A Comparative Study of Interpretation Strategies Applied by Tabriz Professional Simultaneous Interpreters in Dealing with Culture-bound Terms

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Abstract—The present study sought to investigate the most prevailing simultaneous interpretation strategies applied to culture-bound items by a number of professional simultaneous interpreters in Tabriz, Iran. To achieve this aim, 50 English and 50 Farsi culture-bound terms and expressions were selected and put in sentences and short paragraphs as the corpus of the study. These sentences were interpreted by seven professional and experienced interpreters of Tabriz. Kalina's and Pedersen's models were applied for eliciting interpretation strategies within Descriptive Translation Studies (DTS) as the framework of the study to compare the strategies applied by interpreters. The results were then put into numerical mode in order to explore the most dominant interpretation strategies as well as the least frequent ones. The main aim of the present study was to explore the best and most common strategies applied by professional interpreters while dealing with culture-bound items. The results indicated that the most dominant strategies applied in interpretation of culture-bound items were Total Equivalence and Specification, while the least used strategies were Rephrasing and Substitution. It was witnessed that the interpreters have got a high tendency towards providing the target audience with extra information of the foreign culture in order to transfer the exact nature of the culture-bound items into target language.

Index Terms—interpreting strategies, simultaneous interpreting, cultural-specific terms, culture

I. INTRODUCTION

Interpreting is a special type of communicative interaction which takes place when members of different language communities engage in cross-language/culture communication. The role of an interpreter becomes more crucial because as a good interpretation can be useful, a bad or a wrong one can be misleading and to some extent dangerous. Thus, interpretation from one language to another cannot be done adequately without knowledge of the two cultures.

Kondo (1990) claims that the interpreter cannot and should not be expected to close such a gap arising from cultural differences of the parties and that he could be regarded as "overstepping himself as an interpreter" if he attempted to do so, which might even cause him to get into trouble depending on the situation (P. 60-64).

This study aims at identifying the strategies used by professional simultaneous interpreters in Tabriz when providing on-the-spot equivalents for culture-bound terms from English to Persian and vice versa.

For this purpose, the researcher selected 50 Farsi and 50 English terms and expressions and asked seven interpreters to interpret them in a defined time. Then each interpretation task was taped and transcribed. Finally, the interpretations were compared in terms of the applied strategies while dealing with culture-bound items.

II. METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

The present study is a mixed research (the mixing of quantitative and qualitative research) with descriptive and comparative nature which attempts to investigate the interpretation strategies applied to Culture-bound Terms by Tabriz professional interpreters. It mainly follows a descriptive method.

In order to accomplish this objective a comparative study was conducted to explore the most and least frequent strategies applied in interpreting Culture-bound Terms to see whether there is any difference between them. In addition, the researcher used Descriptive Translation Studies (DTS) as the framework of his study, since in this framework the attention is on the completed translations as elements in a large system where the systematic constraints dictate how speeches are interpreted.

III. CORPUS AND SAMPLES/ POPULATION AND SAMPLING

The chosen corpus of the study includes 50 English and 50 Farsi culture-bound terms. All the interpreters were academically educated, and taught different translation courses in universities at the time of conducting this study. Unanimously, all the interpreters were experienced in conference interpretation and simultaneous tasks.

The researcher selected 50 Farsi and 50 English terms and expressions and asked seven interpreters to interpret them in a defined time. Then each interpretation task was taped and transcribed. Finally, the interpretations were compared in terms of the applied strategies while dealing with culture-bound items.

Instruments

The research instruments for this study included a mixture of quantitative and qualitative data analysis. There were also interviews with seven Tabriz Professional Simultaneous Interpreters. This was all based on interpretation theories.

IV. DATA COLLECTION AND DATA ANALYSIS PROCEDURES

To achieve the purpose of this study the researcher followed a step-by-step procedure as follows:

First, Longman dictionary and the Moein Encyclopedia were partially studied in order to identify Culture-bound terms. Based on the framework of the study 100 terms (50 English terms and 50 Farsi terms) were selected from these dictionaries and then put in two forms namely, short paragraphs and individual sentences.

Then, a questionnaire was designed and spread to be filled out by seven professional interpreters from Tabriz in order to classify them and find out some of the factors that might be influential on their interpreting ability. This questionnaire contained various questions about the sex, age and the level of the education of the respondents.

In the third step, the sentences were interpreted by the interpreters simultaneously. Then all the speeches were recorded and transcripted in a notebook by the researcher. Afterwards, the corresponding equivalents of the original culture-bound terms were extracted and scrutinized.

Forth, culture-bound terms and their corresponding equivalents from different interpretations were compared and contrasted to elicit the strategies applied for their interpretation according to the model proposed by Kalina (1998) and Pedersen (2007).

Fifth, a table of specifications was provided for the Corpus that depicted the culture-bound terms and the strategy types used by the interpreters.

Finally, the overall frequencies of strategies were elicited to determine the most and least frequently used strategies by the interpreters.

V. DISCUSSION

This study used Kalina's (1998) and Pedersen's (2007) classification as the framework to analyze the interpretation strategies applied in rendering culture-bound items.

Cultural Item		
Strategies	**Mistakes**	**Omissions**
• Total equivalence: (equivalent translation or phonological reproduction) • Partial equivalence • Rephrasing (use of pronouns etc.) • Specification / expansion • Generalization	• Substitution • Incorrect phonological reproduction	

As mentioned in previous parts the researcher limited the study into culture-bound items. Some scholars have classified CSIs into a number of specified categories. In order to make the analysis more systematic, the study's interview questioner relies on Peter Newmark's categorization (1988) which groups cultural words into five categories:

1. Ecology (flora, fauna, winds, etc.)
2. Material culture (artifacts, food, clothes, houses and towns, transport)
3. Social culture (work and leisure)
4. Organizations, customs, activities, procedures, ideas (political, social, legal, religious or artistic)
5. Gestures and habits (p. 94-103).

Total Equivalence

The respondents provided an equivalent translation for the items, i.e. the cultural items were fully translated or transferred to the TT by conveying the complete original meanings. This tactic was applied by the interpreters in two main ways: first, through transcoding (Kalina, 1998, p. 118), i.e. by repeating full proper names correctly via using a standard translation or "official equivalent" of the items, which Pedersen (2007) describes as follows:

For there to be an Official Equivalent, some sort of official decision by people in authority over an extra- linguistic Culture-bound reference is needed […] (p. 4).

Secondly, by opting for a phonological reproduction (retention) of the items (when understandable by a Persian audience). According to Pedersen (2007), retention is the most ST-oriented strategy, as it allows an element in the SL to "enter" the TL.

The majority of the selected items have been interpreted by this strategy.

The examples from this category are as follows:

Ex.1: *Squeamish person* in English means:

Easily shocked or upset, or easily made to feel sick by seeing unpleasant things.

The same concept of this idiom may be expressed by different words in another language and these two concepts may be equivalent culturally, though not lexically.

For this word the interpreters have picked up the equivalents:

"آدم زود رنج"، "نازک نارنجی"، "آدم وسواس"، "زود چندشم میشه".

It is inferred that according to Kalina (1998) and Pedersen (2007), most of the interpreters have preferred to choose a total equivalence strategy for an existing idiom, because all them correctly used an official equivalent of the items.

Ex.2: *Drizzle* in English means:

Weather that is a combination of light and mist.

For this word the interpreters have picked up the equivalents:

"باران ملایم"، "بارش پراکنده"، "نم نم".

This word inter-bounds with ecology. According to Newmark (1988), Ecology items are referred to cultural words. It seems that according to Kalina and Pedersen most of the interpreters have preferred to choose a total equivalence to an exciting item.

Ex.3: *Korsi* in Persian means:

چهار پایه ای پهن ، کوتاه و چهارگوش که در زمستان در زیر آن منقل می گذارند و بر رویش لحاف اندازند و در زیر آن خود را گرم کنند.

("Korsi" is a stool under which a lighted brazier is placed over which a big quilt is spread. People put their lower part of their bodies under the quilt to be heated.)

Analysis show that Korsi has not been rendered. Maybe it is because of the existing cultural gap between Persian and English. For this word some interpreters have picked up the equivalents, "Korsi". Transference of the above word isn't informative enough in the TL. Therefore, they don't communicate with the TL audience. This word is inter-bound with Iranian material culture. Again, it seems that according to Kalina (1998) and Pedersen (2007) the interpreters have preferred to choose a total equivalence strategy to an exciting item.

Ex.4:

The problem, however, remains with the religious concepts which are not common between Islam and Christianity.

The word *"trinity"* is inter-bound with Christian religion. According to Longman dictionary (2006) , Trinity is one of the main doctrines of Christians, and, the union of father, son and Holy Spirit in one God.

According to Kalina (1998) and Pedersen (2007), in Persian the interpreters has picked up the equivalent, *تثلیث*, and therefore they preferred to choose Total equivalence strategy, because this equivalence conveying the complete original meaning.

Partial Equivalence

The respondents omitted one or more redundant elements without changing the meaning layers of the items (e.g. the shortened version of years). Some examples from this category are as follow.

Ex.5:

The Persian speakers say:

هر چی خاک اون مرحومه بقای عمر شما باشد.

In a Muslim society like Iran which is based on strong belief in life after. Therefore, Iranians do pray for the person died and ask God to forgive his/her sins, and wish happier life for her/his family. According to Kalina (1998) and Pedersen (2007), the interpreter has picked up the equivalent, *"You live longer",* and therefore they preferred to choose partial strategy, because they omitted one redundant element without changing the meaning contents of the cultural items; and of course this equivalent is informative enough in the TC.

Ex.6:

The word ائمه (علیه السلام) in Persian means:

A Muslim religious leader

When the Shia refer to Imam, they normally add "peace be upon him" ("'alayhis salām") after that. But the interpreters just used Imam as an equivalent for ائمه (علیه السلام). So according to Kalina (1998) and Pedersen (2007), they omitted one or more redundant elements and therefore they preferred to choose partial strategy.

Rephrasing

The participants obtained an equivalent translation by using pronouns and other semantic elements, or by changing the order of the elements in the TT (e.g. saying "him" instead of full name). No sample of this strategy could be found in this corpus.

Specification

The participants added some extra information that was not included in the original ST, further specifying the cultural items. This strategy is defined by Kalina (1998) as "Expansion" (p. 119). Some examples from this category are as follows;

Ex.7:

Korsi in Persian means:

چهار پایه ای پهن ، کوتاه و چهارگوش که در زمستان در زیر آن منقل می گذارند و بر رویش لحاف اندازند و در زیر آن خود را گرم کنند.

("Korsi" is a stool under which a lighted brazier is placed over which a big quilt is spread. People put their lower part of their bodies under the quilt to be heated.)

This word is inter-bound with Iranian material culture. For this word some interpreters have picked up the equivalents, *"Traditional oven named Korsii"*, *"A kind of coal stove heater named Korsi"*. Therefore, they added some extra information that is not present in SL, and made the culture-bound term more specific than SL. Using both transference and paraphrase provides the target readers with enough information and therefore interpreters will communicate appropriately with the target receiver.

It seems that according to Kalina (1998) and Pedersen (2007) the interpreters have preferred to choose a Specification strategy to an exciting item.

Ex.8:

The idiom: آب پشت مسافر می ریختند.

In Persian means:

آبی که پس از رفتن عزیزی به مسافرت پشت سر آن بر زمین می ریزند.

This is an inter-bound with Iranian culture and there is no equivalence in English and the interpreters used "they convoyed the passengers by splashing water when they left house." This job is not natural in the TC, therefore adding paraphrase to the transference will help the Target audience to have a coherent interpretation. So, according to Kalina and Pedersen, the interpreter has used Specification strategy.

Ex.9:

The word من تبریز which refers to the weighing scale in Tabriz, and is equal to 3 kg.

There is no equivalent for this scale in English, so most of the responding interpreters added some extra information that is not present in SL, and made the culture bound-term more specific than SL. They also used, *"Tabriz unit of weight, Man as weighing scale in Tabriz, Tabriz unit of weight"* as the equivalents for this culturally bound item. So, according to Kalina and Pedersens statements, the interpreters have used Specification strategy.

Generalization

This strategy means "replacing a cultural item referring to something specific by something more general". In other words, the respondents substituted a cultural item with a more general one.

Ex.10:

Problems with the religious concepts which are not common between Islam and Christianity are challenging for the interpreters to render into Persian and vice versa.

The word *"God as the Father"* is a title is given to God in modern monotheist religions, such as Christianity, Judaism and Bahai, in part he is viewed as having an active interest in human affairs, in the way that a father would take an interest in his children who are dependent on him.

In Persian some interpreters used خالق هستی , خداوند, as the equivalent for "God the Father".

So, according to Kalina's and Pedersen's statements, the interpreters have applied Generalization Strategy. Because they produced an equivalence in target language that is less specific than the SL item.

Ex.11:

Ham in English means:

The upper part of a pig's leg, or the meat from this that has been preserved with salt or smoke.

In Persian the interpreters used همبرگر ، فیله ، ژامبون as an equivalent for trinity. As it's obvious, the word substituted a cultural item with a more general one because the pig's meat in Islam is Haram (religiously forbidden), so the interpreters applied Kalina's (1998) and Pedersen's (2007) Generalization strategy.

Substitution

The interpreter removed the cultural item and substituted it with an incorrect one due to an error in comprehension or translation, thereby changing the connotative meanings conveyed by the ST.

In other words, this strategy involves removing the SL cultural item and replacing it with something else, either a different cultural item or some sort of paraphrase, which does not necessarily involve a cultural item. This is illustrated in these examples;

Ex.12:

The word *Bat Mitzvah* is an inter-bound term with the Jewish religious. Bat Mitzvah in Longman dictionary means: "a religious ceremony held when a Jewish girl reaches the age of 13 and is considered an adult in her religious."

In Persian some interpreters used خفاش میتزوا as equivalent for bat Mitzvah.

It seems that these interpreters substituted the word with an incorrect equivalent due to an error in understanding the meaning of this word. Therefore the SL cultural item is removed and replaced by a different one.

So, according to Kalina (1998) and Pedersen (2007), these interpreters have used a substitution strategy.

Ex. 13:

Redemption in English means:

The state of being freed from the power of evil, believed by Christian to be made possible by Jesus Christ.

This word is related to Christianity. Our analysis showed that an interpreter picked up تلاش as an equivalent for this word. So, it seems that this interpreter substituted the cultural item with an incorrect one which doesn't convey the

religious sense of the SL. Therefore, according to Kalina's and Pedersen's statements, the interpreter has used substitution strategy.

Incorrect Phonological Reproduction

Incorrect pronunciation of a name (where a completely different name was invented), thereby causing the loss of the relevant information and the transfer of different information to that originally provided.

No sample of this strategy could be found in this corpus.

Omissions

As Kalina (1998) points out, omissions can be either strategic or non-strategic. The former are a way for the interpreter to "filter" and carry out a selection of the essential elements of the SL, especially if some of them are redundant. The latter involves the loss of information. Since no strategic omission was identified in the TL representing the subject of this study, only non-strategic omissions have been examined (p. 120).

Ex.14:

The word *Advent* in Longman dictionary means: "the period of four weeks before Christian religion."

In Persian some interpreters haven't rendered this word. This might be because of the interpreter's lack of information about the source culture. So, according to Kalina (1998) and Pedersen (2007) the interpreter has used Omission strategy.

It seems that an interpreter may choose omission responsibly, after rejecting all strategies to save him/her the trouble of looking up something she/he does not know.

Discuusion

Extracting CSIs and their pertinent translation strategies by each interpreter, the number of the strategies used in translations are calculated and represented in the following table:

TABLE 4.1:
FREQUENCY OF INTERPRETATION STRATEGIES APPLIED BY INTERPRETERS

Strategy	Frequency of Strategies Used by Interpreter1	Frequency of Strategies Used by Interpreter 2	Frequency of Strategies Used by Interpreter 3	Frequency of Strategies Used by Interpreter4	Frequency of Strategies Used by Interpreter 5	Frequency of Strategies Used by Interpreter 6	Frequency of Strategies Used by Interpreter 7
Total Equivalence	42	48	44	51	44	41	42
Partial Equivalence	2	2	1	1	2	2	1
Rephrasing	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Specification	34	14	29	30	27	14	38
Generalization	13	20	17	13	20	10	11
Substitution	7	7	5	5	5	4	2
Incorrect Phonological Reproduction	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Omissions	2	9	4	0	2	29	6
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Below is dedicated to the analysis of the total strategies which are adopted by simultaneous interpreters by putting the numerical data in separate table and displaying them in a graph for more clear understanding.

TABLE 4.2:
PERCENTAGE OF INTERPRETATION STRATEGIES APPLIED BY INTERPRETERS

Strategy	Percentage of Strategies Used by Interpreter1	Percentage of Strategies Used by Interpreter 2	Percentage of Strategies Used by Interpreter 3	Percentage of Strategies Used by Interpreter4	Percentage of Strategies Used by Interpreter 5	Percentage of Strategies Used by Interpreter 6	Percentage of Strategies Used by Interpreter 7
Total Equivalence	42 %	48 %	44 %	51 %	44 %	41 %	42 %
Partial Equivalence	2 %	2 %	1 %	1 %	2 %	2 %	1 %
Rephrasing	0 %	0 %	0 %	0 %	0 %	0 %	0 %
Specification	34 %	14 %	29 %	30 %	27 %	14 %	38 %
Generalization	13 %	20 %	17 %	13 %	20 %	10 %	11 %
Substitution	7 %	7 %	5 %	5 %	5 %	4 %	2 %
Incorrect Phonological Reproduction	0 %	0 %	0 %	0 %	0 %	0 %	0 %
Omissions	2 %	9 %	4 %	0 %	2 %	29 %	6 %
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Among the strategies applied by simultaneous interpreters, the strategy of total equivalence has 312 frequency (44%), the strategy of Partial equivalence has 11 frequency (2%), the strategy of Rephrasing has 0 frequency (0%), the strategy of Generalization has 104 frequency (15%), the strategy of Substitution has 35 frequency (5%), the strategy of Incorrect phonological reproduction has 0 frequency (0%) and the strategy of omissions has 52 frequency (7%).

Among the whole strategies, the two strategies used in the rendering of culture-bound terms namely, total equivalence (312) and Specification (186) have the most frequencies.

Total equivalence and specification are two main strategies that were used in dealing with culture bound items; the main reason might be that the interpreters want to be closer to the culture of target audiences.

To arrive at a conclusion about the strategies applied by interpreters in dealing with a culture-bound item, a close study was done. Almost 50 English culture-bound terms and 50 Persian culture-bound terms were selected, scrutinized and compared carefully.

According to the tables presented in this part, the results mentioned in the below table were logical and expected. Rendering Culture-specific terms is so important, because rendering metalinguistic concepts of these terms can convey the role and customs to the audience's culture.

Therefore, the interpreters should bear in their mind that the concepts and meanings must be comprehensible for the target culture and audience.

TABLE 4.5:
FREQUENCY AND PERCENTAGE OF OVERALL TENDENCIES OF INTERPRETATION STRATEGIES APPLIED BY INTERPRETERS

Strategy	Frequency Of Strategies Used By Interpreters	Percentage of Strategies Used by Interpreters
Total Equivalence	312	44 %
Partial Equivalence	11	2 %
Rephrasing	0	0 %
Specification	186	27 %
Generalization	104	15 %
Substitution	35	5 %
Incorrect Phonological Reproduction	0	0 %
Omissions	52	7 %
Total	700	100 %

Analyzing the above table, it should be noticed that strategies "total equivalence" and "specification" are among the most frequently used ones in the simultaneous interpretation of cultural bound items.

The strategies, "Rephrasing", "Substitution" are used less than the other ones.

In other words, the above table proves that among all the usages of strategies proposed by Kalina and Pedersen, the interpreters in most cases used Total Equivalence and Specification strategies. These strategies were applied mostly in the cases in which the interpreters had considered the TL more than SL.

VI. CONCLUSION

The present study was an attempt to compare the frequency of the strategies applied to culture-bound terms by professional interpreters in Tabriz.

Content analysis of the study showed that the dominant strategies were total equivalence with 312 frequencies, Specification with 186 frequencies and Generalization with 104 frequencies.

Among the least frequent strategies were the Rephrasing with 0 frequency and Incorrect phonological reproduction with 0 frequency. The obtained results also answered the research questions. Most of the interpreters provided the target audience with extra information of the foreign culture, in other words they promote the foreign culture.

Most of the interpreters provided the target audience with extra information about the foreign culture and they promoted the foreign culture. The findings of this study approved that most of the interpreters have tendency towards TL and they mainly used the strategy that benefits most target audiences.

We figure out from the findings of the content analysis that there aren't too significant differences in the interpreters' strategies, because among the strategies, the total equivalence and specification were applied by most of the interpreters. So, it indicates that the interpreters attempt to transfer into the TL the complete original information and allow the elements in the SL enter the TL.

The lower frequency of rephrasing, incorrect phonological and higher percentage of total equivalence and specification indicate that the interpreters tried to find the exact equivalence and otherwise to add more information about those terms. And for religious, most of the interpreters preferred the religious notions to be replaced by Islamic ones or to be generalized. Using both transference and paraphrase provides the target audience with enough information in limited time and the problem with comprehension of culture-bound items will be solved. Therefore they will communicate appropriately with the target audiences.

In conclusion, by comparing and analyzing of strategies which applied by Tabriz Professional Simultaneous Interpreters in Dealing with Culture-bound Terms, the researcher found that the eligible interpretation is depends on interpreter's understandings of the cultural elements exist in the source language and the norms active either in source language or target language.

The findings of this study can help translation and interpretation students to recognize culture-bound terms and their importance in the texts and speeches.

This research also presents Kalina's (1998) and Pedersen's (2007) model for interpretation strategies as an appropriate model in investigating the impact of sociocultural constraints on interpretation.

Regarding the delimitations, this research would be conducted more effectively, reach more accurate results, and obtain applicable recommendations were it not restricted to the feedback of listeners only.

In other words, a more comprehensive approach to the research would include insights and reflections of what the interpreters tend to do when rendering idioms and culturally bound terms and expressions, as well as how they decide to choose one strategy over another.

It would also enhance the methodology if the research tested different interpretations of specific numbers of idioms and culture-bound expressions using different interpretation strategies to see which strategy is more effective and more acceptable.

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