Bantu oral narratives in the training of English Foreign Language teachers in Mozambique

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1. Introduction

Mozambique is a former Portuguese colonized country which is located in the southeastern coast of Africa. The country is surrounded by former British colonized countries that use English as their official language. The majority of people in Mozambique speak Bantu languages, which are the indigenous languages of the country. Yet the knowledge of European languages, particularly Portuguese and English, is associated with better social and economical rewards.

Portuguese, the language of colonization, is the official language of the country and the main language of formal instruction. English is the main foreign language in Mozambique. It is also the main language for diplomacy and international trade. English is taught in the two last grades of primary education (grades 6 and 7) and in all grades of secondary education (grade 8, grade 9, grade 10, grade 11, and grade 12). Since 2004, a few Bantu languages have been used in bilingual education programs that have been implemented at the primary level of education. However, the enrollment of children in those bilingual programs is optional. As children progress through primary education, they gradually receive less instruction in Bantu languages and more instruction in Portuguese.

The language and educational policies in Mozambique have led citizens to assume that European languages are more capable of representing valued knowledge than Bantu languages. Educational curricula have also given more prestige to western cultural and intellectual standards. Because of this, people believe that societies who mostly rely on oral traditions are “cultureless societies.” As a matter of fact, Bantu oral traditions have been marginalized in the plans of study of all disciplines, including English. Conceptions of foreign language teaching and foreign language learning have prevented teachers of English in Mozambique from thinking of Bantu oral traditions as valid sources for the production of materials for their classrooms. Hence, teachers of English in Mozambique do not take into consideration the real context in

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which their students live. They pretend that their students are immersed in the target culture and try to use exclusively English in their classrooms. They do not think of themselves as potential translators capable of presenting in English stories that circulate in Mozambican communities.

In this paper, I argue that prospective EFL teachers in Mozambique should be trained to incorporate Bantu oral narratives in their classrooms. EFL teachers in Mozambique and, by extension, their students can greatly benefit from analyzing the system of values in Bantu oral narratives and from translating Bantu oral narratives into English.

2. Research Study

In 2003, I taught a course Mozambican Oral Literature: Theory, Methods, and Materials to students who were being trained to teach English. In this course, I conducted a pilot study and addressed the following research questions:

- What happens when prospective teachers of English in Mozambique are given the opportunity to reflect on the value systems represented in Bantu oral narratives?

- Does the exercise of translation and cultural reflection enable these student-teachers to develop their sensitivity to the relations among Bantu languages, Portuguese, and English?

- Does the exercise of translation of Bantu oral narratives help prospective teachers of English to gain knowledge of English?

Therefore, course participants were engaged in various activities: they translated Bantu oral narratives from Bantu languages or Portuguese into English; they analyzed the system of values represented in those narratives; and they used the English texts they produced to design activities for EFL classrooms. Next, I will briefly present some theoretical principles that guided my teaching when I supervised student-teachers’ work in these three main activities.

2.1. Supervising Student-teachers’ Translation

Susan McGuire Bassnet (1980) observes that Roman Jakobson identified two different categories of verbal translation: interlingual and intralingual. The first category implies the interpretation of verbal or written signs by means of some other language. The second category refers to any act of interpretation within the same language, such as modification of word order, the substitution of some words by synonyms, and the use of different styles or dialects.

These concepts emphasize the idea that translation is a natural process of communication and interpretation, and I tried to make this clear to my student-teachers. I used
the process pedagogy, and I encouraged my student-teachers to produce several drafts of translations and to reflect critically on their lexical and grammatical choices. As Vinay Totawar (1997) argues, translation does not need to be taught as an individual struggle between the student and the text (56). Therefore, I encouraged my student-teachers to work collaboratively with one or two classmates in the translation of the same narrative and to exchange and discuss their different drafts with other groups of students.

Jakobson’s concepts also indicate that, in their process of trying to present Bantu oral narratives in English, Mozambican EFL teachers can do several intralingual translations. For instance, my student-teachers had difficulties translating a particular passage presented in the narrative “The Lion and the Rabbit” published in Contos Moçambicanos 1: 12-13). In this narrative, the rabbit excuses himself and leaves the lion alone for a short time. The rabbit’s excuse, in the Portuguese version, is presented as follows:

- **Senhor Leão, deixe-me ir fazer necessidades.** (1: 13)

Portuguese speakers use the polite expression “fazer necessidades” when they intend to use the restroom. In their first draft, my student-teachers translated this request, as follows:

- Mr. Lion, let me go out to urinate.

I called students’ attention to the fact that this sentence sounded odd and impolite in English. Then, my student-teachers re-examined the particular request in the narrative. They decided that what was most important for them to translate was the idea that the rabbit had briefly walked away from the lion. Thus, they re-interpreted for their readers the rabbit’s request. They wrote: “[…] he asked the Lion to let him go out for a few minutes.”

Currently, scholars recognize that translation is a communicative process that requires not only linguistic but also extra-linguistic considerations. For instance, B. Hantin and I. Mason (1990) claim that translation is a communicative process that takes place within a social context. As they point out,

In creating a new act of communication out of the previously existing one, translators are inevitably acting under the pressure of their own social conditioning while at the same time trying to assist in the negotiation of meaning between the producer of the source language text (ST) and the reader of the target-language text (TT), both of whom exist within their own, different social frameworks. (3)

This means that, when doing translations of Bantu oral narratives, Mozambican EFL teachers need to take into account that their readers might not be very familiar with the sets of beliefs, ideals, and social rules of different ethnic groups in which those narratives circulate. They might need to provide some cultural information to their readers, even if this cultural information is not included in the texts they translate. As Amuradha Dingwaney and Carol
Maier (1995) pointed out, translators need to do much more than just look for the closest lexical equivalent; they need to make familiar and accessible what is confronted as alien. Therefore, Peter Newmark differentiates semantic and communicative translations. In semantic translations that are interpretative and evaluative, translators usually express their own values by excluding the components of meaning that they consider less pertinent or peripherical. In communicative translations, translators take into account the knowledge and sensitivity of their readers, and simplify or emphasize the basic message of the original text. However, as Newmark claims, translators must combine and balance both individual and social values because every translation “must be in some degree communicative and semantic, social and individual” (62). This, as Donald C. Kiraly (1995) argues, presupposes that translators have cognitive, social, and textual skills as well as access to linguistic, cultural, and real world knowledge.

Maier (1998) urges instructors to use translation as an activity to foster language acquisition. She advises instructors to define clear goals and make those goals explicit to students. She also advises them to discuss with students the challenges that the text would present to a translator, assign them to write their translations, and explain the thinking that guided their work (31). As the central focus of my course was to help teacher trainers to examine cultural assumptions represented in Bantu oral narratives, I made this goal clear to my students, and I instructed them to be careful to not erase cultural values represented in the original texts. I also instructed them to evaluate their specific rhetorical situation and the needs of their audience. Thus, I encouraged student-teachers to take into account the social contexts in which their potential readers (EFL students in Mozambique or English speakers of all other countries in the world) live. For instance, kinship terms might have different meanings in Mozambican matrilineal and patrilineal societies, and they might have different meanings in Bantu and European cultures. If those terms were absolutely relevant for the interpretation of a given narrative, student-teachers had to explain their meaning. I also encouraged student-teachers to write reflective papers about their translation process.

2.2. Supervising Student-teachers’ Reflection on Cultural Values

The level of written literacy in Mozambique is very low and, because of this, storytelling plays a major role in the daily life of Mozambican people. Every Mozambican child grows up listening to stories told by their grandparents, uncles, parents, or elder brothers and sisters. Those stories describe, interrogate, explain, and evaluate people’s behavior in different
circumstances. They portray specific customs, taboos, and values of northern matrilineal and southern patrilineal societies in the country. They teach people what animals are good and smart, and what animals are bad and “nonintelligent.” As Greg Sarris asserts,

Storytelling is a fundamental aspect of culture, and stories are used in a number of ways and for a multitude of purposes. Stories can work as cultural indexes for appropriate and inappropriate behavior. They can work to oppress or to liberate, to confuse or to enlighten. So much depends on who is telling the story and who is listening and the specific circumstances of exchange. (4)

In other words, storytelling is not just an entertaining activity. Through storytelling people establish, maintain, or negotiate fundamental values of their communities. Through storytelling people create and develop their sense of identity with a particular cultural group. As Beverly J. Stoeltje and Nancy Worthington point out,

Clichés, values, prejudices, shock, history, anxieties, and general cultural knowledge are all transmitted through oral traditions. However, such forms do function additionally as commentary on social relations and evidence of political conditions; although they may contain either truths or lies, or both, their study reveals to us how people think and feel. (428)

In other words, students’ storytelling experiences in their communities influence their perceptions, feelings, and thinking. In these social and cultural interactions, students shape their personal values.

In the past three decades, educational researchers have protested against the marginalization of students’ community experiences and values in educational systems. Generally speaking, they associate the notion of values with the ideas of good and bad, the moral judgments of correct and incorrect, and things that people like or dislike, that is, personal and/or social preferences. J. Mark Halstead, for instance, defines values as

[…] principles, fundamental convictions, ideals, standards or life stances which act as general guides to behavior or as points of reference in decision-making or the evaluation of beliefs or action and which are closely connected to personal integrity and personal identity. (5)

Halstead associates values with the moral and individual ideas of integrity and identity. He considers that values are part of moral ideology. Since moral conceptual systems are developed by individuals when they interact with one another, this social interaction contributes to the formation of values. Francis Dunlop defines values as “qualities of things” and observes,

We experience the world, and what constitutes it (including persons, events, actions, physical and mental objects – in short, every kind of thing) as possessing positive or negative qualities, or (most frequently) a mixture of the two, as being good or bad (or both) in various respects. (69)
In this statement, Dunlop highlights the importance of experience in the formation of values. He calls attention to the fact that things are valued on a scale, which means that they are not necessarily classified as totally positive or totally negative. According to Dunlop, values make people experience different emotions and give them reasons for action, even when this action only includes a mental act of appreciation.

As John C. Smyth points out, when students do not integrate their previous experiences in schools, they can experience tensions between school values and their community values (66). Considering this possibility, Halstead demands,

Schools must pay attention to the diversity of values in the community they serve (which are themselves in flux) as well as in society at large, and to legitimate expectations of interested parties. They must examine their aims and their curriculum provision and practices to see what values lie embedded there and must reflect on the justifiability, appropriateness and coherence of these values. (8)

Halstead’s point of view is consistent with the principles of the Cultural Studies movement that, since the 1970s, has protested against the marginalization of views, values, and cultures of people who do not represent the dominant ideology. As John Mowitt (1997) explains, this movement encourages the teaching of popular culture, and promotes the idea that instructors should use texts to explore issues meaningful to students who are diverse in terms of life experience, linguistic background, gender, religion, et cetera (56-58). This vision of education promoted by Cultural Studies has gradually influenced the field of foreign language instruction. Today, many EFL instructors recognize that there is a close relationship between language and culture. They acknowledge that foreign language classrooms are appropriate sites to promote multicultural development as it is defined by Paul Pederson (1994). Pederson considers that multicultural development is a learning process that requires awareness, knowledge and skills of one’s own culture as well as the culture of others. Therefore, in my course, I encouraged student-teachers to raise questions about the narratives they translated and to examine the behavior of different characters in the stories in terms of their own cultural experiences. For instance, one of the narratives student-teachers translated explored a conflict between a woman and her husband. This narrative was used as a site to help students reflect on gender values in their own communities.

Cognitive researchers have also called attention to the role of experience in the process of interpretation. George Lakoff in Women, Fire, and Dangerous Things argues,

Meaning is not a thing; it involves what is meaningful to us. Nothing is meaningful in itself. Meaningfulness derives from the experience of functioning as a being of a certain sort in an environment of a certain sort. (292)
Cognitive studies developed from the late 1970s to the middle of the 1990s also indicate that people’s understanding of texts depends on schematic structures (or schemas) that people developed in previous social and learning experiences. Mardi J. Horowitz defines schemas as structures of meaning that “summarize past interpersonal experience into integrated, generalized, and modular forms against which incoming information is measured and recognized” (13). Hiroko Nishida clarifies that schemas are organized structures of past knowledge that people use to receive and process new information (755). According to Nishida, when members of a given culture interact in certain situations for a number of times, several schemas are generated and stored in their brain. As they encounter more of these similar situations, or as they talk more often about the information, these schemas become more organized, abstract, and compact. Hence, “people develop schemas by their direct experience and also by talking about schema-related information” (756). This means that Mozambican students certainly develop cultural schemas when interacting with members of their communities in storytelling events. They use these schemas each time they receive and process new information.

Nishida argues that, throughout their lives, people develop schemas for social interactions. Some of these schemas embrace their values. For instance, “person schemas” include knowledge that causes people to characterize other people in terms of their dominant personality traits, which might, in turn, be related to stereotypes or prejudice. In other words, person schemas include fundamental principles that make people appreciate or not other people’s character or behavior. “Role schemas” include knowledge about sets of behaviors that people are expected to demonstrate in particular social positions. “Context schemas” contain information about appropriate actions that someone should take to achieve certain goals in particular contexts (757-58).

Bruce Hawkins in “Matters of Life and Death: The Role of Iconographic Reference in the Language of Oppression,” uses a theoretical perspective that sees meaning as a process of “constructing understandings - of people, of events, of texts” (7). This perspective can be applied to any process of interpretation of texts. Hawkins argues that the activity of making sense involves the continuous interaction among three related processes: experience, selection, and grounding. People construct meanings on the basis of their individual and social experience. Selection and grounding are processes that help people make sense of their experience. As the author further details,

The process of experience provides the basic substantive resources from which any meaningful text is derived. As no text can ever include all relevant
information pertaining to any experience, any text must be selective in the information it presents. [...] All texts are constructed in a particular pragmatic context, which in itself is rich with resources which can contribute to the meaning of a text constructed in that context. Grounding is the process through which the pragmatic context is meaningfully related to images selectively constructed from experience. (7)

Thus, when students are engaged in the process of interpreting texts, they base themselves in their previous social and learning experiences, including their storytelling experiences. In Mozambique, students have very diverse cultural backgrounds, and this can cause a variation of interpretation across students. In my course, I used this variation to promote communication. I encouraged student-teachers to talk about their previous social experiences, and to reflect on images that they constructed in those experiences. This helped them to reach a consensus and accept a given interpretation as true or false.

Hawkins calls attention to the fact that this process perspective on meaning implies a similar process perspective of reference. He defines reference as “the process of directing attention or turning to some fundamental resource for information” (7). So, any process of reference requires the use of people’s previous experiences. To explain the use of human experience in the process of reference, Hawkins uses the concept of “iconographic frame of reference.” In “The Magical Lexicon of Fighters and Lovers: Toward a Critical Cognitive Grammar,” Hawkins defines this concept as follows:

An iconographic frame of reference (or “iconography” for short) is a conventionalized cognitive structure comprising a coherent set of highly valued images. Iconographic frames of reference are built on the foundation of an experience (or set of experiences) that is highly valued in some domain of human life. (354)

Thus, iconographic frames of reference are integrated systems of images. Each image that belongs to this integrated system is schematic in nature, because it is based on conventional beliefs that people gained in previous social experiences. Iconographic frames of references are constructed on the basis of people’s value systems and they might also affect the process of interpretation of texts.

Lakoff and Mark Turner also assume that people’s experiences strongly impact their process of understanding. These authors argue that U.S. people have well-elaborated schematic images of animals. These schemas include knowledge that make Americans characterize animals and understand their characteristics in terms of characteristics of human beings. They think that pigs are dirty, messy, and rude; lions are courageous and noble; foxes are clever; dogs are loyal, dependable, and dependent; cats are fickle and independent; wolves are cruel and
murderous; and gorillas are aggressive and violent. Because of such metaphorical propositions, Americans react to those animals, and treat them as they would treat a person with such traits (194). People belonging to other cultural groups might have different perceptions of those same animals.

These examples of schemas elaborated by Americans about animals can be applied to the Mozambican context. In truth, just like Americans, Mozambicans also have well-elaborated schemas that affect their perception of certain animals. Mozambicans think, for example, that the lion is the king of the forest, the rabbit is clever, and the monkey is a trickster. Those schematic images are constructed and reinforced by Mozambican oral narratives where those animals repeatedly present the very same characteristics. These schematic images affect students’ expectations in relation to the behavior of those animals in stories, and they might impact the way students select information about animals in the process of interpreting stories. Thus, in my course, student-teachers did not realize that, in a particular narrative we discussed in class, the rabbit could be perceived as “stupid”. When a student-teacher noted that the rabbit in that story was “totally stupid,” her classmates strongly reacted against this observation. After reading the narrative again, they agreed that they had missed relevant textual information that could lead them to that conclusion. Their conventionalized schema for the clever rabbit had caused the students to overlook evidence to the contrary.

As written previously, because the Bantu oral texts come from the students’ home language, they might already be familiar with the system of values represented in those texts. However, research shows that people might not be aware of the values that they established in interactions with a particular cultural group. As Lakoff and Mark Johnson in Metaphors We Live by explain, some values are so culturally embedded that, even when they guide people’s behavior and actions, people are not aware of them (22). According to Hugh Mercer Curtler, people do not create values, but discover them when they respond positively to given objects or events. This requires sensitivity or feelings, but also imagination and cognition. As Richard L. Morrill writes, holding a value implies an active positioning of the self with regard to its own beliefs, conducts, and feelings (63). Lakoff and Johnson argue that people can examine their conceptual system, that is, the baggage of values and beliefs that govern their intellect, by examining evidences of it in language. As they write,

[…] our conceptual system is not something we are normally aware of. In most of the little things we do every day, we simply think and act more or less automatically along certain lines. Just what these lines are is by no means obvious. One way to find out is by looking at language. Since communication is
based on the same conceptual system that we use in thinking and acting, language is an important source of evidence for what that system is like. (3)

Therefore, to help student-teachers to identify and describe cultural values represented in oral narratives, as Lakoff and Johnson suggest, I helped student-teachers to examine carefully the language used by storytellers. This allowed them to develop their understanding of forms of expression used by people who base themselves in oral cultures.

2.3. Supervising Student-teachers' Design of Classroom Activities

According to Sandra Lee Mckay (2001), some communicative theorists maintained that literary texts contributed little to language learning (319). However, recent developments of communicative approach and foreign language theory contest this argument. Ronald Carter (1996), for example, asserts that literary texts should be used in foreign language classrooms because learners must have “greater opportunities to experience, interpret and use language in its more creative aspects”(1). Carter claims that language teachers can use literary texts to:

[... help students practice skills by which cultural knowledge and awareness can be developed and to root the development of such skills both in an engagement with the everyday language and in creative, process-oriented, activity-based methodologies which give responsibility to learners for working out for themselves meanings and significations. (10)]

In other words, English teachers can use literary texts to encourage learners to practice and develop their speaking, listening, reading, and writing skills. At the same time, English teachers should encourage learners to develop their cultural knowledge and awareness. Thus, they should use literary texts to motivate students to speak, listen, read, and write about culture.

McKay maintains that EFL instructors can use literary texts to achieve three major purposes. First, they can show learners how to use the foreign language to achieve specific communicative goals or establish their voice. Second, they can integrate the development of the four language skills, that is, speaking, listening, reading, and writing. For example, EFL teachers can ask learners to examine carefully a literary text and support their interpretations in oral discussions. EFL teachers can use story dialogues to provide learners a basis for judging the use of language in particular situations, or to have them write their own dialogues. Learners can also be asked to write journals or essays expressing their reaction to particular literary texts. Third, because literary texts exemplify several dimensions of culture, EFL teachers can use them to raise cross-cultural awareness. In respect to this third purpose, Mckay observes that the ultimate purpose of addressing culture must be to help learners “see their culture in relation
to others” (329). Thus, teachers need to examine carefully the cultural assumptions present in particular literary texts to plan classroom activities aiming to make students aware of those assumptions. For instance, teachers can discuss with students why particular characters from a specific cultural background behaved the way they did under specific circumstances (330).

In my course, I discussed with student-teachers Mckay’s article and I encouraged them to use the narratives they translated to improve their students four language skills as well as critical thinking. For example, they could ask students to interview different members of their communities and learn more about Mozambican traditional cultural practices represented in narratives being studied. I called student-teachers’ attention for the fact that, to plan specific activities, they would have to take into account a number of factors, such as their students’ ages, level of English proficiency, and cultural background.

3. Results

Earlier, I noted that colonial and post-colonial language and educational policies in Mozambique led common citizens to believe that oral societies are “cultureless societies.” In Mozambican Oral Literature: Theory, Methods, and Materials, we reflected on the relationship among language, ideology, culture, and oral literature. When I first asked course participants to tell me what they understood by culture, some of them defined culture as “the number of books that one reads.” These student-teachers claimed that a person with culture would be a “well-read person.” At the end of the course, I asked course participants to reflect on the knowledge they had gained in this training and to write an analytical paper. One of student-teachers wrote:

I learned that, in our country, we have culture, and we can identify the differences between Mozambique and other countries by analyzing oral narratives.

Other student-teachers made similar observations. In other words, the course changed these student-teachers’ perception of oral societies. In our classroom debates, student-teachers not only understood that Bantu oral traditions express values of particular cultures, but also contrasted Bantu cultures with other cultures in the world. For instance, when we discussed the narratives “The Rabbit and the Snake” and the narrative “This Story Happened during the Time of Traditional Chiefs”, some course participants observed that, in Mozambique, many people do not like snakes or are very afraid of snakes, because they are used to thinking of snakes as very dangerous animals that kill people. In contrast, in India, there are men who enchant snakes and make them dance. Thus, people in India will probably do not have the same image of snakes, because they can perceive snakes as magical animals that dance well. From this
observation, the classroom discussion was expanded and student-teachers debated the relationship that people of different cultures have with animals. They noticed, for example, that Chinese people eat frogs and dogs and, therefore, probably do not have the same perception of those animals as Europeans or Africans. Chinese people can imagine frogs and dogs as food products. On the other hand, Europeans and Africans eat cows, but Hindu people venerate these animals. In brief, my pedagogy showed that students’ native culture can be used in EFL classrooms as a foundation to raise students’ awareness of their own culture as well as of other cultures in the world. Using Mckay’s words, my pedagogy enabled students to “see their culture in relation to others” (329).

The discussion on cultural values impacted student-teachers’ process of translation. For instance, one student-teacher reinforced the positive idea of the rabbit, in the following extract of the narrative “The Liar Monkey”:

**Como não queria repartir os ovos com o Coelhito, …**
2: […] as he didn’t want to share the eggs with the poor rabbit.
4: he did not want to share the eggs with his friend.

As one can observe, the Portuguese version includes the word “coelhito.” This is the Portuguese diminutive of rabbit, and it can be literally translated into English as “small rabbit.” In the second draft of the narrative, instead of using the adjective small, this course participant used the adjective poor and appealed more strongly to the emotions of his intended audience of Mozambican students. In subsequent drafts, he worked collaboratively with two classmates. They replaced the expression “poor rabbit” by the expression “his friend.” They probably did this substitution, because, when we analyzed this narrative, course participants observed that, in Mozambique, when people are visited by friends, they usually invite those friends to eat with them. In other words, student-teachers understood that, in translating Bantu oral narratives, they had the responsibility to make Bantu cultural values clear to readers not well familiarized with Bantu cultures. To put this in different terms, my pedagogy allowed course participants to understand that translation requires extra-linguistic considerations and implies producing “a target text that can function within a different context for recipients from a different culture” (Mona Baker 61).

Participants in my course also gained sensitivity to the relations among Bantu languages, Portuguese, and English. For instance, they gave me several examples of words/expressions that, in Portuguese translations, appear in their original form, because they are difficult to translate. For instance, the Xironga word “kudzungilitzar,” could be translated by “greeting.” However, as my student-teachers observed, this English word does not encode all
social and cultural conventions that Ronga people respect when they are engaged in this particular speech act. Student-teachers also simplified or emphasized the messages presented in the Portuguese versions they were translating. For example, in the sixth draft, a student-teacher who was translating the narrative “The Man and the Monkeys,” simply wrote that the monkeys imitated the man. Using the context, readers would certainly be able to understand that the monkeys imitated the man’s gesture.

Os macacos imitaram o gesto do Homem.
1-5: The monkeys imitated the man’s gesture
6: The monkeys imitated him

Student-teachers also developed their vocabulary or knowledge of English words. They replaced words they used in previous drafts, and produced more accurate images of the situations they described (see a).

(a) Word choice

… as penas foram caindo uma a uma.
1: the wings unstuck one by one
2, 3, 4, and 5: the feathers started to fall down one by one

As Jeanette S. Decarrico notes, vocabulary knowledge involves more than just knowing the meaning of a given isolated word. It involves knowing its possible collocations, that is, the words that might possibly co-occur with it (292). There are two types of syntactic collocations: grammatical and lexical. Grammatical collocations are combinations between a noun, a verb, or an adjective with a particular grammatical item, usually a preposition, such as “account for” or “by mistake.” Lexical collocations consist of combinations of full lexical items, that is, nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs, such as “spend time” or “smoke free” (293). In their translation process, student-teachers seem to have acquired some knowledge of the words’ grammatical and lexical collocations. The first example listed in (b), shows that student-teachers learned that the verb “come” does not co-occur with the neutral pronoun “it,” but with a preposition. They replaced the expression “come it” for “come in”. The second example illustrates that student-teachers realized that, in that particular sentence, the verb “ask” could not co-occur with the pronoun “nothing.” They paraphrased the sentence, and used the collocation “ask about.”

(b) Collocations

- Nem por isso amiga, entra e faça-me companhia.
1: Oh my friend, it’s not like that, just come it and be with me
2: Oh my friend, don’t do that, come it
3 and 4: Oh, my friend, come in please

[…] não teve coragem de perguntar nada.
2: didn’t had courage to ask nothing
3: he had no courage to ask about his mother

Student-teachers also seem to have developed their grammatical competence at various levels. For instance, they corrected the use of prepositions (see c), and corrected tense forms (see d). They also corrected sentence agreement problems (see e) and replaced relative pronouns (see f).

(c) Prepositions
- Quem quer trocar cachimbos por mapira?
 2, 3, and 4: Who would like to exchange pipe with mapira?
 5 and 6: Who wants to exchange mapira for pipes?

(d) Tense Forms
- Vou lançar esta corda para ti e através dela sairás.
 1: I threw a rope inside and pulled the hare out with all his strength.
 2: I will throw this rope inside so that you can come out

(e) Agreement
Havia […] um régulo …
 1 and 2: There were a chief
 3, 4, 5, and 6: There was a chief

(f) Relative Pronouns
[…] um régulo que não gostava de conviver com os velhos.
 1, 2: a chief that doesn’t like old people
 3, 4, 5, and 6: a chief who didn’t like old people.

In initial drafts, because of the influence of Portuguese, student-teachers wrote some sentences without subject pronouns. Later, they included subject pronouns in their sentences (see g).

(g) Subject Pronouns
…, por favor, ajuda-me antes de eu morrer.
 2 and 3: please help me before dying
 4 and 5: It’s me, please, help me before I die

Student-teachers were also able to use the narratives to help their students to talk about the life of people in their communities. For instance, one of the narratives they translated “This story happened during the time of traditional chiefs” discussed the prejudices against aging. In this narrative, a chief ordered his subordinates to kill all old people of his village. Student-teachers use this narrative to promote a reflection and discussion about the role of old people in
societies. They planned a lesson for seven graders, and designed the following sequence of activities:

**Classroom activities**
- The teacher writes on board “All old people are good.”
- He/ she divides the class in two groups, and asks one group to argue in favor of this idea and another group to argue against this idea;
- Students discuss

**Homework**
The teacher asks students to write a composition about their families/ communities. In this composition, students should try to answer the following questions:
- How are old people treated in your community?
- How important are they?
- What is the relationship between old people and young people?

As one can see, in this sequence of activities, EFL learners will have to speak, listen, and write in English. They will need to examine the life of their communities and the way young people treat old people.

In brief, my pilot study revealed that the analysis of cultural values enables EFL teachers to encourage their students to use the target language to think critically and speak or write about their own history, life, beliefs, values, and attitudes. Translating Bantu oral narratives allows EFL teachers to develop their sensitivity to the relation among Bantu languages, Portuguese, and English. It enhances these teachers’ linguistic and communicative competence in English. It helps teachers to encourage their students to praise their own cultures and to use the target language to speak or write about their own history, life, beliefs, values, and attitudes. It develops their ability to think critically in English, and to think critically about English, which better prepares them to teach this foreign language.

4. **Works Cited**


