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**The Role of Teaching Idioms and Proverbs in Mitigating  
Communication Breakdown in ICC**

**The Case of Master Students of English at Abdelhamid Ibn  
Badis University, Mostaganem**

A dissertation submitted in Partial fulfillment for the Requirement of a  
Master Degree in *Language and Communication*.

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## **Dedication**

*I dedicate this dissertation to my beloved MOTHER and FATHER for their encouragements and support during my study period and especially on this work. I thank very much for their unconditional love my dear parents.*

*I also dedicate to all the members of my family and especially my BROTHERS for being helpful and cooperative with me.*

*I would like to dedicate it to my friends Mustapha, BELARBI Zahira and BELMILOUD Hayat.*

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## Abstract

Learning a foreign language has long been focusing on learning the linguistics codes. However, the recent emphasis nowadays has turned to be on cross-cultural communication and this leads to the incorporation of both linguistic and cultural learning in the EFL classroom in order to interact appropriately cross cultures. For that reason, the aim of his study is to investigate the extent to which integrating culturally-bound expressions as idioms and proverbs help EFL learners to mitigate communication breakdown, and whether they are aware of the role of those expressions. In order to conduct this research, two tools were used: a questionnaire and interview to collect qualitative and quantitative data. The results of this study reveal that although that cultural aspects are integral part in learning and teaching processes, EFL learners are not aware enough of the use of such idioms and proverbs. Finally, this research work tied to highlight a list of helpful recommendations for learners to develop their awareness about idioms and proverbs in order to an intercultural competent communicator.

**Keywords:** Cross-cultural communication, culturally-bound expressions, idioms, proverbs, communication breakdown, intercultural competent communicator.

## Table of Contents

<b>Dedication.....</b>	<b>I</b>
<b>Acknowledgements.....</b>	<b>II</b>
<b>Abstract.....</b>	<b>III</b>
<b>Table of Contents .....</b>	<b>IV</b>
<b>List of Tables .....</b>	<b>VI</b>
<b>List of Figures .....</b>	<b>VII</b>
<b>List of Acronyms.....</b>	<b>VIII</b>
General Introduction.....	1

### Chapter One: Theoretical Background

1. Introduction.....	5
1.1. Culture Conceptions.....	5
1.1.1. The characteristics of Culture.....	6
1.1.2. Big “C” Small “C” Culture.....	6
1.2. Language and Communication.....	7
1.3. Teaching Culture in EFL Classroom.....	7
1.4 Culture and Communication.....	8
1.5. The Shift from “CC” to “ICC”.....	8
1.6. Definitions of Intercultural Communicative Competence.....	9
1.6.1. Byram’s Model of ICC.....	10
1.7. The Intercultural Disparity between Arabic and English.....	12
1.8. Translating Idioms and Proverbs from English into Arabic or vice versa.....	13
1.9. Strategies Used in Translating Idioms and Proverbs.....	15
1.10. The Importance of Idioms and Proverbs in the Development of ICC.....	16
1.11. Conclusion.....	17

### Chapter Two: Research Methodology

2. Introduction.....	19
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2.1. Research Methodology.....	19
2.2. Qualitative Research versus Quantitative Research.....	20
2.3. The Mixed Methods Approach.....	21
2.4. Field of Investigation.....	22
2.5. Sample.....	22
2.6. Data Gathering Tools and Instruments.....	23
2.6.1. Questionnaire.....	23
2.6.2. Description of Students' Questionnaire.....	24
2.6.3. Interview.....	26
2.6.4. Description of Teachers' Interview.....	27
1.7. Conclusion.....	30

### **Chapter Three: Data Analysis and Discussion**

3. Introduction.....	32
3.1. Data Analysis.....	<b>32</b>
3.1.1. Analysis of Students' Questionnaire.....	<b>32</b>
3.1.2. Discussion of the Findings.....	38
3.1.3. Analysis of Student' Test.....	38
3.1.4. Discussion of the Tests' Results .....	40
3.1.5. Analysis of Teachers' Interview.....	41
3.1.6. Discussion of the Findings.....	42
3.2. General Discussion.....	43
3.3. Recommendations.....	43
3.4. Conclusion.....	44
General Conclusion.....	45
<b>References .....</b>	<b>47</b>
<b>Appendices</b>	

## List of Tables

Table 3.1: Participants' Age.....	32
Table 3.2: Students' Use of Idioms and Proverbs.....	34
Table 3.3: Students' Views towards the Incorporation of Culture in Language Learning.....	35
Table 3.4: Students' Knowledge towards the Intercultural Communicative Competence.....	36
Table 3.5: Students' Awareness towards the Importance of Culturally-bound Expressions...	36
Table 3.6: Translated Expressions from English into Arabic.....	38
Table 3.7: Translated Expressions from Arabic into English.....	30

## List of Figures

Figure 1.1: Model of ICC, Byram 1997, and p.73.....	11
Figure 3.2: Students' Reasons behind Learning the English Language.....	33
Figure 3.3: Students' Reference in Communicative Practices Cross-Culture.....	33
Figure 3.4: Language Use and Cultural Context.....	33
Figure 3.5: The Degree of Culture Integration in EFL Classes.....	34
Figure 3.6: Students' Perceptions and Attitudes concerning the impact culture learning.....	35
Figure 3.7: Students' Perceptions about learning the ICC.....	36
Figure 3.8: Students' Attitudes and Perceptions of Idioms and Proverbs.....	37

## **List of Acronyms**

**CC:** Communicative Competence

**IC:** Intercultural Communication

**ICC:** Intercultural Communicative Competence

**EFL:** English as a Foreign Language

**TL:** Target Language

**SL:** Source Language

## General Introduction

Being an intercultural competent user of a language does not include only a matter of grammar, phonology, morphology, syntax, etc., but it extends to beyond the cultural elements. When the EFL learners are aware to the cultural differences and similarities between their native culture and the target one from their way of talking and speaking, they will be able to mitigate communication breakdown; they will be able to see the world from different perspectives. To achieve this purpose, teaching culturally-bound expressions such as idioms and proverbs becomes the most important factor; because they share different background knowledge and broaden peoples' understanding of a language. Also they are enjoyable way to develop learners' intercultural communicative competence in an effective manner.

The concept of ICC refers to the understanding of different cultures and using this knowledge to interact across cultures. Hence, teaching idioms and proverbs facilitates and enhances the process of communication and interaction between people from different parts of the world; these cultural related expressions encourage the contact between the EFL learners and the speakers of other language.

The importance of this topic is derived from its subject. It was observed that most of studied had been trying to discuss the issue of idioms and proverbs from a translation perspective. However, our research work will deal with the importance of teaching these culturally-bound expressions in relation to enhance students' intercultural communicative competence in order to mitigate communication breakdown, and to avoid the obstacles that can lead to the failure the interaction between people from diverse cultures.

The main objective of this research is to shed light on the importance of integrating idioms and proverbs in involving the contact between people. Also, it investigates to examine the influence of these cultural expressions on learning and teaching a foreign language and its culture. In addition to that, the present study aims at highlighting the extent to which EFL learners are aware of the translation of idioms and proverbs from English into Arabic or vice versa.

Hence, the main question upon which this dissertation was built is: To what extent are EFL learners knowledgeable and aware of the role of idioms and proverbs in shaping a successful intercultural communication?

So, to achieve the purpose of the present study, this research work is carried out to find answers for the following questions:

- What are the teachers and learners' attitudes towards the incorporation of the cultural elements in the FFL classroom?
- To what extent are EFL learners aware of the use of idioms and proverbs?
- How can idioms and proverbs help EFL learners to mitigate communication breakdown between diverse cultures?

The above-mentioned questions cannot get exact answers. Yet, there a set of hypotheses that will support the current research topic, they are suggested as a follows:

- Teachers and students have positive attitudes concerning cultural integration in the classes order to raise their open-mindedness in the EFL environments.
- EFL learners are not aware of the use and the translation of the culturally-bound expressions.
- Idioms and proverbs may help students to avoid the factors that can lead to communication failure, and, even more importantly to manage social interactions.

The present work is guided theoretically by Byram's framework of Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) which linked the objectives of foreign language teaching/learning with the inter-cultural communication. This model can be considered as a combination between intercultural competence and communicative competence. This theory seems as the suitable model for our study; it makes the language learners aware about the importance of culture integration in constructing a successful communication.

This dissertation was designed as a mixed method approach; both qualitative and quantitative data will be obtained. The nature of phenomena searched is needed to use and mix the two methods in one study; in order to identify different perspectives regarding the research topic and to give an in-depth analysis for the case study evaluation.

The research study was conducted at Abdelhamid Ibn Badis University-Mostaganem during the academic year 2019-2020, with first and second year master students from three different specialties; Language and Communication, Didactics of Foreign Languages and Didactics of Applied Languages. From the above and regarding our research topic which is concerned with the intercultural studies module, the participants chosen are supposed to be familiar with issue of cultural related expressions in the EFL milieus because they are already

taught this module either for one year or two. The sample population selected to accomplish this dissertation is composed of thirty students.

The recent research work is fundamentally divided into a general introduction and three chapters. The general introduction gives an overview about our dissertation. The first chapter is concerned with the theoretical framework of the present study. Whereas, the second chapter is devoted to present a description of the research design, methodology, the sample population and data collection tools. Finally, the third chapter deals with the analysis and discussion of the data obtained from the students' questionnaire, the translation test which is made up of four English idioms and four Arabic idioms, and the teachers' interview. Moreover, this chapter has provided some recommendations that could be beneficial for EFL learners to enhance their awareness about the use of idioms and proverbs in order to mitigate communication breakdown in ICC.

*Chapter One*  
**Theoretical Background**

## **1. Introduction**

This chapter is an attempt to investigate the theoretical background of the present study. This chapter is divided into three sections, the first section will draw a clear picture concerning the conceptualization of culture and mainly its relationship with language. It also highlights the importance of teaching culture into EFL classes. The next section is about the process of ICC and its indication. The final part gives an overview about the idiomatic expressions and proverbs, and their role in the development of ICC.

### **1.1. Culture Conceptions**

The term culture has dimensions including ideas, customs, skills, arts and tools that characterize a group of people in a given period of time. It is also beliefs, values and material objects that create our ways of life, it is different social norms. The concept of culture was used first by the English anthropologist, Edward B. Tylor in his book "Primitive Culture" in 1871, Tylor stated "that complex whole which includes knowledge, beliefs, art, law, morals, custom, and other capacities and habits acquired by man as a member of society" (Tylor, 1870). In the same view Cortazzi and Jin (1999) stated that "culture can be seen as the framework of assumptions, ideas, and beliefs that are used to interpret other peoples' actions, words and patterns of thinking" (p.197). Above the previous definitions, culture is related to society and norms acquired by man within his social group; it is the system shared by a group of people.

Moreover, the notion of culture was needed in order to study other societies because it was associated with the notion of civilization. Margaret Mead denotes that "culture means the whole complex of traditional behavior which has been developed by human race and is successively learned by generation" (1937, p.70). Additionally, culture is considered as an expression of meaning as it is mentioned on Geertz' definition of culture (1975) "(culture is) on historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions expressed in a symbolic form by means of which men(sic) communicate, perpetuate and develop their knowledge about attitude towards life"(p.89).

To conclude, we may say that culture is a wide word so that we cannot have a specific definition because it is not limited.

### 1.1.1. Characteristics of Culture

In order to understand the nature of culture, we have to highlight its important features that make it very unique.

**a. Culture is learned and thought:** the important characteristic of culture is that it is not innate; it is learned from the birth consciously and unconsciously in a variety of ways. They are a most habitual way and from a host of sources.

**b. Culture is shared:** culture is a mental process that a group has in common, it enables people inside the group to interact with each other.

**c. Culture is transmitted from one generation to the next:** the cultural elements and crucial messages are not only shared, but are passed and handed up from one generation to another. This process of transmitting culture is a kind of social inheritance among members of society.

**d. Culture is social in nature:** culture is an individual phenomenon, it progresses in members of society and it is communicated by them. So man becomes a man only among men.

**e. Culture is dynamic:** the cultural changes and its dynamic nature allow culture to survive.

Duranti (1997) explains this criteria as “something learned, transmitted, passed down from one generation to next, through human actions, often in the form of face to face interaction, and of course, through linguistic communication” (p.24)

### 1.1.2. Big “C” and Small “c” Culture

The classification of cultural content makes a distinction between big “C” and small “c” culture.

**a. Big (capital) “C” culture:** also known as highbrow information. It refers to products and contributions of a society which involve factual information related to the fields of literature, arts, architecture, holiday, food and similar aspects. Big culture is “the culture which represents a set of facts and statistics relating the arts, history, geography, business, education, festivals and customs of the target speech community” (LAOHAWIRIYANON, 2012, p.85)

**b. Small (little) “c” culture:** known as low brow information. It refers to social interactions and practices which are associated to customs, habits, everyday life, cultural norms and total way of living. So, it is the hidden parts of culture. According to Lafayette (1997) “the little ‘c’

culture includes recognizing and explaining everyday active cultural patterns such as eating, shopping and greeting people every passive patterns such as social stratification, marriage and work; and acting appropriately in common everyday situations” (Jing, 2012, p.85)

## **1.2. Language and culture**

It has been accepted that language and culture are tightly interconnected and very hard to separate. It is a strong relation holds between them; a particular language is a mirror of a particular culture. Language without culture is unthinkable so is human culture without language. In this sense Brown (2000) cited that “a language is a part of culture and culture is part of language; the two intricately interwoven so that one cannot separate the two without losing the significance of either language or culture” (p.171). In words, these two entities are inseparable.

In one hand, Byram (1989, p.22) stated that “as learners learn about language they learn about culture as they learn to use a new language, they learn to use a new culture”. EFL learners should learn a language in correlation to learn its culture to avoid communication breakdowns. In other hand, Byram (1989, p.44) appends that “language holds culture through the denotations and connotations of its semantics”. For this reason, it is paramount to teach language and culture simultaneously.

To sum up, language is considered as a sign that reflects culture, the interconnectedness between them is dynamic, so that it is inseparable phenomenon.

## **1.3. Teaching Culture in EFL Classroom**

In foreign language teaching, the focus does not only on know the rule of syntax, lexis, phonetic or grammatical contents...etc. but also it on knows the cultural knowledge. The connection between language and culture must be considered in EFL teaching because language is influenced by culture, so that they complement each other” if there is no culture, language will be like water without a source effective communication and that is the notion that should be aspired to English teaching. So that EFL learners have to pay attention to the cultural content concerning its contribution to successful language learning.

Indeed, teaching about culture in EFL classes should take teaching about the target culture in account, in order to enable learners to be competent communicator when facing various situations; this process helps them to participate correctly in spontaneous way. In this

respect, Hymes says: “the communicative competence approach to teaching that emerged in the 1980 emphasized identifying and employing learning strategies that could facilitate genuine communication in the TL” (1980:12). So, that incorporating enhances the intercultural consciousness of the learner. Baker said that “the content of what we teach will always be in a way or another linked to culture” (2003, p.3) so that language and culture should be hand in hand in the classroom.

As a result, teaching culture should be an essential part of teaching English as a foreign language because one of the main aims of teaching EFL is ICC.

#### **1.4. Culture and Communication**

Samovar et al, (1981) observe that culture and communication:

are inseparable because culture not only dilates who talks to whom about what, and how the communication proceeds, it also helps to determines how people encode messages the meanings they have for messages and the conditions and circumstances under which various messages may or may not be sent, noticed, or interpreted...culture...is the foundation of communication (p.24).

So, that can determine the powerful link between culture and communication; communication is the process that involves the continuity of culture.

Additionally, Smith (1996) claimed that “whenever people interact, they communicate, to live in societies and to maintain their culture, they have to communicate” (p.122). So people who live in the same culture can find it easily to communicate with one another because it gives them an interconnected set of shared ideas, assumptions, beliefs, values and even unwritten rules for that, culture is a continuous process that is developed by the members of a society.

To conclude, culture and communication are interconnected process, hence undivided cannot improve his intercultural communication without having a clear understanding of the phenomenon named culture.

#### **1.5. The Shift from “CC” to “ICC”**

Communicative competence is a linguistic term which refers to learner’s second language ability. It is the positive ship between the stored knowledge about language and the

appropriate use of that knowledge in real situation; also it is about understanding the new culture including our own. Muriel (2003) says “it involves the social and cultural knowledge speakers are presumed to have which enable them to use and interpret linguistic forms” (p.18). According to Hymes (1972), the theoretical framework of CC includes four areas of knowledge and skills: linguistic, grammatical, sociolinguistic, discourse and strategic competences. However, Byram criticized the notion of CC because it focuses on the native speaker model rather than the intercultural speaker; who should not acquire only the native speaker level competence on the target language but also to acquire the knowledge and could interpret beliefs, values, and awareness of one’s culture and other cultures.

In 1997, Byram proposed his model of ICC which considers as a relevant aspect that links various cultural perspectives around the world. So, it is the capacity to perform adequately in target culture. ICC is composed into two closely related areas including communicative competence and intercultural competence. Byram 1997 makes a distinction between CC and ICC stated that “the first refers to peoples’ ability to interact in their own language with people from another country and culture. While ICC takes into account language and focus from another country in a foreign language” (p.71).

In conclusion, the shift away from CC towards to ICC may help to up hold the multicultural values of the societies, while facilitating successful communication between people from different counties and mediate between cultures.

### **1.6. Definition of Intercultural Communicative Competence**

The notion of ICC has been the interest of many researchers and scholars due to its multidimensionality and curiosity. Hence, there are various definitions given to discuss this concept in a variety of ways. Guilherme (2004) gave a general definition to the term ICC, which was described as” the ability to interact effectively with people from cultures that we recognize as being different from our own” (p.297). It recognizes the cross-cultural element and foregrounds communication with people from different cultures.

According to Young and Sercombe (2010) ICC is “a dynamic process which people draw on and use the resources and processes of cultures with which they may not typically be associated within their interactions with others”(p.181). In the same view of conceptualizing the theory of ICC, Spitzberg (2000, p.259) states that is” an impression that a behavior is

appropriate and effective in a given context". So, that ICC is the ability to communicate appropriately and successfully in different situations.

In addition, Deardorff (2006) defines the process of ICC as "the ability to behave and communicate appropriately and effectively in intercultural situations based on one's knowledge, skills and attitudes" (p.247). She considers the appropriateness as the "avoidance of violating valued rules" (p.194), and the effectiveness as the "achievements of valued objectives" (p.194). While the items of knowledge, skills and attitudes are explained in the framework of Byram on ICC (1997) which will be expressed consequentially.

In the above-mentioned definitions and views in different sides, ICC is the process that makes the one's aware of cultural differences; it encourages the one's eager about and interested in to adapt communicative behavior in order to interact effectively.

### 1.6.1. Byram's Model of ICC

The conception of ICC was developed by the framework of Michael Byram in 1997. Byram defines ICC as "the ability to interact with people from another country and culture in a foreign language" (p.71). According to Byram's model represented in the figure (1), ICC requires the intercultural competence which consists of three initial components certain attitudes, knowledge and skills to be promoted, in addition to linguistic, sociolinguistic and discourse competence. In this sense, he stated "requires certain attitudes, knowledge and skills in addition linguistic, sociolinguistic and discourse competence. The attitudes include curiosity and openness as well as readiness to see their cultures and speakers' own without being judgmental" (ibid, p.30). Byram describes his framework as a "combination of knowledge (savoirs), skills (savoir-faire), and attitudes (savoir-etre) which allow a speaker, to varying degrees to recognize, understand, interpret and accept other ways of living and thinking beyond his or her home culture" (Beacco and Byram, 2007).

Besides, Byram 1997 proposed five dimensions that make an individual intercultural competent; you cannot communicate interculturally without acquiring these components.

- 1. Knowledge (savoirs):** refers to the knowledge of the rules for individual and social interaction, and it consists of know social group and their practices both in one's own culture and in the other culture.
- 2. Attitudes (savoir-etre):** Byram defines attitudes as: "curiosity and openness, readiness to suspend disbeliefs about one's own" (p.141). It refers to the ability of

bring open minds accept critics, problem, misunderstanding and mitigate prejudice and stereotypes.

3. **Skills of interpreting and relating (savoir- comprendre):** Byram (ibid) states” the ability to interpret a document from one country for someone from another” (p.37). So, it is the ability to use existing knowledge and relate other culture to one’s own culture.
4. **Skills of discovery and interaction (savoir-apprendre):** it “allows the individual to interpret by including the ability to use existing knowledge, attitudes and skills in cross-cultural interactions” (p.98).
5. **Critical awareness (savoir s’ engager):** it is the ability to use perspectives, practices and products in one’s own culture and in other cultures to make evaluations.

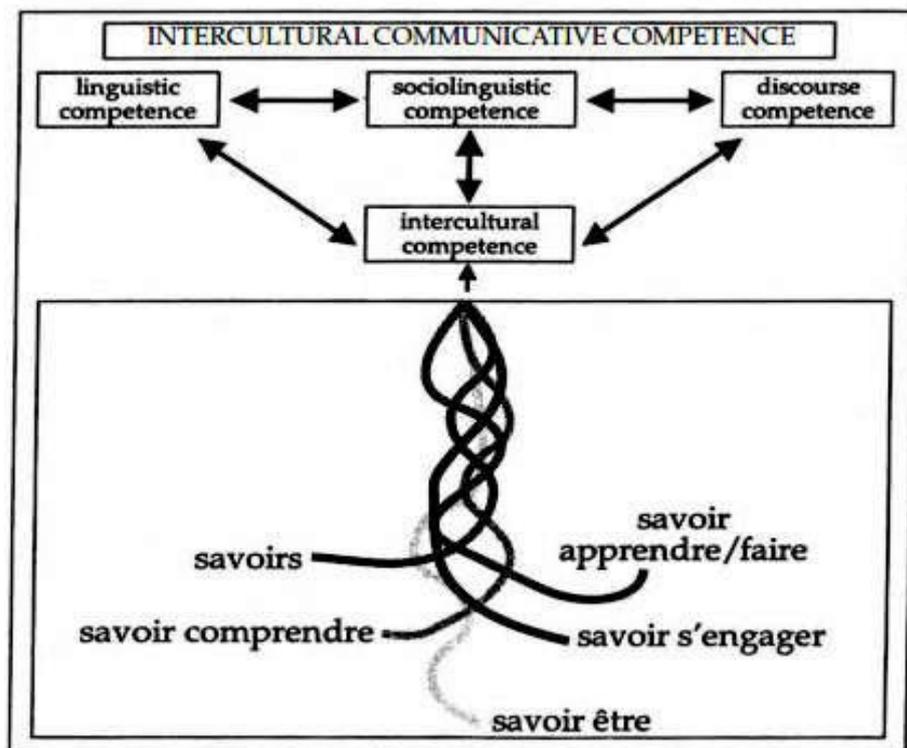


Figure 1.1: Model of ICC (Byram 1997, p.73)

To sum up, Byram’s model of ICC focuses more on the intercultural competence “attitudes, knowledge, skills” which should be cooperated into the EFL teaching process, because they open students’ minds toward other cultures and show cultural diversity as something natural and ubiquitous. So that makes communication easier and prevents possible misunderstanding.

To be interculturally competent does not depend only on the linguistic rules but also on the cultural knowledge. For that reason, EFL learners should be aware to the importance of the cultural boundaries such as the idiomatic expressions and proverbs in order to manage the cultural differences.

### 1.7. The Intercultural Disparity between Arabic and English

The Arabic cultural background is quite different from the English one, Arabic world is dominated by Islamic culture and religion, while English speaking world is dominated by Christianity. In addition, the former is based on Arab desert” Bedouin” environment where as the latter is based on Greek and Roman heritage, more discrepancy between these two cultures is that Arabic is belong from the Semitic family and English is a western language. These differences in culture have their effect on language.

In this regard, the field of animals provides numerous examples of conflict, for instance the expression *“he works like a dog”* will translated into Arabic as *“يشتغل مثل الحمار”* which means he works like a donkey, the world dog was subsumed with the world donkey because the farmer animal is the donkey which is a symbol of hard work in the Arabic culture and is more commonly seen by most Arabs, while the latter is common to the western culture. Another example the term *“Owl”* means in Arabic to a bird, which is an omen of doom and gloom, it refers to negatives associations such as the pessimism and bad luck. The expressions *“لو كان في اليوم خير مافات الصياد”* or, *“doesn’t be pessimist as an owl”* explain clearly the Arabic faith about this bird. However, English people consider *“the owl”* as a symbol of wisdom and grace, for that reason in English cartoons; it always plays the role of a judge or a teacher.

Another difference, concerning the social and religious domains; in the Muslim Arab society, a man can marry up four wives. It is acceptable if he deals with them equally and airily. In contrary, in the Christian English world polygamy is forbidden. Moreover, the English word *“aunt”* refers to both the sister of mother and the sister of father, while in Arabic culture people use *خالَة* for the sister of mother and *عمة* for the sister of father. Also every language has a set of basic color terms. However, the terms do not divide the meanings in the same place. The different between the two cultures is Red to blood, love, passion, anger, revolution, etc. Nevertheless, they differ in the context that Arabic culture associates it with a negative meanings.ie; “death” .In Arabic, the person who is going to be executed wears red colors to refer to his punishment on the end of life. Whereas in English language red has extended its meaning to positive direction, such as Santa Claus who has a red costume to

make the beginning of new year or new life. In addition, red also symbolizes Valentine's Day of Love.

Sub consequently, these cultural differences between Arabic and English impact in the use of expressions such idioms and proverbs, and their translation. For this reason, culture plays an important role in the course of the idiom interpretation. So that, people need to enhance cross-cultural awareness, and require being open-minded to the culture of the second language from different aspects.

## **1.8. Translating Idioms and Proverbs from English into Arabic or vice versa**

One of the most important aspects of English and Arabic languages are the culturally bound expressions such idioms and proverbs, they are frequently used in a wide variety of situations; from friendly conversations and business meeting to more formal and written contexts. Furthermore, since Arabic and English languages are not only remote linguistically, not are also remote culturally. For that reason translators could play a bridging role between cultures to achieve mutual understanding.

### **1.8.1. Translation**

Translation is an important process that has a key role in exchanging culture, news, information, science and literature among people all over the world. It is the process of decoding and re encoding linguistic messages among people all over the world. In this sense, Newark (1981) stated that "translation is a craft consisting in the attempt to replace a written message and/ or statement in one language by the same message and/ or statement in another language" (P.7). According to Nida and Taber (1982:12) "translation consists in reproducing in reproducing in the receptor language the closest natural equivalence of the source language (SL) message firstly, in the terms of meaning and secondly, in terms of style." In words, translation is more closely related to culture.

### **1.8.2. Proverbs**

Proverb originated from the Latin Proverbium is a popular saying usually short, that expresses a general truth about life, which may be applied to common situations. Manser (2007) mentions "proverbs give advice, make an observation, or present a teaching in a succinct and memorable way" (p.4). Proverbs are fixed expressions that are important in any language because they have meanings that can cover all aspects of life and, this in turn, makes

them important elements in peoples' speech. They are related to a specific situation and considered as a symbol for that situation.

### 1.8.3. Idioms

An idiom refers to an expression or phrase peculiar to or characteristic of a particular language, especially when the meaning is illogical or separate from the meanings of its component words. In this view, Langacker (1968:79) states "an idiom is a kind of complex lexical item. It is a phrase whose meaning cannot be predicted from the meanings of the morphemes it comprises". In addition, Jarvice (1993:148) writes "an idiom is an expression whose meaning cannot easily be worked out from the words it contains". Idioms have the potential to cause foreign learners of a language some difficulties. If you say to a native speaker visiting a place for the first time, "How did you find Stratford?" you will get the response "Great I loved it or I did not like the place at all". But if you ask a non-native speaker the same question, the response may be "How did I find Stratford? The train took me there". Here "find" is used idiomatically. This example shows that native speakers can easily understand idioms but nonnative speakers find a lot of problems in recognizing and using them.

### 1.8.4. Idioms and Proverbs

Although idioms and proverbs are considered as popular expressions, they have fixed form. Their meaning could be changed in conversations with social and linguistic skills according to the interpretation of particular social factors and settings. Furthermore, the cultural differences between English and Arabic languages resulted in major differences between expressions like idioms and proverbs. For instance, when we say *في احضان الصحراء* which literally means "*in the bosom of the desert*" whereas English might say "*in the heart of the desert*". This collocation argues that Arabs are associated with desert more than English. Axiomatically, all people share common experiences, regardless of their culture, many of the same proverbs appear throughout the world; so they are universal. In the English proverb "*cats have nine wives*" which signifies literally "*cats have seven lives*" while in Arabic cultures it means *للقطة سبعة ارواح*, which is closely the same careless the number of livingness, it connotes to the hard of die for the cat. In brief, the careful attention should be paid to the cultural elements

Thus, the cultural aspects of language play a significant role in translating idioms and proverbs; Shastri (2012) states that:

Proverbs and idioms are culture specific. They are part of psyche of a linguistic community. They are used symbolically and convey a whole concept in one line. They carry a particular image and a concept which need to be translated. They cannot be translated literally. Sometimes we get the exact equivalent in the TL, which can be easily substituted. If not available they need to be substituted to similar meaning idiom or proverb in the TL. (p.101)

Needless to say, translating idioms and proverbs is one of the most difficult tasks for the translators. For this reason, foreign language teachers should teach language and culture simultaneously in order to ensure that EFL learners use language appropriately when performing in the target language.

### **1.9. Strategies Used in Translating Idioms and Proverbs**

EFL learners do their best to use and especially to translate idioms and proverbs correctly and effectively in order to be competent intercultural user of a language. There are many strategies and techniques used to translate these fixed expressions from the source language into the target language or vice versa; these strategies help EFL learners to preserve the meaning of these culturally bound expressions. In this discourse, Baker (1992) states that as “strategy of finding an idiom of similar meaning and similar form in the target language may seem to offer the ideal situation, but that is necessarily always the case”(p.72).

Researchers and scholars propose various techniques to translate idioms and proverbs; Baker suggests four strategies to follow this process effectively;

- 1. Translation by paraphrasing:** this technique is the most common of translating idioms; it is used when there is no target language (TL) equivalent matching the source language (SL) text idiom due to the difference in stylistic preferences of the source and target language.
- 2. Translation by omission:** this strategy is based on the omission of the whole idiom because there is no homogenous between TL idiom and SL idiom.
- 3. Translation by using an idiom of similar meaning and form:** it is total equivalence, it is mainly used when the source and target language idiom belong to the same family and they have cultural similarities.

4. *Translation by using an idiom of similar meaning but different form:* it is a partial equivalence it involves translating the SL expression idiom into its equivalence in the TL idiom conveys the same meaning.

Translation is not an easy task because a translator needs to have a bilingual competence in the original language and target language as well as knowledge of both cultures to remove the ambiguity in some texts that are needed to be translated.

### **1.10. The Importance of Idioms and Proverbs in the Development of ICC**

Since the initial aim of ICC is to enable EFL learners to interact effectively while using the foreign language with taking into account cultural diversity in order to mitigate communication breakdowns. For this reason, teaching idiom and proverbs became an important task for the instructors in the classroom because they help learners to enhance their performance in the field of intercultural translation. Moreover, they played a potential role in achieving interculturality, so that intercultural communication does not require only the linguistic knowledge but also the cultural elements. In addition, these cultural related expressions are deeply bridge the gap between cultures so that they expend students' open-mindedness, awareness and readiness to understand and to accept the concept of otherness by suspending the disbelief and respect diversity.

On the one hand, it is necessary for teachers and students to deal with idioms and proverbs in suitable environment because a wide knowledge of these culturally boundaries impact on the learners' overall performance; they are well functioning as an instructional tool. On the other hand, learning idioms and proverbs push students to memorize more new vocabularies which can enable them to master their language use. Also the use of these cultural-bound expressions allow them improve their communicative competences to act conveniently in appropriate in cross-cultural contexts. In other words, idiomacity encouraged the EFL learners to raise their skills to achieve interculturality

By ways of concluding, in teaching and learning processes of English, teachers have to familiarize their EFL learners with topic of cultural aspects of idioms and proverbs because they effect on their performance in target language.

### **1.11. Conclusion**

The review of literature of this thesis was concern firstly the concept of culture and its interconnectedness with language. In addition, this chapter presents an overview about the framework of ICC in relation to the idioms and proverbs. Thus, EFL learners should be aware of these culturally boundaries in order to mitigate and reduce communication breakdowns and also to have a successful intercultural conversation. The next chapter will be about the practical part of this work to know the extent to which EFL learners are aware to the use of idioms and proverbs, and how they can translate these expressions. In addition, the next part aims to see the teachers' implementation of these culturally-bound expressions in the classroom in order to achieve interculturality

*Chapter Two*  
**Research Methodology**

## **2. Introduction**

The main aim of this chapter will present the practical part of our dissertation to investigate the research problem and to answer the research question that has been mentioned before which is: what is the role of teaching idioms and proverbs in mitigating communication breakdown in ICC? It will provide an overview description of the methodology and procedures were explored in undertaking this study including sample population predicated in this work, the approaches followed and the field of investigation. In addition, this part will outline the two main instruments employed in data collection which are: questionnaire and interview. Furthermore, a translation test used to attach to the questionnaire to verify and relay the results. This chapter provides more explanation and justification about the methods used to conduct this study.

### **2.1. Research Methodology**

The word “research” is composed into two words “re” and “search”, which means to search again or modify the facts in any field of knowledge. Research is an academic activity and as such the term should be used in a technical sense. It is a logical and systemic search for new and useful information on a particular topic. The advanced learners’ Dictionary of current English, oxford (1952) defines research as “a careful investigation or inquiry especially through search for new facts in new knowledge” (p.1069). In the same line of thought, Redman and Mory state that research is “a systemized effort to gain new knowledge” (the romance of research 1923, p.10). In words, the term research can be defined as the process that aims to obtain the unknown data and create knowledge through investigating, analyzing and recording evidence.

Whereas research methodology is defined as “general approach the researcher takes place in carrying out the research project” (Leedy & Ormord 2001, p.14) it set of systemic techniques used in research, which is a guide to the research and how it conducted. The methodological research is a general research strategy that outlines the way in which a research project is to be undertaken and, among other things and identifies the methods to be used in it. It aims to guide the researcher in order to give the work plan of the research. In this respect, Kothari (2004) claimed that:

The study of research methodology gives the student the necessary training in gathering material and arranging or card-indexing them, participation in the

field work when required, and also training in techniques for the collection of data appropriate to particular problems, in the use of statistics, questionnaires and controlled experimentation and in recoding evidence, sorting it out and interpreting it (p.10).

## 2.2. Quantitative Research versus Qualitative Research

Leedy & Ormord (2001); Williams, (2011) describe the research methodology as “the holistic steps a researcher employ in embarking on a research work” (p.14) For that reason, Qualitative and Quantitative methods are the two basic forms that help the researcher to conduct and complete the research studies; they investigate and explore the different claims to knowledge and both methods are designed to address a specific type of research question. There exists a fundamental distinction between these two types of data.

The Qualitative research method is defined as an umbrella term covering an array of interpretative techniques which seeks to describe a situation in its context, decode the phenomena, explain “*how*” and “*why*” and otherwise come to terms with the meaning. It is non-numerical form, i.e. texts, pictures, videos, etc. In which the data is gathering through using semi-structured methods such as in-depth interviews, participant observation and focus groups. Qualitative approach is concerned with subjective assessment of attitudes opinions and behavior; it is inductive in nature and depends on the purposeful selection of participants. In this respect, Punch (1988) states that “qualitative research is empirical research where the data are not in the form of numbers” (p.4)

In contrast to the qualitative research, the quantitative research approach is covering the data that can be quantified and expressed as a number; it is based on the structure and uses experiments and surveys as methods. It involves the utilization and analysis of numerical data using specific statistical techniques to answer questions like “whom”, “what”, “how much”, “how many”, and “where”, additionally it is deductive in nature and uses statistical sampling. In this line of thought, Fraser Health Authority (2011) see that quantitative research is “research based on traditional scientific research which generates numerical data and usually seeks to establish causal relationships (or association) between two or more variables, using statistical methods to test the strength and significance of the relationships” (p.6). Furthermore, Leedy & Ormord (2001); Williams, (2011) state that “quantitative research involves the collection of data so that information can be quantified and subjected to statistical treatment in order to support or refute alternative knowledge closer”

### **2.3. The Mixed Methods Approach**

The mixed methods research is viewed as the third methodological movement, and it is usually understood as a combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches in single research project. Creswell et al (2003:212) define the mixed methods research as “the collection or analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data in single study in which the data are collected concurrently or sequentially, and involve the integration of the data at one or more stages in the process of research”.

In the mixed methods research design, the researchers incorporate methods for collecting or analyzing data from the quantitative and qualitative research in a particular research study in order to address the research question. So, researchers don't gather and analyze data only numerically but also textually, that includes the analysis of both qualitative and quantitative data; that the two forms of data are integrated in one research problem. This methodological method aims to draw from the strengths and minimize the weaknesses of both qualitative and quantitative approaches. According to Bazeley (2004):

The mixed methods are inherently neither more nor less valid than specific approaches to research. As with any research, validity stems more from the appropriateness, thoroughness and effectiveness with which those methods are applied and then care given to thoughtful weighing of the evidence than from the application of a particular set of rules or adherence to an established tradition.

Since this study explored the phenomenon of teaching idioms and proverbs in relation to their role in reducing communication breakdown in ICC, the mixed methods was the implemented and the suitable approach that allow us to increase reliability and validity of results in our research. Regarding the aim of the present work, it is insufficient to use single approach either qualitative or quantitative research methods. Hence, the exploration and the combination of both numerical and non-numerical data “narrative, textual data” were not required just to capture and provide a rich set of data but also to examine knowledge, attitudes, perceptions, skills and opinions of the participants. Moreover, in this complicated topic, both questionnaire and interview were designed; the questionnaires were conducted for students to obtain a global and general comprehension concerning the role of culturally-bound expressions in constructing learners' intercultural communicative competence to act conveniently cross culture. Similarly, the interviews were used for teachers to gain deeper

understanding into the same research designed. To sum up, the application of different forms of data gathering techniques was very necessary to conduct our study.

#### **2.4. Field of Investigation**

The present study was conducted at the department of English, Abdelhamid Ibn Badis University – Mostaganem, with first and second-year master students from three different specialties; Language and Communication, Didactics of Foreign Languages and Didactics and Applied Languages during the academic year 2019-2020. Regarding our research topic which is totally concerned with the module of interculturality, the selected sample for this study was chosen randomly because these classes were attended ICC's lectures either for one year or two; so, these individuals are act as the representative of the case study. Supposedly, the informants have to be familiar with the field of culturally-bound expressions and their interconnectedness with the EFL teaching and learning milieus.

#### **2.5. Sample**

As we know, the sample is very essential part in conducting a research; it can be defined as a subset of informants or members chosen at random that reflect the population characteristic. Since sample plays as the representative selection of a larger group that fulfills the research objectives and matches the information and resources available, the researchers have to choose the sample design with taking into consideration the nature of the inquiry and other related factors. Sampling provides a means of gaining information about the population without the need to examine the population in its entirety.

The samples populations participating in this study are the EFL students and instructors of the department of English at Abdelhamid Ibn Badis University-Mostaganem. The sample chosen was randomly selected; a group of thirty students (male and female) belonging to three different specialties “Language and Communication, Didactics of Foreign Languages and Didactics of Applied Languages” that have already studied the module of interculturality, in addition to seven teachers of master degree that are specialized in target culture teaching or already have experiences in EFL milieus. The selected samples are purposively based on their teaching and learning experience with culture in relation to language.

## 2. 6. Data Gathering Tools and Instruments

The process of data collection is the heart of any research design because the efficacy of any research depends on the accuracy of the data gathered. There are various tools and techniques used by researcher for collecting information such as observation, questionnaire and schedule, interview, focus groups and projective techniques. For that reason, the decision about which method to employ in data gathering is guided by the research question. In this respect, Nkpa (1997) stated that “data collection in educational research may take many forms. Notable among the many forms is tests projective techniques, consultation of records and documents, direct observation, interviews, and questionnaires” (p.73)

This section emphasizes on the data collection procedures with regard to both the qualitative and quantitative data. As above two methods were used within the mixed method design of the study, both questionnaire and interview were design simultaneously and were conducted at the same stage. Due to the complexity of phenomenon which is debated in our research, we choose to incorporate both questionnaire and interview because they work to gather and complete each other, although they are separated methods. Using a variety of data tools helps to increase the level of reliability of the study. In words, we use these two collected materials in purpose of obtaining sufficient details and answers from selected participants in order to examine the validity of the hypothesis.

### 2.6.1 Questionnaire

In a research, a questionnaire is a list of questions or statements that given to the participants in which answers are being sought. It can be defined as “a set of questions on a topic or group of topics designed to be answered by a respondent” (Richards, Platt and Platt, 1992:303) A questionnaire is a common research tool used to generate both qualitative and quantitative data depending on the nature of question, Gall, et al support this claim and stated that “questionnaires to collect data from participants in a sample about their characteristics, experiences and opinions in order to generalize the findings to a population that the sample is intended to represent”(1996,p.286) Moreover, in a questionnaire the questions can be open-ended or close-ended. In close-ended questions, the respondents are guided by a limit of responses to choose from. In contrast, in open-ended questions the informants have the freedom to give their response and to express their ideas.

The questionnaire provides the study with valid and reliable data; it is a helpful tool that allows the researcher to gather data and to examine the participants from different sides for instance background knowledge, perceptions, attitudes and views in any given context. According to Nunan (1920), in questionnaire “the data themselves are more amenable to quantification than discursive data such as free-form field notes, participant observers’ journals, and the transcripts of oral language” (p.143)

### **2.6.1.1. Description of Students’ Questionnaire**

To achieve this present study, the questionnaire was designed for first and second year master students from three different specialties; language and communication, didactics of foreign languages and didactics of applied languages in order to collect data and to have different points of view information concerning the role of idioms and proverbs in mitigating communication breakdown in ICC. It contains nineteen questions; some of them have a close-ended form and others are open-ended. The questionnaire is divided into six sections; each section has an objective that will be described as follows:

#### **Section one: Personal information**

The first part of the questionnaire aims at investigating the personal data concerning the participants. This section includes information about their gender and age.

#### **Section two: language Learning and Communication**

The second section intends to evaluate the process of communication during the language in EFL classroom in relation to culture in order to achieve the purpose of communication in both sending and sending a message. It consists of five questions, the first aims to know the learners’ reason behind learning the English language, in which the informants were asked to select the answer freely from the list given. The second question seeks to show the extent to which learning about cultures helped the learners to debate appropriately in any context. The third question searches for knowing whether the students refer to their mother culture or the target one in the case of communicating in English. The next question investigates to know whether students use unfamiliar expressions such as idioms and proverbs in the classroom communication. The final question enquires to understand the extent to which EFL learners prefer to use English.

### **Section three: Language/ Culture Learning**

The existence of culture is always supported by the human specific means of communication, which is language. Hence language and culture go hand in hand in the learning process. For that reason, this section designed to complete our questionnaire; it attempts to identify the interrelationship between language and culture, and the culture role in language learning. There are four questions in this section, the first one aims to understand the extent to which culture takes place in EFL classroom. In the second question, the participants were asked about their views concerning the importance of learning a foreign language with taking into consideration the importance of incorporating the learning about its culture; it aims to show the students' attitudes towards culture learning. The other question enquires to extract if whether the module of cross-cultural studies is helpful for EFL learners. The purpose of the last question is to know the impacts of the target culture on the students.

### **Section four: ICC**

The current section is to investigate the intercultural communicative competence (ICC), since this process of cross-cultural mediation is the essential element to achieve idiomaticity and mitigating communication breakdowns. The aim behind this section is to find out to what extent ICC is promoted in EFL classrooms, it consists of five questions. In the first question, the participants were asked about the time that they have been learning with the module of interculturality. The second question aims to search whether students had previous ideas, knowledge, impression and information about the process if ICC before they were being familiar with it in the classes. The next section targets at examining if the learning of intercultural studies influenced the learners' identity, it is also examine their attitudes towards interculturality. Whereas the fourth question seeks to determine whether ICC lectures helped students to raise their intercultural awareness, additionally it deals with learners' perception regarding teaching ICC. The fifth question is concerned with the issue of culturally-bound expressions in which the informants were asked about their views about the contribution of idioms and proverbs in making communication easier to achieve interculturality.

### **Section five: Idioms and Proverbs**

The fifth section is considered as the core message of the present research; it is concerned idioms and proverbs which have a great extent in everyday language, they are considered as linguistic devices which reflect and represent the human and social facts of a

particular culture. As it mentioned by Howwor (2013) “idioms are considered as part and parcel of mastering any language and they are a prominent natural part of everyday discourse since they reflect cultural and linguistic boundaries and enabling communication between different culture” (p.1) There are three questions in this section. In the first question, the informants were asked whether they use idiomatic and proverbial expressions in their communication and conversation from both mother culture and the target one. The purpose behind this question is to show to what extent idioms and proverbs in English are applicable to Arab culture and vice versa. The next question investigates to know whether the use of culturally-bound expressions promote EFL learners with sufficient knowledge and comprehensibility to interact successfully in cross-cultural expressions. The last question aims to determine the extent to which students were interesting to learn idioms and proverbs, and also to examine their awareness about learning these cultural elements.

### **Section six: Translation**

As known, translating idioms and proverbs is a real challenge for EFL learners and translators whose task is to produce target language idioms and proverbs that bear a close meaning resemblance to source language ones. Hence, the last section in the questionnaire was designed as a translation test. The test consisted of four English idioms and proverbs selected to translate them into Arabic, another four Arabic idioms and proverbs to translate into English. The categories the idiomatic and proverbial expressions were chosen according to the traditional wisdom and everyday-experiences of both directions; Arabic and English. This test aims at investigating the strategies and techniques used by students when translating these culturally-bound expressions.

This section was made to examine the extent to which EFL learners were knowledgeable to the idioms and proverbs, and the extent of their usage in the process of learning English as a foreign language. Another purpose of this part is to check their degree of awareness and familiarity towards the influence of culture on the translation of these idiomatic words.

#### **2.6.2. Interview**

To accredit more and validity to the data obtained in our research, the interview is used as a second instrument in data gathering for the purpose to gain in-depth insights into the views of participants. It is the primary tool used in qualitative research. McNamara (1999) stated that “Interviews are particularly for getting the story behind a participant’s experiences.

The interviewer can purpose in-depth information around the topic. Interviews may be useful as follow-up to certain respondents to questionnaires, e.g., to further investigate their respondents". Furthermore, an interview is an activity in which the researcher is asked to record and analyze people's opinions, experiences, beliefs and ideas on relevant topics. To sum up, Gill et al. (2008) pointed out that "the purpose of the research interview is to explore the views, experiences, beliefs, and motivations of individuals on specific matters"

In qualitative studies, research interviews can be classified into three types; structured interview, semi-structured interviews and unstructured interview. The first category is structured interviews, in which the interviewer asks pre-drafted set of questions, or sequence. No freedom of addition or deletion of questions is impossible. In structured interviews, there is no interpretation of the questions, the answers thus recorded can be analyzed and evaluated reliably. They are less appropriate for situations where deeper is required. The second type is semi-structured which is the most used type of interview in qualitative research. In semi-structured interviews, the researcher proceeds with a general outline of themes and questions which can be further expanded when needed. Although there is a set of guiding question, the answers of the topic gives the interviewer the flexibility to pose more enhanced questions than initially drafted ones. As such, it is significant to acknowledge semi-structured interviews as the sole source and the ideal data collection mechanism for qualitative studies. Unstructured interview is the third type. In this type, the interviewer exercises autonomy whatever comes to his/ her mind on a particular research problem. Here the researcher is free to ask additional questions and also repeat, delete or modify questions since there is no pre-determined questions; and that respondents may feel confused owing to inadequate guidance. In addition, the informal interviews cover the better of unstructured interviews. It is, therefore, significant to acknowledge that regards of their irregular structure, unstructured interviews are stilling significant qualitative data collection tool.

#### **2.6.2.1. Description of Teachers' Interview**

The use of interviews became an indispensable part of any research, hence it was included as a part of our study as a complementary tool to the questionnaire in order to gain more in-depth data from the participants. This instrument is selected because it has considered as the best mean to collect information about people's opinions, experiences and attitudes towards the issue of teaching idioms and proverbs and their role in mitigating communication breakdown in ICC. The interviews were conducted using seven open-ended questions based

on the research problem, and designed to cover aspect of them; in order to give more opportunity to the respondents to express their choices and points of views freely. As regards, the informants are seven teachers at Abdelhamid Ibn Badis University-Mostaganem. The samples selected to complete this interview are either teachers of Intercultural Communicative Competence modules or they have experiences with field of intercultural studies. Moreover, the interviews were done through two forms: face-to-face or electronically. In this design, there are seven questions that appear as follows:

**Question one:**

In the present interview, the first question investigates to know whether language teachers consider teaching culture as an important and integral part of language teaching classes. The purpose behind this question is to figure out the instructors' opinions and views concerning the impact of culture in the teaching of English language as a foreign language. Moreover, we aim to examine the informants' awareness concerning the relation between the target language and its culture.

**Question Two:**

The second question sought to clarify to what extent English culture is being taught in EFL classroom. Through this question, we want to examine teachers' attitudes and opinions towards the incorporation of such aspects about the target language culture(s) in their teaching lessons and practices. And also to see the methodology classes and activities integrated by educators in order to ensure the inclusion of this hidden part of education.

**Question Three:**

Teaching the four language skills "*listening, reading, speaking and writing*" were highlighted as the language skills that every language learners has to learn, they are still today the objectives in curriculum documents. Interestingly enough teaching interculturality and cross-cultural studies was considered as the fifth skills. For that reason, the third question was designed to determine whether educators give the teaching of intercultural communicative competence as important as the other skills. Besides, the informants were asked to justify their choices and answers since they are given the opportunity to express their thoughts. The objective of this study is to examine the teachers' perceptions concerning the integration of ICC during the sessions, and also to show to what extent does EFL courses policy sheet address interculturality.

**Question four:**

Another question that makes part in our interview is targeted to find what the instructors' attitudes are towards and practices of developing ICC in their classroom. This question aims to point out to ways of implementing intercultural dimension such as the activities and mechanism inside the classes which may provide more information about how intercultural communicative competence is promoted to increase students' knowledge and awareness; since that the process of foreign language teaching/ learning does not take into account only the learner's culture, but also the target cultures.

**Question five:**

In the fifth question, we investigate to discover whether teachers include cultural elements in the classroom such as idioms and proverbs; our participants are requested to express the reasons leading to such usage of these fixed words and expressions. The objective of this question is to consider the degree to which idioms and proverbs' integration by instructors in the teaching process, in order to enhance students' skills and performance in the field of interculturality.

**Question six:**

The other question included in this interview seeks to assess and evaluate teachers' attitudes towards the implementation of culturally-bound expressions in the EFL classroom. It aims to examine their competences and skills explored to explain these idiomatic and proverbial words, and also to identify the strategies used to translate and transmit them effectively; because fixed group of words have a particular meaning which is different from the meaning of the individual words; In order to provide the EFL learners with sufficient knowledge and awareness to interact appropriately in different intercultural situations.

**Question seven:**

In the last question, we intend to examine teachers' opinions concerning the importance of idioms and proverbs, and their role in mitigating communication breakdown in ICC. In this regard, informants are asked to express their views by providing us more explanation and details to investigate this issue. The aim behind this question is to give a clear picture of the significant influence of culturally-bound expressions in reducing the breakdown in communication such as misunderstanding and misinterpreting between cultures.

## **2.7. Conclusion**

As a summary of this chapter, we can say that this part displays an overview description of the study. More specifically, the research design has been outlined, then the context in which the study was done, and the sample participants. This chapter provides more details and explanation about the selection tools that allow us to collect the data including: questionnaire and interview. Regarding the next chapter, it will present an overall analyzing of the data, and discussion of finding.

*Chapter Three*

**Data Analysis and Discussion**

### 3. Introduction

The current chapter is devoted to the analysis and discussion of the data obtained from the instruments utilized in this research study; students' questionnaire, test translation and teachers' interview. The quantitative data will be analyzed and displayed in tables, graphs, charts and statistics while the qualitative analysis will be summed up in commentary paragraphs. In addition, this chapter will present a set of recommendations that could be beneficial for EFL learners to be competent conversants in diverse cultural context mainly when they use idioms and proverbs.

#### 3.1. Data Analysis

There were two different collection instruments used to complete the current study: firstly, the questionnaire used to gather quantitative statistic data whereas the qualitative data were collected through the interview. At this process, we will analyze only the most important questions to provide data to answer the research questions.

##### 3.1.1. Analysis of Students' Questionnaire

###### Background Information

The first part in the questionnaire is about the personal information. This section intends to indicate learners' age and their gender.

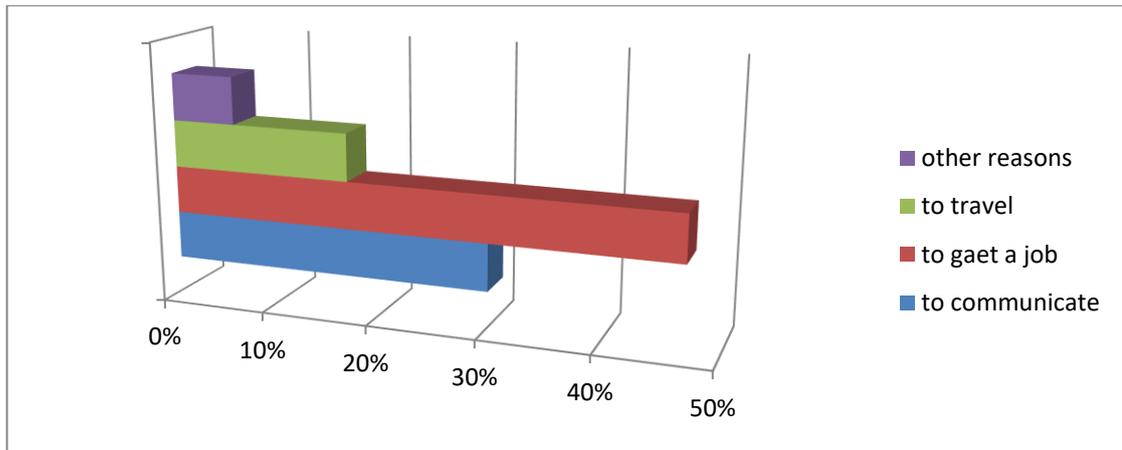
Age	21	22	23	24	Total
Respondents	4	8	14	4	30
Percentage	13,33%	26,66%	46,66%	13,33%	100%

**Table 3.1: Participants' Age**

From the table above, we aim to know students' age who participated in this questionnaire that stranded from 21 to 24 years. The result shows that the majority of students are aged 23 years (46, 66%), whereas the rest divided to 21, 22 and 24 years.

###### Language Learning and Communication

This section aims to know students' attitudes towards learning English as a foreign language. Moreover, this part intends to show students' views concerning the interrelationship between culture and communication.

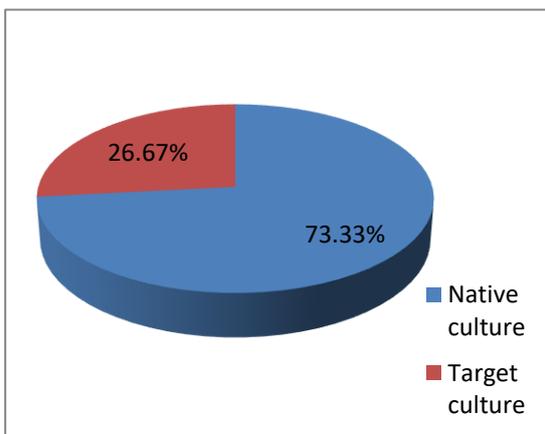
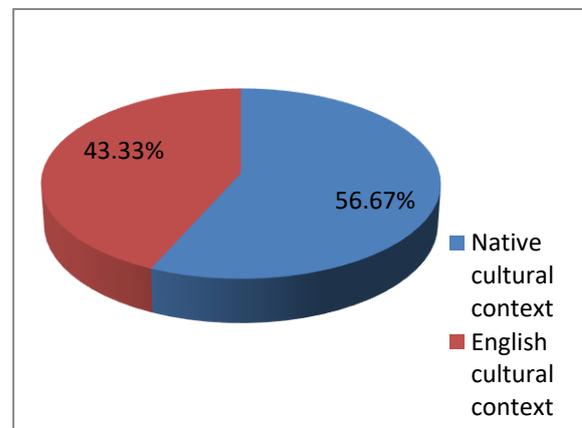
**Question 01:** why do you learn English?**Figure 3.2:** *Students' Reasons behind Learning English Language*

From the figure above, we noticed that the majority of students (47%) chose studying English for getting a job and working in the English domain. (30%) of them prefer to learn English in order to communicate whereas the rest (17%) informants stated that they choose this language just to travel and exchange cultural knowledge.

The next question to be analyzed under this section includes two approximate questions concerning students' interaction in English

**Question two:** Regarding culture, when communicating in English do you take your culture as a reference or a target one?

**Question Three:** In which context do you prefer to use English?

**Figure 3.3:** *Students' Reference in Communicative Practices Cross-Culture***Figure 3.4:** *Language Use and Cultural context*

The figure (3.2) shows that the majority of students (73, 33%) prefer to consider their native cultures as a reference when communicating in English; simply because they do not belong to that culture or they do not have enough cultural knowledge about target culture. (26, 67%) of them chose the target culture as a reference in order to be open-minded and competent users of the language.

From the figure (3.3) we noticed that (56, 67%) learners use English in target cultural context for the purpose of being interculturally competent. While (43, 33%) of them prefer to use the language in their native context.

**Question Four:** Do you frequently use unfamiliar expressions as idioms and proverbs in classroom?

Answers/ Options	Yes	No
Students' Number	14	16
Percentage	46,67%	53,33%

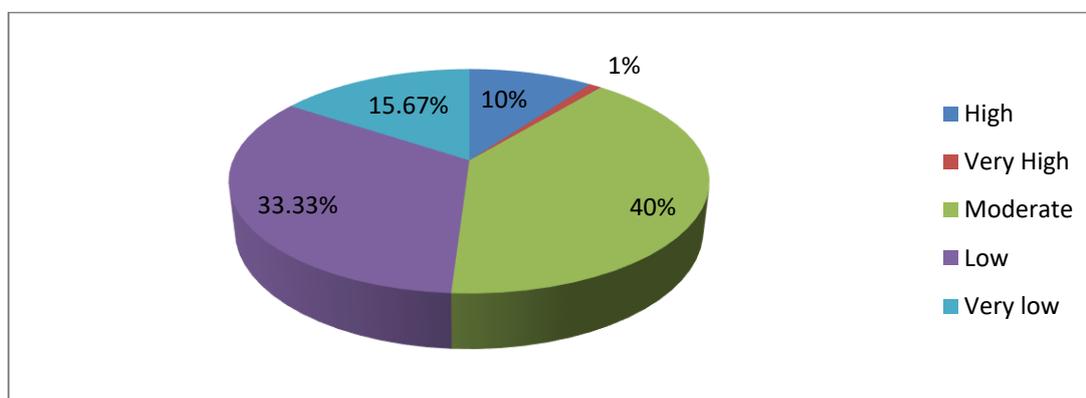
**Table 3.2:** *Students' use of Idioms and Proverbs*

The informants' answers demonstrate that (53, 33%) of them do not use expressions such idioms and proverbs due to their difficulties, whereas the rest (46, 67%) were motivated about the use of these culturally-bound elements.

### Language/ Culture learning

The questions under this session aim to examine students' attitudes towards learning English language and its culture.

**Question One:** To what extent do you learn about culture in class?



**Figure 3.5:** *The degree of Culture integration in EFL classes*

The percentages and numbers presented in the figure above indicate that the majority of students stated that they learned about culture in classroom in a great extent.

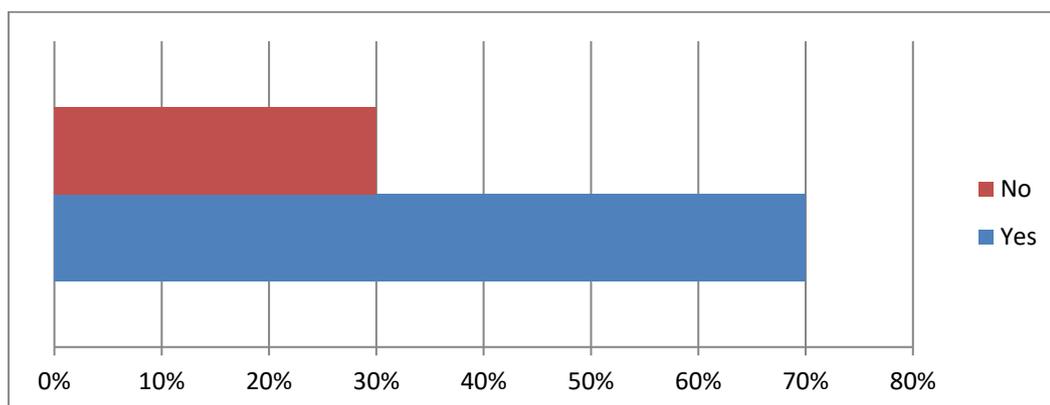
**Question Two:** Do you think that learning about culture is necessary as learning the language?

Answers/ Options	Agree	Disagree	To some extent
Students' Number	15	2	13
Percentage	50%	6,67%	43,33%

**Table 3.3:** *Students' views towards the incorporation of culture in language learning*

The data obtained in this question reveals that the greater part of informants agrees with the view of learning the language and its culture in the EFL classes; they show their awareness of the significance of implementing culture within the English language courses. While the minority of students (6, 67%) disagree with this view.

**Question Three:** Has learning about other culture helped you in learning the language?



**Figure 3.6:** *Students' Perceptions and Attitudes concerning the Impact of Culture Learning*

From the participants' answers we noticed that they have positive attitudes towards implementation of culture in language learning has a great influence on EFL students; and that shows perception and readiness of learning about the foreign languages and their cultures.

### **Interculturality**

From the questions of this part, we aim to find out the extents to which EFL students are familiar with ICC, and how to see how much they interculturally aware to the importance of this process in achieving idiomaticity.

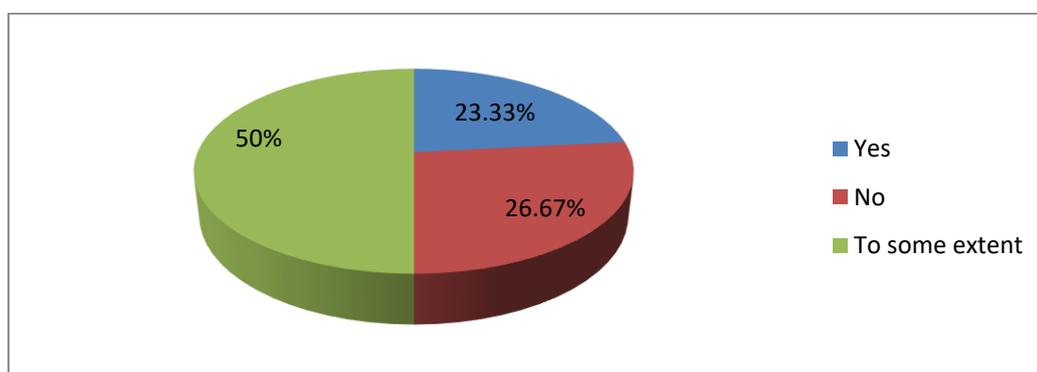
**Question One:** Before learning ICC in classes, did you have background knowledge about it?

Answers/ Options	Yes	No
Students' Number	5	25
Percentage	16,67%	83,33%

**Table 3.4:** *Students' Knowledge towards the Intercultural Communicative Competence*

The table above shows that the students' unfamiliarity with the ICC before they learned it in the classroom as a module; the EFL students were not knowledgeable about this process. Significantly, this result could reflect that learning/ teaching processes focused only on the linguistic competence rather than Intercultural Communicative Competence.

**Question Two:** Do you think that ICC sessions developed your awareness of the English cultural perspectives?



**Figure 3.7:** *Students' Perceptions about Learning the ICC*

The result shows that the ICC' sessions have a great impact in developing students' awareness of English cultural perspectives; this process helps them not only to build language skills but also to deal with cultural and linguistic diversity, it help learners sufficiently to face real life situations. A minority of students (23, 33%) stated that ICC has not a real effect on their perception of the target culture.

**Question Three:** Do you think that idiomatic and culturally-bound expressions mitigate communication breakdown in ICC?

Answers/ Options	Agree	Disagree
Students' Number	27	3
Percentage	90%	10%

**Table 3.5:** *Students' Awareness towards the importance of culturally-bound expressions*

The findings of this question reveal that (90%) of students agree that culturally-bound expressions play positive role in mitigating communication breakdowns in IC such; misunderstanding, misinterpreting and the ignorance of cultural differences. For that reason, these aspects of language helped EFL learners to develop their intercultural communication.

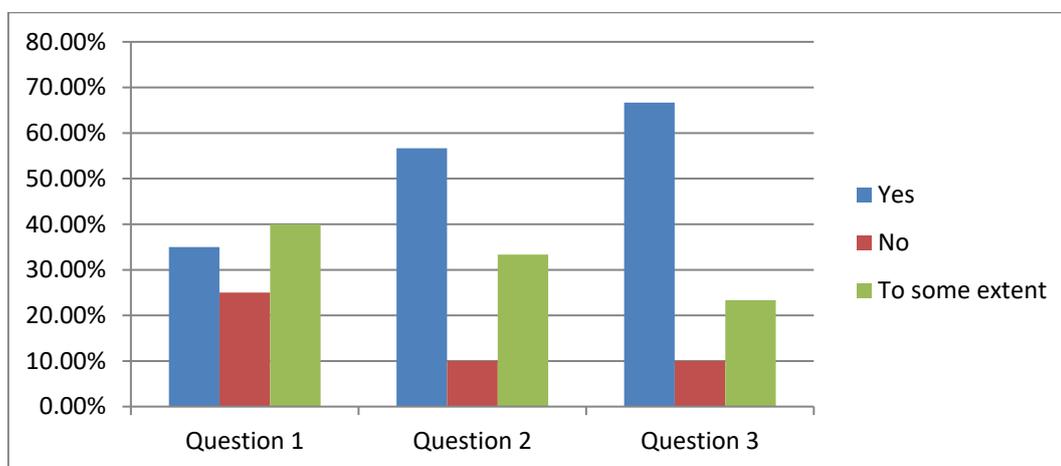
### Idioms and Proverbs

There are three questions under this sections that aim to examine students' use, awareness and perception towards idioms and proverbs. And to see the extent to which these expressions can promote students with a new understanding of the interconnectedness between communication and culture in a language.

**Question one:** Do you use expressions in your communication such as idioms and proverbs from both your culture and the target one?

**Question Two:** Do you think that idioms and proverbs help the learners to communicate effectively in cross-cultural situations?

**Question Three:** Do you think that it is important to learn idioms and proverb?



**Figure 3.8: Students' Attitudes and Perceptions of Idioms and Proverbs**

From the histogram above, we observe that the majority of students used idioms and proverbs from both Arabic and English cultures interchangeably in a great extent. The data gathered elucidate students' intercultural awareness towards the role of these culturally-bound expressions in communication among languages with different cultures. The informants stated that these aspects of culture should be taught simultaneously with foreign language in the classroom.

### 3.1.2. Discussion of the Findings

Based on the data obtained from the questionnaire, we noticed that EFL students were interested in learning both English language and its culture for different reasons. However, they tend to locate themselves in their native cultural context and keep it as a reference in such diverse communicative situations. The results also show that the learning/ teaching processes focused more on linguistic competence rather than intercultural communicative competence and that could impact on students' performance in achieving idiomaticity; although they showed their positive attitudes and their intercultural awareness towards the vital role of culturally-bound expressions in mitigating communication breakdown in IC. Additionally, the majority of participants stated that idioms and proverbs should be taught in order to extend their cultural knowledge.

### 3.1.3. Analysis of Students' Test

The translation test was designed for the purpose of achieving a high degree of reliability. The aim of this part is to examine whether students can provide an appropriate translation of following idioms and proverbs from English into Arabic and vice versa; it attempts to indicate students' degree of familiarity and unfamiliarity with these cultural expressions. Moreover, we want to see whether they are able to achieve cultural equivalence between the source and the target language, and how.

#### English to Arabic translation

The first part consists of a group of English idiomatic and proverbial expressions, students were asked to translate them into Arabic in order to check to what extent EFL learners are knowledgeable and aware of the English idioms and culture. The objective of this section is to test how students translate following culturally-bound expressions.

English expression	Arabic Equivalent Meaning
A word to a wise man is enough	ان اللبيب من الاشارة يفهم
Nature overcomes nurture	الطبع يغلب التطبع
Birds of feather flock to gather	الطيور علي اشكالها تقع

**Table 3.6: Translated Expressions from English into Arabic**

The data obtained from our participants show that only (20%) of that succeeded to give acceptable translation of these culturally-bound expressions whereas the majority failed

to provide a correct equivalent meaning. It should be mentioned that there were irrelevant answers. For example, the expression “*a word to a wise man is enough*” was translated to “*كلمة كلمة واحدة لرجل حكيم تكفي*” Others translated into “*كلمة من رجل حكيم تكفي*” while some students did not any efforts to translate it at all. Generally speaking, the informants were not able to translate this expression.

Concerning the expression “*Nature overcomes nurture*” the participants produced accurate translation to some extent using the literal translation method. Whereas the rest of them mistranslated into *الفطرة الطبيعية تفوق الرعاية* another student translated this expression into *الفطرة التغلب التربية* and that reveals their misunderstanding of the whole meaning of the metaphor. In the other hand, the translation of the proverb “*Birds of feather flock to gather*” had achieved a higher degree with 60 percent in producing proper meanings; thanks to their familiarity with this expression on both cultures; the native and the target one. While some students translated it literary as *طيور من ريش تتجمع معا*, other students were biased on incorrect meaning, committing incorrect translation such as *الطيور في القطيع متجمعة*. It should be noticed that the majority of students interpreted this proverb culturally.

### Arabic into English Translation

The main aims of this part are to examine students’ ability to translate Arabic idioms and proverbs into English. Moreover, we want to check their cultural knowledge of both cultures the Arabic and the English one, and how it can effect on their translation of those cultural related expressions.

Arabic Expressions	English Equivalent Meaning
لا هروب من القدر	No escape from destiny
احذر عدوك مرة و احذر صديقك الف مرة	A good enemy is better than a false friend
رحم الله امرء عرف قدر نفسه	Cut your coat according to your cloth

**Table 3.7: Translated Expressions from Arabic into English**

The data obtained show that our participants were able to interpret the first expression لا هروب من القدر the majority of them did effort to give a cultural translation with a percentage of 55percent for the correct answers. For instance, “*No escape from destiny*” while other students produced acceptable responses as “*there is no escape from faith*” or “*there is no way from destiny*”

For the second expression *احذر عدوك مرة و احذر صديقك الف مرة* which its equivalence in English as a proverb “*A good enemy is better than a false friend*” the vast majority of informants produced incorrect answers such “*keep your friend close and your enemy closer*” others translated into “*Beware of your enemy one and your friend thousand times*” they provided a literal translation rather than cultural translation. Only 10% of students were able to give acceptable answers whereas others ignored to translate this cultural related expression to the target culture.

The last expression *رحم الله امرء عرف قدر نفسه* almost of respondents produced either a literal translation or word by word translation for examples; “*Allah mercy a person who knows the value of himself*”, “*God blesses someone respect himself*” or “*God blesses a person who appreciate himself*” they failed to get the whole point behind this expression; they could not find its equivalent meaning in English. To be honest, we have to mention that there were many students who were disregarded to interpret expression simply because they were not familiar with it in the English language.

### 3.1.4. Discussion of the Test’s results

The analysis of the answers obtained in the test shows that the majority of students failed in achieving the appropriate translation of such idiom and proverb; they encountered many difficulties and problems while interpreting these culturally-bound expressions. This result demonstrates that their familiarity with Arabic and especially with English idioms is somehow low; additionally they used improper translation strategies while producing the message from the source language to the target one or vice versa. For instance, many participants used word by word strategy or literally translation technique in order to get the equivalent meaning of cultural related expression; however these methods are not always appropriate, they were one of the reasons behind their poor performance in the test. For that reason, their ability to interpret unfamiliar idioms is limited. Furthermore, the students’ inability of understanding and getting the needed information about the cultural expressions were an indication of their lack of knowledge about other cultures and even their own language and culture. Moreover, the informants did not take the cultural differences factor in consideration and that can be another indicator that reveals their lack of intercultural awareness; they were unable to use such expressions out of their context. In the end, we may sum up that EFL learners should take a careful attention to the translation of the cultural related terms such idioms and proverbs.

### 3.1.5. Analysis of Teachers' Interview

**Question one:** *do you think that teaching English culture is important as teaching the language?*

This question aims at examining teachers' awareness about the necessity of culture implementation in EFL classrooms. Absolutely, all teachers agree that teaching culture teaching a language is a kind of teaching the culture and habits of the country where the language is spoken. The respondents indicated their answers as follows: "*Yes, it is quite important because they complete each other....*", "*Yes, absolutely it is inseparable from the language as they represent two halves of the same body*". Another said: "*...knowledge about the target culture will help students' target language skills*". Another informant revealed that teaching English language requires teaching its culture, he/she told: "*culture should be the core of intercultural language teaching*".

**Question Three:** *How important do you attach to teaching ICC compared teaching vocabulary, grammar and the four skills? Explain why please.*

The study reveals that the majority of teachers' responses are of the same opinions; they considered teaching ICC as necessary as teaching vocabulary, grammar and the other skills. The informants think that ICC should take place in the classroom and they comment that: "*Personally, I consider culture a language skill as important the other skills. Being an intercultural speaker is crucial nowadays*"; "*ICC promotes students' knowledge, skills and attitudes ...*" While another teacher stated that: "*We cannot say that is equally important but we need to teach it because it is part of communication and being communicatively competent implies being intercultural competent*".

**Question Five:** *Do you use culturally-bound expressions such as idioms and proverbs in the classroom? Explain how please.*

This question addresses teachers' use of words and expressions such as idioms and proverb; the majority of informants indicated that they use culturally-bound expressions in EFL classes and they explained their answers as ensues: "*Yes, to implement the notion of connotative and socio-cultural meaning which facilitates understanding outside the classroom where English is more than lingua-franca*", "*Yes, I use them to express target items in order to open students' eyes to a new perspective of understanding culture and translation*" Another mentioned: "*sometimes I integrate them, according to the situation*"

While another teacher did not prefer to use idioms and proverbs due to their complexity, he/she mentioned: “*I do not use them because it is so hard to express them*”.

**Question seven: *In your opinion, how can idioms and proverbs mitigate communication breakdown in ICC?***

The last question aims to know teachers’ opinions and awareness concerning the issue of idiomatic and proverbial expressions. All teachers have agreed that these culturally-bounds expressions play a vital role in mitigating communication breakdown in the process of ICC. The answers were mentioned as follows: “*Idioms and proverbs represent an important part of culture. Hence, they can provide people with sufficient knowledge, awareness and deep understanding of the target culture; and that lead to make communication easier and successful*”, “*They help learners to interact appropriately to achieve interculturality*” Another teacher stated: “*....Because some of them might be funny and therefore impact positively on conversation. Other proverbs and idioms may be found in the other’ culture and create a kind of cultural closeness*

### **3.1.6. Discussion of the findings**

The findings obtained through teachers’ responses in the interview reflected that they are aware of the dynamic interconnectedness between language and culture and the significance role of implementing culture in the process of teaching/ learning the English language. They consistently stated that culture should be as a fifth skill of language. To link the strong connection between language and culture to the importance of Intercultural Communicative Competence, instructors considered that ICC is necessary in comparison to the grammatical and the other linguistic skills. And it should be an integral part of the EFL classroom for the purpose of raising a global cultural awareness, critical thinking and open-mindedness in the students’ environment. In addition to this, teachers claimed that they use culturally-bound expressions as idioms and proverbs in the classes to provide learners with deep understanding and knowledge about the other cultures. They reported that these expressions and items help students to increase their awareness of cultural connotations of words and phrases in the target language. As elaborated in the prior parts of this research study, the results show that teaching idioms and proverbs have an important function in reducing communication breakdown in IC; they help students to become more aware of conversational behaviors and communicatively competent in different situations in target culture. To sum up, idiomaticity leads to achieve interculturality.

### **3.2. General Discussion**

Based on the data obtained from the questionnaire, the translation test and the interview, we may summarize some notes and conclusions as follows:

As elaborated in this dissertation, teaching/learning a language requires teaching/learning its culture so they should go hand in hand in the classroom; because they are inseparable entities. The findings indicated positively teacher's and student's awareness about the importance of cultural integration in classes to build a global understanding of a foreign culture. Moreover, these results reflected the difficulties of learners generally in using the language, and specifically in finding out the proper equivalent terms.

In addition, the data obtained shows that idioms and proverbs are one of the aspects of culture and they play an essential role in a language, for that reason translating these culturally-bound expressions is the most problematic for the EFL learners. Furthermore, as they are idiomatic expressions, sometimes it can be difficult to decide when or how to use them. Regarding the reasons behind the students' failure in achieving the equivalent translation, they can be due to the lack of the unfamiliarity with these expressions and even the lack of vocabulary. Additionally, the findings indicated that the EFL learners were influenced by their native culture and this was reflected in their performance in the translation test, their weaknesses can be reflected many kinds of errors, especially the cultural errors. Also, they used improper strategies and techniques in interpreting these cultural related expressions such as word by word and the literal translation methods without giving any importance to the cultural context in figuring the meaning. To sum up, many participants were unknowledgeable to the translation of idioms and proverbs.

Moreover, the results indicated the positive attitudes of teachers towards teaching the idioms and the proverbs because they play a vital role in bridging the gaps between cultures. While both students and teachers agreed that these culturally-bound expressions mitigate communication breakdown in IC.

### **3.3. Recommendations**

Based on the study's results, we attempt to provide several recommendations that we saw they may help the EFL learners to be aware of the use of idioms and proverbs and their importance in mitigating communication breakdown in ICC:

- Language and culture should be taught simultaneously in the EFL classroom.
- Culture should be the core of international language teaching.
- Teachers should familiarize their students with their native culture and the foreign culture; because expanding students' knowledge will help them to be intercultural competent, and this process should be a must in the classes.
- The intercultural communicative competence has to be the fifth language skill in the teaching/learning processes because being successful in international communication does not require only the fourth skills (linguistic competence), but also the ability to deal with cultural diversity of a foreign country environment (intercultural communicative competence).
- EFL learners have to be familiar with idioms and proverbs inside and outside of schools and universities in order to extend their knowledge and awareness.
- Idioms and proverbs should be learned and used as a single unit of language.
- Students should be working hard in translating the culturally-bound expressions in order to avoid the factors that can lead to communication breakdown or failure such as the use of inappropriate strategies or the ignorance of cultural differences. For that reason, EFL learners ought to pay a careful attention to them.

### **3.4. Conclusion**

This study aims at investigating the issue of idioms and proverbs and their role in mitigating communication breakdown in IC. It also intends to know students' performance when translating the cultural related expressions from English into Arabic or vice versa. This chapter presents the analysis of the data obtained from our participants. In addition it tries to provide an interpretation and discussion of the results. This chapter tries also to highlight the main difficulties and problems encountered the informants especially in the translation test. It has been noticed that although EFL learners have positive attitudes towards learning idioms and proverbs, they are not knowledgeable and not aware about their use. Through the findings, we observe that many students failed to achieve idiomacity that may lead to communication failure in IC. Moreover, this chapter ends with several recommendations that we saw they can help EFL learners to be intercultural competent users of a language.

## General Conclusion

It is widespread that the ultimate aim of teaching and learning a foreign language is to provide EFL learners with intercultural communicative abilities that allow them to interact effectively with people that are different from them linguistically and culturally, so that teaching idioms and proverbs has a great impact on this process. These culturally-bound expressions mitigate the breakdown that can lead to communication failure.

It was observed that the previous studies had dealt with the issue of translating idioms and proverbs from English into Arabic or vice versa in a whole. However, the present topic discusses the role of using these cultural-bound expressions with the fulfillment of appropriateness and effectiveness in intercultural communication.

The purpose of this thesis is find out whether EFL learners are aware of the role of idioms and proverbs in mitigating the breakdown that can face them to achieve a successful intercultural communication. It also aims to test students' skills and competences in translating these cultural related terms and words from Arabic into English or vice versa in order to assess their knowledge and perceptions towards culture integration in the classroom.

As it is mentioned previously, this present research work is composed of three chapters. The first chapter is the literature review in which the definitions and explanations of different concepts and items related to the research topic. The second chapter is the practical part of this study; it displays an overview description of the research methodology, context of study, sample population and instruments in data collection. Whereas the third chapter reports the analysis and discussions of the finding, additionally it ends with a set of recommendations that can help EFL learners to use idioms and proverbs appropriately in different context I order to mitigate communication breakdown in ICC.

Certainly, the obtained results have clarified the previous hypotheses. The findings have shown that cross-intercultural communication is not given its right value in teaching cross-cultural subjects, so that EFL learners are not aware enough to the use of idioms and proverbs in shaping a successful communication. Furthermore, the data gathered indicated that the performance of students in English was poor and weak due to the lack of unfamiliarity and even the lack of knowledge of such idioms and proverbs in the target culture.

To conclude, it should mention although that we have made our best to design the present study, there were some obstacles that faced us while working on this research topic. Firstly, it is needless to say that Corona Virus (COVID-19) was a fundamental problem; it was very hard to complete this current thesis during that period because we found a lot of difficulties in conducting the practical part and even in finding sources to collect data. In addition, due to the vastness and the complexity of the subject we could not answer and solve all the questions and the issues related to the topic demands. Nevertheless, it opens the doors for further investigations that can deal with this subject from different angles.

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## Appendices

### Appendix I – Students' Questionnaire

Dear students,

The aim of this present questionnaire is to find out the extent to which your awareness of the cultural elements regarding the learning about English cultures. I would be very grateful if you could please answer the following questions. Pick ( ) the appropriate answer (s).

#### Section One: *Personal Information*

Gender: Male  female

Age:

#### Section Two: *Language Learning and Communication*

1- Why do you learn English?

To communicate

To get a job

To travel

If you have other purposes, please state them.....

2- To what extent the learning of culture in our EFL classroom have shape your communicative competencies to act conveniently in appropriate context?

High  Very High  Moderate

Low  Very Low

3- Regarding culture, when communicating in English do you take your culture as a reference or a target one?

Your culture  Target on culture

Say why.....

4-Do you frequently use unfamiliar expressions in classroom?

Yes  No

5- In which context do you prefer to use English?

Your own  English context

Explain your answer .....

**Section Three: *language/culture learning***

1-to what extent do you learn about culture in class?

High                       Very high                       moderate   
 Low                       very low

2-Do you think that learning about culture is as necessary as learning language?

Yes                       No                       To some extent

Explain please .....

3-Has learning about other culture helped you in learning the language?

Yes                       No

4-has learning English influenced your cultural, individual or social identity?

Yes                       No                       To some extent

Justify.....

**Section Four: *ICC***

1-How long have you been learning ICC?

2-Before learning ICC in classes, did you have background knowledge about it?

Yes                       No

3-Do you think that learning ICC affects the EFL learners' identity?

Yes                       No                       To some extent

Justify please.....

4-Do you think those ICC sessions developed your awareness of the English cultural perspectives?

Yes                       No                       To some extent

5-Do you think that idiomatic and culturally bound expressions mitigate communication breakdowns in ICC?

Agree                       Disagree

Explain why.....

### Section Five: *Idioms and Proverbs*

1-Do you use expressions in your communication such as idioms and proverbs from both your culture and the target one?

Yes  No  To some extent

2-Do you think that proverbs and idioms help the learners to communicate effectively in crosscultural situations?

Agree  Disagree  To some extent

3-Do you think that it is important to learn idioms and proverbs?

Yes  No  To some extent

Justify your answer.....

### Section Six: *Translation*

#### A- Translate the following expressions from English into Arabic:

1- A sound mind in a sound body.....

2-A word to a wise man is enough.....

3-Nature overcomes nurture.....

4-Birds of feather flock together.....

#### B- Translate the following expressions from Arabic into English:

1. لا هروب من القدر.....

2. رحم الله امرءا عرف قدر نفسه.....

3. لا دخان بدون نار.....

4. احذر عدوك مرة و صديقك الف مرة.....

**Thank You**

## **Appendix II - Teachers' Interview**

**Question one:** Do you think that teaching English culture is important as teaching the language?

**Question two:** To what extent do you include teaching culture in the classroom?

**Question three:** How important do you attach to teaching ICC compared to teaching vocabulary, grammar and the four skills? Explain why please.

**Question four:** What can teachers do to promote the ICC of their students?

**Question five:** Do you use culturally-bound expressions such as idioms and proverbs in the classroom? Explain how please.

**Question six:** How do you explain idioms and proverbs to the students?

**Question seven:** In your opinion, how can idioms and proverbs mitigate communication breakdown in ICC?

***Thank you!***