

## Investigating the Role of Translation in Teaching Culture to Foreign Language Learners at Institutions of Higher Education in Algeria *Cezayir'deki Yükseköğretim Kurumlarında Yabancı Dil Öğrenenlere Kültür Öğretiminde Çevirinin Rolünün Araştırılması*

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### Öz

Kültürel unsurların dil eğitimi müfredatına dahil edilmesi, özellikle de ikinci dil edinimi bağlamında, eğitim sürecinin genel etkinliğini ve başarısını önemli ölçüde artıran temel ve temel bir bileşen olarak kabul edilmektedir. Bu kapsayıcı yaklaşım yalnızca dilsel yeterliliği değil, aynı zamanda kültürler arası anlayışı da teşvik eder. Öğrencilere kapsamlı ve sürükleyici bir öğrenme deneyimi sunarak, dil becerilerini geliştirirken farklı kültürlerle karşı derin bir takdir geliştirmelerini sağlar. Kültür ve dil arasındaki derin bağlantıyı tanımak ve anlamak çok önemlidir, çünkü bunlar iç içe geçmiştir ve birbirlerine bağımlıdır. Kültür ve dil arasındaki birbirine bağlı ilişki, insan iletişimi ve ifadesinde ayrı ayrı değil birlikte ele alınmaları gerektiğini göstermektedir. Yabancı bir dili derinlemesine anlayabilmek için, öğrencilerin o dili şekillendiren kültürel bağlamla ilgilenmeleri gerekir. Bu, bir topluluğun dilini etkileyen gelenekleri, inançları ve görenekleri keşfetmeyi içerir. Kültürel arka plana dalmak sadece anlamayı geliştirmekle kalmaz, aynı zamanda öğrenilen dilde akıcılık ve yeterlilik kazanılmasını da kolaylaştırır. Bu nedenle, dil eğitimi alanındaki eğitimciler, öğrencilerin hem dilsel hem de kültürel yönleri kapsayan kapsamlı bir dil öğrenme deneyimi edinmelerini sağlamak için kültürel yönleri öğretim yöntemlerine entegre etmekle sorumludur. Kültürel anlayış ve uygulamaların dil öğretimine dahil edilmesi, öğretmenlerin daha kapsamlı ve etkili bir öğrenme sürecini kolaylaştırmalarını sağlayarak öğrencilerin dille anlamlı ve özgün bir şekilde etkileşime girmelerine olanak tanır. Kültürel unsurların entegrasyonunun yalnızca öğrenme deneyimini geliştirmekle kalmayıp aynı zamanda hedef dilin daha derinlemesine anlaşılmasını ve takdir edilmesini teşvik etmede önemli bir rol oynadığı ve böylece öğrencilerin dilsel yeterliliklerini zenginleştirdiği yaygın olarak kabul edilmektedir. Bu çalışma, yabancı dil öğrenenlere kültür öğretiminde çevirinin rolünü ve kültürlerarası iletişimsel yeterlilikleri üzerindeki etkisini araştırmayı amaçlamaktadır. Çalışma, yabancı dil öğrenimi bağlamında kültür eğitiminin mevcut durumunu ve kültürel kavramların dil öğrencilerine aktarılmasında çevirinin önemini değerlendirmeye odaklanmaktadır. Çalışma ayrıca, Cezayir üniversitelerindeki yabancı dil sınıflarında çevirinin dahil edilmesine yönelik öğretmen tutumlarını ve bu tutumların öğretim müfredatları üzerindeki etkisini araştırmayı amaçlamaktadır. İlgili bilgileri elde etmek için, yapılandırılmış bir anket Cezayir yükseköğretim kurumlarının akademik alanında yabancı diller konusunda uzmanlaşmış toplam 18 öğretmen arasında paylaşılmış ve daha sonra betimsel ve analitik metodolojileri birleştiren bir araştırma çerçevesi kullanılarak kapsamlı bir inceleme ve yorumlamaya tabi tutulan birincil verilerin toplanmasına yardımcı olmuştur. Çalışmanın bulguları, çevirinin dil öğrenenler için dilsel yeterliliğin geliştirilmesinde çok önemli bir rol oynadığını göstermektedir. Dil ve kültürün birbirine bağlı olması nedeniyle kültürel nüansların anlaşılması dil eğitimcileri ve öğrenciler için çok önemlidir. Kültürel bileşenleri dil öğretimine entegre etmek, öğrencilere farklı bakış açıları ve bağlamlar sağladığı için önemlidir. Ayrıca çeviri, yabancı dil öğrenenleri kültür konusunda eğitmek, kendi kültürel geçmişlerine dair anlayışlarını derinleştirmelerine ve bunu eğitim gördükleri kültürle karşılaştırmalarına yardımcı olmak, böylece kültürlerarası becerilerini geliştirmek ve kültürel farklılıkları kabul etme ve bunlara saygı duyma becerilerini artırmak açısından önemlidir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Çeviri, Kültür, Yabancı Dil Öğretimi, İletişimsel Yeterlilik, Karşılaştırmalı Yaklaşım.

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It is declared that scientific and ethical principles have been followed while carrying out and writing this study and that all the sources used have been properly cited. Fadhila Abadou

**Complaints**

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**Abstract**

The incorporation of cultural elements into the language education curriculum, particularly within the context of second language acquisition, is widely acknowledged as an essential and foundational component that significantly enhances the overall effectiveness and success of the educational process. This inclusive approach not only fosters linguistic proficiency but also promotes cross-cultural understanding. It provides students with a comprehensive and immersive learning experience, cultivating a deep appreciation for diverse cultures while refining their language skills. It is crucial to recognize and understand the deep connection between culture and language, as they are closely intertwined and mutually dependent. The interconnected relationship between culture and language suggests that they should be considered together rather than separately in human communication and expression. In order to gain a deep understanding of a foreign language, learners should engage with the cultural context that shapes it. This includes exploring the traditions, beliefs, and customs that influence the language of a community. Immersing oneself in the cultural background not only enhances comprehension but also facilitates the attainment of fluency and proficiency in the language being learned. Therefore, educators in the field of language instruction are responsible for integrating cultural aspects into their teaching methods, ensuring that students receive a comprehensive language learning experience that encompasses both linguistic and cultural aspects. Incorporating cultural insights and practices into language teaching enables instructors to facilitate a more comprehensive and effective learning process, allowing learners to engage with the language in a meaningful and authentic manner. It is widely accepted that the integration of cultural elements not only enhances the learning experience but also plays a pivotal role in fostering a deeper understanding and appreciation of the target language, thereby enriching the linguistic proficiency of the learners. This study aims to explore the role of translation in teaching culture to foreign language learners and its impact on their intercultural communicative competence. It focuses on assessing the current state of cultural education in the context of foreign language learning and the significance of translation in conveying cultural concepts to language students. The study also seeks to investigate teachers' attitudes towards incorporating translation in foreign language classrooms at Algerian universities and the impact of these attitudes on their teaching curricula. To acquire relevant information, a structured questionnaire was shared among a total of 18 instructors who specialize in foreign languages within the academic realm of Algerian tertiary institutions, aiding in the collection of primary data that was subsequently subjected to thorough examination and interpretation through the utilisation of a research framework that combines descriptive and analytical methodologies. The findings of the study indicate that translation plays a crucial role in enhancing linguistic competence for language learners. Understanding cultural nuances is essential for language educators and students due to the interconnectedness of language and culture. Integrating cultural components into language teaching is significant as it provides learners with diverse perspectives and contexts. Additionally, translation is important in educating foreign language learners about culture, helping them deepen their understanding of their own cultural background and compare it with the culture they are studying, thus improving their intercultural skills and enhancing their ability to acknowledge and respect cultural differences.

**Keywords:** Translation, Culture, Teaching Foreign Languages, Communicative Competence, Comparative approach.

## Introduction

Culture plays a significant role in the process of teaching and learning foreign languages, as it is an essential element that cannot be overlooked. It is crucial to acknowledge and understand that culture and language go hand in hand, as they are not separate entities but rather interconnected and dependent on each other. To fully grasp and comprehend a foreign language, one must also delve into its cultural aspects. By immersing themselves in the culture, traditions, and customs of the target language, learners can enhance their understanding and fluency in the language itself. Therefore, language educators must incorporate cultural elements into their teaching methodologies, ensuring that students receive a comprehensive and holistic language learning experience. According to Liddicoat et al. (2003: 45), culture is the number of rules, customs, traditions, ways to behave, and manners of interpreting the world that a cultural group shares and considers appropriate for living. He stated that culture is necessary in language teaching as it helps learners understand the language they are learning and see the world from new perspectives. Singhal (1997) argued that culture should not be neglected in the context of the EFL classroom. Any attempt to teach a language without considering its cultural aspects is prone to failure.

Two primary approaches can be identified in teaching culture: one that primarily emphasizes the culture of the country whose language is being studied (the mono-cultural approach) and another that involves comparing the learners' culture with the target culture (the comparative approach). The comparative approach emphasizes the significance of linking foreign cultures to learners' own, rather than simply transmitting cultural information, learners should be encouraged to reflect on their own culture and the foreign culture. It is essential to clearly define the cultural aspects of the text sample that will be utilized to evaluate students' skills as mediators and to ensure that they are aware of the precise cultural elements upon which they will be assessed (Heaney, 2011: 234). According to Byram (1997), culture learning is a comparative process that encourages learners to develop an awareness of their own culture and to compare it with the culture they are learning. This process of comparison allows learners to gain a fresh understanding of their language and culture, challenging their assumptions and leading to increased knowledge, understanding, and acceptance through the discovery of similarities and differences with other cultures.

It's worth noting that, when teaching a language, the cultural aspects are often compared to the learner's own culture. Therefore, the cultural elements are not explained based on their significance in the target language, but rather in the source language (Liddicoat et al., 2003). When considering the significance of translation, it is crucial to acknowledge that translation plays a vital role in bridging the gap between different languages and cultures because translation is not just about language, but also about culture. To help learners gain a deeper understanding of different cultural perspectives, they need to learn about the cultural workings that are connected to new languages. It is the responsibility of teachers to acknowledge cultural differences and provide resources for students to gain this knowledge. This way, students can reflect on their language as well as the language they are learning, which can help to eliminate misunderstandings.

The field of English Language Teaching (ELT) encompasses a broad range of opportunities to exchange knowledge on Translation Studies. It places significant emphasis on cultural understanding, recognizing that translation serves as a tool for intercultural mediation within a particular social and cultural context. (Gile, Hansan & Pokorn, 2010: 29) The field of Translation Studies aims to enhance cross-cultural comprehension for effective translation. It provides students with intercultural awareness, enabling them to value and appreciate cultural

diversity. The process of translation is essential in helping students understand how the world operates and explore cultural perspectives.

Incorporating cultural insights into the language being taught is of utmost importance for teachers. This strategy will enable students to develop a deeper appreciation of the language's historical context and encourage them to reflect on their daily routines and previously overlooked issues. Most importantly, this approach will help engage students in understanding how the language works and how people use it. According to Byram (1997), learning culture involves promoting awareness of both learners' own culture and the culture they are studying, thereby creating a comparative process for English teachers and their students. During this process, various activities and materials such as course books and videos are used in instruction to bring different aspects of culture into the classroom through various types of media (Kim, 2002).

Therefore, teaching cultural aspects through the use of translation will provide students with a deeper understanding of the language, ultimately leading to a high level of proficiency because translation acts as a means of acquiring knowledge about language and culture, while also prompting individuals to contemplate and analyse these aspects, in addition to expanding the intellectual capacities of students.

### 1. Literature Review

Recognizing the inseparable connection between culture and syllabus development in the literature related to educational practices in Foreign Language (FL) classrooms is crucial. The exclusion of culture from the syllabi in the context of foreign language teaching is unfeasible, as a necessary connection exists between culture instruction and the language being learned and taught. (Sellami, 2000; Thanasoulas, 2001). According to Arikani (2009, p: 316), practicum teachers frequently encounter challenges that are connected to the supervising teachers. This highlights the significant influence of teachers on language and culture instruction within school settings.

Several studies have been carried out on the significance of integrating cultural teaching in the Foreign Language (FL) setting, encompassing both literary and empirical research. In a recent study, Al-Rifa'i et al. (2021) investigated the challenges faced by English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers when teaching culture. The study highlighted the crucial role that Foreign Language (FL) culture plays in EFL learning and teaching, emphasizing the need for learners to acquire not only grammar but also cultural elements. Therefore, English teachers need to have a comprehensive understanding of culture to effectively teach and facilitate language learning. This will equip students with linguistic, cultural, communicative, and intercultural competencies to express their own culture and comprehend the target language and culture.

Choudhury (2013) highlighted the significance of including culture in EFL instruction and provided recommendations on the specific components of culture to be taught, such as the option between American and British culture. Liton & Madanat (2013) emphasised the necessity for EFL teachers to acquire knowledge of the target culture and enhance students' awareness of it. Larzén-Östermark (2008) examined teachers' attitudes towards integrating culture in EFL teaching and found that while most teachers recognized the importance of culture, they felt inadequate in their knowledge and skills to teach it due to limited exposure to English-speaking countries. Rohmani and Andriyanti (2022) explored English teachers' beliefs and attitudes towards teaching culture in EFL classes, as well as the manifestation of these beliefs and attitudes in the development of teaching syllabi. The research revealed that the beliefs and attitudes held by junior high school English teachers concerning cultural teaching are of utmost importance. These beliefs and attitudes exerted a significant influence on the creation of appropriate lesson plans, selection of materials, and implementation of activities with cultural integration in the

teaching and learning process. Furthermore, the English teachers believed that culture teaching had an impact on language usage, recognizing that each language possesses its own distinct culture.

Bin Towairish (2021) conducted a study on how the lack of integration between language instruction and cultural understanding affects the communicative competence of learners. The study analyzed the extent to which cultural knowledge is incorporated into English as a Foreign Language (EFL) courses. It also included specific examples of language use that illustrate the challenges faced by students in this regard. The research investigated the impact of the disconnection between language and culture and highlighted the absence of cultural knowledge in EFL language classes at Saudi Arabian universities. The findings confirmed the difficulties faced by students in the areas of language and culture. Several recommendations and solutions were proposed to improve students' understanding of cultural aspects when learning a foreign language. It is important to note that the suggestions and solutions may vary across different societies, depending on the available resources and opportunities. Messerehi (2014) examined the teaching of culture in TEFL to Algerian secondary school students. The majority of teachers rely solely on the "Getting Through" textbook and believe that its topics are too general. This limits opportunities to discuss cultural differences and similarities. The study suggests that teachers include more cultural content in their lessons and supplement textbooks with cultural elements. In 2018, Al-Jamal and Zennou investigated the actual practices of Algerian secondary-stage teachers in teaching culture. They used a research design and observation sheet based on Byram's methodology to cross-check cultural representations presented by 15 teachers at eight schools in Guelma City, Algeria. The study found a "high" percentage of cultural themes integrated into teacher practices and ample opportunities for students to develop awareness of culture.

Indeed, incorporating cultural education in teaching foreign languages (FL) is highly recommended as it can enhance student motivation and improve their intercultural competence, as well as their understanding of effective cross-cultural communication. However, the implementation of various approaches, methods, and strategies in teaching culture to FL learners still seems to be incomplete. Moreover, the previous studies have not thoroughly examined this issue, despite some research indicating that the absence of culture-related topics in class discussions in course books, as well as an overemphasis on grammar-based teaching, can hurt students' motivation to learn about the cultural aspects of a foreign language (Zorba & Çakır, 2019).

As the world becomes increasingly globalized, it has become easier for people to move across borders. This has created a need for effective communication and intercultural contact. However, cultural differences can make it difficult to communicate accurately. Translation is necessary to enable the transmission of ideas, actions, and expressions among different nations. The process of translation involves bilingualism and is closely linked with biculturalism, as it navigates cultural disparities and facilitates cultural exchange within social and cultural contexts. Al-Qurashi (2004) argued that translation has long been recognized as a significant endeavour among nations because it serves a vital function in the dissemination of knowledge across different cultures.

Despite the numerous drawbacks of using translation without critical evaluation in language teaching, some linguists support its usage and call for a more thorough examination, presenting a fresh perspective on translation as an essential aspect of language learning and usage. Guy Cook (2007; 2009; 2010) and Wolfgang Butzkamm (2003; 2011) are among the leading figures in this field, alongside Carreres (2006; 2014) and Gonzales-Davies (2014). Cook (2007, 2010) argues that due to the presence of multiple languages in today's societies, translation skills should be incorporated into language classrooms to prepare learners for the constant need to switch, mediate, and translate between languages in various aspects of their lives. Carreres (2014) presents a similar viewpoint on



the teaching of language through translation as Cook (2007, 2010), highlighting its value as a practical skill with a communicative purpose, while calling for further extensive research to investigate its effectiveness in language learning and instruction (Carreres, 2014). The use of translation in language teaching is supported by arguments that highlight its role in increasing awareness of language similarities and differences, preventing interference errors, and enhancing sensitivity to lexical, syntactic, and discourse aspects (Tekin, 2010; Leonardi, 2010; Samardali and Hasan 2017).

Based on others' works, this research aims to examine the current state of teaching culture in FL (Foreign Language) university classrooms in Algeria. The study will focus on students enrolled in language skills, linguistics, and translation courses, and investigate the role of translation in teaching culture to EFL learners. The importance of translation in developing their intercultural communicative competence will be highlighted. The paper will also explore the attitudes of teachers towards the implementation of translation in foreign language classrooms at Algerian University, and how their attitudes reflect their teaching curricula/syllabi.

## **2. Methodology**

### **2.1. Aims**

The study attempts to:

- Evaluate the current state of teaching culture in foreign language (EFL) university classrooms in Algeria.
- Examine the role of translation in teaching culture to EFL learners.
- Emphasize the importance of translation in improving intercultural communicative competence.
- Explore teachers' attitudes towards the implementation of translation in English language classrooms at Algerian universities, and how these attitudes are reflected in their teaching curricula/syllabi.

### **2.2. Participants**

The sample of the study consisted of 18 FL university teachers, selected randomly from the teachers who work in foreign language departments in Algeria. There are 7 males (38.9%) and 11 females (61.1%). Half of the participants (50%) are in the 31-40 age group, followed by 41-50 (22.2%) and over 50 (16.7%) and 26-30 (11.1%) age groups. 0% of the participants are under 25. The respondents' qualification varies from PhD (88.9%), Master (5.6%) and HDR (5.6%). Third of respondents (33.3%) have between 10 and 14 years of experience and more than 15 years. They teach English, German or Italian, or a combination of these (English and Italian or English and German). half of the respondents (55.6%) teach English, a third of the participants (27.8%) teach French and 16.7% teach Spanish.

### **2.3. Research Methods**

To achieve the goals of this study, an anonymous online questionnaire was administered via e-mail using Google Forms. It comprised five parts: background information, translation in foreign language classes/ teaching, the importance of culture in foreign language teaching and learning, teachers' attitude towards the use of translation in teaching culture to FL learners, and the use of translation in teaching culture to FL learners.

The first part investigated the participants' data about gender, age, qualification, teaching experience, and languages they teach. This part consisted of five multiple-choice questions. The second part enquired into the participants' use of translation, it consisted of two yes-no questions asking the respondents whether they use translation or not, as well as the effectiveness of using translation in language learning and teaching. Six multiple-choice questions that explored the frequency of using translation in language learning and teaching, the kind of translation used (from mother tongue to the target language, vice versa or both), the way translation activities are

conducted individually, in pairs, in groups, or frontal; the attitudes of FL learners towards translation, and the areas where teachers may use translation in language learning and teaching, In addition to one open-ended question investigating types of activities implemented when using translation in the classroom

In parts three and four, teachers were asked to respond to items, five even in part three and four in part four, with a five-point Likert scale about their attitudes towards the importance of culture in foreign language teaching and learning, and the use of Translation in teaching culture to FL learners. The last part was about the use of translation in teaching culture to FL learners. It consisted of four multiple-choice questions that consisted of the aspect of culture that can be taught through translation, the importance given to cultural knowledge in the context of foreign language teaching, the amount of time to dedicate to teaching cultural knowledge in translation classes, and the impact of cultural knowledge on the ability to produce accurate and precise translations. As well as an open-ended question in which participants were asked to design many courses that assess not only linguistic knowledge but also reinforce cultural understanding.

A pilot study was conducted to achieve validity.

## 2.4.Data Collection and Analysis

### 2.4.1. Translation in Foreign Language Classes

The overwhelming majority of participants (94.4%) use translation in teaching foreign languages, they find it effective in language learning and teaching and consider it a valuable tool for students to enhance their language skills (Cook 2007, 2010). They argued their answers saying that by comparing the foreign language to previously learned languages (Tekin, 2010), students gain a better understanding of the foreign language's structure and grammar. Through translation, students learn how to analyze the source sentence, understand the meaning and express it in the target language. They also learn that the meaning of words comes from the context in which they are used. Moreover, Translation helps students understand a foreign language better by comparing it with their mother tongue (Butzkamm 2003, 2011), and it enhances their writing and reading skills. Additionally, it helps teachers explain difficult concepts in poetry and other subjects. Translation is important in language learning because it enriches learners' vocabulary and prevents interference errors between the first language and the second language. (Tekin, 2010; Leonardi, 2010)

Table 1: Frequency of using translation in language learning and teaching

| Possibilities | %     |
|---------------|-------|
| Always        | 55.6% |
| Sometimes     | 33.3% |
| Rarely        | 11.1% |
| Never         | 0%    |

In terms of the Frequency of using translation in language learning and teaching, half of the participant teachers (55.6%) always use translation in their classrooms, (33.3%) sometimes use translation and (11.1%) rarely use translation. This means that most instructors opt for translation in language learning and teaching.

Table 2: Areas where teachers may apply translation in the context of language learning and teaching

| Possibilities                       | %     |
|-------------------------------------|-------|
| Comparing and contrasting L1 and L2 | 55.6% |

|  |       |
|--|-------|
| Checking students' reading and listening comprehension | 22.2% |
| Teaching vocabulary                                    | 16.7% |
| Dealing with errors related to L1 interference         | 16.7% |
| Teaching idiomatic expressions                         | 11.1% |

In response to the question about diverse educational settings where translation can serve as a tool for facilitating language learning and teaching, (55.6%) of teachers use translation to compare and contrast L1 and L2. By comparing and contrasting L2 learners gradually begin to notice particular differences in the grammatical structures between L1 and L2, such as the passive voice and the conditional clauses as well as differences in the pragmatic aspects. (Garces, 1998) (22.2%) of teachers check students' reading and listening comprehension through translation. With this regard, Liao (2006) reports that students mostly use their mother tongue to expand their English knowledge of vocabulary, structures, and expressions, and to improve three language skills reading, writing, and speaking. Moreover, it can help the learners to check their comprehension of different tasks, especially reading and listening. Kern (1994) found that mental translation during L2 reading played "an important and multidimensional role in the L2 reading comprehension processes" of the students. Teachers, with a percentage of 16.7% opt for translation to teach vocabulary and clarify new words. This is clarified in research carried out by Hummel (2010) as well as Laufer and Girsai (2008), who report on the influence of the native language on the acquisition of new vocabulary and suggest that translation could be a useful cognitive strategy in FL vocabulary learning.

In addition, translation is used in dealing with errors related to L1 interference with a percentage of 16.7%, and this is compatible with Pan and Pan (2012) who suggest that translation does not necessarily cause negative interference by the native language, and it does not hinder FL learning at all. On the contrary, it increases students' awareness of similarities and differences between the two languages, promoting their acquisition of difficult structures and elements in the FL and it "assists students to elude the interference of the mother tongue on the first step and then further enhance their L2 learning". Moreover, the sample responses show that translation is a tool for teaching idiomatic expressions with a percentage of 11.1%. Titford (1983) implies that L2 learners can identify similar collocations and idiomatic phrases in their L1 more easily, in addition, they become aware of the difference in and/or figurative meaning.

Teachers use various translation activities in foreign language classrooms. These activities include translating a few words directly, translating idiomatic expressions and times, translating different types of texts, vocabulary reading, grammatical and lexical analysis, writing expression, text comprehension, teaching grammar, grammatical and lexical analysis through the translation of words and simple sentences, translating short passages, and translating simple and complex sentences. The activities in the classroom involve translating between the mother tongue and a foreign language, with a percentage of 55.6% and translating from the foreign language to the mother tongue with a percentage of 44.4%. Among the teachers, 44.4% conduct translation activities in pairs, 38.9% in groups, and only 16.7% individually. According to the teachers, all of the students enjoy translation activities.

#### **2.4.2. The Importance of Culture in Foreign Language Teaching and Learning**



The teachers were asked to answer five questions using a Likert scale to express their views on the significance of culture in FL classes; the results are presented item by item in Table 3, using the abbreviations of SA (strongly agree), A (agree), N (neutral), D (disagree), and SD (strongly disagree).

Table 3: The importance of culture in foreign language teaching and learning

| No. | Item  | Scale |       |      |      |    |
|-----|---|-------|-------|------|------|----|
|     |   | SA    | A     | N    | D    | SD |
| 1   | Culture and language cannot be separated from each other.   | 77.8% | 16.7% | 5.5% | 0%   | 0% |
| 2   | The cultural context influences the writing style of a discourse.   | 50%   | 44.4% | 5.6% | 0%   | 0% |
| 3   | Culture is important in learning and teaching foreign languages.  | 72.2% | 22.2% | 0%   | 5.6% | 0% |
| 4   | Culture is very important in establishing appropriate communication.  | 61.1% | 33.3% | 0%   | 5.6% | 0% |
| 5   | To ensure effective communication, FL learners need to acquire a thorough understanding of the cultural references and cues that are essential to the communication process | 72.2% | 22.2% | 0%   | 5.6% | 0% |

Based on the survey results, the vast majority of foreign language instructors (77.8%) believe that language and culture are closely linked. Additionally, half of the teachers (50%) strongly agreed and 44.4% agreed that cultural context plays a significant role in shaping discourse writing style. Moreover, an overwhelming 72.2% of the participants strongly agreed that cultural awareness is crucial to foreign language teaching and learning. In terms of communication, 61.1% of the teachers strongly agreed and 33.3% agreed that culture is essential to effective communication. Finally, 72.2% of the respondents strongly agreed that foreign language learners must have a thorough understanding of cultural references and cues to communicate effectively.

#### 2.4.3. Teachers' Attitude Towards the Use of Translation in Teaching Culture to FL Learners

The teachers were asked to respond to four items with a five-point Likert scale on their attitudes towards culture teaching in EFL classes. The presentations of the findings are item by item in the sequence as shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Teachers' attitude towards the use of translation in teaching culture to FL learners

| No. | Item   | Scale |       |      |    |    |
|-----|--|-------|-------|------|----|----|
|     |  | SA    | A     | N    | D  | SD |
| 1   | Translation facilitates the identification of variations in lexical usage across different languages and | 50%   | 44.4% | 5.6% | 0% | 0% |

|   |   |       |       |      |      |    |
|---|---|-------|-------|------|------|----|
|   | enhances the comprehension of metalinguistic awareness.   |       |       |      |      |    |
| 2 | Translation helps students understand culture.  | 50%   | 38.8% | 5.6% | 5.6% | 0% |
| 3 | Translation helps students improve their intercultural communicative competence   | 38.8% | 55.6% | 5.6% | 0%   | 0% |
| 4 | Cultural learning is seen as a comparative process in which learners are encouraged to become aware of their own culture and contrast it with the target culture. | 61.1% | 33.3% | 0%   | 5.6% | 0% |

According to the survey results, the first item suggests that translation plays a crucial role in identifying variations in lexical usage across different languages. It also enhances metalinguistic awareness and is strongly agreed upon by 50% of teachers, while 44.4% agreed with it. The second item states that translation helps students understand different cultures. Half of the participants strongly agreed with this statement, followed by 38.8% who agreed, 5.6% as neutral and 5.6% disagreed. Thirdly, 38.8% strongly agreed, and 55.6% agreed that translation helps students improve their intercultural communicative competence. Lastly, the fourth item suggests that cultural learning is considered a comparative process in which learners are encouraged to become aware of their own culture and compare it with the target culture. The majority of participants (61.1%) strongly agreed with this statement, while 33.3% agreed with it.

#### 2.4.4. The Use of Translation in Teaching Culture to FL Learners

In regards to incorporating cultural aspects into foreign language teaching, literature and arts were chosen by 66.7% of teachers, while ways of life and rules of behaviour were chosen by 16.7% each.

Table 5: Aspects of culture can be taught through translation

| Possibilities       | %     |
|---------------------|-------|
| literature and arts | 66.7% |
| ways of life        | 16.7% |
| rules of behaviour  | 16.7% |
| History             | 0%    |

A significant majority of 66.7% of teachers consider cultural knowledge to be an important component of foreign language teaching, with 27.8% believing it to be of little importance, and only 5.6% showing no interest at all.

Table 6: the interest that teachers show to cultural knowledge when teaching FL

| Possibilities | %     |
|---------------|-------|
| Quite         | 0%    |
| Some          | 66.7% |
| Little        | 27.8% |

|             |      |
|-------------|------|
| Do not care | 5.5% |
|-------------|------|

When it comes to the allocation of time for teaching cultural knowledge in translation classes, 38.9% of teachers dedicate 20% of the total class time, while 33.3% give 10%, 22.2% give 15%, and only 5.6% give 5%.

Table 7: The appropriate amount of time dedicated to teaching cultural knowledge in translation classes

| Possibilities    | %     |
|------------------|-------|
| 20% of the total | 38.9% |
| 15% of the total | 22.2% |
| 10% of the total | 33.3% |
| 5% of the total  | 5.6%  |

An overwhelming 88.9% of teachers agree that acquiring cultural knowledge enhances the ability to produce accurate and precise translations, with the remaining 11.1% believing it enhances it to some extent.

Table 8: The acquisition of cultural knowledge enhances the ability to produce accurate and precise translations

| Possibilities | %     |
|---------------|-------|
| Much          | 88.9% |
| Some          | 11.1% |
| Little        | 0%    |
| No            | 0%    |

To enhance cultural awareness in FL classrooms, teachers recommend incorporating translation courses that not only evaluate linguistic proficiency but also reinforce cultural comprehension. These courses should cover the translation of proverbs, idioms, culture-specific expressions, and cultural reality, literary works like poetry and prose, religious terminology, and media texts that address social, cultural, or religious happenings. Trainers must carefully curate authentic texts that contain cultural elements, and publishing translated versions can further benefit learners. A reader-response-based translation approach is ideal, and students should be conscious of how culture, ideology, and context impact translations. Activities should be diverse in terms of content and objectives. Additionally, discussions on global events and how people celebrate them following their customs and traditions should be included.

### 3. Results Discussion

The teachers' questionnaire was designed to collect as much information as possible about the use of translation to teach culture in FL departments at different Algerian universities, it was intended to investigate three main issues:

#### 3.1. The Use of Translation in FL Classes

The results show that foreign language teachers view translation as a useful technique for language learning and instruction. They regard it as a valuable resource for enhancing students' language abilities. These findings are consistent with the research conducted by Guy Cook (2007; 2009; 2010) and Wolfgang Butzkamm (2003; 2011), as well as the new perspective on translation as a crucial component of language learning and use proposed by Carreres (2006; 2014) and Gonzales-Davies (2014).

Cook (2007, 2010) highlights that we live in increasingly multilingual societies, where communication and translation between speakers of different languages is a constant need. Therefore, it is crucial to incorporate translation into language learning to equip learners with the necessary skills they will require in various areas of their lives. When applied to real-world topics, translation can be a motivating factor for learners. Cook suggests that teachers who are proficient in both languages will naturally employ translation as a teaching technique unless taught otherwise. (Cook, 2007: 397) Carreres (2014) also acknowledges the practicality of translation as a valuable skill for real-world communication. However, he emphasizes the necessity for additional in-depth research to explore the efficacy of translation as a means of teaching and acquiring languages.

Additionally, the results reveal that comparing a foreign language to previously learned languages can enhance students' comprehension of its structure and grammar (Tekin, 2010). Translation also teaches students how to analyze source sentences, grasp their meaning, and express them in the target language. Many experts argue that translation is beneficial because it highlights the similarities and differences between the first and target languages (Tekin, 2010; Leonardi, 2010). Butzkamm's research (2003; 2011) suggests that translation serves as a valuable tool for improving foreign language comprehension and enhancing reading and writing abilities. He argues that teaching foreign language structures through direct comparison with the student's mother tongue is an effective approach. Furthermore, he asserts that the mother tongue should be viewed as the primary resource, not just a fallback option, for language learning. In essence, translation can be seen as the grammar of language (2011: 386). Although this perspective may seem unconventional, it is a natural and intuitive way to understand language structures by relating them to familiar languages. This approach can be particularly advantageous for those learning a language in a non-native environment with limited practice opportunities.

Furthermore, the study emphasizes the important role of translation in language learning. It facilitates vocabulary expansion for students, enables teachers to convey complex concepts in poetry and other subjects, and prevents errors caused by interference between a student's first language and the second language they are learning. (Tekin, 2010) By translating, learners can develop a better understanding of the contrastive aspects of language, including lexical and syntactic variations, as well as the similarities and differences on the discourse level. If used critically and with a clear objective, translation can enhance all the other language skills. Moreover, the results of the questionnaire show that Translation can serve as a tool for facilitating language learning and teaching in diverse educational settings as:

- Comparing and contrasting L1 and L2; according to a study conducted by Garces in 1998, when comparing and contrasting L1 and L2, learners gradually develop an understanding of the specific differences in grammatical structures, such as the passive voice and conditional clauses, as well as differences in pragmatic aspects. This indicates that through the process of comparison and contrast, learners can identify and comprehend the variations that exist between their native language and the language they are acquiring
- Assessing students' reading and listening comprehension; this supports Liao (2006) who stated that students often use their native language to enhance their knowledge of English vocabulary, grammar, and expressions and to improve their reading, writing, and speaking skills. Kern (1994) further emphasized the pivotal role that mental translation plays in L2 reading comprehension processes.
- Teaching vocabulary and clarifying new words; translation is a helpful technique for learning new vocabulary and understanding new words. This has been confirmed in studies conducted by Hummel (2010) and

Laufer and Girsai (2008), who have investigated how the native language impacts the acquisition of new vocabulary. They suggest that translation can be a valuable cognitive strategy when learning foreign language vocabulary.

– Dealing with errors related to L1 interference; translation is a technique that can be employed to reduce errors that may arise due to a student's first language (L1) interfering with their foreign language (FL) learning. According to Pan and Pan (2012), translation does not necessarily harm the student's L1, nor does it impede their FL learning. Rather, it helps students gain a better understanding of the similarities and differences between the two languages, thereby facilitating their acquisition of complex structures and elements in the FL. By doing so, translation can aid students in avoiding the influence of their native language and further enhance their ability to learn the L2.

– Teaching idiomatic expressions; translation is a method that is used to teach idiomatic expressions. According to Titford (1983), second-language learners can easily identify similar collocations and idiomatic phrases in their first language. By doing so, they become aware of the distinction in meaning, including the figurative meaning of such expressions.

In addition, the study results indicate that collaborative learning can be enhanced through translation exercises. Most of the respondents stated that in their classes, translation was done in groups and pairs. The teachers reported that all of the students enjoyed translation activities. Leonardi (2010) also suggested that translation can encourage collaborative learning and it is an ideal activity for teamwork and joint problem-solving.

### **3.2. The Importance of Culture in Foreign Language Learning and Teaching**

According to the survey results, language and culture have a close connection, and the cultural context significantly influences writing style in discourse. It is crucial to have cultural awareness when teaching and learning a foreign language since language and culture are intertwined. Fantini (1997) emphasized the mutual impact of language and culture and their relationship. Therefore, integrating culture into FL teaching is essential because it helps learners understand the attitudes and behaviours of native speakers, which improves their communication skills. Kramsch (1993) highlighted that developing cultural awareness and learning a second culture can aid in achieving proficiency in a second language. Singhal (1997) contended that cultural aspects should not be disregarded in the FL classroom. Any attempt to teach a language without considering its cultural aspects is likely to fail. Liddicoat et al. (2003, p: 45) underscored the importance of culture in language teaching.

The research findings support the views of scholars such as Byram (1997), Byram and Fleming (1998), Seelye (1997), Cortazzi and Jin (1999). They all agree that learning a foreign language is not possible without also learning about the culture of the community where the language is used. In terms of communication, the results of the present study demonstrate that culture is essential to effective communication and language learners must have a thorough understanding of cultural references and cues to communicate effectively. This idea is supported by Scollon (1999) who stated that to communicate effectively in a language, learners must not only learn the rules of its use but also understand the cultural context in which it is spoken. According to DeVito (2005), culture is a crucial factor in all types of communication and it can be affected by cultural differences, which hinder comprehension and even result in unfavourable impressions between native and non-native speakers. Bennet (1997) contends that an individual who is fluent in a foreign language but lacks an understanding of its cultural and social context is considered a "fluent fool." One can avoid this dilemma by familiarizing themselves with the cultural aspects of the language.

### **3.3. The Effect of FL Teachers' Attitudes towards the Implementation of Translation within Classrooms to Teach Translation on their Teaching Curricula/Syllabi.**

According to the results of the survey, teachers have expressed a positive outlook towards utilizing translation as a tool for teaching foreign language learners about different cultures. This approach aids in identifying lexical variations across languages, while also promoting metalinguistic skills. Additionally, it helps students improve their intercultural communication proficiency. The comparative nature of cultural learning encourages students to become more aware of their own culture and compare it with the target culture. This process of comparison enables students to gain a fresh perspective on their language and culture, leading to increased knowledge, understanding, and acceptance through the discovery of similarities and differences with other cultures. Byram (1997) suggests that this approach challenges learners' assumptions and broadens their perspective. Liddicoat et al. (2003) suggest that when teaching a language, it's beneficial to compare cultural aspects to the learner's own culture. In this way, cultural elements are explained in terms of the source language rather than their significance in the target language. As Cook (2012: 55) notes, it is essential to recognize that translation plays a pivotal role in connecting diverse languages and cultures, as it encompasses not only language but also culture. As noted by Gile, Hansen and Pokorn (2010: 29), translation holds a key role in enabling intercultural communication within a particular social and cultural context. It promotes the development of students' intercultural competence, which fosters their ability to value and respect cultural diversity. Through translation, students can gain deeper insights into the workings of the world and how cultural ideas shape it.

The results of this research indicate that teachers' positive attitudes towards implementing translation in foreign language classrooms to teach culture have a significant impact on their teaching curricula. Most participants have expressed interest in teaching culture as an essential part of foreign language instruction and they dedicate a significant amount of time to teaching it through translation activities. These activities include the translation of proverbs, idioms, culture-specific expressions, cultural realities, literary works such as poetry and prose, religious terminology, and media texts that address social, cultural, or religious events. Additionally, authentic texts related to social, cultural, and religious events should be included in the curriculum. This approach encourages students to recognize the cultural aspects of their native country, literature modules, and study techniques.

Furthermore, discussions on global events and the diverse ways in which people observe and celebrate them following their customs and traditions are an integral part of the curriculum. This aligns with the findings of Peterson and Coltrane's research (2003), emphasizing the significance of selecting texts that cater to the distinct goals and requirements of students to gain insight into the target culture. They also suggest using authentic materials such as news broadcasts, travel brochures, photographs, and television shows, which can be adapted to suit the age and language proficiency level of the students. The teacher can provide a detailed translation or a chart for students to complete, followed by a discussion of the cultural topics covered, including non-verbal behaviour and societal roles. Another approach is to use proverbs to expose students to culture, analyze stereotypes, and dispel misperceptions of the culture represented in the proverbs of their native language. Finally, literature such as drama, fiction, and poetry can be an excellent source of cultural information and create lasting impressions on readers.

### **Conclusion**



This study was set to investigate the role of translation in teaching culture to FL learners in institutions of higher education in Algeria and to emphasize the importance of translation in improving intercultural communicative competence. It explored the attitudes of teachers towards the implementation of translation in foreign language classrooms at Algerian universities, and the effect of these attitudes on their teaching curricula/syllabi.

Based on the teachers' responses to the questionnaire, it was determined that Translation is a valuable method for teaching a second language. Its benefits include aiding with vocabulary acquisition, clarifying grammatical concepts, teaching idiomatic and cultural expressions, explaining reading material, addressing L1 interferences, and assessing reading and listening comprehension. The survey also indicated that language and culture are deeply intertwined, underscoring the importance of cultural awareness when teaching and learning a foreign language. As such, Culture is a vital element in Foreign Language instruction, fostering intercultural communicative competence among students.

According to the results of the survey, teachers have expressed a positive outlook towards utilizing translation as a tool for teaching foreign language learners about different cultures. This approach aids in identifying lexical variations across languages, while also promoting metalinguistic skills. Additionally, it helps students improve their intercultural communication proficiency. The comparative nature of cultural learning encourages students to become more aware of their own culture and compare it with the target culture. This process of comparison enables students to gain a fresh perspective on their language and culture, leading to increased knowledge, understanding, and acceptance through the discovery of similarities and differences with other cultures. Moreover, teachers' positive attitudes towards implementing translation in foreign language classrooms to teach culture have a significant impact on their teaching curricula. Most participants have expressed interest in teaching culture as an essential part of foreign language instruction and they dedicate a significant amount of time to teaching it through translation activities. Based on the survey results, teachers have a positive attitude towards using translation as a tool to teach foreign language learners about different cultures. This method facilitates the identification of lexical variations across languages and promotes metalinguistic skills, which helps students improve their intercultural communication. The comparative nature of cultural learning encourages students to become more aware of their own culture, leading to increased knowledge, understanding, and acceptance through the discovery of similarities and differences with other cultures.

Furthermore, teachers' positive attitudes towards using translation in foreign language classrooms to teach culture have a significant impact on their teaching curricula. Most participants are interested in teaching culture as an essential part of foreign language instruction and dedicate a significant amount of time to teaching it through translation activities. The curriculum should also include authentic texts related to social, cultural, and religious events. This approach encourages students to recognize the cultural aspects of their native country, literature modules, and study techniques.

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