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entitled

Perception of Arabic Folktales by Readers of Different Language/Cultural Backgrounds

by

Lenah Al-zahabe

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty as partial fulfillment of the requirements for

the

Master of Arts Degree in English

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May 2014
An Abstract of
Perception of Arabic Folktales by Readers from Different Language/Cultural Backgrounds

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This thesis investigates perceptions of Arabic folktales by readers from different language/cultural backgrounds. The study analyzes whether a reader’s language/cultural background affects how Arabic folktales are perceived and understood, particularly focusing on where the comprehension difference appear between non-native speakers of Arabic and native speakers of Arabic, as well as where heritage speakers of Arabic fall within the spectrum. The participants in this study were separated into three different groups, namely Arabic speaking students, non-native speakers of Arabic with no experience with Arabic language/culture courses, and heritage speakers of Arabic. The participants were asked to read three Arabic folktales, The Basket of Figs, Juha and the Hunter’s Gift, and Juha and the Accounting Records, and were asked to answer short-answer survey questions regarding the three folktales as well as general questions about the folktales. The survey responses were typed and tallied by
themes of responses. The result showed that there are differences in comprehension of the Arabic folktales between non-native speakers of Arabic and native speakers of Arabic. Also, the comprehension of heritage speakers of Arabic was more similar to native speakers of Arabic than the non-native speakers of Arabic that had no experience with Arabic language/culture courses.
For my mother, Jennifer, whose unconditional love and support has allowed me to continue my education and accomplish what many others could not have dreamt of. For my grandmother, Judy, who has passed, but will always be an inspiration behind my academic and professional goals. I hope to make you both proud.
Acknowledgements

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Chapter One

Overview of Perception of Arabic Folktales

Introduction

The purpose of this thesis is to investigate the perception of Arabic folktales by readers from different language backgrounds. To do so, I will be attempting to find out whether or not the lack of awareness or exposure to a target language will influence a reader’s perception of the literature of said language. The focus of this research will be on the perception of Arabic folktales by native and non-native speakers of the Arabic language. I will be using the three Arabic folktales Juha and the Hunter’s Gift, The Basket of Figs, and Juha and the Accounting Records to see the differences in the comprehension of the Arabic folktales between the non-native Arabic speakers, heritage speakers of Arabic, and native Arabic speakers; I will also take a look at where the heritage speakers of Arabic fall within the spectrum.

Although Arab-Americans have been active and present members in the American community for over a hundred years, little is known or truly understood by the general American public about their rich and vast culture. While Western stereotypes in the media have been consistent in representing the Arabs as wealthy, evil, uneducated, and angry people, little has been done to enlighten the general American public about the true beauty of the Arab culture. The Arab people have gained many accomplishments throughout their history in
the political, social, and educational realms; however, of all of their achievements, they are most particularly proud of their advancements in literature. Said (1989) finely illustrates this notion, stating:

Of all the major literatures and languages, Arabic is by far the least known and most grudgingly regarded by Europeans and Americans, a huge irony given that all Arabs regard the immense literary and cultural worth of their language as one of their principal contributions to the world (xi).

It seems as though the harsh and unfair Western stereotypes have been set in the minds of many, and that very few people are aware that the Arabs have so much to offer, especially in the literary world. For this reason I feel that it would be very beneficial to see how native English speaking American student with no background in Arabic would read and interpret the translated Arabic folktales that I have selected for them. I would like to see if their lack of knowledge about the Arabic culture will affect their ability to comprehend the morals of the stories, or if they will simply get lost in the details. I believe that this type of research will help us in identifying how unfamiliar languages are perceived by learners, which will allow us to work on alleviating the confusion and misconceptions present in language learning. The inspiration for this topic came from Mari Sawai (2013), a former graduate student from the University of Toledo’s ESL department, and her thesis entitled ‘Perception of Japanese Folktales by Readers from Different Cultural Backgrounds’.
This paper has been divided into three chapters. The first chapter is comprised of a literature review pertaining to the history of Arabic literature, as well as the difficulties of translating literature in general, and more specifically the translation of Arabic texts into English and how this could have an effect on ones’ perception of the folktales. The second chapter will describe the methodology behind the actual research, while the third chapter will conclude the paper with the results, discussion, and future implications.

**Brief Background of Arabic Literature**

Literature plays a very important role in the Arabic culture, a role that dates back to the middle of the 5th century CE (Cachia, 2002, p.1). Literature is deeply rooted in the identities of the Arab people, and to this day people still attend poetry recitations where they sit for hours upon hours, absorbedly listening to and responding with full emotion to the spoken word (Cachia, 2002, p.1). Although the focus of this thesis is on the perception of folktales, it is important to understand that Arabic literature consists of so much more than just folktales, “Arabic literature is a complex and vast body of writing that encompasses many centuries and a variety of branches and subjects” (Lichtenstadter, 1974, p.3). From poetry to prose to the Quran, each of them is connected and has an influence on the manner in which folktales were created.

Oral traditions were the main method of transmission of Arabic poetry prior to the 6th century CE, “In Arabic literature there was no book before the Quran. The songs of the pagan Arab poets were not collected into anthologies at
their own times... In most cases the poems were not written down but were committed to oral tradition” (Goldziher, 1966, p.31). According to Irwin (2000), Islam brought about the creation of the Arabic book. Prior to the compilation of the Quran, folklorists were known to write down the spoken words of poets; however, the verses were intended to be recited orally, committed to memory, and transmitted through oral traditions as the intent of the work was always to be read aloud to an audience (Irwin, 2000, p.1).

Around the 6th century, Muslims developed concerns about the transmission of the Quran and began their work in preserving the holy words of God by writing them down. Upon the completion of the Quran, Muslims began to transcribe all of their valuable works, including not only poetry, but medicine and natural sciences, travel and geography, and many other important findings. Islam encouraged education, and Muslims felt it was necessary and valuable to preserve these works for their posterity. In order to form a sense of unity among Arabs and Muslims alike, all works were transcribed into a single standard form of the classical Arabic language. Although not all Muslims are Arabs, “Arabic with its highly developed grammar and profusely rich vocabulary has always been the language of scholarship among all the Muslim peoples” (Goldziher, 1966, p.3). While the transcribed texts did not match the exact same language used in the Quran, as “the language of the Quran is held to be miraculous” (Irwin, 2000, p.33), they were modeled very closely after it. Since the only method of producing literature was through oral traditions, the literature was
performed in many different regional and national dialects. Since there are so many Arabic dialects that are not universally understood, Arab scholars decided to use classical Arabic known as fusha for all their written works. When scholars began to transmit oral texts into writing using classical Arabic, “they employed a range of strategies, from approximate transcript of the dialect to partial transformation into a corrected literary language to direct translation into classical Arabic” (Slyomovics, 1998, p.266).

Aside from establishing the written word and unifying the language which oral traditions were written in, Islam also began to influence the content of future literary works, namely folktales. This is evident in The Thousand and One Nights, which is perhaps the best known work of Arabic literature in the West. Just as it was with almost all other literature written down after the emergence of Islam, the book begins with an invocation that suggests the stories in The Thousand and One Nights book are related to those of the Quran: “it was almost universal practice to open a work of literature with an exordium which directly or indirectly quotes the Qur’an” (Irwin, 2000, p.32). Although the Thousand and One Nights stories were set in pre-Islamic times, they were compiled after the rise of Islam, which is why “the author wished to imply that the stories he was going to relate contained warnings or messages of moral value for those who read them” (Irwin, 2000, p.32). While the author of the Nights took advantage of the new found practice of written literature to add an Islamic touch to the stories, most if not all folktales that were to follow were centered on Islamic anecdotes,
morals, and lessons. For example, in the tale *Juha and the Hunter’s Gift*, Juha welcomes not only his friend the hunter that gave him a gift, but also his neighbor; he did so because Islam encourages people to welcome and take care of friends and neighbors as if they were your own family, and Juha believed it was his duty to show hospitality to the friend of his close friend. In *The Basket of Figs*, as Juha was being pelted with the quinces he cried out prayers for his neighbor; this signifies not only God’s presence in Juha’s thoughts, but the prayers were specifically referring to wealth, children, and good health, all of which are considered to be the greatest gifts from God in this life. It is important to note that although the Arabs had established a system for written literature, many works were still written with the intention of being orally produced for an audience even though they do not “preserve an authentic oral form” (Slyomovics, 1998, p.270).

**Themes in Arabic Folktales**

Colby (1966) defines a folktale as “a complex cultural production. It may function as a catharsis, provide a world view, describe sanctions and prohibited behavior, liberate one from the immediacy of his own situation, or describe various types of useful behaviors and strategies” (p. 381). The content and characters of folktales typically embody the people and the culture of a text; and although it is safe to say that the purpose of a folktale is to teach a moral or a lesson, the content of the stories may differ from culture to culture. Some cultures implement the use of mythical creatures, magical powers, and talking
animals, while others take a more realistic approach. Aside from *The Thousand and One Nights* compilation with its magical genies, Arabic folktales are more relatable to everyday life as they are comprised of humor, food, morals, and manners of the Arabs and Muslims.

Contrary to the Western stereotypical portrait painted of Arabs as angry and unpleasant people, humor plays a very large role in their everyday lives; as Brookshaw (2012) states, “in the Islamic context, humor… acts as the necessary check and balance to all that is earnest in life” (p.1). It is a common custom among Arabs to try to implement humor whenever possible as they believe it can ease any situation and alleviate tension. Humor is also a means of creating a bond between people; it is a commodity that can transfer between languages, time, and space. Brookshaw (2012) accurately depicts the function of humor among Arabs and Muslims when he states that:

Humor in the Islamic world has fulfilled a wide range of functions from providing (often shocking and transgressive) entertainment, to action as a weapon of ridicule and mockery in the hands of competing poets, to functionings as a balance to the more serious aspects of cultural life, to providing momentary relief from repressive moral or political control. (p.2)

Many of these facets of humor can be found in the ever classic tales of Abu Dulama, Ash’ab the greedy, Ibn al-Jassas, Habannaqa, and most notably in the famous tales of Juha (Jayyuse, 2007, p.2). Juha is a wildly popular literary
character full of timeless anecdotes; he is a jack of all trades, as he acts by turns as a “shepherd, judge, merchant, scholar, saint, and thief” (Jayyuse, 2007, p.6). The tales of Juha have transcended time and space because of his ability to relate to the masses with his varying roles, ranging from a wealthy merchant to a pauper, from an intellectual to an imbecile. While Juha’s character may change roles for different purposes, his ability to convey humor into any situation is uniquely his and what makes him a favorite among children and adults alike.

Another common theme found in Arabic folktales is that of food and generosity and the symbiotic relationship that they share. As Van Gerlder (2000) states, “in Arabic literature... there is often a strong link not only between eating and etiquette, which is obvious, but also between eating and ethics” (p.3). He goes on to explain that today, the Arabic word for literature is adab; however, adab also means good manners, or etiquette. Having good manners or proper etiquette is the ultimate measure of honor among Arabs, especially to the Bedouins, who take the most pride in their generosity with not only their kin and members of their tribe, but also with strangers. Van Gerlder (2000) accurately points out that “it is well known that generosity, together with hospitality which is inseparable from it, is the Bedouin virtue par excellence, in the past and in the present” and that “extreme poverty may not keep the Bedouin from regaling his guests with all he has to give” (p.7). The idea behind acting with such hospitality is that sharing one’s means within one’s family or tribe will strengthen their community as a whole; and extending one’s generosity to an outsider or even to
an enemy is “the appropriate way to gain honor and glory for oneself, one’s clan, and one’s tribe” (Van Gerlder, 2000, p.7).

Offering food is about so much more than extending one’s hospitality, it is about the honor that one gains from their generosity and from showcasing their proper upbringing with upright manners, which is not only an honor to an individual but to their whole family. As Van Gerlder (2000) states, “the connection between eating, ethics and literature is visible symbolically in the apparent etymological link between adab, ‘literature/good behaviours’, and ma’duba, ‘meal or banquet for guests’” (p.3). These parallels between food, hospitality, and honor can be found in many Arabic folktales. Two of the three folktales selected for this research, *Juha and the Hunter’s Gift* and *The Basket of Figs*, include the use of food for the exact reasons previously mentioned; the third folktale, *Juha and the Accounting Records*, also shares the mention of food, however, it is not for the previously stated reasons. Although Arabs of urban communities tend to give much grander gifts such as jewelry, expensive garments, and money, sharing one’s food always remains gracious of hospitalities among the Arab people; “to the Arabs of the past and present, generosity consists before anything else in providing food... the banquet has always remained an important means to show largess to large numbers” (Van Gerlder, 2000, p.6).

Aside from portraying the strong connection to one’s manners and one’s honor, the use of food in Arabic literature “may act as a marker of a multitude of
things such as time, place, class, status, nationality, ethnicity, religion, gender, character, and of course, ‘taste’ on several senses” (Van Gerlder, 2000, p.5). For instance, this can be seen in *Juha and the Hunter’s Gift*, where Juha is presented with a hare as a token of gratitude from a hunter for his hospitality. For many Arabs this would create a connection with the story to the Egyptian culture, as rabbit is considered a delicacy among Egyptians; which would help to symbolize the magnitude of his appreciation. There is also a religious connection with food as food symbolizes the pleasures of this life as well as the pleasures of heaven. In *The Basket of Figs*, Juha gifts the prince with pomegranates then gifts him a second time with again with figs, both delicious fruits that are considered as precious and meaningful gifts as they are mentioned in the Quran. The Quran frequently mentions that among the gifts and bounties of paradise are endless rivers of milk and honey, vats of wine, and the sweetest of dates and fresh fruit. The mention of such foods in the Quran makes for importance and significance of certain foods in the lives and cultures of many Arabs and Muslims.

**Obstacles of Translation**

While cultural knowledge or lack thereof, plays a vital role in the comprehension of a foreign text, so does the translation of a text. Since the focus of this thesis is on readers’ perception of Arabic folktales, it is imperative to address all the possible factors that could have an effect on a readers’ perception of a source text. There are many dynamics involved in the process of translating a source text into a target text; among them are a translator’s knowledge of the
culture of the source text, a translator’s motives, and language-specific obstacles. As Irwin (2000) so eloquently writes, “translation is like a séance with the dead and what comes out on the planchette will often read like urgent nonsense” (p. viii). The translation of words is simply not enough to understand a language. Words on their own cannot ever be fully understood without background knowledge of the culture of a target language; Irwin (2000) similarly agrees as he states that “a translator may well be successful in translating the words, but this cannot mean that the translator has translated the associations that those words had for their original audience” (p. ix).

Translation is like a delicate dance, and a translator is responsible for carefully planning their every step in the process. They must familiarize themselves not only with the culture and history of the source language, but with the history between the source and target languages as well. This is especially pertinent when translating from the Arabic language into English, because the two worlds, the Middle East and the West, have clashed for decades, leaving behind bitter and inaccurate misconceptions and stereotypes about each other’s cultures. According the Faiq (2004) “misunderstandings are said to derive from incompatibilities in processing of media which carry them: language. Yet misunderstandings are not only the products of linguistic incompatibilities per se but of cultural ones as well” (p.1). Many translators may not even realize that they are perpetuating this spread of cultural ignorance, as these cultural biases have been deep rooted into their subconscious. Of course it does not help that the
Arabic language is so dramatically different from the Western European languages, and the pragmatic, syntactic, morphologic, and phonologic differences only aid in creating a barrier for an understanding between the languages (Hibbard, 2010, p.220).

Still, it is the duty of the translator to take a step outside of their comfort zone and to immerse themselves into the true culture of the source language. Al-Masri (2010) is working on a path towards bridging the literary worlds together when she states that “for linguistic equivalence to be achieved in literary translation, translators should take into account not only equivalence of meaning but also investigate higher levels of content, context, semantics and pragmatics” (p.viii). A translator is responsible for more than the conversion of words; according to Shamma (2009), there has been a cultural turn in translation studies where “the translator emerged as a cultural mediator, playing a central role in the representation of other cultures, and consequently, in intercultural relations” (p.2).

Unfortunately, there is not one uniform approach to the translation of texts, and the methods that will be used depend on the attitude and goals of a translator. Schleiermacher (1997) broke down the strategies a translator uses when translating a source text; a translators has two options “the translator either (1) disturbs the writer as little as possible and moves the reader in his direction, or (2) disturbs the reader as little as possible and moves the writer in his direction” (p. 229). If a translator decides to take the first approach, then the
translator will be taking the first step in a positive direction towards familiarizing the target language readers with an honest depiction of the source text. However, if a translator decides to go the other route, they are doing an injustice not only to the source text but to the target language readers; they are preventing them from experiencing what the world has to offer on both a linguistic and cultural level. Maier & Massardier-Kenney (2010) attest to the fact that literature that has been translated into English is often taught as if it had been originally written in English, which creates an alienating effect on English readers from the rest of the literary world (p.1). Faiq (2004) reinforces the notion of the control and influence a translator holds on the target language reader when he powerfully suggests that “translators… become dictators, so to speak, by altering what a group of readers is allowed to know and read, thus censoring and, to a large extent, alienating the target readers” (p.4). Shamma (2009) shares the same sentiment as he notes that “the translator has the choice of either erasing the alterity of the foreign text, adapting it to the expectations and belief systems of his/her prospective readers, or, conversely, of preserving its difference and opposing it to established discourses in the target language” (p.3). Finally, Venuti (1996) articulately summarizes and expresses the implications, both positive and negative, associated with translators and their translations as he states that Translation wields enormous power in the construction of national identities of foreign cultures and hence can play a role in racial and ethnic
conflicts and geopolitical confrontations... allowing translation to be called a cultural, political practice, constructing... identities for foreign cultures, affirming or transgressing institutional limits in the target-language (p.196-7).

There is no doubt that there are personal, social, and political obstacles that a translator must overcome to translate a text from a source language into a target language with its full integrity, without any bias; however, even for the most objective of translators, some languages present certain limitations to the amount of what can and cannot be translated and some losses are inevitable. Arabic is one of those languages, with its distinct linguistic nature and its culturally embedded meanings. Among some of the specific obstacles of translating Arabic is creating a syntactical arrangement that satisfies the original text while simultaneously creating a smooth flow in the target language (Hibbard, 2010, p.220). Translation is further complicated since writers assume that their audience is familiar with the social and historical context of their content, which leaves translators with the difficulties of successfully “capturing puns, wordplay, and similar linguistic humor” (Amin-Zaki, 1995, p.223) into the target language. Translators of Arabic would benefit their readers by including introductory information about the “mediation that translation invariably implies or about the stakes involved in the transfer of another culture” (Hibbard, 2010, p.2). It is especially important when translating from Arabic that a translator avoids the all too common practice of ‘familiarizing’ or domesticating
the source text so that the content becomes familiar and more easily understood by the target text readers. Rather, they should implicate ‘foreignising’ the text; the best way to help the target language readers understand the culture and context is to force them to face the unfamiliar elements of the source language such as loanwords, calques, and the discursive structure (Faiq, 1995, p.27).

The Focus

Through this review of literature it is apparent that there are extensive considerations that need to be made when translating a text from a source language into a target language. Above the language barrier there are cultural, religious, and historical elements that only add to the difficulties of translation. With that said, there will always be a degree of losses in translation to some extent. Coupled with the inspiration from Sawai’s (2013) thesis and my own interest in cross-lingual transfers, I would like to investigate perceptions of Arabic folktales by non-native Arabic speaking readers and whether or not their lack of awareness or exposure to Arabic will influence their perception of the folktales.

In the following chapter I will discuss the methodology for my research. I will describe the data gathering context, my role in the research, the participants, the instruments used, and how the data was analyzed.
Chapter 2

Methodology

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to look at whether or not an understanding of the Arabic language, culture, and customs will enhance the understanding of Arabic folktales. I investigated the perception of Arabic folktales by readers from different language backgrounds to see if background knowledge of a target language/culture or lack thereof, will affect ones’ perception of the meaning of a literary text.

Research Questions

1. Does a reader’s cultural and language background affect how Arabic folktales are perceived and understood?
2. What differences occur between native and non-native speakers of Arabic in the comprehension of the Arabic folktales?
3. Where do heritage speakers of Arabic fall within the spectrum?

Data Gathering Context

To attempt to answer the research questions, I conducted a study at the University of Toledo to compare the perception of three Arabic folktales by three groups of participants with differing language backgrounds, ranging from participants with no experience/knowledge of the Arabic language/culture, to participants who are heritage speakers of the Arabic language, to native speakers
of Arabic. For added clarity, heritage language speakers or heritage language learners, are individuals that identity with a minority language that they hold a historical and personal connection to.

I found the University of Toledo to be an ideal location for this particular study as it is a diverse public university with 23,000 students. The University of Toledo also contains a large community of heritage speakers of Arabic, as well as a large population of international students from the Middle East.

**Background and Role of Researcher**

The inspiration for this research topic came from Mari Sawai’s (2013) thesis entitled ‘ Perception of Japanese Folktales by Readers from Different Cultural Backgrounds.’ I could relate to her thesis as I oftentimes found myself examining the similarities and differences of the two worlds that I belonged to, as I am a child of a bilingual and multicultural household. Although I was born and raised in the United States with English as my native language, I am a heritage speaker of Arabic as my father is Syrian. I have also had the fortune of being able to travel to the Middle East to experience my heritage culture firsthand. With that said, I can recollect many conversations that I have had with people throughout the years, both in the US and in the Middle East, about the “other side.” I always found it very fascinating to hear what people had to say about their perceptions or interpretations of the opposite culture; for that reason I found it appropriate to recreate such a study for the Arabic language to see what types of misconceptions there are about the Arabic language/culture.
Participants

The participants in this study were 40 students from the University of Toledo. The participants consisted of 18 non-native speakers of Arabic who have never taken any Arabic language/culture courses, 10 heritage speakers of Arabic, and 12 native Arabic speaking students. The participants were recruited through various courses taught in the Spring semester of 2014 at the University of Toledo. The classes that I visited were classes taught in the Foreign Language Department and English Department. I also collected surveys from students working in the Writing Center as well as from volunteers in the Carlson Library. The participants consisted of 16 females and 20 males, with their ages ranging from 18 to 55 years old. The countries of origin range among the participants, as 16 stated the United States to be their country of origin, 12 stated Saudi Arabia, two stated Lebanon, one stated Syria, one stated Sudan, and one stated the Caribbean. Linguistically, 20 participants stated that English was their primary language, 12 stated Arabic to be their primary language, and four considered both Arabic and English to be their primary languages.

Folktales and Survey Questions

In order to create an appropriate survey for this research, I sat down with Sanaa Jouejati, an Arabic language expert and close family friend of mine, and carefully dissected each of the folktales to pick the most important aspects of each story to create meaningful comprehension questions. Two different sets of surveys were produced for this study. One set of the surveys was created in
English, while the other one was created in Arabic. Both of the surveys consisted of the same content, both containing three Arabic folktales followed by four to five short-answer questions per folktale. The short-answer questions were used to elicit the participants’ perceptions of certain aspects of the folktales that provide great value and/or enhance the meaning of the folktales as a whole. There were also four short-answer questions relating to the readers perceptions on folktales overall, for a total of 17 short-answer questions. However, the Arabic survey only consisted of 16 short-answer questions, as the last question in the English survey “What kind of differences are there between Arabic folktales and the children’s stories you grew up with?” did not pertain to native Arabic speakers. All of the folktales selected for the survey are tales of Juha, as he is a classic literary character in Arabic folklore.

The first folktale selected for the survey was The Basket of Figs, which tells the story of Juha on his way to give a gift to the emir. In the story, Juha’s neighbor was wary of the quince that Juha was going give the emir, as it is a very large and hard fruit. The neighbor explained to him that a quince was no gift to give the emir, but rather he should take him something sweet and dainty such as figs. Convinced, Juha decided to take a basket of figs instead. Upon arriving to the palace, Juha found that the emir was in a foul mood and had ordered his guards to pelt Juha with own gift and chase him out of the palace. The emir was then puzzled by Juha as he heard him shouting prayers for his neighbor instead of shouting in pain; Juha had informed the emir that his neighbor talked him out
of bringing quinces, which he believed would have broken every bone in his body. Impressed by his humor and attitude, the prince then gifted Juha with a purse of gold. To view the full text of the folktales, in both English and Arabic, please refer to the Appendix A. The comprehension questions pertaining to this story can be seen in figure 1 below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Basket of Figs Comprehension Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. What is the significance of taking a gift to the emir?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 2. How do you perceive the relationship between Juha and his neighbor?  
  Why is it significant? |
| 3. What is the significance of the type of the prayers Juha was making for his neighbor? |
| 4. What is the difference between the first gift Juha received after giving the emir fruit and the purse of gold he received after his second visit?  
  What is the significance of that? |

*Figure 1.* Sample comprehension questions for folktale one.

The second folktale used was *Juha and the Hunter’s Gift*, where Juha was approached by a hunter who gave him a gift of a hare. Juha then cooked the hunter’s gift and shared it with him. Some days later another man approached Juha and explained that he is the neighbor of the hunter. Juha then welcomed the man into his home offered him a meal. Shortly after this, another man approached Juha and explained that he was a friend of the neighbor of the hunter who gave him a gift. Juha then invited the man in and offered him a bowl of hot water. The stranger was baffled and asked what the water was for; Juha then told him that the water was boiled in the same pot as the hare that was
brought to him by the hunter, whose neighbor he knew. Figure 2 below shows the comprehension questions asked in regards to this folktale.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Juha and the Hunters’ Gift Comprehension Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. What is the main theme of the story?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Why do you think the countryman gave Juha a hare as a gift and not a chicken?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. What is the significance of Juha welcoming the neighbor and the friend of the neighbor?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Why did Juha only give the friend of the neighbor of the countryman a pot of boiling water and not a meal as he did the others? Why is this significant?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 2. Sample comprehension questions for folktale two.*

The third folktale, *Juha and the Accounting Records*, tells the story of a sultan who finds the funds of his city in trouble. Although it was not the fault of anyone, but rather the effect of a natural disaster on the city’s crops, the sultan was desperate to place the blame on someone. He decided to blame the city’s governor and ordered his guards to shred the accounting records and force feed them to the governor. The sultan then called upon Juha to be held as the city’s treasurer. Juha tried to free himself from the burden of this position, but his efforts were futile. After some time the sultan summoned Juha and his accounting books, only to find that the records had been prepared on thin layers of bread. The sultan asked Juha for the reasoning behind his actions, in which Juha responded that he knew he would be ordered to swallow the records just as his predecessor was and that as an old man his stomach would scarcely be able to digest all of the bread, let alone paper. The comprehension questions for this story can be found in figure 3 below.
Juha and the Accounting Records Comprehension Questions

1. What is the theme of the story?

2. What was the real reason of the sultan investigating the Governor’s account books?

3. Why did the sultan choose Juha to replace the governor?

4. What is the significance of Juha’s choice of recording the accounts on thin layers of bread? What does this say about Juha? What does this say about the sultan?

5. What is the moral of the story?

Figure 3. Sample comprehension questions for folktale three.

After completing all of the folktales and answering the short answer questions pertaining to them, I asked general questions about folktales over all. These questions can be seen in figure 4.

Folktales Overall Comprehension Questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. In Arabic folktales, why are the main characters usually males and not females?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Is there any connection between religion and Arabic folktales? Explain.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. What are the reoccurring theme/moral lessons in the Arabic folktales?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4. Sample comprehension questions for folktale four.

To view the complete survey, please refer to the appendix.

Procedure

For the data collection, I went to three classes, as well as Carlson library, and administered the surveys. Before distributing the surveys I briefly informed the participants about the nature of the research and carefully explained the consent form, making it clear that the completion of the surveys was completely voluntary and that they would not penalized if they decided not to participate. After collecting all of the signed consent forms, the participants were handed three folktales to read individually and then answered several short-answer
questions in regard to each of the stories. Completion of the readings and questionnaire took approximately 25 minutes.

Data Analysis

In order to analyze the data I typed up each response. I then read through all of the responses, checking for any patterns in the participants’ answers. I was looking for similarities and differences not only among the three groups, but also within each group. In order to keep track of all of the response I created a labeling system so that I could keep consistent with the actual responses. I labeled each of the surveys according to the type of reader, for example I assigned an A for the Arabic speakers, an H for heritage speakers, and N for non-native speakers of Arabic. I then randomly assigned each survey with a number between 1 through 20, and finally when typing up responses I added the question numbers of 1 through 17. For example, the responses that I coded for the Arabic speakers’ survey that I assigned the number 1 to were as follows, A.1.Q1, A.1.Q2, A.1.Q3, and so on.

I enlisted the help of a fellow graduate student and native speaker of Arabic to help me translate and type up the answers provided by the Arabic speaking participants. Once I had all of the responses typed up, I grouped each response by reader type, then by question. All of the questions were checked against a master answer key that I created with the help of Sanaa Jouejati and were based off of our joint knowledge and interpretations after carefully analyzing each of the folktales used. I first checked to see if there was any
constancy among the answers within each specific group and then compared them between groups. I was also looking to see if there were any patterns present in the answers provided that would give me some insight into why participants may have answered the way that they did.

In order to maintain the reliability of my data a second coder was used to cross check the participant’s answers. The second coder was given ten percent of my data to cross check and the results were 90% reliable. In the following chapter I will discuss my research findings, limitations, and implications.
Chapter 3

Results & Discussion

Introduction

In this chapter I present my findings in response to my three research questions, which are: 1) Does a reader’s cultural and language background affect how Arabic folktales are perceived and understood? 2) What differences occur between native and non-native speakers of Arabic become evident in the comprehension of the Arabic folktales? and 3) Where do heritage speakers of Arabic fall within the spectrum? I provide information about the responses from the short-answer surveys and discuss any evident similarities and/or differences in the perceptions of the three Arabic folktales (The Basket of Figs, Juha and the Hunter’s Gift, Juha and the Accounting Records) by the readers of different language/cultural backgrounds (non-native speakers of Arabic, heritage speakers of Arabic, native speakers of Arabic). I would like to point out that there are no truly right or wrong answers to the short-answer survey questions. Like with any works of literature of the past, we can only speculate what we believe to be the thoughts and intentions of the authors; I did not judge the responses based on whether I found them to be correct or incorrect, but rather see if there were any patterns in the responses both within and among the different groups of readers.

Findings
Research Question One: Does a reader’s cultural and language background affect how Arabic folktales are perceived and understood? From this research, I have found that a reader’s language/cultural background does affect the perception and comprehension of the Arabic folktales. However, although the three groups of readers differed in their answers, I found it very surprising that the groups answered slightly more similarly to each other on the questions that pertained to the cultural details than they did on the questions regarding the overall themes or morals of the stories. I believe that the reason behind this is due to the nature of the questions as they were created in English, with English speakers in mind, therefore possibly prompting the native English speaking readers to answer the questions differently from the native speakers of Arabic. For example, in response to question five on the survey that asked about the theme of *Juha and the Hunter’s Gift*, the majority of both the non-native speakers of Arabic and the heritage speakers of Arabic answered that the theme is ‘taking advantage/credit for things you did not do’, followed by ‘sharing/hospitality’; which are answers that I was expecting. On the other hand, the majority of the native speakers of Arabic simply responded that the theme was ‘Juha and the Hunter’s gift’, with only two participants giving the same response as the non-native speakers, stating that the theme was ‘being hospitable’.

Also, in response to question nine on the survey which asks about the theme of *Juha and the Accounting Records*, the most common answer among the
non-native speakers of Arabic that they were ‘unsure of the theme’, followed by ‘to learn from the mistakes of others’, and ‘courage/wit/greed’. While the majority of the participants were not able to detect the theme of the story, they still analyzed it to be something more meaningful and complex than the straightforward answers of the native speakers of Arabic which were simply ‘Juha and book keeping’. There are a number of linguistic and cultural factors that could have affected how and why the readers responded the way that they did, which I will discuss in further detail in the limitations section of this chapter.

Overall, while both groups of participants answered many questions similarly, the ones in which they differed were specific to the Arabic cultural context, and it is important to note that most of the responses of the non-native speakers were followed with question marks, indicating their confusing and uncertainty with their answers as can be seen from their responses to questions four from The Basket of Figs, one and two from Juha and the Hunter’s Gift, and one and five from Juha and the Accounting Records. It was apparent that experience/knowledge of the Arabic language affected the perceptions of the folktales by the readers from all three groups. In the next section I will discuss the areas where the most prominent differences in in the responses from both groups of participants occurred.

**Research Question Two: What differences occur between native and non-native speakers of Arabic in the comprehension of the Arabic folktales?**

Cultural knowledge definitely played a role in the perceptions of the folktales by
the non-native and native speakers of Arabic. In order to help create an understanding for their differences in perception, I think it is important to present the responses from the non-native speakers of Arabic to question 17 in ‘the folktales overall’ portion of the survey, which was only asked to non-native speakers and heritage speakers of Arabic; they were asked if there were any differences between Arabic folktales and the children’s stories that they grew up with. The majority responded that the fairytales that they grew up with were ‘scary/creepy’, ‘involved magic’, and ‘they usually included women as main characters’. One participant responded that they felt that ‘a thorough understanding of the culture is needed in order to grasp these meanings’. I believe that the nature of the children’s stories that they grew up with influenced the non-native speakers of Arabic to have more pessimistic attitudes towards the folktales and therefore have more cynical responses.

The first example of this can be seen by the non-native speakers of Arabic in their responses to question two in regards to The Basket of Figs; the question asks about how they perceived the relationship between Juha and his neighbor. The non-native speakers responded that although they thought they had a ‘close relationship’ and the neighbor was like a ‘mentor’ and Juha the ‘mentee’, they also believed that the neighbor was ‘jealous and deceitful’ because he suggested that Juha change his gift to the emir. I would like to note that it was apparent from the responses of not only the non-native speakers of Arabic, but also from the heritage speakers of Arabic, that they believed the emir was upset because of
the gift that Juha brought. However, this is not the case as the story clearly illustrates that the emir was already in a foul mood before Juha got there and that he would be displeased regardless of the type of gift brought to him; I am not sure what caused the confusion among this group of participants about this aspect of the story, but a clear understanding of this point could have altered the responses of the participants. Their responses could also be because they do not understand the significance of figs in the Arab/Islamic culture; even though a quince is a perfectly delicious fruit, figs would make for a more suitable gift for a prince as they are highly regarded because of their mention in the Quran. With that said, the native Arabic speaking participants responded that they perceived the relationship between Juha and his neighbor to be ‘good/close/brotherly’ because the neighbor felt comfortable enough to give Juha advice and Juha accepted it, which consequently ended up saving his life. Also, in the Arabic culture neighbors are very highly regarded and are to be treated with the same respect and kindness as one would treat their family; for that reason the native Arabic speaking readers would have no reason to assume that the neighbor had any ill will towards Juha.

The continued pessimism on the part of the non-native speakers of Arabic can also be seen in the responses to question eight in regards to *Juha and the Hunter’s Gift*, which asked why Juha only gave the friend of the neighbor of the hunter a pot of boiling water and not a meal as he did the neighbor of the hunter. The non-native speakers mostly responded that it was because ‘this person was
trying to take advantage of Juha/the acts of others’ while a few responded that it was because he ‘ran out of meat/food’. On the other hand, the native Arabic speakers responded that it was because ‘the neighbor is closer to the hunter and the friend of the neighbor has a right, but not like a direct neighbor’. The nature of their answers goes back to the Arab customs of dealing with neighbors and guests. The non-native speakers of Arabic interpreted that Juha was trying to ‘punish’ this man or ‘teach him a lesson’ for his supposed bad manners whereas the native Arabic speaking participants sensed that Juha did not harbor any bad feelings towards this stranger, he simply did not feel that he owed him the same level hospitality as he did not have a direct connection to him; also, he was trying to prevent more ‘friends of friends’ from showing up.

Once again, a sense of negativity and distrust can be seen on behalf of the non-native speakers of Arabic in their responses to question ten in regards to *Juha and the Accounting Records*, which asks about the real reason behind the sultan’s investigation of the governor’s account books. Most of the non-native Arabic speakers responded that ‘he was looking for another scape goat’, followed by ‘the sultan didn’t trust the governor’, and a few responded ‘to find a solid reason for the failing crops’. However, the majority of the native Arabic speaking readers responded that sultan was investigating the governor because ‘the crops were scarce and he wanted to find out why’, with only two stating that it was because ‘he didn’t trust the governor’. Although I myself understood that the intention behind the sultan investigating the governor was to look for
another scapegoat, it is not clear why the native speakers of Arabic interpreted that the sultan had a just motive behind his investigation.

In this section we have seen that there are differences between the native and non-native Arabic speaking readers in the perceptions of the Arabic folktales, most notably how positively the native speakers of Arabic approached each aspect of the folktales compared to the non-native speakers of Arabic. In the next section we will take a look at the responses of the heritage speakers of Arabic in order to help us determine if learned language/cultural knowledge will help non-native speakers of Arabic to perceive the folktales more similarly to native speakers of Arabic.

**Research Question Three: Where do heritage speakers of Arabic fall within the spectrum?** Heritage students hold a unique position in this research as their linguistic and cultural knowledge of Arabic ranges from each individual, making it difficult to determine their abilities to not only detect cultural difference but to understand them as well. Heritage speakers come from a variety of backgrounds and have different levels of exposure to the Arabic language and culture, which makes any assumptions about their responses less generalizable. Having said that, I found an even split with the responses of the heritage speakers as they were divided down the middle with half of them responding identically to the non-native speakers of Arabic and the other half to the native speakers of Arabic.
Interestingly enough, the divide in their answers can be found in the exact same four questions presented in the previous section, which are: question two in regards to *The Basket of Figs*, in which they responded ‘the neighbor is jealous/doesn’t like Juha and tried to hurt him’ and ‘they have a close almost familial relationship’; question five regards to *Juha and the Hunter’s Gift*, in which they responded ‘don’t take advantage of people/expect free things’ other half said ‘hospitality/gift giving’; and in question eight in *Juha and the Hunter’s Gift*, in which they responded ‘the neighbor has a direct link and greater rights than the friend in the Arabic culture’ and ‘to punish the neighbor/teach him a lesson’. The only other question in which the native and non-native speakers of Arabic clashed was in question ten in regards to *Juha and the Accounting Records*; there was no divide in the responses from the heritage students as they gave the same answers as the non-native speakers, which were ‘he needed a scapegoat’ and ‘he thought the governor stole’.

I find that the even divide in their answers from the heritage students is unsurprising considering the fact that the three heritage readers that answered identically to the native Arabic speakers considered both Arabic and English to be their primary languages and the three that answered identically to the non-native speakers of Arabic considered only English to be their primary language; especially because those same students that considered both Arabic and English to be their primary languages also considered their countries of origin to be Middle Eastern countries, although they were all born and raised American
citizens. It would seem from their responses that half of heritage students have had greater levels of exposure/experience with the Arabic language/culture; however, I cannot make any assumptions about how much (or little) knowledge of the Arabic language/culture these participants have as I do not have enough background information on the nature of their exposure to the Arabic language/culture.

In the following section, I will discuss the limitations and implications of this research as well as my suggestions for further research.

Discussion

The results of this research indicate that there were definite differences in the perceptions of the Arabic folktales between the native and non-native speakers of Arabic not only in the details of the stories, but in the themes overall. The responses of the heritage speakers of Arabic were split down the middle, with half of them sharing the same perceptions as the non-native speakers of Arabic and the other half interpreting the stories like the native speakers of Arabic. While the main source of their differences seems to be caused by the participants’ knowledge/experience with the Arabic language/culture, there may be other factors that could have contributed the differences among the participants’ answers. In the following sections I will discuss the possible implications or limitations of this research in further detail, as well as the implications of the research.
Limitations of the Research. As I mentioned earlier in this chapter, there are several factors that may have influenced how and why the participants responded the way that they did. One of the most important limitations to note is that there was no pretesting of the short answer questions to evaluate whether or not they actually measure what they were intended to measure. While checking participant answers against my own answer key, I found that the majority of participants did not respond to the short answer questions with the answers that I was looking for. This did not hinder the effects of the research as I was still able to detect similarities and differences among the perceptions of readers with different language/cultural backgrounds; however, I found that in some cases it was not the amount of cultural knowledge that affected perceptions, but possibly the wording of the questions. Although I am experienced with the Arabic culture, I was analyzing the stories from a native English speaker aspect. I lacked the analytical skills used by native speakers of Arabic, and therefore did not cater to their needs as readers, writers, and thinkers. This appears to be evident in the fact that only two of the native Arabic speaking participants responded in full to questions that contained more than one part; whereas the majority of non-native speakers and heritage speakers of Arabic answered all the parts of every question.

Another limitation of this study was the exclusive use of Juha stories. Both classical and modern forms of Arabic literature contain a wide array of fictional stories and characters, so while the tales of Juha may be famous in traditional
Arabic culture, they are not modern and are not necessarily representative of the modern Arabic culture. Some Arabic cultures may not even consider Juha to be important anymore, so even if the native Arabic speaking participants may have heard of, or read about Juha, they may not be familiar with themes of his stories.

Additionally, although I had the help of Sanaa Jouejati, who is very knowledgeable and experienced with the Arabic language, I lacked the accessibility to social linguists who are experts in the Arabic language/culture, which resulted in relying on my own assumptions about the Arabic language/culture. Also, this study contained a very limited amount of participants. The percentage of distribution was also uneven among the three groups of participants as the number of participants of the non-native speakers of Arabic outweighed the number of native speakers of Arabic, and even more so the number of heritage speakers of Arabic. The findings of this research could have been skewed with such a small and unbalanced sample size.

Implications of the Research. The results of this research support the widely-recognized notion that that cultural knowledge of a language is crucial for one to fully understand a language and that learning the linguistic features alone does not guarantee the success of communication in a language. While the number of heritage students in this research was very limited, it was apparent from their answers that the amount of exposure that half of them had to the target language and culture (Arabic) was limited. For students to acquire a target language and have the ability to communicate effectively in the tradition and
Language is an identity of a society, it tells of their morals, values, and cultural norms. Meaning of words and knowledge of words comes from the environment that they are used in; words get their meaning from the context. Therefore, language teachers should try to immerse their students in the culture of the language, by blending the linguistic input of the target language with the culture of the target; linguistic input needs to be imbedded in a communicative context of the target language. With exposure to the culture of the target language students can make associations between linguistic input taught in classrooms and their meaning in real life experiences. Although the most ideal environment for any language learner would be to relocate to the country in which the target language is spoken, it is unrealistic that most language learners would have the opportunity or means to do so. However, language teachers may be able to attempt to provide their students with some degree of exposure to the natural use of the target language by using audiovisual tools such as Youtube, or by using social media tools such as Skype to allow for live communication with native speakers of the target language.

**Suggestions for Future Research.** I feel that this type of study is imperative to the field of sociolinguistics and the success of language teaching/learning. Further studies such as this one should be conducted with larger groups of participants in order to provide greater insight into the
differences in the perceptions between native, non-native, and heritage speakers of a language. Also, as Sawai (2013) suggested, researchers may find different results by implementing the use of different types of media such as various genres of literature or implementing the use of film such as cartoons, movies, or TV shows. Finally, more demographic information should be collected on the individual language/cultural knowledge of heritage language learners to avoid placing them all into one ambiguous category. Their knowledge and experiences with a target language and culture greatly vary and these factors should be taken into consideration when grouping responses of participants.

Conclusion

It is evident from the findings of this research that one’s language/cultural knowledge of Arabic can impact their perception or understanding of Arabic folktales. While non-native speakers of Arabic may be able to comprehend the stories as a whole, their lack of cultural knowledge may not allow them to be very impacted by the tales as they were not able to grasp the deeper meanings behind the stories. Although the process of translation has helped to bridge a connection between many communities and societies, the conversion of words is not enough. A cultural context needs to be provided in order to fully reap the benefits of translation; this kind of understanding can be applied to other aspects of cross-cultural exchanges such as language teaching/learning.
References


Appendix A

Sample of Surveys Used

**Demographic Information**: Please circle the one that applies to you.

1. Age: ________

2. Gender:
   a. Female
   b. Male

3. Year in school:
   a. Freshman
   b. Sophomore
   c. Junior
   d. Senior
   e. Other: (_______________)

4. Primary language:
   a. English
   b. Arabic
   c. Both English and Arabic
   d. Other: (_______________)

5. Country of origin: ________________

6. Have you previously taken any, or are you currently taking any Arabic class(es)?
   a. Yes (Go to number 7)
   b. No

7. If you answered ‘Yes’ on number 6, which class(es) are you taking?
   a. Arabic 3010
   b. Arabic 3020
   c. Other: (_______________)
**Instruction:** For the following three folktales, please read each folktale first before answering questions. Please answer each question in short answer (1 – 3 sentences).

**Folktale 1: The Basket of Figs**

One year when Juha's pomegranate tree bore very large fruits, he chose the three reddest and most perfect and took them to the palace as a present for the emir. And for this, he was generously rewarded. Some months later, when his quince crop proved unusually fine, he filled a basket with the best of his harvest and set out for the palace again. On the way, he met a neighbor, and when he had explained his errand, the man said, "Are quince any gift for a prince? Shame on you! Something dainty or something sweet is what will please an emir. Take him figs." Juha was persuaded, and when he arrived at the palace gates he had a basket of figs over his arm.

This time, however, the prince happened to be angry, with a frown on him that would frighten a hero. Far from rewarding Juha for his pains, he ordered his servants to pelt him with his own figs and chase him out. But every time a fig hit the mark, Juha would cry out, "May Allah reward you with His blessings, dear neighbor!" or "Allah grant you many sons and abundant riches, dear neighbor!" The prince's curiosity finally overcame his anger, and he asked Juha why he was saying such things. "Sire," replied Juha, "I was bringing you a basket of the largest quinces you have ever seen, white and sweet as apples, but my neighbor told me that figs would be a better gift. Should I not thank the man who saved my life? Had my basket been full of quince, every bone in my body would be broken by now!" The prince laughed, and regaining his good humor, sent Juha home with a purse of gold.

**Comprehension Questions:**

1. What is the significance of taking a gift to the emir?
2. How do you perceive the relationship between Juha and his neighbor? Why is it significant?

3. What is the significance of the type of the prayers Juha was making for his neighbor?

4. What is the difference between the first gift Juha received after giving the Emir fruit and the purse of gold he received after his second visit? What is the significance of that?

Folktales 2: Juha and the Hunter's Gift

A countryman who enjoyed hunting once visited Juha in the city and brought him a hare as a present. Juha took the hare to his wife, had her roast it in the way he most relished, and invited the hunter to stay and share it with him. Some days later a man knocked at Juha's gate. "Who is it?" he called. "A neighbor of your good friend the hunter, who brought you the hare the other day," the man shouted up. Juha asked him in and let him rest and set a meal before him most hospitably. Not long after this, another stranger in country clothes called on Juha. "Who are you?" asked Juha. "I am a friend of the neighbor of the hunter who gave you the hare." "Welcome, welcome," said Juha and led him inside. When the guest was comfortably seated, Juha placed in front of him a steaming bowl of hot water. "What is this?" asked the stranger. "This water was boiled in the very same pot as the hare that my good friend the hunter, whose neighbor you know, brought me," said Juha.
Comprehension Questions:

1. What is the main theme of the story?

2. Why do you think the countryman gave Juha a hare as a gift and not a chicken?

3. What is the significance of Juha welcoming the neighbor and the friend of the neighbor?

4. Why did Juha only give the friend of the neighbor of the countryman a pot of boiling water and not a meal as he did the others? Why is this significant?

Folktale 3: Juha and the Accounting Records

One day the sultan summoned the city's governor to confiscate his possessions, on the pretext that he'd stolen large quantities of funds. The truth was, the crops and fruit had been damaged that year by a natural disaster. The previous year's harvest had indeed been plentiful, but this year the earth had produced barely enough for the people to stay alive. The governor had in fact done the best he could, using all his powers of firmness to extract everything possible from what the people had built up. The man produced his account books, written on the paper of the day only to see Tamerlane tear them up, then have the soldiers on the sultan's orders, first flog him the force him to eat the torn pages. The sultan thereupon confiscated the governor's possessions, leaving him totally destitute.

He then summoned Juha, who had a reputation for honesty, and charged him with supervision of the realm's treasury. The old man tried to wriggle out of the post, citing his failing health, but no excuse was accepted. At the end of the month, the sultan called for the account books, which Juha had prepared on thin layers of bread. The sultan asked him just what it was he'd brought. "Sire," Juha
said, "it will end, I know, in your ordering me to swallow these. I'm an old man, not a man of fame and prowess like my predecessor. Indeed, my stomach will scarcely be able to digest even this bread!"

**Comprehension Questions:**

1. What is the theme of the story?

2. What was the real reason of the sultan investigating the governors account books?

3. Why did the sultan choose Juha to replace the governor?

4. What is the significance of Juha's choice of recording the accounts on thin layers of bread? What does this say about Juha? What does this say about the sultan?

5. What is the moral of the story?

**Folktales Overall:**

1. In Arabic folktales, why are the main characters usually males and not females?

2. Is there any connection between religion and Arabic folktales? Explain.

3. What are the reoccurring theme/moral lessons in the Arabic folktales?

4. What kind of differences are there between Arabic folktales and the children’s stories you grew up with?
معلومات ديموغرافية:

ضع دائرة على الجواب الملائم لك.

العمر: 
الجنس: ـ ذكر ـ أنثى
السنة الدراسية: ـ الأولى ـ الثانية ـ الثالثة ـ الرابعة ـ شيء آخر

اللغة الأم: ـ الإنجليزية ـ العربية ـ كلاهما (الإنجليزية والعربية) ـ لغة أخرى:

التعليمات: يرجى قراءة كل الحكاية أولا و قبل الإجابة على الأسئلة. و يرجى الإجابة على كل سؤال بجواب قصير (1-3 جمل).

الحكاية الأولى:

سلة من التين

في إحدى السنوات، وأثرت شجرة الرمان، وكانت ثمارها ناضجة و كبيرة جداً، اختار جحا أفضل ثلاث رمانات وحملهم إلى القصر كهدية للأمير. ولهذا تمت مكافأته بسخاء.

بعد بضعة أشهر، عندما كان محصول السفرجل جيداً، ولكن كان عليه غرامة كبيرة على نحو غير عادي، ملأ جحا سلة من أفضل محصوله و أخذها للقصر مرة أخرى. على الطريق، التقى جحا بأحد الجيران. وعندما شرح له الأمر، قال الرجل: " السفرجل؟ هدية للأمير؟ عار عليك! أي شيء لذيذ أو شيء حلو هو ما سوف يرضي الأمير حقيقةً، خذ التين."

اقتنع جحا، وذهب إلى بوابات القصر حاملة سلة من التين على ذراعه.

هذه المرة، كان الأمير غاضباً، و كان عابساً. و هذا الأمر كان من شأنه أن يخيف أشجع الرجال. وبدلاً من مكافأة جحا، أمر عبيدنه أن يقذفوا التين على جحا بينما كانوا يطاردونه و يأمرونه بالخروج.

لكن في كل مرة ضرب جحا بالتين، كان جحا يصرخ، "جزاكم الله خيراً، والجار العزيز!" أو "منح الله لك العديد من الأبناء و الثروات الوفيرة، والجار العزيز!"

عاقبت جحا فضول الأمير و تغلب هذا على غضبه، و تساهل لما إذا كان جحا يقول مثل هذه الأشياء.

أجاب جحا: " كنت سأحرص لك سلة من أكبر ثمار السفرجل رأيتها على الأطلال، ولكن قال لي جاري أن التين سيكون هدية أفضل. لا ينبغي لي أن أشكر الرجل الذي أنذرني هكذا! لو كان لدي سلة كاملة من السفرجل، لكان كل عظمة في جسدي مكسورة الآن! " ضحك الأمير، واستعاد روحه الطيبة، وأرسل جحا المنزل ومعه هدية من الذهب.

الحكاية الثانية:

 métier de faiseur de rameaux

En une des années précédentes, une rameuse de raisins s'était formée. L'arbre avait produit une quantité importante de fruits, de sorte que le garçon a choisi les meilleurs rameaux et les a portés au palais comme cadeau à l'héritier. Pour cette raison, il a été récompensé généreusement.

Après quelques mois, le rendement des figues était excellent, mais il avait dû payer une lourde amende. Le garçon a rempli une grande corbeille de ses meilleurs fruits et a porté cette corbeille au palais une autre fois. Sur le chemin, il a rencontré un de ses voisins. Lorsqu'il a raconté le fait à l'homme, celui-ci lui a dit: "Les figues? Un cadeau pour l'héritier? C'est honteux! Qu'est-ce que l'héritier apprécierait d'autre que des raisins?"

Le garçon a compris et a conduit la corbeille de raisins au palais, en chemin, il a crié: "Merci à toi, mon voisin!"

La curiosité de l'héritier a été attirée et a remplacé sa colère, il a demandé pourquoi le garçon disait des choses pareilles.

Le garçon a répondu: "J'allais apporter une grande corbeille de figues, mais mon voisin m'a dit que c'était meilleur. Tu ne devrais pas me donner des fruits que j'ai déjà récoltés!"

Le prince a ri et a retrouvé son humeur joyeuse, il a envoyé le garçon chez lui avec un cadeau d'or.
اجب على الأسئلة التالية:

- ما هو مغزى أخذ هدية للأمير؟

- كيف تفهم العلاقة بين جحا و جاره؟ لم تعتبر هذه العلاقة مهمة؟

- ما هو مدلول نوعية الدعاء الذي كان جحا يدعو به لجاره؟

- ما هو الفرق بين الهدية الأولى التي أخذها جحا من الأمير و الهدية الثانية؟ ما هو المغزى المراد؟

الحكاية الثانية:

جحا و هدية الصياد

في مرة من المرات زار صياد، ممن يستمتعون بالصيد، جحا و جلب له أرنباً كهدية. أخذ جحا الأرنب لزوجته، وطلب منها أن تشوو الأرنب بالطريقة التي يحبها، ودعا الصياد للبقاء وتقاسمها معه. بعد أيام حضر رجل إلى بوابة بيت جحا فقال: " من هناك؟ "، " أخذ جيرا صديق الصياد الذي بلب الأرنب منذ أيام " دعاه جحا وطلب منه أن يستريح ووضع أمامه وجبة من الطعام ليعبره عن حسن ضيافته. ولم يمض وقت طويل، حتى حضر رجل غريب آخر و سأله جحا. " من أنت؟ "، " أنا صديق جار الصياد الذي قدم لك الأرنب "، " قال جحا " مرحبا، مرحبا "، وقاده إلى الداخل. وجلس الضيف بشكل مريح، ووضع جحا أمامه وعاء من الماء الساخن يتصاعد البخار منه. سأل الرجل " ما هذا؟ "، " قال جحا " هذه المياه هي في نفس الوعاء الذي كان فيه الأرنب الذي أحضره لي جاري ".

أجب على الأسئلة التالية:

- ما هو موضوع القصة الرئيسي؟

- لماذا أعطى الصياد هدية لجحا أرنبًا و لم يعطه دجاجة؟

- لماذا قدم جحا لصديق جار الصياد ماءً مغليًا و لم يقدم له وجبةً كما فعل لجار الصياد؟ ما هو معنى مدلول هذا التصرف؟

جحا و سجلات المحاسبة

في يوم من الأيام استدعى السلطان محافظ المدينة لمصادرة ممتلكاته، بحجة أنه سرق كميات كبيرة من الأموال و المحاصيل و الفاكهة. الحقيقة هي أنه في ذلك العام وقعت كارثة طبيعية وكانت

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المحاصيل قليلة و بالكاد قد أنتجت ما يكفي لبقاء الشعب على قيد الحياة. في الواقع، كان حصاد العام الذي قبلته وافراً. ولكن السلطان أمر بتمزيق السجلات المكتوبة على الورق الذي كانوا يستعملونه في ذلك الزمان. بعد ذلك أمر جنوده أولاً بجلد الحاكم و ثانياً بأن يأكل الحاكم الصفحات الممزقة. وأمر السلطان أيضاً بمصادرة ممتلكات الحاكم، تاركاً له لاشيء على الإطلاق.

ثم استدعى السلطان جحا، الذي كانت له سمعة طيبة لصدقه و أمانته، و أمره بالإشراف على خزانة الدولة. حاول جحا التملص من هذا المنصب معتذراً بتدهور صحته لكونه رجلاً عجوزاً، ولكن لم يقبل له أي عذر.

في نهاية الشهر، دعا السلطان جحا ليطلعه على دفاتر حسابات حاكم المدينة، وكان جحا قد أعد الدفاتر و كتبها على طبقات رقيقة من الخبز. استغرب السلطان و طلب منه أن يشرح له ما فعل ذلك.

قال جحا: "أعلم ياسيدي أن الأمر سينتهي بي بابتلاع هذه الدفاتر والملفات، وأنا رجل عجوز، وليس لي من القوة ما لدى سابقي، وخاصة أن معدتي ضعيفة و بالكاد تستطيع هضم هذا الخبز!".

أجب على الأسئلة التالية:
- ما هو موضوع القصة؟
- ما هو السبب الحقيقي الذي جعل السلطان يتحقق من دفاتر حسابات حاكم المدينة؟
- لماذا اختار السلطان جحا ليكون بدلاً من حاكم المدينة؟
- ما هو مغزى اختيار جحا لأن يكتب حساباته على طبقات رقيقة من الخبز؟ على ماذا يدل هذا التصرف؟ وما الذي نفهمه عن السلطان؟
- ما الذي نتعلم من هذه الحكاية؟

عن الحكايات العربية بشكل عام:
- لماذا نرى أن الشخصيات الرئيسية في الحكايات العربية هي من الذكور و ليست من الإناث؟
- هل نرى أي صلة أو ارتباط للدين مع الحكايات العربية؟ أشرح ذلك.
- ما هو الموضوع المتكرر في الحكايات العربية؟
ماهي الفروق التي تراها بين الحكايات العربية وقصص الأطفال التي كنت تقرأها في صغرك؟