

Rethinking Teaching Culture in Classroom: Teaching Culture through Translation

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Abstract

This article provides an empirical study on rethinking teaching culture and its impact on learning language in second language (L2) teaching classroom. The study sample consists of twenty students majoring in English as participants, from third- and fourth-year students, Department of English and Translation, AlQalam University, Yemen. The participants' task was to choose the best translation for twenty English proverbs each. The translation test was constructed on Google. Sheets. The findings indicate that students' performance has developed considerably through teaching them the culture of the proverbs involved. This was supported by a follow-up survey questionnaire, whose results consolidated the study findings that culture should be taught vis-à-vis language in L2 classroom.

Keywords: Rethinking, teaching, culture, classroom, proverbs, translation.

1. Introduction

Teaching L2 culture in L2 classrooms has been emphasized across languages and cultures, to the best of our knowledge, no study has been conducted in Arab context, involving English culture, that tackles the importance of teaching culture in English classroom. This study, thus, aims to fill this gap. It attempts to investigate teaching/acquiring culture in second language acquisition (SLA) context, that is, acquisition of culture vis-à-vis the linguistic input in L2 classroom. This phenomenon is very crucial to acquiring both language and culture, specifically in subjects involving culture such as translation and literature courses. Proverbs were chosen as the subject-matter of the study for being manifestations of everyday life, wisdom, truth, heritage, etc., which actually mirror culture. Translation was also chosen to be the mechanism of teaching culture through proverbs, due to the fact that translation perhaps involves culture more than any other subject. Translation is also very much demanded in our students' day-to-day life, for jobs or in the labor market, among other aspects.

Proverbs, and idiomatic expressions in general, are said to be difficult to learn by L2 learners because these expressions have arbitrariness and idiosyncrasy, where the meaning of the whole proverb is not the sum of the meaning of its individual words (see e.g. Cowie, 1998; Wray, 2000; Bell, 2012; Shormani, 2014a, b, 2015). Shormani (2015), for instance, argues that acquiring expressions having such arbitrariness and idiosyncrasy could almost be confined to the native speakers of the language being learned. Thus, if proverbs are difficult to acquire, they may also be difficult to translate (cf. Taylor, 1934; Brădeanu, 2008).

This study rethinks teaching culture in English teaching classroom, providing evidence from teaching the cultural aspects of English proverbs to Arabic-speaking students, majoring in English, Department of English and Translation, AlQalam University, Yemen. Thus, the article is set up as follows: Section 2 tackles the teaching of culture worldwide, discussing how culture has been recommended to be involved vis-à-vis language in L2 classroom. It also sheds light on the relationship between translation and culture. Section 3 addresses the relationship between culture and proverbs and translation. Section 4 presents the study methodology. Section 5 presents and discusses the results of the study in terms of the two stages of the study, viz. pre-teaching stage and post-teaching stage, and those of the follow-up questionnaire. Section 6 outlines the model proposed for teaching culture through proverbs. Section 7 concludes the article, and outlines the pedagogical implications of the study.

2. The teaching of culture

Translation Courses are prescribed in almost all English Departments, and Arab context is no exception. In English language teaching contexts, as we can tell, all English Departments offer Translation Courses. The aims of these courses are to get our students exposed to L2 several types of texts, including culture-based ones such as poetry, proverbs, religious texts.

Teaching culture was often associated with the teaching of anthropology (Schwartz, 1981) and as part of learning propriospect in general (Wolcott, 1991). Meanwhile, there have been several calls for involving culture in our classroom vis-à-vis language, emphasizing that culture should be given (perhaps equal) portion in language teaching process (Brooks, 1968; Cummins, 1979; Brown, 1986; Chao, 1991; Atkinson, 1999). Chao (1991: 10), for example, emphasizes that “lack of sociocultural knowledge may produce serious problems for the students in coping with linguistic and cultural matters.”

Recently, many language teaching specialists (e.g. Brown & Eisterhold, 2004; Byram & Feng, 2004; Tang, 2006; Brown, 2007; Tseng & Chao, 2012) call for integrating language and culture in the classroom, arguing that this integration brings about understanding of the language being acquired, which results in students’ good competence and proficiency, not only in such a language but also in its culture (Risager, 2011 for a review). For example, Tseng & Chao (2012: 1843) contend that “culture is inseparable from language ... and students find it difficult to develop good language skills because of cultural problems”.

Additionally, Brown (2007: 171) opines that there is an interrelatedness between language and culture. He writes that “[a] language is a part of a culture, and culture is a part of a language; the

two are intricately interwoven so that one cannot separate the two without losing the significance of either language or culture.” He further argues that “[t]he acquisition of a second language ... is also the acquisition of a second culture”.

Additionally, Brown (2007) argues that language cannot be acquired without knowing its culture. He maintains that knowing language culture gives L2 learners a thorough understanding of its distinctive features, nuances of meaning, giving them a stable competence in L2 and a vast horizon to understanding the peculiarities of language. In this view, it seems that ultimate acquisition of an L2 is perhaps impossible without culture, and that linguistic input, i.e. language per se, provided to L2 learners seems to be not sufficient for ultimate acquisition of L2, regardless of what this L2 is (cf. Lardiere, 2007). Thus, if culture is an essential ingredient of language learning/teaching, our students should be introduced to culture in our classrooms, and even out of classrooms through directing them to watch movies, drama, available on several media outlets such as TV, YouTube.

2.1. Translation and culture-embedded texts

Translation is a process through which knowledge, conventions, sciences, experiences are transmitted from a nation to another (Newmark, 1981, 1988; Baker, 1992; Bassnett, 2002). Although there are several subjects involving culture such as literature subjects, perhaps translation is the most connected subject to culture. Literature subjects introduce culture to students in an indirect way, and particularly theoretically, but translation subjects/studies introduce students to culture practically. Specifically, culture is at the heart of, say, non-scientific disciplines, such as trading, global communication, consecutive translation, literary works (say, poetry), which needs not only translating wording, but more importantly also context/situation, concept, intention, purpose of any spoken or written text.

Poetry is said to be one of the most difficult texts to translate, if not the most: “poetry by definition is untranslatable” (Jakobson, 1959: 239). Take, for example (1), which is a line from (Sonnet 18, by Shakespeare) and see how much culture is embedded in this line.

(1) Shall I compare thee to the summer’s day?

If an Arab learner of English, for instance, does not know the cultural aspects such as the situation in which (1) is said, background and purpose, s/he will translate (1) as (2):

(2) أيمكن أن أقارنك/أشبهك بيوم الصيف

ʔayumkinu ʔan ʔusabihuki biyaum ʃ-ʃaifi

‘May I compare/resemble you to the summer’s day?’

which is simply meaningless. The meaninglessness of this Arabic translation is indeed due to culture, as a nonlinguistic factor that hinders translation. Put simply, in some place in England the summer’s day was very short (in Shakespeare time), and if we know this factor, the meaning will be clear. The best translation may then read as (يا حبيبتي) ياالله ما اقصر حياتك yaʔallah mā ʔaqṣar hayyātik (ya ḥabībati). The meaning of this line can be expressed in English as My beloved’s life is so short. This aspect of English culture does not exist in Arabic culture. This example shows how deep culture is embedded in a piece of language, and how so substantial a role it

plays in translation. Culture is a rather defining factor in translation; without knowing the culture of a text, translation seems to be impossible. Therefore, teaching culture vis-à-vis language seems inevitable, specifically in subjects that involve culture like translation and literature courses.

Thus, to translate culture-embedded expressions, we need to adopt a unique type of equivalence, an equivalence that is able to transfer the intended meaning in the SL to the TL. In terms of translating culture, namely concerning the Bible, Nida and Charles (1969: 12) proposes two types of equivalence, namely Dynamic Equivalence and Formal Equivalence. In the former, "[t]he goal ... is to produce in the receptor language the closest natural equivalent of the source-language message, first in meaning and secondly in style". However, the goal of the latter is "to render the precise contextual meaning of the original words and phrases." The emphasis placed on formal equivalence or correspondence is crucial to Nida for its high significance in successful and appropriate translation. He believes that structure sometimes is more important than wording (Nida, 1964). In this study, we employ the dynamic equivalence, more specifically proverbial equivalence.

3. English and Arabic cultures: convergence and divergence

English and Arabic are different languages, belonging to two different language families. The former is an Indo-European language while the latter is Semitic. As languages differ, cultures do, too (Newmark, 1988; Katan, 2015). Additionally, language is deeply rooted in culture and vice versa. As we have seen in the section above, the English poetic line in (1) seems untranslatable. However, once we know the cultural aspects in which this line was said, untranslatability disappears (cf. Qarabesh et al., 2023). Put differently, though the words used in (1) are simple, the untranslatability of (1) has, indeed, to do with culture, more specifically, cultural aspects.

From a universal perspective, languages and cultures sometimes converge and some other times diverge (Gentzler, 1993). (1) above provides us with strong evidence that cultures diverge. To provide more examples from proverbs, consider (3) which illustrates that languages also converge.

(3) الوقاية خير من العلاج

The Arabic proverb in (2) has a very similar equivalent in English, which is Prevention is better than cure. The proverbial equivalence is not only in concept, but also in the words used and the syntactic structure. In fact, this example provides us with strong evidence that languages and cultures do converge. Another example of language convergence is A friend in need is a friend indeed whose Arabic equivalent is الصديق وقت الضيق. However, consider (4).

(4) Fingers were made before forks.

The English proverb in (3) gives us an example of partial convergence/divergence. This partial convergence lies in terms of concept. In Arabic culture, we say that eating with hands (but not with fingers) is some kind of bless; when we eat with our hands we feel satisfied quickly, and

when eating with spoons, we feel hungry whatever we eat. The partial divergence lies in language, i.e. words. There is no proverbial equivalence to (4) in Arabic. We say “hands”, English people say “fingers”, we say “spoons”, but English people say “forks”, and we say fingers are “created”, English people say “made”. Further, consider (5).

(5) It rains cats and dogs.

(5) is an example of ‘full’ divergence, i.e. both in concept and words, or otherwise, in both culture and language. In Arabic culture, we believe that rain is a bless, it is the symbol of mercy of God, let alone being the cause of greenery, crops, harvest, living in harmony, even if it rains heavily. Linguistically, we Arabs say *انها تمطر بغزارة* ‘It rains heavily’, but not ‘It rains cats and dogs’. Arabs also say *إنها تمطر كقواف القرب* ‘It rains (thick drops) like bottles’ covers.’

Thus, learning these cultural aspects, we believe, will consolidate learning, motivate students’ exposure to L2, they are learning, foster their understanding of how to be aware of their own culture in addition to L2 culture, and ease L2 teachers’ educational task. Proverbs are said to be one of the most difficult constructions to translate, because translating them involves more than simply translating texts (i.e. wording). In translating proverbs, the cultural aspects in which they are used must be considered more than the text. According to Brădeanu (2008), translating proverbs is difficult even those that have complete equivalence in the TL. Proverbs resemble idioms which are said to be difficult to acquire by L2 learners due to being of formulaic and cultural nature. They are fixed and idiomatic expressions, the mastering of which has been considered specific to native speakers of the language being learned (Wray, 2000; Bell, 2012; House, 2009; Dobao, 2006; Shormani, 2014a, b, 2015).

As for a foreign/second language context, Brooks (1968: 210), labeling this type of culture as “Culture4”, defines it as referring to “the individual’s role in the unending kaleidoscope of life situations of every kind and the rules and models for attitude and conduct in them.” Brooks adds that “[b]y reference to these models, every human being, from infancy onward, justifies the world to himself as best he can” (ibid). Undoubtedly, both teachers and students will get benefits from studying culture vis-à-vis language, not only linguistically in terms of words, expressions, but more importantly, in terms of culture, how to deal with English interlocutors, English speaking people in cultural communication, specifically in this age, an age of globalization and “a small village” world.

4. Methodology

In this section, we discuss the methodology of this study. Before doing so, it is worth noting that this study seeks to answer one major question: Does teaching culture assist learning the language?

4.1. Participants

This study was conducted in March 2019, involving twenty male and female participants from level three and four students, Department of English and Translation, AlQalam University, Yemen. The purpose of recruiting these students as participants ensues from having studied all

the courses that have made them aware of the parallelism between language and culture. These courses include Linguistics courses, Literature courses, and Translation courses. They undertook the same test twice: in Pre-Teaching stage, and in Post-teaching stage, i.e. after teaching them the proverbs' cultural aspects.

4.2. Data collection

This study involves twenty proverbs, divided into two criteria:

1. Complete Arabic Equivalence (CAE)
2. Zero Arabic Equivalence (ZAE)

We collected 10 proverbs, namely those in category 1 from Flavell and Flavell's (1993) (henceforth, F&F). The ten proverbs in category 2 were adopted from Shormani (2020). The proverbs in CAE were meant to examine the participants' awareness of culture through proverbs in both languages. Those in ZCE were meant to find out whether teaching culture assists learning the language.

4.3. Instruments

The study involves two instruments: test and questionnaire. The test contains twenty proverbs (Appendix C). The participants are asked to choose the best answer from a three-choice paradigm. It was constructed on Google. Sheets (for samples of participants' responses, see Appendices A & B). The purpose of constructing the test on Google. Sheets was to enforce the necessary completion of all the test items. It was also meant to allow the participants to use (online) dictionaries, CAT tools like Google. Translate. The test was constructed considering two main factors: i) students' awareness and knowledge of their own culture, i.e. Arabic/Yemeni. This was manifested in CAE proverbs, and ii) their awareness of English culture per se, which was manifested in ZAE proverbs, and their ability to translate the proverbs involved.

The second instrument was a follow-up questionnaire (Appendix D). It consists of two parts: part one contains twenty items related to the experience the participants underwent during the translation tasks, viz, before and after teaching the proverbs' cultural aspects. Part two asks the participants to state any other opinions, ideas about their experience. The questionnaire was meant to assess their experiences and benefits from learning the proverbs' cultural aspects in both stages (see below) through teaching. It was also meant to examine their attitudes towards teaching culture vis-à-vis language in our L2 classroom.

4.4. Procedure

This study was conducted in two stages: Pre-Teaching Stage (Pre-TS) and Post-Teaching Stage (Post-TS). In Pre-TS, the translation test was administered to the participants without previous teaching of the proverbs involved. In this study, each proverb was given three suggested translations, two incorrect/inappropriate and one correct. Some proverbs were given two correct translations: one from Standard Arabic (SA) and one from Yemeni Arabic (YA). The purpose of this procedure is to know which one, viz. SA or YA form they prefer, which, in turn, was meant to know whether they are tied to their own culture. Additionally, they had limited time for responding to the test items. They were also told that every item has to be translated, otherwise,

they will not be able to submit their answers (the option was set to “required” in/by Google.Sheets). They were allowed 40 minutes, from 7:20 pm to 8:00 pm; each item was given 2 minutes to respond to. And they were also told that the Google. Sheets page will be closed exactly at 8 pm (this was done by turning the “accepting responses” button off). This allows us to prevent them from visiting the page again so as not to get familiar with the test items and find them easy in the Post-TS. We then used Google. Sheets to collect the responses in terms of two criteria, viz., correct translations and incorrect translations. The same procedure was carried out for the Post-TS.

A follow-up questionnaire was administered to the study participants. After we completed the second stage, we prepared a survey questionnaire in Likert scale with a four-choice fashion, ranging from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree. The items are constructed in such a way that they each reflect the participants’ experience in the Pre-TS and Post-TS.

4.5. Teaching culture through proverbs

Post-TS was preceded by formal teaching of the twenty proverbs involved. The teaching was in terms of the cultural aspects such as origin/background, situation/context, meaning, and moral of each proverb in both categories: CAE and ZAE. A heavy comparison between English and Arabic cultures was also presented to the participants during the teaching task. They were also shown that a proverb is an idiosyncratic piece of language that almost does not adhere to syntactic rules they are familiarized with in ordinary speech or writing as in Two company, three’s crowd or like father like son. The same thing also applies to Arabic proverbs as in *nār sanṣā wa la janat ḍamār* ‘Sana’a’s fire is better than Tamar’s paradise’ or *ʔannār wa la al’ār* ‘Fire is better than disgrace’.

Most importantly, during the teaching task the participants were not told that they will undergo another or same translation test again, or anything related to the Pre-TS at all. They were, however, told that this teaching task is only to draw their attention to some of the erroneous ways/strategies they employed in translating the proverbs in the Pre-TS, and how to focus on understanding the culture of the language they are learning. As for how and what model we followed in teaching the proverbs’ cultural aspects, we propose an interactive model.

Thus, it should be noted that the present study is different from Shormani’s (2020) in several aspects including: i) time, while Shormani’s (2020) study was conducted in 2017, the present study was conducted in 2019, ii) place, while Shormani’s (2020) study was conducted at Ibb University, a public institution, this study is conducted at AlQalam University, a private institution, iii) participants are different in both studies in several ways including age and gender, courses studied, iv) scope, Shormani (2020) employed proverbs to examine whether culture can translate, but we use translation to examine whether English culture can be taught in L2 English classroom vis-à-vis English language, and to what extent it affects students’ proficiency in L2, v) instrument, Shormani’s (2020) used hard-copy sheets to administer the test, while this study uses Google. Sheets, vi) ready translations, Shormani (2020) asked students to provide translations, while we give them ready translations (3, translations, 1 correct and 2 incorrect, see Appendices C & D) the participants have to choose the correct one, vii) focus, Shormani’s (2020) focus was on translation, hence there was no need for a follow-up questionnaire, but our study

requires this follow-up questionnaire to assess the participants’ satisfaction and attitudes towards teaching cultural aspects and to what extent they find it useful for their learning of English language, and viii) criteria of equivalence, Shormani’s (2020) criteria are based on three categories of equivalence while ours are based on two categories of equivalence.

5. Results and Discussion

The test results were collected from Google.Sheets by the functions Frequency and Percentage for each proverb in terms of two aspects, viz., correct and incorrect translations. Table 1 summarizes the results of the Pre-T stage.

Table 1: results of Pre-TS (category of proverb, type of translation, frequency and percentage)

Category	Proverb No.	Correct translation		Incorrect translation		Total	
		Freq.	Perc.	Freq.	Perc.	Freq	Perc.
CAE	1	14	70%	6	30.%	20	100%
	2	12	60%	8	40%	20	100%
	3	17	85%	3	15%	20	100%
	4	15	75%	5	25%	20	100%
	5	13	65%	7	35%	20	100%
	6	11	55%	9	45%	20	100%
	7	13	65%	7	35%	20	100%
	8	7	35%	13	65%	20	100%
	9	10	50%	10	50%	20	100%
	10	11	55%	9	45%	20	100%
Total		123	61.5 %	57	38.5%	200	100%
ZAE	1	00	00%	20	100%	20	100%
	2	1	5%	19	95%	20	100%
	3	2	10%	18	90%	20	100%
	4	00	00%	20	100%	20	100%
	5	00	00%	20	100%	20	100%
	6	00	00%	20	100%	20	100%
	7	3	15%	17	85%	20	100%
	8	00	00%	20	100%	20	100%
	9	00	00%	20	100%	20	100%
	10	1	5%	19	95%	20	100%
Total		7	4.5%	193	96.5%	200	100%

5.1. Pre-Teaching Stage

5.1.1. Complete Arabic Equivalence

Table 1 shows that correct translations in Pre-TS are somehow unsatisfactory, because it was expected that these types of proverbs are common to both languages and cultures. In CAE, 123, out of 200, proverbs were correctly translated, which contradicts our expectations. This in a way

or another suggests that the participants may be ignorant of not only English culture, or cultural aspects underlying the proverbs and their special way of translation, but also their Arabic culture.

To account for these facts, it may be argued that translating proverbs is difficult like acquiring them, as we have alluded to so far. In fact, this phenomenon has also been noted in the literature. Brădeanu (2008), for instance, finds out that proverbs, even those having complete equivalents in French and Spanish, are not easy to translate. Additionally, Shormani (2020: 907) argues that the difficulty of translating proverbs in his study is due to the fact that the translation courses taught to students do not involve these or similar proverbs, or “students are not trained on translating proverbs”, and hence lacking sufficient exposure to English culture.

The highest score of correct translation was obtained by proverb 3, i.e. An eye for an eye, where it was translated correctly by 17 participants, i.e. 85% of all the participants. This high score could be ascribed to the fact that the Arabic proverb العَيْنُ بِالْعَيْنِ *alʿaynu bilʿayni* is a Qurʾanic verse. It is often said by Yemenis when the situations in which they or their relatives have been injured by others. So, they use it frequently and those who translated it correctly may have been exposed or come across the English version, i.e. An eye for an eye.

The lowest score of correct translations is proverb 7, viz., Like father like son, though it has a complete Arabic equivalent proverb which is هَذَا الشَّيْلُ مِنْ ذَلِكَ الْأَسَدِ *hāḍ aššiblu min ḍaka alʿasad*. The reason of this low correct translation may be related to the difference in wording and the type of structure in each language. For example, while it is a phrase in English, it is a sentence in Arabic. It may also be ascribed to the participants not being exposed to proverbs in their study. The rest of the proverbs vary in terms of correct translations (see Table 1).

Thus, we will not discuss the cultural aspects underlying these proverbs because they each has CAE. We will just confine the presentation of the cultural aspects to those of the zero-equivalence category, and discuss them in details in the next section.

5.1.2. Zero Arabic Equivalence

As for the ZAE category, only 7 correct translations were noted. This clearly shows that the participants are unaware of the cultural aspects these proverbs involve. The reasons of this difficulty could be attributed to the factors just stated with regard to CAE, i.e. ignorance of English culture, the possibility that participants have not been come across such proverbs. Additionally, and most importantly, these proverbs are completely different from Arabic, be it in proverbial saying, wording, cultural aspects: contexts, situations, morals. The results shown in Table 1 for ZAE are really considerably problematic. And now, we think the picture of why such problems and difficulties exist is almost clear. For example, proverb 1, viz., Does a chicken have lips? has no correct translation. In the test, we provided two correct translations, and only one incorrect translation. The correct translations are لا تهرف بما لا تعرف and جدتك العشى, the first of which is adopted from Shormani (2020). It is a Yemeni proverbial saying, often said in situations involving a sarcastic remark in a situation where the speaker seems not to say the truth, joking about the addressee, speaks about something he/she does not know, or even asking a question that has no answer (Shormani, 2020). The second Arabic rendering has the same meaning and cultural aspects of the English version (and also of the Yemeni version), but it is a Standard Arabic (SA) form. However, all the participants did not get its meaning and instead,

they chose the incorrect translation, i.e. هل مع الدجاجة شفاه, which is a literal translation of the English proverb, which, in turn, results in their bad performance. Thus, the moral of this proverb is that one has to think before saying anything he/she does not know, or asking the speaker to stop asking/saying such ridiculous stupid things.

For ease of exposition, Table 2 summarizes the cultural aspects of the rest of the proverbs involved in ZAE category.

Table 2: Proverb, correct translation, incorrect translations & proverb's cultural aspects (situation, origin, meaning, moral)

Proverb	Cor. Trn.	Inc.Trn.	Situation	Origin	Meaning	Moral
<i>Fingers were made before forks</i>	الاكل باليد بركة	الاصابع صنعت قبل الشوك / الاصل ابع خلقها الله قبل الشوك	Eating with hands	14 th C.: John the Good, Duke of Burgundy (F&F: 98)	Eating with hand is better than eating with forks	Taking advantage of anything available
<i>Faint heart never won fair lady</i>	الحب يحتاج الى قلب قوي	القلب المعسى عليه لا يملك سيدة جميلة/القلب وحده لا يملك سيدة جميلة	said to a coward person	John Gower's Confessio Amantis (c 1390) (F&F: 126)	No achievement without courage and determination	Decision making needs courage and determination
<i>Feed a cold and starve a fever</i>	كل عند البرد، صم عند الحمى	اطعم البرد ولا تطعم الحمى / اطعم البرد وتجويع الحمى	When having cold or fever	19 th C. (F&F: 97)	Food is essential to resist cold	Body needs food when cold, but fasting when fever
<i>Good wine needs no bush</i>	الجميلة لا تحتاج الى مكياج	الخير الجيد لا يحتاج الى شجرة/النبيذ الجيد لا يحتاج الى شجرة	something is of a good quality	Renaissance time (F&F: 249)	No need to speak well about good things/people	good quality sells itself
<i>How we apples swim</i>	سماك يا ربي سمك ما قريب جاز عة	كيف تسبح التفاح / نحن تسبح مع التفاح	Said to a person with self-aggrandisement	Brother Protestant (1733) (F&F: 6)	'pride of one's deeds'	Modesty is a good quality
<i>It rains cats and dogs</i>	السماء تمطر بغزارة/ انها تمطر ككافواه القرب	انها تمطر قطط و كلاب	Said when it rains heavily	No exact origin	It rains heavily	Don't go out when it rains heavily
<i>The devil is beating his grandmother</i>	مطر بهطل وشمس تضيئ	الشيطان بضرب جدته/ لشيطان يقتل جدته	Said when it rains while the sun shines	1703 (Taylor 1934: 11)	Raining and sun shine coinciding	Nature is unpredictable
<i>The nearer the church, the further from God</i>	قربك من المعبد لا يعني تدبلك	الكنيسة القريبة من الله بعيدة / كلما كانت الكنيسة قريبة كان الله بعيد	Said to a person who is religious but not doing good	14 th C. (F&F: 49).	Not all religious people are good	good deeds signal good religion
<i>Two's company, three's crowd</i>	خير الصحبة اثنان	لا تعمل شراكة مع اكثر من اثنين/ صاحب اثنين او ثلاثة	Said when three or more people in a company	No exact origin	'presence of a third person prevents intimacy'	the less to accompany, the more intimacy to enjoy

5.2. Post-T Stage

As alluded to above, stage two was conducted after the teaching process of the cultural aspects of the proverbs involved. The cultural aspects taught include origin, concept, context/situation,

meaning, moral, and/or form, and the teaching of these cultural aspects followed the method described in Section 4.2. After teaching these aspects, the participants were asked to undergo the translation test. Table 2 presents the results of the Post-Teaching stage.

Table 3: Results of Post-TS (category of proverbs, type of translation, frequency and percentage)

Category	Prover No.	Correct translation		Incorrect translation		Total	
		Freq.	Perc.	Freq.	Perc.	Freq	Perc.
CAE	1	19	95%	1	5%	20	100%
	2	19	95%	1	5%	20	100%
	3	20	100%	00	00%	20	100%
	4	20	100%	00	00%	20	100%
	5	18	90%	2	10%	20	100%
	6	20	100%	00	00%	20	100%
	7	20	100%	00	00%	20	100%
	8	18	90%	2	10%	20	100%
	9	17	85%	3	15%	20	100%
	10	20	100%	00	00%	20	100%
Total		191	95.5%	9	4.5%	200	100%
ZAE	1	15	75%	5	25%	20	100%
	2	16	80%	4	20%	20	100%
	3	20	100%	00	00%	20	100%
	4	20	100%	00	00%	20	100%
	5	19	95%	1	5%	20	100%
	6	19	95%	1	5%	20	100%
	7	20	100%	00	00%	20	100%
	8	14	55%	6	30%	20	100%
	9	17	95%	00	00%	20	100%
	10	20	85%	3	15%	20	100%
Total		180	90%	20	10%	200	100%

As Table 3 illustrates, students' performance develops dramatically. Comparing Table 1 and Table 2, it is clear that teaching the cultural aspects of the proverbs involved is the main reason behind this development. The results presented will be discussed according to both categories, viz. CAE and ZAE in the following section:

5.2.2. Complete Arabic Equivalence

It is clear that students' performance has developed considerably. In this category, there are five proverbs, namely 3, 4, 6, 7 and 10 which score full translation, i.e. twenty correct translations. Proverbs 1 and 2 score 19 correct translations. Proverbs 5 and 8 score 18 correct translations, and proverb 9 scores 17 correct translations. Overall, the CAE category scores 191 correct

translations, i.e. 95.5% of the total number of the proverbs involved, and 9 incorrect translations, i.e. 4.5%, were found. This implies that students' performance has improved significantly, which can only be attributed to the teaching of the proverbs' cultural aspects to students.

5.2.3. Zero Arabic Equivalence

The results in this category are really very significant, as can be seen in Table 2. Four proverbs, viz. 3, 4, 7 and 10 score full translations. Proverbs 5 and 6 score 19 correct translations. The least correct translations were scored by proverb 8, with 14 correct translations. Overall, 180 correct translations, i.e. 90%, were found, and twenty incorrect translations, i.e. twenty % of the total number of translations. This is a significant improvement if we compare Pre-TS to Post-TS, whose reasons can only be attributed to the teaching of proverbs' cultural aspects.

Thus, in what follows we present the most salient characteristics of the participants' performance. Avoiding repetition, we will focus on 5 proverbs as a sample of the development the participants have undergone after being taught the proverbs' cultural aspects.

To begin with, proverb (1) Does a chicken have lips? scores 15 correct translations, لا تعرف بما لا تعرف 'don't say things you don't know' was selected by 13 participants, and جددك العشى was chosen by 2 participants. This indicates that the participants preferred the Standard Arabic translation rather than Ibbi translation. This is actually in contrary to Shormani (2020) whose participants favored the Ibbi expression. The reason might be that in our study the translation is provided, i.e. they just select from available alternative translations, while in Shormani's (2020) study, participants guess the best meaning they thought of, which is not provided as a choice.

The correct translation selected by the participants for proverb 2 Fingers were made before forks is *الاكل باليد بركة* alʔaklu bilyaddi barakah ‘eating with hand is a bless’. This choice was chosen by 16 participants, who ignored the incorrect translations including *الاصابع صنعت قبل الشوك* alʔaṣābiʕu ṣuniʕat qabl aššawk ‘The fingers are made before forks’. It seems that students have realized that this incorrect translation is just a literal rendering, given their knowledge about the cultural aspects of this proverb they have been taught.

The participants chose the correct translation for proverb 5 Good wine needs no bush, viz. الجميلة الـمكيـاج *aljamilah lā tahtaj ila mikyāj* ‘a beautiful woman does not need make-up’. As noted by Shormani (2020), the moral of this proverb is that anything valuable or of good nature need not be decorated. A similar thing can be said regarding humans, a good human need not be spoken about: “deeds speak louder than words”- an English proverb.

As for proverb 6 How we apples swim, the participants chose *سماك يا ربي سماك ما قرينع جاز عة* samāk yarbbi samāk ma qurinʿ jazīʿih ‘Oh, God take care of your sky, Qurina (a kind of bird) is leaving’. The fact that 19 participants chose this translation indicates that almost all students have understood the cultural aspects of this proverb, hence ignoring other (incorrect) translations such as *كيف تسبح التفاح* ‘kayt tasbah attuffah’ ‘How do apples swim?’ The moral of this proverb could be that one should be proud, but with modesty, i.e. arrogance is not good manner.

The last proverb we will discuss here is proverb 8 It rains cats and dogs. Recall that this proverb was one of the most misleading proverbs for the participants in Pre-T stage. However, after the teaching process, participants were able to figure out the best translation, hence most of them

chose انها تمطر كإفواء القرب ?inhā tumiṭir ka-ʔafwāh ʔalqirab ‘It rains like the covers of the bottles. This is very significant, because they favor the proverbial translation rather than their nonproverbial one which is تمطر بغزارة tumiṭir biyazārah ‘It rains heavily’. Only one participant chose the incorrect translation, viz. قطط وكلاب تنساقط من السماء qīṭaṭun wa kilābun tatasāqat min assamā ‘Cats and dogs are falling from the sky.’

5.3. Results related to the follow-up questionnaire

In this section, we will present and discuss the results obtained from the follow-up questionnaire. Table 4 summarizes these results.

Table 4: Participants’ responses to the follow-up questionnaire’s items (item number, frequency and percentage)

Item No.	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree		Total	
	Freq.	Perc.	Freq.	Perc.	Freq.	Perc.	Freq.	Perc.	Freq.	Perc.
1	00	00	1	5%	00	00	19	95%	20	100%
2	18	90%	1	5%	1	5%	00	00	20	100%
3	20	100%	00	00	00	00	00	00	20	100%
4	00	00	00	00	3	15%	17	85%	20	100%
5	12	60%	5	25%	3	15%	00	00	20	100%
6	16	80%	00	00	1	5%	3	15%	20	100%
7	14	70%	2	10%	4	20%	00	00	20	100%
8	20	100%	00	00	00	00	00	00	20	100%
9	16	80%	00	00	4	20%	00	00	20	100%
10	11	55%	3	15%	6	30%	00	00	20	100%
11	19	95%	1	5%	00	00	00	00	20	100%
12	20	100%	00	00	00	00	00	00	20	100%
13	12	60%	4	20%	3	15%	1	5%	20	100%
15	14	70%	4	20%	00	00	2	10%	20	100%
16	8	40%	00	00	12	60%	00	00	20	100%
17	18	90%	00	00	2	10%	00	00	20	100%
18	13	65%	5	25%	2	10%	00	00	20	100%
19	00	00	2	10%	5	25%	13	65%	20	100%
20	17	85%	3	15%	00	00	00	00	20	100%

Table 4 demonstrates that the teaching process of the proverbs’ cultural aspects has considerable effects on students’ performance. If we look closely at the items and their score, we clearly find that translating and learning proverbs have been a difficult task, in the Pre-T stage. In fact, the follow-up questionnaire results reflect the test results, in that the difficulty experienced by the participants in the Pre-TS, and the relative ease they found after being taught the proverbs’ cultural aspects are borne out. For example, item 1 Proverbs are easy to learn and translate scores 19 Strongly disagree responses, i.e. 95%, and only 1 Agree response. Responses to item 2 I do not understand English proverbs which have no equivalence in Arabic are very significant, which vividly shows that CAE proverbs were easier than ZAE ones, scoring 90% Strongly agree

responses. Another significant case concerns item 3 I always have difficulty in learning proverbs' underlying meaning which scores 100% Strongly agree responses. The same thing can be said regarding item 8 My problem lies in not knowing proverbs' background. Item 11 Proverbs cannot be acquired without teaching us their cultural aspects could be considered to reflect students' experience after being taught proverbs' cultural aspects. The 95% Strong agree score this item has supports this. Thus, this suggests that students realize that without teaching culture, it is very difficult to learn and/or translate proverbs.

This is also manifested more in item 12 Understanding proverbs' cultural aspects helps me considerably in translating them. This item scores 100% Strong agree responses, which clearly manifests the benefit of the teaching process the participants have undergone. However, item 16 I prefer Yemeni Arabic equivalence, because it is close to us more than Standard Arabic is quite significant due to the fact that scoring 40% Strongly agree, no Agree responses and 60% Disagree responses means that most participants prefer Standard Arabic equivalence. This also gives us a room to explain the fact of the participants' preference of translating the proverb Does a chicken have lips? as “لا تهرف بما لا تعرف” rather than “جنتك العشمى”, which is a Yemeni equivalent proverb (cf. Shormani, 2020). The last item to discuss here is twenty I hope that teaching us English culture is extended to other subjects. The fact that 85% Strongly agree and 15% Agree responses this item scores is significant, which is threefold: i) teaching proverbs' cultural aspects seems to be strongly favored by students, ii) its effects come to play, in that students hope to extend teaching culture to other subjects, and iii) it vividly demonstrates the Post-T stage's results in students' improved performance.

As for part two of the questionnaire, some participants wrote comments about their experience during the translation task. An example is given below (including his/her errors):

The experience I have in translation task is very good. I learned a lot of thing specially about culture and importance in translating. I frankly was not knowing how to translate English proverbs but after you teach us their cultural aspects. I now can translate any proverb that I understood the culture of it. And I hope you teach us culture in all subjects.

6. Teaching English culture through proverbs: a proposal

In this section, we propose a model for teaching culture through proverbs. This model is interactive in nature as figure 1 showcases.

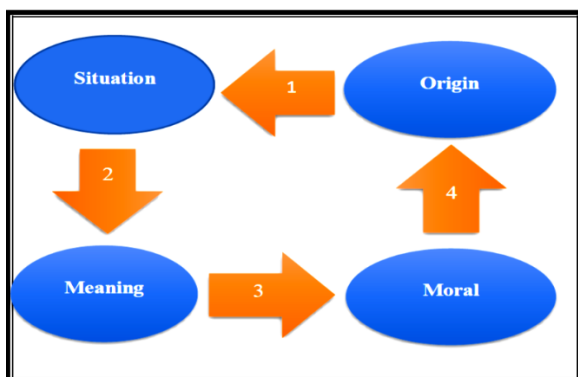


Figure 1: Interactive Model for teaching proverbs' cultural aspects

The interactive model in Figure 1 proposes that step 1 of teaching the cultural aspects of the proverb starts with thinking about a situation/context in which the proverb is used. The participants would immensely be engaged in this interaction. The first step is the situation that could be created in English as a conversation between two or three students, or between the teacher and students, engaging them in such a conversation, and asking them to think of a proverb to be used in this situation. The situation could also be created in Arabic and ask students to think of a proverb that could be said in this situation, and then ask them to think of an equivalent proverb in English. The proposal is highlighted in what follows:

Situation: SS1: you got high marks in English, right?

SS2: Yes, thank God!

SS3: Yes, his father is a teacher of English.

Teacher: So, he is like his father, can you think of a proverb in English or Arabic that can describe this situation?

SS: Yes, in Arabic هذا الشبل من ذاك الاسد *hāḏa aššiblu min ḏaka alʿasad* 'lit: This cub is from that lion.'

Teacher: Great! Do you know an equivalent proverb in English?

SS: mmmm, no!

Teacher: Yes, there is one: like father like son.

Meaning:

When the situation of the proverb was understood by students, then we asked them to give us the meaning of this proverb. In case they were not sure or unable to guess the meaning, we gave them hints, but if they were also unable to guess, we finally gave them the meaning, and ask them to repeat the situation and say the proverb once more.

Origin:

Students, out of curiosity, asked us the question: “Who used this proverb for the first time?” We answered it by teaching them where it came from and who used it, but also the first time it was noted in written works.

Moral:

Then, we asked them to guess the lesson/moral we learned from this proverb, depending on the cultural aspect aforementioned.

Form/wording:

As for the wording/form of a proverb, we followed a syntax-based approach. Put differently, the proverbs involved in this study were taught to students in terms of whether they are a phrase or sentence each, and whether the sentence is simple or complex. For example, the proverb Like father like son is a phrase, a preposition phrase. However, it was explained to students that the syntactic structure underlying this proverb is actually a sentence having the form: The son is like the father (considering also the inverse structure). This is the syntactic structure we have to understand it in. Another example of a phrase-proverb is: An eye for an eye, a noun phrase. Note that its equivalent proverb in Arabic is a sentence. The underlying structure of this proverb could be: A sound eye of the person who damaged another person's eye is damaged instead. Or, if one damaged another one's eye, his eye must be damaged, too. Students were also taught the purpose of such a proverbial form; sometimes for preciseness and conciseness, sometimes to make it easy to memorize and remember, giving them examples from Arabic proverbs, too.

Thus, teachers are advised to make students aware of this feature, too. Another very important aspect is wording; students should be made clear of wording. Put simply, students should know that most of the time a proverb wording is different from meaning due to proverbial idiomaticity and idiosyncrasy. For example, the proverb You can't teach an old dog new tricks, the wording here refers to animals, particularly “dog”, but what is meant is human, i.e. “Man”. They may also draw their attention to this phenomenon and give examples from Arabic as in *هذا الشبل من ذلك الاسد* where wording is related to animals, but what is implied here is, again “Human” (Shormani 2020). Students should also get clear of the proverbial form or what we may call ‘brevity of expression’.

7. Conclusion and Pedagogical Implications

The results of this study indicate that exposing our students to TL culture through proverbs played a significant role in improving the participants' performance. If we compare Pre-TS to Post-TS, students' performance improves considerably, and the main reason is undoubtedly teaching these cultural aspects to them. Thus, the answer to the question: Does teaching culture assist learning the language? is now clear; it is actually, yes. We could also extend these findings to other courses.

Another aspect worth addressing here is that the study participants wanted to be taught culture aspects in classroom, as indicated in their responses to the follow-up questionnaire items (see

Table 4). This, in turn, indicates that their experience in the teaching process was beneficial, and that they found themselves better, not only at the linguistic level, but also at the cultural level. This aspect strongly supports several studies and calls for integrating culture in L2 classroom vis-à-vis language (Brown & Eisterhold, 2004; Byram & Feng, 2004; Tang, 2006; Brown, 2007; Tseng & Chao, 2012).

If we think of alternative channels, we have nowadays a considerable number of channels to expose our students to culture, here English. English movies available on YouTube can do us more than we expect. There is a good number of movies like family movies, which can be advised for our students to watch. These channels either literature courses, or movie series expose our students to intercultural channels, everyday communication, interlocutors' responses, the way English people think, see the world, in different contexts. When teachers teach these cultural aspects, they, in a way or another, open new windows for their students to think critically, encouraging them to reflect on their own cultural values and characteristics. They, besides, allow them to examine where Arabic language and English language culture converge, and where they diverge. This will also give them a strong sense of cultural self-awareness (O'Brien, 1993; Tavin & Anderson, 2003; Tseng & Chao, 2012).

Thus, we expect our students to master idiomatic expressions like proverbs and idioms; they will be equipped with native-like competence, fluency and proficiency. Knowing the cultural aspects of English proverbs enhances students' understanding of the arbitrariness and idiosyncrasy of these expressions. If idiomatic expressions are to distinguish a native speaker from a non-native speaker, then mastering them gives our students a means to be like native speakers. Another aspect is that learning the cultural aspects of proverbs provides our students with a sense of cultural identity, in that they will practice their own culture, i.e. Arabic/Yemeni culture, not only English culture, getting aware of, and tied to their own culture. Their awareness of their culture would enable them to clearly see how both cultures differ, and hence acquire English culture in its own right.

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