

Enhancing Cross Cultural Communication Skills of FL Learners of Arabic through Contextual Reading of Saadallah's Plays

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Abstract – The language and culture both are deeply rooted. A language cannot be understood completely without the knowledge of its cultural background. Similarly, a culture cannot be perceived comprehensively without its language. Therefore, language is not just about structures and words but there is a world inside any language and that world is known through its culture. This culture has always a crucial role to form its structure and impact in the particular language. This article will explain how Saadallah Wannous's plays provide a suitable ground for both - communicative competence and discourse competence. Characters, plot, and settings open the world of Arabic language and Arab culture which can foster better understanding of cross cultural skills for a foreign language learner.

Keywords: Language, Culture, Drama, Cross Cultural Communication.

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When we say Arabic, that time it doesn't mean Arabic language only but there is a vast world which suddenly comes in our mind. That world is known as its culture where this language has born, nourished and developed gradually.

We all know very well that a culture is the mirror of a society. Whatever is going on inside or nearby the society, it reflects in its culture. We as a writer, thinker and historian are starting keeping these points in our notes. Preferably, all these things are written mostly in its local language. Because, a local person can absorb the things deeply. In this way, the things can be understood in a better way when it has been written or spoken by its own local language, in short in the language of society. As Nelson Mandela told: "if you talk to a man in a language he understands, that goes to his head but if you talk to him in his own language that goes to his heart"(1).

Arabic language has a rich literature, a numerous writers expressed their views, ideas and experiments on Arab culture, Saadallah Wannous is one of them who wrote a number of plays, novels and short stories which are considered as the mirror of Arab society.

As per my topic, I will try to describe the Cross Cultural Communication through the great Arabic dramatist Saadallah Wannous, although Cross Cultural Communication is called basically "communication between two different cultures. But according to my study, if we see a huge gap between

a king and his People, that gap shows the differences in terms of culture, behaviour and living style etc. Then why we should not consider it as cultural differences and why not we can say it as Cross Cultural Communication? Yes, we can, of course we can say. Let me put some example from the play's text.

"The Elephant is, King of the Time":

One of his famous plays "**The Elephant is, King of the Time**" (الفيل يا ملك الزمان), we find the clear example of Cross cultural Communication, as between a ruler and the public there is a huge gap, a gap that creates a long distance between the both, a gap that makes someone as the greatest one, and another one as an animal even worse than it.

The same scenario we find here when an elephant which is actually a beloved one of the king. That elephant is destroying everything of the people in the village, thrashing the agricultural fields, grains, smashing the houses and killing the surrounding kids which are playing in the street"

(2) "فأدرکه الفیل وداس فوق

But no one has the guts to stand up in front the elephant rather than the kind, keeping in mind that elephant is a beloved of the king, so no one cannot utter a single word against him

(3) "ولا أحد يجرأ على الكلام"

After a mass destruction and heavy loss of property as well as death of several innocent kids. The victims decided to meet the king in his Palace and complain against the elephant. Due to the gap between the king and the people, the people are thinking and discussing among them, how to go to King's Palace, what to wear, how to clean our body, how to stand in front of him, what to say about his beloved elephant?? after a long discussion, they decided to wear the some kind of proper dress, decided to take bath that day before the dressing up, decided to comb properly their hair, and even they practiced to speak together in one voice in front the king. Finally they reach the gate of Palace, the guard is asking the people a number of questions, exactly as they thought that they will be facing in the palace. For example, the guard says, walk slowly inside the palace, and do not make sound, don't put your dirty fingers on the shining walks, arrange your hair and clothes so that your dirt and insects will not fall down there inside the palace.

ولكن قبل أن تدخلوا نظفوا أذيتكم جيدا، وانفضوا ثيابكم كيلا يهرم القمل أو البراغيث، وأهم من كل هذا أن تدخلوا بنظام وأدب. إياكم أن تلمسوا شيئا وتذكروا أنكم لستم على مذايلكم بل في (4) قصر الملك

The point is here that the people prepared themselves according to the king to whom they are going to face and complain regarding their problems. In the same way, if we are going to communicate with a person who belongs to different background and culture, first of all we have to be free minded and keeping ability to accept the things as it is, without any hesitation.

Secondly, if we really wish to get the things what is that actual things in a particular language or culture then we have to make our mind according to that situation, so that we can get into that things easily and deeply without any doubt.

“Corpse on the footpath”:

Another clear example of Cross Cultural Communication through the text of “Corpse on the footpath” (جثة على الرصيف) in this play, two young poor become very much fed up with their bitter situation. Their poverty was till so miserable that both had not any shelter to live except naked sky above their head, no food to eat, no place to earn or stay a single night except the dark footpath. Finally both of them were sitting in a frozen mid night at a footpath, one of them “Usama” could not bear the cold and died on the spot. Next to the dead body his friend is sitting and crying with deep pain for losing his friend due to efficiency of the food and winter cloth. In a while a rich bureaucrat is passing through to the dead body with a big and barking dog which is like asking for that dead body for his diet, and the so-called bureaucrat is convincing the alive friend to

provide that dead body to the hungry dog for his food.

يتطلع إلى الجسد من جديد ثم يحنني فيربط على رأس الكلب "لا" لا بأس (5) بحنان، إني أفكر في شرائه إذن"

But the humanity emerges in the heart and mind of alive friend, he repeatedly rejected to give his friend's dead body as the dog's food, even the bureaucrat tries to pay money for that corps. How pathetic it is, that how a human can sale the dead body for an animal food just for few pennies?

During this hot conversation, a security guard comes to the spot and taking to the bureaucrat favour, he tries to keep silent that alive friend on scare of long stick in his hand and convince him to offer the friend's body to the barking dog as its food.

"حقا! ينظر إلى الكلب ثم إلى الشارع يبدو أنني. . أرجو ألا يكون في ذلك (6) ما يضايقك. . إني لا أرغب في بيعه"

During the verbal fighting among them the bureaucrat abuses the alive poor boy as a load of the earth, wastage of the society and priceless on the earth. Even he told him in such a way that poor people are like animal only, their values is like an animal only either that is alive or dead. Hearing the bitter words from the bureaucrat, the alive friend started shouting and replying for each sentences loudly with anger, for example he asked “ why we poor are treated like same when we are alive as well as when we are dead too just like the worst things on the earth or like animal, even more than that sometimes?. Even after long time arguments and fighting the so called bureaucrat became successful to convert a human dead body to dog-food with the power of money and muscle.

The point is that we can see here two types of cultures very clearly like their life style and behaviour between a bureaucrat and a poor boy. From the beginning of conversation, the bureaucrat talks in his own style like the Hitler to that boy. But that boy talks in a manner politely only till the bureaucrat crosses his limitation as he asks him to offer his friend to a dog as its food.

If we talk here about the Cross Cultural Communication, we see that in the beginning of verbal fighting between the bureaucrat and the poor boy. The bureaucrat was not getting his feelings, not understanding the value of a human body even it is dead. But after the arguments when the boy got angry, started shouting on the bureaucrat and blaming him as player of the human body and dead boy, the bureaucrat used his money and muscle power and became successful to play human dead body.

From this context we can say that our communication should be clear and stronger one without bothering about the society and culture

surrounding us. So that we can work on Cross cultural communication easily.

“Tragedy of a poor vendor of molasses”:

In his another play “**Tragedy of a poor vendor of molasses**”, the writer has depicted the reality of a poor vendor who is selling the eatable with a broken and hand-pulling van. The vendor’s financial situation is very miserable because if he sells the things whole day then only he can hardly buy the food for his family where he has children in the house including his wife.

"ربما . . . حين أطوف المدينة كلها طولا وعرضا دون أن أبيع إلا القليل مما أحمل تنقبض نفسي بمرارة وخيبة" (7)

One day early morning he starts his daily routine before than his usual time. Because that day early morning he got a voice of his new born baby. Without seeing his face suddenly but happily he left home so that he can go some more distance and can sell some more Molasses in the streets.

"فما سمعت بكائه حتى حمدت الله، وحملت كيسي أسأل عن رزقه،
ويا له من فال خيرا" (8)

During his hardworking in a street, a cleaver government agent comes to him and introduced himself as he is well known to him as his name is Hasan, lives nearby his home only and so on. He compelled him verbally by various ways to utter any single word against the ruling government. But the poor seller was very simple and innocent person so initially he denied to say anything which is not from his interests.

"لم أسمع يا جاري لم أسمع شيئا البتة ستموت عائلتي لو " (9)
تفرغت للقليل والقال

After sometimes due to his compulsion the poor man just expressed his tragedy in front of him and immediately he finds himself inside the jail.
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"كنت أصبح في المدينة عشر مرات كل يوم حتى أستطيع تأمين
إكفاف لعائلتي. منذ ستة شهور وأربعة أيام وأنا أدق أقصى ألوان
التعذيب أظن أهلي مفقودا" (10)

After few days again that the same person meets him in the street during his business and tries to introduce to him as he is “Hussain” but the seller recognises him immediately and says we have met earlier and your name is “Hasan” as you told me in the last meeting. But the cheater denies his claim very sharply saying that he does not know any Hasan, and his name is Husain. Even he told that may be you have met a person who looks really like me, but not me actually. This time the cheater says his name as “Mohsin” and he is showing himself as he is very generous and kind person so he wants to help the poor. As usual the seller kept denying him

as he has met already twice earlier by the name of Hasan then Husain and now again he is saying like his name is Mohsin and he is a new person.

The point is here, there are always some people in the society who are trying to be very close to the rulers and the ruling government to get higher position in their life. To pursue the higher positions off course they use to do all those actives that is not fruitful for the all citizens because people have different levels especially in their financial and social status. In this way as we see in the play a person who is changing his name, looks and designations one after one according to his plans. He wants his own benefits but the same time he is destroying another person’s life and family as well.

Through this play we see a clear difference between the rich or ruler people and the poor people. Some people feel in the society that they are the superior in each and every angel. They think that their culture is better than other even the best. In this way we see there are two different cultures; one is a culture of rich or rulers, and another is culture of the poor people of society. So they openly try to play with the life of the poor people for their own benefits only. So the important point is that we should be very careful regarding the cultural communication among the different type of people. Because a minor difference and mistake can lead to a major problem as well as can be the result of war too

In Short, we can say that off course there will be some differences in terms of culture, life style and feelings among the people, but we have to deal all these differences very smartly so that we can get the inner and deep literal meaning through the text in terms of cross Cultural Communication, and that will be very useful for any foreign language learner. That is the point we find it clearly in Saadallah Wannous's plays in a suitable ground for both - communicative competence and discourse competence. Characters, plot, and settings open the world of Arabic language and Arab culture which can foster better understanding of cross cultural skills for a foreign language learner.

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