

# International Journal of Social Science Exceptional Research

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## Safeguarding the Jordanian Oral Literature by Translation in Jerash Province

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### Article Info

**ISSN (online):** 2583-8261

**Volume:** 03

**Issue:** 06

**November-December 2024**

**Received:** 06-09-2024

**Accepted:** 09-10-2024

**Page No:** 24-31

### Abstract

The goal of this study is to look into how oral literature in Jerash region, Jordan, is translated. To revitalize Jordan's heritage, two major questions were raised: to what extent translated proverbs, idioms, and linguistic expressions can revive Jordan's heritage for generations, and what challenges or opportunities in safeguarding Jordanian proverbs, idioms, and linguistic expressions in Jerash city by translation are. From a methodological standpoint, a personal interview was devised to include ten questions about how oral literature is translated; it was administered to a representative sample of English teachers in Jerash. Because the schools in Jerash were the subject areas, the population of concern (PoC) included all of the English instructors in Jerash city (N. 57); those with translation competency were 24 (=42.1%). The oral literature of Jerash was discovered to be in need of translation and efficient classification; there were too many stories to tell and render forth. Specialized training and ethical principles in cultural translation are essential for maintaining oral literature (or orature) and passing on heritage to future generations. A collaboration with the Jordanian Ministry of Culture and/or the Public Libraries of Jerash could be organized, with the objective of hosting a book fair.

**DOI:** <https://doi.org/10.54660/IJSSER.2024.3.6.24-31>

**Keywords:** Oral literature, national heritage, translation, Jerash province, Jordan

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### 1. Introduction

Oral literature, also known as orature, refers to a type of literature that is verbalized or sung as opposed to being written, despite the fact that many examples of oral literature have been documented. Therefore, it is ingrained in the cultural heritage of a country. The term 'folklore' means shared understanding. It also addresses the aesthetic elements found in works of popular culture. Anthropologists have provided different descriptions for oral literature or folk literature, so there is no agreed-upon standard definition (Eugenio, 2007) <sup>[3]</sup>. A wide definition identifies it as literature with oral tradition and without a specific structure. It consists of the narratives, myths, and past events transmitted orally across generations. Oral literature is usually a core part of culture, functioning in the ways that literature is typically assumed to do. Auger (2010) <sup>[2]</sup> notes that it is still prevalent in both academic and popular writing.

Scholars face classification challenges due to the cultural changes in the modern digital age when categorizing the various genres of oral literature. Educated communities might maintain a spoken folklore - especially through familial or informal social settings like bedtime stories (Kipchumba, 2016) <sup>[4]</sup>. Orature refers to knowledge transmitted through spoken language, and it thrives within a vibrant community due to its basis on spoken word. When communal aspects diminish, oral communication becomes obsolete and ceases to exist. It requires individuals in a dynamic social environment: it requires existence itself (Roscoe, 1977, p. 9) <sup>[12]</sup>. This indicates that a 'non-written society' had to find ways to preserve spoken words, even if only temporarily. We typically see all types of verbal art forms as part of the unified category of folklore. We view all kinds of verbal arts as belonging to the classification of folklore.

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In Arabic, the term "Tirath al-Sha'abi" or "al-Adab al-Darij" denotes general knowledge that includes a wide range of information covering folk literature. This term also highlights the use of local language in these works. In this way, preserving Jordan's heritage through translation in Jerash protects idioms, proverbs, and cultural expressions for guaranteeing precise depiction. Jerash province in Jordan is known for its wealth of oral stories that should be documented. This concept pertains to the aspect of culture which contrasts formal culture; however, its reach and area are vast. In literature, the term oral literature is significantly more effective (Hawamdeh, Mansour, Rabea & Banat, 2024). From the 7th century onwards, Arabic literature began to focus on utilizing different forms of popular poetry in addition to odes, like Mawaliyah and Zajal. Based on the issue at hand, two primary questions were addressed:

1. To what extent can translated proverbs, idioms, and linguistic expressions revive Jordan's heritage for generations?
2. What are the main challenges or opportunities in safeguarding Jordanian proverbs, idioms, and expressions by translation?

## 2. Related Literature

Translation is essential in connecting linguistic and cultural differences, making it easier to share and comprehend various cultural meanings. Translating Jordanian idioms, proverbs, and cultural expressions opens them up to a larger audience, whether in Jordan or around the world. This viewpoint highlights that translation is more than just changing words; it includes transmitting cultural subtleties, social backgrounds, and historical importance. Moreover, the process of translation can also serve as a way to revitalize interest in endangered languages and cultural traditions. Translating ignites curiosity, promote investigation, and cultivate admiration for the variety and richness of human culture by making these elements available to a wider range of people. It is important to recognize that translating culture necessitates sensitivity and specialized knowledge, and the need for encapsulating the traditional knowledge, beliefs and values is to be emphasized.

O'Neill (2013) <sup>[9]</sup> examined the translation of oral literature in indigenous societies, especially in multilingual and multicultural areas such as Northwestern California. Shared, regional material could be ethnically marked when seemingly small changes are introduced. A case in point was the profound symbolic effects that went with a shift in languages. Though Dell Hymes was deeply concerned with questions of translation, he had rarely applied his analytical framework to translations within indigenous cultural settings; more often, he focused on the subtleties of translating oral literature into English, with emphasis on faithfully representing aspects of the structure and style. One way to build on Hymes's legacy would be to apply his careful attention to matters of structure and style to a discussion of translation within indigenous traditions, teasing out minor differences that took on great symbolic significance.

The indigenous languages spoken by diverse ethnic groups in India were also an issue to examine by Luhar & Nimavat (2020) <sup>[5]</sup> in terms of their community literatures. Many less explored indigenous groups with living oral traditions are found in India but their orality is not yet documented. In their attempts to find such cultural groups, the researchers came across many cultural groups that were being ignored because of their small population, lack of political backup, lack of governmental upliftment policies, socio-economic conditions, or lifestyle. The cultural groups referred to here are not the communities living in tribal or forest areas but groups of people that live in cities or villages. These groups mainly consist of migrating populations whose members wander here and there to earn their livelihood. Eventually, the study tried to demonstrate how translation is a two-tier process in India where the majority of marginalised groups speak indigenous dialects.

For the function of literature in shaping human character, Rosa (2020) <sup>[11]</sup> argued that the values mandated in literary works, especially folklore, have a strategic role in shaping and perfecting behavior. These works are very useful in guiding people's attitudes and mindsets as literary readers and lovers, especially folklore from West Sumatra, and humans could use information systems and technology to carry on important values in folklore. However, the extent to which progress was used to pass down the values of the character's formation represented three folktales from West Sumatra as the focus of the analysis. The study used functional research methods to dismantle the values of character education for developing the national character, showing that literature had a role as an aesthetic teaching tool and was veiled. Folklore was eventually stressed as a means to convey teachings about politeness for readers.

From an educational angle, Owiti *et al.* (2014) <sup>[10]</sup> stress that the use of oral literature in teaching English grammar in high schools would provide learners with a genuine context and a focus to communicate. Therefore, the study sought to find out teachers' conceptualization of using 'orature' in the teaching of English grammar and establish teachers' use of oral literature in the teaching of grammar in Bondo District. The sample consisted of all the 28 high schools in the district and 44 English-language teachers. Data were collected by use of questionnaires, observation schedule and document analysis schedule. Although teachers appreciate the benefits of contextualized grammar teaching, they do not exploit oral literature genres in the teaching of English grammar because they do not know how to integrate the genres in classroom. All genres are recommended to be carefully used in the teaching of English grammar.

Likewise, Nnamdi-Eruchalu (2022) <sup>[7]</sup> argued that oral literature is perceived by students as boring, and just another course to be studied and passed. He sought to establish the need for ICT integration to complement traditional methods of teaching and learning for making the course more responsive to its objectives. If the right curriculum and pedagogy were adopted for the course, it would not only achieve its objectives but also do it in an entertaining way. It

was a library research whose data were drawn from secondary sources such as comments and literature on the topic. The research was driven by Friere's pedagogy of the oppressed, encouraging the dominated to regain their freedom and become more fully human. Integrating ICT tools in teaching oral literature was concluded to bring life and performance right inside the classroom and go a long way to facilitating learning.

Mpumuje *et al.* (2024) <sup>[6]</sup> also argued that the role of oral literature in enhancing language performance in high schools had not received much attention. The study investigated the role that teaching oral literature in English could play in learners' language performance. Adopting a quasi-mixed-methods approach, three high schools from one district in Rwanda were selected. The focused population was 15 participants. The study used both a questionnaire and an interview with school staff, with a particular focus on teachers of literature in English. It was revealed that folk dramas and tales, myths, proverbs, sayings, and tongue twisters were the most focused components of oral literature by English teachers in the sampled schools. Also, a

significant positive effect was seen to occur in orature and learners' language performance. Further efforts are recommended to enhance oral-literature teaching in schools.

### 3. Methodology

For the theoretical population, it was all the English teachers in Jordan, focusing on those involved in translation projects. As the schools in Jerash was the subject areas for collecting the sets of data for the purpose of the present study, the population of concern (PoC) represented all the English teachers in Jerach city (N. 57 from 19 schools). Out of this PoC, the teachers with translation competence were 24 (=42.1%) in both schools for boys and girls (see Table 1 for the frequencies and percentages of the chosen samples). (See also Figure 1 for the respondents' demographic variables as stated in this study's research instrument.) Chosen for geographical proximity, availability at a certain time and/or easy accessibility, the personal sample was intended to prove a reliable representative of the whole PoC in the form of a convenience/opportunity sample.

**Table 1:** Frequency and percentage of the research sample

Variable	Options	N	%
Age	25-40	14	58.3
	41-65	10	41.7
Gender	Male	13	54.2
	Female	11	45.8
Qualification	Bachelor	14	58.3
	Master	10	41.7
Years of Experience	1-15	12	50.0
	16-30	12	50.0
Initiatives?	Yes	11	45.8
	No	13	54.2
Translator Competence	High	10	41.7
	Low	14	58.3

The current study's questionnaire was constructed using a basic framework comprising four steps: planning, designing, validating, and piloting, as outlined by Churchill & Brown. In preparation, the literature was initially examined to identify any concerns, difficulties, resolutions, and issues regarding the translation of idioms, proverbs and cultural expressions to be safeguarded by translation in Jerash for revitalizing Jordan's heritage. Each research question in the current study raised a total of five questions. It was determined that a self-administered personal interview would be used as the tool for this study (refer to Figure 2 and Appendix 1). Showing concern for both content and layout

and achieving optimal response rates, the questions were arranged in a suitable order:

1. A preliminary question to determine early on if any respondents should proceed,
2. An icebreaker, easy-to-address question to engage respondents' interest in this survey,
3. A relevant question to motivate participants to engage in the personal interview effectively,
4. A transitioning question to help respondents alleviate any stress they might feel, and
5. A concluding question to help respondents be inclined to complete the self-administered interview.

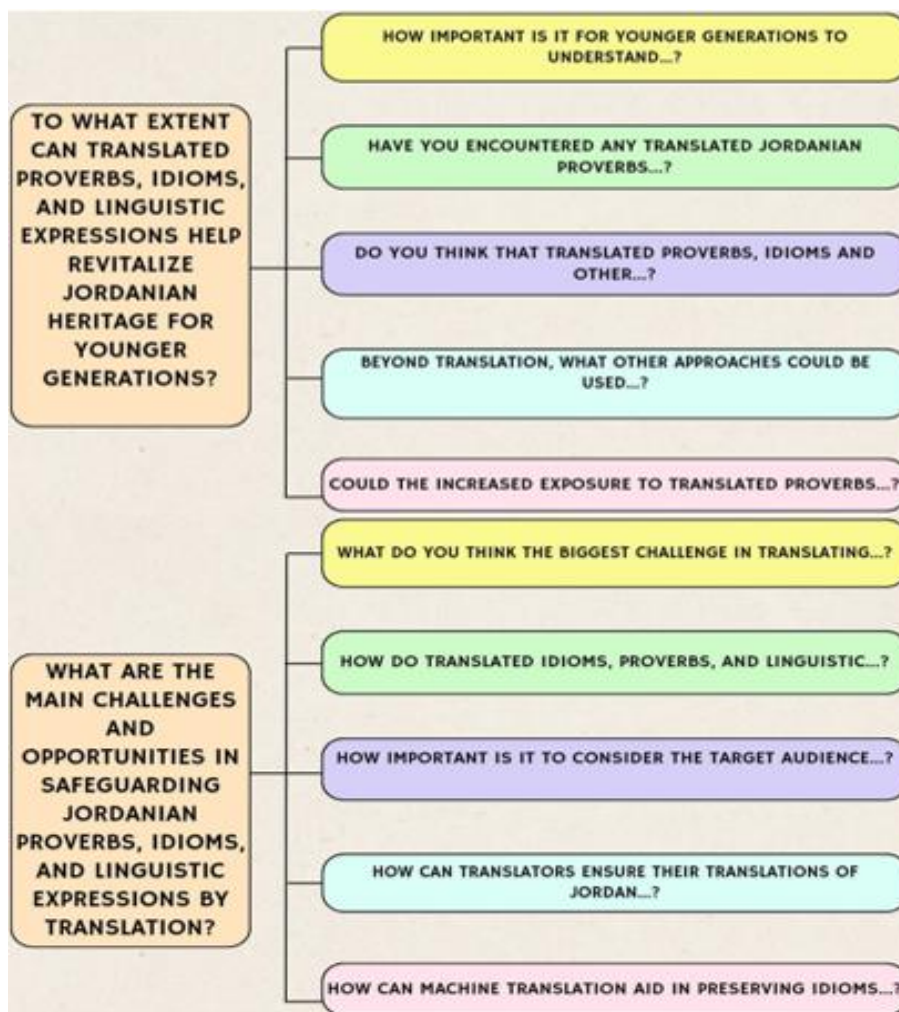


Fig 1: Main questions and inquiries in the instrument

During the validation phase, the research measurements underwent validation by being sent to three experts in the same field. They reviewed the questions and provided feedback on the appropriateness of the items in addressing the issue of revitalizing Jordan's heritage: safeguarding idioms, proverbs and cultural expressions by translation. Also, in order to confirm the value of studying the research topic, a preliminary study was conducted by providing the same tool to individuals who shared similarities with the chosen sample but were not included in it. Finally, Excel and, when necessary, SPSS were used to analyze the data. Graphical representations were created to visually show a summary of the analysis: tables for showing such statistical measures as frequencies and percentages for the subject responses, graphs for providing visual representations of the information obtained in the form of pie and bar ones, and figures for reflecting the perceptions of the given reality and revealing the characteristics of the impact.

#### 4. Findings

##### 4.1 Translated National Heritage

*To what extent can translated proverbs, idioms, and*

*linguistic expressions help revitalize Jordanian heritage for younger generations?*

Translating proverbs or any fixed expressions involves understanding of the linguistic equivalence in the target language. The translator in the formal equivalence concentrates on the form and content of the SL and the TL while, in the dynamic one, he/she produces the same effect in the TL as it does in the source language. It also requires cultural awareness of the similarities and contrasts of civilizations, such as beliefs, ways of life, arts, customs, values, and cuisine. The *first* inquiry of the research instrument reads: how important it is for younger generations to understand and use Jordanian proverbs, idioms, and linguistic expressions. According to the study's respondents, these proverbs, idioms, and linguistic expressions are highly significant; they have a crucial role in communicating ideas and thoughts in any culture (see also Table 2 for further responses). People utilize them for a variety of purposes (e.g. offering advice, criticizing a situation or briefly explaining it... etc.).



**Table 2:** Inquiries raised on the translated national heritage in Jerash

Sr.	Inquiry	Basic Response	Further Note(s)
2	Have you encountered any translated Jordanian proverbs or expressions? If so, did you find them easy to understand?	Foreign learners typically struggle to understand an expression's precise meaning after determining whether it is idiomatic or proverbial.	Although proverbs may have comparable situations and meanings throughout cultures, their concepts may differ.
3	Do you think that translated proverbs, idioms, and expressions can convey the Arabic cultural nuances and wisdom?	Despite the characteristics proverbs may convey, translation errors nonetheless happen, due to differences in how a reader perceives	...the connotations and implications of proverbs and idioms. Sufficient explanation is vital for connecting languages.
4	Beyond translation, what other approaches could be used to make Jordanian proverbs, idioms, and expressions more accessible?	Even though language is essential for communicating, communication becomes difficult when the speaker and listener lack	...shared knowledge and a common frame of reference. Culture plays a vital role in the communication process.

Regarding the final aspect to explore in the tool, enhanced exposure to translated proverbs, idioms, and language expressions results in a deeper appreciation of Jordanian heritage. The participants concur that converting oral traditions into English can be challenging because of the cultural subtleties involved. Furthermore, the use of informal language makes the translation process more challenging. Due to a project translating works from Arabic, numerous Jordanian plays, novels, short stories, and poems have now been translated into English, allowing people globally to read and enjoy them. These artifacts link us to history and offer a feeling of identity and continuity. Yet, as the globe grows more interconnected, maintaining the integrity and importance of these treasures necessitates proficient translation. In fact, translation is crucial in this effort, making sure that the profound history and cultural importance of oral literature are available to individuals worldwide.

#### 4.2 Translating Challenges and Opportunities

*What are the main challenges and opportunities in*

*safeguarding Jordanian proverbs, idioms, and linguistic expressions by translation?*

The culturally bound nature of proverbs, idioms, and other terms makes translation difficult. A translator is simply a bridge between two different cultures, and the situation necessitates assistance from any competent bodies or authorities. Translators use a decoding-encoding method to convey both the literal and metaphorical interpretations of a proverb or phrase, as well as their communication effect. These issues are caused by linguistic and cultural factors that complicate the translation process. For the *first* inquiry contained in this study's research instrument, the respondents think that the biggest challenge in translating Jordanian proverbs, idioms, and linguistic expressions into other languages (e.g. English) is culture (see also Table 3 for further responses). A Jordanian beginner translator encounters challenges when translating proverbs or idioms from Arabic into English, as part of his/her attempt to render the national heritage in such a small province as Jerash.

**Table 3:** Inquiries raised on translating challenges of heritage

Sr.	Inquiry	Basic Response	Further Note(s)
2	How do translated idioms, proverbs, and linguistic expressions influence the target readers' understanding of the source culture?	Translating proverbs involves linguistic and cultural aspects, posing a difficult task for translators. They must possess a strong language proficiency to convey	...the culture-specific expressions, experiences, values, wisdoms, and historical incidents embedded in proverbs or idioms.
3	How important is it to consider the target audience when translating Jordanian proverbs, idioms, and linguistic expressions?	Jordanian beginner translators struggled with culture-bound or -specific words and terms and several literal translation, and linguistic or contextual errors	...when translating Arabic proverbs, idioms and cultural expressions into such a completely different language as English.
4	How can translators ensure their translations of Jordanian proverbs, idioms, and expressions are culturally sensitive and respectful?	The importance of grasping cultural nuances for successful proverb translation must be focused on. Utilizing common proverbs creates a collective tie	...to one's cultural legacy. Knowing proverbs promotes a sense of connection to a broader cultural group, enhancing feelings of inclusion.

The fifth aspect to explore was if machine translation (MT) can help in retaining idioms, proverbs, or other linguistic expressions while preserving their original cultural significance. The accuracy of MT systems, or engines, is currently a significant issue because of the increasing demand for online translation and interpretation services. As reported by the participants, "Google translate," recognized as a leading MT engine, faces difficulties in translating Arabic proverbs, idioms, or other set expressions into English. In reality, translation serves a complex function in safeguarding these linguistic treasures. It guarantees that the oral literature is successfully shared with international visitors, academics, and future generations. A key function of translation is providing a global audience access to the history of these

expressions. Translating these resources into various languages enables visitors from diverse nations to comprehend and value the history and importance of a small city like Jerash.

#### 5. Conclusions

This study investigates the importance of translating Jordanian idioms, proverbs, and cultural expressions. It seeks to comprehend the difficulties and benefits of conserving these treasures by concentrating on Jerash city. By combining theoretical exploration with practical analysis, this study investigates how translation can play a crucial role in protecting Jordan's cultural heritage for generations to come. This level of access is crucial for protecting heritage, helping

upcoming generations, in Jordan and worldwide, gain knowledge from the insight, wit, and customs in these language gems. Jordan, a nation with a rich history and cultural heritage, showcases a lively mix of idiomatic expressions and cultural traditions, as they contain the wisdom, humor, and customs (cf. Abdul Muttalib, Hawamdeh, Al-Yousuf & Mansour, 2024). With the advent of globalization and the influence of digital communication, these items of Jordan's intangible cultural heritage face the risk of being forgotten or lost in translation. The following points are stressed:

1. The translation of some Arabic proverbs is problematic due to the unavailability of a cultural equivalent whereas few of proverbs have direct and indirect equivalence.
2. Translating linguistic expressions from one language into another through MT is a matter of interest due to their importance in religious, cultural and historical aspects.
3. Proverbs and idioms may have similar occasions and connotations in different cultures, but there may be a mismatch in the way they are conceived.
4. Phraseological expressions like proverbs and idioms always cause a lot of problems not only to translators but

## 6. Appendix

**Jerash University**

A Personal Interview to Apply to English Teachers in Jerash Province, Jordan, for the Purpose(s) of a Research Project Titled as:

**"Safeguarding the Jordanian Oral Literature by Translation in Jerash Province"**

حماية الأدب الشفوي الأردني بواسطة الترجمة في منطقة جرش

Age: ..... العمر:

Gender: ..... النوع:

Qualification: ..... المؤهل العلمي:

Years of Experience: ..... سنوات الخبرة:

Any Initiatives in Heritage: ..... أية مبادرات في حفظ التراث:

Work as a Translator/Interpreter? هل عملت مترجمًا حتى الآن?  
Please circle: 1 2 3 4 5

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- also to foreign language learners.
5. Translating the selected proverbs into English collides with many challenges, of which the cultural ones are observed as the most manifest.

Specialized training and ethical guidelines in cultural translation are crucial for preserving oral literature and passing down heritage for future generations. This term, seen as a moral quality, highlights the close relationship between speaking and writing, where the creative use of language is emphasized. Yet, oral traditions contain aspects beyond just words, including gestures, dance, and the dynamic between storyteller and audience (Nwi-Akeeri, 2017). In this way, translation has the potential to be clear and almost flawless because all languages originate from God and are therefore connected in a profound manner, revealing the shared foundation of their origins. Maybe we have been too extensively swayed by their strict ways in anthropology, always striving for a precise translation of oral tradition. Due to time constraints, a good attempt of collaboration is still not easy to achieve; it is with the Ministry of Culture and Public Libraries in Jerash, reinforcing our dedication to cultural engagement.

### Category 1:

*To what extent can translated proverbs, idioms, and linguistic expressions help revitalize Jordanian heritage for younger generations?*

*إلى أي حد يمكن أن تساعد الأمثال المترجمة والاصطلاحات والتعبيرات اللغوية على إحياء التراث الأردني للأجيال الشابة؟*

#### Topic 1(a):

How important is it for younger generations to understand and use Jordanian proverbs, idioms, and linguistic expressions?	ما مدى أهمية فهم واستخدام الأمثال والاصطلاحات والتعبيرات اللغوية الأردنية للأجيال الشابة؟
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#### Topic 1(b):

Have you encountered any translated Jordanian proverbs or expressions? If so, did you find them easy to understand?	هل واجهت أي أمثال أو عبارات أردنية مترجمة؟ إذا كان الأمر كذلك، هل وجدتها سهلة الفهم؟
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**Topic 1(c):**

Do you think that translated proverbs, idioms, and expressions can convey the Arabic cultural nuances and wisdom?	هل تعتقد أن الأمثال والتعابير المترجمة يمكن أن تنقل الفروق الثقافية والحكمة العربية؟
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**Topic 1(d):**

Beyond translation, what other approaches could be used to make Jordanian proverbs, idioms, and expressions more accessible?	إلى جانب الترجمة، ما الأساليب الأخرى التي يمكن استخدامها لجعل الأمثال والتعابير الأردنية أكثر سهولة في الوصول؟
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**Topic 1(e):**

Could the increased exposure to translated proverbs and expressions lead to a greater appreciation of Jordanian heritage?	هل الإطلاع على أبة أمثال أو تعابير مترجمة إلى الإنجليزية يزيد من أهمية التراث الأردني؟
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**الفئة الأولى: إنتهى**

**Category 2:**

**What are the main challenges and opportunities in safeguarding Jordanian proverbs, idioms, and linguistic expressions by translation?**

ما هي أهم التحديات والفرص الرئيسية في حماية الأمثال والمصطلحات والتعابير اللغوية الأردنية عن طريق الترجمة؟

**Topic 2(a):**

What do you think the biggest challenge in translating Jordanian proverbs, idioms, and expressions into other languages?	1. ما هو التحدي الأكبر برأيك في ترجمة الأمثال والأقوال والتعابير اللغوية الأردنية إلى اللغات الأخرى؟
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**Topic 2(b):**

How do translated idioms, proverbs, and linguistic expressions influence the target readers' understanding of the source culture?	كيف تؤثر العبارات والأمثال المترجمة على فهم الجمهور المستهدف للثقافة العربية؟
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**Topic 2(c):**

How important is it to consider the target audience when translating Jordanian proverbs, idioms, and linguistic expressions?	ما أهمية مراعاة الجمهور المستهدف عند ترجمة الأمثال والاصطلاحات الأردنية إلى الإنجليزية؟
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**Topic 2(d):**

How can translators ensure their translations of Jordanian proverbs, idioms, and expressions are culturally sensitive and respectful?	كيف يمكن للمترجمين التأكد من أن ترجماتهم للأمثال والمقولات الأردنية معبرة ثقافياً ومحترمة في اللغة الأخرى؟
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**Topic 2(e):**

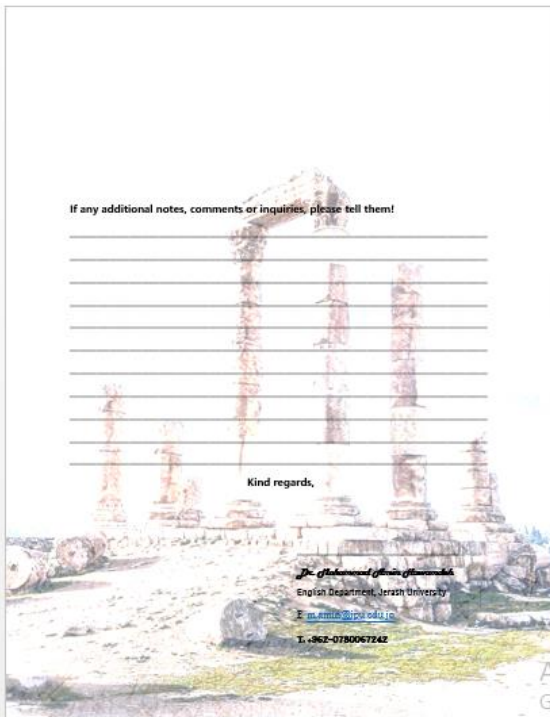
How can machine translation aid in preserving idioms and proverbs while maintaining their original cultural context?	كيف يمكن للترجمة الآلية أن تساعد في الحفاظ على الأمثال مع الحفاظ على سياقها الثقافي الأصلي؟
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