**Islamic Azad University**
**Central Tehran Branch**
**Faculty of foreign Languages**

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements of the Degree of Master of Arts in Translation Studies

# A STUDY OF STRATEGIES USED FOR RENDERING CULTURE-BOUND ELEMENTS IN CONFERENCE INTERPRETING

Advisor:

**K. Akef Ph.D**

Reader:

**F. Farahzad Ph.D**

By:

**Shima Asadi**

**Winter 2013**

# In the Name of God

To My Beloved Family

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This study would not have been possible without the support of many people. First and foremost, I would like to express my gratitude to my dear advisor, Dr. Kourosh Akef, for his endless affection and his ability to comment insightfully on almost every aspect of this work. His ongoing support for the project right from the beginning has been invaluable.

Special thanks are also due to my dear reader, Dr. Farzaneh Farahzad, who gave generously of her time and expertise in reading and commenting on content and style of this study. She also gave her backing to this study when it was still a proposal.

Besides, I would like to express my sincere appreciation to my referee, Dr. Masoud Motahari, for acknowledging this study and providing valuable comments and suggestions that benefit this thesis.

I also thank Dr. Franz PÖchhacker for the welcome feedback he provided on conducting this research and also his enthusiastic guidelines.

I am grateful to my dearest friend, Dr. Zahra Bahremand, who helped me as a rater throughout the data analysis.

My thanks go to all those institutions and conference interpreters who assisted me with the collection of the data. Moreover, I have been fortunate to have several friends to give me detailed suggestions on how to improve this thesis.I wish to avail myself of this opportunity to thank them all for the contributions they have made.

I would also like to take immense pleasure in thanking the true love of my life, my dear husband, for his endless love and understanding during the completion of this work. His encouragement, patience and support in every decision I took, made my path easier on the course of victory.

Last but not least, I am deeply indebted to my beloved parents, for their faith in me and allowing me to realize my own potential and to be as ambitious as I wanted. All the support they have provided me over the years was the greatest gift anyone has ever given me. I am grateful to them from the bottom of my heart for giving me the opportunity to live, to learn, to love, and to be loved. I will always appreciate their patience, dedication, inspirations, understanding and consistent support throughout my life. Not to forget my lovely elder brother, I also thank him for his understanding during the academic years.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS** III

**TABLE OF CONTENTS** IV

**LIST OF TABLES** IX

**LIST OF FIGURES** XI

**ABSTRACT** XII

**CHAPTER I: Background and Purpose** 2

- 1.1. Statement of the Problem 5
- 1.2. Research Questions 7
- 1.3. Definition of Key Terms 8
  - 1.3.1. Interpreting 8
  - 1.3.2. Conference Interpreting 8
  - 1.3.3. Conference Interpreter 8
  - 1.3.4. Simultaneous Interpretation 9
  - 1.3.5. Culture-Bound Elements 9
- 1.4. Limitations of the Study 10
- 1.5. Delimitations of the Study 11
- 1.6. Significance of the Study 12

**CHAPTER II: Review of the Related Literature** 15

- 2.1. Introducing Interpreting 16
  - 2.1.1. Roots of ‘Interpreting’ 16
  - 2.1.2. The history of Interpreting Studies 16
  - 2.1.3. Interpreting as Process 18
  - 2.1.4. Types of Interpreting 20
    - 2.1.4.1. Conference Interpreting 20
    - 2.1.4.2. Legal and Court Interpreting 21
    - 2.1.4.3. Focus Group (Marketing) Interpreting 21
    - 2.1.4.4. Escort Interpreting 22
    - 2.1.4.5. Public Sector Interpreting 22
    - 2.1.4.6. Medical Interpreting 22
    - 2.1.4.7. Sign Language Interpreting 22

2.1.4.8. Media Interpreting 23
2.1.5. Modes of Interpreting 23
2.1.5.1. Simultaneous Interpreting 23
2.1.5.2. Consecutive Interpreting 23
2.1.5.3. Whispered Interpreting or Whispering 24
2.1.5.4. Relay Interpreting 24
2.1.5.5. Liaison Interpreting 24

2.2. A Bridge to Translation and Culture 25
2.2.1. Disciplinary Perspectives in Interpreting Studies 25
2.2.1.1. Psycho/linguistic Approaches 25
2.2.1.2. Socio/cultural Approaches in Interpreting 26
2.2.1.3. Interpreting in Translation Studies 26
2.2.2. The Differences Between Interpreting and Translation 27
2.2.3. Culture and Culture-Bound Elements in Translation Studies 29
2.2.3.1. Peter Newmark 31
2.2.3.2. Han-Josef Vermeer 31
2.2.3.3. Mary Snell-Hornby 32
2.2.3.4. Eugene Albert Nida 32
2.2.3.5. Natasa Pavlovic 33
2.2.3.6. C. Thriveni 34
2.2.3.7. Mildred Larson 34
43

2.2.1. Translation Strategies for Rendering Culture-Bound Elements in Translation Studies 34
2.2.1.1. Piotr Kwiecinski 35
2.2.1.2. Jean-Paul Vinay and Jean Darbelnet 35
2.2.1.3. Peter Newmark 35
2.2.1.4. Mona Baker 37
2.2.1.5. Javier Franco Aixela 38
2.2.1.6. Dobrynska 39
2.2.1.7. Sandor Hervey 40
2.2.1.8. Piyasuda Wongsawang 40
2.2.1.9. Ritva Leppihalme 40

2.3. A Journey into Language and Culture in Interpreting 43
2.3.1. Culture and Culture-Bound Elements in Interpreting Studies 44
2.3.1.1. Geert Hofstede 45
2.3.1.2. Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner 46
2.3.1.3. Edward T. Hall 46
2.3.1.4. David Katan 47
2.3.2. Communication 48

2.3.3. The Role of Cultural Elements in Communication 52
2.3.4. Cultural Awareness 56
2.3.5. Conference Interpreting vs. Community Interpreting 59
2.3.6. The Role of Interpreters 60
2.3.7. Interpreting Strategies for Rendering Culture-Bound Elements 66
2.3.7.1. David Snelling 66
2.3.7.2. Ronald Taft 67
2.3.7.3. Chelly V. Chernov 69
2.3.7.4. Jean Herbert, Helle Dam and Sergio Viaggio 69
2.3.7.5. Marianna Sunnari 69
2.3.7.6. Kurt Kohn and Sylvia Kalina 70
2.3.7.7. Henry C. Barik 70
2.3.7.8. Jan Pedersen 74
2.3.7.9. Franz Pöchhacker 79
2.3.8. Norms in Interpreting 80

2.4. Training Conference Interpreters 85

**CHAPTER III: Methodology 88**

3.1. Type of Research 90

3.2. Corpus of the Study 90

3.2.1. Corpus Type 90

3.2.2. Elements 90

3.2.3. Size of the Corpus 90

3.3. Theoretical Framework 93

3.3.1. The Model for Categorization of CBRs 93

3.3.2. The Model for Strategies of CBRs 95

3.4. Unit of Analysis 96

3.5. Procedures 97

3.5.1. Data Collection and Recordings 97

3.5.1.1. Situation of Data Collection 97

3.5.2. Data Classification 98

3.5.3. Data Processing and Analysis 99

**CHAPTER IV: Results and Discussion 102**

4.1. Data Analysis 104

4.1.1. Types of Extralinguistic Culture-Bound References 106

4.1.1.1. Person Names 106

4.1.1.2. Titles 110

4.1.1.3. Places 115

4.1.1.4. Institutions 118

4.1.2. Types of Intralinguistic Culture-Bound References 121

4.1.2.1. Acronyms 121

4.1.2.2. Rhetorical Devices 123

4.1.2.3. Religious Terms 133

4.1.3. Research Findings 138

4.2. Results of Culture-Bound Elements and Adopted Strategies 144

4.2.1. Frequency and Percentage of Extralinguistic CBEs along with Adopted Strategies 144

4.2.2. Frequency and Percentage of Intralinguistic CBEs Along with Adopted Strategies 147

4.2.3. Frequency and Percentage of Culture-Bound Elements Along with Adopted Supplementary Strategies 149

4.2.4. Overall Results of Culture-Bound Elements 153

4.3. Discussion of Culture-Bound Elements 155

**CHAPTER V: Conclusion, Implication, Suggestions 162**

5.1. Conclusions 164

5.2. Pedagogical Implications 167

5.3. Suggestions for Further Research 168

**REFERENCES 171**

**APPENDICES 180**

**Appendix A: List of Data Tables 181**

**Appendix B: List of International Conferences in 2010 207**

# LIST OF TABLES

**CHAPTER III** Page

Table 3.1 List of Seven International Conferences held in Iran in 2010 92

**CHAPTER IV**

Table 4.1.1.1 Person Names and Adopted Extralinguistic Culture-Bound Reference Strategies 106

Table 4.1.1.2 Titles and Adopted Extralinguistic Culture-Bound Reference Strategies 110

Table 4.1.1.3 Places and Adopted Extralinguistic Culture-Bound Reference Strategies 115

Table 4.1.1.4 Institutions and Adopted Extralinguistic Culture-Bound Element Strategies 118

Table 4.1.2.1 Acronyms and Adopted Intralinguistic Culture-Bound Reference strategies 121

Table 4.1.2.2 Rhetorical Devices and Adopted Intralinguistic Culture-Bound Reference Strategies 123

Table 4.1.2.3 Religious Terms and Adopted Intralinguistic Culture-Bound Reference Strategies 133

Table 4.1.3.1 Culture-Bound References Along with Supplementary Strategies 138

Table 4.2.1.1 Frequency and Percentage of Extralinguistic Culture-Bound Elements 144

Table 4.2.1.2 Frequency and Percentage of Rendition Strategies Used for Extralinguistic Culture-Bound Elements 145

Table 4.2.2.1 Frequency and Percentage of Intralinguistic Culture-Bound Elements 147
Table 4.2.2.2 Frequency and Percentage of Rendition Strategies Used for Intralinguistic Culture-Bound Elements 148
Table 4.2.3.1 Frequency and Percentage of Culture-Bound References with Supplementary Strategies 150
Table 4.2.3.2 Frequency and Percentage of Supplementary Strategies 151
Table 4.2.4.1 Percentage of Culture-Bound Element Strategies 154

# LIST OF FIGURES

**CHAPTER II** Page

Figure 2.1 The Onion Model of Culture 45

Figure 2.2 Iceberg Model of Culture 47

Figure 2.3 How intercultural Noise Poses Communication Barriers 51

Figure 2.4 Interpreter Roles 64

Figure 2.5 Taxonomy of ECR Transfer Strategies 75

**CHAPTER III**

Figure 3.1 Taxonomy of Types of Culture-Bound References 94

Figure 3.2 Taxonomy of CBR Transfer Strategies 96

**CHAPTER IV**

Figure 4.1 Frequency and Percentage of Supplementary Strategies 152

Figure 4.2 Total Percentage of CBE Strategies 153

# ABSTRACT

A major issue in interpreting studies is how to deal with Culture-Bound Elements (CBEs) with regard to different target-language cultures. Based on a substantial corpus (approx. 720 minutes) of seven international conferences, this study was designed to observe problem-solving strategies used for rendering different Culture-Bound References from Persian into English language through an observational descriptive analysis.

The findings indicated that simultaneous interpreters employed retention, omission, direct translation and substitution both for intralinguistic and extralinguistic CBEs respectively. However, they were more inclined to generalize intralinguistic CBEs compared with extralinguistic CBEs which were often specified. Moreover, in some cases a combination of the aforementioned strategies were adopted. In sum, conference interpreters generally resorted to source-language oriented strategies when dealing with the rendition of culture-bound elements.

# CHAPTER I

# BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

# CHAPTER I

## Background and Purpose

The history of practice on interpreting does not leave any tangible trace. However, it is noted that pioneering attempts to gather available sources on interpreting were made in the mid-1950s by significant works of German and French scholars. Later on, historian purviews on interpreting studies were extended by adopting less Eurocentric perspective, including Asian and African civilizations. Other intensive studies focused on developments in the twentieth century which led to the emergence of interpreting as a recognized profession closely associated with international conferencing (Pöchhacker, 2004, pp. 159-162).

Considering the important aspects of professionalization which are the founding of profession organizations of interpreters such as the International Association of Conference Interpreters (AIIC) and the US Registry of Interpreters for Deaf (RID) and also the establishment of interpreters training programs throughout the world, it is significant to mention that the most in-depth study on the history of conference interpreting has been conducted in the late 1990s by Jesús Baigorri Jalón, a UN staff interpreter with an academic background in history. He also reconstructed the origins of simultaneous interpreting, known as a mode of interpreting in conference settings, which led up to the Nuremberg Trials (ibid).

In the 21st century, however, links between research and the profession are becoming stronger and the researchers' attention have been directed to cultural aspects of interpreting due to the growing importance of conference interpreting and other types of interpreting such as community interpreting, court interpreting, media interpreting and so on in face to face communication (Garzone & Viezzi, 2002, p. 11).

In fact, interpreting has been defined as a communicative process linking different cultural systems. The interpreters' role thus is to render the original speech 'functional' for the target cultural audience in keeping with the 'purpose' of the communicative event (Pöchhacker, 2007, p. 126). So, the interpreter may need to have an active role through changing the original speech, adding explanations or omitting certain parts and acting as a "cultural mediator" rather than a neutral or invisible agent (Kondo & Tebble, 1997). Katan (2004, p. 17) includes Taft's definition of "cultural mediator" in his book:

> "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.”

With regard to the above definition, it is the interpreters’ task to have sound background knowledge about the cultures they are mediating for- including customs, behavior, patterns, geography, history and even popular culture (Katan, 2004, pp. 11, 12).

However, it is believed that having a complete knowledge about different cultures, is not often considered as a feasible and practical issue. In such a case, cultural mediators may get caught in the crossfire of cultural barriers. These cultural difficulties -as noted by many interpreting or translation scholars- have been, without a shadow of doubt, arisen from culture-bound references (CBRs) which are specific to every cultural system.

As Pöchhacker (2007, p. 132) states these CBRs could be related to either ‘extralinguistic’ phenomena, i.e. to ‘realia’ such as persons, places, institutions and programs or ‘intralinguistic’ phenomena including economic jargon, campaign buzzwords and idiomatic phrases. Dealing with CBRs will thus force the interpreters to come up with some strategies in order to overcome cultural barriers. According to Pedersen (2005), the strategies applied for rendering Extralinguistic Culture-Bound References

(ECRs) are either source language (SL) oriented such as retention, specification, direct translation or target language (TL) oriented including generalization, substitution and omission.

In this study, however, regarded as one of the first corpus-based analyses of culture-bound elements in (simultaneous) conference interpreting, an attempt was made to investigate the strategies used for rendering culture-bound elements by professional interpreters relying on a unidirectional corpus (i.e. Persian into English) collected from seven live international conference settings. The theoretical framework is also based on Pedersen’s (2005) classification of rendition strategies applied for extralinguistic culture-bound references.

## 1.1. Statement of the Problem

Recently, the growing importance of different types of interpreting in face-to-face communication has directed researchers’ attention to cultural aspects of interpreting. As Pöchhacker (2004) asserts culture affects the way people think, act and interact.

However, regarding the fact that ‘culture’ differs from one society to another, it would be possible to consider culture as “a filter which restricts the way we perceive, what we see, hear, or feel” (Kondo & Tebble, 1997, p. 152). As Reeves (1994) points out:

“In interpreting, as well as in communication in general, transmission of messages has a chance to succeed if the receiver shares that cultural and

> social knowledge. If not, the utterance does not make sense to the receivers as it does not correspond to any reality they had experienced."

In line with the statements above, culture brings its own problems for the target culture audiences. According to a number of scholars and theorists in the field of translation and interpreting, cultural difficulties appear in the form of culture-bound references which are different in every cultural system. In this case, the interpreter needs to make adjustments to 'smooth over cultural differences'. In other words, s/he serves as a cultural mediator' (Kondo & Tebble, 1997, p. 158) in order to overcome cultural barriers which are manifested in the form of culture-bound elements. Hence, the challenging task of rendering culture-bound items accompanied by using some strategies should be taken as serious by interpreters.

In this study which highlights the inseparable relationship between interpreting and culture of both source language and target language, the researcher focused her attention on exploring different types of culture-bound references in order to elicit culture-bound elements and also identifying the strategies which conference interpreters use when dealing with rendering such items.

It is also of great importance to mention that the strategies applied for rendering both intralinguistic and extralinguistic culture-bound references are based on Pedersen's rendition model (2005) of ECRs hoping that these strategies shed some light on the areas of cultural concern. Besides, the model used for identifying types of culture-bound references was inspired by Leppihalme's (1996) studies of 'allusion' and Pöchhacker's (2007) work on 'culture in media interpreting' including both intralinguistic and extralinguistic culture-bound references.

The domain of this study has also been selected from the conferences within international projects with simultaneous interpretation as there are almost no observational studies in Iran which concern rendering culture-bound elements in simultaneous conference interpreting.

## 1.2. Research Questions

This study is designed to provide answers to the following questions:

1. To what extent the strategies of Pedersen's model (2005) have been used for rendering Extralinguistic Culture-Bound References (ECRs) by professional interpreters in simultaneous conference interpreting from Persian into English?
2. To what extent the strategies of Pedersen's model (2005) have been used for rendering Intralinguistic Culture-Bound References (ICRs) by professional interpreters in simultaneous conference interpreting from Persian into English?

## 1.3. Definition of Key Terms

**1.3.1. Interpreting:** Pöchhacker (2004, p. 11) defines interpreting as a “form of translation in which a first and final rendition in another language is produced on the basis of a one-time presentation of an utterance in a source language.”

**1.3.2. Conference Interpreting:** Conference interpreting is the interpretation of a conference, either simultaneously or consecutively. It is divided between two markets: the international institutions and local private markets. The former, holding multi-lingual meetings, often favors interpreting several foreign languages to the interpreters' mother tongues. The latter, however, tends to bilingual meetings and the interpreters work both into and out of their mother tongues; The International Association of Conference Interpreters (AIIC) Founded in 1953 is the only worldwide association of conference interpreters (Pöchhacker, 2004).

**1.3.3. Conference Interpreter:** According to the definition of AIIC, a conference interpreter renders verbally the statements spoken in one language in another language at a formal or informal meeting or in a conference-like situation. Professional conference interpretation may be consecutive or simultaneous regardless of the length and/or complexity of the original statement.