



Relationship between Cultural Intelligence and Translation of Culture-Bound Texts

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Abstract

Cultural intelligence is supposed to be influential to the development of intercultural competence as individuals with a higher cultural intelligence can more easily navigate and understand unfamiliar cultures and adjust their behaviors to perform effectively in culturally diverse situations (Earley & Ang, 2003; Earley & Mosakowski, 2004; Rosen et al., 2000). Development of intercultural competence for translators, in turn, is of significance value because in translation not only two languages but also two cultures invariably come into contact. In this sense, then, translation is a form of intercultural communication (House, 2015). To investigate the relationship between cultural intelligence and quality of translation of culture-bound texts, the current study was conducted over 88 Iranian postgraduate students of English translation at universities in Britain. The Cultural Intelligence Scale (CQS), developed by Ang et al. (2007), was adopted to evaluate participants' level of cultural intelligence. The article from The Observer featuring a significant number of British cultural references used in the studies by Olk (2003) and Elyildirim (2008) was also used to evaluate participants' ability to translate culture-bound texts. The analysis of spearman rank order correlation (ρ) revealed a significant positive relationship between cultural intelligence and quality of translation of culture-bound texts. The pedagogical implications of the findings suggested incorporating cultural components of source language community into every translation course.

Keywords: cultural intelligence, intercultural competence, translation quality

INTRODUCTION

Cultural intelligence, defined as an individual's capability to function and manage effectively in culturally diverse settings (Earley & Ang, 2003), was first introduced by Earley and Ang (2003). Cultural intelligence is composed of four dimensions: metacognitive, cognitive, motivational, and behavioral. Metacognitive cultural intelligence refers to the mental processes that people apply to learn about and understand other people's cultures. Cognitive cultural intelligence refers to the knowledge of norms, practices, and conventions in various cultures obtained through education and personal experiences. Motivational cultural intelligence refers to the

ability to direct attention and energy toward learning about and functioning in situations which are characterized by cultural differences. Finally, behavioral cultural intelligence refers to the ability to show appropriate verbal and nonverbal actions in interaction with people from different cultures. People who possess high metacognitive cultural intelligence are consciously aware of other people's cultural preferences and adjust their mental models during interactions with them. People who possess high cognitive cultural intelligence are able to understand the similarities and differences across cultures. People who possess high motivational cultural intelligence are able to direct attention and energy toward intercultural situations based on intrinsic interest and confidence in their intercultural effectiveness. Finally, people who possess high behavioral cultural intelligence show situationally appropriate behaviors based on their wide range of verbal and nonverbal abilities, such as exhibiting culturally appropriate words, tone, gestures, and facial expressions (Ang et al., 2007).

Cultural intelligence is supposed to be influential to the development of intercultural competence, defined as a "complex of abilities needed to perform effectively and appropriately when interacting with others who are linguistically and culturally different from oneself" (Fantini 2006: 12), as individuals with a higher cultural intelligence can more easily navigate and understand unfamiliar cultures and adjust their behaviors to perform effectively in culturally diverse situations (Earley & Ang, 2003; Earley & Mosakowski, 2004; Rosen et al., 2000). Past research also supports the use of soft skills such as cultural intelligence to help people adapt to the cultural values and norms of the source country and to better understand intercultural interactions (Ang et al., 2007; Bhaskar-Shrinivas et al., 2005; Earley, 2002; Templer et al., 2006). In fact, people with high cultural intelligence are more familiar with the distinctions of intercultural interactions so that they naturally know how to behave in order not to cause any intercultural mistakes and to facilitate positive reactions (Thomas & Inkson, 2005). Development of intercultural competence for translators, in turn, is of significant value because in translation not only two languages but also two cultures invariably come into contact. In this sense, then, translation is a form of intercultural communication. Over and above recognizing the importance of the two larger macro-cultural frameworks, however, the translator must of course also consider the more immediate 'context of situation' (House, 2015). The transference from the source language to the target language without intercultural competence involvement, consequently, results in strange sentences which are although grammatically structured but cannot be considered suitable (Lado, 1957).

In fact, the significance of cultural knowledge in translation of culture-bound texts has been investigated by a number of scholars in the field. In one of these studies, Boers and Demescheleer (2001) tried to measure the impact of cross-cultural differences on language learners' interpretation of imageable idioms. The experiment was carried out with the participation of 78 French-speaking students at the Universite Libre de Bruxelles. They were asked to guess the meaning of 12 idioms, which had been rated as having an intermediate level of semantic transparency, without any contextual clues. The results showed that the majority of participants failed to guess the meaning of the

imageable idioms. In another study, Olk (2003) examined the extent to which knowledge of British culture affects the translation performance of German degree-level students of English. In the study, 19 German degree-level students of English at a German university were asked to translate an English article from *The Observer* featuring a significant number of British cultural references. To gain deeper insight into potential knowledge problems, the students were instructed to think aloud while translating. Directly after the think-aloud translation, all participants were additionally questioned about their approach to translating individual cultural references in the task. Findings of the study suggested that 57 percent of the cultural references identified by the researcher did not seem to involve any knowledge problems, 35 percent were identified as overt knowledge problems, while the remaining 8 percent constituted covert knowledge problems. In a partial replication of the study by Olk (2003), Elyildirim (2008) conducted a study over 50 English major students at a university in Turkey. The participants were asked to translate the same newspaper article which was given to German students by Olk (2003). However, since the number of the students taking part in the study was nearly three times bigger than the number of the students taking part in Olk's (2003) study, the students were not instructed to think aloud and only a small number of all participants were questioned about the strategies they used to translate the target items. The results showed that not only the cultural references causing difficulty to German students were not comprehended by Turkish students either but also the comprehension problems were bigger for Turkish students. Most recently, Rafieyan (in press b) investigated the effect of cultural distance from the source language culture on the quality of translation of culture-bound texts. The study consisted of two groups of participants: a group of German undergraduates of English translation considered culturally close to Britons as source language community and a group of South Korean undergraduates of English translation considered culturally distant from Britons. Data were collected through a text containing some excerpts of news from The British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC). The study revealed that translation students who had less cultural distance from the source language culture, sharing more cultural knowledge with source language community, presented their translation at a higher level of quality.

The studies conducted so far have merely investigated the role of intercultural competence in the quality of translation of source language cultural references with no reference to the significant role which participants' level of cultural intelligence can play in developing this intercultural competence. Therefore, considering the significance of developing intercultural competence to enable translators to translate culture-bound texts optimally for the target language readers on one hand and the significance of cultural intelligence to enable translators to quickly grasp knowledge of cultural features of the source language community and develop their intercultural competence on the other hand, the current study seeks to investigate the relationship between translation students' level of cultural intelligence and the quality of their translation of culture-bound texts. In this respect, the research question to be addressed in the current study is:

- Is there any relationship between level of cultural intelligence and quality of translation of culture-bound texts?

Accordingly the null hypothesis is:

- There is no relationship between level of cultural intelligence and quality of translation of culture-bound texts.

METHODOLOGY

Participants

Participants of the study were 88 Iranian postgraduate students of English translation at universities in Britain. They were all at the second semester of their studies. The participants were supposed to have a good command of English translation as they had passed required translation courses during undergraduate studies. Furthermore, as all of the participants possessed an IELTS overall band of 6.5 or 7 as the entry requirement to their universities, they were at an equally high level of language proficiency. Moreover, since they had stayed in Britain for a minimum of six months, they had a lot of opportunities to be exposed to source language culture and contact with source language speakers and consequently develop their intercultural competence. Among all translation students participating in the study, 52 were females and 36 were males. Their ages ranged from 22 to 28 with a mean age of 24.2.

Instruments

To evaluate participants' level of cultural intelligence, the Cultural Intelligence Scale (CQS), developed by Ang et al. (2007), was adopted. The questionnaire consisted of 20 items with four subscales: metacognitive cultural intelligence (items 1-4), cognitive cultural intelligence (items 5-10), motivational cultural intelligence (items 11-15), and behavioral cultural intelligence (items 16-20). The items on the questionnaire were based on a 7-point likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree with values 1 to 7 assigned to them respectively. In this respect, the value of 1 was assigned to 'strongly disagree', the value of 2 was assigned to 'disagree', the value of 3 was assigned to 'slightly disagree', the value of 4 was assigned to 'neither agree nor disagree', the value of 5 was assigned to 'slightly agree', the value of 6 was assigned to 'agree', and the value of 7 was assigned to 'strongly agree'. A higher score on the scale indicated that the person can better adjust to new cultures, understand local practices, and can behave appropriately and effectively in other cultures outside their own (Chen et al., 2011).

To evaluate participants' ability to translate culture-bound texts, the same article from *The Observer* featuring a significant number of British cultural references used in the studies by Olk (2003) and Elyildirim (2008) was adopted. To examine the validity of the adopted culture-bound text, content validity was used. The researcher wrote out the definition of what he wanted to measure and then gave this definition, along with the instrument and a description of the intended sample, to two professors at a university

in Iran who were experts in the field of translation. The professors confirmed that the content and format of the instrument was consistent with the definition of the variable and the sample of objects to be measured (Fraenkel et al., 2012). To examine the reliability of the adopted culture-bound text, a pilot study was conducted over 32 nonparticipant postgraduate students of translation at universities in England. The reliability coefficient of the instrument assessed through Cronbach's alpha was 0.85.

Procedure

During the second semester of the academic year 2015/2016, 88 copies of the culture-bound text were distributed among all 88 students of English translation participating in the study to be translated. Participants were neither informed of the existence of the British cultural references in the culture-bound text nor alerted of the significant weight of appropriate transference of these cultural references into the target language according to the sociolinguistic and sociocultural features of the target language in assessing the quality of their translations. Participants were given ample time to render a high quality of translation of culture-bound text to the best of their knowledge and were allowed to use any type of dictionaries they wished to use during the translation task. Immediately following the completion of the translation task, 88 copies of the cultural intelligence questionnaire were distributed among all of the participants. Participants were guided to answer each item on the questionnaire by selecting the point on the scale which best reflected their beliefs toward the idea expressed by the item. Again, they were given ample time to reflect on the items and complete the cultural intelligence questionnaire. Finally, all translations and cultural intelligence questionnaires were collected by the researcher and prepared for the subsequent data analysis.

Data Analysis

To measure translation students' level of cultural intelligence, descriptive statistics was used to describe and summarize the properties of the data collected from the participants. Descriptive statistics consisted mainly of mean and standard deviation. The cultural intelligence was represented by a mean score on a 7-point scale, where 1 (strongly disagree) represented the minimum score on the scale and 7 (strongly agree) represented the maximum score on the scale. The mean score and standard deviation were computed for each subscale of cultural intelligence including metacognitive, cognitive, motivational, and behavioral individually as well as all subscales generally.

To measure the quality of translations, two professors who were experts in the field of translation rated the quality of translations based on a 5-point scale ranging from 'very bad' to 'very good' with values 1 to 5 assigned to them respectively. In this respect the value of 1 was assigned to 'very bad', the value of 2 was assigned to 'bad', the value of 3 was assigned to 'neither good nor bad', the value of 4 was assigned to 'good', and the value of 5 was assigned to 'very good'. Quality of translations was assessed based on House's (1977, 1997) functional-pragmatic model which consisted of three steps: (1) the source text was analyzed along the dimensions of Field, Tenor, and Mode. On the

basis of findings on the lexical, the syntactic, and the textual level, a text-profile was set up which reflected the individual textual function; (2) the translated text was analyzed along the same dimensions and at the same level of delicacy; (3) the source and translation texts were compared. An assessment of their relative match was established: how the two texts were similar and/or different, given differing linguistic and cultural constraints (Thuy, 2013).

To measure the degree of agreement between the ratings assigned by the two raters, the inter-rater reliability was assessed through Cohen's Kappa which is a measure of inter-rater reliability used to measure agreement between two coders (Saldanha & O'Brien, 2014). The analysis of Cohen's Kappa would give a value between -1 and +1. The interpretation of the values obtained through Cohen's Kappa, according to Landis and Koch (1977), are presented in Table 1. The inter-rater reliability assessed for the translations was 0.88 which, according to the guidelines set by Landis and Koch (1977), indicates an almost perfect agreement between the two raters. For cases which received different ratings, the raters discussed until they reached an agreement.

Table 1: Interpretation of Cohen's Kappa Values

Values	Interpretation
Smaller than 0.00	Poor Agreement
0.00 to 0.20	Slight Agreement
0.21 to 0.40	Fair Agreement
0.41 to 0.60	Moderate Agreement
0.61 to 0.80	Substantial Agreement
0.81 to 1.00	Almost Perfect Agreement

To measure the relationship between translation students' level of cultural intelligence and the quality of their translations, spearman rank order correlation (ρ), which measures the relationship between two variables when both variables are measured on ordinal scales (Gravetter & Wallnau, 2013), was used. The size of the value of spearman correlation can range from -1.00 to +1.00. This value indicates the strength of the relationship between the two variables. A value of 0.00 indicates no relationship at all, a value of +1.00 indicates a perfect positive correlation (as one variable increases, so does the other variable), and a value of -1.00 indicates a perfect negative correlation (as one variable increases, the other variable decreases) (Pallant, 2013). Cohen (1988) suggests a set of guidelines to interpret the values between 0.00 and 1.00. The guidelines, which have been presented in Table 2, apply whether or not there is a negative sign out the front of the correlation value.

Table 2: Strength of Relationship

Correlation Value	Interpretation
0.10 – 0.29	Small Correlation
0.30 – 0.49	Medium Correlation
0.50 – 1.00	Large Correlation

The squared correlation (r^2), called the coefficient of determination, was then used to measure the proportion of variability in translation quality that can be determined from its relationship with cultural intelligence. Squared correlation would give a value ranging from 0.00 to 1.00. Cohen (1988) has also suggested a set of guidelines to interpret the values of squared correlation. The criterion for interpreting the value of squared correlation, as proposed by Cohen (1988), has been presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Percentage of Variance Explained

Squared Correlation Value	Interpretation
0.01	Small Correlation
0.09	Medium Correlation
0.25	Large Correlation

RESULTS

Table 4 presents the descriptive presentation of level of cultural intelligence of translation students participating in the study. Descriptive data presented in the table consists of the number and percentage of participants in each category of cultural intelligence. According to the descriptive data, motivational cultural intelligence which refers to the ability to direct attention and energy toward learning about and functioning in situations which are characterized by cultural differences accommodated the highest number of participants (31.82 percent) while behavioral cultural intelligence which refers to the ability to show appropriate verbal and nonverbal actions in interaction with people from different cultures accommodated the lowest number of participants (18.18 percent).

Table 4: Descriptive Presentation of Cultural Intelligence

Type of Cultural Intelligence	Number of Participants	Percentage of Participants
Metacognitive	24	27.28
Cognitive	20	22.72
Motivational	28	31.82
Behavioral	16	18.18

Table 5 presents the descriptive presentation of quality of translation of culture-bound text for translation students participating in the study. Descriptive data presented in the table consists of the number and percentage of participants for each translation quality. According to the descriptive data, the majority of participants presented their translations of the culture-bound text at an average and above level. As the data shows, 52.27 percent of participants presented their translations at an above average level of quality (good and very good levels), 36.36 percent of participants presented their translations at an average level of quality, and 11.37 percent of participants presented their translations at a below average level of quality (bad and very bad levels).

Table 5: Descriptive Presentation of Translation Quality

Translation Quality	Number of Participants	Percentage of Participants
Very Good	18	20.45
Good	28	31.82
Neither Good Nor Bad	32	36.36
Bad	8	9.10
Very Bad	2	2.27

Table 6 presents the results of spearman rank order correlation (ρ) analysis between translation students' level of cultural intelligence and the quality of their translations of culture-bound text. The first thing to consider in correlation analysis is the direction of the relationship between the variables (cultural intelligence and translation quality). The data shows that there is a positive relationship between the two variables, that is, the higher the cultural intelligence the higher the quality of translation. The second thing to consider in correlation analysis is the size of the value of the correlation coefficient. This value indicates the strength of the relationship between the two variables (cultural intelligence and translation quality). The value of correlation coefficient obtained in the analysis of spearman rank order correlation (ρ) is 0.76 which according to the guidelines proposed by Cohen (1988) to interpret the values of correlation coefficient suggests quite a strong relationship between cultural intelligence and quality of translation.

Table 6: Correlation

			Cultural Intelligence	Translation Quality
Spearman's rho	Cultural Intelligence	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	0.760**
		Sig. (2-tailed)		0.000
		N	88	88
	Translation Quality	Correlation Coefficient	0.760**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	
		N	88	88

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

To get an idea of how much variance the two variables (cultural intelligence and translation quality) share, the coefficient of determination was calculated. This can be obtained by squaring the correlation value. The coefficient of determination for the obtained correlation analysis is $r^2 = (0.76)^2 = 0.5776$ which according to the guidelines proposed by Cohen (1988) to interpret the values of coefficient of determination suggests a very large correlation coefficient. To convert the value of coefficient of determination to 'percentage of variance', it was multiplied by 100, that is, $r^2 = (0.76)^2 \times 100 = 57.76$. This suggests that cultural intelligence helps to explain nearly 58 percent of the variance in translation students' quality of translation.

DISCUSSION

The study found that there is a strong positive relationship between translation students' level of cultural intelligence and their quality of translation of culture-bound texts. Translation students who possessed a higher level of cultural intelligence managed to develop their intercultural competence to a greater extent and subsequently present their translation of culture-bound text at a higher level of quality than translation students who exhibited a lower level of cultural intelligence. Therefore, the null hypothesis of the study which states that there is no relationship between level of cultural intelligence and quality of translation of culture-bound texts is rejected.

These findings can be explained through the fact that higher level of cultural intelligence facilitates navigation and understanding unfamiliar cultures and adjusting behaviors to perform effectively in culturally diverse situations (Earley & Ang, 2003; Earley & Mosakowski, 2004; Rosen et al., 2000; Thomas & Inkson, 2005). Translation students who were more culturally intelligent were consciously aware of source language people's cultural preferences and adjusted their mental models in the translation process (metacognitive cultural intelligence), were able to understand the similarities and differences across source and target language cultures (cognitive cultural intelligence), were able to direct attention and energy toward intercultural situations based on intrinsic interest and confidence in their intercultural effectiveness (motivational cultural intelligence), and showed situationally appropriate behaviors based on their wide range of verbal and nonverbal abilities (behavioral cultural intelligence) (Ang et al., 2007). This awareness and knowledge of source language cultural features and the distinctions between the cultural perspectives of the source language and the target language ideally prepared them for transferring the meaning of source language cultural references to target language according to the sociolinguistic and sociocultural norms of the target language.

These findings can be also explained through relevance theory. Relevance theory developed by Sperber and Wilson (1986) deals with the contextual effects which a text yields and the processing effort which the readers need to make to comprehend the text. Relevance theory states that everything else being equal, the greater the positive contextual effects achieved by the audience, the greater the relevance of the input to the person processing it. However, everything else being equal, the smaller the processing effort required by the audience to obtain these effects, the greater the relevance of the input to the person processing it (Wilson, 2004). Translation students who possessed a higher level of cultural intelligence were more familiar with the sociolinguistic and sociocultural features of the source language and the similarities and differences with their native language cultural features. Therefore, they were equipped with the knowledge of using appropriate equivalent expressions for source language cultural references to provide enough contextual effects for the translated text to help target language reader comprehend the text easily without putting too much processing effort. However, translation students who possessed a lower level of cultural intelligence were not equipped with the ability to use appropriate equivalent expressions for source

language cultural references in the process of transferring meaning across languages. Consequently, their translation did not provide necessary contextual effect to be easily comprehended by the target language reader at minimum processing effort.

The findings obtained in the current study are in line with the findings obtained in the studies by Boers and Domescheleer (2001), Olk (2003), Elyildirim (2008), and Rafieyan (in press b) who found that intercultural competence plays an important role in the quality of translation of cultural references. The findings of this study also support the findings obtained in the studies by Ang et al. (2007), Bhaskar-Shrinivas et al. (2005), Earley (2002), and Templer et al. (2006) who found that the use of soft skills such as cultural intelligence helps people adapt to the cultural values and norms of the target country and to better understand intercultural interactions.

CONCLUSION

The study revealed a significant positive relationship between level of cultural intelligence and quality of translation of culture-bound texts. Translation students who possessed a higher level of cultural intelligence managed to develop their intercultural competence to an optimal level during their sojourn experience and consequently presented their translations of the culture-bound text at a higher level of quality than translation students who displayed lower level of cultural intelligence. This significant role of intercultural competence in improving the quality of translation of culture-bound texts suggests incorporating cultural components of source language community into every translation course (Elyildirim, 2008; Rafieyan et al., 2013a; Rafieyan et al., 2013b; Rafieyan, in press a; Rafieyan, in press b; Rafieyan, in press c).

The study was limited in some ways, however. First of all, the study did not consider the role of level of contact with source language people and intensity of interactions with them in the development of participants' intercultural competence during their academic sojourn. Regardless of the level of cultural intelligence, translation students who had more opportunities to interact with source language people could gain more knowledge of source language sociolinguistic and sociocultural features and subsequently higher cross-cultural translation ability than translation students who had less interaction with source language people. Also, the study was conducted based on a cross-sectional design which did not trace participants' cultural gains during their educational sojourn. Therefore, future studies are recommended to consider the role of contact and intensity of interaction on a longitudinal design as well.

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