

Misinterpretation of English Cultural Bound Expressions by English Majors at Saudi Universities

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Abstract

This study aims at investigating Saudi university English language majors' inability to translate cultural bound expressions. English cultural bound expressions are used to describe those expressions which are connected with western culture and they don't have equivalent in Saudi culture, such as 'girl friend'. The study sample involves (253) English majors from the University of Tabuk and Taif University-Saudi Arabia. A culture-based translation test (CBTT) was developed to serve the purpose of this paper. The results of the study revealed that Saudi university English majors' performance in translating cultural bound English expressions is very poor as reflected by their scores on the culture-based translation test (CBTT). Translating cultural-bound English expressions is marginalized by current in-class translation practices in Saudi universities.

Key words: *culture, cultural-bound expressions, translation, interpretation*

Introduction

Translation is a task which has been performed for centuries. It is ultimately a human activity which enables people to exchange ideas and thoughts regardless of their different tongues. Recently, globalization has touched the lives of people all over the world and brought nations, languages, and cultures together. As a result, developing intercultural communication has become a matter of high importance as a globalization commitment. Many people spend an enormous amount of their time communicating with people of different languages and cultures around the world. Hinkel (1999) states that learning the cultural aspects of foreign languages has become a central objective of learning foreign languages in the last few decades. To this point, Hinde (1997) argues that lacking relevant cultural knowledge causes intercultural misunderstanding. That is why the United States considers learning cultural knowledge of foreign languages one of the five goal areas of the national standards for foreign language learning in the 21st century (National Standards in Foreign Language Education Project, 1996). Simply, coupling intercultural communication with knowledge exceptional rapid expansion and transfer has magnified the role of translation. Bahameed (2008) points out 'that most recent theories in social linguistics raise the question of intercultural translation' (p. 1). This implies that the more a translator is aware of complexities of differences between cultures, the better a translator will be.

Translation can play an important role in maintaining intercultural communications. It can foster intercultural communications through delivering or conveying messages across different languages, borders, and cultures. Intercultural communications have resurrected the role of culture in translation. To this point, Al-Qurashi (2004) states that translation has been of great importance to all nations as it plays an essential role in transferring knowledge from one culture to another. Bassnett-McGuire (1980) considers the relationship between language and culture as similar as the relationship between heart and body.

This implies that translators have to consider the cultural aspects that are implicitly embedded in the source language (SL). For Gerding-Salas (2000), the main aim of translation is to serve as a cross-cultural bilingual communication vehicle among peoples. This means that effective exchange of information among peoples requires accurate and fast transfer of knowledge from one language into another and from one culture into another.

However, "differences between cultures may cause more severe complications for the translator than do differences in language structure" (Nida, 1964, p.130). In practice, translating the cultural aspects of any given source language is not an easy job. Al-Aqra (2001) states that linguistic and culture systems are closely related to each other. Nida (1964) argues that translation problems are likely to happen even when the source language SL and target language (TL) have some similar linguistic and cultural features. This means that translation problems may vary in scope depending on the cultural and linguistic gap between the two concerned languages. That is why bridging the cultural gap in the source language (SL) and the target language (TL) is one of the challenging tasks in translation processes. Accordingly, translating cultural bound expressions from English into Arabic is one of the most nagging translation problems facing Saudi English language majors. Many students' tend to translate cultural bound expressions literally. Along with this feeling of dissatisfaction of the translation courses offered in the Arab universities, Dadour (2004) mentions that 100% of the Egyptian university students agreed on the importance of translation, yet 97% were dissatisfied with the translation courses they study. Most of the subjects recommended that translation courses should cover the cultural aspects of the American and British life. For example, some students translate the English phrase 'Oh, my Baby' into Arabic saying: (يا صغيرتي) /yaSaḠiirati/ 'my small child' instead of the accurate equivalent (يا حبيبتي) /yaHabibati/ 'my lover'.

Literature review

Culture refers to all socially conditioned aspects of human life. language is one of the most important aspects of human life. That is, there is a very strong correlation between language and culture. Accordingly, culture cannot and should not be ignored when translating any text. Erten (2001) argues that "the words culture and translation should be linked to each other" (p. 346). In addition, Hermans (1999) believes that "translation can and should be recognized as a social phenomenon, a cultural practice" (p. 142).

Since the past few decades, translation has been developed because of the rising of international trade, the increased of migration, globalization, the recognition of linguistic minorities, and the expansion of the mass media and technology. For these reasons, the translator plays an important role as a bilingual or multi-lingual cross-cultural transmitter of culture and truths by attempting to interpret concepts and speech in a variety of texts as faithfully and accurately as possible (Gerding-Salas, 2000). Nord (1997) confirms the idea that translation is a form of cross-cultural communication:

"Communication takes place through a medium and in situations that are limited in time and place. Each specific situation determines what and how people communicate, and it is changed by people communicating. Situations are not universal but are embedded in a cultural habitat, which in turn conditions the situation. Language is thus to be regarded as part of culture. And communication is conditioned by the constraints of the situation-in-culture." (p. 1)

Armellino (2008) argues that it is impossible to replace culturally-bound words or expressions in one language by the same words or expressions in another language. This is often impossible because the meaning which lies behind this kind of expressions is always strongly linked to the specific cultural context where the text originates or with the cultural context it aims to re-create. For this, Newmark (2001) concludes: "Now whilst some see culture as the essence of translation, I see culture as the greatest obstacle to translation, at least to the achievement of an accurate and decent translation" (p. 328).

To translate culturally-bound words or expressions, translators apply and follow different procedures to overcome the problems of translating such words and expressions. Graedler (2000), for instance, suggests some procedures of translating culturally-bound sentences, words, and expressions: 'Making up a new word', 'explaining the meaning of the SL expression in lieu of translating it', 'preserving the SL term intact', and 'opting for a word in the TL which seems similar to or has the same 'relevance' as the

SL term'. Harvey (2003) suggests the four major techniques for translating culture bound expressions. 'Functional Equivalence' means using a referent in the TL culture whose function is similar to that of the source language (SL) referent. 'Formal Equivalence' or 'linguistic equivalence' means a 'word-for-word' translation. 'Transcription' or 'borrowing' stands at the far end of SL-oriented strategies. If the term is formally transparent or is explained in the context, it may be used alone. In other cases, particularly where no knowledge of the SL by the reader is presumed, transcription is accompanied by an explanation or a translator's note. 'Descriptive' or 'self-explanatory' translation uses generic terms to convey the meaning. It is appropriate in a wide variety of contexts where formal equivalence is considered insufficiently clear. In a text aimed at a specialized reader, it can be helpful to add the original SL term to avoid ambiguity.

Al-Hasnaw (2007) investigates the 'untranslatability' of some Arabic metaphors into English. He found that most metaphors are shaped by the socio-cultural beliefs and attitudes of a specific culture. Thus, he suggests that the best way to translate Arabic metaphors into English is the 'cognitive equivalence,' where metaphors must be looked at as cognitive constructs representing instances of how people conceptualize their experiences, attitudes and practices, and record them.

Armellino (2008) analyzes the script of, 'Scent of a Woman', a popular American film made in the USA in the 1990s to find out culture-bound elements that might cause translation problem. English language was the SL and Italian was the TL. Armellino finds that culture-bound elements can be classified under three main categories: history (facts and people of American history, but also objects, situations which can be clearly linked to a certain historical period); society (customs and usages, institutions and social structure, lifestyle and habits, and beliefs and morality); and Myths and traditions.

Subjects and Methodology

The current study targeted third and fourth year English language male students at Saudi universities. Accordingly, the study subjects were selected from the University of Tabuk (139 students), and Taif University (131 students). The total number of the sample was 270 students whose age was ranging from 21 to 23 years. The sample was limited to the third and fourth year English language majors as they are supposed to be acquainted with English language and translation. Reviewing students' responses on the study test and questionnaires revealed that 17 students did not respond to the study test and questionnaires. After excluding those students, the actual study sample was 253 Subjects. A culture-based translation test (CBTT) was developed to serve the purpose of this paper. The test consists of 25 items. , the twenty-five items of the list were approved as a valid content of the CBTT. The test layout was very simple to allow the subjects to easily respond to the test tasks where each expression was placed in a meaningful sentence and the subjects were asked to translate each sentence in the given place. Each statement contains one cultural expression covering most of the common cultural communication expressions related expressing happiness (item 7), sadness (items: 1, and 9), love (items: 2, 3, and 22), disobedience (item 4), money (items: 5,8,14, and 16), badness (items: 6, and 19), health (item 10), imprisonment (item 12), favorites (item 11), attraction (item 13), authority (items: 15, and 23), suspension (item 17), danger (item 18), loss (item 20), reliability (item 21), guilt (item 24), and sensitivity (item 25). The test items were randomly arranged to minimize the chances of guessing.

The test was reviewed by EFL experts who approved its face and content validity to test Saudi university English language majors' ability to translate cultural bound expressions.

For estimating the reliability of the CBTT, the test was administered twice (using test-retest procedure). On the 18th of March 2008 the test was administered to 13 Saudi university English language majors at the University of Tabuk. After a week, the same test was re-administered to the same students. The test-retest procedure was used to calculate the reliability of the CBTT using Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient. The reliability coefficient of the CBTT was found to be reasonable ($r= 0.81$) as stated by a specialist in educational statistics from the University of Tabuk.

The total score of the CBTT was (50) scores, two scores were devoted to each item of the twenty-five items. Exact cultural translation was given two scores, while one score was devoted to the translation that conveys the meaning but not accurately. Literal or wrong translation was scored zero. Students' scores were interpreted according to five criteria; less than 60% means failed, from 60% to 69% means fair, from 70% to 79% means good, from 80% to 89% means very good, and from 90%

to 100% means excellent. Each test was marked and scored by four evaluators; the researchers, EF teacher, and a TEFL specialist.

Result and Discussion

The first hypothesis was stated as follows: Saudi university English majors are expected to show poor performance in translating culture-bound English expressions as reflected by their scores on the culture-based translation test (CBTT).

Tables (1, 2 and 3) summarize the required key data.

Table 1
 Subjects' Mean Score on the CBTT

Subjects	Obtained Mean	Required Mean	Indication
253	24.5	30	Poor Performance

Table (1) shows that subjects' obtained mean is (24.5), while the required mean is (30) or more. The obtained mean is less than the required mean. This means that the subjects failed to achieve the required mean indicating that the majority of the Saudi university English majors were unable to translate English cultural-bound expressions.

Table 2
 Subjects' Total Results on the CBTT

Subjects	Fail	Pass
n	196	57
%	77.47	22.52

Table (2) shows that 77.47% of the subjects (n =196) obtained scores less than 60% and this means that the majority of the subjects were not able to pass the cut-off level of the CBTT, while 22.52% of the subjects were able to pass the test and this confirms the idea that the majority of the Saudi university English majors were unable to translate cultural-bound expressions.

Table 3
 Subjects' Detailed Results on the CBTT

Criteria	N	%
Fail= (Less than 60%)	196	77.47
Fair= (60% to 69%)	44	17.39
Good= (70% to 79%)	9	3.56
Very Good= (80% to 89%)	4	1.58
Excellent= (90% to 100%)	0	0

Table (3) shows that 77.47% of the subjects (n =196) obtained scores less than 60% and this means that the majority of the subjects were not able to pass the cut-off level of the CBTT. This result confirms the subjects' inability to translate cultural-bound expressions. In addition, the table reveals that 17.39% of the subjects (n =44) got scores ranging from (60%) to (69%). This percentage assures the idea that most of the subjects who were able to pass the cut-off level of the CBTT were not able to get high scores and this reflects their shaky ability to translate cultural-bound expressions. This result is confirmed by the result that only 3.56% of the subjects (n =9) got the 'Good' grade (70% to 79%). Again, the same result is supported by the result that only 1.58% of the subjects (n=4) got 'very good' grade (80% to 89%). Strikingly, none of the subjects were able to reach the grade excellent.

Analysis of Subjects' Translation Performance

Test item (1)

'My friend went bananas when his new car was stolen.'

The subjects produced different translations to this item. Generally, this item was one of the few test items that was translated correctly by many students. Most of the translations were revolving around 'getting angry or shocked'. However, some subjects produced strange translations, such as:

- 1- the color of the face of my friend became as the color of the banana.
- 2- My friend went to Bananas when his car was stolen
(In the second item they assume that banana is a name of a country)

Apparently, most of the subjects (n= 230 / 90.90%) were able to produce proper or at least intelligible translation conveying the cultural connotation of the expression 'went bananas' which revolves around connotative meanings of anger and shock. The possible rationale behind subjects' acceptable translation to this item is that they perhaps were able to make good use of the simple and clear context in which the expression was placed. Accordingly, they were able to guess some culturally acceptable meanings. On the other hand, some students used transliteration or literal translation so that they produced wrong or unacceptable translations.

Test item (2)

'Tom was angry with his girlfriend.'

Almost most if not all the subjects (n= 248 / 98.02%) produced unacceptable translation to this item. This expression 'girlfriend' has no equivalence reference in the Arab culture. Accordingly, they were not able to convey its acceptable cultural meaning. The following are examples of the subjects translations:

- 1- (صديقته) 'Sadiqatuhu' his friend
- 2- (حبيبته) 'Habibatuhu' his beloved

Test item (3)

'Many love children suffer from psychological problems.'

Generally, few subjects (n= 16 / 6.32%) produced acceptable translation to this item. They used the exact Arabic cultural equivalences such as: (ابن زنا) /ibin zinaa/ and (لقيط) /laqiI/ (the kid who was born as a result of adultery or without a known father)

Strikingly, the vast majority of the subjects (n= 236 / 93.67%) left this item without translation or produced totally wrong translations such as:

- (جميل) /jamiil/ 'beautiful child'
(ذكي) / ðakii/ 'smart child'

It can be assumed that the rationale behind the subjects' inability to translate the target expression 'love children' is that the apparent literal denotative meaning is completely different from its connotative cultural meaning. In addition, sexual and parental relations in English culture differ from those of the Arabic culture. Accordingly, it was difficult for most of the subjects to convey the accurate cultural meaning.

Test item (4)

'Our teacher has to get rid of the bad eggs in the classrooms.'

Many subjects (n= 160 / 63.24%) produced acceptable translation to this item. It seems that the context helps the subjects to figure out the meaning. Thus, they used acceptable Arabic cultural equivalences such as:

- (مشاغبين) /mushaaGibiin/ 'students who create problems'
(غير مؤدبين) /Ġayiiir mu?adabiin/ 'impolite students'
(سئيين) /sai?iin/ 'bad students, etc.'

On the other hand, the rest of the subjects (n= 93 / 36.75%) left this item without translation or gave totally wrong translations such as: 'rotten eggs, eggs with bad smell, etc. The rationale behind the subjects' inability to translate the target expression 'bad eggs' is that the subjects resort to literal translation because they lack the cultural awareness needed for translating such culturally

bound expressions. In addition, in both Arabic language and culture the word (بيض) /bayD/ 'eggs' is used to refer to weakness. It is rarely used to convey such English culture connotation.

Test item (5)

'The stock market goes under the control of fat cats.'

Apparently, most of the subjects (n= 238 / 94.07%) left this item without translation or gave totally wrong translations such as:

(قطط سمينة) /qiTaT samiinah/ 'fat cats', (نمور) /nomoor/ 'tigers', (هامور) /hamoor/ 'fat fish' and (قطط) /qiTaT/ 'cats'. As can be noted, most of the subjects follow literary translation.

On the other hand, very few subjects (n= 15 / 5.92%) were able to produce acceptable translation to this item. They used acceptable and exact Arabic cultural equivalences such as: (الاغنياء) /al?aGniya? 'the rich', (الاثرياء) /al?aθria? 'very rich' and (كبار التجار) /kibaar attujaar/ 'big merchants'

The rationale behind the subjects' inability to translate the target expression 'fat cats' is that the subjects resort to literal translation. However, few subjects were acquainted with the cultural meaning of the target expression, especially the expression (هامور) 'fat fish' is commonly used in the Arabic stock and business markets particularly in Saudi Arabia. Another possibility is that the clear context of the expression facilitated guessing its proper meaning.

Test item (6)

'Chris used to be yellow in serious situations.'

Almost all subjects (n= 247 / 97.62%) were able to produce acceptable translation to this item. They used acceptable Arabic cultural equivalences revolving around the meaning that 'the color of his face got yellow in difficult or hard situation'.

In fact the connotative cultural meaning of the color 'yellow' in Arabic especially in serious situations conveys a 'sense of fear' and this matches the same cultural sense in English. Accordingly, most of the subjects were able to translate the target expression. On the other hand, very few the subjects overlooked this item without translation.

Test item (7)

'I was on cloud nine after I got the full mark.'

It is clear that some subjects (n= 55 / 21.73%) were able to write acceptable translation to this item. Most of the correct answers were revolving around the idea that 'I was extremely happy when/after I got a full mark'.

On the other hand, most of the subjects (n= 198 / 78.26%) skipped the item or provided literal translation for the expression 'I was on cloud nine', for example:

1- كنت على السحاب التاسع -

/Kuntu 9alaa alsaHaab altasi9/

'I was on the ninth cloud'

2- كنت في السماء التاسع -

/Kuntu fii alsama/ altasi9/

'I was in the ninth sky'

This result indicates that few subjects were acquainted with the cultural reference of the target expression. However, most of the subjects were not able to translate the target expression properly because the Arabic language and culture link happiness to (لطيران) /alTayaran/ 'flying'. It is common in Arabic to find a collocation conveying the same meaning of happiness, seemingly, students' shaky strategy awareness is behind their poor performance.

Test item (8)

'Many people want to make a quick buck.'

Some subjects (n= 63 / 24.90%) produced acceptable translation to this item. They used acceptable Arabic cultural equivalences to mean that 'many people want to be rich quickly, quick richness, huge amount of money'.

On the other hand, the rest of the subjects (n= 190 / 75.09%) left this item without translation or gave totally wrong translations such as:

'many people want (الحلول السريعة) /alHiluul alsarii9ah/ 'quick solutions' or (الوجبات السريعة) /alwajabaat alsarii9ah/ 'quick meal'. Others (n=185) left it without translation.

The rationale behind the subjects' inability to translate the target expression 'quick buck' is that the word 'buck' is very colloquial American money-related word. Americans say: 'a million bucks' to say a person is very healthy or happy. Actually such cultural connotation is far fetched in the Arabic language.

Test item (9)

'Your car is in sad shape.'

This item was one of the easiest items of the test where most of the subjects (n= 230 / 90.90%) provided acceptable translation to this item. Most of them translated it into 'your car is so bad, in a bad condition, etc.'

The rationale behind the subjects' ability to translate the target expression 'sad' is that literal translation can convey the cultural meaning of the target expression. In addition, the word 'sad' seems to carry the same cultural indication in both Arabic and English. However, some subjects (n=23 / 9.09%) left the target expression with no translation.

Test item (10)

'Do not annoy him, he has a bad ticker.'

Seemingly, this item was one of the most difficult items of the test where almost all the subjects (n= 246 / 97.23%) wrote totally wrong translations. 'bad ticker' was translated into (أحمق) /aHmaq 'foolish', (مخدع) /muxadi?/ 'cunning', or (مزاجه سيئ) /mizajuhi sai?/ 'bad timbered'.

On the other hand, very few subjects (n= 7 / 2.76%) produced acceptable translation to this item. They used acceptable and exact Arabic cultural equivalences such as: (قلبه مريض) /qalbuhi mariiD/ 'his heart is ill'

The expression 'ticker' is culturally bound and it refers to 'heart' in the American culture. Thus, it was difficult for the subjects to guess or to give literal translation.

Test item (11)

'English isn't my cup of tea.'

Again, almost all the subjects (n= 250 / 98.81%) wrote totally wrong literal translation such as:

- اللغة الإنكليزية ليست كأس شاي
/alluGah al?inkiliizyah laysat kaa?s shaii/
'English language is not a cup of tea'
- كوب الشاي إنكليزي.
/Kuub shii i?nkiliizii/
'An English cup of tea'

Strikingly, the target expression 'my cup of tea' was very difficult for almost all the subjects. 'Tea' is very common in both American and Arabic cultures, yet it has different cultural connotation.

Test item (12)

'The criminal was sent to the big house for 20 years.'

Almost most of the subjects (n= 242 / 95.65%) left the item without translation or wrote wrong translations. 'the big house' was literally translated into (البيت الكبير) /albayt alkabiir/ 'the big house' or (بين العائلة) /bayt al9a?ilah/ 'family house' or left without translation.

On the other hand, very few subjects (n= 11 / 4, 34%) were able to produce acceptable translation to this item. They used acceptable Arabic cultural equivalences for the 'big house' such as: (السجن) /assijin/ 'jail or prison'. Some of them gave the name of famous jails in Arab culture such as (أبو غريب) /abu Grayb/ (in Iraq) and (أبو زعبل) /abu za9bal/ (in Egypt).

In fact, 'the big house' refers to 'jail or prison' and it is very common cultural expression in the American culture and daily communications.

Test item (13)

'Nora was dressed to kill for her party on Saturday night.'

Almost most of the subjects (n= 235 / 92.88%) left the item without translation or wrote wrong translations. The expression 'dressed to kill' was literally translated into related meanings revolving around 'killing', such as:

(لكي تقتل) /likay taqtul/ 'in order to kill', (لديها نية القتل) /ladayhaa niyat allqatil/ 'has a desire to kill', (جمال نورا) /jamaluhaa qatil/ 'her beauty is deadly', etc.

On the other hand, very few subjects ($n= 18 / 7,11\%$) were able to produce acceptable translation to this item. They used acceptable Arabic cultural equivalences revolving around 'attractive or beautiful dress'.

Seemingly, 'dressed to kill' was difficult for most of the subjects to translate. This is because the Arabic language does not collocate 'beauty' with dressing, it rather links 'beauty' to body parts such as (رمش قتال) /rimsh qattaal/ 'killing eyebrow'.

Test item (14)

'His pocket is deep.'

The vast majority of the subjects ($n= 231 / 91,30\%$) left the item without translation or wrote wrong translations. They translate the word 'deep' literally such as: (جيبه عميق) /jaybuh 9amiiq/ 'his pocket is deep' (جيبه كبير) /jaybuh kabiir/ 'his pocket was big', etc.

On the other hand, very few subjects ($n= 22 / 8,69\%$) were able to produce acceptable translation to this item. They used exact Arabic cultural equivalences such as: (جيبه مليان) /jaybuhu malyaan/ 'his pocket is full (of money)' (غني جداً) /Ḡanii jiddan/ 'very rich', etc.

Obviously, due to the lack of cultural awareness, most of the subjects used literal translation and the result was unacceptable translation.

Test item (15)

'My father wears the trousers at home.'

Almost all the subjects ($n= 250 / 98,81\%$) left the item without translation or wrote wrong literal translations such as:

والدي يرتدي السروال في المنزل

/Waalidii yartadii assirwal fii almanzil/

'My father wears the trousers at home'

On the other hand, just three subjects (1.19%) were able to produce acceptable translation to this item. They used exact Arabic cultural equivalences such as:

1-والدي هو الذي يتخذ القرارات في المنزل.

/Waalidii howa allaḏii yataxiḏ alqararat/

'my father is the decision maker at home'

2-السلطة في يد والدي في المنزل

/aSSoITah biyad waalidii fii almanzil/

'the authority in the house is in the hand of my father'

Obviously, due to the lack of cultural awareness, almost all the subjects used literal translation and the result was unacceptable translation. Generally, the expression "wears the trousers" was difficult for most of the subjects to translate. Arabic language rarely associates 'clothe' with power or authority.

Test item (16)

'This jacket is for ten bucks.'

Most of the subjects ($n= 217 / 85,77\%$) left the item without translation or wrote wrong literal translations, 'ten bucks' was translated into (عشرة آلاف) //9asharat alaaf/ 'ten thousand', (عشرة ريالات) /9asharat reyalat/ 'ten rails'

On the other hand, some subjects ($n=36 / 14,22\%$) were able to produce acceptable translation to this item. They used exact Arabic cultural equivalences such as: (عشرة دولارات) /9shrat dolarat/ 'ten dollars'.

Obviously, those who were acquainted with the American slang expression 'buck', which means dollar, were able to translate it easily. However, those who were not acquainted with its cultural reference used literal translation and the result was unacceptable translation.

Test item (17)

'I smell a rat regarding the new deal.'

Most of the subjects ($n= 156 / 61,66\%$) left the item without translation or wrote wrong literal translations such as:

(أشتم رائحة فأر في هذه الصفقة) /?ashtamu raiHat faar fii haḏihi alSafqah/ 'I smell the smell of a mouse in this deal', (أشتم رائحة جرد) /ashtamu raiHat jurḏ/ 'I smell the smell of the rat'

On the other hand, some subjects ($n=97 / 38,33\%$) were able to produce acceptable translation to this item. They used acceptable Arabic cultural equivalences such as: (أشتم أخبار غير جيدة بخصوص هذا) /ashtamu axbar Ḡayer jayedah bixṢuuṢ haḏa almawḌuu9/ 'I smell bad news regarding this (الموضوع)

issue', (أشعر برائحة خيانة في هذه الصفقة) /ash9ur biraiHati xyanah fii haaḏihi aSSafqah/ 'I feel a betraying smell in this deal', and (لدي شك في هذه الصفقة) /ladaya shak fii haḏihi aSSafqah/ 'I doubt this deal'. Culturally, the 'rat' in Arabic carries the same American connotation that 'doubt or suspicion'. In Arabic, it is very common to say:

(الفار يلعب في جيبتي) /alfar yalʔab fii jaybi/ 'the mouse is playing in my pocket' to convey a sense of suspicion. However, many subjects were not able to relate the two cultures together as they may do not have adequate bicultural awareness.

Test item (18)

'His job was on the line because of his carelessness.'

Most of the subjects (n= 203 / 80, 23%) wrote wrong literal translations for the expression 'on the line'. It was translated into (على الخط) /9laa alxaT/ 'on the line'.

On the other hand, some of the subjects (n=50 / 19.76, 33%) were able to produce acceptable translation to this item. They used acceptable Arabic cultural equivalences to mean that 'he is about to lose his job'

Clearly, this item represents a difficulty in translation for many subjects and this confirm the idea that literal translation is not a workable strategy in translating culturally bound expression.

Test item (19)

'Joe's new car is a real lemon.'

Most of the subjects (n= 231 / 91, 30%) wrote wrong literal and false translations. 'A real lemon' was literary translated into (لونها ليموني) /lawnuhaa laymoonii/ 'has the color of lemon', (صفراء اللون) /Safraa allwn/ 'its color is yellow' etc.

On the other hand, few of the subjects (n=22 / 8.69%) were able to produce acceptable translation to this item. They used acceptable Arabic cultural equivalences revolving around the idea that 'Joe's car is in a bad condition'.

Apparently, most of the subjects (n= 231 – 91.30%) were not able to produce proper translation conveying the cultural connotation of the expression 'lemon'. This is maybe due to the fact that 'lemon' has positive connotation in the Arabic language. Accordingly, literal translation led the subjects to produce wrong or unacceptable translations.

Test item (20)

'He lost his shirt at the last race.'

The vast majority of the subjects (n= 240 / 94.86%) produced acceptable translation to this item. They provided acceptable Arabic cultural equivalences revolving around the idea that 'he lost the last race'

On the other hand, few subjects (n=13 / 5.13%) were not able to produce acceptable translation to this item. They used unacceptable cultural equivalences such as: (فقد قميصه في السباق) /faqada qamiSahu fii assibaaq/ 'he lost his shirt in the race' and (ضاع قميصه في السباق الأخير) /Daa9a qamiiSahu fii assibaaq alʔaxiir/ 'his shirt was missing in the last race'.

Apparently, most of the subjects (n= 240 / 94.86%) produced proper translation conveying the cultural connotation of the expression 'lost his shirt'. This maybe due to the fact that the expression is commonly known among Arabs.

Test item (21)

'The information is straight from the horse's mouth.'

All the subjects (n= 253 / 100%) were not able to produce acceptable translation to this item. While most of them (n= 236 /93.28%) left the item without translation, few of them (n=17 / 6.71%) provided unacceptable Arabic cultural equivalences. They gave literal translation such as:

(المعلومات من فم الحصان) /alma9lumaat min fam alHiSaan/ 'the information is from the mouth of the horse'.

Evidently, this item is the hardest one in the test where none were able to translate it properly. This can be attributed to due to the fact that the expression is not common in the Arab world where 'horses' are not a source of information.

Test item (22)

'Jack has a date with his baby.'

Most of the subjects (n= 215 / 84.98%) produced unacceptable translation to this item or left it without translation. They translated 'baby' into (طفلته) /Tiflatuhu/ 'his baby' or (ابنته الصغيرة) /?ibnatihi aSSaḒiirah/

'his small child' While the rest (n= 38 / 15.01) provided unacceptable Arabic cultural equivalences. The word 'baby' was translated into (محبوبته) /maHbubatih/ 'his beloved'.

Test item (23)

'Tom claims he is a big cheese.'

Almost all the subjects (n= 245 / 96.83%) provided literal and unacceptable translation. 'a big cheese' was translated into (قطعة جبن كبيرة) /qiT9at jubn kabiirah/ 'a big portion of cheese' or (جبان) /jabaan/ 'coward', or left it without translation.

On the other hand, very few subjects (n=8 / 3.16%) were able to produce acceptable translation to this item such as: (مهم) /muhim/ 'important' or (عظيم) /9aZiim/ 'great'.

Again the reason behind subjects' inability to translate this expression properly is that, in Arabic, the word 'cheese' has no cultural connotation to authority or high social status or ranks.

Test item (24)

'The old man was caught red-handed.'

Almost most of the subjects (n= 201 / 79.44%) provided acceptable translation. 'red-handed' was translated into (متلبساً بالجريمة) /mutalabisan biljariimah/ 'committed a crime' or (مذنب) /muðnib/ 'guilty'. On the other hand, some subjects (n=52 / 20. 55%) were not able to produce acceptable translation. The expression 'red-handed' was literary translated into (الأيدي الحمراء) /al?aidii alHamraa?/ 'the red hands'

Again the reason behind the ability of most of the subjects to translate this expression properly is that, in Arabic, the color 'red' reveals bloody risky actions or killing.

Test item (25)

'If you have a thin skin, you will never survive in politics.'

Obviously, most the subjects (n= 227 / 89.72%) were not able to provide acceptable translation. The expression 'thin skin' is translated into (ليس قوياً) /laysa qawii?an/ 'not strong' or left without translation. On the other hand, some subjects (n=26 / 10, 28%) were able to produce acceptable translation. 'thin skin' was translated into (رفيق المشاعر) /raqiiq almashaa9ir/ 'kind hearted', (رهيف القلب) /rahiif alqalb/ 'kind hearted', or (حساس) /Hasaas/ 'sensitive'.

Generally, the data displayed in tables (1, 2 and 3) and the information gained from the detailed analysis of the subjects' performance on CBTT indicated that Saudi university English majors show poor performance in translating cultural-bound English expressions as reflected in their scores on the culture-based translation test (CBTT). Empirically, this result is partially in line with the findings of Armellino (2008), Bannon (2008), and Delzenderooy (2008) that highlighted the difficulty of translating cultural elements or aspects.

Conclusion

As previously mentioned, intercultural communications have resurrected the role of culture in translation. Translation is a kind of activity which inevitably involves at least two languages and two cultural traditions. This implies that translators have to consider the cultural aspects that are implicitly embedded in the source language (SL).

This paper has provided evidence on the idea that translation is not just linguistic conversion or transformation between languages but it involves accommodation in scope of culture, politics, aesthetics, and many other factors. It builds a bridge between two different cultures and two different worlds of thoughts. Accordingly, every lexical item carries with it a set of cultural-bound connotations. Native speakers are aware of these connotations. These connotations make the process of translating one message accurately into another very difficult.

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List of Phonetic Symbols

Consonants

- ? Glottal stop
- b Voiced bilabial plosive
- t Voiceless dento-alveolar plosive

T	Voiceless emphatic dento-alveolar plosive
d	Voiced dento-alveolar plosive
D	Voiced emphatic dento-alveolar plosive
θ	Voiceless interdental fricative
ð	Voiced interdental fricative
x	Voiceless velar fricative
z	Voiced dento-alveolar fricative
<u>Z</u>	Voiced emphatic alveolar fricative
s	Voiceless dento-alveolar fricative
S	Voiceless emphatic alveolar fricative
ʁ	Voiced pharyngeal
ʒ	Voiced velar fricative
f	Voiceless labio-dental fricative
q	Voiceless uvular plosive
k	Voiceless velar plosive
l	Voiced alveolar
r	Voiced dento-alveolar rolled
m	Voiced bilabial nasal
n	Voiceless plain dental nasal
h	Voiceless glottal fricative
H	Voiceless pharyngeal fricative
w	Voiced labio-velar semi-vowel
y	Voiced palatal glide
ch	Voiceless palato-alveolar affricate
j	Voiced palato-alveolar fricative
g	Voiced velar plosive

Vowels

a	unrounded, low, short
aa	unrounded, low, long
u	rounded, high, back, short
aa	rounded, high, back, long
i	unrounded, high, front, short



ii unrounded, high, front, long