

Linguistic Equivalence is Not Sufficient: Saudi Translation Students' Linguistic Knowledge Compared to their Sociocultural Knowledge of the English Language

Faisal M. Alqahtani*

English Language and Translation Department, College of Language and Translation, King Saud University, PO box 145111, Riyadh 4545, Saudi Arabia

Corresponding Author: Faisal M. Alqahtani, E-mail: falqahtani@ksu.edu.sa

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ABSTRACT

English as a foreign language (EFL) and translation studies have argued that linguistic equivalence is not sufficient to transfer intended cultural meanings of the target language (TL) text. Unlike previous studies, this study investigates and compares the knowledge level of the linguistic and sociocultural competencies of selected Saudi translation students (STs) at King Saud University. A multiple-choice test questionnaire was developed and used to examine the respondents' knowledge level of two areas of linguistic competence: grammatical functions and grammatical forms of key elements of English language tense and aspect, and two areas of sociocultural competence: knowledge of native speakers' culture and the cultural dimension of the TL. The results were compared to determine any statistically significant differences. These results suggest that the respondents' linguistic competence is more developed than their sociocultural competence, and their knowledge of the forms is more developed than that of the functions of key elements of English language tense and aspect.

Key words: Linguistic Competence, Sociocultural Competence, Sociolinguistic Competence, Cultural Competence, Cultural Translation

INTRODUCTION

Research studies in the fields of language learning and translation have emphasized the importance of developing non-native speakers' knowledge of both the cultural background of the target culture (TC) and the cultural dimension of the target language (TL). These studies have demonstrated that knowledge of grammatical functions and rules of the TL can only help language learners use the foreign language (FL) accurately. However, not understanding how native speakers in different cultural contexts socially and culturally use the FL creates gaps in the crucial components of non-native language users' "communicative competence (CC)." The lack of such a vital communicative component can lead to misunderstanding and confusion when communicating with native speakers. The cultural meaning of a TL text can be transferred properly only if translation students are aware of how native speakers use their language appropriately in different social and cultural contexts.

Therefore, research studies in FL education have emphasized the importance of developing language learners' CC. Criticizing Chomsky's linguistic theory, Hymes (1972) boldly argued, "There are rules of use without which the rules of grammar would be useless" (p. 278). Building on Hymes' (1966, 1972) argument, Canale and Swain (1980) designed a model of teaching to promote the development

of language learners' CC. Celce-Murcia et al. (1995) and Celce-Murcia (2007) developed the CC model further and introduced the concept of "sociocultural competence" to account for the speakers' knowledge of socially and culturally appropriate language use. Similarly, translation studies (e.g. Catford, 1964; Bassnett, 2002; Nida, 1964 and 1994) have stressed that translation students need to develop both kinds of knowledge to be able to translate a source text both accurately and appropriately.

To approach the scope of these two types of competencies differently, linguistic competence is used in this study to refer to two types of knowledge: 1) The knowledge level of the functions of the key elements of English language tense and aspect, and 2) the knowledge level of the grammatically acceptable forms of key elements of English language tense and aspect. For example, this study attempts to determine the selected STs' knowledge level of these two sentences: "He left when she arrived", and "He had left when she arrived".

Sociocultural competence, on the other hand, refers to 1) the knowledge level of aspects of the culture of native English speakers, and 2) the knowledge level of the appropriate language use of certain English language utterances as accepted and expected by native English speakers. For example, this study attempts to determine the selected translation students' knowledge level of 'why Americans go to

the supermarket', and what phrases like, 'Paper or plastic' would mean in the supermarket context.

There is little literature examining Arab translation students' knowledge level of the grammatical functions and forms of key elements of English language tense and aspect, native speakers' culture, and the cultural dimension of the TL. The objective of this study is to examine and compare STSs' knowledge levels of these four areas to determine in which areas and competencies they are more developed. This study is not intended to create a framework or a model for translation teachers to follow but to highlight the knowledge gaps where STSs need to improve and develop. A model of how to develop linguistic and sociocultural competence is an intended project for follow-up research.

Importance of the Study

The importance of this study is derived from the importance of the inseparability of language and culture. Referencing Sapir-Whorf's thesis on this subject, Bassnett (2002) said, "In the same way that the surgeon, operating on the heart, cannot neglect the body that surrounds it, so the translator treats the text in isolation from the culture at his [or her] peril" (p. 23). Building further on Sapir-Whorf's hypothesis, Bassnett argued that no cultural reality could be expressed without a medium that embodies this cultural reality and that no culture can exist without a natural language; thus, each language represents a distinct reality. Previous studies on language learning and translation have illustrated that awareness of the inseparability of language and culture means a translation student should be able to look beyond the linguistic level to understand the cultural context of the TL text.

The importance of this study lies in its attempt to determine the selected STSs' sociocultural knowledge compared to their linguistic knowledge of the English language and to determine if Saudi language students face the same challenges that Arab translation students have in recognizing the concepts of 'aspect as pertains to English language grammar.

The Purpose of the Study

Using the CC model (Celce-Murcia, 2007), this study attempted to examine, describe, and analyze the current linguistic competence and the sociocultural competence of selected translation students. The respondents' performance was then analyzed to compare their level of linguistic knowledge with their level of sociocultural knowledge of the TL to determine any significant differences in their performance. To develop a deep understanding, the results were then discussed in relation to the research questions and existing knowledge.

Theoretical Framework

It is important to note that this research works within an existing framework, and it is not intended to be ground-breaking. In general, the current study is guided by the CC theoretical framework developed by Celce-Murcia (2007). In her model, Celce-Murcia emphasizes the importance of

developing language learners' sociocultural competence as a crucial element of their overall CC to be able to understand and use the TL in different social and cultural contexts of communication (Celce-Murcia, 2007).

The study is also guided by the notion of the "cultural turn" as advanced by Lefevere and Bassnet (1990). The cultural turn is a cultural approach to translation where more emphasis is on the cultural referent of the TL texts as crucial component for appropriate translation. Research has demonstrated that the translation act is a "cross-cultural transfer", where translators practice cross-linguistic substitution and cross-cultural communication (Snell-Hornby, 1998). The "cultural approach to translation" is used here to discuss the results of this study. Emphasizing Lefevere and Bassnet's (1990) argument, Jukko (2016) stated, "translation is an intercultural practice requiring a mind-shifting from one cultural model of the world to another" (p. 74). Studies by Catford (1978) and Nida (1964, 1994) also stress the cultural approach to translation and the importance of understanding the socially and culturally contextual meaning of the TL text for successful translation to take place.

Finally, this study is guided by previous studies on Arab translation students. These studies focused on Arab translation students' knowledge of the English language tense and aspect. Recognizing the function of the English language tense and aspect is essential for Arab translation students as they need to know which linguistic equivalent or correspondent structure in their language can convey the intended English tense or aspect. In terms of descriptive grammars, the "tense and aspect" systems of the Arabic and English languages are incommensurable. The two languages do not share the same tenses and aspects, and this calls for thorough teaching that relies more on explanation than on teaching the tense and aspect structure as facts. Advancing a cognitive approach to tense and aspect teaching, Bielak and Pawlak (2011) stated that, "generally speaking, the descriptive/reference grammars employ mostly traditional grammatical terminology and organization of the material, concentrate mostly on language facts rather than their explanations." In his discussion of the English "progressive aspect", Imai (2008) agreed that "the most important factor in language learning is understanding what the sentence really means, and grammatical explanations should serve that purpose."

Without fully understanding the concept of tense and aspect, translation students may have difficulty transforming the exact timing of an event when translating from English to Arabic. Simple past tense would be easy to transfer into Arabic, but an event in the past continuous or past perfect would be very difficult to transfer if the students have not yet fully understood the purpose of adding progressiveness or perfectiveness to the simple past tense in English. Studying how Jordanian undergraduates transfer "Arabic perfect verbs" into English, Abu-Joudeh et al. (2013) found that "students tend to overuse the simple past tense whenever they translate the Arabic bare perfect form into English" (44).

This lack of recognizing the exact timing is noted by Mattar (2001) who stated that most of the respondents in his study "used the past simple tense for the simple present

perfect tense and the present continuous for the present perfect continuous” (p. 145). He attributed this avoidance of “present perfect tense” to a lack of internalizing the real meaning and function of this tense: “This is probably due to the fact that they have not yet established proper form-meaning associations” (p. 151). He also attributed it to a “lack of understanding of the nature of this tense, which is neither wholly present nor wholly past, but rather paradoxically both present and past” (Ralph, 1967, as quoted in Mattar, 2001, p. 151).

This difficulty in recognizing the exact timing of events is probably due to the lack of the “aspect” concept in Arabic. The concept of “aspect” in the English language is probably more complicated to realize by Arabic learners of English or Arab translation students, as confirmed by Klopfenstein (2017), who said, “I have not encountered any analogous Arabic term for ‘aspect’ in my review of the literature” (p. 20).

Framed and guided by these theoretical approaches of language learning and translation, this study attempts to reemphasize the importance of developing sociocultural knowledge among STSs. Based on the results, a follow-up study could build a framework to bridge the knowledge gap between their linguistic and sociocultural competence.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Language Learners’ Communicative Competence

Since Hymes (1966) coined the term, researchers have been working to advance the concept of “communicative competence”. In response to Chomsky’s linguistic theory, which ignores the sociocultural dimension of language use, Hymes (1972), Canale and Swain (1980), Canale (1983), Celce-Murcia et al. (1995), Celce-Murcia (2007), and several other researchers continued to develop and evolve the CC model. As a general model, the CC model emphasizes that non-native speakers need to develop essential areas of competencies (linguistic, discourse, sociocultural, strategic, interactional, and formulaic) to be fully competent in the FL.

The CC model also emphasizes the need for developing FL learners’ knowledge of accurate language use and appropriate language use in different social and cultural settings according to the native speakers’ agreed rules of use. Celce-Murcia (2007) argued that Hymes (1966, 1972) coined the term “communicative competence” to account for the functional part of language, including all cultural and social factors. Developing the CC model further, she added the component of “sociocultural competence” to account for culturally appropriate language use. Celce-Murcia further added that language learners need to develop “formulaic competence” to counterbalance their developed linguistic competence: “Formulaic competence refers to those fixed and prefabricated chunks of language that speakers use heavily in everyday interactions” (p. 47). In the current study, formulaic competence was considered part of sociocultural competence.

The Importance of Developing Sociocultural Competence for Translation Students

Celce-Murcia (2007) emphasized the importance of developing sociocultural competence to equip language users with the necessary cultural knowledge needed to communicate appropriately with native speakers. Based on her definition, this component of the CC model is crucially important for FL learners and translation students. Without developing their sociocultural *competence*, translation students may encounter difficulty understanding the culturally contextual meaning of the target text. Earlier, Spinelli and Siskin (1992) argued that to understand the meaning of the FL words or utterances fully, non-native speakers need to be aware that “every expression we use has a cultural dimension” (p. 306). They cautioned that native speakers have different sets of meanings because they have different perceptions of reality from one culture to another. Translation students need to be aware of this fact to avoid attaching a contextually inappropriate meaning to an FL word or utterance when translating a TL text to their language.

In her discussion of the cultural approach to translation (as defined by Bassnett and Lefevere, 1990), Marinetti (2011) stated that “for Bassnett and Lefevere, translation is primarily contextual” (p. 26). Many embarrassing mistakes can occur when a translator denotatively translates a text without knowing its contextual meanings or its cultural referents established by native speakers. Lacking these contextual referents can result in a translator who makes “a fool” of themselves as labeled by Bennett (1997). With a good command of the language structure, it might not be assumed that they have a lack of cultural knowledge, and the people being translated could be offended (Marsh, 1990). Translation, according to Jukko (2016), involves knowledge of the connotative meaning that is dependent on the knowledge of the context, without which, full meaning cannot be delivered. Jukko here resonates Kramersch’s (2000) argument about the importance of deciphering the “cultural coherence” of the TL text.

Kramersch (2000) argued that without developing the capacity to understand the cultural referents, merely knowing the meaning of words is no guarantee of fully understanding what those words mean in real life. A good example of what Kramersch means here is the question a cashier in a department store asks during holidays: ‘Would you like a gift certificate?’. Knowing the meaning of each word is no guarantee that a non-native speaker would understand what the cashier really means. Therefore, she further added, “One of the greatest sources of difficulty for foreign readers is less the internal cohesion of the text than the cultural coherence of the discourse” (p. 59). According to Kramersch, lack of cultural knowledge of the FL can lead to difficulty understanding the cultural coherence of an FL text or utterance, and accordingly, could lead translation students to attach inappropriate meaning to the translated text, a meaning that is not the intended contextual meaning. She argued that translation is a process between two languages that can be only successful if the contextual meaning of the current language use is taken into consideration during the process.

The attachment of the inappropriate meaning to a FL word or utterance is a result of the lack of knowledge of the current contextual use of that word or use, that is, the connotative meaning of that word or utterance (Kramersch, 2014). In her discussion of “translation across linguistic codes”, Kramersch argued that the differences between two languages in the meaning of a word, a phrase, or an utterance is not between the dictionary definitions of this word, phrase, or utterance but in their contextually current uses. She explained, “These differences are based not only on conventional semantic definitions but also on the subjective, social, and cultural resonances of utterances. that is, their meaning relative to the context of the utterance” (p. 252). Thus, according to Kramersch, “Translation as multilingual practice, both from L1 to L2 and L2 to L1, is an exercise both in denotation and in connotation, in the construction of both objective and subjective meanings” (p. 252).

Therefore, translation studies have emphasized the importance of viewing translation as not only a cross-linguistic substitution but most importantly, as cross-cultural communication. For Snell-Hornby (1998), the translation process is now a process of “cross-cultural transfer,” where the translators mediate between two cultures and not merely effect a process between two languages. Thus, the importance of developing sociocultural competence stems from the view that translation is an act of “cross-cultural meditation.” Hence, several translation studies have emphasized the importance of viewing translators as “intercultural mediators.” Olk (2009) argued that “if translation is regarded as an act of communication in which a text produced for readers in one particular context is rendered for readers in another, students need to take on the role of intercultural mediators” (p. 1). Along the same line, Eyckmans (2017) argued that translation is a cross-cultural practice. She argued that that role of translators had been redefined as “intercultural mediators” who need to have “profound knowledge of source and target cultures” (p. 209).

Congruently, Guo (2012) argued that it is very important for translators to be able to play the role of cross-cultural mediators, as translation calls for their linguistic and cultural competence. Guo added, “In this sense, translation means more than [sic] merely translating the words, sentences, or articles from the source language into the target language. It means also to transfer between cultures” (p. 343).

Adopting the role of cultural mediators can allow translation students to overcome the challenge of equivalence limitedness. Accurately transferring the intended linguistic structure of the TL and the intended cultural meaning of the TL word or utterance is a challenge. Guo (2012) highlighted this challenge by arguing that “because of the differences between the original language and the target language, there exists the translation equivalence limitedness. This limitedness is not only manifested in the meaning of words, grammatical features but also manifested in cultural differences more seriously” (p. 342).

This equivalence limitedness can result in untranslatability. Catford (1978) argued, “Translation fails—or untranslatability occurs—when it is impossible to build functionally

relevant features of the situation into the contextual meaning of the TL text. Broadly speaking, the cases where this happens fall into two categories. Those where the difficulty is linguistic, and those where it is cultural” (p. 94).

Sociocultural failure occurs when, as Pesola (1991) argued, “without cultural insight and skills, even fluent speakers can seriously misinterpret the messages they hear or read, and the message they intend to communicate can be misunderstood” (p. 331).

“Fluent fools” (Bennett, 1997) results from translators having a high level of linguistic competence but a low level of sociocultural competence. As Marsh (1990) pointed out: “There is evidence (cf. Thomas, 1983) which suggests that command of a second/foreign language in structural terms assumes a corresponding ability to use the language efficiently in interaction” (p. 182). Sun (2007) also argued that such a low level of sociocultural competence could lead native speakers to “interpret violations of rules of speaking as bad manners. Ill feelings are then created” (p. 192).

A mistake in using the right language form might be taken by native speakers as a grammatical mistake, but a mistake when using language appropriate to the communication context might be misunderstood by native speakers or taken as an offense or rudeness. For FL learners, Celce-Murcia (2007) warned that “a social or cultural blunder can be far more serious than a linguistic error when one is engaged in oral communication” (p. 46). For translators, Nida (1964) argued that “Differences between cultures may cause more severe complications for the translator than do differences in language structure” (p. 130).

RESEARCH METHOD

Research Questions

1. What is the translation students’ knowledge level of the functions of key elements of English language tense and aspect (FELTA)?
2. What is the translation students’ knowledge level of the grammatically acceptable forms of key elements of English language tense and aspect (AFELTA)?
3. What is the translation students’ knowledge level of aspects of the culture of native English speakers (AspCNS)?
4. What is the translation students’ knowledge level of the appropriate language use of certain English language utterances as accepted and expected by native English speakers (AppLU)?
5. Do translation students in this study show more development in linguistic competence or sociocultural competence?

Delimitations and Limitations

For this study, ninety-four male translation students from the Department of English Language and Translation at the College of Language and Translation (COLT) at King Saud University (KSU) responded to the questionnaire. They were randomly selected from different levels. Only male students

were selected because classes at KSU are segregated by gender, and female students are on a different campus, so the researcher would not have had access to the female section. Although the questionnaire could have been emailed to the female section, the researcher deemed it necessary to be present to make sure that respondents understood the questionnaire instructions.

The heterogeneity of the respondents' background knowledge, education, and experience may have caused the most potential limitations of this study. They had different levels of English as a foreign language (EFL) learning experience, ranging from three to ten years. Another potential limitation may have resulted from the fact that some students had traveled abroad, either to English-speaking countries or to other countries where they needed to use English as the medium of communication. In addition, the sample size of this study was a limitation. The number of students who participated in this study may not be representative of the target population as the entire population of male translation students at COLT consists of 521 students. There are 878 female students in the female campus and including them in the study could have either supported or yielded different results.

To minimize the limitations of using a self-developed questionnaire, it was first refereed by two experts in the field. The questionnaire was then piloted to minimize any limitations that might result from the use of ambiguous words or phrases. For a more comprehensive study in future, more items should be included in each section.

Instrument Description

A multiple-choice questionnaire was designed with five sections. The first section was designed to collect demographic data. Sections two, three, four, and five included single-answer multiple choice questions, and the respondents were instructed to select only one acceptable answer. The second section was designed to examine the students' knowledge level of key elements of English language tense and aspect. In each item, the respondents were asked to select the option that completed the tense or aspect accurately. The third section tested the students' knowledge level of the grammatically acceptable forms of key elements of English language tense and aspect. The respondents were asked to select the grammatically acceptable sentence structures. The difference between the last two sections was the difference between knowing the function versus knowing the acceptable application of the key elements of English language tense and aspect. The fourth section was structured to explore the students' knowledge level of certain aspects of the TC. Aspects of the target culture are those basic elements of the TC practices, perspectives, products, persons, and communities (Moran, 2001). The fifth section was designed to explore the students' knowledge level of culturally and socially acceptable English language use, including knowledge of the formulaic language as defined by Celce-Murcia (2007). It is important to note that the target culture in this study refers to American culture. While the second and the third sections were designed to examine the respondents' level of linguistic

competence, the fourth and fifth were designed to examine their level of sociocultural competence.

Ten items were assigned to sections two, three, four, and five. The total possible points for the whole test were forty, with one point assigned for each acceptable answer; the scores ranged between zero and ten points for each section. While section two was arranged on a five-point scale, sections three, four, and five were arranged on a four-point scale.

The respondents were all adults and participated voluntarily in this study, and they were instructed not to write their names or their university numbers on the questionnaire instruments. The researcher gained permission from the department to conduct the study and collect data. For accuracy, the items used in sections two and three were mostly taken from two sources: The Education First (EF) website, and Azar's (2003) book.

Pilot Study

Before pilot-testing the questionnaire instrument, a panel of two EFL experts in the field of applied linguistics, one from the UK and the other from Saudi Arabia, were emailed a version of the final draft of the questionnaire. To establish the accuracy of the instrument, they were asked to examine the clarity, relevance, and plausibility of the questionnaire items. One of the experts was an EFL professional with a long experience of EFL teaching in Saudi Arabia and other parts of the world. The other expert was a professor of applied linguistics from King Saud University. They were asked to evaluate the questionnaire individually, and modifications were applied according to their feedback before and after conducting the pilot study. The questionnaire instrument was then piloted before the onset of the study with a group of twenty students from the main sample, to whom the questionnaire was distributed later.

Cronbach's alpha was used as a measure of internal consistency, and reliability in this study was established using the pilot study data. The questionnaire had an adequate level of reliability with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.78 and Cronbach's alpha was calculated using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 25.0.

DATA ANALYSIS

Procedures

Descriptive statistics (i.e. means and standard deviations) were used to summarize the quantitative data obtained from the questionnaire. Using SPSS v.25, the responses were coded and analyzed, and the frequency summation and percentage calculations were tallied. The data were also cross-tabulated to compare the responses of the different sections, and tables were created accordingly.

The answers were coded as either (1) for a correct choice or (0) for an incorrect choice. A paired sample t-test was performed to examine any statistically significant difference between the respondents' mean scores in the four sections of the questionnaire. A paired sample t-test was performed to

compare the respondents' mean scores in sections two and three and their mean scores in sections four and five. Then, the mean scores in section two were combined with those in section three, and the mean scores in sections four and five were combined as well. A paired sample t-test was then performed to compare the combined mean scores. Statistical significance for all analyses was set at a P-value of 0.01 or less.

Data Presentation and Analysis

Ninety-four students responded to the questionnaire. They were all native speakers of Arabic majoring in English language and translation with a GPA that ranged from (2 and above) to (4 and above) out of 5. The majority (95%) had an average of 3 and above. They all reported that they had various levels of authentic language input, such as watching American TV shows and movies, both comedies and dramas. The results demonstrated that the majority (84%) of the respondents had at least four years of experience with EFL learning.

While more than 54% of the respondents reported that they had visited a foreign country, only about 26% had visited an English-speaking country. The nature of these visits may need to be explored in a future study as the results may provide further insight.

RESULTS

STSS' Knowledge Level of FELTA, AFELTA, AspCNS, and AppLU

Research question 1. What is the translation students' knowledge level of the functions of key elements of English language tense and aspect (FELTA)?

To answer research question 1, section two was designed to examine the respondents' knowledge level of FELTA. There were ten items with five options. Each item was structured to explain a grammatical function of one English tense or aspect. The respondents were asked to select the correct option and the first item is as follows:

The is one of several forms of the present tense in English. It is used to describe habits, unchanging situations, general truths, and fixed arrangements.

- Simple present tense
- Present continuous
- Present perfect
- Present perfect continuous
- Not sure

The tenses and aspects addressed in section two were present tenses and aspects (including simple present tense, present continuous, present perfect, and present perfect continuous), past tenses and aspects (including simple past, past continuous, past perfect, and past perfect continuous), and future tenses and aspects (including simple future, future continuous, future perfect, and future perfect continuous). Table 1 shows that less than half of the respondents (42.3%) managed to select the correct answers.

Research question 2. What is the translation students' knowledge level of the grammatically acceptable forms

of key elements of English language tense and aspect (AFELTA)?

To answer research question two, section three was designed to measure the respondents' knowledge level of AFELTA. There were ten items with four possible answers, and respondents were asked to select the correct answer. The first item is below:

Khalid _____ to school every morning.

- is going
- goes
- go
- Not sure

The tenses and aspects forms addressed in section three questions were the same as those addressed in section two above. Table 2 shows that most of the respondents (75.5%) managed to select the correct answers.

Research question 3. What is the translation students' knowledge level of aspects of the culture of native English speakers (AspCNS)?

To answer research question three, section four was designed to measure the respondents' knowledge level of AspCNS. American culture is the intended target culture for this study. There were ten statements with blanks followed by four possible options. The respondents were asked to select the correct answers. The first item is below:

The demographic group born during the post-World War II, approximately between the years 1946 and 1964, are known as _____.

- Baby boomers
- Baby bombers
- Baby generation
- Not sure

The cultural issues addressed in this section are basic aspects of American culture, which included history, significant days, shopping, the political system, sports, and cultural practices. Table 3 shows that less than half of the respondents (44.3%) managed to select the correct answers.

Research question 4. What is the translation students' knowledge level of the appropriate language use of certain English language utterances as accepted and expected by native English speakers (AppLU)?

To answer research question four, section five was designed to examine the respondents' knowledge level of AppLU. Selected examples of American language utterances were selected for this section. There were ten statements followed by four possible options. The first item is below:

If you're unsure of an adult American woman's preferred title or marital status, it would be most appropriate to use _____.

- Ms.
- Miss
- Mrs.
- Not sure

This section included basic language forms, structures, phrases, basic speech acts, and common sayings that are used daily by Americans to communicate, such as 'Paper or

plastic?' Table (4) shows only (34.3%) of the respondents managed to select acceptable answers.

Paired samples test

Research question 5. Do translation students in this study show more development in linguistic competence or socio-cultural competence?

The questionnaire test had four sections: the first two sections were designed to determine the respondents' current linguistic knowledge (FELTA and AFELTA) and the latter two sections were designed to determine the respondents' current sociocultural knowledge (AspCNS and AppLU). To answer research question five and find any differences in the respondents' performance in the four sections, a paired sample t-test was conducted as follows.

Table 1. Knowledge level of FELTA

Questions	Number of correct answers (N= 94)	Percent (%)	Mean	Std. Deviation
Mean number of correct answers	39.8	42.3%	4.23	2.42

Table 2. Knowledge level of AFELTA

Questions	Number of correct answers (N= 94)	Percent (%)	Mean	Std. Deviation
Mean number of correct answers	71	75.5%	7.54	1.57

Table 3. Knowledge level of AspCNS

Questions	Number of correct answers (N= 94)	Percent (%)	Mean	Std. Deviation
Mean number of correct answers	41.6	44.3%	4.43	2.58

Table 4. Knowledge level of AppLU

Questions	Number of correct answers (N= 94)	Percent (%)	Mean	Std. Deviation
Mean number of correct answers	32.2	34.3%	3.43	1.20

Table 5. Paired samples test between respondents' scores on FELTA and AFELTA

	Section 2: FELTA			Section 3: AFELTA			t -value	p (2-tailed)
	N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD		
Section 2 * Section 3	94	4.23	2.41	94	7.54	1.57	11.84	0.00

Paired samples test between respondents' scores on FELTA and AFELTA.

Table 5 illustrates that the t-value test for paired samples is 11.84, and it is statistically significant at a P-value level of 0.01 or less (a value set for the analysis here). Accordingly, the respondents seemed to have more knowledge of AFELTA (mean, 7.54) than of FELTA (mean, 4.23).

Aired samples test between respondents' scores on AspCNS and AppLU.

Table 6 illustrates that the t-value test for paired samples is 4.80, and it is statistically significant at a P-value level of 0.01 or less. This indicates that there is a significant difference between the means of the participating students' scores on questions related to AspCNS (mean, 4.42) and their scores on questions related to AppLU (mean, 3.42).

Paired samples test between respondents' combined mean scores

Table 7 compares the respondents' overall combined mean scores of FELTA and AFELTA (linguistic knowledge) to their overall combined mean scores of AspCNS and AppLU (sociocultural knowledge). Table 7 shows that the t-value test for paired samples is 8.01, and it is statistically significant at a P-value level of 0.01 or less. This indicates that the participating students' performance is higher on questions related to linguistic knowledge (FELTA and AFELTA, M: 11.78) than their performance on questions related to sociocultural knowledge (AspCNS and AppLU, M: 7.85).

DISCUSSION

The overall purpose of this study is to examine the participating translation students' level of linguistic competence compared to their level of sociocultural competence. It aims to determine whether the respondents have more knowledge of FELTA and AFELTA than knowledge of AspCNS and AppLU. Demonstrating the selected students' knowledge gap with respect to their linguistic and socio-cultural competence can be used to improve the translation teaching at KSU. To establish a robust understanding of the respondents' performance, the results are discussed in light of the argument of previous studies in the fields of language learning and translation. Sections (5.1 and 5.2) address the first four research questions. While section (5.2.1) addresses the first and second research questions, section (5.2.2) addresses the third and fourth research questions. Finally, section (5.2.3) addresses only the fifth research question.

Table 6. Paired samples test between respondents' scores on AspCNS and AppLU

	Section 4: AspCNS			Section 5: AppLU			t -value	p (2-tailed)
	N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD		
Section 4 * Section 5	94	4.42	2.58	94	3.42	1.99	4.80	0.00

Table 7. Paired samples test between respondents' mean scores on (FELTA + AFELTA) and (AspCNS + AppLU)

	Sections 2+3 (FELTA + AFELTA)			Sections 4+5 (AspCNS + AppLU)			t -value	p (2-tailed)
	N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD		
Section 2+3 * Section 4+5	94	11.78	3.04	94	7.85	4.16	8.01	0.00

Respondents' Performance on FELTA, AFELTA AspCNS, and AppLU (Research Questions Addressed 1, 2, 3, and 4)

The overall results of this study indicate that the respondents' knowledge level of linguistic competence is more developed than their knowledge level of sociocultural competence. The respondents demonstrated a higher performance on questions related to knowledge of FELTA and AFELTA. Their performance on the questions related to knowledge of AspCNS and AppLU was not as high, especially for questions related to AppLU.

This was expected, as it confirms previous studies' findings that demonstrated the emphasis on teaching acceptable language forms in English language classrooms. Previous studies also demonstrated that non-native English language teachers focus more on teaching language forms than on teaching the TC and culturally appropriate language use for different reasons. Most importantly, non-native teachers of English may not be socioculturally competent enough to teach the TC or the appropriate language use as defined by native speakers (Al-Qahtani, 2003), and the same assumption might be applied to translation professors.

Differences in Respondents' Performance on FELTA, AFELTA AspCNS, and AppLU (Research Questions Addressed 1, 2, 3, and 4)

A paired sample test was performed to summarize the respondents' performance differences on the four sections of the questionnaire.

Respondents' performance differences on FELTA and AFELTA (research questions addressed 1, and 2)

There was a significant difference in the scores between the respondents' performance on answering questions related to knowledge of AFELTA (M: 7.54, SD = 1.57) and their performance on answering questions related to knowledge of FELTA (M: 4.23, SD = 2.41); $t(93) = 11.84, p = 0.00$. This result is somewhat expected, as EFL teaching is usually more focused on teaching grammatically acceptable forms than explaining these forms' meaning or functions in depth.

The abstractness element in recognizing the meaning of each tense and aspect, what they are used for, and when they are used can be a challenge for Arab EFL learners. The

translation students in this study are EFL learners, and so they may have the same difficulties. It might be assumed that EFL teachers themselves may not be aware of the abstractness and complexity of the concepts of the English "tense and aspect," and thus may have placed less emphasis on the teaching of FELTA than the teaching the AFELTA. This claim needs to be investigated further in future studies.

Klopfenstein (2017) argued that Arab EFL learners may have difficulty understanding the concept of 'aspect' due to the lack of equivalence of this term in Arabic. Thus, it seems that it was less complicated for the respondents to select the correct forms rather than the correct functions of the key elements of English tense and aspect.

Respondents' performance differences on AspCNS and AppLU (research questions addressed 3 and 4)

The participating students showed a higher knowledge level of AspCNS than they did on questions related to knowledge of AppLU. There was a significant difference in the scores between the respondents' performance in answering questions related to the knowledge of AspCNS (M: 4.42, SD = 2.58) and their performance on answering questions related to knowledge of AppLU (M: 3.42, SD = 1.99); $t(93) = 4.80, p = 0.00$.

This result is somewhat expected, as knowing that Americans go to supermarkets to buy groceries is easier to understand and remember than understanding what a cashier at a supermarket means by saying "Paper or plastic?" For example, although the respondents were all students from the English and Translation Department, and almost half (40.4%) were in their third and fourth year of undergraduate studies, only 9.6% managed to select the correct option for the following item:

In the American politics, describing a current president as "a lame-duck president" means _____.

- The current president likes lame ducks
- The current president' successor has been already elected
- The current president is rude to other people
- Not sure

The respondents' weak performance on AppLU (M: 3.43) seems contradictory to their responses on one item in section one (other language input). The majority of the respondents reported that they watch American movies and

TV. This should have offered these respondents a great deal of exposure to authentic language input in culturally authentic contexts. A possible explanation for the respondents' low score on answering questions related to AppLU is that there might have been translated subtitles, and the respondents might have paid more attention to the translated subtitles (Arabic transcripts) at the bottom of the screen more than to the English language. This needs to be investigated in future studies.

Performance differences on (FELTA + AFELTA) Versus (AspCNS + AppLU) (research question addressed 5)

As defined earlier in this study, the questions in sections two and three (FELTA + AFELTA) were designed to examine the respondents' linguistic competence, and the questions in sections four and five (AspCNS + AppLU) examined their sociocultural competence. To observe differences in the respondents' performance on questions related to linguistic knowledge compared to their performance on questions related to sociocultural knowledge, a comparison was performed between the combined mean score in sections two and three and the combined mean score in sections four and five. Then, a paired sample test was conducted between the two overall mean scores.

There was a significant difference in the scores between the respondents' performance in answering questions related to knowledge of linguistic competence (FELTA + AFELTA, $M: 11.78, SD = 3.04$) and their performance in answering questions related to knowledge of sociocultural competence (AspCNS + AppLU, $M: 7.85, SD = 4.16$); $t(93) = 8.01, p = 0.00$.

The results of the differences in the respondents' performance on AFELTA compared to AppLU, and the difference in their performance on (FELTA + AFELTA) compared to (AspCNS + AppLU) were expected as they agree with previous research on FL teaching (Seelye, 1997; Celce-Murcia et al., 1995; Canale and Swain, 1980; Kramsch, 1998; Byram and Risager, 1999). These studies and others have demonstrated that there is more emphasis on teaching language rules and less emphasis on sociocultural knowledge teaching. The respondents' low scores in (AspCNS + AppLU) compared to their higher scores in (FELTA + AFELTA) can be used to support what these studies have demonstrated. This result also may support other studies that indicated that the lack of teaching of the AppLU is due to the lack of preparation of teachers themselves (e.g. Konishi, 2016; Celce-Murcia, 2007; Al-Qahtani, 2003). Commenting on this, Konishi (2016) said, "It is especially challenging for second- and foreign-language instructors to help students develop sociocultural competence because most instructors have a better knowledge of linguistic rules than the sociocultural knowledge of the target language" (p. 40).

CONCLUSION AND PEDAGOGICAL NOTES

Different from previous studies, this study aimed at investigating and comparing selected Saudi translation students' linguistic and sociocultural competencies. Approaching the

concepts of linguistic and sociocultural competencies differently, the linguistic competence in this study refers to knowledge of language forms and functions, and the sociocultural competence refers to knowledge of culture and appropriate language use. Based on the results of this study, it might be argued that STSs would have similar difficulty Arab students have in translating English texts. Therefore, this study should provide the basis for further research in the Saudi context. Although the results of this study cannot be generalized, the study may suggest that like Arab translation students, STSs may have difficulty translating the following into Arabic:

- 1) He left when she arrived.
- 2) He had left when she arrived.

Without fully understanding the differences between the past simple and the past perfect in English, these students would mostly translate both as simple past tenses. Translation students may only accurately transfer the intended meaning of the second sentence if they recognize the function of using the past perfect instead of the past simple in the second sentence. Not being able to recognize the difference is probably due to a lack of "proper form-meaning association" (Mattar, 2001, p. 151). Abu-Joudeh et al. (2013) also found that Arab translation students in their study overused the past simple tense when translating from Arabic into English. As explained by Klopfenstein (2017), the perfective verbs in Arabic do exist, but they are not explained or referred to as "aspect," which makes the concept of "aspect" in English very complicated to understand by Arab students. Therefore, explaining the meaning and functions of key elements of the English language tense and aspect becomes a very crucial task for translation professors to help their students find the proper equivalent structure during translation.

With respect to sociocultural competence, translation, as discussed by several translation studies, is not a cognitive game of finding linguistic equivalence, but rather, it is an act of cultural transfer. Based on their performance on the questions related to the sociocultural competence (AspCNS and AppLU), it might be assumed that the respondents in this study could encounter difficulty in appropriately transferring the intended meaning of the following sentence suggested by Kramsch (2000): "Although he was over 20 years old, he still lived at home" (p. 59). She explained that this sentence contains a troubling structure for non-native speakers who do not understand the cultural coherence of this sentence. Being unaware of the cultural referents of the American values of individualism and independence, the respondents in this study may not be able to coherently understand why one would use "although" to illustrate a contradictory aspect, as argued by Kramsch. Due to a low level of sociocultural competence, the cultural dimension of Kramsch's sentence would cause more complications than its structure, as explained by Nida (1964). Accordingly, they would have difficulty translating it appropriately into Arabic; instead, "untranslatability" occurs, as indicated by Catford (1978).

In conclusion, translation departments and translation professors need to cultivate a mindset that values the crucial role that the sociolinguistic/sociocultural approach plays in translation teaching. They need to be cognizant that

translation is a process of a cross-cultural communication as much as a process of linguistic substitutions, if not more so, and that this communication can only be effective and successful if language and culture are seen as one whole, and denotative meaning is not enough to transfer the intended cultural referents of a word, a phrase, or an utterance. They need to be aware that they need to produce living intercultural mediators and not merely passive human machines. As Nida (1994) affirmed:

The crucial problems of effective interlingual communication are not primarily linguistic, but sociolinguistic, because it is in the blend of language and culture, of words and concepts, and of semantics and pragmatics that the real significance of translation and interpretation can be best understood and the principles of sociolinguistics can be most usefully employed (p. 50).

Without internalizing and adopting this view, translation teaching, like language teaching, would continue to place greater emphasis on the teaching of linguistic knowledge and less emphasis on the teaching of sociocultural knowledge. It is thus incumbent upon translation teachers to raise their students' awareness of the inseparability of language and culture. To accomplish that, they need to engage sociocultural theory and the CC model as a guide to promote translation students' sociocultural competence development.

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Declaration of Interest

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest.

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