

An Investigation into the Similarities and Differences between Arabic and English Proverbs

Mustafa Hasan Ahtif¹, Nilotpala Gandhi²

¹PhD. Research scholar, School of Languages, Gujarat University, Ahmedabad, India

²Professor, School of Languages, Gujarat University, Ahmedabad, India

*Corresponding Author: Mustafa Hasan Ahtif

Email: mustafaihtayyif@gmail.com

Received: April 6, 2023

Revised: May 2, 2023

Accepted: May 18, 2023

Abstract

Proverbs are essential in every language and civilization. Proverbs in each society improve communication by providing users with more confidence. However, translators sometimes get them wrong. This study reveals how the quality of proverb translation is determined. It also displays many commonalities between the flaws discovered when translating proverbs using partial equivalence and paraphrasing. The most prevalent challenges when translating proverbs using partial equivalents and paraphrases are those relating to comprehension, communicating an inaccurate interpretation, and distorting the message. When utilizing literal translation, the most common difficulties are erroneous lexical selection and too literal translation. Finally, this article suggests improving the accuracy of proverbial translations into Arabic. In addition, numerous suggestions for further investigation are presented. Because the English and Arabic languages are somehow related, this article is progressing in comparing their proverbs. As a result, the title of this study is "Comparative proverbs of Arabic and English." The study aims to research proverbs and their significance to individuals and the many sorts of sayings used in English and Arabian civilizations. Furthermore, it compares the proverbs used in English and Arabic languages.

Keywords: Proverbs, Language, Arabic, Lexical, Arabian Civilizations, Comparative

Introduction

Proverbs are statements passed down through centuries to express wisdom, truth, or morals. Because of their importance in preserving religious, cultural, and historical aspects, machine translation has been used to translate them from one language to another. It also aimed to validate the necessity of human interaction in resolving the accuracy problem. Words with different meanings bring numerous obstacles and difficulties to online translation. On the other hand, the differences in linguistic patterns between English and Arabic make translation difficult at times, as both languages belong to unrelated families.

Aristotle is related to paremiology, the study, and collection of proverbs derived from the Greek word paroima. Frequently, proverbs are interpreted as metaphors. Proverbs also referred to as maxims, address essential human behavior or interaction concepts.

Proverbs examine the fundamental notions of behavior or interaction among individuals, also known as maxims. Frequently, proverbs are deemed metaphorical. The study and collection of

proverbs are known as paremiology (from the Greek word paroima, meaning "proverb"), and Aristotle is credited with developing the discipline.

The following are definitions of Proverbs:

Proverbs are well-known and frequently repeated sayings that communicate a truth based on common sense or human experience. They are traditional proverbs that impart advice or a moral concisely (The Oxford Dictionary of Proverbs, 2004: ix).

Presumably, proverbs reflect the most potent linguistic tools available to help humans attain the highest level of elegance. The impact of structuring figurative and non-literal language may extend the past language itself (Mukhalad Malik, 2019). Thus, proverbs are a luxury and a thorough reflection of the communication activities of the wealthiest man. They serve as effective spoken or written instruments in constant mental activity, conveying countless sensations, intentions, experiences, purposes, Etc.

Proverbs are "statements containing at least a topic and a comment" (Dundes, 1975; Milner, 1971). In addition, "proverbs are frequently spoken, conversational forms with unknown origins and usually a didactic role" (Giddy, 2012; Norrick, 1985).

Arewa and Dundes (1964) define a proverb as "a phrase that summarises a situation, passes judgement, suggests a course of conduct, or acts as a secular precedent for contemporary activity." According to Yusuf (1997), a proverb is "a phrase referring to a short, repeated, witty summary of experience that serves a social purpose."

Arabic and American proverbs

Unless pragmatics can encompass a whole view of what, how, and where something could be, proverbs are often blind. Since pragmatics refers to the meaning that extends beyond what is physically conveyed, this information can be regarded as entirely trustworthy. It is feasible to decipher proverbs based on their semantic frames, regardless of whether they are metaphorical assertions or cultural discourse. Therefore, proverbs are figurative and signifying actions of meaning that mediate interpretation and negotiate pragmatic signification on linguistic, philosophical, and cultural levels. Some proverbs illuminate universal truths of human existence, shared traditions, and shared ideas. Although languages are diverse and there are significant cultural distinctions, this is the case. Proverbs constitute and reveal the cultural identity of a particular civilization. Such expressions have proven to transcend linguistic and cultural gaps throughout human history.

As a result of the metaphorical character of their core, proverbs have become an integral part of how language is employed. According to Hofstede's view, culture is always a communal phenomenon because it is at least partially shared by people who were educated in the same social context. It implies that culture can never exist independently of other individuals. It is not possible to genetically transmit one's culture. It is not the result of a person's genetic makeup but rather their upbringing and social environment.

On the one hand, culture must be distinguished from human nature, and on the other hand, it must be distinguished from a person's personality (Hofstede, 1991, p. 4). Similarly, Susan Bassnett illustrates that "no language can exist unless it is rooted in the framework of culture, and no culture can exist if it does not have the structure of natural language at its core" (Bassnett, 2002, p. 22). It recalls Plato's parallel of the body and spirit, in which culture is the

spirit that sits within the body of language, and the combination of the two generates the "continuation of life force" (Bassnett, 2002).

Even though a lot is known about proverbs, including their purpose, how they sound, how old they are, and the tale that lies behind them, there is still much controversy surrounding the definition of precisely what makes up a proverb (Mieder, 1993). "little is known about the cognitive foundations of proverb production, pragmatics, expertise, emotion, or the micro cognitive aspects of proverb comprehension." However, numerous people throughout history have attempted to classify, better define, and structure the use of proverbs (Honeck, 1997). Depending on the dictionary that you consult, a proverb can be described as "a brief saying in general use, held to embody a general truth" (Concise Oxford English Dictionary), "a condensed but memorable saying embodying some important fact of experience that is taken as true by many people," (The Free Dictionary by Farlex), "a brief popular epigram or maxim," (Merriam-Ninth Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary), "a complex, intriguing, and essential verbal entity (Honeck, 1997). According to some other definitions, a proverb is a short saying that presents a well-known fact that is popular and familiar to all (Bakalla, 1984), or it is a child of experience handed down to us by our ancestors (Penfield & Mary, 1988). According to these and other definitions, proverbs are a mechanism for societies to instruct their members on how to behave when confronted with challenging circumstances and offer guidance for finding solutions to problems. There are various ways in which proverbs can be expressed and various contexts in which they might be used. There is a wide range of differences between them in terms of content, age, form, structure, sort, and provenance. Because many individuals and places can relate to specific proverbs, these sayings are shared by a wide variety of cultures and have been around for a long time. Others that deal with daily life issues are only appropriate to a specific geographic place, a particular circumstance, or a particular point in time. Because there are so many different famous proverbs, it is not unreasonable to assume that some of them are in direct opposition to one another (Islam, 2009). Even though two different proverbs appear to contradict one another directly, it is still possible for either one to be accurate when applied to a particular circumstance.

Problem Statement

Proverbs in each community enhance communication in a better way as it gives users more confidence. English and Arabic languages are somehow interrelated. Hence, this research is moving forward in assessing the comparison of their proverbs. Therefore, this article is entitled "Comparative proverbs of Arabic and English."

Literature Review

According to Stiles, 1980, The deliberate act is an essential part because it clearly shows how the statement is "thought to be"; it also hints at the meaning that the speaker had in mind; and the intentional deed is typically carried out by the correctly employed proverb (Stiles, 1980, p. 234). Moreover, Akmajian et al., 2001 explain that It is self-evident that proverbs are rarely utilized literally and directly; instead, they are typically used nonlinearly and indirectly. It is because most people dislike telling their audience what to do. Instead, they employ proverbs to cushion the blow by removing themselves from the counsel or warning (Akmajian et al., 2001, p.387). Further, Leech, 1980 states that described, a proverb is a collection of lexical components (words) that have been connected to form larger semantic units. The speaker encodes these units, and the hearer is responsible for decoding them. Leech asserts that proverbs have their conceptual meaning, which is an essential aspect of comprehending

and interpreting language, and that the conceptual meaning of practically everything is the same, independent of language because conceptual meaning is a "universal quality of the mind" (Leech, 1980, p.13). Because these words are linked to concepts related to the human experience, the potential meanings of individual words, which together make up the overarching conceptual meaning of proverbs, have many additional essential aspects. It is valid only when these words are used in specific communicative circumstances. This type of meaning is referred to as "associative " and can pertain to a wide range of meanings. Connotative, affective, stylistic, and collocative connotations are the most important. People's diverse experiences result in many alternative meanings that might be connected with a term. Gairness and Redman illustrate that proverbs usually consist of the association of concepts due to collocation when regarded as an expression of literary style.

Authors use the latter type occasionally to create varied visual effects intended to astound readers. Whether or not the semantic function of the collocated words in the proverb can be entirely deduced from the meaning of the individual words. There will always be differences of opinion in the English language about what constitutes an acceptable collocation and whether or not this can be said to be the case. However, the collocations mentioned in the following proverbs are conventional. These collocations are founded mainly on the fact that their meanings are antonymous, and no two individuals would argue whether or not they are correct: "What you sow is what you will reap," as the saying says. Gairness and Redman (1986) We employ proverbs to reinforce our arguments, express broad generalizations, persuade or control others, rationalize our inadequacies, call into question particular behavioral patterns, satirize social evils, and make light of absurd situations. All of this is accomplished through the use of proverbs in our speech. It should come as no surprise that, over time, proverbs that have endured and made significant contributions to the English language have remained an essential component of that language and can thus improve our daily discussions. They breathe new life into the language, making it a more effective communication tool. When we not only talk with our mouths and do not utilize our expression of a state of mind but instead employ a generic viewpoint, an answer carries more weight. According to Finnegan, proverbs have been shown to occur in all communication events regarding their roles. It has been proven to be relevant due to its effectiveness and influence.

Finnegan (1994) They can be used for public speaking, coaching, judging, adding to speeches, and making talks more interesting. Hanzén (2007) discovered that English language instructors favor using proverbs in the classroom. Lontas (2002) conducted a separate study on the opinions of EFL student-teachers and L2 learners on idiomaticity in general. He demonstrated to the class that the students understood the importance of idioms in communication and that they desired to learn more about them. A theory, according to Solomon et al. (2012), is "a set of interconnected constructs, definitions, and propositions that provide a systematic understanding of a phenomenon by identifying relationships among variables to explain and predict such phenomena." A theory, in other terms, "provides a systematic picture of a phenomenon by outlining the relationships between variables in order to explain and forecast such phenomena." In linguistic terms, a proverb is a group of words that might be phrases or sentences and represent a concise but comprehensive idea. They appear in many different forms and can be found in all aspects of life. Regardless of their shape, they all have multiple speaking acts, most of which are indirect. Individual words in a proverb can be construed in various ways, and these interpretations vary depending on which proverb is employed and in what context. Proverbs are used to perform specific purposes within the context of

communication, possibly their most important feature. They are incredibly significant in language because they stimulate particular behaviors, enhance knowledge, and draw attention to facts and truths. These items appear to be an essential component of human contact, playing a part in transmitting ideas, constructing meanings, and other such activities. Interpreting proverbs, how to use them, and how they connect to communication are critical components of correctly understanding language (Malik, M., 2019).

In light of the findings of the present research, which shed light on the challenge of translating English proverbs into Arabic, it is crucial to note that proverbs may be found in any language, and the significance of proverbs can change significantly from one culture to another (Dabaghi et al., 2010). According to Alshammari (2015), proverbs are employed to communicate the cultural wisdom of a society. They are present in every language to communicate particular meanings. Samovar et al. (2009) demonstrated that proverbs carry particular messages to express cultural values and ideas. Similarly, this finding suggests that proverbs have been used throughout history. According to Meider (1985), a proverb is "a short, generally known sentence of the folk that contains wisdom, truth, morals, and traditional views in a metaphorical form and which is handed down from generation to generation." This definition describes a sentence that is "generally known" by the populace and is "short." According to Mollanazar (2001), an additional definition of proverbs is that a proverb is "a unit of meaning in a specific context via which the speaker and hearer arrive at the same meaning." Even in today's modern culture, proverbs continue to serve as an effective means of communication, although their frequency of application can differ from one area of society to another. According to Alshammari (2015), this practical mode of communication serves two primary functions: literary and practical. The first interpretation suggests that proverbs can be utilized in prose, poetry, and music, while the second interpretation suggests that proverbs have particular features that are useful for everyday tasks. Both interpretations are correct.

According to Ilyas (2013), "connotation means the connections that a word may bring to the mind of the hearer according to his cognition and experience that are supplementary to its literal meaning or the definition given by the dictionary." Similarly, the connotation was described by Hatim (1997) as "extra meanings that a lexical term acquires beyond its core, referential meaning" (p. 228). Nida refers to the emotional impact that words have not just on the people who hear them but also on the people who utter them as "connotation" (1964). Connotation is a notion or emotion evoked by a word, and it can be positive or negative. Anything that people consider to have some worth and can be treasured has positive connotations, while negative connotations have the opposite effects on people. Carpuat (2015) pointed out that connotation is a notion or emotion evoked by a word, and it can be positive or negative. Accordingly, the negative or positive feeling that a word can provoke in a person who is either the listener or the speaker is what is referred to as the term's connotation.

Syzdykov (2013) studied folk proverbs and sayings, considering them an essential aspect of the culture of human language. The results of this study supported the claim that it is challenging to translate English proverbs into other languages. The primary purpose of his research was to decipher the meanings of English and Kazakh proverbs, which can represent various aspects of human existence, such as "social experience, outlook, the originality of artistic attitudes and tastes, mental and ethical and aesthetic values." He discovered that translating English proverbs into other languages is not as straightforward as expected. In addition, he added that the use of proverbs helps pupils "grow creativity, broaden their vocabulary, help them learn the structure of the language, and enhance memory as well as the emotional expressiveness

of speech." In addition, he mentioned that translating proverbs is not a simple operation and that more labor is highly required.

Research Gaps

From the reviews, below gaps have been observed; (1) The studies exploring only the proverbs and its uses in certain places; (2) The students or teachers were well used to about proverbs, which were making them more confident; (3) The studies also explored the understanding of proverbs in terms of communicative significance; (4) The studies also explored that the proverbs make positive interaction among people; (5) Beyond this, no study has been done that was exploring the comparison between proverbs of different localities.

Objectives of The Study

This research aims at the comparison of proverbs using in Arabic and English language. Beyond this, we have following objectives; (1) To study the Proverbs and its importance for the people; (2) To study the different types of proverbs being used in English and Arabian communities; (3) To put a comparison among the proverbs being used in English and Arabic Language.

Methods of The Study

This research is comparing the uses of proverbs of Indian and Arabic language. Hence, for this study, majorly we have used secondary sources to compare. The primary sources for this research may be dictionary of English and Arabic language. Along with the dictionary, we will use secondary sources as the published papers, blogs, website, journals, etc. with that we can analyze the uses of proverbs. Thereafter, we will compare the proverbs, meaning and their uses in both languages using content analysis techniques.

Results and Discussion

The primary objective of this research was to investigate some comparative proverbs in Arabic and their equivalents in English to highlight vital socio-cultural distinctions between the two languages. In order to determine how these analogous proverbs in the two languages and the cultural distinctions they convey are distinct from one another, a contrastive method will be utilized. The categorization of topics served as the basis for the selection of example proverbs. The comparative analysis of authentic and representative responses of members of two cultural communities, Arabic and English, to particular situations that are similar to one another, in which they are attempting to strengthen their points of view through the utilization of proverbial expressions, constitutes the thematic approach. An individual's perceptions and values regarding cultural diversity can transform after being exposed to Arabic and English proverbs. This type of exposure can also facilitate new understanding and insights into the cultural concepts of other countries, which can enhance an individual's ability to work effectively across cultural boundaries.

Language and culture are inextricably linked, as language is the medium via which individuals communicate their thoughts and, in turn, convey the worldview of the culture to which they belong. Even if they come from the same cultural background, individuals who speak different languages have developed distinctive perspectives on the world. Proverbs are a compilation of observations of social life, natural occurrences, and the code that determines the relationships between people. They are also a testimony left by ancestors that is essential for the education of future generations. Because of the metaphorical nature of their core, proverbs have evolved

into an essential component of how language is used. According to Hofstede's theory, culture is always a communal phenomenon since it is at least partially shared with people who live in the same social milieu, which is where it was learned. In other words, culture can only exist as a shared experience. It is not possible to pass on one's culture genetically. It is not a product of one's genetic makeup but instead of the social context in which one was raised.

On the one hand, culture ought to be differentiated from human nature, and on the other, it ought to be differentiated from an individual's personality (Hofstede, 1991). In the same train of thinking, Suasn Bassnett illustrates that "no language can exist unless it is entrenched in the framework of culture, and no culture can exist which does not include at its centre, the structure of natural language" (Bassnett, 2002). It is reminiscent of Plato's comparison of the body and spirit, in which culture is the spirit that resides within the body of language. The combination of the two creates the "continuation of life energy."

The cultural background of Arabic speakers is very different from that of English speakers. The former is founded on the religion of Islam and the "Bedouin" environment of the Arab desert. In contrast, the latter is founded on the heritage of the Greeks and Romans, Christianity, and the region's cold weather. Because of the significant cultural variations between the two languages, the expressions in both languages, such as idioms and proverbs, are significantly different (Nadjib, 2001). Proverbs are "special, fixed, unchanged phrases which have special, fixed, unchanged meanings" (Ghazala, 1995, p. 138), and their traditional function is didactic because they contain "wisdom, truth, morals and traditional views" (Meider, 2004, p. 3). In other words, proverbs are phrases that have remained the same over time but have had their meanings changed. The transfer of a culture's linguistic and cultural norms from one generation to the next is accomplished through proverbs. Therefore, considerable care must be taken when reproducing proverbs, and literal interpretation should not be expected. When doing so, one must keep in mind the proverbs' cultural, religious, and historical context to ensure that the core of their meaning is preserved.

Conclusion

The use of proverbs in communication gives users more confidence and makes communication more effective and interactive. With the comparison, it can be expected that the proverbs of both languages (i.e., English and Arabic language) are efficient to use. However, Indian proverbs make users more interactive with each other, making communication between people more effective. Also, from the study, it may be concluded that the people using proverbs are observed as more literate and have the best personality among others.

Proverbs are well-known assertions of truth based on common sense or human experience that are often repeated. They are timeless proverbs that impart lessons or principles.

It is considered that proverbs represent the most potent linguistic resources available to humans seeking the highest level of elegance. The structure of figurative and nonliteral language may have effects beyond the language itself. Thus, proverbs are a luxury and a complete picture of the communicative acts of the wealthiest guy. Moreover, "proverbs are typically spoken, conversational forms with uncertain origins and a typically instructive function."

Until pragmatics can encompass a whole perspective of what, how, and where a proverb could be, it is frequently blind. Since pragmatics refers to the meaning that extends beyond what is physically communicated, this information can be regarded as reliable. Proverbs can be

decoded using their semantic frameworks, whether they serve as metaphorical affirmations or as cultural speech. Thus, proverbs are symbolic actions of meaning that mediate interpretation and negotiate pragmatic significance on linguistic, philosophical, and cultural levels. There exist proverbs that illuminate universal human truths, practices, and beliefs. Although languages are diverse and civilizations are vastly different. Proverbs define and communicate the cultural identity of a culture. Throughout history, this form of phrase has been shown to cross linguistic and cultural divides.

Due to the metaphorical nature of their core, proverbs have become an essential component of how language is employed. According to Hofstede, culture is always a collective phenomenon since it is shared, at least in part, by those who live in the same social milieu in which it was taught. It implies that culture cannot exist without individuals. Culture cannot be transmitted genetically. It is not the outcome of a person's genetic makeup but rather their upbringing in a social setting. Culture must be distinguished from both human nature and an individual's personality.

References

- Akmajian, A. R. Demers A. Farmer and R. Harnish. (2001). *Linguistics: An Introduction to Language and Communication*. Cambridge: The MIT Press.
- Alshammari, J. N. (2015). Examining Nida's translation theory in tendering Arabic proverbs into English: A comparative analysis study. *International Journal of English Language and Linguistics Research*, 3 (8), 45-57.
- Arewa, E.O. & A. Dundes (1964). "Proverbs and the Ethnography of Speaking Folklore". *American Anthropologists*. 66(6). pp. 70-85
- Bassnett, S. (2002). *Translation Studies*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Carpaut, M. (2013). A semantic evaluation of machine translation lexical choice. In Proceedings of the 7th Workshop on Syntax. *Semantics and Structure in Statistical Translation*, 1-10. Retrieved from <http://www.anthology.aclweb.org/W/W13/W13-08.pdf#page=11>
- Dabaghi, A., Pishbin, E., Niknasab, L. (2010). Proverbs from the viewpoint of translation. *Journal of Language Teaching and Research*, 1 (6), 807-814.
- Distributing-Exporting.
- Dundes A (1975). *On the structure of the proverb*. *Proverbium*, 25:961–973.
- Finnegan, R. (1994). "Proverbs in Africa." In *The Wisdom of Many: Essays on the Proverb*. (Eds): Wolfgang Mieder and Alan Dundes'. New York: Garland, 10-42.
- Gairness, R. and Redman, M. (1986). *Working with Words*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Ghazala, H. (1995). *Translation As Problems and Solutions: A Coursebook for University Students and Trainee*
- Giddy P (2012). "Philosophy for children" in Africa: Developing a framework. *South African Journal of Education*, 32(1):15–25.
- Hanzén, M. (2007). When in Rome, do as the Romans do": Proverbs as a part of EFL teaching.
- Hatim, B., & Munday, J. (2004). *Translation: An advanced resource book*. Oxford: Routledge.

- Hofstede G. (1991). *Cultures and Organizations: Software of the Mind*. McGraw-Hill Book Company
- Hofstede G. (1991). *Cultures and Organizations: Software of the Mind*. McGraw-Hill Book Company,
- Ilyas, I, A. (2013). The importance of connotation in literary translation. *Arab World English Journal*, (1), 248-263.
- Leech, G (1980). *Semantics*. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books limited.
- Liontas, J. I. (2002). Exploring second language learners' notions of idiomaticity. *System*, 30(3), 289–313. [https://doi.org/10.1016/s0346-251x\(02\)00016-7](https://doi.org/10.1016/s0346-251x(02)00016-7)
- Malik, M., (2018). *Alsuna: Journal of Arabic and English language*. Institut Pesantren Kh. Abdul Chalim Pact Mojokerto.
- Meider, W. Dundes, A. (1994). *The wisdom of many: Essays on the proverb*. Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press.
- Milner GB (1971). The quartered shield: Outline of a semantic taxonomy. In E Ardener (ed). *Social anthropology and language*. London, England: Routledge.
- Mollanazar, H. (2001). *Principles and methodology of translation*. Tehran: SAMT.
- Nadjib, A. M. (2001). *The Basis of English/Arabic/English Translation*. Egypt: Ibn Sina Bookshop Printing-
- Nida, E. A. (1964). *Toward a science of translating: with special reference to principles and procedures involved in Bible translating*. Brill Archive.
- Norricks NR (1985). *How proverbs mean: Semantic studies in English proverbs*. Berlin, Germany: Mouton.
- Samovar, L., Porter, R., & McDaniel, E. (2009). *Communication between cultures* (7th ed., 198-214). Stamford, CT: Cengage Learning.
- Solomon G. Anaeto (2012). *Models and theories of communication*. Lagos. Africa Renaissance Books Incorporated
- Stiles, W. (1980). Classification of Intersubjective Illocutionary Acts. *Journal of Language in Society*- (1). P. 233-249
- Syzdykov, K. (2013). Contrastive studies on proverbs. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 136 (2014), 318-321.
- The Oxford Dictionary of Proverbs (2004). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Yusuf, Yisa (1997). "The Sexist Correlation of Women with the Non-Human in English and Yoruba Proverbs". *Deproverbio Electronic Magazine*. 3(2). pp.1-9.