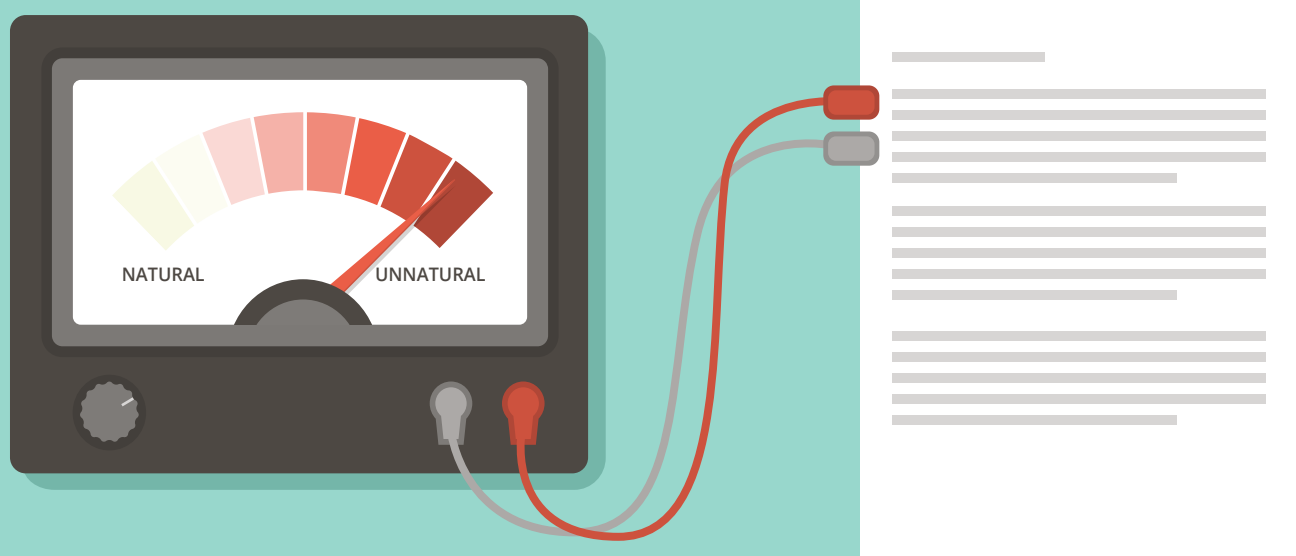


#8: Collocations



Ever wondered why some words or phrases simply “sound right” to a native speaker’s ear? If you’ve hit upon a phrasing that rolls off the tongue nicely, chances are that it’s a collocation that you’ve used.

A collocation is a “habitual juxtaposition of a particular word with another word or words with a frequency greater than chance” (Oxford English Dictionary). So, these are groups of words that tend to “go together” to convey a particular meaning, like:

- Strong tea
- High quality
- Fast food
- Zero tolerance

All these phrases convey meanings that are understood clearly by native speakers. We could phrase them in different ways that would be grammatically correct, but would sound “foreign”. If you were to read powerful tea or quick food, for instance, you would understand the writer’s intention but it’s likely that it would set off your “non-native speaker radar”.

That’s why collocations are important for a polished translation: customers will quickly pick up on phrases that don’t sit well in the target language.

Types of Collocation

Collocations come in six main forms:

- **Adjective + noun:** e.g. “strict parenting”
- **Noun + noun:** e.g. “a flock of sheep”
- **Verb + noun:** e.g. “to take action”
- **Adverb + adjective:** e.g. “painstakingly slow”
- **Verbs + prepositional phrase:**
e.g. “to chance upon”
- **Verb + adverb:** e.g. “to drive dangerously”

Collocation Resources

A quick web search will provide tonnes more information on this topic. Some of the best resources are collocation dictionaries, such as:

- **Ozdic**
www.ozdic.com/
- **Online Collocation Dictionary**
oxforddictionary.so8848.com/

Posted by Daniel Harper,
German to English ST

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Other Lessons

To talk about the lesson or ask questions, join our discussion in the [Translator Forums](#).