gerund, i.e., a verbal noun. Typical examples of this construction are: please excuse my waking you so early, this fact justifies Bob's coming late and etc. Benson et al(1986) mention that some of these

constructions are very close to those in pattern J, which consist of verb(trans) + direct object + verb +ing. Therefore the following constructions that are virtually synonymous: "I cannot imagine them stealing apples" and "I cannot imagine their stealing apples", however, the possessive construction is awkward when two objects are joined by a conjunction. Thus, the construction "I can't imagine Bill (or Bill's) and Mary's doing that" is far less likely to occur than the pattern J construction I can't imagine Bill and Mary doing that.(ibid). In this relation, the research questions have been formulated as follows:

- (1). How is English grammatical collocation of verb +v-ing translated into Azeri?
- (2). How is English grammatical collocation of verb (Trans) + object + v-ing translated into Azeri?
- (3). How is English grammatical collocation of verb (Trans) + poss + gerund translated into Azeri?

2. Material and Methods

The purpose of this study is to investigate and analyze the Azeri translations of English grammatical collocations of gerund on the basis of Benson et al's classifications of grammatical collocations, i.e. "Verb +v-ing"; "verb (trans) + object + v-ing", and "verb (trans) + poss + gerund". 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 the expected and observed frequencies in the Azeri translation of English grammatical collocations of **verb +v-ing**, **verb (trans) + object + v-ing** and **verb (trans) + poss + gerund**".

This research is corpus-based, both qualitative and quantitative study. 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

After collecting the data from mentioned materials, they were classified and summarized based on their frequencies for further analysis which come as follows:

■ English grammatical collocations of **verb +v-ing** and their translations in Azeri:

Based on the Azeri translation of 70 sentences involving this grammatical collocation, it has been cleared that in Azeri, only in 5 sentences v-ing has been translated as gerund (indiki zaman feli sifət in

Azeri) and in most of the sentences instead of using gerund/indiki zaman feli sifət, "infinitive" has been used, such as following examples:

*I dislike driving long distances: Mən uzun məsafələrə maşın **sürməyi** xoşlamıram.

* He started smoking a few years ago: "O, bir neçə il öncə siqaret **çəkməyə** başladı".

*He enjoyed talking of pleasures of travelling:"O, səyahətin həzzindən **danışmaqdan** ləzzət alırdı."

*He hates flying:"O, təyyarə ilə **uçmağı** sevmir".

*She likes cooking and she is very good at it: "O, xörək **bişirməyi** xoşlayır və bu işdə mahirdir".

Table 1. The frequency of the Azeri translation of English grammatical collocation of verb+v-ing

	Frequency	Percentage
Sentences involving Infinitive	65	93%
Sentences involving Gerund	5	7%

■ English grammatical collocation of **verb(trans)+ object + v-ing** and their translations in Azeri:

The analysis of Azeri translation of 55 sentences showed that in 47 sentences, infinitive, instead of gerund, has been used. In 8 translated sentences gerund has been translated as gerund. The examples are:

*She heard them learning the meeting: Qız onların mitinqi tərək **etməyini** eşitdi.

*I saw my friend running down the street: Mən dostumun küçə aşağı **qaçmağını** gördüm.

*We watched them dancing marvelously: Biz onların məharətlə rəqs **etməyini** gördük.

*He stood and looked at the ship leaving the port: O qalxdı və gəminin tərək **etməyini** baxdı.

*She saw him reading in the garden; Qız onun bağda kitab **oxumağını** gördü.

Table 2. The frequency of the Azeri translation of English grammatical collocation of verb+object+v-ing

	Frequency	percentage
Sentences involving infinitive	47	85%
Sentences involving gerund	8	15%

■ English grammatical collocation of **verb (Trans) + poss + gerund** and their translations in Azeri:

On the basis of the translation of 27 data, it has been concluded that in translation of this grammatical collocation also infinitive has been used more than gerund. In 23 sentences, gerund has been translated as infinitive.

*She saw my playing chess: “Qız mənim şahmat oynamağımı gördü”.

*This fact justifies Bob’s coming late: “Bu fakt Bobun gec gəlməyinə bərat qazandırır”.

*I never mind your asking a difficult question: “Heç vaxt sizin çətin sual verməyinizin əleyhinə deyiləm”.

*I will consider our going with you: Bizim sizinlə gətməyinizi nəzərə alacağam.

*She will not tolerate our delaying anymore: “O bizim təxirə salmağımıza dözməyəcək.”

Table 3. The frequency of the Azeri translation of English grammatical collocation of verb+poss+v-ing

Frequency		percentage
Sentences involving	23	85%
infinitive		
Sentences involving	4	15%
gerund		

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); Arabove & Solymanova(2009); and Gurbanove (2004), it has been expected that English gerund translated as gerund (indiki zaman feli sifət) in Azeri, therefore, the expected frequency for each of these grammatical collocations regarded as half of the number of sentences.

Table 4.Observed and expected frequencies in the Azeri translations

G.C.G	O.F	E.F
Verb +v+ ing	65	15
Verb obj+v+ing	47	27
Verb(trans)+poss +gerund	23	13

$$X^2 = 48.21$$

$$\text{Critical } X^2 = 5.99 \text{ (P=.05, df.2)}$$

Results of data analyses (table4) indicate that there is a significant difference between obtained chi-square (48.21) and critical $x^2(5.99)$, therefore, the mentioned null hypothesis is rejected.

3. Results

Although most of the English-Azeri grammar books mention that English gerund 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, 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 verb+ v-ing, in Azeri, is used as “infinitive + verb”, i.e. gerund translated as infinitive. Regarding English grammatical collocation of verb (Trans) + object +v-ing, the results of this study indicate that it is used as “object+ infinitive+ verb (trans)” in Azeri. And finally, English grammatical collocation of verb (Trans) + poss+ v-ing, translated as “poss+ infinitive+ verb (trans)”.

Table 5.The Azeri translation of English grammatical collocations of gerund

E.G.C.	A.G.C.
verb+ v-ing	infinitive+ verb
verb (trans) + object +v-ing	object+ infinitive +verb(trans)
verb (trans)+ poss+ v-ing	poss +infinitive +verb(trans)

4. Discussions

It can be said that patterns of collocation are largely arbitrary and independent of meaning. This is so both within and across languages. The same degree of mismatch that can be observed when comparing the collocational patterns of synonyms and near-synonyms within the same language is evident in the collocational patterning of ‘dictionary equivalents/near equivalents’ in two languages (Baker, 1992, p.48). Therefore, translation of collocations can be one of the problematic issues in translation. On the other hand, as Nida (1975,p.23) states, “successful translating involves one of the most complex intellectual challenges known to mankind. Moreover, in our present world, the need for an extensive, accurate and effective communication between those using different languages gives the translator a position of new and strategic importance”, therefore, a translator who attempts to translate collocations of one language into another expected to possess full varieties of knowledge on both source and target language i.e. the linguistic knowledge of a fluent speaker in order to analyze both lexical and grammatical collocations of the source and target languages and provide an acceptable translation. In fact, a translator does not have to know the grammar of the language for just the sake of it, he should be well versed in comparative grammar of two languages involved in translation and the similarities and dissimilarities in them. Therefore, translation is always more than simply writing in the sense of putting words to paper.

Based on this study, it is necessary to point that through contrastive studies of authentic syntactic patterns in context, new possibilities open up for

additional insights, methodological renewals and empirical theory developments based on the study of sentences form. In other words, the main advantage of a bilingual or even multilingual parallel corpus is that the languages interrelate with each other (Leech, 1997,p.23). Besides, it seems that in the literature of translation studies and in translation classroom, students and learners are required to compare and contrast translations with their originals. It is useful for language learning, translation education, translation studies, lexicography, finding equivalents for source language expressions, terms, and structures and so on. It is hoped that the results of the research may be used as additional information for the teachers especially in teaching English grammar and translation courses. Also, the results of the present study may help Azerbaijani translators, English learners and translator trainees for being able to provide the best translation of English grammatical collocations of gerund.

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