

THE DISREGARD OF THE CULTURAL DIMENSION IN TRANSLATION

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Abstract

The cultural turn in translation studies has propelled translation beyond a mere act of linguistic transposition. At this juncture, the cultural dimension has garnered significant attention, and translation has evolved into an act of cultural mediation. Within this framework, learners' perceptions of the cultural dimension and classroom teaching practices are pivotal factors influencing translation quality. This study examines the classroom teaching practices *vis-à-vis* cultural learning and investigates learners' perception of the significance of culture in translation. A survey questionnaire was administered to seventy-eight Master's students of translation (Arabic-English-French) at the Institute of Translation, Oran University, Algeria. Additionally, an interview was conducted with 26 students from the same institute to accredit more validity and reliability to this study, to obtain more qualitative data, and to compare and crosscheck while interpreting the data from both the questionnaire and the interview. The analysis of the obtained data elucidated that cultural knowledge was impeached by classroom practices that do not foster intercultural learning despite learners' positive attitudes towards the target cultures. This study offers some pedagogical recommendations to give the cultural dimension due attention in the translation classroom.

Keywords: culture, learner, perception, practice, translation

Introduction

Beyond any shadow of doubt, interactions among individuals from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds are on the rise. These encounters are facilitated by various factors, such as travel, immigration, international education, tourism, travel, displacement due to conflicts, business engagement, and myriad other reasons. Moreover, technological advances, including the internet and various social networks, have intensified human interactions, transcending physical geographical boundaries. This mobility, whether physical or virtual, has rendered translation an indispensable task, and the role of the translator has become crucial in facilitating communication among individuals. In this vein, House (2009) explains that "translations mediate between languages, societies, and literatures,

and it is through translations that linguistic and cultural barriers may be overcome” (p.3).

Indeed, translation has often been perceived as a straightforward task achievable by any bilingual individual. However, the creation of texts that are linguistically and culturally acceptable involves significant challenges and demands a high level of sensitivity. Different linguistic backgrounds and cultural affiliations necessitate the translator’s comprehension of diverse linguistic symbols and distinct cultural perspectives. Consequently, translation has been attributed to a decisive role in bridging the gap between individuals with divergent belongings and upbringings. In its cultural turn and response to the super diversified world that is characterised by unprecedented (Hyper)mobility, whether it is virtual or physical, translation surpasses its traditional role of linguistic transposition and assumes the additional responsibility of cultural mediation.

The indubitable necessity to integrate the cultural component in translation training has been an issue of extensive investigation reflected in scholarly research and evidenced by the proliferation of publications in the bygone years (Abbadì & Belal, 2014; Munday, 2016; Yan et al., 2018). This is driven by the need for highly qualified translators who can mediate not between two languages solely but between two cultures as well. These studies agree that translation errors do not always emanate from linguistic deficiencies solely but from cultural deficiencies as well (Al-Ghazalli & Layth, 2019; Bahumaid, 2010). In crude terms, the ignorance of the cultural dimension in the translation process hinders translation quality and renders a decent, accurate translation unattainable in learners’ translation performances. The situation is likely to aggravate when the translation is between two languages that belong to two different language families with dissimilar lexical and syntactic cognates, such as Arabic and English, which show flagrant disparity in the cultural norms that are associated with language use. In token of that, Hassan (2014) argues that “cultural elements are more resistant to translation than linguistic ones (p. 6). It should be mentioned that being bilingual is not enough for successful translation. Rather, the translator should be bicultural as well. In this line of reasoning, Nida (1964) confirms that “differences between cultures may cause more serious problems for the translator than do differences in language structure” (p.175). To this end, intercultural learning in translation training has become more than a mandate if the objective is to have competent translators who can mediate between different languages and cultures. Under this spirit, it could be argued that both learners’ perceptions of the cultural dimension in their translation training and classroom practices are determining factors in the achievement of the intended outcomes.

Undoubtedly, the cultural turn in translation studies has instigated researchers to extensively investigate, theorize, and provide critical reviews regarding this massive intellectual movement (Bassnett & Lefevere, 1990; Farahani, 2024). Some studies accentuated the role of culture in translation and its impact on translation quality (ÇAĞAÇ, 2018). Others offered guidelines for incorporating the cultural dimension in translation training (Geng, 2011). In contrast, some researchers tackled the challenges accompanying the translation of culture-bound terms (Durdureanu, 2011) to visualize how cultural disparities may impact translation. Yet, scant attention is accredited to the actual classroom practices to see whether translation trainers and stakeholders diligently integrate the cultural component in

translation and make the soon-to-be translators cognizant of the delicate role of culture in translation. For this reason, this study examines the Algerian translation classroom practices to see the extent to which they foster learning about other cultures, provide learners with opportunities to gain knowledge about the target cultures, and enable them to behave appropriately and effectively in intercultural encounters. Additionally, the current study investigates translation learners' perceptions of the cultural dimension in their translation training.

It is worth noting that the present research is a descriptive study. According to Gil (2008), descriptive researches are used to demonstrate the characteristics of a population, investigate a phenomenon experience, or establish relations among variables. Descriptive research was conducted with the objective of unveiling students' perceptions of the cultural dimension in translation training and examining classroom practices.

Literature Review

Translation: From linguistic to cultural turn

The field of translation and translation studies has been the subject of extensive investigations that are reflected in the different understandings, theories, and turns over the years. Manifestly, in the last bygone years, the arena of translation studies has witnessed great metamorphosis. It shifted from being a linguistic act solely to a discipline where a myriad of perspectives entwines, and various emerging issues intersect. The shift from the linguistic to the cultural turn will be examined, albeit briefly, in this section to provide an understanding of the translation act from traditional understandings to current practices.

The linguistic turn

The premise that permeated the translation process was restricted to bridging two languages by finding equivalents, and the traditional role of the translator was restricted to rewording meaning from the source language into the target one. The linguistic approach was a turning point in the evolution of translation theories. Its main proponent was Nida with his seminal work *Toward a Science of Translating in 1964*. Translation, under this discourse, used to be studied from a linguistic perspective as it used to be seen as a linguistic phenomenon that implies linguistic mediation and a process of meaning transpositions. Under this spirit, Catford (1965) described it as a process that implies "the replacement of textual material in one language (SL) by equivalent textual material in another language (TL)" (p.20). In crude terms, Claramonte (2009) puts it as "a synonym for finding an equivalent for a source text, for saying the same thing in another language, for replacing or substituting" (p.39).

With reference to the linguistic-oriented approach, Gambier (2016) states that "translation was seen as a mechanical process, a word-by-word substitution, a problem of dictionaries, or simply an activity that accrues no apparent prestige and which can be handed off at any moment to a bilingual relative or colleague" (p. 887). In light of this understanding, translation was seen as an activity that can be performed by finding lexical similarities and terms' equivalents and requires no more than a competent use of the dictionary and mastery of grammar.

Undeniably, linguistic approaches to translation have been subject to serious criticism. To this end, serious endeavors in the bygone years moved translation

beyond its narrow understanding towards shiny ones catering to the incessant changes characterizing the contemporary global world that necessitates various translations for different purposes. At this juncture, Bassnett and Lefevere introduced a shift towards the cultural turn (1990). Hence, translation has become inexorably culture-bound.

The cultural turn

The cultural turn in translation studies was first introduced by Snell-Hornby (1988). She rejects the notion of equivalence that permeated the realm of translation previously as a key term in the linguistic-oriented approach to translation. In her view, it is unacceptable for translation to hinge on assumptions that promote “an illusion of symmetry between languages which hardly exists beyond the level of vague approximations and which distorts the basic problems of translation” (Snell-Hornby, 1988, p. 22). Since language does not operate in a vacuum but is a construct intricately intertwined with culture, it is inevitably shaped by the culture of the translator and external social factors. In clearer terms, House (2009) puts it, “translation is not only a linguistic act; it is also a cultural one, an act of communication across cultures. Translation always involves both language and culture simply because the two cannot really be separated” (p. 11). In common parlance, Snell-Hornby (1988) postulates, “if language is an integral part of culture, the translator needs not only proficiency in two languages, he must also be at home in two cultures. In other words, he must be bilingual and bicultural” (p. 42).

This turn has gained momentum among scholars who furthered it to garner more ground and thus move translation beyond a narrow linguistic approach. This novel turn has been adopted by Bassnett and Lefevere, who became its advocates in translation studies. The acceptance of the turn is reflected in the many works that followed its introduction, such as Bassnett (2003), Bassnett and Lefevere (1998), Lefevere (1992), Lefevere and Bassnett (1990), Venuti (1995).

This massive intellectual movement engendered a move from a linguistic discourse that dominated in translation to a cultural one. Shifting the focus from language to culture, Bassnett and Lefevere stressed the significance of the role of culture in translation, the influence of the cultural background on the translator, and the social background that can affect the translation process. By the same token, referring to the interplay of language and culture in the translation process, Larson (1984) avers that since language and culture are two constructs that go in tandem, translation between two different languages cannot be performed without the translator’s adequate knowledge of the two language structures and the two cultures as well. Following this move, the translators’ role has shifted from “transferors of words and sentences between languages to mediators of culture and cross-cultural communicative functions” (Bedecker & Feinauer, 2009, p. 133).

This turn in translation has resulted in significant alterations to the perceptions, objectives, and approaches of translation education. Cutting it short, Bassnett and Lefevere succinctly put it, “neither the word, nor the text, but the culture becomes the operational ‘unit’ of translation” (Bassnett & Lefevere 1990, p. 8). Arguably, Al-Sofi (2003) contends that translation cannot be completed without diligent integration of cultural clues when constructing meaning since language is both a reflection of and an essential component of culture. In this line of reasoning, Nida (1964) confirms that the problems resulting from cultural disparities and

ignorance of cultural norms are more serious than the ones caused by differences in the structure of languages. With this understanding, being bilingual, without cultural knowledge, does not suffice to produce texts that are accepted both linguistically and culturally.

Culture in the translation classroom

In this era of cultural diasporas, translation plays a delicate role in bridging cultures and nations. Undeniably, the diversity that characterizes today's world at multiple levels requires intercultural communication that ensures peaceful coexistence between individuals and nations of different affiliations. In this vein, the translator occupies a pivotal position in mediating between cultures. Thus, "cultural knowledge is an essential part of the translator's competence" (Fenyo, 2005, p.71). Within this discourse, in the translation classroom, to achieve the aims, as Bara (2012) states, the translator should acquire "cultural skills that complement the component of language proficiency, in both languages involved in translation" (p. 1). Time and again, assigned the role of mediating between languages, cultures, and nations and acting as translators whose role is to bridge between different languages and cultural contexts, learners of translation who aspire to be professional, competent translators have to be equipped with cultural knowledge, skills and develop positive attitudes towards the target cultures. In this regard, Nelson (2007) opines that "mistakes in translating key concepts, often generated by misapprehensions or ignorance about the cultural assumptions underlying them, could have highly destructive, albeit unintended, consequences" (p. 364). That is the case when mistranslation occurs due to a lack of comprehension and knowledge that guides language use in different contexts. Eventually, the consequences are extremely nefarious when mistranslations are performed intentionally nurtured by phobic attitudes, ideologies, and wicked aims that have myriad varying forms.

Indisputably, one cannot separate culture from translation. They are so integrated that they need proper attention. In clearer terms, Shirinzadeh and Mahadi (2015) put it, "nowadays, the issue of bilinguality or knowing another language is not the only prerequisite for being a translator; in this fast-moving world, translators should be primarily cultural experts" (p.167). More importantly, Hatim and Mason (1990) assert that, in translation, being bicultural is highly prioritized more than being bilingual. In their view, translators must mediate between source and target cultures.

Attitudes toward foreign cultures

Attitude, as defined in Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary, is "a mental position with regard to a fact or state, a feeling or emotion toward a fact or state." It is a truism that attitudes are not observable but are demonstrated in different manifestations of behaviors. In relation to the field of translation, attitudes play a decisive role in the success or impeachment of learning and play a primordial role in achievement attainment.

Positive attitudes toward the cultures of other people increase the learners' motivation. Chambers (1999) asserts that learning happens more easily when the learner has a positive attitude towards the language and learning. In contrast, negative and phobic attitudes can be detrimental to learners' learning and inhibit

their acquisition of a foreign language. At this juncture, due attention should be paid to learners' attitudes in foreign language and translation classrooms.

Method

Sample description

The present study aims to examine classroom teaching practices regarding cultural learning and investigate learners' perceptions of the significance of culture in translation. The sample consisted of 78 master students (Arabic-English-French) from the Institute of Translation at Oran University in Algeria who were chosen randomly to fill out the questionnaire, and twenty-six (26) of them replied to the interview questions.

Data collection instruments

A questionnaire was administered to 78 master students (Arabic-English-French) from the Institute of Translation at Oran University to collect the necessary data. The questionnaire comprises different sections, namely learners' perceptions of the cultural dimension in translation, learners' attitudes towards the target culture, and culture and translation classroom practices.

To accredit more validity and reliability to this study and to suspend any inaccuracies in the data collection procedure that are likely to occur from responses to the questionnaire, an interview was conducted with 26 students from the same institute for the aim of comparing and crosschecking while interpreting the data from both the questionnaire and the interview. Additionally, the interview was used to obtain more qualitative data from the participants. Undeniably, the qualitative data are prone to be more reliable for the investigation of perceptions and viewpoints. Arguably, Seliger and Shohamy (1989) explain that, unlike other data collection tools, interviews are personalized and allow for generating free responses, flexibility, and the ability to gather information at a deeper level. The interview includes a set of open-ended questions, and the informants answer the questions, justify their choices, and provide explanations for their views and opinions. Therefore, a combination of the two instruments (questionnaire and interview) would apparently work better in this study.

Data analysis

The data gleaned from data collection instruments (the questionnaire and interview) will be analysed thematically and categorized in different sections. Relying on qualitative and quantitative data analysis method, the researcher will discuss the obtained findings and demonstrate the participants' perceptions of the cultural dimension in translation and classroom practices. Descriptive statistics such as numbers and percentages are presented in tables to analyse the questionnaire responses. Qualitative analysis was used to analyse the interview transcripts and provide in-depth insights into the respondents' attitude and perceptions. The integration of quantitative and qualitative data were important to complement and validate each other.

Findings and Discussion

Findings

Learners' perceptions of the interplay of language and culture

This section targets to gauge students' cognizance of the inveterate relation of language and culture and the reciprocity that gels these two constructs in the realm of foreign language teaching and learning. Beyond any shadow of a doubt, "language is deeply embedded in culture" (Rivers, 1983, p.263). Within this vista, the informants were asked to state the extent to which they agree on the indubitable necessity to learn about other cultures while learning a foreign language. Seventy-four of the respondents, which constitutes 94% of the whole, declared that they either agree or strongly agree with the fact that teaching English as a foreign language cannot be successful without teaching about its culture. The results of the investigation of this question in the first section can be demonstrated in the following table.

Table 1. Teaching English as a foreign language requires teaching its culture

	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Strongly Agree	15	19.23%
Agree	59	75.64%
Undecided	3	3.84%
Disagree	1	1.28%
Strongly Disagree	0	0%

To explore learners' perception of the target culture, they were asked to state the extent to which it is important to learn about other cultures. Interestingly, 59 (75%) participants expressed that it is very important, and 12 (15%) voiced that it is extremely important. Only the minority, that is 8% of them, stated it is important, and none of them see that culture is not important in foreign language instruction. The analysis of the obtained findings indicates that the respondents are likely to be aware of the inseparability of language and culture, and the intricate relation that gels them is prominent in the realm of foreign language teaching in general and in the field of translation in particular. The following chart displays the obtained responses.

Table 2. Learning about other cultures is:

	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Extremely Important	12	15.38%
Very Important	59	75.64%
Important	7	8.97%
Not Important	0	0%

The data obtained from the interview equates to the ones obtained from the questionnaire. The majority of the informants' answers to this question in the interview elucidate their cognizance of the significance of the cultural dimension in the foreign language classroom in general and in the translation classroom in particular. One of the interviewees stated that *"if we learn only grammar and*

vocabulary and theories about language without culture, our learning of English will be incomplete.”

In an extension of this question, students were asked to provide explanations regarding their points of view. The majority of the informants' feedback revolves around the idea that language and culture are inseparable entities, and it could be convoluted to understand or use a language without being aware of its culture. One of the informants stated that *“learning about other cultures makes me familiar with the different ways of thinking.”* Another commented that *“culture is the key to mastering the language.”* A third learner adds, *“We cannot, as translators, use language without knowing its culture, and the two cannot be separated.”*

To explore the learners' perceptions of language-appropriate use, they were asked to state what it means for them to be fluent in English. 87% of them stressed that appropriate language use encompasses the knowledge of structures, functions, and uses of language. The three dimensions are important for using the language appropriately and effectively. Yet, 10 (12%) believe that language-appropriate use is restricted to the knowledge of either the different functions or the different uses of the target language. The data obtained from this question suggest that learners are cognizant of the fact that discarding the social and cultural dimension of language does not suffice for a foreign language learner to be a competent user of a language, though they have knowledge of the language structure.

Learners' perceptions of the cultural dimension in translation

Axiomatically, in the arena of translation studies, “translating involves not just two languages, but a transfer from one culture to another” (Hervey & Higgins, 2002, p. 31). For this reason, section two of the questionnaire was more focused and was dedicated to investigating the students' perceptions of the role of culture in translation and the extent to which they think that ignorance of the target culture may hinder translation quality.

The interplay of culture and translation

The first question was asked with the aim of discovering the extent to which learners perceive that culture is important in translation. The informants' feedback reveals that the majority of them thought that the integration of the cultural component in translation is of paramount importance. Yet, a lower rate, 7%, was recorded for those who believed that integrating the cultural component in the translation training was not necessary. The chart below displays the findings.

Table 3. Culture is important in translation

	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Strongly Agree	49	62.82%
Agree	23	29.48%
Disagree	6	7.69%
Strongly Disagree	0	0%

From the obtained responses, it could be inferred that our informants are cognizant of the fact that “since language reflects the culture and an integral part of it, the process of translation cannot be carried out without integrating the cultural cues in the construction of meaning” (Al-Sofi, 2020, p.3).

Cultural learning and translation training

In a globalized world where intercultural encounters are increasing, cultural knowledge has become an indispensable prerequisite for translators as mediators who ensure successful communication. To gauge our participants' awareness of this interplay between translation and culture, they were asked to state whether it was possible for them to learn translation without learning about foreign cultures. The responses indicated unanimous agreement by most of them, which forms 91% of the whole who believed that cultural learning is inevitable in translation training. However, it should be noted that 5(6%) of them thought that learning about other cultures was not necessary for their translation training, and they could have learned translation without learning about other cultures. Additionally, 2 (2%) of the informants preferred to give no feedback on this question, which shows that either they did not understand the question or they did not grasp the notion of culture and its importance in translation. The obtained data are displayed in the chart below.

Table 4. Do you think you could have learned translation without learning about foreign cultures?

	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Yes	5	6.41%
No	71	91.02%

To dig deeper into learners' perceptions, they were asked to provide explanations for their answers. Most of the explanations provided were around the idea that translation can be wrong and inaccurate without knowledge of the target culture.

Responding to the same question in the interview, one of the interviewees said that *"because every language has its culture, incorporating cultures into translation makes the translation wrong."* Another one said, *"to translate a word, I need to know the different uses in the foreign culture to which we translate."* Other learners believed that without having knowledge of the target culture, translation quality may be hindered. In the same line of thought, another informant opined that *"to translate a word, I need to know the different uses in the foreign culture to which we translate."* On the other hand, expressing the insignificance of culture in learning translation, one of the informants commented, *"we do not have to learn about foreign culture to be able to translate."* To some extent, these findings elucidate that being bilingual is not adequate for translators. Rather, being bicultural is an indispensable prerequisite if the aim of translators is to bridge the gap between two languages and mediate between two divergent cultures.

The effect of cultural learning on translation quality

It is a truism that language and culture are two entities that work in tandem in translation. To this end, equal importance should be given to both linguistic and cultural dimensions, and both linguistic and cultural differences should be taken into consideration to maintain the quality of translation. Under this spirit, a question was asked to gauge learners' awareness of this fact and the correlation between ignorance of culture and translation quality. The obtained answers revealed that learners are cognizant of the fact that ignoring or trivializing the cultural dimension in translation is likely to be detrimental to translation quality. The chart underneath displays the obtained findings.

Table 5. Ignorance of the target culture:

	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Affects translation quality	69	88.46%
Does not affect translation quality	9	11.53%

To obtain qualitative data and to dig deeper into this issue to visualize learners' perceptions, the same question was asked in the interview regarding the role of culture in the translation process and the consequences of discarding the cultural component. The informants' responses showed, albeit not all of them, that discarding the cultural dimension, whether due to ignorance or trivializing it, may likely hinder the translation quality and render their performances both inaccurate and inappropriate. Lucidly, one of the interviewees stated, *"each country has a language and culture that make us different in ways of thinking, doing, and saying things."* In common parlance, a second learner said, *"since countries such as Algeria and England or America, for example, are different in customs, religion, and culture, the understanding of meaning must be different and can cause problems in communication and translation."* However, it is worth noting that the data gathered revealed that some of the informant learners still view translation as a mere linguistic process and an activity of finding equivalents in the target language, and the ignorance of the cultural dimension in the debated process is not with dire consequences since one learner masters grammar and has a rich vocabulary repertoire. Succinctly put by one of the participants: *"No need to learn other cultures. If you have rich vocabulary and master grammar rules, your translation will be good and may be perfect."*

To some extent, though there is no complete unanimous agreement, the obtained data echoed learners' cognizance of the delicate role of cultural knowledge in translation. Unequivocally, Yazıcı (2007) contends, "linguistic deficiencies in the translation may be acceptable in a way, but the ones related to culture are not approved" (as cited in Al-Sofi, 2020). To this end, due attention should be paid to the cultural peculiarities in translation training. Similarly, though only 4 (8%) of the informants stated that no correlation exists between ignorance of the target culture and the translation quality, this suggests that in the translation classroom, proper attention should be accredited to demonstrate the significance of culture in translation as these learners, albeit few, should know, as future translators, that their role is to bridge the gap between two different languages and mediate between two disparate cultures. Their answers, to some extent, show that they are prone to be unaware of the fact that translation is both an interlingual and intercultural process as well.

Learners' perceptions of translation competence

Translation competence, to cast any doubt, encompasses the knowledge of at least two linguistic codes and two cultural perceptions. Under this spirit, the informants were asked to state their understanding of a competent translator. The question sought to ensure learners' perceptions and understandings of the cultural dimension of language in translation and whether or not it is sufficient to have knowledge of the target culture only or to be knowledgeable of both the source and the target culture. The data gathered indicated that the informants were aware of the

importance of being knowledgeable of both the native and the foreign cultures. The following chart displays the obtained responses.

Table 6. To be a competent translator means:

	Number of Respondents
To have a good knowledge of the source culture	1
To have a good knowledge of the target culture	6
To have a good knowledge of the source culture and target culture	71

The obtained findings elucidated learners’ understanding of the intricate relation between language and translation and their perception of translation competence. This, beyond any shadow of a doubt, is a fertile and solid ground to promote intercultural learning in the translation classroom and subsidize learners’ intercultural competence since “the meaning of a text depends on how knowledgeable a translator is about both the source and the target culture” (Ceramella, 2008, p. 16). At this juncture, much onus then is on translation trainers and teachers to find better ways to adeptly integrate the cultural component in their classrooms or other translation training settings. In token of that, Clouet (2008) lucidly postulates that “the language teacher’s role as mediator and facilitator is fundamental. The latter needs to be able, not only to raise students’ awareness of the cultural patterns but also to train and prepare them for their future job as mediators in intercultural encounters” (p.13).

Cultural learning and translation quality

It is a truism that one cannot separate culture from translation, and equal importance should be given to both linguistic and cultural differences to maintain the quality of translation. To see the extent to which learners are aware of this correlation between ignorance of culture and translation quality. The responses suggested that learners are aware that discarding the cultural dimension in translation is likely to hinder translation quality. The table underneath demonstrates the obtained data.

Translation classroom practices

This section examines the translation classroom practices in order to gain some information about the actual incorporation of the cultural dimension in translation training, the extent to which the different syllabi, the materials brought to the classroom, the activities, and the explanations promote for intercultural learning, and the time allocated to teach about foreign cultures.

Culture in the translation classroom

At first, our informants were asked to state whether the cultural dimension was given proper attention in their translation training. The chart below demonstrates the obtained findings.

Table 7. Do you think that the cultural dimension of language is given importance in your translation training?

	Number of Respondents	Percentage
To a Great Extent	9	11.53%
Somewhat	11	14.10%
Very Little	33	42.30%
Not At All	25	32.05%

Lucidly, the data gathered reveal that the cultural dimension needs to be reconsidered in the translation training. The obtained responses indicated that culture is likely to be marginalized and relegated- albeit to some extent- to a minimal position. Only 9 (11%) of the informants stated that they enjoy learning about other cultures and that culture is given attention to a great extent in their translation classrooms, whereas 11 (14%) declared it is given importance to some extent. Surprisingly, 33 (42%) of the respondents expressed that the cultural dimension is given little attention in their translation training, and 25 (32%) said it is not accredited with any attention. In one of the answers obtained from the interview to the same question, a learner explained, *“we expect more from the teachers to explain the similarities and the differences between our culture and the foreign culture, but most of them do not do.”* Another one replied, *“I do not think it is enough because most of the time, we study about theories of translation and how to translate technical vocabulary and vocabulary related to economics, business, politics, and other fields.”* These answers revealed that learners need to be provided with much more opportunities to learn about other cultures.

Culture in the translation syllabi

For the aim of knowing if the different syllabi promote cultural learning, learners were asked to state whether they help them learn about other cultures. The chart underneath displays the responses.

Table 8. The different syllabi promote knowing about other cultures

	Number of Respondents	Percentage
To a Great Extent	9	11.53%
Somewhat	13	16.66%
Very Little	34	43.58%
Not At All	22	28.20%

The data indicated in the table above showed another negative response from the respondents who aspire to be professional, competent translators through their program training. According to their responses, 56 (71%) expressed that the different syllabi either promote a little or do not promote at all to know about other cultures. This could impede reaching the contemplated objectives of being competent translators if they do not adequately learn in their translation training about the target cultures and the cultural cues that go in tandem with language use.

Culture, translation, and instructional training materials

It is axiomatic that materials and content should be employed in order to make learners aware of the cultural contents of language learning, encouraging them to

compare and contrast the foreign culture with their own. Materials that do this will, as Valdes (1990) suggests, “prove successful with learners” (Lee, 2018, p. 4). In this vein, to gain some knowledge regarding this issue, the informants were asked to express their views regarding the extent to which the materials and activities abet them to gain cultural knowledge. Once again, the obtained data showed an undesirable reality. Fifty-nine, which constitutes (75%) of them, declared that materials and activities brought to the classroom either help a little or do not help at all in acquiring knowledge about other cultures. By the same token, the interviewees, in this part of the interview, were asked to identify which module helped them learn about other cultures. Unanimous agreement was recorded towards a literary translation that, according to the respondents’ answers, provides ample opportunities to discover the similarities and differences in cultural norms, values, and beliefs and support learners with rich cultural input. The following table shows the obtained findings. Yet, the interviewees complained about the time allocated to this module, which, according to them, was not sufficient.

Table 9. In your opinion, do the materials and activities available you use promote knowledge about the target culture?

	Number of Respondents	Percentage
To a Great Extent	8	10.25%
Somewhat	11	14.10%
Very Little	35	44.87%
Not At All	24	30.76%

It should not be left unnoticed that “activities and materials should be judiciously chosen in order to portray different aspects of culture, highlighting attractive aspects vs. shocking ones, similarities vs. differences” (Clouet, 2008, p.16). In this line of thought, Meaningful experiences and many opportunities should be offered for learners to learn about both other cultures and their own to be able to stand in a “third place” and act as a mediator between the two cultures.

Time allocation to culture teaching/learning

Incontrovertibly, time is one of the relevant components of curriculum design. To gain some information about the time allocated to culture teaching, learners were asked to say whether time devoted to teach about other cultures is adequate. More than half of the total number questioned, that is 46(58%), expressed that the time devoted to teaching about other cultures is very little, and 9 (11%) thought that time is not sufficient at all. Only 8 (10%) stated that the devoted time is sufficient to a great extent, and 15 (19%) opined that it is sufficient to some extent.

Table 10. Do you think that the time allocated for teaching culture is sufficient to cover most of the cultural aspects needed to develop your communicative competence?

	Number of Respondents	Percentage
To a Great Extent	8	10.25%
Somewhat	15	19.23%
Very Little	46	58.79%
Not At All	9	11.53%

The aforementioned data elicited negative attitudes towards the time dedicated to cultural instruction. In different terms, the teaching method was prone to be unsatisfactory as most learners held a negative attitude towards it, and the majority saw the timing as not adequate. It suggests that an urgent reconsideration, re-evaluation, and intervention were required from the trainers or stakeholders to meet learners’ expectations and the contemplated objectives. In addition, it seems that classroom practices do not promote satisfactory cultural teaching/ learning as, most of the time, based on the learners’ responses, is devoted to either topical explanations or theoretical underpinnings.

Learners’ perceptions of intercultural competence

The last section of the questionnaire is dedicated to investigating both learners’ perceptions of intercultural competence (IC) in their translation training and classroom practices regarding intercultural competence development. Indisputably, as Clouet (2008) argues, “Cultural mediation places the intercultural competence at the heart of language teaching, particularly when the language is used for specific purposes, namely for translation and interpreting” (p.17).

Learners’ perceptions of intercultural competence in translation
Learners’ understandings of intercultural competence

The first question aimed at unveiling learners’ perceptions of intercultural competence and checking their understanding of debated notions in their translation training. To this end, they were asked to choose three understandings, the best of which was intercultural competence. The learners’ answers are displayed in the following chart:

Table 11. Do you think that intercultural competence refers to:	
	Number of Respondents
Having knowledge about the native culture	1
Having knowledge about the target culture	9
Having knowledge about both the native and the target culture	68

Analyzing the obtained data, 68 (87%) of learners exhibit an understanding of IC, as most of them opted for the answer that intercultural competence implies being knowledgeable about both the native and the target culture, while only 1 (1%) of them thought that intercultural competence refers to having knowledge about the native culture solely and 9 (11%) understand it as having knowledge about the target culture. In a similar question in the interview, learners were asked to provide their own understanding of intercultural competence. Undeniably, they provided varying responses. Some of the answers demonstrated learners’ understanding of intercultural competence. To illustrate, one of them defined intercultural competence as “*the knowledge of both the source and the target culture,*” while others explained it as “*the awareness of the cultural norms and values which are different from people to others and which are important in language learning and translation.*” Yet, a lower rate was recorded for those who showed their inability to provide any conception of the term in question.

To gauge learners' awareness of the delicate role intercultural competence plays in translation, they were asked to state their views. The answers to this question demonstrated that learners are likely to be aware of the significant role of IC in translation as it enables them to perform accurately and appropriately when translating from one language to another. Sixty-seven (85.89%) of them said that intercultural competence was important in translation. Only 8 (10%) thought that IC was important, but just to the extent of their translation training and their translation performances. The findings are displayed in the chart below.

Table 12. Is intercultural competence important to improve your translation competence

	Number of Respondents	Percentage
important	67	85.89%
Important but to some extent	8	10.25%
Not important at all	3	3.84%

Intercultural competence and translation classroom practices

In order to gain knowledge about whether classroom activities help promote intercultural competence, learners were asked to state their views, and their responses are displayed in the following chart:

Table 13. Do current cultural classroom activities promote EFL cultural competence?

	Number of Respondents	Percentage
To a Great Extent	9	11.53%
Somewhat	11	14.10%
Very Little	36	46.15%
Not At All	22	28.20%

The obtained data indicated that intercultural competence needs to be accredited proper attention in learners' classroom activities as a large portion of the whole, that is 58 (74%), saw that classroom activities promote either a little or do not promote at all intercultural competence. In contrast, no more than 20 (25%) thought that such activities promote intercultural competence to a certain extent. To validate the obtained findings, the interviewees were asked to state whether the classroom activities and the syllabi content helped develop intercultural competence. Their feedback revealed that intercultural competence is not given due attention in the translation classroom. To dig deeper into the place of intercultural competence in translation classroom and particularly its assessment in learners' performances, the participants were asked to express their views toward this issue. Their feedback elucidated that intercultural competence is neglected not in the process of teaching only but in the assessment process as well. Simply put, the data gathered suggested that linguistic and syntactic errors are accentuated by teachers who generally refer students' attention toward these kinds of errors while errors that emanate from cultural ignorance are in most of time discarded, trivialized and not accentuated in the correctors' evaluation grids.

Discussion

Unequivocally, a myriad of research tackled the cultural turn in translation studies and accentuated the significance of the cultural dimension in translation. Based on empirical research, researchers found that learners' shortcomings in translation do not emanate solely from linguistic deficiencies but from cultural deficiencies as well. As an illustration, Al-Shloul (2023) highlighted in addition to linguistic and syntactic errors, learners' translation performances are impacted by the lack of cultural knowledge and the disregard for the cultural dimension in translation. Parallel to this, previous research indicated that translators, particularly novice ones, encounter different challenges in rendering the culture-bound terms due to cultural disparities between the translator's cultural context and that of the target language, and the results could be the distortion of the meaning and aim of the source text. For this reason, some studies (Badawi, 2008; Mounassar, 2018) have accentuated the indubitable necessity to integrate the cultural component in translation syllabi to equip translation trainees with the necessary cultural knowledge and skills that enable them to perform their role of cultural mediation.

The analysis of the data gathered from the students' responses to both the questionnaire and the interview indicates that learners' translation errors emanate from divergent sources. In addition to linguistic deficiencies, cultural deficiencies are likely to occur and pervade learners' translation performances. Equally important, the cultural deficiencies in learners' performances are nurtured by inadequate and inappropriate classroom practices that do not promote cultural learning and provide learners with ample opportunities regarding the significant role of the cultural dimension in the translation activity. Unequivocally, the obtained findings reveal positive perceptions and attitudes towards the target culture instead of negative and phobic ones. Beyond any shadow of a doubt, this forms a strong basis for fostering intercultural learning. The positive attitude is befitting in the education sphere since it nurtures learners' motivation and brings about a sequel to invest time and efforts to learn, gain knowledge about the target culture, develop intercultural competence, and, eventually, reach the intended outcomes of their learning journey. Yet, it should not be left unnoticed that though the minority exhibits negative perceptions, this urges immediate intervention and careful consideration from trainers, teachers, and stakeholders.

Indisputably, translation, following its cultural turn particularly, cannot be undertaken without accrediting proper attention to the cultural component. At this juncture, learners' perceptions of this intricate link between translation and culture are determining factors in the translation quality. Fortunately, the data gathered elucidated the respondents' cognizance of this relation and revealed that they are aware of the fact that culture and translation are inseparable. Therefore, the onus is on teachers and translation trainers to adeptly integrate the cultural component in the translation learning milieus and to diligently provide a rich cultural input that could ensure cultural learning and equip learners with the necessary competencies and knowledge.

By the same token, cultural knowledge is a mandate for learners who aspire to be competent translators. Hassan (2014) asserts that "the more a translator s/he will be" (p.48). In contrast, their ignorance may have wicked and egregious consequences on the learners' translation performances. Fortuitously, the responses obtained from our

respondents indicate their awareness of the delicate role that culture plays in translation and that linguistic competence does not suffice for a translator to produce texts that are accurate both linguistically and culturally. Ergo, cultural knowledge is indubitable in their training and not a simple add-on to the translation curriculum.

Incontrovertibly, it is worth noting that despite learners' cognizance of this kind of correlation, it could be inadequate if not supported with proper classroom practices. In other terms, though learners' perceptions of the role of culture in translation training are undeniable, this does not suffice to ensure accurate and appropriate translation when dealing with divergent languages and cultures if not supported by classroom practices that are propitious sites to foster cultural knowledge. However, an undesirable reality demonstrated from the obtained data elucidates a flagrant mismatch between learners' expectations and actual classroom practices regarding cultural teaching/ learning. The majority of learners hold negative attitudes regarding cultural teaching/learning in their translation training.

The translation syllabi are of great value if diligently and judiciously designed, taking into consideration learners' needs, interests, and expectations. However, the obtained responses revealed that despite the fact that learners show both curiosity and readiness to learn about other cultures, the different syllabi are under the learners' expectations. Additionally, a rich input hinges largely on a careful selection of classroom instructional material. Yet, the obtained data demonstrate, again, that they do not provide ample opportunities for learners to develop their knowledge of the target cultures and develop the necessary competencies that help them both produce and interpret texts based on comparing and contrasting the cultural peculiarities.

Regarding time allocation to teaching about other cultures, the respondents showed highly negative attitudes. The majority of them stressed that little time is devoted to teaching about foreign cultures, and most of it is dedicated to discussing the content of texts under study and/or dealing with linguistic aspects or theoretical underpinning of translation. Truly, as Whitfield (2005) puts it: "despite the cultural turn, linguistic theories of translation continue to dominate the teaching of translation."

It is a truism that a decent, accurate translation is guaranteed to a great extent by intercultural competence, that is regarded a *sine qua non* in the debated field to prevent the cultural shortcomings in translation performances. Therefore, it should receive due attention in the translation classroom. The obtained data regarding the debated competence and classroom practices to develop it in learners were both positive and negative.

In this regard, some learners showed their awareness of the decisive role that intercultural competence can play in ensuring translation competence and mediating between two different languages and cultures. Nevertheless, some others showed misunderstanding of intercultural competence. Arguably, "conceptual clarity will have the added benefit of making intercultural competence more explicit and thus also more teachable than before (Cranmer 2015, 157). In crude terms, the more and the better the learners understand what intercultural competence entails, the more effort they invest in developing the different competencies and skills that it orchestrates.

Equally important, the data gleaned from the informants' answers indicate that linguistic competence still pervades translation training instead of intercultural competence. Certainly, intercultural competence should be addressed in the translator's classroom explicitly and continuously. To this end, translation trainers should gear their teaching practices to develop the debated competence in their trainees since it is an indispensable prerequisite for them as future translators.

Based on the findings of the present study, the researcher assumes that it is primordial to lay profound implications for the future of translation studies. Hence, the following recommendations could be provided.

The obtained results behove translation institutions to provide translation courses that could make trainees acquainted with the different factors involved in the translation process. Moreover, a cultural turn in translation implies a cultural turn in curriculum design and syllabi prescriptions. Furthermore, proper aims and methods should be clearly and diligently stated to be in accordance with the requirements and fundamentals of the translation process. At this juncture, learners' needs, interests, and attitudes should be taken into consideration while designing curricula and prescribing syllabi for them.

Obviously, change in teaching aims requires a re-evaluation of teaching practice. The orthodoxical view towards translation and the traditional approach that permeates translation training is doomed to be obsolete and unbefitting if the aim is a decent and accurate translation. To this end, translation program designers and trainers should give culture its due place in the translation classroom. It is also suggested that translation courses in higher institutions should include modules that familiarize students with the intercultural dimension of language, which could help them develop intercultural competence and act as mediators between two different languages and cultures.

It is a truism that the teaching-learning process may not be successful without thoughtful assessment methods. Learners do not pay much attention to cultural cues in their translation acts if they are not accentuated in the evaluation process. To this end, in the translation classroom, the assessment of learners' performances should not be restricted solely to linguistic aspects. Rather, the cultural dimension should be given due attention in the teachers' evaluation grids.

Conclusion

The obtained data might be of great importance to stakeholders in the translation arena. Translation trainees, translation trainers, and syllabus designers should be cognizant of the significance of the cultural dimension in the translation process. Undeniably, a panoply of factors converges to render the task of teaching and learning translation to reach the contemplated objectives demanding and arduous. In addition, the teaching about other cultures in translation classrooms is not without quandaries. Indisputably, learners' attitudes, teachers' perceptions, the lack of teaching materials, inadequate time, and the lack of research effort made by some learners to improve their learning are amid the predicaments that could impeach reaching the outcomes of the translation teaching-learning process. Yet, these obstacles can be, partly or completely, overcome if efforts are more invested and thoughtful consideration is put into practice.

Though the present study offered an insightful investigation of learners' attitudes toward cultural teaching and learning in their translation training, it might

be open to criticism as it could exhibit some of the shortcomings. In crude terms, the results obtained through this study cannot be generalized to other settings without similar research in other contexts and translation training institutions. Additionally, the research tools used in this study were a questionnaire and an interview. However, since translation is an empirical field, the researcher assumes that empirical studies such as translating texts and analysing learners' performances would be beneficial in visualizing learners' cognizance of the cultural dimension in translation. In this regard, the researcher recommends more research to provide practical guidelines that can help teachers and translation trainers to integrate the cultural component in translation training diligently and effectively and to gear their classroom practices toward the development of trainees' intercultural competence.

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