TRANSLATING THE BODY

HORTENSIA PÂRLOG

In memoriam Mioara Avram

Abstract. In order to speak a language correctly, one must know what words may combine or collocate with what other words. A combination or collocation that is semantically correct and acceptable in one language may not be so in a different language. The paper focuses on the translation into Romanian of English collocations in which one of the terms denotes a part of the body. Some of the collocations are translated literally, particularly if the the term is used in its primary sense. Very often, however, various changes take place in the translation of each of the items that form a body collocation.

1. INTRODUCTION

All languages are characterized by certain syntagmatic relations existing between words, which may combine on the basis of their semantic affinity. Words cannot combine at random: one cannot, for example, **give a contribution* ("*a da o donație*"), and *an explosion* cannot **burst* ("*o explozie izbucneşte*"); one can *make, offer* or *pay a contribution* ("*a face o donație*") and *an explosion happens, occurs, takes place* ("o explozie are loc"). To know a word means not only to know its form and some of its senses, but also the words that may be expected to precede or to follow it and the grammatical patterns in which it occurs.

The first to stress the importance of syntagmatic relations was the German linguist Porzig (1934), who demonstrated that the meaning of a lexical item can be described satisfactorily only if one takes into account its explicit or implicit syntagmatic relations with other lexical items. For example, one cannot explain the meaning of the verb *bark* without referring to the noun *dog*.

The recurrent combinations of the same words are known as *collocations*; their study is essential for establishing the grammatical and semantic potential of the words.

The concept of *collocation* was introduced by J.R. Firth, who argued that "you shall know a word by the company it keeps" (1958: 195). He used it only with reference to the combination of an adjective with a noun, but later on, the term came to be applied to other types of combinations as well. Firth demonstrated that in order to discuss the lexical meaning of a word, it is necessary to analyse its collocational level. A frequently quoted example offered by him is that of the words

RRL, **LII**, *3*, p. 325–336, Bucureşti, 2007

BDD-A281 © 2007 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 22:59:10 UTC)

night and *dark*: "one of the meanings of *night* is its collocability with *dark* and of *dark*, of course, its collocation with *night.* This kind of mutuality may be paralleled in most languages" (Firth 1958: 196).

Some words have a broad collocational range, while others have a more limited one. For example, *auburn* typically occurs with the noun *hair*, thus forming a "unique" or "specific" or "frozen" collocation. The adjective *ugly*, on the other hand, can combine with a great number of nouns (e.g., *building, child, drawing, face, insinuations*, *mood, rumours, scar, threats, wound,* etc.), forming so-called *free combinations* of words, also known as "irrelevant", "multiple" or "common" collocations (Bantaş 1986, Sârbu 1987, Hill and Lewis 1997). In free combinations of this type, the lexical items are not necessarily linked from a semantic point of view.

There is also a distinction to be made between collocations proper and idiomatic phrases. In a collocation, each lexeme preserves its semantic independence, while in an idiomatic phrase, the combination has a new meaning, different from the meanings of its component elements. For example, *fresh, salted, dried herring* are collocations, because *fresh, salted, dried* and *herring* are semantically independent, while *red herring* is an idiomatic phrase, meaning "something intended to divert attention from the real problem or matter; a misleading clue" ("mijloc de diversiune, de abatere a atenției").

We use collocations (more or less) correctly in our own language, because they are part of our linguistic competence, even if sometimes we are not aware of their existence and importance. On the other hand, even if we had perfect knowledge of collocations in our native language, this would not facilitate the correct use of collocations in a foreign language. In teaching a foreign language, attention is usually paid to grammatical problems and core vocabulary. But in order to speak a foreign language correctly, we must know, besides words and grammatical structures, whether two words can be used together in a way that sounds natural to a native speaker, i.e. we must know whether the words *collocate* or not. Thus, while one can speak of *a slight/ minor error*, one can only speak of *a minor crime*, but not of a **slight crime*; one can speak of *great shame*, but not of **large shame* or **big shame.*

Various works on this topic, especially dictionaries of English collocations, monolingual (e.g. Benson, Benson, Ilson 1986; Kozlowska 1991; Kjellmer 1994; Hill, Lewis 1997; Oxford Collocations 2002) or bilingual (e.g., Benson, Benson 1993, Pârlog, Teleagă 1999, 2000), are meant to facilitate the work of translators or the acquisition of English as a foreign language. Unfortunately, no monolingual dictionary of Romanian collocations has been compiled so far.

2. TRANSLATION PROBLEMS

The translation of collocations from one language into another is not always easy; the difficulties that may occur are determined by semantic, grammatical or, sometimes, cultural differences between the two languages. The translation

BDD-A281 © 2007 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 22:59:10 UTC)

problems vary from very simple ones, caused by the word order typical of each language, to more complicated ones, caused by lexical gaps in the target language or by the absence in the target language equivalent of some semantic feature present in one of the terms of the English collocation.

Of the many types of collocations that exist in English, attention will be paid in what follows to the problems raised by the translation into Romanian of the collocations in which one term is a word denoting a part of the body.

2.1. Some of these collocations are translated literally into Romanian; they roughly convey the same meaning in the two languages, and consist of equivalent lexical items, whose linear arrangement is identical. Examples of such collocations can be easily given: *eyes blink* / *ochii clipesc* (Noun + Verb); *to lose an eye* / *a pierde un ochi* (Verb + Noun); *a heart of gold* / *o inimă de aur* (Noun + preposition + Noun); *from head to foot* / *din cap până în picioare* (Phrase).

2.2. Very often, however, the body collocation structures are dissimilar in the two languages and their Romanian translations represent "departures from formal correspondence" or *shifts* (Catford 1965: 73-82). Several such "departures" will be discussed at word level, in connection with some of the terms that form English body collocations.

2.2.1. ***Parts of the body***

2.2.1.1. The translation of the noun denoting a part of the body sometimes involves a change of morphological class, called *class shift* by Catford (1965: 78-79); in their categorization of translation procedures, Vinay and Darbelnet (1958/1995: 30-41) call it *transposition*. The noun denoting a part of the body becomes a different part of speech in Romanian, most frequently an adjective: e.g.: *heart murmur / murmur cardiac*; *have a heart* / *fii milos* ["be compassionate"]; *head work = muncă intelectuală* ; *eye contact / contact vizual*; *eye witness / martor ocular*; *eye strings / fibre oculare*; *eye ball / glob ocular*; *bone tissue / ţesut osos*; *ear cornet* or *ear tube / cornet acustic*; *face ache / nevralgie facială*; *flesh wound / rană superficială, uşoară*; *flesh glove / mănuşă aspră (de baie)*, etc. (Comments on the word order in the two languages will be made under 2.2.3.1.).

2.2.1.2. A more complex modification occurs in the case of what the above quoted Vinay and Darbelnet (1958/1995: 30-41) call *modulation*, i.e. "a variation of the form of the message obtained by a change in the point of view". They state that such a change occurs when, "although a literal or even transposed translation results in a grammatically correct utterance, it is considered unsuitable, unidiomatic or awkward in the TL".Very often, particularly when the English part of the body occurring in a collocation has a figurative meaning, it is translated into Romanian by a different part of the body or by an abstract word.

BDD-A281 © 2007 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 22:59:10 UTC)

Thus, the Romanian equivalent of *heart* may be the Romanian words for "eyes", "legs", "chest/breast", "stomach": e.g., sob, cry, weep one's heart out / a-i seca ochii de atâta plâns; my heart fails me / mi se taie picioarele (de frică); press to one's heart / a strânge la piept; heart burn / arsuri la stomac. In certain structures *head* is translated as *ureche* "ear", *frunte* "forehead", *gură* "mouth", *gât* "neck", *nas* "nose", *ochi* "eyes", *falcă* "jaw" (i.e. some part of the head is used for the whole) or as *mână* "hand", *palmă* "palm", *talpă* "sole of the foot", *piele* "skin", and even *sânge* "blood": e.g., off / out of one's head / într-o ureche; the head of a queue /(cei din) fruntea cozii; the head of a cave / gura unei peşteri; to crane one's head / a-şi întinde gâtul; throw oneself at sb's head / a se arunca de gâtul cuiva, a-i face ochi dulci; two heads are better than one / patru ochi văd mai bine decât doi; to sit upon sb's head / a tăia cuiva nasul; have a long head / a avea nas bun; the head of an axe / talpa toporului; to risk one's head / a-şi pune pielea în saramură; to have (got) a swollen head, get the swollen head / a nu-şi mai încăpea în piele, a se umfla în pene; to knock sb's head off / a trage cuiva o palmă, a muta fălcile cuiva; let sb have his/ her head, give sb his/ her head / a da mână liberă; to keep one's head / a-şi păstra sângele rece; cool, level head / sânge rece, etc. English structures with *eye* correspond to Romanian structures containing words like *ureche* "ear", *gură* "mouth", *cap* "head", *faţă* "face": the eye of the needle / urechea acului; the eye of a mine / gură de mină; up to the eyes / până peste cap; eyes right! / capul spre dreapta; eyes front! / capul înainte; in the eye of the law / în faţa legii. Other examples are: belly dance / dansul buricului; troubled breast / inimă tulburată, chinuită; the womb of the earth / măruntaiele pământului; the jaws of death / ghearele morţii; to hold one's jaw / a-şi ţine gura; to lie on one's stomach / a sta pe burtă; fed to the teeth / sătul până peste cap, până-n gât; glib tongue / bun de gură; a shoulder of lamb / picior de miel; to have sb. on the hip / a avea pe cineva la mână; to rap sb. over the knuckles / a lovi peste degete, etc.

Examples of Romanian abstract words used as equivalents of only three English parts of the body (*heart*, *head* and *eye*) are *suflet, conştiinţă, curaj, îndrăzneală, gând, milă, înclinaţie, gust, interes, atitudine, mijloc, centru, miez, esenţă,* etc. for *heart*; *minte, inteligenţă, gând, judecată, înţelegere, iniţiativă, viaţă, presiune, titlu, nucleu, punct culminant, şef,* etc. for *head*; *vedere*, *privire*, *atenţie*, *observaţie*, *părere*, *perspicacitate*, *centru*, *mijloc*, etc. for *eye*. Sometimes, however, modulation parallels the literal translation. Here are some collocations with these words: to bare, open, pour out, uncover, unlock one's *heart* / a-şi deschide *inima, sufletul*; to search one's *heart* / a-şi cerceta *inima, conştiinţa*; have *a heart* / fie-ţi *milă*; to have *heart* / a avea *curaj*; *the heart* of the matter / *miezul* problemei; a change of *heart* / o schimbare de *atitudine*; clear *head* / *minte*, cap limpede; above, over one's *head* / depăşind *înţelegerea* cuiva; to keep a cool *head* / a-şi păstra *calmul, cumpătul*; *the head* of a river / *izvoarele* râului; *head* loss / pierdere de *presiune*; *head* word / cuvânt *titlu*; *head* of state / *şef* de stat; to risk one's *head* / a-şi risca *viaţa*, capul; sharp *eyes* / *privire* pătrunzătoare; good *eyes* /

BDD-A281 © 2007 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 22:59:10 UTC)

vedere bună, ochi buni; in the public *eye* / în *atenţia* publică; camera *eye* / *memorie* vizuală; in, to sb.'s/one's *eye(s)* / după *părerea* cuiva; bull's *eye* / *centrul* ţintei, etc.

2.2.1.3. Sometimes Romanian adverbials replace the source language body parts altogether: e.g., *set one's heart on sth* / *a-şi dori ceva foarte mult* ["want sth. very much"]; *work one's head off / a munci pe rupte* ["work very hard"]; *sit upon sb.'s head / a pune pe cineva la locul lui* ["put sb. in his/her place"]; *eat one's head off / a mânca cât şapte* ["eat enormously"]; *snap sb.'s head off / a vorbi cuiva brutal, grosolan, a i-o reteza scurt* ["speak rudely, abruptly"].

2.2.2. *Determiners*

2.2.2.1. The articles

English and Romanian have, in broad lines, a formally corresponding systems of articles: in both languages one may distinguish zero, definite and indefinite articles: e.g., *to make_ eyes at / a face_ ochi dulci, to have_ heart / a avea_curaj, a change of_heart / schimbare de_atitudine* (zero article), ***the*** *heart of the city / inim**a** oraşului, (in)* ***the*** *eyes of the world / (în) ochi**i** lumii* (definite article), *cast* ***an*** *eye (over) / a arunca* ***un*** *ochi,* ***o*** *privire (peste), have* ***an*** *eye in one's head / a avea* ***un*** *ochi ager* (indefinite article).

While in both languages, the indefinite article precedes the noun it determines, the English definite article, which has an invariable form, always precedes the noun it determines and the Romanian definite article is, in most cases, enclitic, has no formal independence, being attached to the word that it determines, and is variable (depending on number and gender). For example, *not to have* ***the*** *heart (to) / a nu avea inim**a** (să)* (*inimă* is a feminine noun); ***the*** *head of the table / cap**ul** mesei* (*cap* is a neutre noun); *(in)* ***the*** *eyes of the world / (în) ochi**i** lumii* (*ochi* is a masculine noun), etc.

There are many collocations where the equivalent of an article in the source language is not the corresponding word in the target language system.

The English definite article may correspond to the zero article in Romanian: e.g., *disease, condition of* ***the*** *heart / boală de _ inimă*; *to beat out of* ***the*** *head / a scoate din_ cap, minte*; *to leap to* ***the*** *eye / a sări în_ochi, sparkle in* ***the*** *eye / strălucire în_ochi.* On the other hand, the English zero article may correspond to a Romanian definite article: e.g*., to lose_heart / a pierde curaj**ul**; to put, plant, set_ foot (in, on) / a pune picior**ul** (în, pe); to shake_hands / a da mân**a***, while the English indefinite article turns sometimes either into a Romanian definite article or into the zero article: e.g*., have* ***a*** *(good) head on one's shoulders / a fi cu cap**ul** pe umeri; have* ***a*** *head / a-l durea cap**ul**; turn* ***a*** *blind eye (to sth.) / a închide ochi**i** (la ceva); have* ***a*** *head (for) / a avea_ cap (pentru); have* ***a*** *heart / ai_ milă.* These are examples of what Catford calls "intra-system shifts", where "the shift occurs internally, within a system" (1965: 80). They are cases "where SL and TL possess systems which approximately correspond formally as to their constitution, but when translation involves selection of a non-corresponding term in the TL system." (Catford 1965: 80).

BDD-A281 © 2007 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 22:59:10 UTC)

2.2.2.2. Possessive adjectives

Very often nouns denoting parts of the body are determined by possessive adjectives in English. When the collocation is translated into Romanian, these adjectives undergo a class shift and become definite articles: e.g., ***His*** *heart stops / Inim**a** se opreşte*; *He turns **his** head/ Întoarce cap**ul***; *She opened **her** eyes / A deschis ochi**i***. The possessive meaning of the Romanian article is often reinforced by the possessive value of the unstressed forms of the possessive dative of the personal pronoun, which nowadays accompanies verbs mostly (cf. Avram 2001: 162) or of reflexive pronouns (e.g., ***His*** *heart stopped / **I** s-a oprit inim**a***; ***My*** *heart is beating fast / **Îmi** bate inim**a** repede*; ***My*** *eyes close / **Mi** se închid ochi**i***; *You bared **your** head / **V**-ați descoperiți cap**ul***; e.g., *She poured out **her** heart / **Şi**-a deschis inim**a***; *He raises **his** head / **Îşi** ridică cap**ul***; *She is rubbing **her** eyes / **Îşi** freacă ochi**i***).

2.2.3. ***Pre-modifiers***

Pre-modifiers occurring in the English body collocations undergo a variety of changes when translated into Romanian.

2.2.3.1. With few exceptions, the usual, neutral position of the modifier in the Romanian noun phrase is after the head noun, just as the neutral position of the English modifier is before the head noun: e.g., *an interesting idea / o idee interesantă*. Pre-position is possible as a means of emphasis or in poetical style: *interesantă idee.* In Romanian it is only the modifier expressed by certain numerals or by certain pronominal adjectives that obligatorily occurs before the noun it modifies: e.g., *trei idei* [“three ideas”], *aceeaşi idee* [“the same idea”], *ce idee* [“what idea”], *care idee* [“which idea”], *vreo idee* [“some idea”].

One type of frequent shift is therefore the change of the word order, i.e. *a structure shift* occurring at the level of the noun phrase, where the English *modifier + head noun* becomes a *head noun + modifier* in the Romanian translation, irrespective of the class of words to which the English modifier belongs. Here are some examples:

– Adjectives: *artificial heart / inimă artificială, healthy heart / inimă bună, sănătoasă*; *good head / cap bun, clear head / cap limpede*; *large eyes / ochi mari, oriental eyes / ochi orientali*;

– Participles: *broken heart / inimă zdrobită, frântă*; *crowned head / cap încoronat*; *bent, bowed head / cap (a)plecat*; *sunken eyes / ochi afundați, înfundați*; *trained eye / ochi format*;

– Nouns: *head word / cuvânt titlu; the mind’s eye / ochiul minții*.

The change of word order is frequently accompanied by various other types of changes.

2.2.3.2. Thus, besides changing its position, the word functioning as pre-modifier in English may also undergo a change of morphological class, so the

BDD-A281 © 2007 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 22:59:10 UTC)

translated collocation contains not only a structure shift, but also a class shift. For example:

– the premodifying adjective may become a prepositional noun phrase: e.g., *human heart / inimă de om; human head / cap de om; departmental head / şef de secţie, de catedră; nominal head / şef de formă, cu numele; gappy teeth / dinţi cu strungăreaţă; wise tooth / măsea de minte; manly shoulders / umeri, spate de bărbat;*

– a pre-modifying noun may become an adjective e.g., *block, cabbage head / cap prost, sec*; *bedroom eyes / ochi seducători; mustard eyes / ochi galbeni, gălbui*; *saucer eyes / ochi mari şi rotunzi; body clock* / *ceas biologic*; *body guard / gardă personală*; *body search / percheziţie corporală; stomach muscles / muşchi abdominali*; *stomach pump / pompă stomacală*;

– the adjectival nature of the English participles makes it easily possible for them to have Romanian adjectives as equivalents: e.g., *greying head / cap cărunt*; *loving heart / inimă iubitoare*; *piercing, penetrating eyes / ochi pătrunzători*; *shining, sparkling eyes / ochi strălucitori*;

– the participle may even be translated as a (prepositional) noun phrase: e.g., *bulging eyes / ochi de broască*; *a sinking heart / o strângere de inimă.*

2.2.3.3. The English pre-modifier expressed by a noun in the common case is frequently translated as a post-modifying prepositional noun phrase; the noun governed by the preposition is in the accusative case. We deal therefore with a change of word order and of modifier structure. The most frequent preposition is *de*, but other prepositions are also possible. Here are some examples: *heart* beat / bătaie ***de*** *inimă*; *heart* attack / criză ***de*** *inimă*; *head* hunting / vânătoare ***de*** *capete*; *head* loss / pierdere ***de*** *presiune*; *eye* operation / operaţie ***de*** *ochi*; *glass* eye / ochi ***de*** *sticlă*; *wisdom* tooth / măsea ***de*** *minte*; *heart* surgery / operaţie ***pe*** *inimă*; *heart* burn / arsuri ***la*** *stomac*; *head* injury / rană ***la*** *cap*; *head* sea / valuri ***din*** *prova*; *eye* signal / semn ***cu*** *ochiul*.

2.2.3.4. The pre-modifying English noun, used in the common case, may correspond to a Romanian post-modifying noun in the genitive case: e.g., *heart* beat / bătaie *a inimii*; *family* head / capul *familiei, cap al familiei*; *head* cold / răceală *a capului*; *eye* injury / leziune *a ochiului*; *eye* infection / infecţie *a ochiului*. The nouns in the genitive case take the definite article, and are sometimes preceded by the possessive article as well (*a* for feminine singular nouns, *al* for masculine and neutre singular nouns).

2.2.3.5. The pre-modifier may undergo a *function shift*, turning into a Romanian head noun (while the English head noun – naming a part of the body – becomes the Romanian post-modifier): e.g., *a sinking heart / o strângere de inimă*; *camera eye / memorie vizuală*.

2.2.3.6. Sometimes, especially when one of the terms of the English structure does not have a single lexeme as an equivalent in Romanian (i.e., when the target

BDD-A281 © 2007 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 22:59:10 UTC)

language has *a lexical gap*), a pre-modifying participle is translated as a relative clause: *opening eyes / ochi care se deschid*, *unblinking eyes / ochi care nu clipesc*, *greying head / cap care încărunţeşte* (but also *cap cărunt*).

2.2.4. *Post-modifiers*

If the English collocation contains a post-modifier expressed by a noun in the analytical genitive (i.e. an *of-phrase*), it is very frequently translated as a noun in the genitive case, which, in Romanian, requires no preposition: e.g., the secrets *of the heart* / secretele *inimii,* abundance *of heart /* prisosul *inimii,* the bottom *of one's heart /* adâncul *inimii cuiva,* the heart *of the forest /* inima *codrului*; a nod *of the head* / înclinare *a capului,* head *of state* / şeful *statului*; the white *of the eye* / albul *ochiului,* the eyes *of the world /* ochii *lumii.*

The case of the noun may however change in the translation: it is possible that the English genitive turns into a Romanian accusative, governed by the preposition *de*: e.g., head *of a family* / cap *de familie*; head *of a hammer* / cap *de ciocan*; head *of a page* / cap *de pagină*; eye *of a potatoe* / mugur *de cartof*, face *of the clock* / cadran *de ceas*; strand *of hair* / şuviţă *de păr*, etc.

2.2.5. *Verbs*

The English verbs that occur in body collocations may have semantic features not present in the Romanian equivalent verbs, e.g., they may suggest the manner, the duration, the place, the instrument or the cause of the actions suffered by the various parts of the body. Such features must be made explicit in Romanian with the help of adverbial modifiers; e.g.:

– cause or reason of the action: *one's heart vibrates* / *inima tremură de emoţie, de fericire* ["one's heart trembles with emotion, with happiness"]; *one's heart sinks* / *inima se strânge de tristeţe* ["one's heart shrinks because of sadness"]; *sob, cry, weep one's heart out / a-i seca ochii de atâta plâns* ["one's eyes get dry from so much crying"]; *eyes glitter / ochii scapără, lucesc de supărare, de mânie* [eyes shine with anger"]; *eyes glow / ochii strălucesc de emoţie* ["eyes shine with strong emotion];

– manner of the action: *one's heart throbs, thumps, is thudding, pounds, palpitates / inima bate tare, cu putere* ["one's heart beats strongly"]*, palpită, zvâcneşte*; *one's heart gallops / inima bate cu repeziciune/ repede* ["one's heart beats rapidly"]; *one's heart quickens / inima începe să bată repede*; ["one's heart begins to beat faster/quicker"]; to toss one's head / *a-şi mişca în sus capul în semn de dispreţ, nepăsare* ["move one's head upwards as a sign of contempt, carelessness"] ; *to duck one's head /a apleca repede capul* ["lower one's head quickly"]; *to cock one's head / a ţine capul sus* ["hold one's head high"]; *to nod one's head / a da din cap afirmativ* ["to move one's head downwards and upwards to suggest agreement"]; *eyes glare / ochii privesc cu mânie, lucesc mânioşi,*

BDD-A281 © 2007 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 22:59:10 UTC)

scapără plini de mânie ["eyes give an angry look"]; *eyes twinkle / ochii scânteiază, licăresc amuzaţi* ["eyes shine in an amused way"];

– duration of the action: *one's heart skips, misses a beat/ inima se opreşte o secundă/o clipă* ["one's heart stops for a second/ moment"];

– instrument of the action: *to hold, clutch one's head / a se ţine, a se lua, a se apuca cu mâinile de cap* ["hold one's head with one's hands"];

– place of the action: *show one's head / a scoate capul în lume* ["show one's face in public"];

– duration + manner of the action: *eyes dart / ochii se îndreaptă o clipă, brusc, pe neaşteptate,* ["eyes look briefly and suddenly"].

Dimitriu (2002: 35) points out that Vinay and Darbelnet (1958) were the first to mention this technique of *explicitation*, later on referred to as *addition* by Nida (1964), by means of which one explains in the target language translation what is implicit in the source language text.

2.2.6. *The whole collocation*

2.2.6.1. It very often happens that the English collocation is translated into Romanian by one word only.

This may be **a verb** (often a reflexive one), e.g.: *touch sb's heart / a impresiona, a mişca (pe cineva)* ["impress", "move sb."]; *give heart to sb. / a încuraja, a sprijini* ["encourage", "support"]; *lose heart / a **se** descuraja* ["become discouraged"]; *cross one's heart / a **se** jura* ["swear"]; *one's heart sinks / a **se** dezumfla, a **se** potoli* ["feel, be flat, deflated"]; *make head / a progresa, a înainta* ["(make) progress", "advance"]; *gather head / a creşte, a **se** umfla, a **(se)** coace* ["grow", "swell"]; *make head or tail of sth. / a pricepe, a înţelege* ["understand"]; *bite sb.'s head off / a **se** repezi la* ["attack verbally"]; *keep an eye on / a observa, a urmări* ["watch"]; *give sb. the eye / a flirta* ["flirt"]; *dust sb.'s eyes / a deruta, a înşela, a îmbrobodi* ["mislead", "cheat"]; *draw, pull the wool over sb.'s eyes / a orbi, a îmbrobodi (pe cineva)* ["hoodwink", "twist sb. round one's little finger"].

The English collocations made up of nouns (*noun + noun* or *noun + of + noun*) often have a Romanian **noun** as equivalent: e.g., *heart specialist / cardiolog* ["cardiologist"]; *heart burning / gelozie, invidie* ["jealousy", "envy"]; *heart break / mâhnire, supărare* ["grief", "sorrow"]; *head count / recensământ* ["census"]; *head band / cordeluţă*; *head dress / coafură, frizură* ["hairdo"]; *head scarf / batic, fular*; *head of hair / chică* ["long, thick hair"]; *head of a flower / inflorescenţă, capitul* ["capitulum"]; *eye doctor / oftalmolog* ["ophthalmologist"]; *eye socket / orbită*; *eye wink / ocheadă* ["(sidelong) glance"]; *eye sore / urcior* ["sty"]; *the eye of a door / vizor, ferestruică* ["peep hole, peep window"]. A whole phrase may be translated as one noun: *all my eye (and Betty Martin) / prostii, fleacuri* ["nonsense"]. The noun may be a substantivized adjective: e.g., *dear, sweet heart / scumpule, scumpo, dragule, draga mea*.

BDD-A281 © 2007 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 22:59:10 UTC)

Although seemingly less frequently, a Romanian **adjective** or an **adverb** may also stand for a whole English collocation: *heavy heart / trist, deprimat* ["sad, depressed "]; *out of one's head / furios, turbat, înnebunit* ["furious", "crazed"]; *off one's head / sonat, sărit, scrântit* ["crazy"]; *with an eye to (sth) / atent* ["attentive"]; *without batting an eye / impasibil* ["imperturbable", "calm"]; *in a pig's eye / niciodată* ["never"].

2.2.6.2. Sometimes the Romanian equivalent is simply an explanation, a paraphrase of the English structure: e.g., *a union of hearts / căsătorie bazată pe afecțiune, pe dragoste* ["marriage based on affection, on love"]; *the head of a hall / partea de lângă intrare, într-un hol* ["the part of a hall near the entrance"]; *head room / spațiul dintre cap şi tavan, în special într-o maşină* ["the space between the head and the top inner surface (especially of a car)"]; *a single eye / efort constant, către un singur țel* ["constant effort towards a single goal"]; *please one's eyes and plague one's heart / a se căsători din interes, împotriva sentimentelor* ["marry for some advantage, not for love"].

3. FINAL REMARKS

The present study must be regarded as a (rather didactic) exercise in translation.

I am aware that by concentrating on various departures from formal correspondence in the translation of the items making up English body collocations, I take them out of their larger context, which may often influence their meaning and may reveal whether they have a literal or a figurative meaning or both a literal and a figurative meaning or an idiomatic meaning or several figurative meanings.

For example, the meaning of the source language collocation may be a figurative one: e.g. *(s/he is) sick at heart* (Adjective + preposition + Noun, "he feels great disappointment, fear or grief, i.e. he is unhappy") does not mean **(el/ea este) bolnav(ă) de inimă* (Adjective + preposition + Noun, "s/he has heart trouble"), but *îşi simte inima grea; are o povară pe suflet*, and this meaning becomes clear in "His decision to go away without her left her sick at heart".

The collocation *My heart fails me* may refer to the organ that no longer perfoms its function: "nu-mi mai bate inima", "îmi stă inima" (literal meaning) or it may suggest lack of courage: "curajul mă părăseşte"; similarly, *My heart aches* may have a literal meaning, "mă doare inima", and a metaphorical one, suggesting sadness: "mă doare sufletul", "mi se rupe inima (de durere)". *Over one's head* has a literal meaning in *The criminal fired over their heads / Criminalul a tras* peste *capetele lor,* and a figurative meaning in *The discussion was way over my head / Discuția era de neînțeles pentru mine, mă depăşea* ["difficult to understand"]; *cabbage head* can be *căpățână de varză* or *cap prost, sec*. *To hit sb. in the eye* may

BDD-A281 © 2007 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 22:59:10 UTC)

refer to an instance of harm to somebody's eye in *The tennis ball hit me in the eye / Mingea de tenis m-a lovit în ochi*, or it may indicate that something is very obvious, noticeable in *The graffiti hit me in the eye / Atenția mi-a fost atrasă de graffiti; Graffiti mi-a sărit în ochi*. *To open one's eyes wide / a deschide ochii mari* may refer to a movement of the organ of sight, but in the sentence *I hope her words have opened your eyes* / *Sper că spusele ei ți-au deschis ochii/ te-au făcut să înțelegi*, the meaning is a figurative one ["make sb. understand, realize the truth about sth"].

A collocation like *to go to one's head* may have two figurative meanings: "to get dizzy, slightly drunk", as in *The plum brandy went straight to my head / Mi s-a urcat țuica la cap*, and "to make one conceited or too confident", in *The success of her speech went to her head / Succesul cuvântării i s-a suit la cap. The eye of the storm* may denote "a relatively calm spot in the centre of a hurricane" and "the middle of a difficult situation", etc.

The meaning of a collocation is dictated sometimes by the way in which the word collocates not only lexically, but also grammatically. An example is offered by the co-occurrence of the verbs *have* and *lose* and the noun *heart*: in *have heart,* the noun is determined by the zero article, and its metaphorical meaning is "courage"; in *have a heart*, the determiner is the indefinite article, and the metaphorical meaning changes to "pity", "sympathy"; *have a heart for [sth.]*, where *heart* takes an indefinite article and is followed by a preposition, suggests "inclination", "liking"; *not have the heart to (do sth)*, where *heart* is determined by the definite article and followed by the long infinitive, suggests "kindness", "lack of cruelty". *Lose heart* (zero article) means "feel disappointed and stop believing that you can succeed", while *lose one's heart (to sb.)* (possessive determiner preceding the noun and a possible prepositional noun phrase following it) means "start to love someone", "fall in love".

At the same time, I am also aware that this analysis is far from being complete and that one might come across many more ways of translating body collocations and other types of shifts as well. The important thing to bear in mind is that, even if equivalence is not perfect, it is always possible to translate the meaning of a source language body collocation into another language, and that a good translation involves a good knowledge of both source and target languages, down to their minutest details.

REFERENCES

Avram, M., 2001, *Gramatica pentru toți*, Bucureşti, Humanitas.

Bantaş, A., 1986, "Noțiunea de colocabilitate şi aplicațiile ei lexicografice", *Studii şi cercetări lingvistice,* XXXVII, 3, 215–220.

Benson, M., E. Benson, 1993, *The Russian – English Dictionary of Verbal Collocations*, Amsterdam, John Benjamins Publishing Company.

BDD-A281 © 2007 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 22:59:10 UTC)

Benson M., E. Benson, R. Ilson, 1986, *The BBI Combinatory Dictionary of English. A Guide to Word Combinations,* Amsterdam/ Philadelphia, John Benjamins Publishing Company.
Catford, J.C., 1965, *A Linguistic Theory of Translation,* London, Oxford University Press.
Dimitriu, R., 2002, *Theories and Practice of Translation*, Iaşi, Institutul European.
Firth, J. R., 1958 (1957), "Modes of Meaning", *Papers in Linguistics. 1934–1951,* London, Oxford University Press, 190–215.
Hill, J., M. Lewis (eds.), 1997, *Dictionary of Selected Collocations,* Hove, Language Teaching Publications.
Kjellmer, G., 1994, *A Dictionary of English Collocations,* Oxford, Clarendon Press.
Kozlowska, C. D., 1991, *English Adverbial Collocations,* Warszawa, Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN.
Pârlog, H., M. Teleagă, 1999, *Dicţionar de colocaţii nominale englez – român,* Timişoara, Editura Mirton.
Pârlog, H., M. Teleagă (coord.), 2000, *Dicţionar englez-român de colocaţii verbale,* Iaşi, Polirom.
Porzig, W., 1934, "Wesenhafte Bedeutungsbeziehungen", *Beitrage zur Geschichte der deutschen Sprache und Literatur,* 58, 70–97.
Sârbu, R., 1987, "Colocaţie şi coligaţie în sintagmatica lexico-semantică", *Filologie,* XXX, Timişoara, Tipografia Universităţii, 53–64.
Vinay, J. P., J. Darbelnet, 1958/1995, *Stylistique comparée du français et de l'anglais. Méthode de traduction*, Paris, Didier; trans. and ed. By J.C. Sager and M.-J. Hamel (1995), as *Comparative Stylistics of French and English: A Methodology for Translation*, Amsterdam and Philadelphia, John Benjamins.
***, 2002, *Oxford Collocations Dictionary for Students of English*, Oxford, Oxford University Press.

BDD-A281 © 2007 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 22:59:10 UTC)