**VIETNAM NATIONAL UNIVERSITY**

**UNIVERSITY OF LANGUAGES AND INTERNATIONAL STUDIES**

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**AN EXPLORATION ON SIMULTANEOUS INTERPRETER COMPETENCE FROM AN INTERCULTURAL PERSPECTIVE**

*(Nghiên cứu năng lực phiên dịch đồng thời từ bình diện liên văn hóa)*

Major: English Linguistics

Code: 9220201.01

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**SUMMARY OF DOCTORAL THESIS**

**HANOI – 2020**

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# PART 1. INTRODUCTION

## 1. Research aim and questions

This research aims to explore the intercultural competence (IC) performed by English – Vietnamese simultaneous interpreters (SIrs) via intercultural communicative (ICC) transfers during their real – life work sessions.

To attain the aims set for the study, the following research questions need to be answered. These questions are made basing on important assumptions. First, as it always involves multiple parties from different cultures, interpreting itself is assumed as an intercultural activity. Second, the fact that SIrs own and show their intercultural competence is expressed by their deployment of ICC transfers.

Question 1: What ICC transfers did the SIrs use while interpreting?

Question 2: How do audience react to the ICC transfers used by SIrs?

Question 3: What are the possible reasons for the use of ICC transfers as perceived by SIrs?

All three questions are interrelated. First, the research tries to understand the types of ICC transfers used in real – life workshops. Second, as audience is an integral party in any interpreting mediated event, the research continues to investigate their reactions to the ICC transfers used by SIrs. Finally, the reasons why SIrs use these ICC transfers are discovered. Approaching from different perspectives (researcher, interpreter, and audience), all the research questions are surrounding and provide a comprehensive view on the topic of ICC transfers in particular, intercultural competence in particular.

## 2. Scope of the study

The scope of this study is confined to simultaneous interpreting provided in Vietnam, between English and Vietnamese. This means other modes of interpreting, for example: consecutive interpreting and whispered interpreting, and other contexts of interpreting other than the formal conference setting (e.g. field trips, three-corner, court, etc.) are not covered.

Due to the data size for analysis, the thesis does not aim to represent all topics supported by interpreting industry in Vietnam. Only ten topics are chosen basing selective criteria. Therefore, its results are more for providing some useful insights into the IC realized by SIrs via ICC transfers, rather than findings that can be widely generalized.

## 3. Contribution of the study

Referring to different theories and using a different research approaches, the dissertation is expected to have several contributions. Firstly, readers will, for the first time, have a view on how IC is performed by SIrs in Vietnam for the language pair of English – Vietnamese. This is reflected in the strategies (ICC transfers) deployed by SIrs. Secondly, the research adds to the pool of interpreting studies in general with useful and vivid illustrations collected from authentic workshops. Thirdly, findings about SIr IC will be useful input to the training of SIrs in Vietnam and other countries.

# PART 2. DEVELOPMENT

## Chapter 1. Literature review

### 1.1. Simultaneous Interpreting Research

In this thesis, the definition of interpreting is an inclusive one formulated by Pöchhacker (2004, p. 11): “Interpreting is 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”. In its turn, the notion of Translation (with capitalized T) is defined as “an activity consisting (mainly) in the production of utterances (texts) which are presumed to have a similar meaning and/or effect as previously existing utterances in another language and culture (Pöchhacker, 2004, p. 12).

For “simultaneous interpreting”, it is a type of interpreting in which the target language (TL) utterance is produced in parallel with source language (SL) utterance using simultaneous interpreting (SI) equipment (e.g. microphones, headsets, audio transmitters) in a sound-proof booth (Pöchhacker, 2004, p. 18-20).

### 1.2. Interpreter Competence

For its comprehensiveness and proven application in the European Union’s Master in Translation, the definition of competence in general by Kaminskiene and Kavaliauskiene (2012) is selected to guide this study. Accordingly, “competence is a general ability to perform a specific task, action or function successfully on the grounds of the existing knowledge, skills and attitude system; a combination of knowledge, skills and attitudes appropriate to the context; the proven ability to use knowledge, skills and personal, social and/ or methodological abilities, in work or study situations and in professional and personal development.”

Regarding interpreter competence, after reviewing Kalina (2000, p. 2), Pöchhacker (2004, p. 166), and Kutz (2010, cited in Albl – Mikasa, 2013, p. 59), the common point is that competences are the ability required for interpreters to fulfill their demanding job as interpreters.

Interpreter competence models often take one of the two approaches in organizing their sub-competences: horizontal and serial. While horizontally organized models (e.g. Khanji and Salman 2002; Deborah and Carol, 2003; Refki et. al., 2013; Kermis, 2008; Fraihat and Mahadi, 2011) can be more convenient for doing research, they may be too abstract for operation. On the other hand, serially organized models (e.g. (Kalina, 2005; Albl – Mikasa, 2012) could be specific enough for operation and application in training, but too detailed for generalizable researches.

### 1.3. Interpreter’s Intercultural Competence Models

Newmark (1998, p. 94) defined culture as “the way of life and its manifestations that are peculiar to a community that uses a particular language as its means of expression”. This author also recommended different categories of culture, including (1) ecology, (2) material culture, (3) social culture, (4) organizations, customs, activities, procedures, concepts, and (5) gestures and habits.

To prepare for the analysis of data, this research has reviewed a lot of theories related to interpreting and interpreting studies, competence and interpreter competence, cultural and intercultural competence. There has been an investigation of not only intercultural competence models for interpreters but also those for translators.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **No.** | **Author(s)** | **Year** | **Name** | **Foundation theory** |
| 1. | Albir and Olalla-Soler | 2016 | Cultural Competence for Translator | Witte (2000), Katan (2009b), PICT (2012) |
| 2 | Yarosh | 2015 | Translator Intercultural Competence Model | Arjona (1978), Kelly (2005),  Robinson (2007), CIUTI’s Translator’s Profile, EMT Expert Group (2009), Witte (1993) |
| 3 | PICT | 2012 | Translator Intercultural Competence Model | Not mentioned |
| 5 | Kaczmarek | 2010 | Intercultural Competence Model for Community Interpreters | Spitzberg (2009) |

**Table 1:** **Cultural/Intercultural Competence Models Reviewed**

By reviewing the models, a clear observation can be made on their common point: they all include the ability to compare the cultural/intercultural aspects of SL and those of TL. Given the importance of this ability, this thesis focuses on this component of simultaneous interpreter’s intercultural competence: comparative cultural knowledge. In order to verify if this competence component is owned and performed by SIrs, the author uses an operational model developed basing on Quang (2014).

### 1.4. Selected Research Operational Model

After reviewing different authors, an operational model has been selected to analyse data and answer the three research questions. This operation model is taken from Quang’s list of cross – cultural transfers (2014). Quang (2014) puts forward four types of verbal – verbal transfers (transference strategies) in cross-cultural communication. These are (1) absolute linguistic transfer, (2) relative linguistic transfer, (3) communicative transfer, and (4) cross – cultural transfer. In all these transfers, the priority is that the impact brought to a language A speaker by the source (spoken) text should also be felt equally by a language B audience through the target (spoken) text. Table 2 below summarizes the four types of cross – cultural transfers recommended by Quang (2014).

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Type of transfer | | Method of transfer | Priority | Pragmatic force |
| Linguistic transfer | Absolute linguistic transfer | Language A components are transferred one - to one to language B components | Vocabulary components | Pragmatic force on native speaker of language A is equivalent to that of language B |
| Relative linguistic transfer | + Text restructuring + Rearrangement of text components + Addition and/or omission of text components + Relative alternation | Text and pragmatic components | Pragmatic force on native speaker of language A is equivalent to that of language B |
| Communicative transfer | | + Replacement of language components + Reservation of message meaning | Discourse and pragmatic components | Pragmatic force on native speaker of language A is more or less equivalent to that of language B |
| Cross-cultural communicative | | + Transference and reflection of cultural practices + Transference and reflection of cultural hiddens + Transference and reflection of cultural preferences | Cultural and pragmatic components | Pragmatic force on native speaker of language A is more or less equivalent to that of language B |

Table 2: Quang’s Cross - Cultural Transfers (2014)

Our ICC transfers are adopted from the list of cross - cultural transfers by Quang (2014). In his article, he aimed at comparing cultures and finding the similarities and differences. Meanwhile, our transfers aimed at mediating different parties in a multi-language/multi-culture event. That is why ICC transfers is a more suitable term.

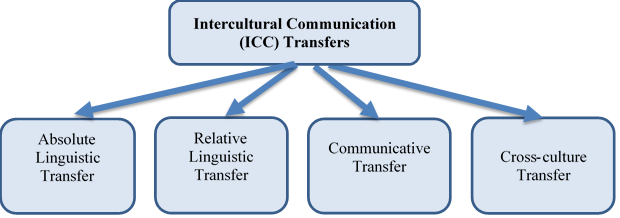


Figure 1: Research Operational Model – ICC Transfers

The four transfers are coded from S1 to S4 for the sake of data analysis, as shown in Table 3.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Code** | **Type of Transfer** | **Example** |
| S1 | Absolute linguistic transfer | *We’ll talk about it later.*  Chúng ta sẽ nói về chuyện đó sau. |
| S2 | Relative linguistic transfer | *He was reading when I came yesterday.*  Hôm qua khi tôi đến thì nó đang đọc sách. |
| S3 | Communicative transfer | Search me. Hỏi tôi thì hỏi cái đầu gối còn hơn. |
| S4 | Cross-cultural transfer | *Honey, it’s time for tea.*  *Em ơi, cơm nước thế nào nhỉ? Muộn rồi đấy.* |

Table 3: Codes of ICC Transfers

## Chapter 2. Methodology

### 2.1. Research methodology

#### 2.1.1. A combination of qualitative and quantitative research approaches

After reviewing research methods in linguistics studies in general, and the methods that have been used to investigate interpreter intercultural competence in particular, the researcher has decided to combine quantitative and qualitative methods. The thesis applies three techniques, including (in a sequence) audio recording transcription analysis, survey, and focus group interview.

With all three research questions being interconnected, the thesis was conducted in three phases. In the first phase answering the first Research Question, corpus data (transcription from workshops) was analyzed with QUAN focus (prevalence of ICC transfers used in workshops). Yet, some QUAL information was also provided to explain the situations where these transfers are used. Phase two which deals with Research Question 2 started with QUAN analysis (number of responses from a survey - based audience reaction test). However, the main part of this question was answered qualitatively (audience’s reactions to the use of ICC transfers). Phase three, relevant to the final research question, dealt with QUAL data from a focus group interview.

#### 2.1.2. Reactions to Alternatives

Reactions to alternatives is the name of a technique suggested by Nida (1969) to assess written translation quality. Stipulated by his notion of dynamic equivalence, which is defined as “the closest natural equivalent to the source-language message”, Nida (1964 and 1969) advocated for the use of receptor responses as a proxy of translation quality. According to this author (Nida 1969, p.173), the success of a translation is based on three criteria: (1) receptors understand the original message correctly, (2) receptors understand the original message easily, and (3) receptors get involved thanks to the appropriate form of the translation. Verifying the quality of a translation, as claimed by Nida (1969), does not only mean contrasting texts to see if the language units are consistent but also determining the possible ways in which receptors of a translation response to it. The translation should not consist details which are “stylistically awkward, structurally burdensome, linguistically unnatural, and semantically misleading or incomprehensible, unless, of course, the message in the source language has these characteristics.” The way to evaluate these translation attributes is through the potential translation users. To operationalize this idea, Nida (1969, p.169-p.173) recommended “reactions to alternatives”, beside other translation testing techniques such as close test, “explaining the contents”, “reading the text aloud”, and “publication of sample material”. In the original version of “reactions to alternatives” by Nida (1969), the tester should prepare different alternatives (versions) of the same source text. These alternatives are then read out slowly before the respondents are asked to select the alternative which sound sweeter or plainer or more understandable. To get valid reactions, this test should not involve by those responsible for the translation draft, including the translator. Otherwise, the possible politeness of the respondents may influence their choices (Nida 1969, p.171).

#### 2.1.3. Focus Group Interview

Interview, according to Kvale (1996) and Cohen (2007), is an activity where at least two people exchange opinions about a topic that they are all interested in. For the purpose of collecting data, interview is a flexible tool that helps the researcher to make use of different sensory channels: verbal, non-verbal, spoken and heard.

Among others, FGI is one type of interview that typically involves five to ten participants (Krueger, 2000). The interaction among participants is what makes FGI special and different from one-to-one interview, enabling rich data generation. Participants in an FGI do not need to reach consensus with one another. The views collected are more collective than individual (Cohen, 2007, p. 376).

#### 2.1.4. Researcher’s Personal Account and Role

Up to 2020, the researcher has got nearly 20 years studying English linguistic. After having a bachelor degree from a Vietnamese university in 2005, he finished his Master program with a Swedish training institution in 2009. His research career continued in 2016, marked by the enrolment in a Doctoral program in English linguistics. He has published seven peer-reviewed articles which are all related to translation and interpreting field. The researcher has also worked as a fulltime translator/interpreter trainer for the last 15 years (since 2005). More specifically, he gives lectures on translation and interpreting practice, translation and interpreting studies, professionalism and technology application in these professions. From 2004 to now is also the time the researcher has consistently been active as a conference simultaneous interpreter. With about 150-200 conference days per year, his familiar topical areas are greatly diversified and in different settings, with speakers and audience from Vietnam encountering those from different foreign cultures. With the background as mentioned above, the researcher is confident that the research data is collected, processed and interpreted in a reliable manner, producing meaningful findings and implications.

### 2.2. Data collection

#### 2.2.1. Workshop Transcription

The first Research Question used transcription data from ten authentic workshops in nine different topics. In these workshops, the voice of speakers and interpreters were recorded in two separate audio recorders. A section lasting from four to eight minutes was selected from the speaker’s recording. Then the corresponding section was extracted from interpreter’s recording. After being selected, the two recording sections were transcribed and synchronized every second. The transcribed source recordings were divided into segments differentiated by different colors (green and white). Respective segments of the interpretation version were marked in the same color. For each pair of segments, one or more ICC transfer(s) was identified. In total, there were twenty recordings (ten pairs). Five pairs were English – Vietnamese in direction and five are from Vietnamese to English. The total transcription length was 24,954 words.

All interpreters that were recorded have got at least ten years of experience, with about two hundred conference days per year. Their extensive experience in different topics and with different clients provided a good guarantee to the validity of data collected on ICC transfers. Audio recordings were transcribed by volunteer junior interpreters and by online transcription service at www.sonix.ai. To ensure accuracy, all transcriptions are carefully reviewed by the researcher.

The transcription was firstly analyzed in a qualitative manner to identify the type of ICC transfer basing on the description by Quang (2014). Then a quantitative counting was conducted for the prevalence of each strategy (transfer). In other words, how frequent a transfer appeared was revealed. Later, the research tried to understand qualitatively the situations where different transfers were used.

#### 2.2.2. The Audience Reaction Test

Data for the second Research Question was collected using the technique of “reactions to alternatives” (from now on referred to as Audience Reaction Test - ART for short). The test was administered online as a survey. To guarantee the survey’s effectiveness and efficiency, three rounds of piloting have been done before the final ART version is available.

In the final version of the ART, there were 12 items. Each item included a pair of utterances (T1 and T2 – standing for Target 1 and Target 2). T1 was the original version, delivered by the SIr at real life workshops. This original version was remade by the researcher to ensure all the content and delivery styles of the original SIr were imitated. In producing T1, the SIr was using ICC transfers, consciously or unconsciously. The cultural differences between speaker (foreigner) and audience (Vietnamese) was taken into consideration. The other utterance in the pair – T2 – has the same content but is slightly different in the way of expression. This was because the experiment interpreter rendered literally, without considering cultural aspects. Respondents were asked to listen to both options and select the better one. If they think none of the versions was better or worse, they could select the third option “Equally good”. Explanations were expected from respondents regarding their choices.

The participants of the survey were those assumed to have opportunity to attend events using SI service. These people, in general, share the following characteristics: (1) aging 22 to 60, (2) being in university or having at least a bachelor degree, (3) speaking English at least basically, without experience as an interpreter.

After one week of data collection, there were 178 responses collected. The number of respondents was not too large but acceptable and valuable given the difficult nature of the test. It took on average 15 minutes to complete the test which was not too short. However, the dropout rate was perfect at zero percent. The respondent’s dedication provided a solid ground for the validation of the data they submitted.

#### 2.2.3. Focus Group Interview

In total, eight interpreters were interviewed (coded as I1 to I8 in the alphabetical order of their last names). While seven are based in Hanoi, one interpreter (I2) is based in Ho Chi Minh City. These interpreters have had from 12 to 20 years of experience, working in a large variety of topics (diplomatic, education, industry, information technology, health, agriculture, etc.) and settings (small technical seminars, large symposiums, bilateral/multilateral negotiations, escort events, state head summits, etc.). Seven of them joined the FGI whereas I1 was interviewed individually due to a last-minute change in his work schedule.

The interview lasted for one and a half hour. After considerations, the researcher decided to conduct the FGI online (on Zoom platform at [www.zoom.us](http://www.zoom.us)) for its many advantages, including convenience, connectivity, and user-friendliness (Archibald et al., 2019). With the participants’ permission, the whole discussion was video and audio recorded for transcription and analysis later using Zoom’s record function. Besides, the researcher also used an external voice recorder as a backup in case there were network interruptions. A detailed agenda with six question items was carefully prepared and piloted to prevent the dominance from a certain interviewee, and to make sure the talk could get the expected data.

There were two groups of questions (situations). The first included the items that have been asked in the ART but the findings (from audience’s perspective) was not clear. In these questions, the rate of support for the use of ICC transfers was not as high as expected by the researcher. That was why FGI was used to collect more views from professional practitioners and have more conclusive viewpoints. The second group were situations that were not mentioned in the ART but analyzed in relation to Research Question 1. Higher priority was paid to Vietnamese – English words/phrases to compensate for Research Question 2 where only English – Vietnamese items were investigated. The FGI also benefited from spontaneous unplanned cases shared by the participants during the interview (e.g. Item 4, Interviewee 7).

For convenience, the language used in the FGI was Vietnamese. When quotes from interviewees are inserted into the analysis below, English translations are provided by the researcher.

## Chapter 3. Presentation of results and findings

### 3.1. The ICC Transfers Used by SIrs

3.1.1. Occurrence and Prevalence of Intercultural Communication Transfers

From all ten recorded workshops, 1143 incidents of strategies are identified. 597 are detected in English – Vietnamese interpretations while the other direction only has 546. In terms of commonness, S2 ranked the first (598 incidents, 52%), followed by S3 (278 incidents, 24%), S1 (148 incidents, 13%) and S4 (72 incidents, 6%). This finding meant that all SIrs, at least in this research, owned and operated their IC. Besides, the operation of IC is difficult, because the more culturally dense strategies (S3 and S4) did not appear too frequently.

3.1.2. ICC Transfer Usage Situations

##### 3.1.2.1. Absolute Linguistic Transfer – S1

Out of four strategies, S1 was the third one in terms of popularity. It was used in only 148 cases out of 1143 incidents, representing a probability of 13%. The strategy was more common in English to Vietnamese direction than vice versa (17% versus 9%). Interpreters were widely different in using S1, ranging from 5% to 23%. From the data collected, there were four situations of using S1 found, as shown in Table 2 below.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Strategy | Usage situations |
| S1 - Absolute linguistic transfer | 1. Similarity existed between the two languages involved. |
| 2. Modest change in word use needed. |
| 3. Rearrangement was needed at phrase level. |
| 4. Technical terms and abbreviations needed to be rendered. |

##### **Table 4: Summary of S1 Usage Situations**

##### In summary, S1 – absolute language transfer, was not very common in the selected SI workshops. This possibly resulted from the large difference between English and Vietnamese. In situations where deployment was possible, S1 provided the benefit of saving time and effort for SIrs, especially in dealing with abbreviated technical terms. To enjoy the strengths of S1, SIrs have to own intercultural competence to properly assume the audience’s understanding.

##### 3.1.2.2. Relative Linguistic Transfer – S2

Among the four strategies analyzed in this research, S2 – Relative linguistic transfer is the most common. From 1143 instances of transfers identified, 599 of them belong to this category, equal to 52%. No significant difference is found between the two language directions (58% in EV versus 47% in VE). However, the deployment of S2 fluctuates among SIrs and workshops (ranging from 35% to 64%).

As summarized in Table 3, interpreters in the recorded workshops used S2 in five different situations.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Strategy | Usage |
| S2 - Relative linguistic transfer | 1. Source texts needed restructuring. |
| 2. Components in an utterance needed reordering. |
| 3. Tongue slips and false starts needed removal. |
| 4. Softening words needed removal. |
| 5. Softening words needed to be added. |

**Table 5: Summary of S2 Usage Situations**

In summary, relative linguistic transfer – S2 was popular across workshop topics and interpreters. S2 were used to handle utterances that needed restructuring or component reordering. It was also useful in cases where the speaker had a slip – of – the – tongue or false starts. Finally, this strategy directed SIrs to properly add or remove “softening word” to have smoother communication. These usages are very important to the practice of professional SIrs as well as interpreter trainees. A good command of S2 helps make the renditions more concise, understandable, and natural.

##### 3.1.2.3. Communicative Transfer – S3

Communicative transfer, coded as S3, is the second most common strategy in this research after only S2. There are totally 277 occurrences among 1143 incidents, accounting for 24%. More occurrences of this strategy are found in Vietnamese to English direction than vice versa (29% versus 20%). The use of S3 varies among interpreters and among different workshops, ranging from 7% to 35%.

As seen in Table 4, there were seven situations in which the subject interpreters relied on S3. This is the biggest number of situations recorded in the research, showing that S3 is very diversified and interesting.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Strategy | Usage |
| S3 - Communicative transfer | 1. Explanations were needed for audience’s better understanding. |
| 2. Details were deemed not important to overall message. |
| 3. Source texts had different usage between English and Vietnamese. |
| 4. Redundant words were already included in surrounding details. |
| 5. Technical terms needed to be rendered. |
| 6. Source text was not clear in meaning. |
| 7. Source text needed correction. |

**Table 6: Summary of S3 Usage Situations**

To sum up, communicative transfer (S3) was commonly used in the selected SI workshops. The use of S3 heavily depends on the intention of the interpreter, meaning for the same situation, S2 or S1 could also have been used. However, S3 may bring better communicative effects, mainly in one of the two main ways. The first way was that S3 helped listeners to understand more clearly and conveniently the source text. This was done because explanatory details were supplied by the SIr, although the addition requires more time and effort. In the second way of benefiting, the SIr could reduce the time pressure by cutting off some unimportant words or replacing an expression wholly or partly without hindering the understanding of the overall source text. To do so, the interpreter needed to have long time experience in order to judge the context and the audience’s prior knowledge.

##### 3.1.2.4. Cross-cultural transfer – S4

Out of four strategies, cross-cultural transfer (S4) stands last in the ranking list of commonness in the current study. Only 6% of 1143 incidents, e.g. 71 cases, fall into this category. Much more occurrences were identified in Vietnamese – English interpretations than in the reversed direction (60 – 10% compared with 11 - 2%). The variation among different interpreters was not too large, ranging from 0% to 9%, except for workshop 4 (22%).

In total, six usage situations were identified from the corpus regarding S4.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Strategy | Usage |
| S4 - Cross cultural transfer | 1. Pre-coded gambits need to be rendered |
| 2. Intercultural differences in rhetorical questions existed |
| 3. Speaker has indirect style of presentations |
| 4. Politeness aspects of utterances need adjustment. |
| 5. Source texts are politically sensitive |
| 6. Proper nouns are leveraged to create closeness |

**Table 7: Summary of S4 Usage Situations**

In conclusion, S4 – cross cultural transfer was really an interesting strategy. However, the use of S4 and the identification of it heavily depended on the intercultural competence of the SIr and the SI researcher, respectively. Compared with other transfers, S4 had the smallest number of occurrences. These occurrences were related to language differences in using gambits, redundant and indirect style of presenting information. S4 was also used to deal with politically sensitive details, with politeness, and lastly, with proper nouns.

### 3.2. Audience Reactions to the Use of ICC Transfers

#### 3.2.1. Audience Reaction Test Overall Findings

As perceived by the audience, ICC transfers brought eight positive and eight negative effects to the target texts. The positive effects include (1) higher naturalness, (2) higher understandability, (3) more appropriate emphasis, (4) higher conciseness, (5) higher politeness, (6) higher intimacy, (7) higher context suitability, and (8) higher political correctness. Meanwhile, the negative effects are (1) greater lengthiness, (2) lower academicity, (3) lower logicality, (4) less appropriate emphasis, (5) lower generality, (6) higher gender bias, (7) lower friendliness, and (8) lower involvement. Though having the same number of eight, positive effects were much more prevalent than negative ones. In the survey, the audience preferred the interpretation versions using ICC transfers. The most appreciated transfer was S2, followed by S3 and then S4.

#### 3.2.2. Positive effects

**Higher naturalness** and **understandability** are the two most common positive effects of ICC transfers, found in all or almost all questions. Coming from various reasons such as structure change, active voice conversion to passive voice, noun phrase conversion to verb phrase, the use of authentic Vietnamese words, etc. these are important qualities gained from ICC transfers. They increase the audience’s trust in the interpreter and therefore facilitates her message communication. **More appropriate** **emphasis** and **higher** **conciseness** were the next two important positive effects as each of them was recognized in four questions. In these situations, the strategic transfers directed the SIr to get rid of unimportant details and produced clearer target texts. The fifth benefit from using one of the three strategies was **higher** **politeness**. In questions 9 and 12, the interpreters decided to use a more specific pronoun and honorifics to hint the inferiority of the speaker. Therefore, listeners may feel that that target text were politer. The sixth contribution of ICC transfers – **higher** **intimacy** – is linked to the naturalness and politeness that they brought. The use of a selective pronoun and of softening words made the audience feel closer to the speaker. In addition, ICC transfers gave the target text higher formality, which was perceived as more **suitable to the context** of a workshop (questions 3 and 9). Finally, **higher** **political correctness** was a special case that showed up only in questions 8. Furthermore, there was also a strong debate on the advantage of ICC transfer related to this situation. The perception may change in the future as the political context of Vietnam will also develop.

#### 3.2.3. Negative effects

**Greater** **lengthiness**, in other words being longer, was the most common weak point caused by an ICC transfer. This effect which was perceived in three question items. It was because the authentic SIr added an explanation, merged two source sentences into one, or use authentic Vietnamese instead of Sino – Vietnamese words. Meanwhile, other disadvantages only exist in one or two test situations. This was in contrast with the positive effects of ICC transfers which normally spread across different question items. This information demonstrated that compared with positive effects, the weaknesses of such transfers were rather minor.

### 3.3. The Reasons Why SIrs Use ICC Transfers

#### 3.3.1. Focus Group Interview Overall Findings

Based on the data provided by focus group interviewees (including interviewee I1 which engaged one-on-one), three major findings were harvested. First, it was demonstrated by all professional interpreters in the interview that they did use ICC transfers, particularly S3 (communicative transfer) and S4 (cross-cultural transfer). Even when they do not use ICC transfers, all SIrs explicitly considered intercultural aspects before making the final decision in how to render the source text (e.g. I4, I7, I1 in question 1; I4, I1 in question 2; I4, I6, I7 in question 3; I6, I7, I1 in question 4; I2, I7, I4 in question 5; and I3, I6, I4 in question 6). In other words, intercultural competence was important to them and indeed performed by them in authentic workshop situations.

As perceived by SIrs, there were seven reasons why ICC transfers were used, including R1 - accurate comprehension, R2 - lower sensitivity, R3 - higher universality, R4 - higher respect, R5 - higher equality, R6 - higher efficiency, and R7 - authentic Vietnamese preservation. These reasons are under two themes: Enhancing Audience’s Comfortability and Enhancing Interpreter’s Comfortability. Compared with Theme 2, Theme 1 was more commonly observed. It showed up in 22 quotes which were mentioned by all eight interviewees in five out of six questions. Among the seven reasons for SIrs to use ICC transfers, five of them fell under this theme. Meanwhile, Theme 2 appeared in 14 quotes, by six interviewees in three questions, and consisted of two reasons. As can be seen, that Theme 1 is more popular shows that though professional interpreters could think for themselves, they always give the highest priority to audience’s benefit.

#### 3.3.2. Focus Group Interview Specific Findings

As mentioned in the previous section, the seven reasons for ICC transfer use are categorized into two themes. Under the first theme “Enhancing Audience’s Comfortability”, there are five reasons. The common point of these reasons is that they all aim to bring positive experience to the audience. Besides, the underlying basis for these reasons are directly related to the interpreter’s IC. In other words, the SIrs make use of their IC to render an optimal target text, in their opinion, for the workshop participants that need their interpretation service. The first reason, **R1 - “Accurate comprehension”** – was acknowledged by many interpreters (I1, I4, I6, I7, I8) and in different situations (questions 1, 2, 6). This means SIrs always try to make sure the source text messages are conveyed accurately to the audience. The next reason, **R2** - **“Lower sensitivity”**, was also relatively popular. It was suggested by six interviewees (I1, I2, I4, I5, I6, I7) in two situations (question 1 and 3). This reason emerged in relation to the words that are associated with some political meanings. For the next reason of using ICC transfers, interviewees claimed that these strategies may give their interpretation **“Higher universality” (R3)**. This reason was specifically mentioned in relation to rendering addressing forms. **R4 – “Higher respect”** was recognized by two interviewees, relevant to the discussion on addressing devices. Despite its limited prevalence, this reason is interculturally important. Accordingly, if the interpreter is more mindful of the intercultural differences between the speaker and the audience, her renditions will show a higher level of respect to the addressee and, hence, be more appreciated. Although like the previous one, the fifth reason of **R5 - “Higher equality”** – did not gain the attention of many interviewees, it is explicitly related to intercultural differences.

The second theme of reasons for using ICC transfers (Enhancing Interpreter’s Comfortability) include two items: R6 and R7. These reasons base themselves on the SIr’s IC and aim to ‘make life easier’ for the interpreters without compromising the audience’s experience. It should be noted that though ‘Efficiency’ and ‘Authentic Vietnamese preservation’ are not directly related the SIr’s intercultural competence, the application of ICC transfers in these situations indeed requires very good knowledge and skills of both the source and target languages and cultures. For example, to firmly remove unimportant details while doing no harm to the audience’s understanding, the interpreters must very quickly consider the intercultural differences between the speaker and the target audience. Only when knowing that the details to be removed do not contribute to the overall source text message can the SIrs proceed with this intended solution. That is why R6 and R7 are counted as reasons for using ICC transfers. The sixth reason, **R6 – “Higher efficiency”**, was actually the most popular among all the seven reasons recorded in the FGI. It was mentioned by six out of eight interviewees (I1, I2, I3, I6, I7, I8) and was relevant to three situations in the FGI (questions 2, 5, 6). **R7 – “Authentic Vietnamese preservation”** is the last reason identified from the FGI regarding why ICC transfers were used (I1 in question 3). This reason should be appreciated in the era when so many words are borrowed, sometimes carelessly, into Vietnamese language.

# PART 3. CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

## 1. Recapitulation

This research aims to explore a rather new topic: intercultural competence of English – Vietnamese simultaneous interpreters. A proxy has been used to investigate this competence: the use of ICC transfers by interpreters in real – life conferences. To fulfil this aim, there are three research questions to be answered from both quantitative and qualitative perspectives. The operational model derived from Quang (2014) with a list of four types of ICC transfers. Three techniques have been applied to collect data, including audio recording transcription, ART, and FGI.

From the analysis against the operational model, S2 (relative linguistic transfer) was identified as the most common, followed by S3 (communicative transfer), S1 (absolute linguistic transfer) and lastly S4 (cross-cultural transfer). This result shows that, at least in this research, SIrs owned and operated their intercultural competence. The research also found eight positive and eight negative effects that ICC transfers had on the target texts. Not all effects were equally significant and some of them were more common than others. The use of ICC transfers was perceived as making the target text more natural and understandable in almost all situations. It is also worth noticed positive effects were much more commonly observed than negative effects. As for the last research question, seven reasons for SIrs to use ICC transfers were found, belonging to two themes: Enhancing Audience’s Comfortability and Enhancing Interpreter’s Comfortability. This means using ICC transfers in particular, having IC in general is beneficial not only to the audience, but also to the interpreters themselves. Besides, IC is very important to interpreters as all SIrs in the interview used ICC transfers in different situations.

## 2. Implications

Given the benefits found in this research about ICC transfers, professional interpreters should get ready to use these strategies where appropriate. For simultaneous interpreter students, they should accumulate IC components from training programs and other sources. This competence should be gradually developed right before the students enter the market. If so, they own a valuable comparative advantage to be successful in the industry. Respectively, developers of simultaneous interpreter training programs are recommended to pay more attention to IC related contents and exercises. This will add to the overall competence of their graduates and hence increase values for their programs.

Future researches on interpreter’s ICC transfers can leverage the set of criteria for transfer identification recommended in this thesis. With these criteria, a larger amount of data can be analyzed in a more convenient and systematic manner.

## 3. Limitations

Although carefully prepared and conducted, this research is, of course, not without certain limitations. The first limitation is concerning the transcription data for Research Question 1. As this question investigated the natural language use (by speakers and interpreters in real conferences), the analysis was complicated. Sometimes, the set of criteria for classifying ICC transfers developed by the researcher was not clear enough. This meant one transcription segment might have the signs of more than one transfers, or it is not clearly any of the four transfers. The second limitation is linked to the second Research Question. As described earlier in the chapter of methodology, due to the challenges in recruiting non-Vietnamese audience during COVID 19 outbreak, the ART was administered only to Vietnamese audience. As a result, the survey could only test the reactions of audience to English – Vietnamese interpretations. The research findings could have been more comprehensive if Vietnamese – English renderings were also included in the test. The last limitation was also associated with the last Research Question. To answer this question, it would be best if the researcher can interview the SIrs immediately after they finished their turns of interpreting. However, due to practical limitations (interpreters after a turn of working need to immediately support the other partner and/or prepare for the next turn), an FGI conducted later was used as an alternative. The participants in the interview were also not totally the same pool of SIrs recorded and analyzed in Research Question 1. This may cause small differences in the findings, though basically professional SIrs share similar strategic decisions and rationales.

## 4. Recommendations for future research

It is recommended that the research investigate the use of ICC transfers against different variables such as the conference’s thematic content, the interpreter’s seniority, and the interpreter’s background training. Doing so may provide more exploratory knowledge of this topic.

Besides, the audience reaction survey (ART) should include English speaking audience in order to test Vietnamese – English interpretations. That will give a more thorough understanding of how the audience react to the ICC transfers used by SIrs.

Finally, in certain situations when handling source language and target language intercultural differences, interpreters may leverage such paralinguistic devices as silence, sound lengthening or tone raising to supplement intra-linguistic strategies. Therefore, it may be a good suggestion to add para-linguistic strategies to Quang’s ICC transfers (2014) and use this modified model to investigate conference recordings. Audio recordings should be transcribed using a detailed convention such as Jefferson (2004, quoted in Podesva et. al, 2013, p. 486) before being analyzed.

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