

## Obstacles that Face Yemeni Students in Translating Proverbs from English into Arabic

Dr. Abdou Ahmed Ali Mounassar<sup>(\*)</sup>

### Abstract

This study aimed to investigate the obstacles that face Yemeni students in translating proverbs from English into Arabic. To achieve the goal of this study, the researcher selected a random sample of 45 English students who registered in the first semester of the academic year (2021-2022) in the Department of English, Faculty of Arts at Tamar University in Yemen. The researcher designed a translation test that consists of 14 English proverbs. The students were asked to translate them into Arabic. The collected data were analyzed and investigated. The results discovered unaccepted level of students in translating these proverbs. The most committed problems were related to students' unfamiliarity with English culture-specific items; their failure in achieving the exact Arabic equivalence; lack of knowledge of techniques and strategies of translation in general and proverbs in particular; the ambiguity of some English proverbs and committing linguistic, stylistic, and grammatical mistakes.

**Keywords:** Translation, equivalence, obstacles, culture-specific items, English proverbs, Arabic proverbs, Yemeni students, Tamar University.

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(\*)Associate Professor of Translation, English Department, Faculty of Arts  
Tamar University, Yemen.

الملخص:

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى معرفة الصعوبات التي تواجه الطلاب اليمنيين عند ترجمة الأمثال من اللغة الإنجليزية إلى اللغة العربية. ولتحقيق هذا الهدف اختار الباحث عينة عشوائية قوامها 45 طالبًا وطالبة مسجلين في الفصل الدراسي الأول من العام الجامعي (2021-2022) في قسم اللغة الإنجليزية بكلية الآداب بجامعة ذمار، الجمهورية اليمنية. صمم الباحث اختبار ترجمة يتكون من 14 مثالاً إنجليزيًا. حيث طُلب من الطلاب ترجمتها إلى اللغة العربية. بعد ذلك تم جمع النتائج وتحليلها وقد كشفت هذه النتائج أن الطلاب لم يكونوا عند المستوى المطلوب؛ فقد كانت أكثر المشكلات تتعلق بعدم إلمامهم بالتعابير الثقافية الإنجليزية، بالإضافة إلى إخفاقهم في إيجاد المكافئ العربي الدقيق، كذلك عدم معرفتهم بتقنيات واستراتيجيات الترجمة بشكل عام و ترجمة الأمثال بشكل خاص إلى جانب غموض بعض الأمثال الإنجليزية. كما قاموا بارتكاب أخطاء لغوية وأسلوبية ونحوية.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** الترجمة، التكافؤ، الصعوبات، التعابير الثقافية الإنجليزية، الأمثال

الإنجليزية، الأمثال العربية، الطلاب اليمنيون، جامعة ذمار.

## 1. Introduction

Translation is an essential process that allows people to share information, news, culture, literature, and sciences among others. It is the procedure of moving from one language 'source language' to another 'target language'. Translation is not an easy task because a translator needs to have a bilingual competence in the source language and the target language as well as knowledge of both cultures to clear off the ambiguity in some texts. Therefore, the translation of proverbs that are known to be culture-specific concepts will absolutely form a problem. Proverbs are fixed expressions that are important in any language because they have meanings that can cover all aspects of life, knowledge, social values, religion and other aspects of culture.

Students are generally careful when translating proverbs into their closest equivalence in the target language because there are many obstacles that face them while translating proverbs. They have their own structure, form and style. Furthermore, there are proverbs which contain some cultural aspects in the source language that can't be found in the target culture. Therefore, Students must be familiar with the strategies of translation in general and translating proverbs and fixed expressions in particular. In translating proverbs from English to Arabic, students encounter some obstacles due to the linguistic, stylistic and cultural gap between the two languages. One of the linguistic difficulties is the equivalence in the target language. This study aims to explore the obstacles that Yemeni students encounter in translating proverbs from English into Arabic.

### **1. 1 Significance of the Study**

Studies that deal with translating proverbs are relatively few, especially in Yemen. This current study may be of great value to those who are interested in the field of translation in general and to English students in particular, since it provides broad analysis to the areas of difficulties in translating proverbs from English into Arabic. The findings of the study may help students, translators, readers, academics and other people interested in this field. The study is expected that the findings will fill some gaps in translation studies.

### **1.2. Objectives and Questions of the Study**

The goal of this study is to explore the obstacles that face English students in translating proverbs from English into Arabic. In addition, it aims to find out the reasons behind these obstacles. The study, therefore, attempted to answer the following questions:

- a- What are the obstacles that face Yemeni students in translating proverbs from English into Arabic?

b- What are the reasons behind these obstacles?

### **1.3. Limitation of the study**

The population of the study consisted of 45 students from level four who hold B.A degree in English at English Department, Faculty of Arts, Tamar University, Republic of Yemen. The sample of students (male and female) were chosen randomly from the total population of students registered in the first semester of the academic year 2021/2022. It dealt with some difficulties that undergraduate students of English encounter in translating proverbs from English into Arabic.

## **2. Definition of Terms**

### **2.1. Translation**

Translation has been the subject of interest not only to linguists, professional and amateur translators, and language teachers but also to electronic engineers and mathematicians. A huge number of books and articles have been written about this field of human knowledge. However, "What is translation?" is still a question in need of research. The reason is that writers on translation seem to look at translation from different perspectives. The result is that translation appears to be a complex process. According to Catford (1965:20) "Translation is the replacement of textual material in one language (source language) by equivalent textual material in another language (target language)". It means that the translator has to replace anything related to the source text with something that relevant in the target text. The "textual material" can be words, idioms, phrases, sentences, language style, and the grammatical structure. Nida and Taber defined translation as "Translation consists in reproducing in the receptor language the closest natural equivalent of the source language message, first in terms of meaning and secondly in terms of style." (Nida & Taber, 1982: 12). By this definition, the translators' priority is to consider whether the

translation would be read and understood by the target language readers as it is intended by the writer of the source language text.

## 2.2. Equivalence in Translation

According to Roman Jakobson, interlingual translation involves ‘substitute(ing) messages in one language not for separate code-units but for entire messages in some other language.’” The role of a translator, therefore, is to read the original carefully, recodify accurately and transmit the message meaningfully in the target language. Hence it can be said that translation involves two equivalent messages in two different codes. Roman Jakobson, in his “On linguistic Aspects of Translation” (1959), talks about the problem of equivalence in meaning between words in different languages. He points out that “there is ordinarily no full equivalence between code-units.” What he means is that when one is trying to translate from the source language, one figures out that sometimes it is impossible to find an exact, equivalent word or expression in the target language. The reason is that our language is based on the socio-cultural practices. (Munday,2008 :37)

## 2.3. Proverbs

According to Ghazala (2008:138) "Proverbs are special, fixed, unchanged phrases which have special, fixed, unchanged meanings. A proverb cannot be translated or understood as a collection of the individual meanings of its words. Moreover, proverbs are metaphors that stand for something else. Besides that, they are culture-specific. Therefore, they should not be translated or understood directly. " On other hand, Meider (2004: 3) defines proverbs as "a short, generally known sentence of the folk which contains wisdom, truth, morals, and traditional views in a metaphorical, fixed and memorable form and which is handed down from generation to generation". According to Julie Mourad, Dictionary of Comparative Proverbs English- Arabic

(2006:7) "Proverbs have always been words of wisdom uttered by our ancestors in an eloquent style...They are the expression of life itself, in its sweetness and bitterness. They reveal the hidden content of the human mind and feelings, hence they are quoted in every occasion and by all generations." Furthermore, Mohammed Attia, the Dictionary of Common English Proverbs, Translated and Explained (2004: 3) defined proverb as:

"المثل هو قول شائع وجيز يحمل معنى النصح أو التحذير، فالمثل لا بد أن يكون شائعاً بين عدد كبير من أفراد المجتمع طوال فترة طويلة من الزمن، وهذا ينم عن قدم المثل، فلا يمكن للمثل أن يكتسب صفة الشيوخ بين يوم وليلة، وإنما تتناقله الأجيال وتردده الألسنة حتى يصبح جزءاً من تراث الأمة."

### 3. Review of Literature

A number of studies in translating proverbs tried to explore methods of translating them into Arabic and vice versa.

**Mohammed Bassam Thalji (2015)** conducted a study that shed light on translating proverbs from Arabic into English and vice versa. It aimed to explore the obstacles that Jordanian novice translators encounter when translating proverbs and to explore the strategies they use when translating proverbs from Arabic into English and vice versa. The study revealed that the obstacles which Jordanian novice translators face when translating proverbs from Arabic into English and vice versa are: inability to translate culturally bound words/ expressions properly; giving wrong TL equivalent, irrelevant meaning and wrong paraphrasing; using literal translation and misuse of the appropriate lexical words; committing linguistic, stylistic, and grammatical mistakes; and unfamiliarity with translation strategies and techniques. Moreover, the strategies they used while translating proverbs were: rendering TL equivalent which accounted for 181 instances 45.25% of

the total responses; the paraphrase technique which accounted for 88 instances 22%; literal translation which reached to 57 instances 14.25%; and glossing which accounted for three instances 0.75% of the total translation.

**Mohammad Al Shehab (2016)** achieved a study that aimed at examining the ability of translation students in translating English cultural expressions “proverbs” into Arabic. The collected data were analyzed and investigated quantitatively and qualitatively. The data showed a low level in students' translation, most of them focused on literal translation that affects the meaning and the tone of proverbs. The results illustrated a high rate of poor translation that interpreted the low level of students' understanding in English and Arabic languages. The most committed problems were related to students' unfamiliarity with English proverbs, in addition to their failure in achieving the exact Arabic equivalence of English proverbs listed in the translation test.

#### 4. Translating Proverbs

According to Baker (1992:68-71), there are main difficulties a translator could face while translating proverbs. These difficulties are follows:

1- The lack of cultural equivalence in the TL. In this case, the SL may have some culture-specific concept that cannot be found in the TL or the relevance of a word is different depending on the languages. What the SL finds relevant may not be relevant for the TL.

2- The proverb might exist in the SL and TL but the connotations are different, thus the context of use is no more the same.

3- The interdependence of the literal meaning and the figurative meaning in the SL which has to be conveyed in the TL. Here, the SL

proverb might contain rhymes or figures of speech that give the proverb a type of musicality. It is therefore difficult to create the same effect in the TL.

4- The context and the frequency of use of a proverb are different from one language to another.

According to Hassan (2014:45) "Translators should consider relevance in the translating of proverbs. Relevance is one of the factors which they should pay special attention in the interpretation of proverbs. The translation of a source language proverb should be relevant to the target language community." Ibrahim and Kennedy (1996) as cited in Hassan (2014:46) argue that "interpretations of given proverbs by people from differing cultural backgrounds should show corresponding differences in the use of language..." For this, not all proverbs should be translated literally.

The cultural differences between sender and receiver also complicate matters. Susan Bassnett gives an example of how complicated the translation of even ordinary prosaic words can become. The good translator has to be aware of all minute cultural differences even before starting off on the process of translating even a simple word like 'yes'.

## **5. Strategies for Translating Proverbs**

The term strategy refers to a method or a procedure used by a translator to solve a particular problem while translating. Baker (1992:72-78) suggests strategies that help translators in translating proverbs as follows:

### **1- Using a proverb of similar meaning and form**



This strategy is about using the target language proverb that has meaning and lexical items similar to the source language proverb. For instance, the proverb (*No smoke without fire*) لا دخان من دون نار the meaning and the form of the source proverb is the same as of the target proverb.

## 2- Using a proverb of similar meaning but dissimilar form

In this strategy, the translator can use a target language proverb that has a similar meaning but different linguistic structures. For instance, (*The grass is greener on the other side*) the Arabic equivalence of this proverb is (النبي في غير أهله كريم، مزمار العي لا يطرب) The linguistic structures of these two proverbs are different but the meaning is the same.

## 3- Translation by Paraphrase

This strategy is used when there is no target language equivalent identical to the source text proverb or the style of the target text differs from the source text. For instance, the proverb (Barkis is willing) is translated into (العين بصيرة واليد قصيرة) Mr. Barkis, fictional character, a cart driver in the novel *David Copperfield* by Charles Dickens. Barkis is persistent in his courtship of Clara Peggotty, Copperfield's childhood nurse, and is known for the hopeful often-repeated phrase "Barkis is willing'." He declares his intention to marry Peggotty. (<https://www.britannica.com/topic/Mr-Barkis>)

## 4- Translation by Omission

In this strategy, the translator deletes the whole proverb because there is no target language proverb similar to the source language one closely. Therefore, translators tend to paraphrase the meaning as clearly and accurately as possible.

## 6. Methodology

### 6.1. Instrument of the Study

The researcher used a translation test which was carried out to meet the objectives and achieve the needs of the present study. The test contained 14 English proverbs selected from English resources to be translated to Arabic and they covered many themes.

### 6.2. Discussion and Analysis

Students deal with translating English proverbs indifferent ways. Answers are presented in three categories: correct answer, wrong answer and no answer. Fourteen English proverbs were in the test and discussion is provided below. Each proverb in the test is discussed separately as follow:

Table (1): Students' Performance in the 1st Proverb

No.	Proverb	Correct Answer		Wrong Answer		No Answer	
		F	%	F	%	F	%
1	Cut your coat according to your cloth.	15	33	30	67	0	0

According the table above (15) 33% of the students provided correct answers by using Arabic cultural equivalence such as: مد على قدر بساطك (على قدر بساطك مد) and (30) 67% of them provided wrong answers by using literal translation and giving irrelevant meaning and by committing linguistic, stylistic and grammatical mistakes that distort the entire meaning of the proverb such as:

(اقطع معطفك حسب قماشك/ ضع الشيء في مكانه المناسب/ ضع معطفك مع ملابسك/ اقطع كوتك عبر ملابسك/ على قدر فراشك وسح/ لا تؤجل عمل اليوم إلى الغد/ قطع قطعة قماش لأن

معطفه قطع/ ينزل البرد بقدر الدفاء/ يقطع طبقة رقيقة حسب ملابسك/ فصل كوتك على قدر ملابسك/ مزق قماشك وفقاً لقماشك الخفيف)

According to The Facts on File Dictionary of Proverbs (2002: 50) this proverb means: "Match your actions to your resources, and do not try to live beyond your means." According to Mohammed Attia, the Dictionary of Common English Proverbs, Translated and Explained (2004:29), this proverb is translated as:

-على قدر لحافك مد قدميك. المعنى: لا بد أن يوفق الإنسان بين دخله ومصروفاته فلا ينفق أكثر مما لديه من الموارد.

Julie Mourad, Dictionary of Comparative Proverbs English- Arabic (2006:44) translated it as:

-على قدر بساطك امدد رجلك. أي ليكن مصروفك على قدر استطاعتك.

Table (2): Students' Performance in the 2nd Proverb

No.	Proverb	Correct Answer		Wrong Answer		No Answer	
		F	%	F	%	F	%
2	The fear of God is the beginning of wisdom.	13	29	32	71	0	0

In translating this proverb (13) 29% of the students provided correct answers by using Arabic cultural equivalence such as: ( رأس الحكمة مخافة ) الله). Whereas (32) 71% of them provided wrong answers by committing linguistic, stylistic and grammatical mistakes and giving irrelevant meaning that distort the entire meaning of the proverb like:

(النار من الله يكون بداية من الحكمة/ الخوف من الله بداية الإيمان/ مخافة الله أول الحكم/ إن الله يخشى من عباده العلماء/ الخوف من الرب يكون بداية من التقرب إليه/ من خاف من الله ما هاب/ اعبد الله كأنك تراه/ من لا يخاف لا يسلم)

According to Julie Mourad, Dictionary of Comparative Proverbs English- Arabic (2006:124) this proverb is translated as:

-رأس الحكمة مخافة الله.، -أي أن أولى واجبات المرء التي تنم عن دراية هي خشية خالقه وطاعته في محارمه.

Table (3): Students' Performance in the 3rd Proverb

No.	Proverb	Correct Answer		Wrong Answer		No Answer	
		F	%	F	%	F	%
3	Add insult to injury.	23	51	19	42	3	7

According to the table above (23) 51% of students provided correct answers by using Arabic cultural equivalence such as: (يزيد الطين بلة) , while (19) 42% provided wrong answers by using literal translation and giving irrelevant meaning and by committing linguistic, stylistic and grammatical mistakes such as:

(يضيف إهانة للجرح/ إضافة الشتائم إلى المصائب/ الإهانة إصابة/ يزيد الحقارة ضررا/ من تدخل في ما لا يعنيه يلقي ما لا يرضيه/ ما يوجعك إلا الذي وصلك/ غدر وإهانة/ كثرة الإهانة تؤدي إلى الأذى/ يصب ماء على الزيت/ ضع النقاط على الحروف/ يضيف الإهانة إلى الخسارة)

And (3) 7% of students didn't translate it at all. According to Julie Mourad, Dictionary of Comparative Proverbs English- Arabic (2006:22) ) this proverb is translated to:

-زاد ضغتنا على إبالة، -زاد الطين بلة. - أي زاد الوضع سوءًا عما هو عليه.

Table (4): Students' Performance in the 4th Proverb

No.	Proverb	Correct Answer		Wrong Answer		No Answer	
		F	%	F	%	F	%
4	The end justifies the means.	20	44.4	23	51.1	2	4.4

As shown in table 4 above, (20) 44.4% of students provided correct answers by using Arabic cultural equivalence such as: (الغاية تبرر الوسيلة) According to Mohammed Attia, the Dictionary of Common English Proverbs, Translated and Explained (2004:43), this proverb is translated into:

-الغاية تبرر الوسيلة. المعنى: تعد هذه المقولة من أكثر الأقوال التي اختلف عليها الناس بين مؤيد ومعارض، - والمعنى أنه ما دام الهدف كان شريفًا ونبيلًا فلا بد من السعي لتحقيقه مهما كانت الوسيلة حتى وإن كان ذلك سيسبب الألم والمعاناة لبعض الناس.

On the other hand, (23) 51.1% of students provided wrong answers by committing linguistic, stylistic and grammatical mistakes and by giving irrelevant meaning that change the meaning of the proverb like:

(وقع الفأس في الرأس/ خير الكلام ما قل ودل/ النهاية تبرر المعنى/ الوسيلة نهاية التبرير/ النهاية خلاصة المعنى/ لا تبخل على غيرك/ العبرة بالخواتيم/ الوسيلة غاية لا تدرك/ في النهاية تظهر الدلائل/ نهاية الأعداء التسكع/ عذر أقبح من ذنب)

And (2) 4.4% of students didn't translate it at all. According to The Facts on File Dictionary of Proverbs (2007: 73) this proverb means: "Any course of action, however immoral or unscrupulous, is justifiable

if it achieves a worthy objective." While, Julie Mourad, Dictionary of Comparative Proverbs English- Arabic (2006:123) translated it into:

-الغاية تبرر الوساطة.. - كثيرون يرون في الغاية التي وصلوا اليها ما يبرر الطريقة التي اعتمدها.

Table (5): Students' Performance in the 5th Proverb

No.	Proverb	Correct Answer		Wrong Answer		No Answer	
		F	%	F	%	F	%
5	Between Seylla and Charybdis.	8	18	27	60	10	22

According to the table above (8) 18% of students provided correct answers by using Arabic cultural equivalence such as: (كالمستجير من الرمضاء )  
بين نارين (بالنار، أمران أحلاهما مر، بين نارين) Meanwhile (27) 60% of students provided wrong answers by committing linguistic, stylistic and grammatical mistakes and by using literal translation and giving irrelevant meaning such as:

(بين سيلا وشاربندس/ بين السماء والأرض/ بين سيلا وشخص حذر/ بين سيلا وشاري/ بين سيلا وكاربيودز/ ما بين المشرق والمغرب/ ما بين الحياة والموت/ بين البينين/ بين البيع والشراء/ ما بعد على العين بعد عن القلب/ عين في الجنة وعين في النار)

(10) 22% of students didn't translate it. According to Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English, this proverb means: "in a situation where you have to choose between two possible actions, but both are dangerous or unpleasant." The phrase comes from the ancient Greek stories of Scylla, a monster, and Charybdis, a whirlpool (water that spins around and pulls things down into it) that killed sailors in the sea between Italy and Sicily."

(<https://www.ldoceonline.com/dictionary/between-scylla-and-charybdis>)

Table (6): Students' Performance in the 6th Proverb

No.	Proverb	Correct Answer		Wrong Answer		No Answer	
		F	%	F	%	F	%
6	Cleanliness is next to godliness.	40	89	3	7	2	4

As shown in the table above (40) 89% of students provided correct answers by using Arabic cultural equivalence such as: (النظافة من الإيمان). Only (3) 7% of students provided wrong answers by using literal translation and committing linguistic and stylistic mistakes and by giving irrelevant meaning such as:

(النظافة بعد الشر/ النقاء جوار الخير/ تجنب كل ما يضر واعمل كل ما ينفع/ الوقاية خير من العلاج)

and (2) 4% of students didn't translate it at all. According to The Facts on File Dictionary of Proverbs (2002: 43) this proverb means: "Personal hygiene indicates a pious or virtuous nature; also used more generally to emphasize the importance of cleanness." Mohammed Attia, the Dictionary of Common English Proverbs, Translated and Explained (2004 :25), translated it into:

-النظافة من الإيمان. المعنى: يضرب هذا المثل لحث الإنسان على تحري النظافة سواء في البدن أو الملابس أو المسكن.

According to Julie Mourad, Dictionary of Comparative Proverbs English- Arabic (2006:41) this proverb is translated as:

-النظافة من الإيمان. -أي من كان نظيفًا بدنيًا كان نظيفًا أخلاقيًا، لا يكذب ولا يسرق الخ.

Table (7): Students' Performance in the 7th Proverb

No.	Proverb	Correct Answer		Wrong Answer		No Answer	
		F	%	F	%	F	%
7	One man's meat is another man's poison.	13	29	32	71	0	0

According to the table above (13) 29% of students provided correct answers by using Arabic cultural equivalence such as: (مصائب قوم عند قوم فوائد) and (32) 71% of students provided wrong answers by using literal translation, committing linguistic, stylistic and grammatical mistakes and by giving irrelevant meaning that change meaning of the proverb such as:

( رجل سمم الرجل الآخر/ من طعن غيره طعنه الله/ الرجل يأكل لحم أخيه/ من حفر حفرة لأخيه وقع فيها/ رجل واحد قابل رجلا آخر مقتولا بالسم/ أوجب أحدكم أن يأكل لحم أخيه ميتاً فكرهتموه/ رجل واحد له نقطة ضعف/ يختلف الأسلوب من شخص لآخر /واحد ينهش لحمه و الآخر يقتله بالسم )

The word 'meat' in the proverb translated by some students to (يقابل) which means in English 'meet' that indicate to their carelessness in reading and understanding every word of the proverb.

According to The Facts on File Dictionary of Proverbs (2002: 214) this proverb means "What one person likes, another person dislikes." Mohammed Attia, the Dictionary of Common English Proverbs, Translated and Explained (2004: 149) translated it into:



-طعام الرجل سُمُّ للآخر. المعنى: الطعام الذي يناسب شخصًا ما قد لا يناسب شخصًا آخر وما يعجب شخص ما قد لا يطيقه شخص آخر، فمثلا قد يكون أخوك مغرمًا بالأفلام البوليسية بينما لا تطيق أنت رؤيتها.

According to Julie Mourad, Dictionary of Comparative Proverbs English- Arabic (2006:103) this proverb is translated as:

-مصائب قوم عند قوم فوائد.، - من غرائب القدر أن تكون فائدة بعض الناس نتيجة مصائب الآخرين.

Table (8): Students' Performance in the 8th Proverb

No.	Proverb	Correct Answer		Wrong Answer		No Answer	
		F	%	F	%	F	%
8	March winds and April showers bring forth May flowers.	10	22	31	69	4	9

In translating the proverb "*March winds and April showers bring forth April flowers*" (10) 22% of students provided correct answers by using Arabic cultural equivalence such as: (إن بعد العسر يسرا، ما بعد الشدة إلاّ) (رب ضارة نافعة) Moreover, (31) 69% of them provided wrong answers by using literal translation, committing linguistic, stylistic and grammatical mistakes and by giving irrelevant meaning such as:

(مارس عاصف وأبريل يحطر، تجلب ما يشبه ذلك مايو الزهور/ رياح مارس وزخة أبريل تحضر ورود مايو/ رياح مارس وثلوج أبريل تجلب أربعين زهور في مايو/ في الرابع من مايو تنمو الأزهار مع الرياح مارس وأمطار أبريل/ في أربعة مايو في شهر مارس تتساقط الورد وفي شهر أبريل تمطر بغزارة/ رياح مارس وبساتين أبريل أحضرت زهور أربعة مايو)

If we take a glance at the translation above, some of them are misunderstand the word 'forth' and they confused with the word 'fourth' and translated it into (الرابع / أربعة / أربعين)

According to The Facts on File Dictionary of Proverbs (2002: 11) this proverb means " Something unpleasant often leads to something more desirable." On the other hand, (4) 9% of students didn't translate it at all.

Table (19): Students' Performance in the 9th Proverb

No.	Proverb	Correct Answer		Wrong Answer		No Answer	
		F	%	F	%	F	%
9	Even Homer sometimes nods.	1	2	37	82	7	16

The Arabic cultural equivalence of this proverb is:

لكل جواد كبوة ولكل عالم هفوة، كل ابن آدم خطأ، جل من لا يخطئ، جل من لا يسهو.)  
 As shown in the table above, only (1) 2% of students provided correct answer by using accepted translation as: لا أحد يخلو من العيوب, while (37) 82% provided wrong answers by using literal translation and by committing linguistic, stylistic and grammatical mistakes and by giving irrelevant meaning that distort the entire meaning of the proverb such as:

( حتى المشرد أحياناً إيماءة بالرأس / حتى المطرقة أحياناً توميء / حتى البيت أحياناً لا توجد راحه /  
 حتى المطرقة أحياناً تصيب الرأس / حتى البيت بعض الوقت يوميء برأسه / حتى المطرقة تلوح برأسها  
 /الأحداث تشير إلى أصحابها/ حتى هوميروس أحياناً يهز رأسه / حتى الصوامع تنحني أحياناً / حتى  
 هوميروس أحياناً فضولي )

If we take a glance at the translation above, some of students are misunderstand the name 'Homer' and translated it into (المطرقة/ البيت)

because they may be confused with the word 'hammer and home'. According to Speake, Oxford Dictionary of Proverbs, (2007: 253) this proverb means: "Nobody, even a poet as great as the Greek epic writer Homer, can be at his best or most alert all the time. Nods here means 'becomes drowsy, falls asleep'; hence, 'errs due to momentary lack of attention'." According to Julie Mourad, Dictionary of Comparative Proverbs English- Arabic (2006:72) this proverb is translated as:

- لكل عالم هفوة، ولكل جواد كبوة، ولكل صارم نبوة.، - يضرب لتبرير فشل الناجحين وخطأهم.

(7)16% of the students didn't translate it at all.

Table (10): Students' Performance in the 10th Proverb

No.	Proverb	Correct Answer		Wrong Answer		No Answer	
		F	%	F	%	F	%
10	He came back empty handed.	23	51.1	20	44.4	2	4.4

As shown in the table above (23)51.1% of the students provided correct answers by using Arabic cultural equivalence such as:

(رجع بخفي حنين، عاد خالي الوفاض)

Meanwhile, (20) 44.4% of the students provided wrong answers by using literal translation and by committing linguistic, stylistic and grammatical mistakes and by giving irrelevant meaning that change the entire meaning of the proverb such as:

(هو رجع إلى البيت بيديه فارغة/ أتى خلف يد فارغة/ عاد وما معه شيء/ وجودك مثل عدمك/  
عاد بيدين فارغتين/ هو عاد غامض اليد/ عاد فاضي اليدين/ رجع مكفوف اليدين/ الحاذق خرج من  
السوق عطل)

and (2) 4.4% of them didn't translate it.

Table (11): Students' Performance in the 11th Proverb

No.	Proverb	Correct Answer		Wrong Answer		No Answer	
		F	%	F	%	F	%
11	A leopard never changes its spots.	5	11	31	69	9	20

According to the table above (5)11% of the students provided correct answers by using Arabic cultural equivalence such as: (الطبع غلب التطبع) Meanwhile, (31) 69% give wrong answers by using literal translation and giving irrelevant meaning and by committing linguistic, stylistic and grammatical mistakes that change the entire meaning of the proverb such as:

(الفهد لا يغير خطواته/ الفهد لا يغير مكانه/ النمر لا يغير موضعه/ القوي لا يغير خطواته/ لا تعمل من الحبه قبة/ اللاعب لا يتغير أبداً في رياضته/ القط من شبل الأسد/ الفهد لا يغير أبداً من الرياضة/ الفهد من شبل الأسد/ واثق الخطى يمشي ملكاً/ لا حياة مع اليأس ولا يأس مع الحياة/ الفهد لا يغير أبداً مكانها)

If we take a glance at the translation above, some of the students are misunderstanding the word 'spots' and translated it into (رياضته/ الرياضة) because they confused with the word 'sport'.

(9)20% of the students didn't translate it. According to The Facts on File Dictionary of Proverbs (2002:164) this proverb means: "A person cannot change his or her character or nature". On the other hand, Mohammed Attia, Dictionary of Common English Proverbs, Translated and Explained (2004: 116) translated it into:

(لا يستطيع النمر أن يغير جلده (الطبع غلب التطبع) المعنى: يولد النمر بجلده ولا يستطيع أن يغيره، فكذلك إذا كان الإنسان شريراً بطبيعته واستشرى الشر فيه فليس هناك من أمل أن يتغير أبدا مهما عاش من الزمن)

According to Julie Mourad, Dictionary of Comparative Proverbs English- Arabic (2006:125) this proverb is translated as:

-الطبع غلب التطبع.، - العادة توأم الطبيعة.، - العادة طبيعة ثانية.

Table (12): Students' Performance in the 12th Proverb

No.	Proverb	Correct Answer		Wrong Answer		No Answer	
		F	%	F	%	F	%
12	If a wind blows, ride it.	4	9	35	78	6	13

While (4) 9% of the students provided correct answers by using Arabic cultural equivalence such as: (إذا هبت رياحك فاغتنمها)، (35) 78% of them provided wrong answers by using literal translation, giving irrelevant meaning and by committing linguistic, stylistic and grammatical mistakes that distort the entire meaning of the proverb such as:

(قارب الخوف تأمن/ إذا هبت الرياح اركبها/ إذا عصفت الرياح واجهها/ إذا هبت الرياح تجنبها /  
الباب الذي يجي منه الريح اغلقه واستريح/ تأتي الرياح بما لا تشتهي السفن/ اذا أمسكها ركبها/ لو  
ركب الخيل وأسرع أضاع نفسه/ إذا هبت الرياح زادت النار)

And (6)13% of the students did not provide any translation for it. According to Julie Mourad, Dictionary of Comparative Proverbs English- Arabic (2006:28) this proverb is translated as:

-إذا هبت رياحك فاغتنمها.

- أي أذا واتتك الفرصة أفد منها. وقال الشاعر:  
غافل الفرصة واعلم أنها كمضي البرق تمضي الفرص.

Table (13): Students' Performance in the 13th Proverb

No.	Proverb	Correct Answer		Wrong Answer		No Answer	
		F	%	F	%	F	%
13	A chip of the old block.	13	29	27	60	5	11

According the table above (13)29% of the students provided correct answers by using Arabic cultural equivalence such as: ( هذا الشبل من ذاك )  
من شابه أباه ما ظلم (الأسد، الولد سر أبيه، من شابه أباه ما ظلم). On the other hand (27) 60% of them provided wrong answers by using literal translation, giving irrelevant meaning and by committing linguistic and stylistic mistakes that change the entire meaning of the proverb such as:

(ما يضر مقتول طعنه/ الكسرة من الحجر القديم/ السفينة من السواد القديم/ شظية من المبنى القديم/  
قطعة من كتلة صخرية قديمة/ قطرة من بحر/ قطعة أثرية رخيصة/ تأتي الرياح بما لا تشتهي السفن/  
قطعة من البناية القديمة / الطمع أعمى عيونه وانحجب عن رؤية الحق)

If we take a glance at the translation above, some of them are misunderstand the word 'chip' and translated it into (السفينة/ السفن) because they confused with the word 'ship'.

Only (5)11% didn't translate it at all. According to Julie Mourad, Dictionary of Comparative Proverbs English- Arabic (2006:12) this proverb is translated as:

-العصية من العصا، -إن هذا الشبل من ذلك الأسد، -الولد سر أبيه.

-أي أن الابن ينشأ على ما كان عليه والده.

Table (14): Students' Performance in the 14th Proverb

No.	Proverb	Correct Answer		Wrong Answer		No Answer	
		F	%	F	%	F	%
14	No sweet without sweat.	11	24	34	76	0	0

As shown in the table above (11) 24% of the students provided correct answers by using Arabic cultural equivalence such as: ( من طلب العلي سهر )  
من طلب العلي سهر (الليالي، من جدّ وجد، ومن زرع حصد  
Meanwhile, (34) 76% provided wrong answers  
by using literal translation and giving irrelevant meaning and by  
committing linguistic and stylistic mistakes such as:

(ليس كل حلوى مرآ/ ماعد بش حلا في شيء/ لا حلوى بدون حلوى/ لا حياه بدون ملح/ لا حلوى  
من دون مرارة)

If we take a glance at the translation above, some of them are  
misunderstand the word 'sweat' and translated it into (حلوى) because  
they may be confused with the word 'sweet'.

According to The Facts on File Dictionary of Proverbs (2002: 205) this  
prover means: "Nothing can be achieved without effort, suffering, or  
hardship." On the other hand, Mohammed Attia, Dictionary of  
Common English Proverbs, Translated and Explained (2004: 142)  
translated it into:

(لا حلوى بلا عرق (حلاوة النجاح ممزوجة بعرق الكفاح) المعنى: لا يستطيع المرء أن يصل إلى  
مراده ويحقق آماله دون بذل الجهد والعرق وتحمل المشقة)

**Table (16): The Total Frequencies and Percentages of Students' Answers of English Proverbs**

No.	Proverbs	Correct Answer		Wrong Answer		No Answer	
		F	%	F	%	F	%
1	Cut your coat according to your cloth.	15	33	30	6	0	0
2	The fear of God is the beginning of wisdom.	13	29	32	71	0	0
3	Add insult to injury.	23	51	19	42	3	7
4	The end justifies the means.	20	44.4	23	51.1	2	4.4
5	Between Seylla and Charybdis.	8	18	27	60	10	22
6	Cleanliness is next to godliness.	40	89	3	7	2	4
7	One man's meat is another man's poison.	13	29	32	71	0	0
8	March winds and April showers bring forth May flowers.	10	22	31	69	4	9
9	Even Homer sometimes nods.	1	2	37	82	7	16
10	He came back empty handed.	23	51.1	20	44.4	2	4.4
11	A leopard never changes its spots.	5	11	31	69	9	20
12	If a wind blows, ride it.	4	9	35	78	6	13
13	A chip of the old block.	13	29	27	60	5	11
14	No sweet without sweat.	11	24	34	76	0	0
<b>The Total Number of Proverbs for 45 Students are (630)</b>		<b>199</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>381</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>8</b>

If we take a glance at table (16) we will see that 3 English proverbs have achieved above 50 percent when translated into Arabic. The English proverb "*Cleanliness is next to godliness.*" has achieved 89% it means in Arabic culture (النظافة من الإيمان). The proverb expresses the idea that those who are pure and wholesome are close to God. Similarly, the English proverbs "*Add insult to injury.*" and "*He came back empty handed.*" have achieved 51% and 51.1% and they have Arabic equivalents as: (يزيد الطين بلة) and (رجع بخفي حنين) consecutively. On the other side, eleven English proverbs have achieved fewer than 50 percent such as; "*The fear of God is the beginning of wisdom.*" that means in Arabic: (رأس الحكمة مخافة الله) and means in English (we must



avoid evil, or anything that lures us to do evil or wickedness) it has got 29% while 32 students failed in translating it.

The low level was for the proverb: "*Even Homer sometimes nods.*" it has got 2%. Generally, the total number of proverbs for 45 students are (630) and the percentages of the correct answers are 32% whereas, the percentages of the wrong answers are 60% and the percentages of no answers are 8%. It is clear that correct answers show lower percentages specially in proverbs No.1, 2, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 11, 12, 13 and 14. Whereas, high percentages in wrong answers include proverbs No. 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13 and 14. On other hand, percentages in no answers include proverbs No. 3, 4, 5, 6, 9, 10, 11, 12 and 13.

The study has discovered that the obstacles that Yemeni students encounter in translating proverbs from English into Arabic are:

The first obstacle is the failure to translate culture-specific items, for example, students failed in translating the proverbs: "*Between Scylla and Charybdis.*" and "*Even Homer sometimes nods.*" They could not explain the meaning of the proverb or because the concepts which the source language lexical items refer to are not available in Arabic language. This result agrees with Baker (1992) who assumes that the source language text may have words that are unknown in the target culture and cause problems to translators.

The second obstacle is using literal translation which does not reflect the appropriate meaning because students either misinterpret the intended meaning or have no previous knowledge in these terms. Some students replace the source language words with target language words without bearing in mind the semantic and linguistic features of the words used. Also, some of them are deceived by the resemblance between words of the source language and target language that may lead to a false translation. For instance, some students tend to give wrong meanings for the proverb "*The end*"

*justifies the means.*" The word (end) indicates " purpose or aim" but some students translated it into (النهاية) also the word (means) indicates " way or method" but some students rendered it into(المعنى). In the proverb "*The fear of God is the beginning of wisdom.*" The word (fear) indicates "horror" but some students confused with the word (fire) and translated it into"النار". Also, In the proverb "*No sweet without sweat.*", they deceived by the resemblance between 'sweet' and 'sweat'. The word (sweet) means "sugary" but (sweat) means "toil" and they translated it into (حلوى). This agrees with Alsaïdi (2020) who finds that literal translation and lack of linguistic and cultural knowledge in both languages cause problems of fully understanding of the intended meaning.

The third obstacle is committing linguistic, stylistic, and grammatical mistakes. The students do the mistakes because they maybe lack practicing in translation or they are in a hurry while translating these proverbs and they maybe do not edit their answers after finishing the translation or they do not have enough linguistic competence.

The fourth obstacle is the unfamiliarity with translation strategies and techniques and the ambiguity of some English proverbs. Most of the students use literal translation but this is not helpful in translating proverbs that contain culture-specific terms such as "*March winds and April showers bring forth May flowers.*" And "*Even Homer sometimes nods.*" This result agrees with that of Dweik & Suleiman (2013) who find that the lack of knowledge in translation techniques and translation strategies is one of the problems that students have encountered.

## 7. Conclusion

After investigating the obstacles that face Yemeni students in translating proverbs from English into Arabic, the study showed that they face the following problems: inability to translate culture- specific items that do not have equivalents in Arabic; using literal translation which does not reflect the appropriate meaning; committing linguistic, stylistic and grammatical mistakes that distort the entire meaning of the proverbs; unfamiliarity with translation strategies and techniques that were the major reasons for the poor translation. The results demonstrated a high rate of wrong translation (60%) that interpreted their weaknesses in knowing both languages and cultures. As a final point, students either misinterpret the intended meaning or have no previous knowledge in these terms and by carrying out more studies such this, the gap will be filled and students' translation of proverbs from English into Arabic will be improved.

## 8- Recommendations

The following recommendations may help in overcoming the obstacles faced by the students in translating proverbs:

1. Students should be familiar with source language and target language culture.
2. Students should gain more practice in translation and not limit themselves only to the theoretical part.
3. Students should use the appropriate dictionaries to recognize the meaning of the proverb.
4. Students should pay attention to linguistic mistakes and edit their answers after finishing the translation.
5. Students should be familiar with the distinguished structure of proverbs and their style.

6. Students should be aware of the translation strategies and technique in translating proverbs.

7. Students should realize that proverbs can be culture-specific items which need extra care through their translations into the target language.

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**Appendix**  
List of English Proverbs

No.	English Proverb	Arabic Translation
1	Cut your coat according to your cloth.	على قدر بساطك مد رجلك.
2	The fear of God is the beginning of wisdom.	رأس الحكمة مخافة الله.
3	Add insult to injury.	يزيد الطين بلة.
4	The end justifies the means.	الغاية تبرر الوسيلة.
5	Between Seylla and Charybdis.	كالمستجير من الرمضاء بالنار، أمران أحلاهما مر، بين نارين.
6	Cleanliness is next to godliness.	النظافة من الإيمان.
7	One man's meat is another man's poison.	مصائب قوم عند قوم فوائد.
8	March winds and April showers bring forth May flowers.	إن بعد العسر يسرا، ما بعد الشدة إلا الفرج، رب ضارة نافعة.
9	Even Homer sometimes nods.	لكل جواد كبوة ولكل عالم هفوة، كل ابن آدم خطأ، جل من لا يخطئ، جل من لا يسهو.
10	He came back empty handed.	رجع بخفي حنين، عاد خالي الوفاض.
11	A leopard never changes its spots	الطبع غلب التطبع.
12	If a wind blows, ride it.	إذا هبت رياحك فاغتنمها.
13	A chip of the old block.	هذا الشبل من ذك الأسد، الولد سر أبيه، من شاب أباه ما ظلم.
14	No sweet without sweat.	من طلب العلى سهر الليالي، من جد وجد ومن زرع حصد.