

# The Role Played by Translation Within Cross-Cultural Communication: Case Study From EFL Teachers Based at Haql University College, Saudi Arabia

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**Abstract**—This study aims to enhance the cross-cultural communication skills of EFL learners and demonstrate the importance that translation has for cross-cultural forms of communication. A descriptive analytical method was followed in the study along with the distribution of a questionnaire to nineteen EFL teachers so that the necessary data could be collected. There was then statistical analysis of the data collected using the SPSS software 23. Many findings came out of the study, amongst the most important of which are that many skills are required in translation so that the original message can be conveyed into the language being targeted. Cross-cultural skills of communication of the EFL learners are improved in using translation. A number of cultural items that exist within a particular culture may not exist within another culture so there are some cultural items that are untranslatable. A vital role is played by translation in creating a general and universal culture. Without cultural universalities and similarities, people from different cultures have no way to communicate with one another and there will be an impossibility for translation to master the knowledge of differences and similarities between L2 and L1. The language accuracy of translators is developed through use of translation. This study recommends that the original message ought to be conveyed into the language being targeted by translation, and that communicators and learners of EFL ought to be able to communicate culturally through translation, and that translation ought to enable the so-called fifth language skill to be mastered by communicators.

**Index Terms**—skills in cross-cultural communication, translation, cultural universalities and similarities

## I. INTRODUCTION

With it performing the role of a way of communication linking people of diverse ethnic groupings, translation can be seen as a way of facilitating intercultural and interlingual communication (Othman, 2021). Within translation, the cultural factor is both undeniable and obvious. Within the process of translation, it is not only two languages that interact but also two cultures that have both national specificity and common features (Baker, 2000). As a process, translation does not just involve two languages but also a kind of transfer between two different cultures. Translation that involves transposition of thoughts that have been expressed by a social group in one language into appropriate expression for another group involves a process entailing cultural decoding and recoding and also encoding. Since cultures are being brought into contact with each other to an increasing degree, there is the ever-increasing degree to which multicultural considerations are being brought to bear.

An alien culture faces the translator, though the message needs to be conveyed in a way that must not be alien to the recipient. Idiosyncrasies of a culture are expressed in ways that are bound culturally, with particular cultural words, idiomatic expressions and proverbs that are used and that originate in ways that are uniquely and intrinsically tied to the culture in question. As such, translators are required to translate in cross-cultural ways, the success of which depending upon the understanding that they have of the cultures in question (Byram, 1989). Furthermore, the translator can be considered as a kind of mediator between different cultures and languages. Also, the translator may be considered as having expertise in intercultural communication, with the task of creating a bridge and aiding others in crossing linguistic and cultural boundaries. So, the translator ought to master a number of fields such as interpretation, translation, service procurement, work organization and the management of processes of intercultural communication. Indeed, translations represent a place where previously separate cultures can come together and where ongoing relations can be established. As such, it seems quite obvious that translation has considerable importance, with a translator not just a person who works at translating words, but also a person who is able to discover the optimum way in which the key ideas are transposed in order for the intended audience to receive them appropriately. She/he ought to also consider the political and social background in which a particular translation is happening.

The problem statement for the study is:

EFL learners hail from different language and cultural backgrounds and they have to communicate ideas by using a common language; there can be fulfillment of that need through translation.

This study has the aim of:

- a) Enhancing the cross-cultural communication skills of EFL learners;
- b) Demonstrating the importance that translation has for cross-cultural forms of communication.

This study tries to find answers to the following two questions:

- a) By what extent can EFL learners communicate culturally?
- b) What role is played by translation in the enhancement of cross-cultural communication?

This study, then, entails the positing of the following two hypotheses:

- a) There is a need for EFL learners to communicate through lots of cultures.
- b) Cross-cultural communication is facilitated by translation.

With regard to significance of this study, it is considered to be of great importance for teachers and learners of EFL and people learning abroad or who travel for work since it can demonstrate to them that translation has significance for the enhancement of cross-cultural communication.

With regard to methodology for the study, a descriptive analytical method was followed. Within the research study, the population was made up of teachers of English language based at the University College of Haql. A questionnaire was employed in the collection of data which was then analyzed using the SPSS program.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

As a notion, contemplation of culture is considered vital when reflecting upon translation implications. The term 'culture' is in reference to the lifestyle possessed by a collection of people that is relatively specialized in nature. It comprises the beliefs, values, ways of behaving, artifacts and forms of communication of the people in question. Moreover, it involves all that the social group members have developed and produced such as their art, religion, laws, modes of thinking and language. Understanding the role that culture plays within communication is a crucial basis for gaining an understanding of intercultural communication since it happens interpersonally within small groups, within public speaking or within the media. It is also essential for having an appreciation of the principles that lie behind effective forms of intercultural communication (Katan et al., 2021).

In discussing problems for correspondence within translation, equal importance is conferred by Nida to both cultural and linguistic differences between TL and SL (Hervey & Higgins, 2002). Each culture possesses its own communication rules that identify what is considered appropriate or inappropriate. Within some cultures, respect is shown by people through avoidance of direct eye contact when speaking to someone, whilst within other cultures such averting of gaze would signal a level of disinterest. A crucial role is played by translation in making culture that is general and universal. Translation serves as a bridge for communication of all types of languages, particularly those with similarities to one another when considering their cultural customs and linguistic features in all regions of the world. So, translation connects all parts of the planet within a global network. Furthermore, there is a presumption with translation that boundaries exist between different cultures with a translator probably having awareness of those boundaries along with awareness that crossing them will be inevitable.

Without universalities and cultural similarities, people from different cultures have no way of communicating with one another and it will be impossible to have translation. When considering two languages requiring equivalent translation, there is a need for translators to convey the same meanings in interlinked, pragmatic and referential terms. If communication is to be effective it must involve the transmission of information and thoughts in a way that ensures messages are understood by readers or listeners in the manner that was intended by the writer or speaker. So, a communicator who is effective is someone who conveys sentiments, convictions and facts clearly. When translating from a culture and language to another, it is particularly crucial that the communicator is effective. Whilst a translator is clearly not the author, he/she does transfer communication for a client and, before doing anything, the translator has to be sure they have understood both the content of the message and the intention that lies behind it. A failure to gain that understanding means it will be impossible for the message to be communicated effectively within the target language; indeed, that point has particular relevance for technical translation.

### A. *The Conveying of Tone of Voice*

There is also a need for a translator to consider the tone of the voice of the author within their writing. Accuracy in the recreation of factual elements within a text is not all, there also needs to be capture of the sentiment of a message. If translation is to be of a high quality, it ought to capture any emotions, convictions and nuances that are evident within the source, with an understanding of underlying values and motivations. In order to capture all such elements within written form, without the pointers that could be gleaned from intonation and volume, there is a need for careful and artful selection of words.

### B. *The Choosing of the Right Words*

There is little surprise in knowing that the selection of appropriate words is a key aspect of translation, though there is a need to be both articulate and precise, and skillful in getting messages over clearly through the use of language that is respectful and non-judgmental. There is also a need to pitch text at a level that is appropriate for the audience being targeted. If reference is made to a concept or topic that is culturally specific, extra adaptations or information may be

required, if appropriate, to ensure there is communication of those alien concepts to the audience targeted in a manner that is as clear as possible. A vital role is played by translation in making a culture seem general and universal. Translation serves as a form of bridge so that all types of languages can be communicated, particularly those that have similarities in respect to their cultural customs and linguistic features in other regions of the world. As such, all parts of the world are linked within a global network. Furthermore, with the presumption that translation accepts that boundaries exist between differing cultures, the translator has awareness, most probably, of those boundaries and an awareness that they would inevitably be crossed.

Without cultural universalities and similarities, translation would be impossible and people from different cultures would not be able to communicate with one another. With regard to two different languages that have to be translated in an equivalent manner, then there is a need for translators to convey the same meanings in pragmatic, referential and interlinked terms. However, because of the differences between two different cultures, there can be limits to the achievement of semantic equivalence. Since the technology nowadays makes communication between cultures a commonplace and everyday occurrence, the translator does not now see themselves as being isolated, but rather as an ambassador on the global stage that offers services for a market of ever increasing size. It is noticeable that as there is slowly increasing globalization, more cultures are striving to achieve communication with one another, and translators are realizing the growing need for translation (Köksal & Yürük, 2020).

It is increasingly the case that we have to communicate within other languages and, in order for businesses to be successful, we have to respectfully understand different cultural contexts of the people with which we have dealings. Whilst we have more savvy as both consumers and employees, there is a need for translations to be seamless within the native language or that message in question will not succeed, whether a presentation given to employees in relation to a new safety program or an advertisement on behalf of a huge multibillion dollar corporation. For a genuine professional, translation is considered first and foremost an art, afterwards a translator may consider it a craft that they take up. The translation art is not easy since it calls for lots of skills with the translator having the responsibility for conveying an original message within a target language to enable the reader to overlook any difference between the translation and the original and to read it naturally.

### *C. Cross-Cultural Forms of Communication*

Cross-cultural forms of communication relate to points of contact between different cultures that arise at a particular point where there is a meeting of two cultures; for example, if a company that is multi-national hires Chinese laborers within America or if there are Indian scholars of IT that work within New York. As cited within (Qawasmeh., 2022), there must be confrontation of two different cultures in communication that is cross-cultural. Often, communication that is cross-cultural is known as intercultural communication since there is interaction that is taking place between people within similar and different ways or situations. The cross-cultural communication process is one that has a high degree of complexity since there may be certain cultural items that are present within a particular culture that are not present within another culture; as such, certain cultural items can be considered as untranslatable. As noted within (Qawasmeh., 2022), in understanding other cultures, each culture has to be seen in how it relates to those other cultures.

### *D. Translation Considered as a Means for Cross-Cultural Communication*

Rather than solely being an act that is linguistic, translation is also a cultural act that is a form of communication between cultures. It is always the case that translation involves both culture and language simply because it is impossible to separate the two. Language is embedded culturally with it both expressing and shaping cultural reality; indeed, the meaning attached to linguistic items may only be understood if they are considered along with cultural context, within which those linguistic items are utilized. When a text is being transferred from one text of a culture over to another, translators ought to pay considerable attention to the differences in the kind and the degree of conventionalization within both the source and the target cultures. A key characteristic held by translation is the 'double-bind situation', wherein a translator must link a source text within its cultural context over to communicative-cultural condition of the target (House, 2009). Thiruvasagam (2010) noted that translation is needed for there to be cross-cultural communication.

The term 'translation is in reference to cultural communication as well as language communication; considered as such, translation can be considered as an act of transfer of a culture over to another culture. With people traveling all over the world because of lots of different reasons, and the inevitable confrontation of cultures, translation may play a vital role. Different cultures are contacting each other through a variety of ways, such as internet, the media, books and so on, and there is a need for a lingua franca. As different languages and cultures confront each other, people can face many problems with cross-cultural communication that may happen between two languages and cultures or more. Within that type of communication, there is interpretation of one culture with another culture acting as the base; for example, the English culture within England along with Indian culture. If one seeks to understand the manners of the English when eating, there has to be comparison made to the manners with which Indians eat. Again, communication can be considered as a process for understanding the different messages between people or animals to other people or animals, and that process can be non-verbal or verbal. Humans utilize both non-verbal and verbal types of communication, however, since animals do not possess verbal languages they only utilize non-verbal forms of communication (Qawasmeh, 2022).

The process of communication and translation is affected by culture. Primarily, translation uses language as the communication medium. In a broad sense, culture includes customs, sets of beliefs, festivals, views, ways of living, values, routine behavior, clothing, rituals and many other things that affect the way human beings live within a community or well-structured society (Lai et al., 2016). A contact point amongst different cultures situated at a particular point of the meeting of two cultures is indicated by cross-cultural communication. For a culture to be understood through another culture, there has to be a number of things in common. It is impossible for each and every type of cultural item to present within another culture. Indians, for example, have lots of different cultural festivals compared to other European cultures. So, the relationship between culture and translation is an inseparable as is that between culture and language (Qawasmeh, 2022). The aim of cultural translation is to find effective solutions to problems that are inherent within translation, e.g. items that are culturally specific such as rituals, festivals, food, clothing, and ways of worshipping and so on. At the core of cultural translation is the issue of cultural and social equivalence. Broadly, with regard to translation and culture, cultures can be considered as translation processes that constantly shift, multiply and diversify. The cultural translation ideas may serve as an anti-holistic and anti-essentialist metaphor with the aim of uncovering discursive forms, resistant actions and counter-discourses in a culture and the heterogenous types of discursive space that lie in a society. In doing so, a dynamic conceptualization of culture can be enabled to view it as a form of practice for the negotiation of cultural differences, cultural overlap, realization and syncretism.

III. MATERIALS AND METHODS OF THE CURRENT STUDY

The study participants were teachers of EFL based in the University College of Haql at Tabuk University in Saudi Arabia. There was distribution of a questionnaire to 19 EFL teachers so that the necessary data could be collected regarding the role that translation plays within cross-cultural communication. The data that was collected and analyzed statistically using the SPSS program. Within the tables that follow, statistical analyses from the questionnaires are shown.

Analysis of data

**It is not easy to perform translation since the task calls for lots of skills to convey an original message over to a target language.**

TABLE SM1

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	Disagree	1	5.3	5.3
	Neutral	1	5.3	5.3
	Agree	17	89.5	89.5
	Total	19	100.0	100.0

From the statistical analysis in Table SM1, it can be seen that most of the respondents ( 89.5 %) agreed, 5.3% disagreed and 5.3% were neutral with regard to the translation art not being easy since the task calls for lots of skills to convey an original message over to a target language.

**There is a high degree of complexity in the cross-cultural communication process**

TABLE SM2

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	Neutral	2	10.5	10.5
	Agree	17	89.5	89.5
	Total	19	100.0	100.0

It can be seen from Table SM2 that most of the respondents (89.5%) agreed and 10.5% of respondents were neutral with regard to there being a high degree of complexity in the cross-cultural communication process. Indeed, certain cultural items are in existence within a particular culture though they do not exist within another culture; hence, it can be said that certain cultural items can be considered untranslatable.

**A vital role is played by translation in creating a general and universal culture.**

TABLE SM3

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	Disagree	1	5.3	5.3
	Neutral	3	15.8	15.8
	Agree	15	78.9	78.9
	Total	19	100.0	100.0

It can be seen in Table SM3 that most of the respondents (78.9%) agreed that a vital role is played by translation in creating a general and universal culture. Meanwhile, 5.3% of respondents were in disagreement with that statement and 15.8% were neutral.

**It is particularly crucial for a communicator to be effective when they are translating between a culture and language over to another.**

TABLE SM4

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	Neutral	1	5.3	5.3
	Agree	18	94.7	94.7
	Total	19	100.0	100.0

It can be seen in Table SM4 that most of the respondents (94.7 %) agreed that it is particularly crucial for a communicator to be effective when they are translating between a culture and language over to another. Meanwhile, 5.3 % of the respondents in the sample were neutral.

**There is a presumption in translation that boundaries exist between differing cultures.**

TABLE SM5

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	Disagree	2	10.5	10.5
	Neutral	2	10.5	10.5
	Agree	15	78.9	78.9
	Total	19	100.0	100.0

It can be seen in Table SM5 that most of the respondents (78.9%) agreed that there is a presumption in translation that boundaries exist between differing cultures. Meanwhile, 10.5% disagreed with the statement and 10.5% of the respondents were neutral.

**Without cultural universalities and similarities, it is not possible for people hailing from different cultures to effectively communicate with one another and, furthermore, it will be impossible to undertake translation.**

TABLE SM6

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	Disagree	1	5.3	5.3
	Neutral	2	10.5	10.5
	Agree	16	84.2	84.2
	Total	19	100.0	100.0

It can be seen in Table SM6 that most of the respondents (84.2 %) agreed with the statement that without cultural universalities and similarities, it is not possible for people hailing from different cultures to effectively communicate with one another and, furthermore, it will be impossible to undertake translation. Meanwhile, 5.3% of respondents disagreed with the statement and 10.5% were neutral.

**With regard to two different languages that are to be equivalently translated, there is a need for translators to convey the same meanings in interlinked, pragmatic and referential terms.**

TABLE SM7

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	Disagree	1	5.3	5.3
	Neutral	3	15.8	15.8
	Agree	15	78.9	78.9
	Total	19	100.0	100.0

Statistical analysis shown within Table SM7 reveals that most of the respondents (78.9%) agreed with the statement that with regard to two different languages that are to be equivalently translated, there is a need for translators to convey the same meanings in interlinked, pragmatic and referential terms. Meanwhile, 5.3% of respondents disagreed with the statement and 15.8% of respondents were neutral.

**Through translation, communicators are enabled to master the 5<sup>th</sup> language skill**

TABLE SM8

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	Disagree	2	10.5	10.5
	Agree	17	89.5	89.5
	Total	19	100.0	100.0

It can be seen in Table SM8 that most of the respondents (89.5%) agreed that through translation, communicators are enabled to master the 5<sup>th</sup> language skill. Meanwhile, 10.5% of respondents were neutral with regard to the statement.

**Technology improves the communicative abilities of EFL learners**

TABLE SM9

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	Neutral	2	10.5	10.5
	Agree	17	89.5	89.5
	Total	19	100.0	100.0

It can be seen in Table SM9 that 85% of the respondents agreed that technology improves the communicative abilities of EFL learners. Meanwhile, 15% of respondents were neutral in that regard.

**Translation performance is enhanced through mastery of knowledge of differences and similarities between L2 and L1.**

TABLE SM10

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	Neutral	1	5.3	5.3
	Agree	18	94.7	94.7
	Total	19	100.0	100.0

It can be seen in Table SM10 that 94.7% of respondents agreed that translation performance is enhanced through mastery of knowledge of differences and similarities between L2 and L1. Meanwhile, 5.3% of respondents were neutral with regard to that statement.

IV. FINDINGS

This study came forward with the eight findings that follow. It was found that the task of translation is a difficult one requiring lots of skills, with the translator having responsibility for conveying the original message within the target language. Also, communication is seen as being cross-cultural with a great deal of complexity since certain cultural items can be untranslatable. The findings showed that a vital role is played by translation if a culture is to be made general and universal, and that it is most likely that the translator has awareness of translation boundaries and awareness that crossing them will be inevitable. The results showed that cultural differences and similarities show that translation is needed and that communicators are enabled in mastering the 5<sup>th</sup> language skill by translation. Furthermore the findings revealed that translation performance is enhanced by mastery of knowledge of differences and similarities between L2 and L1 and that the use of translation develops the language accuracy and cross-cultural communication of translators.

Based upon the findings, the following four recommendations could be put forward. It is clear that translation ought to convey the original message within the target language. Also, communicators and learners of EFL ought to be able to use translation to communicate culturally. It is also recommended that the translator ought to have awareness of the boundaries of translation and awareness that it is inevitable that they would be crossed. Finally, it is recommended that translation ought to enable communicators to have mastery of the 5<sup>th</sup> language skill.

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