

Cultural Discrepancies Encountered by Interpreters in International Conferences

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ABSTRACT

The present research focuses on the cultural challenges encountered by translators during interpretative translation at international conferences from English to Arabic. The main issue addressed in this study is the cultural differences faced by translators during the interpretative translation process between the English and Arabic languages in international conferences. The aim of this study include identifying the cultural differences experienced by translators in interpretative translation at international conferences, exploring strategies that can be utilized for interpretative translation, specifically in the context of international conferences, and proposing potential solutions to help translators bridge the cultural gap during the translation process in international conferences. The current study hypothesized that interpreters may encounter difficulties in capturing cultural differences during the translation of international conferences from English to Arabic. It is also posited that misunderstanding the cultural aspects of both languages can result in inappropriate translations. To accomplish this study, a theoretical background is presented, providing an overview of the topic. Additionally, the data analysis is discussed and examined based on the adopted model. The findings of this study reveal that some participants were unable to fully grasp the context and cultural differences in the source text. Consequently, they mistranslated cultural content from English to Arabic due to insufficient knowledge of the cultures involved and time constraints during the interpretation process from English to Arabic.

Keywords- Translation, Interpreting, Conference Interpreting, Culture.

I. INTRODUCTION

The essential problem of the current research is that the cultural differences encountered translators during the process of interpretative translation between the English and Arabic languages in international conference, i.e. lack of knowledge of another culture may cause confusion, misunderstanding or even offense during communication process and it also makes the conclusion of international or bilateral agreements difficult or impossible. To the extent that without communication there can be no negotiation,

communication is obviously integral to the success of the mission. The current study aims at investigating the strategies which can be applied in interpretative translation particularly in international conferences .It aims at determining the cultural differences faced by translators in interpretative translation in international conferences. Additionally, producing possible solutions to help translators in bridging the gap of the cultural differences in international conferences during the process of translation.

The current study is hypothesized that the interpreters sometimes find difficulty in capturing the

cultural differences in international conference when translating from English into Arabic. Hence, the failure in understanding the cultural aspects of both languages could lead translators to translate inappropriately. It is also hypothesized cultural differences between the source language (SL) and the target language (TL) will affect the process of translating.

The present study will be of a great value to translators in the field of translation. It is hoped that this study will prepare students, specialists in translation and researchers interested in translation studies with valuable theoretical and practical information about the interpretative translation in international conferences.

Eclectically speaking, two models are adopted in this thesis, the first one is Venuti (1992) along with his methods of translation namely domestication and foreignization. The second model the strategies of interpreting suggested by Al-Salman and Al-Khanji (2002), including transcoding, code-switching, and summarizing as well as Strategies of Interpreting by Jones, R. (2002).

1.1 Various Definitions of Translation

Newmark (1981:7) defines translation as it "is a craft consisting in the attempt to replace a written message and/ or statement in one language by the same message and/ or statement in another language". He also defines translation theory as "the body of knowledge that we have and still to have about the process of translating" (ibid: 19). Bassnet (2002: 2) postulates that "what is generally understood as translation involves the rendering of a SL text into the TL text so as to ensure that: The surface meaning of the two languages will approximately be similar; the structure of the SL will be preserved as closely as possible but not so closely that the TL structure will be seriously distorted".

According to Hatim and Munday (2004:3) that translation is an extremely wide concept that can be understood in numerous ways. For instance, one might refer to translation as a process or a result, and define forms such as literary translation, technical translation, subtitling, and machine translation; while the phrase often refers to the transfer of written texts, it can also encompass interpretation. Nida and Taber (1974:12) argue that translation is about finding the closest natural equivalent of the source text in the target text, both in terms of content and style. Nonetheless, translation is seen as a search for equivalent rather than sameness of meaning.

1.2 The Concept of Interpreting

According to Pchhacker and Shlesinger (2002: 3) that the concept of interpreting is not regarded as a novel activity. It dates back thousands of years, potentially to the end of the Pyramids' Period, when interpreters played an essential role in facilitating communication between Nubians and Egyptians. They state that improving communication is one of interpreting's primary duties and goals. Interpreting is therefore described as "interlingual, intercultural oral or

signed mediation, enabling communication between persons or groups who do not share or prefer not to use the same languages.

Since the turn of the century, interpreting has become an increasingly vital field. Prior to that time, interpreting was simply one of several areas of study within the field of translation. It wasn't until the 1990s that the field of study known as "Interpreting Studies" emerged with the goal of defining the phenomenon of interpretation and establishing guiding principles. Additionally, the paradigms from Translation Studies and other subjects, especially psychology and linguistics, have had a considerable impact on the development of the field of Interpreting Studies over the years. (ibid)

Research into the theoretical and practical aspects of interpreting is necessary since it now serves a wide variety of modern contexts, including courts, the medical field, businesses, and conferences. Research on interpreting can be approached from a variety of angles, including linguistics, semantics, syntax, psychology, and so on.(ibid)

According to Jones (2002: 3), a straightforward definition of interpreting is "immediate oral translation." But he agrees that such a description misses the mark when it comes to capturing the heart of what interpretation actually entails. Communication is at the heart of the idea of interpreting. Thus, an interpreter has difficulties beyond those posed by language barriers. Jones demonstrates that cultural issues "can manifest themselves both explicitly and implicitly." A cultural reference that has no direct equivalent in the target language is an example of an implicit representation, while knowing the speaker's intent and what is hidden behind the words, as in the case of irony, are examples of explicit representations. The interpreter, he says, must "constantly explain and clarify."(ibid:4)

1.3 Interpreting and Translation

Gile (1998: 40-5) argues that the most obvious differences between translation and interpreting stem from the fact that translators work with written texts and have time to "polish" their translations, whereas interpreters work with oral texts and are under severe time constraints, so there is no time to "polish" their interpretations. Translators must understand the laws of written language and be capable writers in the target language (TL). Interpreters must grasp the characteristics of oral language and be proficient speakers, especially the appropriate use of their voice and the "microphone personality." Any additional knowledge, like as terminological or global knowledge, can be learned during textual translation, but it must be acquired before SI. Interpreters must make decisions significantly more quickly than translation.

According to Christoffels and De Groot (2005: 456) there appears to be misunderstanding on the definition of interpreting. Most individuals consider translation and interpreting to be the same profession.

Indeed, interpreting and translation overlap, and despite their similarities, they are distinct professions.

1.4 Characteristics of Interpreters

According to Bls (2004) interpreters should examine the following significant points:

1. Roughly 22 percent of interpreters (and translators) are independent contractors.
2. Work is frequently intermittent, and many of these workers are part-time.
3. The fluency in at least two languages, many interpreters (and translators) are required to have a bachelor's degree. Furthermore, many complete job-specific training programs.
4. Occupational outlooks vary by specialty.

1.5 Conference Interpreting

According to Phelan (2001: 6), "conference interpreting is the most prominent form of interpreting and the most financially profitable." He verifies that the two main kinds of interpretation, consecutive and simultaneous, are relevant to conferences interpreting. The field of conference interpreting is still young, as stated by the International Association of Conference Interpreters (AIIC) in 2005. The extensive use of and interest in simultaneous interpretation did not start until the Nuremberg trials. (1945-1946)

The Nuremberg interpretations are evaluated in depth by Gaiba (1998). She was able to do so by consulting both official court documents and discussions with linguists. She gave particular attention to the implementation and consequences of simultaneous interpretation. After the United Nations was established and the need for simultaneous interpreting was further demonstrated, the Association of International Conference Interpreters (AIIC) was established in 1953. As of now, AIIC counts somewhere about 2500 members. AIIC was able to effectively control interpreters' working conditions and raise the profession's visibility internationally when it introduced a code of ethics and professional standards in 1957. It has also "played a substantial role in teaching and research on important topics in the profession" In light of this, (Pochhacker, 2004:29)

1.6 The Role of Interpreters in International Conferences

According to Angelelli (2000:15) the most common setting for simultaneous interpreting is international conferences, where individuals from many nations gather to discuss the most recent developments in highly specialized and group-specific topics. Only a small number of interpreters are adept at simultaneously translating, as it is a highly difficult technique. The speaker continues to speak without stopping or pausing.

He hasn't stopped talking. The translator, therefore, must do the following while the speaker is talking: listen to what the speaker is saying; mentally translate it; make the translation in his microphone; and simultaneously listen to what is being said while he is speaking himself.

Pochhacker (1992) argues that cultural mediation in simultaneous perception is often quite limited in both extent and efficacy. It's also important to keep in mind that the interpreter won't have enough time to do extensive reframing or cultural mediation between the source and target texts. There is a "period temporal limitation" for simultaneous interpretation, as emphasized by Gile (2001)

1.7 Culture and Interpreting

As stated by Newmark (2000: 94), culture is defined as "the way of life and its manifestations that are unique to a particular language-using community." Therefore, culture is a system of customs, beliefs, morals, law, religion, and behaviour." Regarding the relationship between culture and language, Faiq (2008) states, "language and culture are the two aspects of the same coin. Aziz (1982:25) illustrates this relationship as follows: "The meaning of a language's vocabulary is largely determined by its culture. Therefore, meaning is the fundamental relationship between culture and language; it is also the core of translation." Faiq (ibid.) believed that "the two fundamental components of translation and interpreting are culture and language" in terms of intercultural communication, which is conducted in part through the processes of translation and interpreting. In pursuit of translation and interpreting's primary goals, interpreters and translators frequently encounter cultural and linguistic obstacles. However, cultural obstacles are more difficult for them to overcome than linguistic ones. Newmark (2000, p. 94) states that "frequently where there is a cultural focus, there is a translation problem due to the cultural 'gap' or 'distance' between the source and target languages.

1.8 Interpreters as Cultural Mediators

According to Ktalan (2005:12) "a cultural mediator is a person who facilitates communication, understanding, and action between persons or groups who differ with respect to language and culture. The role of the mediator is performed by interpreting the expressions, intentions, perceptions, and expectations of each cultural group to the other, that is by establishing and balancing the communication between them. In order to serve as a link in this sense, the mediator must be able to participate to some extent in both cultures. Thus, a mediator must be to a certain extent bicultural.

According to Taft (1981, cited in Ktalan, 2005), a mediator must exhibit the following competences in both cultures:

1. Knowledge of society: history, folklore, traditions, and customs; values, prohibitions; the natural environment and its significance; neighbors, influential members of society, etc.
2. Communication skills: oral, written, and nonverbal.
3. Technical skills: those demanded by the mediator's position, such as computer literacy, proper attire, etc.
4. Social skills: awareness of the rules governing social relations in society and emotional competence, such as the acceptable level of self-control.

1.9 Cultural Differences Faced by Interpreters

Interpreting culture-specific concepts (CSCs) appears to be one of the most difficult duties for a translator; in other words, culture and intercultural awareness are significantly more complex than they may look to the interpreters. Bračaj (2015) asserts that the greater interpreter's awareness of the complexity of cultural variations, the better the interpreter will be. In this regard, words and phrases that are so rooted in one culture that they are nearly hard to translate into the language -verbal or otherwise- of another culture have traditionally been the main issue.

According to Bračaj (2015) "Long debates have been held over when to paraphrase, when to use the nearest equivalent, when to coin a new word by translating literally, and when transcribe. All these "untranslatable" cultural-bound words and phrases continued to fascinate translators and translation theorists".

Wiersema (2004) suggests that when translating cultural components, a translator and interpreter might choose between the following three approaches:

- 1- Using the foreign words without any illustrations.
- 2- Using the foreign words with excessive explanations.
- 3- Rewriting the texts in order to make it more understandable to the TL audience. Graedler (2000:3) suggested certain procedures for translating culture-specific words which are explained below:
 1. Creating a new word.
 2. Illustrating the meaning of the SL expressions then translating them.
 3. Keeping tact of the SL term.
 4. Choosing a word in the TL that sounds like the SL term or has the same relevance.

Harvey (2003:2-6) defined the culture-bound terms as the terms which "refer to concepts, institutions and personnel which are specific to the SL cultural expressions. He proposes four primary strategies for

1. Functional Equivalence: employing a referent that is functionally equivalent to the TL.

2. Formal Equivalence or linguistic equivalence: providing a word for word translation.

3. Creating a new word.

Let us take the following example of culture-specific expression:

Example (1) المهر او الصداق

It worthwhile to note that the closest common English equivalent of the above Arabic word is "dowry," which is a close enough translation. In contrast, a cross-cultural examination of this term reveals that in each culture it connotes distinct meanings.

On one hand, the term "dowry" in English culture refers to the monetary or material goods a bride brings to her new husband, whereas the term "mahr" or "muqaddam Sada:q" in Arabic culture refers to the monetary or material goods a groom brings to his bride. However, the concept of "delayed dowry" (or "muakhar

Sada:q") exists in Arabic culture and refers to money or property that the husband is obligated to pay to the wife in the event of a divorce, whereas in English culture, "dowry" refers to a life estate to which a wife is entitled upon the death of her husband.(ibid)

II. METHODOLOGY

The data of the study is taken from two political speeches, the first one is the inaugural speech delivered on Friday, January 20, 2017 by former U.S. President Donald Trump on the West Front of the United States Capitol Building in Washington, D.C. and the second one is delivered by President Barack Obama of the United States, on June 4th, 2009 in the city of Cairo, Egypt.

The analysis of selected political speech of Trump is based on three interpretations provided by three independent interpretations by Arab interpreters working for three existent Arabic TV channels, Al-Jazeera, RT channel, and France 24 Arabic. While the analysis of selected political speech of Obama is also based on three interpretations provided by three independent interpretations by Arab interpreters working for three existent Arabic TV channels, Al-Jazeera, Al-Masriya TV, and Al-Arabiya TV. The audio tape was transcribed and examined so that the interpreters' techniques could be determined. This analysis focuses on how the interpreters handled the selected interpretation segments.

SL interpreting unit no. (1)

"An education system **flush with cash**, but which leaves our young and beautiful students deprived of all knowledge, and the crime, and the gangs, and the drugs that have stolen too many lives and robbed our country of so much unrealized potential. This American carnage stops right here and stops right now."

"<https://www.politico.com/story/2017/01/full-text-donald-trump-inauguration-speech-transcript-233907>"

Retrieved on January 20, 2017

TL interpreting units:

1. First interpreter (Aljazeera channel)

إن نظام التعليم لديه الكثير من المال ولكنه يترك لمعرفة إما الجريمة والعصابات والمخدرات التي سرقت الكثير من الحيات وسرقت بلادنا هذه المذبحة الأمريكية كما صح التعبير يجب أن نتقنها ويجب أن نتقف اليوم الآن

2. Second interpreter (RT channel)

نظام التعليم لدينا مليء بالأموال ولكن ليس هناك من علم في تلاميذنا أيضاً الجريمة هناك العصابات والمخدرات التي سلبت كثير من الأرواح وتمزق بلدنا وهذه مخاطر جمة هذا يجب أن يتوقف حالياً ويتوقف حالياً هنا

3. Third interpreter (24 France channel)

ومنظومتنا التربوية مملوءة بالنفود ولكن أبنائنا الشباب حرموا في هذه المدارس من المعارف ونسبة الجرائم والعصابات والمخدرات التي سرقت ودمرت الكثير من حياة الأشخاص ودمرت بلدنا ونخرت في إمكاناتنا العظيمة إن هذه المجزرة الأمريكية تتوقف الآن وتتوقف في هذه اللحظة

Translation Analysis:

It is important to note that the SL text has an idiomatic expression "flush with cash" which goes beyond the literal meaning as well as falls within the group of culture specific concepts. According to the online Cambridge English Dictionary, this idiom means having a lot of money. The subjects no. (1, 2 3) were able to translate this culture-specific concept and conveyed the intended meaning of this idiom. Moreover, all subjects have followed the method of domestication

and successfully applied the strategy of summarizing because interpreters of the channels utilized this strategy to describe what is ambiguous because the source text's speaker may convey his opinions indirectly or incoherently. The subjects rendered the in-depth meaning of the English idiomatic expression in Arabic and conveyed the same cultural effect.

Minute details are illustrated the strategies of interpreting in the following table:

Table 1: Frequency of Strategies of Interpreting

Strategies of Interpreting	INT.1	INT.2	INT.3	Total
Transcoding				
Omission				
Skipping				
Addition				
Reformulation				
Approximation				
Code switching				
Simplification				
Generalization				
Summarizing	1	1	1	3
Incomplete sentence strategy				
Anticipation				

Minute details are illustrated the methods of translation in the following table:

Table 1: Frequency of Methods of Translation

Strategies of Translation	INT.1	INT.2	INT.3	Total
Domestication	1	1	1	3
Foreignization				

SL interpreting unit no. (2)

"The Holy Koran teaches that whoever kills an innocent is as it is as if he has killed all mankind"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Lw6hxogL9Qw>

Retrieved on January 4, 2009

TL interpreting units:

1. First interpreter (Aljazeera channel)

القرآن يعلمنا ان من يقتل نفس بغير نفس فكأنما قتل الناس جميعا

2. Third interpreter (Al-Arabiya TV)

القرآن الكريم يقول لنا أن كل من يقتل بريء فإنه كما لو يقتل كافة البشرية

3. Second interpreter (Al-Masriya TV)

لقد جاء في القرآن الكريم أن من قتل نفس بغير نفس أو فساد في الارض فكأنما قتل الناس جميعا

Translation Analysis:

It can be noted that the first and second subjects resorted to the method of foreignization and they translated the whole interpreting unit literally and did not convey the same cultural equivalence. They applied the strategy of transcoding due to lack of religious context and time constraints during the process of interpreting.

As for the third subject, he resorted to the method of domestication because they domesticated the source text and coloured it with cultural equivalence. He applied the strategy of reformulation due to his ability and professionalism in translating such a religious text into Arabic accurately and successfully. His translation opted to the target culture.

Minute details are illustrated the strategies of interpreting in the following table:

Table 2: Frequency of Strategies of Interpreting

Strategies of Interpreting	INT.1	INT.2	INT.3	Total
Transcoding	1	1		2
Omission				

Skipping				
Addition				
Reformulation			1	1
Approximation				
Code switching				
Simplification				
Generalization				
Summarizing				
Incomplete sentence strategy				
Anticipation				

Minute details are illustrated the methods of translation in the following table:

Table 2: Frequency of Methods of Translation

Strategies of Translation	INT.1	INT.2	INT.3	Total
Domestication			1	1
Foreignization	1	1		2

III. CONCLUSIONS

In light of what was mentioned above, the following conclusions can be drawn:

1. The cultural differences significantly impact interpretive translation in international conferences. Some translators face challenges of accurately conveying the speaker's intended meaning while considering cultural contexts.
2. The strategies of interpreting by Al-Salman and Al-Khanji (2002) as well as strategies of interpreting by Jones, R. (2002) can be applied successfully in the process of interpreting of cultural texts from English into Arabic.
3. Domestication and foreignization are two translation methods that played important roles in interpreting cultural differences when translating from English to Arabic. These methods are successfully utilized in the data analysis in determining the intended meaning and literal meaning behind the process of translating the cultural texts from English into Arabic.
4. It can be noticed that some of the subjects of the study were unable to grasp the context and the cultural differences in the source text which led them to mistranslate the cultural texts from English to Arabic due to lack of sound knowledge of cultures and the time constraints during the process of interpreting from English into Arabic.

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