

## ABSTRACT

Title of Document:           OVERCOMING INTERCULTURAL  
  CHALLENGES IN INTERPRETING:  
  A CASE STUDY ON CHINESE-ENGLISH  
  CONFERENCE INTERPRETING

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This exploratory case study examines the role of culture in Chinese-English conference interpreting. Given that there has been a lack of empirical research in understanding the role of culture in conference interpreting through the lens of intercultural communication frameworks, we know relatively little about conference interpreters' experiences with intercultural communication challenges. This project helps address this research gap by investigating the types of intercultural communication challenges that Chinese-English conference interpreters experience and their strategies in managing those challenges.

This study hears the voices of both professionals and postgraduate interpreting students. A total number of 27 participants were recruited for this research. Twenty professional conference interpreter were interviewed and seven interpreting students were organized for a focus group discussion. Grounded theory was used to analyze the participants' observations and strategies in managing intercultural communication challenges when doing Chinese-English conference interpreting.

The data analysis process led to the emergence of two procedural guidelines and one process – Interpreters' Intercultural Mediation Process. The two procedural guidelines offer

guidance for the interpreters to provide the most appropriate and effective service: meet with the clients beforehand and be prepared to offer intercultural insights when consulted. Interpreters are found to follow the Interpreters' Intercultural Mediation Process to decide when and how to mediate intercultural communication challenges at work. This Process includes four criteria, seven intercultural challenges, and seven coping strategies.

This study offers theoretical and applied contributions to our understanding of the role of culture in interpreting. By jointly applying frameworks from intercultural communication and interpreting studies to examine the conference interpreting process, this case study makes great efforts to connect the field of intercultural communication with the field of interpreting studies. This study identifies the types of intercultural differences that would lead to challenges in Chinese-English conference interpreting. It also contributes to the call for a cultural turn in interpreting studies. By learning the two procedural guidelines, conference interpreters can be better prepared for their work. By following the Interpreters' Intercultural Mediation Process, conference interpreters can better anticipate and manage the intercultural challenges at work. This study also offers guidance on tailoring intercultural communication courses for postgraduate interpreting training programs.

OVERCOMING INTERCULTURAL CHALLENGES IN INTERPRETING:  
A CASE STUDY ON CHINESE-ENGLISH CONFERENCE INTERPRETING

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## Chapter 1—Introduction

In the age of globalization, intercultural encounters have become more frequent and people of different cultural backgrounds are increasingly dependent upon each other (Chen, 2010). According to the International Congress and Convention Association (ICCA), the number of international conferences that are held increases by approximately 10% annually. During the period 1963-1967, only 1,795 international conferences took place. In the period 2008-2012, 54,844 international conferences were held (ICCA, 2013). The flow of refugees and immigrants also is increasing, not to mention the exponential growth in tourism (Cronin, 2002). Against this background, interpreters who are able to facilitate interlingual and intercultural communication are in great demand (Diriker, 2004).

Former Chinese foreign minister Li, Zhaoxing considered interpreters as the bridges to intercultural communication (Li, 2012). Professor Gravier of the University of Paris – Sorbonne described the importance of interpreters: “The conference interpreter plays a very important role in interpretational affairs. Young people who read magazines or keep up with the latest news on television see an interpreter standing between two heads of state. It is easy to see why he is there in the middle. He helps the two VIPs overcome the language barrier and understand each other better; he helps dispel their suspicions and perhaps even makes it possible for them to reach an agreement. Interpreters are thus often involved in discussions of paramount importance to mankind which can lead to peace or war, happiness or despair, poverty or a more equitable distribution of wealth. Many young people secretly identify with this unobtrusive and knowledgeable individual who is instrumental in establishing valuable ties between the world's leaders” (Seleskovitch, 1998, p. iii).

Traditionally, interpreters are thought of and think of themselves as “conveyers of others’

words and utterances” without any personal involvement (Wadensjö, 1998, p. 8). Interpreters listen to the source language and reconstruct it into the target language on the spot (Zhang, 2011). However, in recent years, interpreting scholars question whether interpreters only have an invisible and powerless role in interpreter-mediated communication. Recent research reveals that interpreters are powerful co-constructors of interpreter-mediated interactions (e.g., Angelelli, 2004a, 2004b; Davidson, 2000; Hsieh, 2006; Roy, 2002; Wadensjö, 1998). Interpreters exercise their power by “adopting various verbal and non-verbal strategies to negotiate, coordinate, check, and balance power relations” in interpreter-mediated communication (Mason & Ren, 2012, p. 233). In order to exercise their powers appropriately to best serve the purpose of the communication, it is believed that interpreters should take both the source culture and the target culture into consideration. This study argues that the interpreting process can be and should be viewed as an intercultural communication process. Interpreters work in intercultural contexts and should exercise power appropriately to facilitate intercultural communication.

However, there has been a lack of empirical research on the role of culture in interpreting studies. Cronin (2002) called for a “cultural turn” in interpreting studies. Interpreting should be a leading area in investigating the role of culture in language contact (Cronin, 2002). All forms of interpreting should be “grounded in the economic, political, and cultural conditions of people’s lives” and variables like “social class, education, gender, age, and situational factors” should be investigated (Cronin, 2002, p. 391). Since then, studies that are driven by cognitive psychology or linguistic approaches were done to answer this call for a cultural turn in interpreting studies (e.g., Diriker, 2004; Monacelli, 2009; Schäffner, Kredens, & Fowler, 2013). However, there still has been a lack of empirical research in understanding the role of culture in interpreting activities

that is driven by an intercultural communication approach. Nor is there much empirical evidence on strategies interpreters can adopt to manage such challenges at work.

This paper argues that there is an urgent need to answer the call for the “cultural turn” in conference interpreting (Cronin, 2002). Consequently, this project helps address those research gaps by taking an intercultural communication approach to investigate professional conference interpreters’ experience with cultural differences in Chinese-English conference interpreting.

### **Purpose of Study**

The main purpose of this study is to investigate the types of intercultural communication challenges conference interpreters experience and their strategies in managing those challenges. In this dissertation, I propose an exploratory qualitative case study method. To make the study more manageable and to facilitate an in-depth analysis and discussion, only the Chinese-English conference interpreting context is examined. Theoretical frameworks from both the field of intercultural communication and the field of interpreting are jointly applied to help achieve this goal.

To be specific, high-context/low-context, cultural value dimensions, face saving, and nonverbal codes from the field of intercultural communication as well as a multi-parameter model of interpreting constellations are jointly applied to examine Chinese-English conference interpreting process. A brief overview of those theoretical frameworks is provided here. A more detailed and nuanced discussion of those frameworks as well as some particular Chinese and American cultural differences will follow in the later section of the literature review.

The theory of high-context and low-context was proposed by Edward T. Hall (1959). It makes a distinction between low-context cultures where people verbalize their communication explicitly in a direct manner and high-context cultures where information is implicitly embedded

in the context and is not always verbalized (Hall, 1959). Cultural value dimensions were established by Hofstede and his colleagues (Hofstede, 1980; Hofstede & Bond, 1988). This paradigm includes five dimensions: individualism/collectivism, power distance, uncertainty avoidance, masculinity/femininity, and Confucian dynamism. Face negotiation theory, developed by Oetzel and Ting-Toomey in 2003, argues that people in all cultures maintain and negotiate face in all communication situations. Nonverbal codes refer to the factors that people use to communicate other than words, such as body motions, vocal qualities, the use of time, and space (Neuliep, 2009).

In the field of interpreting studies, the traditional conduit model is firstly reviewed. The conduit model considers human interaction as a unidirectional process and interpreters are expected to be translation machines without doing any mediation (Reddy, 1979; Wadensjö, 1998). Then, a multi-parameter model that accounts for a greater variety of interpreter-mediated events by Alexieva (2002) is examined. This model classifies interpreter-mediate activities in terms of the degree of interpreters' cultural embeddedness and attempts to locate them on the continuum of universality vs. culture-specificity. Seven scales are proposed: distance vs. proximity; non-involvement vs. involvement; equality/solidarity vs. non-equality/power; formal setting vs. informal setting; literary vs. orality; cooperativeness/directness vs. non-cooperativeness/indirectness; shared goals vs. conflicting goals.

Theoretical frameworks from both the field of intercultural communication and the field of interpreting are jointly used to guide the research questions of this project. The main research question of this case study is:

RQ: What, if any, intercultural communication challenges are faced by Chinese-English conference interpreters and how are those challenges managed?

To make this main research question more operational, four sub-research questions are offered:

RQ1: What, if any, challenges are introduced by the differences between high-context Chinese culture and low-context American culture? What are interpreters' strategies in managing such challenges?

RQ2: What, if any, challenges are introduced by the differences in culture value dimensions between Chinese culture and American culture? What are interpreters' strategies in managing such challenges?

RQ3: What, if any, challenges are introduced by Chinese Confucianism? What are interpreters' strategies in managing such challenges?

RQ4: What, if any, challenges are introduced by the differences in nonverbal communication between Chinese culture and American culture? What are interpreters' strategies in managing such challenges?

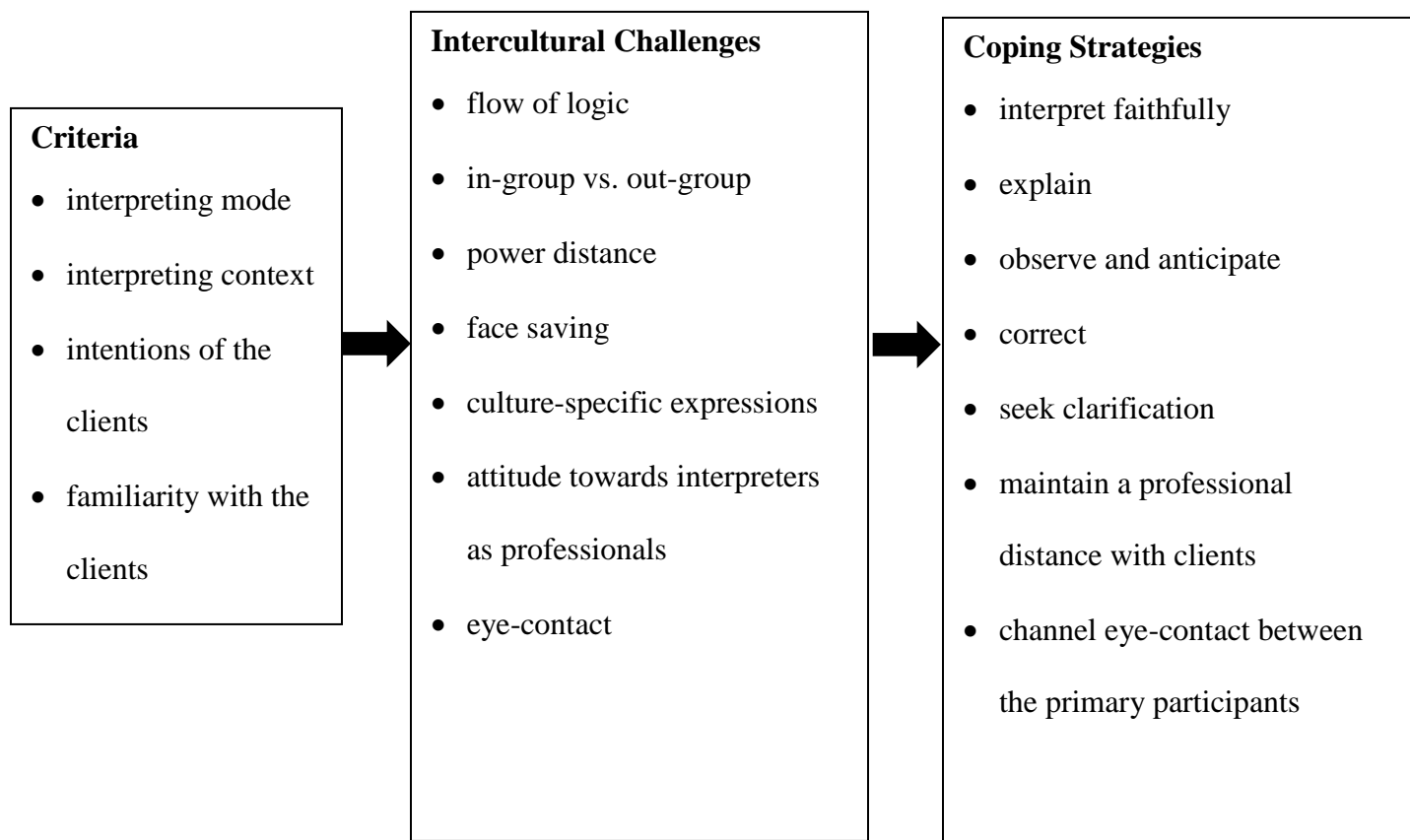
To address the main and sub-research questions, I conducted 20 semi-structured in-depth interviews and one focus group discussion. From January to May, 2015, I recruited 20 experienced professional Chinese-English conference interpreters from both America and China to explain their performances, give examples, and describe experiences (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). I also was able to organize a focus group discussion with seven graduate students who are enrolled in the Chinese-English track of a professional master's program in interpreting. Those students were moderated to discuss the intercultural challenges they encountered during their practices and internships and to raise questions to each other (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011).

I used grounded theory for data analysis. I transcribed the data and applied grounded theory for data analysis. Two procedural guidelines and a Process emerged from the data.

Interpreters were found to follow two procedural guidelines to provide the most appropriate and effective service: (1) meet with the clients beforehand; (2) be prepared to offer intercultural insights when consulted. Despite following the two procedural guidelines, intercultural communication challenges still were inevitable. My data analysis led to the formation of the Interpreters' Intercultural Mediation Process. This Process illustrates the procedure interpreters follow to decide when and how to mediate intercultural communication challenges at work.

To be specific, the Interpreters' Intercultural Mediation Process includes four criteria, seven types of intercultural challenges, and seven coping strategies. Conference interpreters go through the following four criteria to evaluate the situations before doing any mediation: (1) interpreting mode; (2) interpreting context; (3) intentions of the clients; (4) familiarity with the clients. After evaluating those four criteria, if interpreters still feel the necessity to mediate intercultural challenges, they generally are faced with the following seven types of challenges: (1) flow of logic; (2) in-group vs. out-group; (3) power distance; (4) face saving; (5) culture-specific expressions; (6) attitude towards interpreters as professionals; (7) eye-contact. To address those different types of challenges, interpreters adopt seven coping strategies: (1) interpret faithfully; (2) explain; (3) observe and anticipate; (4) correct; (5) seek clarification; (6) maintain a professional distance with clients; (7) channel eye-contact between the primary participants. This Process is illustrated in a flowchart as below:

#### Interpreters' Intercultural Mediation Process



### Significance of Study

This study offers theoretical and applied contributions to our understanding of the role of culture in interpreting. By applying intercultural communication frameworks to examine the role of culture in interpreting, this case study makes great effort to bridge the field of intercultural communication with the field of interpreting and inspire more research in this direction.

In particular, this case study sifts through the major intercultural communication frameworks and identifies the types of intercultural communication differences that could potentially cause challenges for the interpreters' work. This case study also makes contributions to Cronin' (2002) call for a cultural turn in interpreting studies. It conducts empirical research on the types of intercultural communication challenges Chinese-English conference interpreters face

and their managing strategies. It is hoped that this approach can stimulate more researchers to further investigate the role of culture in other language pairs and domains of interpreting. Eventually, a systematic examination of the role of culture that is driven by the intercultural communication approach can be achieved in interpreting studies and more new theories can be created.

In addition to theoretical contributions, this study also offers practical applications. By learning the Interpreters' Intercultural Mediation Process, both professional interpreters and students will be able to improve their understanding and management of the intercultural challenges. This Process provides empirical information for interpreters to enhance intercultural communication competence. The findings of this exploratory case study also offer guidance on tailoring intercultural communication courses for postgraduate interpreter training programs.

The introduction has provided an overview of the study, presented the research questions, offered an initial look at the literature and proposed methods that will guide the study. It also has discussed the significance of this case study. The next chapter, the literature review, will discuss in depth the definitions and theories that guide this study. The research questions and the methodology will then be discussed along with a description of the data collection and analysis procedures. Finally, the findings, theoretical and practical implications, limitations of the study, and directions for future research conclude this paper.

## Chapter 2—Literature Review

In this chapter, I will explore how some key intercultural factors can have a potential stake in the interpreting process. First, I will discuss some key terms and definitions, especially the relationship between culture and language. Then, I will introduce the concepts of communication competence and intercultural competence. After that, I will review some important theoretical frameworks in intercultural communication that are applicable in interpreting. Following that, I will review interpreting literature that discusses intercultural communication. Also, a brief review on the cultural turn and roles of interpreters will be provided. Last, I will introduce some particular differences between Chinese and American cultures before introducing the proposed case study on the role of culture in Chinese-English conference interpreting. By examining the interpreting activities with an intercultural communication approach, this literature review aims to demonstrate the importance of intercultural communication in all domains of interpreting.

### 1. Definitions of Key Terms

Intercultural communication is defined as “the communication between people of different cultures” (Neuliep, 2009, p. 10). In this definition, culture is the core concept. However, culture itself is a complicated concept to define (Martin & Nakayama, 2013).

Over the years, culture has been defined in a variety of ways to serve different research purposes (Kroeber & Kluckhohn, 1952). Researchers have yet to reach consensus on the definition and scope of culture (Martin & Nakayama, 2013). Kroeber and Kluckhohn (1952) made an effort to review the concepts and definitions of culture and they compiled a list of 164 different versions. Therefore, a point that has become fashionable is that “there is nothing usefully called a culture” (Sahlins, 1994, p. 386).

Nevertheless, it still is useful to review some definitions of culture that are relevant to the proposed study to define the scope of culture under this specific study. Hall (1959) suggested the “Iceberg Theory” to understand culture and argued that the most important part of culture is hidden and what can be observed is just the tip of the iceberg. Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (1997) conceptualized culture as consisting of three layers: the outer layer of artifacts and products that can be easily observed, the medium layer of norms and values, and the inner layer of assumptions that are hard to observe. Faure and Sjostedt (1993) further proposed to understand culture as a set of shared and enduring meanings, values, and beliefs that characterize national or ethnic groups and orient their behavior.

In this particular case study, culture is defined to include communication styles, customs, values, and philosophical beliefs. How the different communication styles, customs, values, and philosophical beliefs between China and America influence the Chinese-English conference interpreting process is examined.

It also is important to examine the relationship between culture and language. In addition to the definitions noted above, culture also can be considered as the integrated patterns of human behavior that include factors like “language, thoughts, communications, actions, customs, beliefs, values and institutions of racial, ethnic, religious, or social groups” (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2001, pp. 4-5). This definition regards language as part of culture. Samovar, Porter, and Nemi (1981) also stated that, “what we talk about and how we talk about it is for the most part determined by the culture in which we have lived” (p. 25).

In translation and interpreting studies, the relationship between language and culture also is an important topic. In translation studies, Dingwaney (1995) emphasized that language cannot be isolated from culture. Instead, language is embedded in culture and it is used to express

culture. Therefore, translators “cannot merely search for equivalent words in the target language to render the meaning of the source” (Dingwaney, 1995, p. 3). Instead, translators should look at both the source culture and the target culture before proceeding to the actual translation (Dingwaney, 1995). This viewpoint is shared by other scholars in interpreting studies. Torikai (2010) argued that that, “For interpreters, culture is so much a part of their life that it cannot be treated as a separate issue” (p. 81). Torikai (2010) came to this conclusion after conducting interviews with conference interpreters about their perception of culture. Culture was found to be part of the communicative interactions in the interpreting process because when interpreters talked about interpreting practice, they also talked about cultural issues explicitly or implicitly without realizing it (Torikai, 2010).

Therefore, the scope of culture and language can be overlapping. For the purpose of this study, I choose to define language in its narrow sense as an effort to distinguish language from culture for the purpose of this study. I choose to limit the scope of language to refer only to its linguistic perspective, which is “the sounds, structure, and the rules of human languages” (Berko, Wolvin, Wolvin, & Aitken, 2013, p. 39). By this definition, challenges that are caused by factors other than linguistic differences and the interpreters’ lack of background knowledge could be considered as intercultural communication challenges.

It also is crucial to distinguish interpreting from translation in this study. Put simply, translation converts a written text into another written text while interpreting converts an oral message into another oral message (Seleskovitch, 1998). More specifically, interpreting is defined 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” (Pöchhacker, 2003, p. 11). “One-time-presentation” is a key term in this definition because it

stresses the “immediacy” nature of interpreting activities (Pöchhacker, 2003). In interpreting, service is performed on the spot to facilitate people overcoming barriers of language and culture. In contrast, translation does not need to be done in the moment. Translators enjoy the luxury of time to resort to dictionaries or other sources of help and deliver a refined version at a later time (Pöchhacker, 2003). In this particular study, I am interested in the intercultural challenges in the interpreting process where interpreters need to find a solution immediately.

Last but not least, it also is important to define intercultural mediation. According to Liddicoat and Scarino (2013), it is a meaning making activity that aims at developing shared understanding between participants in the communication process. In other words, it is the process of understanding and analyzing the meanings of all interlocutors from different cultural backgrounds to assist those interlocutors to understand each other (Liddicoat, 2015). An intercultural mediator is a person who is capable of interpreting “the expressions, intentions, perceptions, and expectations of each cultural group to the other” so as to facilitate the communication (Taft, 1981, p. 53). Based on the definitions, the intercultural mediators must be familiar with both cultures (Taft, 1981) and interpreters meet this criteria. In the interpreting process, interpreters are the only party in the communication process who are able to understand and analyze both cultures. Therefore, they could potentially take on the mediation role.

## **2. Communication Competence**

The role of culture can be understood by attempting to learn how to gain communication competence to communicate the differences across cultures. People cannot not communicate. Regardless of an individual’s intention in sending out a message, the audience will assign meanings based on their own observations and interpretations (Spitzberg, 2013). In order to conduct successful communication, communication competence is necessary, which is defined as

“the ability to demonstrate knowledge of the communication behavior socially appropriate to a given situation” (Larson, Backlund, Redmond, & Barbour, 1978, p. 21).

Communication competence refers to the degree to which an individual is perceived as “constantly engaging in appropriate and effective communication” (Spitzberg, 2013, p. 130).

Appropriateness and effectiveness are the two main criteria of communication competence.

Appropriateness refers to being deemed as socially acceptable without violating situational rules (Spitzberg, 2013). Effectiveness means making correct verbal and nonverbal communication choices to achieve the purpose of the interaction (Spitzberg, 2013).

Communication competence is “manifested in skills and performance” (Wolvin & Coakley, 1994, p. 148). A variety of communication skills and behaviors, such as empathy, efficiency, behavioral flexibility, relaxation, interaction management, and the ability to adapt to changing situations are conceptualized in communication competence (Canary & Lakey, 2006; Wiemann & Backlund, 1980). However, communication “skills” and communication “competence” are not the same and need to be differentiated (McCroskey, 1984; Spitzberg, 2013). An individual’s behaviors in a given context constitute his/her skills. Whether or not those skills are competently performed is evaluated by a given audience in a given context (Spitzberg, 2013). Consequently, even if individuals have learned communication skills such as how to maintain eye-contact and manage turn-taking, they still may be viewed as incompetent communicators by a particular audience in a given context (Spitzberg & Hurt, 1987).

To better understand communication competence, Spitzberg (2013) proposed a theoretical model of communication competence – the common integrative conative model. He argued that certain factors could systematically predict whether an individual’s communication quality was judged as appropriate and effective in any given context. To be specific, those

factors are: motivation (i.e., cost/reward), knowledge (i.e., language, rules, roles, and context), and skills (i.e., attentiveness, composure, coordination, and expressiveness) (Spitzberg, 2013). It is conceptualized that, “Motivation concerns the approach and avoidance orientation to communication. Knowledge includes the cognitive content and procedural dynamics of action assembly. Communication skills are the repeatable goal-oriented action sequences involved in message production and interaction” (Spitzberg, 2013, p. 130). To illustrate, a communicator may have sufficient motivation but lack knowledge of how to demonstrate appropriate or effective behaviors. As a result, he/she will be viewed as an incompetent communicator. A communicator may be both motivated and knowledgeable, but fails to demonstrate behaviors in accordance with this motivation and knowledge. In this case, he/she still will be viewed as incompetent (Spitzberg, 2013).

This model is comprehensive and answers Wilson and Sabee’s (2003) call for a theoretical approach in understanding communication competence instead of merely considering it as a construct. It summarizes previous efforts in theorizing communication competence and supports the following discussion on specific competence in the intercultural context.

## **2.1 Intercultural Competence**

Intercultural competence puts communication competence in the specific cultural context and further breaks down its criteria (i.e., appropriateness, effectiveness) and factors (i.e., motivation, knowledge, & skills). To be specific, Fantini (2006) defined intercultural competence 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, p. 12). The importance of being appropriate and effective in communication competence is reflected and stressed in the concept of intercultural competence.

Through the years, the term intercultural competence has been used interchangeably with some other concepts. Table 1 presents some of them (Fantini, 2006, Appendix F):

Cross-cultural awareness	Global competitive intelligence	International Competence
Intercultural interaction	Intercultural sensitivity	Effective Inter-group Communications
Cultural Sensitivity	Communicative Competence	Intercultural Cooperation

All of these terms emphasize, to a certain degree, the ability to step beyond one's own culture and interact with people with diverse cultural backgrounds. According to Sinicrope, Norris, and Watanabe (2007), historically, research on intercultural competence focused on the experiences of westerners working abroad (e.g., Peace Corp volunteers) in the 1950s, 1960s, and early 1970s. During that period of time, those people were the first to experience difficulties in interacting with people from other cultures. In the late 1970s and 1980s, intercultural competence research started to focus on studying abroad, international business, cross-cultural training, and immigrant acculturation (Sinicrope, Norris, & Watanabe, 2007). Today, the scope of research is even broader, covering cross-cultural mediation, how to select the appropriate personnel to send abroad, and how to assess learning outcomes after training etc. (Sinicrope, Norris, & Watanabe, 2007).

To evaluate communicators' level of intercultural competence. Several dimensions are suggested:

- Display of respect, which describes an individual's ability to "express respect and positive regard" for other individuals.
- Interaction posture, which refers to an individual's ability to "respond to others in a descriptive, non-evaluative, and nonjudgmental way."
- Orientation to knowledge, which describes an individual's ability to "recognize the extent to which knowledge is individual in nature."
- Empathy, which is an individual's ability to "put himself/herself in another's shoes."
- Self-oriented role behavior, which expresses an individual's ability to "be flexible and to function in initiating and harmonizing roles." Initiating means seeking further information and clarification while harmonizing refers to mediating the status quo of groups.
- Interaction management, which is an individual's ability to take turns in discussion and initiate and terminate interaction based on a reasonably accurate assessment of real intentions and attitudes of the interlocutors.
- Tolerance for ambiguity, which describes an individual's ability to "react to new and ambiguous situations with little visible discomfort" (Ruben, 1976, pp. 339-341).

## **2.2 Interpreters' Intercultural Competence**

There is not much difference in the definition of interpreters' intercultural competence from the general definition mentioned above. The only differentiation is that the burden of communicating cultural differences is now born by interpreters instead of primary participants (e.g., speakers, audience, doctors, and patients). In interpreter-mediated contexts, interpreters need to be culturally competent in order to facilitate the communication among primary participants who speak different languages and come from different cultural backgrounds.

The importance of interpreters' intercultural competence has begun to be recognized in recent years. Schuster (2013) proposed a five-stage sociological model to describe the process from a state of chaotic public sphere where no institutional solutions are in place to facilitate the communication between public service providers and the new immigrants to a state where the public sphere is linguistically accessible as part of a comprehensive policy of cultural competence. Unfortunately, Schuster (2013) did not specify the definition of cultural competence in his study.

The Conférence Internationale permanente d' Instituts Universitaires de Traducteurs et Interprètes (CIUTI) also recognizes the importance of intercultural competence for trainee interpreters and translators (CIUTI, 2014). According to CIUTI, without a thorough knowledge of related cultures, a successful interpretation or translation is not possible. Interpreting is a complicated transferring process from source culture/language into target culture/language (2014). Therefore, CIUTI advocates for socio-cultural context to be taken into account in the interpreting process and encourages its member universities to emphasize intercultural competence during training (CIUTI, 2014).

### **3. Intercultural Communication**

In the following section, several important intercultural communication frameworks that may impede the interpreter-mediated communication are reviewed. I will first explain the theories and then discuss briefly how each theory can potentially play a role in interpreting. A more detailed discussion on intercultural challenges in each domain of interpreting will be provided in a later section of this chapter.

#### **3.1 High-context/Low-context Cultures**

The differences between high-context cultures and low-context cultures play a role in the interpreting process. This construct was proposed by Edward Hall in 1959. According to Hall (1959), in low-context communication cultures, people communicate directly, explicitly, and rely on verbal communication to explain everything. The discussion is direct and straightforward. Important issues are openly and exhaustively discussed. On the contrary, in high-context cultures, information lies implicitly in the context and is not always verbalized. As a result, discussion is indirect and main issues may only be inferred or not discussed at all.

Hall (1989) also pointed out that in high-context cultures, the receiver of a message assumes responsibility to infer the hidden or contextual meanings of the message. Therefore, a high-context speaker would expect the listeners to get the implied meaning without being specific. Whereas in low-context cultures, the speaker is expected to be responsible for constructing a direct and unambiguous message for listeners. As a result, it is not difficult to imagine that misunderstanding or even frustration will occur when the interpreter tries to interpret a high-context speech to an audience from low-context cultures. If the interpreter simply does a word-for-word interpretation, a low-context audience might not be able to get the implied meaning encoded in the high-context source speech. Worse still, the audience might question the interpreter's competence and blame him/her for not being able to successfully conveying the meaning.

The interpreting process could be affected by the communication styles of all communicants. Interpreters need to take into consideration the degree to which communicants rely on contextual factors rather than explicit speech to convey meanings.

### **3.2 Cultural Value Dimensions**

Hofstede is another significant figure in the development of intercultural studies. He developed four cultural value dimensions based on a country-level factor analysis of IBM employees in 40 countries: individualism/collectivism, power distance, uncertainty avoidance, and masculinity/femininity (Hofstede, 1980). Later, Hofstede and Bond (1988) developed a fifth dimension: Confucian dynamism.

To be specific, Hofstede's first dimension is *individualism (IND)*–*collectivism (COL)*, with IND defined as “a loosely knit social framework in which people are supposed to take care of themselves and of their immediate families only”, while COL “is characterized by a tight social framework in which people distinguish between in-groups and out-groups, they expect their in-group to look after them, and in exchange for that they feel they owe absolute loyalty to it” (Hofstede, 1980, p. 45). Moreover, being assertive or aggressive often is seen as a virtue in individualistic cultures, whereas being accommodating and modest are highly valued in collectivistic cultures (Landis, Bennett, & Bennett, 2004). In interpreting, this distinction can bring challenges to interpreters' interpreting styles and professional ethics. A speaker from an individualistic culture may decide to give an assertive speech, assuming that is a good way to make his/her viewpoints loud and clear. If interpreters deliver a faithful rendition of this assertive speech to the participants from collectivistic cultures, they may consider the speaker as rude and arrogant. As a result, misunderstandings are created unintentionally. In addition, interpreters are expected to work in an impartial way according to their professional codes. However, people from collectivistic cultures tend to include interpreters as their in-group members and reveal confidential information that interpreters are not supposed to know. To sum up, the differences between collectivism and individualism can impact interpreters' choice of words and challenge their professional ethics.

Hofstede's second dimension is *power distance (PD)*, which is defined as "the extent to which a society accepts the fact that power in institutions and organizations is distributed unequally" (Hofstede, 1980, p. 45). Power distance can be a concern when determining the status of all participants in an interpreter-mediated context. Primary participants (e.g., speakers, service providers) are treated with more respect and given more power in cultures with higher power distance. In addition, the status of interpreters also is appreciated differently across cultures. Some cultures treat interpreters with great respect and consider them as experts who master the ultimate language skills and cultural knowledge. Whereas, in other cultures interpreters simply are considered as assistants or secretaries. Therefore, interpreters may need to learn how to cope with different role expectations and negotiate their own status as well as the status of the primary participants.

Hofstede's third dimension, *uncertainty avoidance (UA)*, is defined as "the extent to which a society feels threatened by uncertain and ambiguous situations and tries to avoid these situations by providing greater career stability, establishing more formal rules, not tolerating deviant ideas and behaviors, and believing in absolute truths and the attainment of expertise" (Hofstede, 1980, p. 45). This dimension can be applicable in interpreting when interpreters find themselves stuck between one party that stresses rules, formality, punctuality, and the other party that takes business casually. Being aware of this dimension can help interpreters make informed decision on mediating strategies to avoid mistrust and even confrontation between the two parties.

Hofstede's fourth dimension is *masculinity (MAS)–femininity (FEM)*. MAS is defined as "the extent to which the dominant values in society are 'masculine' – that is, assertiveness, the acquisition of money and things, and not caring for others, the quality of life, or people"

(Hofstede, 1980, p. 46). FEM is defined as the preference for cooperation, modesty, caring for the weak and quality of life (Hofstede, 1980). In interpreting, this dimension means that interpreters should be careful when determining the appropriate language style and word choices in a conversation. Participants from masculine cultures can be very competitive in negotiation styles and assertive in word choices. If interpreters simply do a word-for-word interpretation, participants from feminine cultures might feel very uncomfortable or even feel being offended. On the other hand, participants from feminine cultures may be considered as too soft and indecisive by masculine cultures participants. As a result, this also is a factor interpreters should be aware of in the interpreting process.

The fifth dimension, *Confucian dynamism*, also is known as *long-term vs. short-term orientation* (Hofstede & Bond, 1988). Long-term orientation refers to future-oriented values such as perseverance, thrift, and having a sense of shame. Short-term orientation expects personal stability, face saving, respect for tradition, as well as reciprocation of greetings, favors, and gifts (Hofstede & Bond, 1988). This dimension may lead to arguments and distrust between/among primary participants. Participants may have different time agendas in their minds and fail to realize that a well-accepted agenda in one culture may be considered as an unacceptable agenda in another culture.

### **3.3 Face Saving**

The concern for face is another important intercultural factor that can potentially be a challenge in interpreters' work. Face saving is defined as "what we do in order to have our ego recognized and taken account of, to have one's views heard, and to some extent accepted by others, or at least have others accept one's right to have them" (Mulholland, 1991, p. 68). Face saving theory predicts that some cultures value face more than other cultures (Brown & Levinson,

1987; Goffman, 1967; Ting-Toomey & Kurogi, 1998). One face-saving strategy is to deliberately use titles and honorifics to address other people while downgrading one's own status. However, this practice can be understood differently across cultures because humbleness in one culture may be taken as a weakness in another culture (Mulholland, 1991).

To further understand why people perceive face differently, Oetzel and Ting-Toomey proposed a related theory known as face negotiation theory (Oetzel & Ting-Toomey, 2003). Face negotiation theory provides a sound explanatory framework for explaining differences and similarities in face and face saving during conflicts. Face negotiation theory argues that:

- (a) people in all cultures try to maintain and negotiate face in all communication situations;
- (b) cultural variability, individual-level variables, and situational variables influence cultural members' selection of one set of face concerns over others (such as self-oriented face-saving vs. other oriented face-saving); and
- (c) subsequently, face concerns influence the use of various face saving and conflict strategies in intergroup and interpersonal encounters (Oetzel & Ting-Toomey, 2003, p. 660).

Therefore, if interpreters work between/among cultures that perceive face differently, challenges may occur. Face saving theory and face negotiation theory raise interpreters' awareness of different communication strategies between/among primary participants who bear different attitudes towards face.

### **3.4 Nonverbal Communication**

Nonverbal communication focuses on the "messages people send to each other that do not contain words, such as messages sent through body motions; vocal qualities; and the use of

time, space, artifacts, dress, and even smell” (Neuliep, 2009, p. 247). To be specific, communication with the body is called kinesics, which includes “the use of hands, arms, legs, and face to send messages” (Neuliep, 2009, p. 247). Take facial expressions as an example. Psychologist Paul Ekman and colleagues discovered that six basic emotions have universal facial expressions: happiness, sadness, disgust, surprise, anger, and fear. Expressions for these emotions have the same meaning for the same intensity in most cultures (Ekman, 2003; Matsumoto, 2006). Although research indicates universalities in certain facial expressions, the causes for people to express those emotions may vary from culture to culture. As Martin and Nakayama (2013) argued, smiling is a universal facial expression, but what prompts a person to smile may be culture-specific. Also, how often people smile varies across cultures. Szarota (2010) found that North Americans tend to smile more often than other cultural groups because they consider smiling as being friendly. In comparison, French and German people emphasize sincerity in expressing one’s feelings and only smile when they feel truly happy. Worse still, people who smile too often even can be regarded as being superficial (Szarota, 2010). To sum up, interpreters may need to be mindful of appropriate kinesics qualities at work.

Proxemics refers to the study of space that shows how people “express intimacy and power” (Neuliep, 2009, p. 247). Hall (1966) distinguished contact cultures from noncontact cultures. According to Hall (1966), people from contact cultures prefer to stand closer, maintain more direct eye contact, touch more frequently, and speak in louder voices. On the contrary, in noncontact cultures, people tend to stand farther apart while talking, maintain less eye contact, touch less often, and speak in lower voices. South America and southern Europe are contact cultures, whereas northern Europe, the US, and the Far East are noncontact cultures (Hall, 1966). For instance, some cultures prefer to kiss as a means of greeting, even when people meet each

other for the first time. On the contrary, some cultures make no physical contact at all. Therefore, it is not uncommon for a Spanish speaker to greet the interpreter with a kiss even when they do not know each other. If other participants in the interpreter-mediated context are not familiar with this custom, they may mistakenly assume that the Spanish speaker and the interpreter are close friends (Hale, 2014). By understanding the different preferences in proxemics, interpreters can try to maintain a comfortable space with primary participants to avoid misunderstandings. Interpreters also can be more alerted to the awkward display of space between/among primary participants themselves and intervene if necessary.

Paralanguage refers to “vocal characteristics such as volume, pitch, rate, and so forth” (Neuliep, 2009, p. 247). Knapp and Hall (1992) divided paralanguage into two broad categories: voice quality and vocalizations. Paralinguistic voice qualities include pitch, rhythm, and resonance of voice. Paralinguistic vocalizations include laughing, crying, signing, inarticulates (e.g., um, ah, uh) (Knapp & Hall, 1992). Take the English and Chinese languages as an illustration. The Chinese language relies on tones to communicate meaning. A tone change in a word can completely change the meaning of the word. *The Four Tones in Mandarin Chinese* (Hsin-Yun, 1998, as cited in Neuliep, 2009) used the word *ma* as an example. In the first tone, *ma* means “mother”. In the second tone, *ma* refers to “grass”. In the third tone, *ma* associates with “horse”, and in the fourth tone, *ma* becomes “to scold”. English, on the other hand, relies on the pitch of a word to express anger, surprise, or sadness (Neuliep, 2009). For instance, the word *interesting* can mean either really interesting or not interesting at all depending on the pitch people use to pronounce this word. A good mastery of paralanguage can help interpreters quickly uncover the real intention of the interlocutors.

Chronemics is about how people understand and use time across cultures (Martin &

Nakayama, 2013). One way to understand chronemics is to distinguish between monochronic and polychronic time orientations (Hall, 1966). Monochronic cultures value being punctual to appointments and meetings, completing tasks before deadlines, and following schedules except in the case of emergency. In contrast, polychronic cultures think of time in a more holistic way and do not emphasize deadlines or punctuality as much (Hall, 1966). Due to such differences, it is not surprising that people from monochronic cultures (e.g., Americans) find it difficult to conduct business with people from polychronic cultures (e.g., Middle Easterners) (Neuliep, 2009). US businessmen do not understand why their Middle Eastern counterparts can be hours late for a meeting without apologizing. US businessmen do not understand how meetings can just be cancelled due to personal obligations (Neuliep, 2009). Therefore, interpreters should be aware of the different philosophies towards time in the cultures that they interpret for.

#### **4. Interpreting**

##### **4.1 The Cultural Turn**

After reviewing the important intercultural frameworks, it is useful to learn how culture is studied in translation and interpreting studies. The “cultural turn” was proposed in translation studies first in the 1980s (Pöchhacker, 2009). Translation scholars began to argue for an interdisciplinary and cultural approach to understand translation studies. Snell-Hornby (1988) stated that translation studies should be viewed as a culturally-oriented subject that draws theories from various disciplines like psychology, ethnology, linguistic, and philosophy. Ingo (1992, as cited in Leppihalme, 1997) argued that translation studies were related to philosophy, literary studies, linguistics, sociology, pragmatics, and culture studies. This cultural turn highlighted intercultural translation problems because scholars finally came to the recognition that a “culture-bound concept, even where the two cultures involved are not too distant, can be

more problematic for the translator than the semantic or syntactic difficulties of a text” (Cordero, 1984, p 473). Culturally-oriented translation studies stop seeing the source text and the target text simply as linguistically different materials. Both the source text and the target text are considered to occur “in a given situation in a given culture in the world” (Leppihalme, 1997, p. 3)

In interpreting studies, the “cultural turn” did not start until 2002 when Cronin (2002) wrote the *The Empire Talks Back: Orality, Heteronomy and the Cultural Turn in Interpreting Studies*. Cronin (2002) highlighted the important social framework that interpreters work within and argued for more research to illuminate the linguistic and cultural boundaries interpreters face in their work. It is argued that all forms of interpreting should be “grounded in the economic, political, and cultural conditions of people’s lives” and, thus, a cultural turn should be included in interpreting studies (Cronin, 2002, p. 391). As a result, some research has been done to answer this call for a cultural turn. Diriker (2004) examined meta-discourse as the social context to study the presence and performance of simultaneous interpreters from a socio-cultural and communicative perspective. Monacelli (2009) employed participation framework and interactional politeness to investigate the self-regulation and face-saving behaviors of simultaneous interpreters. In community interpreting, the editors of the book *Interpreting in a Changing Landscape* compiled the latest studies to make sense of the socio-political and socio-cultural issues in interpreting practices (Schäffner, Kredens, & Fowler, 2013). Some papers explored how social and institutional restrictions impact the actual interpreting behavior and the social perception of interpreters (e.g., Baixauli-Olmos, 2013; Bot & Verrept, 2013; Dickinson, 2013; Martin & Herráez, 2013; Rubio & Martí, 2013). However, none of those studies adopted an intercultural communication approach. Therefore, I argue that the call for a cultural turn in interpreting studies has not been fully answered, especially not from an intercultural

communication driven approach.

In addition, the lack of attention to empirical evidence has impeded the development of interpreting studies. Gile (2011) revealed that one of the striking features in the history of interpreting studies was the prevalence of personal theorizing when scholars tended to generate interpreting theories based on personal experience. Those personal experiences and ideas about the nature of the interpreter's work have been applied widely in interpreter training in many parts of the world (Gile, 2011). Even today, scholars in interpreting studies still tend to be cited more for their theories and opinions rather than for their research methods or findings (Gile, 2011). This study holds that empirical evidence and findings are equally important.

## **4.2 Role of Culture in Interpreting**

Therefore, in the following section, I am going to review both theoretical and empirical evidence on the role of culture in interpreting studies through the lens of intercultural communication frameworks. To best facilitate the discussion below, I choose to categorize interpreting activities under four different domains: conference, community, legal, and healthcare (Pöchhacker & Shlesinger, 2002). I will first provide the definition of each domain and then discuss the role of culture within.

### **4.2.1 Conference Interpreting**

Conference interpreting refers to the use of simultaneous or consecutive interpreting in a formal meeting or conference. Specifically, simultaneous interpreting (SI) refers to the kind of interpreting that allows the listeners to hear the interpretation at the same time as the speech is made (Phelan, 2001). On most occasions, it is done with the aid of audio transmission equipment. Simultaneous interpreters often sit in a booth, hear the speech through the headphone, and interpret simultaneously into the target language (Phelan, 2001). The booth can be inside the

conference room or can be far away from the actual site. In other circumstances, interpreters sit right next to one or several listeners with no audio transmission equipment present and interpret simultaneously as the speech is delivered. This is called whispered interpreting (Pöchhacker, 2003). Due to the appeal of large conference halls, specialized subject matter, and the near simultaneity from one language to another, simultaneous interpreters are often given more respect than other interpreters in other domains. It is thought that they are miraculously accomplishing a task that is impossible (Diriker, 2004).

Despite the prestige of simultaneous interpreting, research in this area is quite limited and has mainly focused on cognitive, psycho-, and neuro-linguistic factors (Diriker, 2004).

Pöchhacker (1995) argued that studies in simultaneous interpreting tend to focus narrowly on how the brain processes information second-by-second rather than taking a holistic consideration of text, situation, and culture. The presence and performance of simultaneous interpreters in relation to the socio-cultural and communicative aspects is rarely examined (Diriker, 2004). However, the underexplored socio-cultural and communicative aspects of simultaneous interpreting does not mean that they are not important (Diriker, 2004). Stenzl (1983, as cited in Diriker, 2004) argued for developing an overarching model that approaches simultaneous interpreting as an interlingual communicative task that includes the speaker, the interpreter, and the target culture receiver. She argued that researchers should explore how the communication between the speaker and the audience is influenced by culture, context, and the presence of simultaneous interpreters. Thiéry (1990) also stressed that in conference interpreting, it is important that interpreters do a situation analysis to decide “who is talking to whom, to what purpose, and with what possible effect” (p. 14). Nevertheless, only a few scholars have actually conducted empirical research on the role of culture in simultaneous interpreting.

Pöchhacker (1994, as cited in Diriker, 2004) is a pioneer in exploring simultaneous interpreting in its holistic context of culture and situation. By analyzing the transcripts of a three-day conference of the International Council for Small Business, Pöchhacker argued that the output of simultaneous interpreters should be grounded in specific contexts and cultures.

Inspired by Pöchhacker, Diriker (2004) argued that simultaneous interpreters are actively involved in the ongoing context, speaking on behalf of themselves as well as the clients they serve. Diriker (2004) conducted research based on a two-day SI-mediated academic conference named the International Philosophy Colloquium that was held in Istanbul, Turkey. Simultaneous interpreting service was provided between English and Turkish throughout the conference. Diriker (2004) did participant observation at the actual conference. She also conducted interviews with the interpreters, speakers, organizers, and audience of the conference. Her aim was to study the presence and performance of simultaneous interpreters in this particular event. Some of her findings relate to nonverbal communication concepts like proxemics, even though she did not explicitly point them out. For example, Diriker (2004) mentioned that in order to better prepare for a highly technical meeting, the simultaneous interpreters asked the organizer to assign a research assistant to be in the booth to help explain unexpected terminologies during the conference. Despite everyone's best intentions, they realized that using an assistant in the booth was not easy. The presence of the assistant made the room inside the booth even more cramped, causing proxemics discomfort. In addition, the assistant was not responsive to the nonverbal cues from interpreters and tended to answer questions in a very loud voice. As a result, Diriker (2004) noticed that "both sides seem rather frustrated with the process" (p. 62).

Diriker's (2004) study also confirmed that simultaneous interpreters were concerned about face saving and adopted several face-saving strategies. When a speaker decided to speak

German which was not an official language for the conference and the interpreter did not know German, the interpreter made an announcement to his audience immediately by saying “you are listening to the German” and stopped interpreting (Diriker, 2004, p. 72). By making this quick announcement, the interpreter defended his self-face by letting the audience know that it was not his fault in failing to provide the simultaneous interpretation. During the interview, this interpreter admitted that his voice might have sounded a bit angry when he made that announcement. He simply did not want to be blamed by the organizer of the conference. It was unfortunate that the researcher did not follow up those paralinguistic factors in the study. She could have asked the audience whether they sensed the anger in that interpreter’s voice and how they felt about it.

Inspired by Diriker’s (2004) findings, Claudia Monacelli (2009) continued to explore how simultaneous interpreters regulated themselves to ensure professional survival in face-threatening situations. An important theoretical framework she adopted was face saving (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Goffman, 1967; Ting-Toomey & Kurogi, 1998). She explored the strategies interpreters adopted to respond to potential threats to self-face and other-face. Four face-saving strategies were discovered: omissions, additions, weakening, and strengthening. Take omission as an example. Monacelli (2009) found simultaneous interpreters chose to omit a text sequence when they considered it as a threat to the positive face of the person addressed in the source text. However, except for a handful of calls and cases, situating simultaneous interpreting activities in holistic intercultural contexts has not constituted a major research focus.

The International Association of Conference Interpreters (AIIC) website also discussed the importance of non-verbal communication in simultaneous interpreting and offered several general suggestions on how to handle the problems caused by different non-verbal

communication styles (Besson, Graf, Hartung, Kropfhäusser & Voisard, 2005). Interpreters are encouraged to reproduce the same intonation as the speaker. When the speaker makes inarticulate noises such as “eh” between words or sentences, interpreters are advised to transmit only the actual message while filtering all the noises. As for kinesics, if simultaneous interpreters can be seen by the audience from the booth, they may need to reproduce the body gestures of the speaker. However, this AIIC article also pointed out that the audience usually looked at the speaker while listening to a simultaneous interpretation. Therefore, there is a rather small need for the interpreters to reproduce the body gestures. Likewise, simultaneous interpreters are limited in their opportunities to transfer facial expressions because they cannot communicate visually with the audience from their booths (Besson, Graf, Hartung, Kropfhäusser & Voisard, 2005).

Collados Aís (2002) sought to test the effect of intonation on the subjects' evaluation of the quality of simultaneous interpretation. The end-users of simultaneous interpreting service were asked to listen to three manipulated versions of simultaneously interpreted video-recordings and then, answer a user expectation questionnaire. The three manipulated versions were: (1) video with monotonous intonation and no content error; (2) video with lively intonation but content error; (3) video with lively intonation and no content error. The result indicated that the monotonous intonation of the simultaneous interpreters was clearly detected by the users and was used to assess the quality of the interpretation. Video 3 received the highest rating on the overall quality of the interpretation and showed a significant difference compared with video 1. However, the end-users were not good at judging the actual quality of the simultaneous interpretation because they perceived video 2 that contained content errors to be as good as video 3 that contained no content errors. Collados Aís (2002) concluded that there was a clear

separation between the actual quality and the perceived quality of a simultaneous interpretation and simultaneous interpreters can take on a lively intonation to compensate for certain content errors.

Ahrens (2004) further confirmed the importance of voice quality in simultaneous interpreting. Ahrens (2004) analyzed an authentic English-German corpus to identify the non-verbal differences between the source text and the target text and the possible strategies. Simultaneous interpreters were found to apply omitting and summarizing strategies in order to keep up with the fast pace of the source text. By intentionally applying those two strategies, the simultaneous interpreters also were aware of the fact that they were not able to imitate the source text structure when omitting certain elements of the source text. To compensate for the loss of content, simultaneous interpreters chose to rely on their voice and prosodic features to convey the source text clearly and unambiguously into the target text (Ahrens, 2004).

In consecutive interpreting (CI), the interpreter listens to a speech while taking notes and when the speaker finishes a meaningful segment, the interpreter tries to reproduce the meaning in the target language (Nolan, 2012). Depending on the length of the speech, consecutive interpreting may be done “all at one go or in several segments” (Nolan, 2012, p. 3). Since consecutive interpreters will not start interpreting until the speaker finishes a meaningful segment, good short-term memory and note-taking skills are necessary to be able to record and reproduce the speaker’s words and utterances in the target language. Those two skills also are the focus of research in consecutive interpreting.

Consecutive interpreting had long been the standard method of interpreting for international conferences until simultaneous interpreting was first introduced on a large scale during the WWII Nuremberg trials (Andres, 2012; Nolan, 2012). Nevertheless, consecutive

interpreting is still widely used in meetings and conferences (Gilles, 2005). One of the main reasons is that it does not require much equipment except a pen and a notebook (Nolan, 2012; Obst, 2010). However, since speakers and interpreters take turns to speak, consecutive interpreting takes twice as much time. In particular when three or more languages are involved in a conference, time becomes a serious concern and simultaneous interpreting will be favored over consecutive interpreting (Obst, 2010).

Generally speaking, consecutive interpreting is still preferred in certain occasions, such as brief public appearances by prominent figures, welcoming addresses, speeches for banquets or similar occasions, press conferences, one-to-one interviews, confidential hearings, diplomatic interpreting or high-level talks (De Jonghe, 1992; Nolan, 2012). For instance, at banquets or receptions, the host will want to give a speech to the guests and the guests will want to reciprocate. Thus, consecutive interpreters are there to facilitate the communication (Gillies, 2005). Consecutive interpreters also work for foreign visits and guided tours. For example, when a group of businessmen visit a factory in a foreign country, they will rely on interpreters to interpret local guides' introduction consecutively (Gillies, 2005). As Gillies (2005) noted, there is no end to the list of occasions where consecutive interpreters are needed.

Compared to simultaneous interpreting where interpreters sit in the booths and cannot always be seen by the speaker and the audience, consecutive interpreters are present on site where speeches are given. Therefore, consecutive interpreters also have better access to observe the nonverbal cues from the speaker and the audience. This is especially helpful when paralinguistic and kinesics are independent of the verbal language (Poyatos, 2002). Poyatos (2002) mentioned a scenario when the speaker smiles, nods his/her head, and makes paralinguistic sounds like "Mmmmm, uh-huuuu" to express agreement without actually saying

any word. To help consecutive interpreters handle this scenario, Poyatos (2002) suggested several possible solutions. The interpreter could reproduce the speaker's paralinguistic and kinesics as originally encoded; the interpreter could verbally explain the message; the interpreter could interpret the speaker's paralinguistic and kinesics into the target language's paralinguistic and kinesics etc (Poyatos, 2002). It should be pointed out that Poyatos' (2002) suggestions are theoretically based rather than being empirically tested.

On the other hand, consecutive interpreters also should be fully aware that their body language and public speaking skills are directly visible to both the speaker and the audience (Pöchhacker, 2003; Poyatos, 2002). Lorena Bottan (2002, as cited in Pöchhacker, 2003) carried out a study to explore the importance of public speaking skills in consecutive interpreting. Bottan (2002) found clear evidence that public speaking factors, such as breathing, voice control, and eye contact, impact the successful delivery of consecutive interpreting.

#### **4.2.2 Community Interpreting**

Community interpreting is considered as a less formal kind of interpreting that happens between people who do not master each other's language. It is carried out in face-to-face encounters and is undertaken most frequently worldwide compared with other types of interpreting (Wadensjö, 1998). It is widely used in business, education and social services etc. (Niska, 2000). There are some differences as to what term to use to describe this type of interpreting. While most countries choose the term "community interpreting", many European countries refer to it as public service interpreting (Phelan, 2001). Sometimes, liaison interpreting also can be used as a synonymous term (Wadensjö, 1998).

Even the term "community interpreting" itself can be associated with slightly different meanings in interpreting studies. For example, some research (e.g., Ozolins, 1998; Roberts, 1997)

uses it to refer to all types of interpreting other than conference interpreting. That is to say, community interpreting should include legal interpreting and healthcare interpreting, whereas other research argues that legal and healthcare interpreting should be their own independent domains (Phelan, 2001). In this paper, I distinguish legal and medical interpreting as specialized domains because they have unique features that regular community interpreting activities do not have. I will elaborate more in the discussion below.

In community interpreting, interpreters and clients often sit face-to-face in the same room and conversations are quite casual (Hale, 2007). Community interpreting is done out of necessity because participants will not be able to communicate without the help of an interpreter (Hale, 2007). Thus, it is especially important for community interpreters to be aware of cultural differences to facilitate the communication.

Hale (2007) pointed out that, “Community interpreters work in a participatory framework and the behaviors of all participants influence the interaction and the effectiveness of the interpreting activity” (p. 145). At the micro level, matters such as seating arrangements, eye-contact, turn-taking and overlapping speech are important considerations in interpreter-mediated contexts. At the macro level, participants’ attitudes towards interpreters and their expectations of interpreters’ responsibilities impact the roles of interpreters (Hale, 2005).

Scholars working on community interpreting have been very keen to analyze and question the role of interpreters, their job descriptions, and the implications of interpreter-mediated interactions in various contexts (Diriker, 2004). Community interpreting scholars ask questions on how the presence of interpreters influences the interaction and the relation between/among participants in interpreter-mediated interactions. They also are interested in understanding how the presence of interpreters reveals and restores power differences

between/among participants (Diriker, 2004). In addition to power distance, face concern is discussed in community interpreting. Wadensjö (1998) noted that community interpreters have several faces to save. One is the face of their clients. If clients display a wish to save face, interpreters are expected to convey this wish while speaking on the clients' behalf. Another is the face of interpreters themselves. Interpreters have their own face to save as professionals and wish to gain confidence and trust from their clients. However, it also should be noted that interpreters may deliberately choose to risk losing faces if they have other more important goals to achieve. Merlini (2013) mentioned a case when an interpreter told the physician about a child's eating problem that the child's grandfather mentioned accidentally when they were waiting outside the physician's room. The interpreter did so to help the physician's treatment of the child, despite the potential face threat it may create to the grandfather (Merlini, 2013).

Wadensjö (1998) also implicitly mentioned the concept of high-context/low-context cultures. She noted that in some circumstances, vagueness in interaction can be a better way to find out about other people's real intentions and value systems whereas frankness and explicitness may be considered as inappropriate in some cultures. As a consequence, if community interpreters do not pay attention to those cultural factors, they risk losing trust from their clients or even hurting their clients' feelings.

Nonverbal communication factors also are found to be used by community interpreters to facilitate the communication. Davitti (2013) recently did a case study to explore the activities of interpreters working in parent-teacher meetings that involve English and Italian. Through conversation analysis, interpreters were found to actively promote the alignment between the teacher and the parent. Interpreters did so by elaborating more explicitly the teacher's evaluation and stance on the student to make sure that the parent understands and agrees with the teacher.

Interpreters also were found to maintain more eye-contact with the parent than the teacher as a means of compensating for the lack of eye-contact between the teacher and the parent.

#### **4.2.3 Legal Interpreting**

Legal interpreting should be considered as an independent domain from community interpreting because it occurs in very formal contexts (Phelan, 2001). It is of vital importance that legal interpreters remain impartial and accurate. It also is absolutely essential that interpreters in this domain have a sound understanding of legal concepts (Phelan, 2001).

Generally speaking, the settings for legal interpreting include: police interviews and interrogations, lawyer-client interactions, tribunal hearings, as well as courtroom hearings and trials (Hale, 2007). Berk-Seligson (1990) is a pioneer in exploring courtroom interpreting. She investigated how the dynamic in the courtroom changed with the presence of interpreters, and how these changes impacted the judicial proceedings. She did seven months of ethnographic observation in three tiers of court: federal, state, and municipal and recorded the judicial proceedings (Berk-Seligson, 1990). Some of her major findings can be explained by cultural differences. For instance, she found a discrepancy in how interpreters define their status and how other court personnel and court clients perceive the status of interpreters (Berk-Seligson, 1990). Ng (2013) further confirmed the power asymmetry in the courtroom. Ng (2013) found that legal interpreters made an overt and consistent effort to avoid reproducing the first-person references used by legal professionals. Instead, interpreters used the third-person references or chose to omit the first-person pronouns altogether. Ng (2013) argued that this phenomenon occurs because interpreters perceive legal professionals as having more power in the hierarchical courtroom setting and decided to differentiate themselves from the powerful legal professionals.

The theories of individualism/collectivism and power distance can be used here to explain the very social status of legal interpreters in the social structure of the courthouse.

Despite their effort to differentiate themselves from the powerful legal professionals in the courtroom, legal interpreters are considered to have powerful influence in the courtroom because they are the only party who know both languages in the courtroom. Scholars like Edwards (1995) are concerned about how they should wield that power responsibly. Berk-Seligson (1990) specifically pointed out that legal interpreters are able to influence the evaluations of judges and jurors by rephrasing the source language in a way that conforms to the cultural preferences and word choice in the target language. When interpreters rephrase the Spanish testimonies into more polite and higher register English expressions, the witnesses are evaluated as more trustworthy, competent, and intelligent by English-speaking jurors (Berk-Seligson, 1990). Hale (2004) analyzed the discourse practices of lawyers, witnesses, and interpreters. She further confirmed that interpreters tended to alter the witnesses' style of expression, and as a consequence, potential evaluations by the magistrates may be impacted (Hale, 2004). However, Hale (2004) also noticed that interpreters' alterations did not always bring positive effects. Some alterations did improve witnesses' image, making them more competent and convincing whereas other alterations could achieve opposite effects.

Hale (2007) concluded that many intercultural differences were reflected in the way people express themselves in languages. Politeness could be expressed differently in different cultures. If the target language expresses politeness directly while the source language expresses politeness indirectly, some intervention might be required to avoid misunderstandings (Hale, 2007). As a specific example, in many languages, a sentence such as 'Open the door' would not be considered impolite. However, in English, such a sentence could be considered as impolite

because a more appropriate expression would be, “Could you please open the door?” Similarly, if a legal interpreter is to interpret a polite request in English such as “Can you please tell the court what happened?”, the interpreter should first determine whether it is a genuine question about ability or a polite request. After making the decision, the interpreter can match the pragmatic speech act to achieve the same level of politeness (Hale, 2014, p. 324).

Should interpreters interpret cultural differences in legal settings? Here is an example that illustrates how an interpreter’s intervention helps address cultural misunderstandings but still may not be able to change a person’s mind:

An Arabic-speaking man is discussing with his lawyer his fight for the custody of his children in a divorce case. The lawyer explains that the Family Court expects all parents who are seeking custody to complete a parenting course. The client says he will not do that, as such a course is for women, not men. The lawyer says that if that is his response, they cannot negotiate; they must go to court and let the judge decide the case. The interpreter interrupts to explain that in the Arabic culture the man’s reaction is acceptable. The lawyer ignores the interpreter’s intervention and leaves (Hale, 2007, pp. 141-142).

Unfortunately, the interpreter’s intervention does not achieve the desired result and the lawyer still chooses to leave the meeting. In my opinion, the intervention still is useful. At least, the lawyer is offered an explanation as to why the Arabic father responds in such a rude way according to western standards. Although the lawyer still chooses to leave, he makes an informed decision instead of leaving the room puzzled. I think that the intervention helps reduce the personal grudge held against that Arabic man.

Kelly (2000) further investigated whether legal interpreters should interpret cultural differences. Judges, interpreters, interpreter trainers, administrators, prosecutors, defense lawyers,

and legislators in Massachusetts were surveyed. The result showed that 53% of judges said no, 47% of prosecutors said no, yet only 29% of interpreters gave negative responses. The reasons behind this question could be several, but the concern for power was certainly one (Kelly, 2000). Disagreements were found among all parties on how much power interpreters should be given and how much cultural differences they should explain in the courtroom. One extreme opinion was that cultural differences should be conveyed to the defense team outside the courtroom instead of taking the time in the actual courtroom. Kelly (2000) suggested that in principle:

The interpreter's cultural intervention should not derive from sympathy with the defendant or a belief in his guilt or innocence. Such action should occur due to the existence of identifiable differences between the host and defendant's cultures. One should not advocate which may have a bearing on the outcome of the case (p. 145).

Although cultural differences do play a role in legal interpreting, legal interpreters should exercise the most caution in facilitating intercultural communication. Legal interpreters always should bear in mind that their job is to interpret rather than to question clients or advocate for them (Phelan, 2001). Legal interpreters should be taught that they are not lawyers and thus are in no position to supply additional information over and above what the clients actually say (Phelan, 2001).

#### **4.2.4 Healthcare Interpreting**

Healthcare interpreting happens at private practice, hospital or consultation meetings with healthcare professionals such as doctors, nurses, dieticians, dentists (Hale, 2007). When healthcare providers and service recipients do not speak the same language, healthcare interpreters are needed. For example, if a person with limited English proficiency is hospitalized

in America, a healthcare interpreter needs to be presented in the doctor-patient communication to explain the doctor's diagnosis and the medical procedures to be taken (Phelan, 2001).

When doctors and patients speak the same language, a successful doctor-patient interaction depends largely on doctors' questioning styles and techniques (Hale, 2007). For instance, doctors need to know how to ask the most appropriate questions, to listen attentively and empathetically to all the patient has to say, to capture verbal and nonverbal cues that may help better understand the patient's problems, and to build trust with the patient (Cordella, 2004; Ferguson & Candib, 2002; Hale, 2007; Zoppi & Epstein, 2002). As Cordella (2004) suggested, "The way in which the question is presented, therefore, can pre-determine the reply" (p. 32). However, when doctors do not speak patients' languages or know patients' cultural backgrounds, they risk asking inappropriate questions that could be deemed as insulting or intimidating by patients. Healthcare interpreters are brought in to help facilitate doctor-patient communication. Healthcare interpreters not only remove language barriers but also make sure that doctors ask culturally appropriate questions so that no misunderstandings occur. For instance, after interviewing 26 community interpreters; Gustafsson, Norström, and Fioretos (2013) found that interpreters were mindful of the cultural background of the patients and adopted strategies to facilitate the communication. As an example, one interpreter rephrased the question to the patient by avoiding the word "cancer" in the doctor's original question. Another interpreter shifted her position from female interpreter to represent a mother as a means of better facilitating the communication during a medical examination (Gustafsson, Norström, & Fioretos, 2013).

Meryer, Apfelbaum, Pöchhacker, and Bischoff (2003) stressed that healthcare interpreters also should be considered as cultural brokers, mediators, and advocates. Cultural differences play a vital role in healthcare interpreting. Well-trained healthcare interpreters should know how to

respect patients' cultures and privacies. As Phelan (2001) suggested, "People from different cultures have different attitudes on a huge range of issues from illness and dying to blood transfusions to organ transplants. They also may have different attitudes towards the medical professions" (p. 34). In addition, in some cultures, patients may not want their family members or friends to know about their medical conditions (Hsieh, 2006).

In my opinion, cultural value dimensions can be a good start to explain to doctors why some questions are inappropriate. Interpreters can refer to the five dimensions to check if the interpretation is culturally appropriate for patients to accept.

The dimension of individualism and collectivism can explain why interpreters feel that it is difficult to maintain their professionalism. After conducting in-depth interviews with 26 medical interpreters from 17 languages in the Midwest area of America, Hsieh (2006) discovered that patients from some cultures tended to reveal certain private information to interpreters but not to healthcare providers. Bot and Verrept (2013) also stated that patients and their interpreters could feel close to each other due to a common political or ethical background, which might make doctors feel isolated. As a result, interpreters were left with the dilemma between telling the truth to doctors (i.e., violating the patient's confidence) and concealing the information from doctors because patients do not want their doctors to know. This phenomenon can be explained by the dimension of individualism and collectivism. People from collectivistic cultures often tend to include interpreters who speak their languages as in-group members and, as a result, feel confident to reveal personal and confidential information. However, professional ethics (e.g., CHIA, 2002) require interpreters to work in an impartial and neutral way without differentiating between in-group and out-group members.

Power distance also plays a role in healthcare interpreting. People from different cultures can have different attitudes towards medical professionals (Phelan, 2001). Hsieh (2006) mentioned a case when some patients were shocked when their doctors told them to make their own decisions on the treatments. Doctors from low power distance cultures tended to inform patients with all the choices and risks and let patients make final decisions. On the contrary, in cultures with high power distance, doctors enjoyed the ultimate authority and power. Patients were dependent on doctors to make final decisions for them. Therefore, power distance can become an important factor in healthcare interpreting.

The concern for face was illustrated in Van De Mieroop's (2012) case study on doctor-patient medical interviews. One healthcare interpreter was found to distance herself from her words by using the third person to refer to the doctor when those words were face-threatening, either because of the message itself (e.g., bad news) or because it might undermine the doctor's dominant position in the medical interview (e.g., when the patient initiates a topic). Since delivering bad news about the patient's health was a very face-threatening activity, this interpreter chose to emphasize her role as the animator/reporter of the doctor's words (Van De Mieroop, 2012).

The main reason healthcare interpreting is separated from community interpreting as an independent domain is because a good number of healthcare interpreting organizations have been founded and many regulations on the professionalism of healthcare interpreters have been made (Phelan, 2001). Take America as an example. Resources for Cross Cultural Health Care (RCCHC) was founded to make sure that culturally and linguistically appropriate health care service is provided to culturally diverse populations. As a result, National Standards for Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services in Health Care (CLAS) were created as to

provide culturally and linguistically appropriate healthcare interpreting services (RCCHC, 2014). The goal is to ensure that healthcare interpreters are aware of diverse cultural beliefs in healthcare practices to provide effective, equitable, and respectful service (CLAS, 2014). The California Healthcare Interpreting Association (CHIA) is another pioneer association in recognizing the importance of cultural sensitivity and intercultural competence in healthcare interpreting (CHIA, 2002). CHIA recommends several measures to evaluate interpreters' cultural responsiveness:

- Identify and monitor personal biases and assumptions to make sure that they do not impact the interpreting;
- Recognize and identify personal values conflicts and cultural beliefs conflicts among all parties;
- Monitor and prevent personal reactions and feelings (e.g., embarrassment or frustration) from interfering with the accuracy of the message, and also recognize that such feelings may be a result of their own personal acculturation level, which may be similar to or different from patients and providers.
- Identify statements made by providers and patients that indicate a lack of understanding in health beliefs and practices, and use applicable strategies to prevent potential miscommunication.
- Seek continually to update their knowledge and understanding of the dynamic cultures of patients, healthcare providers, and the culture of the healthcare system in the United States (CHIA, 2002, pp. 31-32).

To sum up, there is a wide recognition of the importance of intercultural competence in healthcare interpreting. This domain also has conducted the most extensive research on the role of culture compared to other domains of interpreting.

### **4.3 The Interpreter's Role**

The reviewing the role of culture in the four domains of interpreting reveals that there lacks consistent guidance on what interpreters are expected to do when facing intercultural communication challenges. The following section is going to review the roles of interpreters that are discussed in the literature of interpreting studies?

Mason and Ren (2012) listed some metaphors that have traditionally been applied to the role of interpreting throughout the history of interpreting in China and the West, such as “tongue man” “parrot”, “conduit”, “echo machine”, or “voice box”(p. 235). All those metaphors suggested the interpreter should be invisible, neutral, detached, and is not entitled to intervene in the communication process (Mason & Ren, 2012). However, in recent years, interpreting scholars began to question the invisible and powerless role of the interpreter (e.g., Angelelli 2004a, 2004b; Bot & Verrept, 2013; Roy, 2000; Wadensjö 1998).

Anderson (1976/2002, as cited in Mason & Ren, 2012) is one of the first few scholars to account for the powerful role of the interpreter. Anderson claimed that the interpreter exercised power by monopolizing the means of communication (Mason & Ren, 2012). More research has been done that confirms and reinforces the powerful role of the interpreter. For example, Wadensjö (1998) pointed out that interpreters “fill a function in the institutional system of control” (p. 13). Davidson (2000) further concluded that healthcare interpreters were indeed institutional gatekeepers because they tended to act as advocate for the patients and as a result, kept the medical consultation on track and the physicians on schedule. Angelelli (2004a) argued

for a visible and active role of healthcare interpreters by referring to them as the “co-participant” and “co-creator” in the communication (p. 141). As the co-creator of an interaction, the interpreter assumed power. Their power was manifested primarily “by adopting various verbal and non-verbal strategies to negotiate, coordinate, check, and balance power relations” (Mason & Ren, 2012, p. 233).

It should be pointed out that the interpreters’ role is predominately discussed in the context of community interpreting, legal interpreting (e.g., Christensen, 2008; Jacobsen, 2008; Lipkin, 2008), and healthcare interpreting (e.g., Dubslaff & Martinsen, 2005; Merlini & Favaron, 2005; Valero-Garces, 2005) (Liu, 2011). Chang and Wu (2009) is an exception because they investigated how conference interpreters shifted the address form in Q & A sessions in international conference settings.

In community interpreting, two other roles also are frequently discussed and can be viewed as the common practices of community interpreters: message clarifier and cultural broker.

The role as a message clarifier means that interpreters are expected to provide explanations when it comes to technical or cultural-specific terms to make the source text understood by the audience. It also is referred to as the situation when interpreters cannot hear clearly or understand the conversation and need to interrupt to get clarifications (CHIA, 2002). For instance, if interpreters encounter an idiomatic expression and are not able to find an equivalent idiomatic expression in the target text, interpreters should try to explain its pragmatic meaning (Hale & Luzardo, 1997).

The role of cultural broker has been used interchangeably with other expressions like mediator, clarifier, and intermediary (Gustafsson, Norström, & Fioretos, 2013). All these expressions suggest that interpreters play a critical role in identifying cultural issues and

considering how and when to mediate (Bot & Verrept, 2013). Taft (1981) defines the role of a cultural mediator as:

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 a certain extent bicultural (p. 53).

Katan (2014) argued that interpreters need to take on the role as cultural mediator because it is the interpreters' goal to enable the service provider and client to communicate effectively with each other while respecting the client's cultural and language needs. This role is most related to the purpose of this proposed case study.

In a survey, Hale (2014) asked legal interpreters if they alerted the court/tribunal when they noticed any potential intercultural misunderstandings. The result showed that legal interpreters did not agree on what they should do when confronted with intercultural differences. Hale (2014) suggested that one of the possible reasons could be because interpreters did not know how to deal with intercultural differences. Hale (2014) also found that interpreters who were more experienced and better qualified were more likely to alert the court or tribunal of potential intercultural misunderstandings. CHIA (2002) suggested some general principles on how to clarify cultural differences in healthcare interpreting:

- Interrupt the communication process with a word, comment, or a gesture, as appropriate.

- Alert both parties to potential miscommunication or misunderstanding (Interpreters may say, for example, “As an interpreter, I think that there may be potential danger for miscommunication/ misunderstanding...”).
- Suggest cultural concerns that could be impeding mutual understanding.
- Assist the patient in explaining the cultural concept to the provider, or the provider in explaining the biomedical concept. When requested, interpreters also need to explain the cultural custom, health belief or practice of the patient to the provider, or educate the patient on the biomedical concept (p. 44).

It can be seen from the discussion above that the roles of interpreters have mainly been studied at the community level, in particular in healthcare, legal and social work settings. However, it also can be learned from the literature review that only a limited number of studies have centered on understanding the complex roles of interpreters in conference settings. Although some of the findings on the role of interpreters from community interpreting can be borrowed and applied in the conference setting, more research on the complex roles of interpreters in conference settings need to be done due to its unique features. Although the complex roles of conference interpreters are not the focus of my case study, the findings from this case study do shed light on understanding the complex roles of conference interpreters.

#### **4.4 Interpreting Models**

The following section will review two models that guide the interpreter’s practice in their actual work.

##### **4.4.1 Conduit Model**

The conduit model is the traditional model that considers human interaction as a unidirectional process that transfers information from one person to another (Reddy, 1979).

Based on the conduit model, interpreters are encouraged to “be thought of and think of themselves as conveyers of others’ words and utterances” without any personal involvement (Wadensjö, 1998, p. 8). In recent years, the conduit model of interpreters has received considerable criticism. In particular, its assumption that interpreters work in a social vacuum is questioned (Angelelli, 2004b). As Dysart-Gale (2005) pointed out, it is oversimplified to conceptualize the interpreter just as a conduit to transfer information faithfully and neutrally without any distortion. Cultural differences can make it impossible for interpreters to assume a conduit role and simply perform word-for-word interpretation.

#### **4.4.2 A Multi-Parameter Model of Interpreting Constellations**

A more recent and stronger model in guiding interpreters through intercultural interactions is a multi-parameter model of interpreting constellations proposed by Alexieva in 1997. This model also is referred to as the typology of interpreter-mediated events. Alexieva (2002) challenged the traditional practice of categorizing interpreter-mediated events on the basis of a single parameter. For instance, Berk-Seligson (1990) focused only on court interpreting and Wadensjö (1992) studied only community interpreting (Alexieva, 2002). Instead, Alexieva (2002) argued for a multi-parameter approach to account for the greater variety of interpreter-mediated contexts. Alexieva (2002) made great effort to include a large number of variables from real-life interpreter-mediated events.

The most important advantage of Alexieva’s (2002) typology over other interpreting models is that intercultural communication is not only mentioned but also emphasized. As Alexieva stressed, “It is also important to bear in mind that interpreters mediate across cultures and not just across languages” (2002, p. 221). She also argued that interpreter-mediated events could be classified in terms of the degree of interpreters’ cultural embeddedness.

To be specific, the parameters in the typology were investigated under two broad headings: mode of delivery and elements of the communicative situations.

- Mode of delivery distinguishes between (i) a non-stop delivery of the source text and simultaneous production of the target text, and (ii) a consecutive delivery of the source text followed by the production of the target text. This distinction also involves the differences in the use, or non-use, of ancillary equipment, the specificity of the setting and the nature of the contact and distance between participants.
- Elements of the communicative situations refer to the primary participants (speakers and addressee), the secondary participants (interpreter, organizer, moderator), the topic discussed and the way it relates to the communicative context, the type of texts used in the communication, the spatial and temporal specifications of the communication, and the purpose of communication or goals pursued by the participants (Alexieva, 2002, pp. 221-222).

Under those two broad headings, an interpreter-mediated event can be located along a continuum of universality vs. cultural-specificity using the following scales:

- distance vs. proximity (between speaker, addressee, and interpreter);
- non-involvement vs. involvement (of the speaker as text entity);
- equality/solidarity vs. non-equality/power (related to status, role, and gender of speaker and addressees, as well as the interpreter in some cases);
- formal setting vs. informal setting (related to number of participants, degree of privacy, and distance from home country);
- literary vs. orality;
- cooperativeness/directness vs. non-cooperativeness/indirectness (relevant to

- negotiation strategies;
- shared goals vs. conflicting goals (Alexieva, 2002, p. 230).

Locating interpreter-mediated events on a continuum between universality vs. cultural-specificity offers practical guidance for interpreters in their actual work. Interpreters can note that events located towards the universal end of the continuum (those closer to the left-hand side of the scales listed above) require them to follow the conduit model and not to intervene too much in the communication (Alexieva, 2002). By contrast, events located towards the culture-specific end of the continuum (those closer to the right-hand side of the above scales) are more challenging. Those events require interpreters to actively intervene in the communication to mediate cultural differences and avoid misunderstandings (Alexieva, 2002). As a result, this continuum helps identify the degree of culture-specificity associated with a given interpreter-mediated situation. Thus interpreters are able to make more informed decisions on when to intervene.

This is a very important model for my own theory development. The focus on my study is culture and the concept of culture or cultural-specificity is embedded throughout the scales in Alexieva's model. Take the first scale, distance vs. proximity, as an example. Alexieva (2002) considered it as the most important scale in terms of determining the degree of the cultural-specificity of an event. This scale is related to proxemics and kinesthetic factors between the primary participants (e.g., speakers, addressees, clients) and the secondary participants (i.e., interpreters). This scale distinguishes simultaneous interpreting from other forms of interpreting activities since simultaneous interpreters sit inside the booth. This indirect nature of the communication limits the role kinesthetic and proxemics factors can play and affects the nonverbal communication of all communicants (Alexieva, 2002). On the other hand, in face-to-

face consecutive interpreting and community interpreting, communication is direct. The physical distance between participants is closer in social/personal terms defined by Hall (1966). In particular, all participants in community interpreting are heavily involved in the communication. They pay great attention to not only other participants' verbal language but also their nonverbal language (Alexieva, 2002). The interpersonal nature of communication means that the relationship and power dynamic between/among the primary participants themselves, as well as between the primary and the secondary participants, are quite different from that of simultaneous interpreting. Therefore, this scale highlights the role of nonverbal communication in different domains of interpreting. It guides interpreters to focus on different aspects of nonverbal communication in different domains of interpreting.

This typology is quite comprehensive and includes almost all related factors in interpreter-mediated events, especially culture-related factors. Some factors are defined differently from their generic definitions that we discussed in previous sections. That is because Alexieva (2002) conceptualized them in interpreter-mediated contexts. For example, status of all participants was discussed in this typology. Alexieva (2002) argued that depending on the cultures involved, the social status of the primary participants institution-wise (their institution affiliation and position within the hierarchy) and expertise-wise (their prestige as authorities on the issues discussed) had an impact on the interpreting process. The social status of interpreters, as well as their education background, age, and gender also were appreciated variously across cultures, which might result in tensions in interpreter-mediated events (Alexieva, 2002). In addition, potential tension among all participants was discussed. Participants can be influenced by factors such as high/low-context cultures and power distance. Alexieva (2002) particularly noted when people of unequal power joined a conversation as equal participants, a great deal of

tension could be generated, especially when participants from high-context cultures were involved. Interpreters could potentially be tempted to exceed their expected roles when they feel superior to the primary participants in terms of age, gender, or knowledge of cultural norms (Alexieva, 2002). In addition, the concept of face saving also was discussed in the typology and face saving also is a key factor in intercultural communication. Therefore, some scales included in Alexieva's model are very relevant to the purpose of my study. I decided to combine Alexieva's model with the major intercultural communication frameworks to jointly guide my research.

However, the major shortcoming of this typology is that it has not been empirically tested. There is no guarantee that the continuum will work as Alexieva conceptualized. This is an area of research that future scholars should investigate.

Based on the discussion above, we can see that intercultural communication factors are briefly, in many cases, implicitly discussed in interpreting studies. Throughout my review of the literature, I have not been able to find much work that applies an intercultural communication approach to systematically examine the role of culture in interpreting. Nor have I been able to find any empirically tested theory that adequately discusses the interplay between interpreting and intercultural communication. This study intends to make the initial step in filling in this research gap. This study applies intercultural communication theories to systematically examine the interpreting process.

## **5. Chinese-English Conference Interpreting**

In this particular case study, I aim to systematically investigate the role of culture in Chinese-English conference interpreting through the lens of intercultural communication frameworks.

### 5.1 Chinese-English Cultural Particulars

Before I present my case, I will first review some particular cultural differences between China and America. In addition to the intercultural communication theories mentioned above, there are some specific cultural barriers that are manifested both verbally and non-verbally between Chinese and American cultures.

In Chinese culture, Confucianism has been a major influence in shaping the Chinese ethical and cultural value systems (Li, 2012; Sheer & Chen, 2003). Confucius (551-479 BC) traveled from kingdom to kingdom in what is now China to spread his beliefs on politics, ethics, and doctrines of behavior. After his death, his disciples recorded all his beliefs into a book, the *Analects*. Since then, Confucianism has been in existence in China for over 2,000 years and has an enormous influence on Chinese culture and society. It can be used to explain “the design of political, education, and economic systems, behavioral regularities, and thought patterns of Chinese people” (Sheer & Chen, 2003, p. 52). Confucianism also plays an important role in guiding interpersonal relationships among Chinese people (Li, 2012). Because of its importance, *Confucian dynamism* is added as the fifth dimension in the cultural value dimensions. This dimension includes factors such as reciprocation, respect, stability, and face saving (Hofstede & Bond, 1988).

In Confucianism, harmony is one of the core values (Shenkar & Ronen, 1990). It is the unifying principle by which things come to exist and seek for a balance in the ever changing interpersonal relationships (Höchsman, 2004). Chinese people endeavor to establish and maintain a harmonious relationship with in-group and out-group members (Sheer & Chen, 2003). As a result, an indirect communication style is preferred as a means of offering and receiving respect. In a Chinese-American meeting, the Chinese party rarely dismisses an idea or a business

proposal directly because it would be deemed as disrespectful. On the contrary, American culture regards being straight-forward as a smart business tactic (Seligman, 1999).

Harmony also can be found in the maintenance of one's face, which is referred to as *Mianzi* in Chinese language. Compared with the general discussion of face saving mentioned above, Chinese *mianzi* is at the far high end on the continuum of face saving for self and others. Chinese people do not disagree with people openly because they would like to save and give face to themselves and to other people (Sheer & Chen, 2003). Chinese people are willing to appear weak and passive and to deliberately downplay their skills in social interaction in order to save other people's face as a means of preserving harmony (Lu, 2000). Losing face is equivalent to losing one's eyes, nose, and mouth (Hofstede & Bond, 1988). If Chinese people feel that they are not treated with due respect or they are insulted publicly, they will refuse to cooperate or even choose to retaliate (Seligman, 1999). Moreover, Chinese people especially prefer to be addressed by their official titles and honorifics, regarding this as a means of face saving. In Chinese culture, people rarely are called by their given names, except by close relatives or extremely intimate friends. The common practice to address a Chinese person in public occasions is to use his/her surname, together with a title such as Mister, Miss or even Director or Manager (Seligman, 1999). As an extremely courteous form of address, the word "deputy" should be dropped from the official title. For instance, "Vice Minister Li" should simply be referred to as "Minister Li" (Seligman, 1999, p. 42).

Harmony also is manifested in the concept of humility in Chinese culture. Chinese people tend to be humble when being praised. Therefore, when a Chinese person is praised on the excellent work he/she has done, the Chinese person tends to say: "No, no, it is not good at all" or "it is my duty to do so". However, in American culture, this humbleness may be taken seriously

as being incompetent or obliged. One strategy to address this issue during interpreting, as suggested by Li (2012), is for the interpreter to simply say “thank you” on behalf of the Chinese side (Li, 2012).

Confucianism also emphasizes *Guanxi*, which refers to the “interconnectedness among people” and distinguishes between in-group and out-group members (Sheer & Chen, 2003, p. 53). The Chinese *guanxi* also elevates the concept of collectivism to a new level. Based on *guanxi*, in-group members trust and depend on each other to access resources and services. Out-group members do not share any benefit with the in-group members (Sheer & Chen, 2003). Davies, Leung, Luk and Wong (2003) vividly illustrated the importance of *guanxi* in Chinese society:

*Guanxi* seems to be the lifeblood of the Chinese business community and extends into politics and society. Without *guanxi*, one simply cannot get anything done. Or, as Western managers soon find, things can be done without *guanxi* if one invests enormous personal energy, is willing to offend even close friends and trusted associates, and is prepared to see such pyrrhic victories melt away like snow on a hot day while one is off on a business trip or home leave. On the other hand, with *guanxi*, anything seems possible (p. 43).

## **5.2 A Case Study on Chinese-English Conference Interpreting**

After reviewing some particular cultural differences between China and America, I hereby present a case study that investigates the role of culture in Chinese-English conference interpreting. Due to China’s growing importance and further opening up, it is important and timely to conduct a project of this kind.

China has been actively embracing globalization. China joined the World Trade Organization in 2001, and its GDP has increased significantly from \$1.453 trillion to \$5.926 trillion from 2002 to 2010 (World Bank, 2012). In the meantime, according to the Chinese

General Customs Administration (2012), the total value of foreign trade imports and exports has soared from 620.77 billion US dollars in 2002 to 3,642.06 billion US dollars in 2011, an average increase of 21.77% per year.

Against this background, there is a rapidly growing number of international conferences that are held in China. According to the International Congress and Convention Association (ICCA), China held 302 international meetings, ranked 8<sup>th</sup> after US, Germany, Spain, United Kingdom, France, Italy, and Brazil in 2011 (ICCA, 2011). At the same time, more and more Chinese people go abroad to do business or attend conferences. With China further embracing globalization, it is believed that the number of intercultural encounters between China and the other major economies will continue to grow.

However, there are not enough qualified interpreters available, especially well-trained conference interpreters. Readers (2011) mentioned that there are no more than 500 conference interpreters working in China, and they are concentrated in big cities like Beijing, Shanghai, and Guangzhou. The International Association of Conference Interpreters (AIIC) website also provides some figures on the number of their members who specialize in Chinese-English conference interpreting. Since AIIC follows a very tough procedure to admit new members into their association, only 84 Chinese-English conference interpreters have been accepted as their members as of 2014. Of those 84 Chinese-English AIIC members, only 32 are actually residing in China with 12 in Beijing, 14 in Shanghai, 5 in Hong Kong, and 1 in Guangzhou (AIIC, 2014). On the US side, there are 11 members with 4 of them are on the east coast and the other 7 on the west coast (AIIC, 2014).

Moreover, research on the role of culture in Chinese-English conference interpreting is very limited. One study that briefly discussed the role of culture was Chang and Wu (2009). The

forms of address (both the names and the pronouns the questioners used to address the presenters) in interpreter-mediated question and answer (Q&A) sessions in international conferences was examined. Data were collected from two conferences that were held in Taiwan where Chinese-English simultaneous interpretation was provided. The findings showed that simultaneous interpreters tended to conform to target-culture conventions in their renditions of address forms. For example, when the Chinese-speaking questioner indicated to whom the question was addressed by referring to the presenter's company, the interpreter also decided to add the presenter's first name because it was considered as more appropriate in the English culture. Of the three presenters, the chair of the session addressed the two English-speaking presenters by their first names only while addressing the Chinese-speaking presenter by his official title (i.e., president of a company) plus last name. The interpreter was found to follow the address forms established by the chair (Chang & Wu, 2009). The findings reaffirmed the idea that in Chinese culture, honorific titles were used to show respect and give face. Despite some valuable and interesting findings, this study was not driven by any intercultural communication theory and only focused on the shift of address forms. However, it inspired me to propose a case study to further examine cultural-related factors in Chinese-English conference interpreting.

Therefore, I hereby present a project that adopts an intercultural communication approach to systematically examine the role of culture in Chinese-English conference interpreting. The main research question of this project is:

RQ: What, if any, intercultural communication challenges are faced by Chinese-English conference interpreters and how are those challenges managed?

To make this main research question more operational, four sub-research questions are offered:

RQ1: What, if any, challenges are introduced by the differences between high-context Chinese culture and low-context American culture? What are interpreters' strategies in managing such challenges?

RQ2: What, if any, challenges are introduced by the differences in culture value dimensions between Chinese culture and American culture? What are interpreters' strategies in managing such challenges?

RQ3: What, if any, challenges are introduced by Chinese Confucianism? What are interpreters' strategies in managing such challenges?

RQ4: What, if any, challenges are introduced by the differences in nonverbal communication between Chinese culture and American culture? What are interpreters' strategies in managing such challenges?

### **Chapter 3—Method**

This study is a qualitative case study to explore the role of culture in Chinese-English conference interpreting. I will define my approach to qualitative research and I will explain the rationale for choosing the case study method and introduce two data collection methods: interview and focus group. I then will explain my procedures in recruiting participants, data collection, and data analysis. I will conclude by discussing self-reflexivity, and how I approach validity and reliability.

#### **1. Qualitative Research**

A qualitative approach is able to “elicit meaning, gain understanding, and develop empirical knowledge” of a specific phenomenon (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 1). For this study, I want to understand what the intercultural challenges are in Chinese-English conference interpreting and how conference interpreters manage such challenges. As Hesse-Biber and Leavy

(2011) stated, research questions that typically begin with “words like *why*, *how*, and *what*” should choose a qualitative approach (p. 9). My research questions are open-ended, so I am expecting “a multiplicity of findings to emerge” (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011, p. 9).

Interpreters work in real-life intercultural settings. In this study, I focus on naturally-occurring intercultural settings to know what “real life” is like and how to handle it (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 10). Moreover, in this exploratory study, I attempt to integrate certain aspects from the field of intercultural communication with the field of interpreting. I explore the impact of some intercultural communication frameworks on the process of conference interpreting. A qualitative approach is suitable because it helps yield “preliminary insights into the key issues to help shape future research” in this important area (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011, p. 10).

Last but not least, my goal is to gain an in-depth understanding on how Chinese-English conference interpreters experience, understand, and deal with intercultural challenges. Qualitative analysis is most appropriate because it is capable of providing “richly textured experiences and reflections about those experiences” (Jackson II, Drummond, & Camara, 2007, p. 22).

## **2. Case Study**

Qualitative research assumes several data collection methods, such as interviews, focus groups, ethnography, oral history, content analysis, and case study (Berg, 2007; Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011). In this study, I selected the case study approach because it is designed to capture “a holistic understanding of a problem, issue, or phenomenon with its social context” (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011, p. 256). Its unique strength lies in “its ability to deal with a full variety of evidence – documents, artifacts, interviews, and observations” (Yin, 2009, p. 11). Therefore, it is

the most relevant to my own study when my goal is to capture a holistic picture of the intercultural challenges and coping strategies in Chinese-English conference interpreting. By conducting a case study, I endeavored to collect extremely rich, in-depth data that could be used to explain the complicated interpreting process (Berg, 2007; Bogdan & Biklen, 2003; Simons, 2009; Yin, 2009).

I chose to do a case study because it is a commonly-used research method in interpreting studies. Out of the 48 evidence-based studies that were published in the journal *Interpreting* during the period 2004 to 2009, 11 case studies were reported (Liu, 2011). Most of the case studies in interpreting focused on the various roles of the interpreter, including the impact of technology and remoteness on the performance of conference interpreters (Braun, 2007); face saving adopted by legal interpreters (Jacobsen, 2008); the roles of participants in asylum-seeking cases (Merlini, 2009); and the legal interpreters' role in changing the court's perception on the defendant's social-legal identity (Gallez & Maryns, 2014). However, no research was found to examine the impact of intercultural communication factors on the interpreter's performance. Therefore, a case study on this particular research gap is very timely and necessary.

In my own case study, I selected two different data collection method to ensure the richness of my data: interview and focus group. I conducted interviews because they allowed me to listen to interpreters describing their personal experiences and giving examples to explain their strategies in facilitating intercultural communication (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). I also chose to conduct a focus group discussion because I wanted to take into account a group' opinion on the intercultural challenges. Research suggests that the group environment can inspire participants to come up with new perspectives through discussion and triangulate the participants' oral accounts (Berg, 2007). By collecting data from a variety of sources, I was able to develop a holistic

picture of the intercultural challenges and coping strategies in Chinese-English conference interpreting.

The case study method also is beneficial for my study because its findings can be valuable for transferability (Lincoln & Guba, 2000; Merriam, 2009). The results can transfer and apply to other contexts, thus extending the usefulness of a particular case (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011). I hope that the findings of this Chinese-English conference interpreting case study can be transferred and applied to interpreting activities in other language combinations or cross other domains of interpreting. Interpreters of different language combinations (i.e., other than Chinese-English language combination) and interpreters of different domains (i.e., other than conference interpreting) could have a better understanding of the role of culture in their work by learning from this case study. Ideally, interpreting scholars will be stimulated to undertake this type of research in their own language combinations and domains.

### 2.1 Interview

The interview is a particular kind of conversation between the researcher and the participant that requires “active asking and listening” (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011, p. 95). It is conducted with a clear purpose (Rubin & Rubin, 2005) and yields exploratory and descriptive data that may or may not lead to theory development (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011).

Interview is the most commonly-used method in qualitative data collection (Merriam, 2009). It can be used as a stand-alone method or it can be used together with other methods such as content analysis and focus groups (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011). Interviews allow researchers to better understand how participants make sense of themselves, people around them, and attach meaning to events (Berg, 2009). Researchers who conduct in-depth interviews are looking for patterns that emerge from the “thick descriptions” of their participants’ social life (Hesse-Biber

& Leavy, 2011, p. 95). The knowledge generated from interviews is “contextual, linguistic, narrative, and pragmatic” (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009, p. 18).

The goal of in-depth interviewing is to collect “rich qualitative data on a particular subject from the perspective of selected individuals”. Therefore, it is most appropriate to use this method when the researchers have a particular topic in mind and hope to gain detailed information from individuals (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011, p. 95).

I opt for the in-depth interviewing data collection method because I am interested in understanding the perceptions of my participants and learning how they come to attach certain meaning to their interpreting strategies and decision-making process (Berg, 2009). I also would like to hear interpreters give examples, describe their experience, and explain their strategies in their actual work when facilitating intercultural communication (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). And it is a good method to uncover nuance and subtlety (Rubin & Rubin, 2005).

In interpreting studies, the interview is an important data collection method (Liu, 2011). It is especially useful when interpreting scholars are interested in understanding the perception and experience of their participants (Liu, 2011). For example, Edwards, Temple, and Alexander (2005) had semi-structure interviews with people who needed interpreters’ help in order to gain access to public services. Their findings showed that personal character and trust played an important role in those people’s perception if the interpreting service was satisfactory and/or if they preferred to use this interpreter again.

There are four primary types of interview questions: essential questions, extra questions, throw-away questions, and probing questions. Essential questions are the central focus of the study. Extra questions are designed to check the consistency in responses and effect of a change in wording. Throw-away questions are thrown at the beginning of an interview to build rapport

or throughout an interview to set pace or change topic. Probing questions are asked for additional detail, elaboration, and clarification (Berg, 2007).

However, the interview method has its weaknesses. Researchers are dependent on participants' oral responses to make sense of the phenomenon under investigation. Participants can choose not to tell the truth due to various concerns (Berg, 2007). Interviews also are time consuming and may involve extensive travel to reach participants whom researchers would like to interview (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). To compensate for the disadvantages of the interview data collection method, I also utilized the focus group method to organize a group of graduate students in interpreting to engage in a group discussion on the role of culture in the interpreting process.

## 2.2 Focus Group

The focus group is designed for a small group of participants to have a group discussion on some particular issues or topics (Schutt, 2003). A focus group session is typically guided by a moderator (Berg, 2007; Hale & Napier, 2013). The moderator's task, similar to that of the interviewer in an in-depth interview, is to draw out information from the participants in regard to important topics of a study (Berg, 2007). The moderator also plays an important role in regulating the group discussion, encouraging participation, and monitoring the progress of the discussion to make sure that "key topics are covered in enough depth" (Hale & Napier, 2013, p, 105). The researcher and the moderator can be the same person or can be different persons (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011). In this case study, I was both the researcher and the moderator.

The size of the group is an important consideration. Krueger (1994) suggests that the size of focus group should be kept to no more than about seven participants for complex issues. Lunt and Livingstone (1996) think that six to ten people per focus group is a reasonable size to ensure

the even distribution of voices. Hale and Napier (2013) recommend that a group of eight to ten is optimum. Balancing all the suggestions, my focus group had seven participants.

Although focus groups and interviews share some similarities (e.g., an interview outline, a person to facilitate the conversation), these two data collection methods have a fundamental difference (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011). Focus group is a dynamic process based on the interaction and conversation among multiple people. Participants do not merely respond to questions posed by the moderator. They also respond to each other and to the group dynamic as a whole (Berg, 2007). Therefore, in focus group, only group opinions are formed and obtained (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011).

Conducting focus group interviews has several advantages (Berg, 2007). It speeds up the sampling process by collecting a large amount of data from multiple people at one time. It also helps gain a better understanding of how the group views are formed in the unfolding process (Berg, 2007). Researchers also will be able to explore related but unanticipated topics as they arise from the group discussions (Berg, 2007).

In interpreting studies, Angelelli's (2006) study serves as a good example of employing the focus group method to understand healthcare interpreters' reaction to the *California Standards for Healthcare Interpreting* produced by the California Healthcare Interpreting Association (CHIA). Four focus groups were organized with a total of 53 participants who spoke 15 languages. A crucial requirement for participation was a minimum of three years' interpreting experience in a health or health-related setting. The average length of each focus group discussion was about two hours. Through this focus group study, challenges that were faced by healthcare interpreters when trying to follow the *Standards* were revealed. This focus group

study led to the conclusion that the *Standards* should be periodically revised to account for new findings in research.

The focus group method also comes with weaknesses. Since attendance is voluntary, researchers may face the risk of not having a sufficient number of participants in a focus group. As a result, a thorough discussion where participants question and inspire each other may not occur (Berg, 2007). Another risk is group think (Berg, 2007). Some participants with strong personalities may dominate the discussion. Other group members may give in to the group pressure and agree with points that they may not agree in other circumstances (Lunt & Livingstone, 1996).

Since both interview and focus group have advantages and weaknesses as data collection methods. I utilized both methods to diversify my data sources and triangulate the data collected.

### **3. Participants Recruitment**

As the capital of the United States, Washington D.C. hosts many international conferences and gathers a large number of Chinese-English conference interpreters. Moreover, the University of Maryland has recently launched a postgraduate interpreter training program - Graduate Studies in Translation and Interpreting (GSIT) - on the East Coast. GSIT has drawn leading interpreting professionals to teach in the program and experienced interpreting professionals to study in this program to elevate their skills. GSIT also emphasizes the importance of intercultural competence in their curriculum and offers two required intercultural communication-related courses for students to take.

Therefore, in the data collection process, I started with convenience sampling to recruit my initial participants from colleagues, fellow students, and friends (Hale & Napier, 2013). To ensure the quality of the data, I had two general requirements for the interview participants. First,

they must have at least 5 years of professional experiences as conference interpreters. Second, they must have credentials from a recognized interpreter training institution, or be affiliated with renowned conference interpreters associations, or be contractors of organizations who employ a large number of conference interpreters.

I identified GSIT instructors, GSIT students, and my alumni as my initial participants. I reached out to them via email using the interview recruitment announcement. (See Appendix D for interview recruitment announcement.) They all responded, and six out of the seven people whom I approached agreed to be interviewed.

Since the participants I recruited through convenience sampling were well-connected and high-level professionals, I then used the snowball sampling technique and asked them for referrals to expand my participant pool. Some of my initial participants introduced my project to their colleagues in person while others forwarded my interview recruitment announcement to their colleagues. One participant was particularly helpful and posted my interview recruitment announcement to the Monterey Institute of International Studies Alumni Network's mailing list. I also searched through the International Association of Conference Interpreters' (AIIC) online membership directory and sent request emails to the members whose language combination was Chinese and English. I also was able to interview two interpreters working for the United Nations while they were visiting the DC area. Further, I reached out to my alumni who have graduated from the MA program in Translation and Interpreting from Newcastle University, England, and worked as conference interpreters in China.

Altogether, I was able to conduct 20 in-depth interviews, ten in person, four via telephone, and six via Skype. My participants consisted of eight men (40%) and 12 women (60%) with years of experience as professional conference interpreters ranging from five years to 20 years.

Sixteen (80%) of them were based in the US and four (20%) were based in China. Participants who were based in the US were given a \$10 Starbucks gift card in person or e-gift card via email at the end of the interview as appreciation for their time and contribution. Participants who were based in China were wired ¥50 via bank transfer at the end of their interviews.

Half way through the in-depth interview process, when I was certain which interview questions were more relevant and more frequently discussed than others, I organized a focus group discussion with GSIT students in the Chinese-English language track. I had planned to organize a focus group with professional interpreters but it was proven too difficult to coordinate a time among them to sit down together and discuss.

The voice from the GSIT students also was very important. Some students were already taking internships with interpreting firms. Most of their practice materials were real-life texts and videos. In addition, those students had already taken one or two courses on intercultural communication. Compared with professional interpreters who have years of working experience, students who are preparing to enter into this profession may have different understandings on the role of culture and may face different types of intercultural challenges. Therefore, I decided to include the students' voices in my data collection to hear their experience with the role of culture in their training and practice.

I reached out to ten students via email. (See Appendix E for focus group recruitment announcement.) Seven replied and agreed to participate in the focus group discussion (see Appendix F for focus group participants' profiles). The group consisted of three (43%) male students and four (57%) female students. It took place on the second floor of the Skinner Building on the University of Maryland campus in March, 2015 and lasted about an hour.

To sum up, my data collection process lasted over three months. I started interviewing participants at the end of January, 2015, and finished my last interview in early May, 2015. In mid-March, 2015, I conducted the focus group discussion. In total, I was able to recruit 27 participants for my project, 20 for the in-depth interviews and seven for the focus group discussion. Out of those 27 participants, 11 were men (41%) and 16 were women (59%).

As a qualitative researcher, I strived to reach a “saturation point” while collecting data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). I did not stop gathering data until I came to the point where new interviews stopped adding anything unique to what had already been mentioned (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). At my 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> interviews, I began to hear similar and consistent answers from my participants and was not discovering any new, significant information. However, I continued until my 20<sup>th</sup> interview. By that point, I was certain that I could stop interviewing as I had collected a considerable amount of data and began to hear repeated answers.

#### **4. Data Collection**

*Interview.* I took a number of steps to collect my data. I prepared an interview guide (also known as interview protocol, questionnaire, conversation guide) to help me stay focused on what main questions to ask and of whom (Yin, 2009). An interview guide also is very useful in helping me “balance the need for predictability with the freedom to explore unanticipated topics” (Rubin & Rubin, 2005, p. 150). Before starting data collection, I applied for and received IRB approval. (See Appendix A for IRB initial application, consent forms, and approval letter.)

After gaining IRB approval, I pre-tested the interview guide with my initial participant pool. According to the feedback, my initial protocol was good except that some questions were quite lengthy. So, I consulted with my committee and revised my protocol accordingly to make the questions stay more focused. I also added more probes to uncover detailed information about

certain topics. (See Appendix B for interview guide.)

When participants agreed to be interviewed, I emailed the consent form and the interview guide to them. I decided to provide the participants with the interview guide ahead of time because the interview questions required them to come up with specific examples to illustrate the challenges that they experienced and the strategies they adopted to address such challenges. Participants needed time to go over the interview guide and reflect upon their whole interpreting career. A few participants did not have time to read through the interview guide ahead of time. As a result, during the interview, I noticed that they spent much longer time in coming up with specific examples. Occasionally, they were not able to come up with illustrations even though they admitted that they encountered significant intercultural challenges.

For the ten interviews that I conducted in person, I provided a brief overview and asked the participants to review and sign the consent forms before I started the interview. For the ten interviews that I conducted via telephone/Skype, I asked the participants to read the consent form ahead of time and email the signed form back to me before the scheduled interview. I observed no significant difference between the quality of the interviews conducted in person and the quality of the interviews conducted via telephone/Skype.

The interview guide was semi-standardized. Such structure was not only appropriate to answer my research questions, but also enabled me to contextualize the experience using my participants' own words (Warren & Karner, 2010). The first part of my interview guide included baseline questions to obtain information about participants' language combination, educational background, years of experience, percentage of doing consecutive interpreting (CI) and simultaneous interpreting (SI) etc. The second part of the interview guide consisted of the

research-related questions that were roughly aligned with the sub-research questions proposed above. For example:

- In Chinese culture, information often lies implicitly in the context and important issues may only be inferred to rather than being verbalized. In American culture, information is straightforward and important issues are openly and exhaustively discussed.
  - a) Have you observed such differences while interpreting?*
  - b) Do such differences present challenges to your interpreting?*
  - c) Can you think of some specific examples of such challenges and explain what strategies you use?*
  
- Chinese people value face saving for self and others. They tend to communicate disagreement indirectly to save face. Americans, on the contrary, value being straightforward and communicate disagreement directly.
  - a) Have you observed such differences while interpreting?*
  - b) Do such differences present challenges to your interpreting?*
  - c) Can you think of some specific examples of such challenges and explain what strategies you use?*

Although I referred to the interview guide throughout the interview, I maintained flexibility in determining whether the research questions had been adequately addressed, and when and how to follow up appropriately (Roulston, 2010). Based on my participants' professional background (e.g., areas of specialty, affiliated associations) and educational background (e.g., whether they received intercultural communication training while gaining their credentials in interpreting), I probed for additional questions when necessary (Berg, 2007). As a result, I was able to gather the maximum information from my participants on their experience

and solutions to intercultural communication challenges (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). (See Appendix B for interview guide.)

I also was able to build rapport with my participants. As suggested by Berg (2007), one way to achieve this purpose is for researchers to find some common ground. I am a trained interpreter and have done interpreting work. I endeavored to make my participants feel that I understood their difficulties and shared their concerns during interviews. My participants were confident sharing their true thoughts and opinions with me.

I also paid attention to my own body language, because researchers should be aware that their appearance, accreditation, sponsorship, and characteristics can all be captured by interviewees to decide whether to talk and what to talk about etc. (Berg, 2007). I dressed professionally, listened attentively, and probed questions appropriately. I was aware that eye contact, nodding, and facial expressions were important in rapport building (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011).

With my participants' consent, I digitally recorded most of the interviews and fully transcribed them. Two participants preferred not to be recorded, so I took exhaustive notes and transcribed my notes into transcripts immediately after the interviews while my memory was still fresh. The length of each interview ranged from 35 minutes to 86 minutes with an average of 57 minutes. The total length of all the interviews added up to 19 hours 7 minutes. I also wrote memos to record my thoughts and reflect the difficulties I encountered after each interview (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

*Focus group.* Once I learned from my interviews which questions generate more discussions, I revised my interview guide into a more concise form as the focus group discussion guide. (See Appendix C for focus group guide.) Before the focus group started, I asked all the

group participants to sign the consent forms and gained all their permissions to video record the entire focus group session. I provided a brief overview of my project to the students before they started their discussion. Since they all had taken intercultural communication courses and were familiar with the concepts included in my research, I did not explain in detail what each factor meant. The discussion lasted 55 minutes. After the focus group, I fully transcribed the recording. I also wrote memos immediately after the focus group to record my thoughts and to reflect the difficulties I encountered while moderating the focus group discussion (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

To sum up, my overall data collection process lasted over three months from the end of January, 2015 to May, 2015. A total of 27 people participated in my project, 20 for the in-depth interviews and seven for the focus group discussion. Out of those 27 participants, 11 were men (41%) and 16 were women (59%). The total length of the data including interviews and focus group lasted 20 hours 2 minutes.

## **5. Data Analysis**

I approached the data analysis process rigorously and systematically. I transcribed all the interview audio recordings and the focus group video recording. As I was doing the transcription, I inserted my own thoughts and comments, such as emerging themes, connections to previous interviews, my reactions to interviewees' responses, and future interviewing strategies (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998).

I began the data analysis while gathering further data. I did not wait until the end of the data collection period to start my data analysis process. As Miles and Huberman (1994) claimed, waiting until all the data are gathered to begin analysis is a "serious mistake" that "rules out the possibility of collecting new data to fill in the gaps, or to test new hypotheses that emerge during

analysis” (p. 49). I was able to identify gaps in the data more quickly, and highlighted topics that required further investigation. This early stage of data analysis helped shape my subsequent interviews questions.

In addition to analyzing the transcripts, I also analyzed the memos that I wrote after each interview and the focus group discussion. Analyzing memos helped me move from empirical data to a conceptual level where I was able to understand issues better (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

I used a grounded theory approach to code and analyze my data (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). It is a widely-used technique to analyze data collected from interviews, field observations, and unobtrusive evidence (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011).

Grounded theory was initially proposed in 1967 by two sociologists: Glaser and Strauss. Its main purpose was to build theory from data. In 1965, Glaser and Strauss published a book titled *Awareness of Dying* and in 1967, they summarized the methods they used in *Awareness of Dying* into a book that first suggested grounded theory. However, after the 1967 book was published, Glaser and Strauss disagreed on how this theory should further be developed. It became an open argument after Strauss and Corbin published the *Basics of Qualitative Research: Grounded Theory Procedures and Techniques* in 1990. Glaser (1992) criticized that Strauss and Corbin (1990) was not the real grounded theory approach. According to Glaser (1992), it was forcing data rather than letting data emerge itself. Strauss and Corbin did not respond. In 2008, Corbin and Strauss published the second edition of their book, in which they focused less on the step-by-step systematic data analysis process.

According to Charmaz (2006), grounded theory has several characteristics. First, it focuses on a simultaneous process of data collection and data analysis. Second, it emphasizes

memo-writing which encourages researchers to write substantially and comprehensively about their own thoughts. Third, it advocates theoretical sampling, a technique to gather data from places, people, or situations where researchers will find the maximum amount of data. Fourth, grounded theory can be used in areas that lack theoretical frameworks to generate middle-range theories. Because of the merits mentioned above and especially due to the lack of research in guiding interpreters with intercultural communication, I opted for the grounded theory approach to carefully and systematically analyze my data.

Coding is central to a grounded theory approach (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011). Everything that gets in the researcher's way should be considered as data and be coded (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). In this case study, the interview transcripts, the focus group transcripts, as well as my memos were all coded.

In the coding process, I started with open coding to break down the data line by line (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). I first read over my data and highlighted what I thought was relevant to the role of culture in interpreting. By marking up the text, I was able to locate segments of information that I believed were relevant to my research questions (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011). I then assigned a code or several codes to each segment. My goal during open coding was to "gain insight and understanding" (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011, p. 309). I immersed myself in the data until themes, concepts, and categories arose (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011). This crucial step enabled me to examine the data in a way that could be different from the descriptions of my participants.

Then, I went through all my transcripts again using selective coding. After the open coding and analyzing all my highlights, I came up with the core variables. Selective coding meant that I reread the transcripts and selectively code any data that relates to the core variables

that I had identified. I found this step very helpful in sorting out the large amount of data into analyzable segments and refining my concepts and themes (Corbin & Strauss, 2008).

My next step was axial coding. In this step, I crosscut and linked the core variables and themes to each other to identify relations between/among them (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). I developed a coding paradigm to check the relationships, causes/consequences, and conditions between the concepts that I had discovered. This step eventually led to the formation of the two procedural guidelines and the Interpreters' Intercultural Mediation Process.

When it comes to naming the themes discovered, Corbin and Strauss (2008) advocate utilizing vivo codes. Vivo codes refer to utilizing the actual words from the participants to name the themes rather than researchers making up the names (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). I used vivo codes whenever possible because they truly reflected my participants' experiences and viewpoints.

To illustrate my coding process, I will use the concept "flow of logic" as an example. At the open coding stage when I was marking the data, I highlighted many examples that talked about idea of the different ways of organizing speeches and Q&A between the Chinese delegations and the American delegations. So, I decided that it is a major challenges for interpreters. Several participants referred to this challenge as the differences in the *sequence of logic* or *flow of logic*. Following the vivo code principles, I named this core variable the *flow of logic*. Then, I went through my transcripts for the second time and coded all the data that related to the concept of *flow of logic* and got a list. To name a few:

Selective code	Examples from participants
Flow of logic	P15: The flow of logic is different between Chinese and English speeches. Chinese speeches are not that straight forward and you need to listen to the

	entire segment or you would need to wait longer before you can understand the real meaning of the speaker.
	P16: When the Chinese are asking the question, they will go on and on and explain the background, explain the rationale behind it, explain their thoughts, and then, they ask the question. Americans, on the other hand, will start with the question, and then, explain if the audience or speaker is not getting it. So, right away, you know what the question is and then you go into logical explanation.
	P17: The sequence of logic moves differently. For Americans, they make the points at first. They will make point by point to support the major subjects. ...For Chinese, they draw the conclusion after spending a lot of demonstration and examples.
	P20: When Chinese people are speaking, for foreigners, it is difficult for them to really understand what the Chinese are saying... They are very ambiguous...not very straightforward...My clients would look confused and they would probably think that it is my fault.

During the axial coding, I compared the quotes and examples on the different flows of logic to see their similarities and differences, grouped them accordingly, and selected the most representative examples to be included in my findings. I also examined the circumstances where my participants encountered the challenge caused by the flow of logic in speeches. I discovered from my data that in simultaneous interpreting mode, my participants were experiencing more difficulty explaining the logic of the speeches than in the consecutive mode. However, due to the nature of simultaneous interpreting, interpreters had no time to provide the explanation or adjust the flow of logic. In the consecutive mode, interpreters were able to hear a whole meaningful

segment before doing the interpretation and thus, had more time to sort out the logic of the speeches themselves and explain it to the audience from the target language. My data also informed me that government officials were better at getting the logic of a speech from another culture than people from private businesses. Those observations eventually led to the formation of the four evaluation criteria in the Interpreters' Intercultural Mediation Process. When trying to link the challenges caused by the different flows of logic to the coping strategies, my data suggested that two strategies were mainly used: explain and seek clarification. However, being able to observe the situation and anticipate the forthcoming was also important. In other circumstances, my participants had no choice but to interpret faithfully. Therefore, there were no fixed coping strategies to manage each intercultural challenge identified.

My data suggested that intercultural communication challenges do exist in conference interpreters' work but the interpreters do not address all of the challenges as they occur in the interpreting process. Instead, the interpreters have a process. They evaluate the circumstances they are in and make decisions accordingly. They can be noticing intercultural challenges but choose not to mediate. For the same type of challenges, they will prefer one coping strategy over another depending on their evaluations and judgments. Therefore, when forming the Interpreters' Intercultural Mediation Process, I decided not to link any particular evaluation criteria with any particular intercultural challenge with any coping strategies.

My concern was that due to the limited number of participants and the qualitative nature of this study, such linkages may not be accurate. Moreover, doing linkages would compromise the purpose of this exploratory case study, which is to provide a holistic picture on the types of intercultural challenges that are faced by conference interpreters and their possible coping

strategies. After being informed of the overall process, interpreters have the freedom to make the evaluation themselves and choose the strategies that work best under particular situations.

I also conducted memo-writing as encouraged by grounded theory to write as detailed and substantive memo as possible during the data analysis process (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). And I coded my memos to contribute to the final conclusion drawing and theory building process. I assigned pseudo names to my participants.

## **6. Self-Reflexivity**

In qualitative research, it is important that researchers are self-reflexive, which means that they have an ongoing conversation with themselves (Berg, 2007). This process helps researchers understand how their own identity affect the data collection and analysis process. Self-reflexivity is an important way for research to be considered as valid and a researcher to be considered as credible and trustworthy (Kvale, 1995).

In my case, I am a Chinese woman in my late twenties. My language combination is Chinese and English with Chinese being my mother tongue. I was born and raised in China. I obtained my bachelor's degree in *English and Translation Studies* in China. Then, I left China for England. I gained my master's degree in *Translation and Interpreting* in England and worked for a British government agency to promote communication between China and England for a few years. Then, I came to America to pursue a doctoral degree in Intercultural Communication. I have lived in multiple cultures, facilitated actual intercultural communication, and am a trained interpreter myself. I have encountered intercultural communication challenges in my personal and professional life. This is exactly the reason why I chose this very topic for my PhD dissertation.

In preparation for this project, I asked myself the following question: “What are the intercultural challenges that I have encountered when I worked as an interpreter?” I had some ideas but I also was aware of the fact that I had not worked very long as professional conference interpreter. Moreover, this project is not about reinforcing my own ideas. It is about learning from the experiences of a group of high-level professional conference interpreters. I did draw upon my own experience in conjunction with the literature review to determine the theory framework to use and the research questions to ask.

In the data collection stage, I was able to recruit a large number of qualified participants because I already knew some of them through my social networks. I used to work with the instructors and students in the GSIT program. They all knew who I was and what I was doing. Therefore, when I approached them about contributing to my research project, most of them responded in a timely fashion and were willing to help.

During my data collection process, I often got the question from my participants: “This is a fascinating study. Why did you choose this topic?” When I told my participants about my educational background, they felt that I knew what I was doing and were more confident about sharing their experiences and stories. In the data analysis stage, I encountered little difficulty in understanding the terms and expressions my participants used. I drew upon my own experiences to “obtain insight into what my participants are describing” (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 80). However, I was mindful not to impose my personal experiences upon the data. Therefore, my data and the analysis were not biased (Corbin & Strauss, 2008).

## **7. Validity and Reliability**

I also worked hard to make sure that my study is both valid and reliable. Since my research is a qualitative one, I would like to firstly make a distinction between the definitions of

validity and reliability in qualitative research versus quantitative research. Then, I will explain how I achieved qualitative validity and reliability to make sure that my study is trustworthy.

In quantitative research, a study is internally valid if the research instrument accurately measures what it is supposed to measure (Wolcott, 1995). A quantitative study is deemed as reliable if it “yields the same answer however and whenever it is carried out” (Kirk & Miller, 1986, p. 19).

However, the quantitative concepts of validity and reliability do not apply in qualitative research (Kvale, 1995). Qualitative research is generally interested in multiple perspectives and knowledge (Merriam, 2009). This complex standpoint means that researchers cannot really expect rigorous and accurate predictions (Gilpin & Murphy, 2008). Instead, researchers should work toward accepting “looser causality, lighter controls, and limited predictability” (Gilpin & Murphy, 2008, p. 42). Lincoln and Guba (1986) argued that the use of rich, thick description throughout the findings actually will allow readers to make connection and establish applicability from findings. The most significant step towards this direction was taken by Lincoln and Guba (1985) when they proposed the concepts like credibility and consistency to replace validity and reliability.

Credibility in qualitative research deals with internal validity or the idea that findings of a study match reality. Maxwell (2005) argued that in qualitative research, credibility can only be seen as “a goal rather than a product” (p. 105). Even though qualitative research can never capture an objective truth, it still can be considered as valid in the sense that it “accepts the possibility of specific, local, personal, and community forms of truth” (Kvale, 1995, p. 21).

In order to get the personal and community forms of truth, I did thorough literature review to understand the development of my proposed research topic. I also relied on my

literature review to guide my research and interview questions. I carefully selected my participant pool to make sure that they met up with my standard. I reached out to my participants with a sincere attitude to learn from them. I asked and probed questions to get as much interpreting experience from them as possible. But I was careful not to probe for particular names of people or organizations because those information may jeopardize confidentiality or embarrass my participants.

To evaluate qualitative validity, Kvale proposed the concepts: (1) craftsmanship (whether a study checks, questions, and theoretically interprets the findings); (2) communication (whether questions concerning how, why, and who of communication are raised to check the validity of findings); (3) and pragmatic (whether findings help take actions to produce desired results) (Kvale, 1995).

To achieve validity in my study, I exercised craftsmanship and communication. I strictly followed a grounded theory data analysis approach to systematically analyze, check, question, and theorize data (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). I went back to my participants to clarify their points where I was not clear. I relied on my background as a trained interpreter to ask the most appropriate questions. I also exercised communication by doing member check and asking my participants to comment on my initial findings. I emailed my participants my final abstract and asked them to confirm that it truly reflected their perspectives. They came back and confirmed that my findings reflected what they meant. Therefore, my study is trustworthy because I followed Kvale's (1995) evaluation criteria.

Consistency deals with the idea of reliability in quantitative research. Merriam (2009) argued that reliability causes problems in social science because "human behavior is never static" (p. 221). Moreover, the behavior of a group of people is not necessarily more reliable than

the behavior of a single person (Merriam, 2009). Consistency can be achieved through triangulation. Patton (2002) proposed four types of triangulations: researcher triangulation, theory triangulation, data source triangulation, and methodological triangulation. By utilizing triangulation, researchers will be able to reduce biases and increase the trustworthiness of the data.

In this study, I leveraged data triangulation by drawing theories from both intercultural communication and interpreting studies to guide my research and interview questions. I reviewed theories of the high-context/low-context, cultural value dimensions, face saving, and nonverbal codes from the field of intercultural communication. I also reviewed the conduit model and the multi-parameter model of interpreting constellations from the field of interpreting studies. By triangulating theories, I made sure that my research and interview questions were most relevant to investigate the role of culture in conference interpreting. I also adopted two different data collection methods (i.e., interview and focus group). By triangulating data sources, I was able to explore my research questions from multiple angles and triangulate findings that emerge from different sources of evidence. Therefore, my study is trustworthy.

#### **Chapter 4—Findings**

In this chapter, I will present two procedural guidelines and a process. Throughout my data analysis, two procedural guidelines emerge as rules that interpreters follow to work appropriately and effectively: meet with clients beforehand and be prepared to offer intercultural insights when consulted. According to my participants, many of the intercultural communication challenges could be prevented by following those two guidelines. Moreover, my participants would earn more respect from their clients.

I then will present that a process that illustrates how interpreters manage intercultural

communication challenges when doing Chinese-English conference interpreting. To better facilitate the discussion, I call this process the Interpreters' Intercultural Mediation Process.

In explaining the guidelines and the process, I will include direct quotations to reflect my participants' experience, insights, and thoughts. In doing so, I aim to give voice to the experienced conference interpreters. (Note: The participants are given pseudonyms to protect their identities.)

### **1. Procedural Guidelines**

*Meet with Clients Beforehand.* All my participants agreed that it was essential to meet with their clients beforehand to understand the goals of the conferences and to get background materials. By doing so, my participants were able to prepare better and have the opportunity to learn the unique industry terms from their clients. As a result, their interpretation would be more professional and accurate during the actual conferences. Moreover, my participants would take this opportunity to offer some cultural insights ahead of time in the hope that fewer intercultural misunderstandings would occur during the actual conferences. As Mia, a freelance who is based in the US with 15 years of experience, said:

This is quite essential for any type of meeting. If you don't get to know your clients, you really don't know what their intent is. It doesn't matter what type of meeting it is. There is usually some kind of goal that they [clients] set but they don't tell you. They [clients] just assume that as an interpreter, you go there, you just interpret, and you are done. But it is very important for us [interpreters] to know what the goal of the meeting is and what are the clients trying to come across when communicating. After I know their [clients'] agenda and what they are trying to achieve, that will help me prepare for the meeting ... if they [clients] ask me if there is anything they need to know cultural wise, I would let

them know the subtle cultural differences. So, when the Chinese side displays any cultural difference, they [clients] would be aware and try to resolve the issue.

Another participant, Luke, has six years' experience working for an interpreting firm in China. Luke further added that he would try to clarify with his clients about the unique selling points of their products and special terminologies. In his opinion, making the interpretation more in line with what the insiders say would "earn interpreters more respect from the clients and the audience". Luke gave a specific example:

Once I was interpreting for the shipping industry. The chief engineer actually in Chinese is called 老规 or 轮机长. Without being briefed by them, it is difficult to find the right word in Chinese ... So, there are a lot of industries' specific terminologies and meet them beforehand will be of great help.

However, my data also suggested that it was not always possible for the interpreters to meet with the clients ahead of time, no matter the participants were based in China or the US. Some clients might be too busy to meet with the interpreters before the meetings. Under other circumstances, some clients could be very protective of their information due to concerns for intellectual property rights, sensitive information leakage or simply due to habit. Thus, they were reluctant to share such information with the interpreters ahead of time. As my data suggested, even though meeting the clients beforehand was a general principle interpreters should strive for, they should not be discouraged if all of their efforts to meet with the clients beforehand failed. There are strategies to take during the interpreting process.

Additionally, my data suggested that if meeting the clients was not possible, my participants should try to get to the meeting venues early on the day of the conference. Winnie worked as a freelance in China for five years. According to Winnie, "If the conference starts at 9

a.m., I would go there around 8:15 a.m. and usually, there will be PPTs and I would get a copy and start preparing.” Other participants did not give exact timelines on how early they would show up for the meetings but they emphasized the importance of getting to the venue ahead of time to get oriented.

*Be Prepared to Offer Intercultural Insights when Consulted.* During my data analysis, working appropriately and effectively were found to be the top priority for all my participants. On the one hand, they would like to try their best to facilitate the intercultural communication. But on the other hand, they were cautious not to cross the line and be seen as meddling too much. Therefore, under circumstances where my participants were not certain what to do, they would rather stay out of the situations and simply interpret faithfully. They only would share their opinions if they were consulted for cultural insight and comments. Beck had 20 years of conference interpreting experience in the US and also taught interpreting in an American university. Her opinion was quite representative in my data. According to Beck:

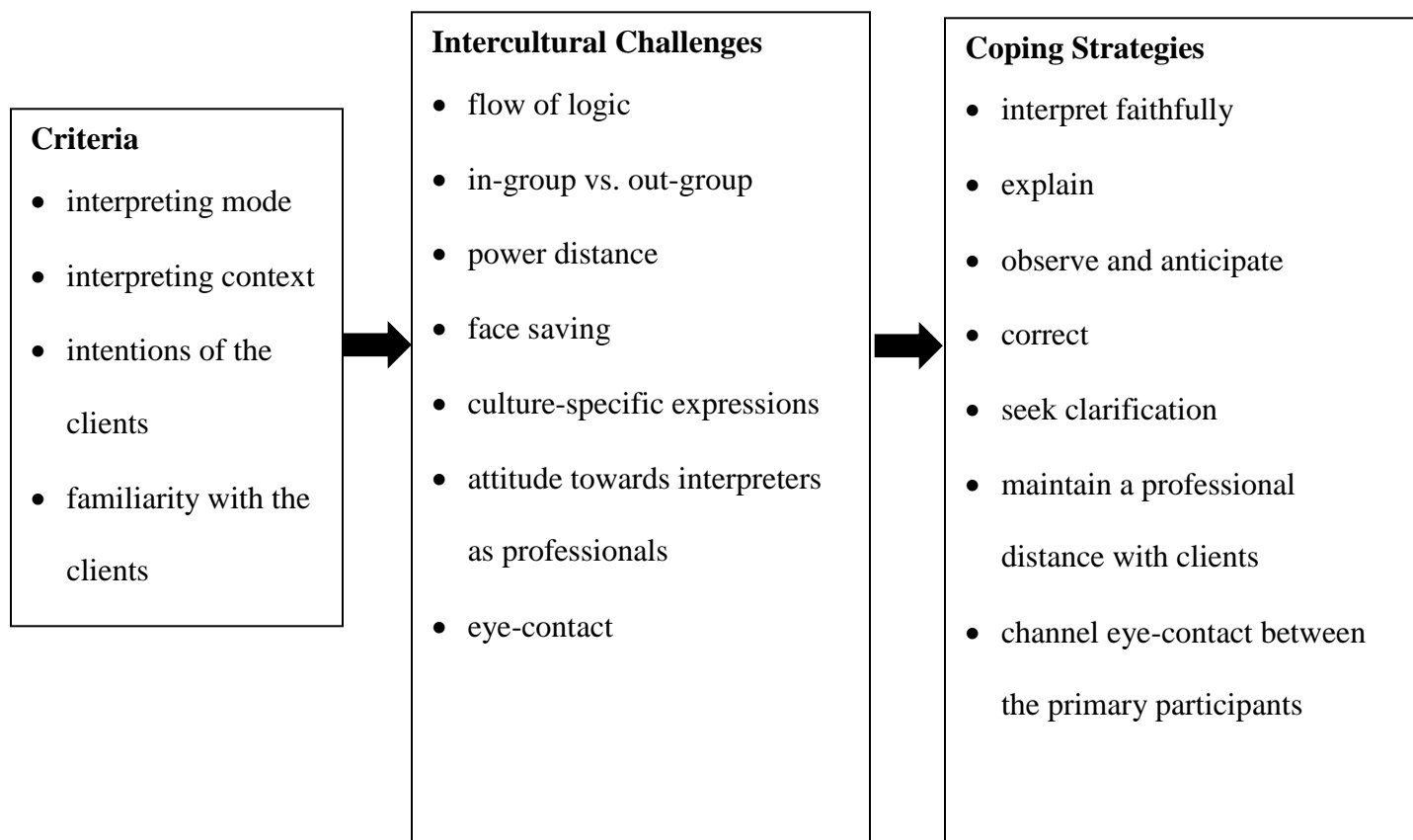
You have to be careful as the interpreter to not cross any line. For me, I don't want to say that this person is doing this or doing that because I don't want to make assumptions. But if somebody is asking me from a cultural perspective: “Do you think there is a cultural reason why we had this frustrating encounter?” I may give a little bit perspective: “In Chinese culture, there is much less tradition of doing that than American culture.”

Generally speaking, since most of my participants worked as freelance interpreters, being discreet was crucial in gaining the trust of their clients and securing more future job opportunities. Therefore, my participants always tended to follow those two procedural guidelines throughout their interactions with the clients.

## **2. Interpreters' Intercultural Mediation Process**

When my participants were faced with intercultural communication challenges at work, they were found to follow a procedure to determine if they should mediate and how they should mediate. This process is described as the Interpreters' Intercultural Mediation Process. My data revealed that not all intercultural communication challenges would be and should be addressed. Therefore, this Process starts with the evaluation criteria that conference interpreters apply to determine whether to mediate or not. Then, this Process illustrates the types of intercultural challenges interpreters encounter if they decide to mediate, and their coping strategies. The Process is illustrated in a flow chart:

### Interpreters' Intercultural Mediation Process



## 2.1 Criteria

My data analysis suggested that my participants followed four criteria to evaluate the circumstances before taking any action: (1) interpreting mode; (2) interpreting context; (3) intentions of the clients; (4) familiarity with the clients.

*Interpreting Mode.* The majority of my participants did both simultaneous interpreting and consecutive interpreting on a regular basis, but there also were a few who only interpreted simultaneously or consecutively. My data analysis confirmed that intercultural communication challenges were mainly addressed in the consecutive mode.

Participants who only did simultaneous interpreting for international conferences admitted that they had seen intercultural differences in their interpreting. However, they felt that there was not much room and time for them to mediate. They often sat in booths that were away from the podium. Even if intercultural communication challenges were spotted, my participants found it difficult to seek clarification or add explanation due to the constraints of simultaneous interpreting. Since the role of simultaneous interpreters was more restricted, my participants chose to focus on getting the message out in the target language faithfully and timely.

Luke's comment was shared by many participants when he explained that, "In a simultaneous setting, speakers give the speech and they are gone. You just have to interpret what they say. But in consecutive interpreting, people have closer contact with each other. They tend to display cultural difference more obviously." As a result, my participants were found to mainly manage intercultural communication challenges they encountered when they were doing consecutive interpreting.

*Interpreting Context.* My data analysis suggested that decisions on whether to mediate intercultural communication challenges or not also was made by evaluating the context my participants were working for.

Generally speaking, when my participants were interpreting for government agencies, they tended not to mediate cultural differences. Instead, they preferred to interpret faithfully and let the difference play out itself. It was thought that high-level government officials were all highly educated and well experienced. As a result, intercultural differences might be intentionally displayed as a negotiation tactic. As Winnie pointed out:

Some of my clients have been working with Chinese people for a long time, so they can tell that the Chinese people don't actually agree with them. Sometimes, they would challenge the Chinese by saying: "If you don't agree with me, let's talk about it." And after being pestered for so many times, the Chinese side would reluctantly express their attitude but still in a very polite way.

Another of my participant, Hannah, was a US Department of State contractor with 20 years of experience. As a veteran interpreter, Hannah also had observed many cases when the Chinese were giving implicit answers and the Americans kept on pushing to hold the Chinese responsible. Being caught in the middle, she struggled about what to do at the early years of her interpreting career. Gradually, Hannah determined that the best way was to interpret faithfully instead of mediating the conversation because: "Those people [government officials] have been dealing with Chinese affairs for a long time. If they didn't know before, they must know by now."

Moreover, several of my participants expressed the belief that government agencies should have permanent staff who would take care of the cultural differences. As government contractors, my participants were very cautious not to cross the line. As a result, they mainly saw their roles narrowly defined as conduit.

On the contrary, in private businesses, the atmosphere was considered to be more relaxed

and interpreters might be the only party in the room who spoke both languages. Under such circumstances, my participants considered it necessary to mediate intercultural differences that could potentially lead to misunderstandings or even confrontations. Lily worked both as a State Department contractor and a freelance and had six years of experience. Comparing the two difference work settings, Lily felt that when working for private businesses, the atmosphere was more relaxed. Lily would try to make sure that “both sides are able to communicate as comfortable as possible and as clearly as possible.” Winnie also mentioned that, as a freelance interpreter, she hoped to provide “value-added” service to her clients by explaining intercultural differences when necessary. Lily was based in the US and Winnie was based in China. But they both evaluated the contexts before doing any mediation and found it more necessary to bridge cultural differences for private businesses.

*Intentions of the Clients.* Data analysis revealed that my participants would evaluate the real intentions of their clients to make decisions whether to mediate intercultural communication difficulties or not. What is considered as acceptable in one culture could be unacceptable in another culture. Therefore, when my participants were certain that the clients unintentionally caused culture-related misunderstandings, they would mediate. Otherwise, my participants would be very cautious about taking any action.

Lily mentioned a case when she was working for the State Department. A mayor from a Chinese city was visiting a city in America. This Chinese mayor felt very welcomed and was trying to pay compliments to his American hosts. And the Chinese mayor’s sentence was: “Thank you very much, Mr. Mayor, for inviting us and hosting us. We really enjoy your hospitality. Coming to your town, I realize that the Americans are indeed very well off and that’s why you are all so *fat*.” In Chinese culture, it is acceptable to compliment a person by saying that

he/she is fat because it suggests that this person is healthy and well off. However, in American culture, it is quite insulting to be called fat. Lily's judgement was that the Chinese mayor meant to pay a compliment rather than insulting the American hosts. Therefore, Lily corrected the sentence by saying, "Well ... you all look healthy."

As another example, asking people their salary is not considered as rude in China. It is a common way to start conversations. However, Americans are very sensitive about their income, considering it to be private information. Many participants mentioned cases when the Chinese delegates were asking the Americans about their income and other information that was considered as private by the American side. When my participants were certain that the Chinese delegates did not intend to ask rude private questions, they would try to rephrase the questions. For instance, my participants would correct the question by interpreting it as: "How much money do you think someone in a position comparable to yours might make?" In this way, it was thought that the Americans were given some room to come up with an answer without turning red in the face.

However, when my participants were not certain about the intentions of their clients, they would be very cautious about taking any action. Their clients could intentionally be straightforward and pushy as negotiation tactics. Worse still, some clients could be ill-mannered in their verbal and nonverbal language. And their tones and gestures could be captured by the other party without any interpretation. As Beck pointed out:

If it is a culturally-based misunderstanding that comes across as rude, it is good if you [interpreter] can cushion it a little. But if someone is rude and you [interpreter] paint them as being very polite, that could lead to worse communication down on the road.

*Familiarity with the Clients.* Data analysis suggested that my participants distinguished between long-term clients and new clients. They felt more confident about mediating intercultural communication challenges when working for long-term clients.

Generally speaking, when interpreting for new clients, my participants expressed the concern that they were not familiar with their clients' preferences or how well their clients knew about the other culture. Therefore, fewer actions would be taken. Once the new clients became the long-term clients, my participants were more familiar with the clients' expectations for the interpreters. When my participants were confident that they would be seen as providing necessary assistance instead of crossing the line, they tended to mediate more intercultural differences. Gabby had 14 years of conference interpreting experience for both the US Department of State and private businesses. She told me that she would consider the "level of trust" and "familiarity built with her clients" before taking proactive measures to mediate cultural differences. Her answer was supported by other participants.

## **2.2 Types of Intercultural Challenges and Coping Strategies**

After going through the four main criteria listed above, if my participants still felt the need to mediate intercultural communication challenges, they would take several strategies. Generally speaking, my data analysis identified seven culture-related factors that could potentially present challenges to an interpreter's work. Those factors were: (1) flow of logic; (2) in-group vs. out-group; (3) power distance; (4) face saving; (5) culture-specific expressions; (6) attitude towards interpreters as professionals; (7) eye-contact. I will first explain each factor and then, provide examples to illustrate my participants' strategies in managing such challenges.

*Flow of Logic.* My data analysis revealed that American-style speeches were more logically structured and easier to follow compared with Chinese speeches. Jade was based in

China and had over 10 years of experience. She observed that the sequence of logic moved differently in the two cultures and found it more difficult to follow the logic of Chinese speeches. Cale was based in the US and had 15 years of conference interpreting experience. Cale also taught interpreting at an American university. He further seconded Jade's comment that when Chinese speakers were giving speeches, they tended to use "free-flowing" style and it would take a while before interpreters could really understand "what the speakers were trying to say". For Americans, "they make the points at first and then go to the major subjects ... For Chinese, they have the tendency to draw the conclusion after spending a lot of demonstrations and examples", as Jade summarized.

The difference in the flow of logic also was manifested during question and answer sessions. Lily made the comparison:

When the Chinese are asking a question, they will go on and on to explain the background, explain the rationale behind it, explain their thoughts, and then, they ask the question. Americans, on the other hand, will start with the question, and then, explain if the audience or speaker is not getting it. So, right away, you know what the question is ... This is also true when answering the question. The American side will say: "Well, the answer is either yes or no." And then, they will go on. Or they will say: "It depends and here is why." They establish something and then will go on. On the Chinese side, if it is the same thing, they will go right into it and start going both ways. You [interpreter] are not sure if the Chinese are saying yes or no.

To address the implicit flow of logic in Chinese speeches, my participants sought clarification with the speakers on the stage. Luke encouraged interpreters to be proactive: "If you [interpreter] don't understand the real logic behind what the speaker means, you should ask

them.”

My participants also suggested explaining the difference briefly to the Chinese side. Lily told her Chinese clients: “You might want to start with a question, and then go on to explain your chain of thoughts and your rationale. In this way, we know where you are going.” Of course, Lily also emphasized that she would only offer such advice when she was with a group for a long time and entered a lot of exchanges.

My participants also would anticipate situations to avoid being blamed when misunderstanding occurred. In question and answer sessions, some Chinese question-raisers would start by saying “I have a question” but kept on making comments. Then, they would sit down without actually asking any question. My participants anticipated that the speaker on the stage would be confused and might blame the interpreter for missing the actual question. Under such circumstances, my participants would add “actually it is a comment” at the end of the interpretation to make it clear that the person simply made a comment instead of asking a question.

*In-group vs. Out-group.* My data suggested that Chinese people tended to evaluate whether they should treat their American partners and the interpreters as in-group members or out-group members. Generally speaking, my participants noticed that at the initial interaction, the Chinese side tended to consider the American side as out-group members and be more reserved about sharing their true thoughts. Once trust and friendship were built, the Chinese side would be more open with the American side and show more commitment.

My participants observed that the Americans were not comfortable with this cultural preference at the beginning of their partnership with the Chinese side. Sarah had 23 years of experience working both as a US State Department contractor and as a freelance. She observed

that the American side felt being “shut out” because they were not able to tell if the Chinese side would like to work with them. Luke also noticed that when an American company was meeting the Chinese clients for the first time, the American side wanted to hear frank comments on the advantages and disadvantages of their products from the Chinese clients. However, the Chinese clients would not open their heart and mind until both sides became familiar with each other. No matter my participants were based in American or China, they shared same view on this phenomenon.

As for the coping strategy, interpret faithfully was preferred. It is thought that both sides would naturally find their “comfort zones” after spending times together. That being said, my participants also expressed their readiness to offer insights when consulted. “This is a Chinese thing. Chinese people distinguish people between strangers, acquaintances, and friends. They don’t just adopt that attitude towards you” were some comments my participants would make when being consulted.

Once the Chinese side started to treat their American partners as in-group members, my participants learned to anticipate some changes in the Chinese word choices, particularly pronouns like “we”, “our”, “you”. For instance, Gabby was very experienced and well-known in the conference interpreting profession. She recalled a case when her Chinese client asked the American side: “How many employees do our company have?” At first, Gabby thought the Chinese client was talking about his own company. Gabby was a bit confused herself because in her mind, a person should have some idea about the size of his own company instead of asking the outsiders. Then, Gabby realized that the Chinese client actually was treating the American side as one of his own and the actual question to the American side was: “How many employees does your company have?”

In addition to evaluating whether the American side should be considered as in-group or out-group members, my data also suggested the Chinese clients were trying to figure out if they should treat interpreters as their in-group or out-group members. On the contrary, most Americans did not tend to make such distinction. Rachel had five years of interpreting experience and she also taught interpreting at an American university. She found it interesting to watch as the Chinese side trying to figure out where the interpreters stood. “The Chinese are confused by Chinese persons who serve as interpreters hired by an American company ... they [the Chinese visitors] are kind of confused about where the interpreters are in terms of their identity”, as Rachel recalled. As the coping strategy, those of my participants with Chinese as their native language had to explain that they were a neutral part of the conversation in some circumstances. Otherwise, the Chinese side would not continue the negotiation. Interestingly, those of my participants who were native English speakers reported that they were identified as being on the American side no matter whether they were or not.

My data also confirmed that when Chinese visitors came over to the US side, they were happy to see interpreters who were native Chinese and tended to treat those interpreters as in-group members. Being regarded as in-group members meant that the Chinese visitors would be friendlier to interpreters and even overlook some interpreting errors. Although that could make interpreters’ work easier, my participants also warned against staying too close to their clients. Interpreters could end up being approached for errands outside the realm of an interpreter’s work. Sophie had 12 years of experience working as freelance in the US and her example also was shared by several other participants. She remembered helping the Chinese clients “calling the pharmacies, calling Costco for refund and calling the online websites to try to get things

delivered to a different address ...” But Sophie also pointed out that this kind of situation would only happen when interpreters spent multiple days with the same Chinese group.

As for the coping strategies, my participants suggested that it was essential to maintain a professional distance with the clients from both cultures and use the contract as a shield to turn down unreasonable requests politely but firmly. In particular, my participants mentioned the importance of skillfully balancing in-group and out-group distinctions with the Chinese clients. Tom was a freelance with 10 years of experience. His strategy was quite representative in my data when he said that interpreters should be friendly and conduct small talk with the Chinese side although he also warned against becoming too close with the Chinese side. Mia who had 15 years of experience further elaborated:

Yes, I don't try to be cold. I will tell them [Chinese visitors] that I am a freelancer and ask them, “is there something you need?” Then, if they tell me, I will pass on the information. I want to make sure that my work comes to the professional level. If they do come to me and ask me to do something is that outside of my professional work scope, I will say: “well, let me go to ask my principal because under the contract, I don't know if I am supposed to do that.” When you bring up the word “contract”, they kind of understand that you can't stand up and help them. You use it as your shield. You don't want to offend them. You don't want them to feel that you are not a friendly person.

Within the realm of in-group vs. out-group distinction, my participants also mentioned another unique Chinese cultural characteristic, *Guanxi*, the interconnectness among people. Winnie thought that one of the biggest challenges for Americans to do business in China was that the Chinese emphasized such interpersonal relationship over rules and regulations. As the American clients' interpreter in China, Winnie felt:

In China, it is not all about going through the procedures or getting approvals. It is really about relationships, whether you have established a really close relationship with somebody.

My participants' main coping strategy was to interpret faithfully. Playing a proactive role in such situations was not recommended. As Haley, a freelance who was based in the US with 15 years of experience, said, "Interpreters are neutral party ... Whatever is being said, that's why we deliver." That being said, some of my participants did mention the possibility of explaining the importance of *Guanxi* to their American clients when being consulted privately.

*Power Distance.* All my participants agreed that they observed a huge difference in terms of power distance between Chinese culture and American culture when doing interpreting. It was mainly manifested in the dynamic of the interaction. For example, at the negotiation table, only the head of the Chinese delegation would talk, whereas on the American side, people who possessed the knowledge would speak out more freely. For my participants, even though the situation seemed awkward, it did not bring much challenge to their interpreting. Their coping strategy was to interpret faithfully.

However, power distance presented challenges to my participants in other ways. Haley remembered that she was pulled to the side by the entourage when she was walking in front of a high-level Chinese official. Haley was told that she should never walk in front of a person of a higher rank. She also was very cautious when having to interpret sentences like "help yourself to tea and coffee" into Chinese. In Chinese culture, people at the lower rank were supposed to bring tea to people of higher rank.

Power distance also manifested itself in titles. My data confirmed that the Chinese attached greater importance to their titles and ranks being accurately mentioned. In particular,

Chinese people would be offended to hear their ranks being demoted by mistake. Liam was a graduate student in the GSIT program and had limited internship opportunities. But he already could recall a case when he was warned to refer to a Chinese project manager as the “general” manager at the Chinese delegation’s request.

The presence of hierarchy among Chinese organizations is closely tied to the Chinese historical and cultural background. Gernet (1982) pointed out that the foundation of Chinese respect for hierarchy is based on the relational norms expounded by Confucianism.

Confucianism believes that human relationship should be regulated by the Five Code of Ethics (*Wu Lun*), including ruler/subject, father/son, husband/wife, older brother/younger brother, and between friends. To be specific, ruler shows justice and subject shows loyalty; father shows love and son shows filial piety; husband shows initiation and wife shows obedience; the older brother shows brotherly love and the younger brother shows reverence; and friends show mutual faith to each other (Chen & Chung, 1994). In nature, these relationship are unequal. People at the junior level are required to show respect and obedience to their seniors. Because of influence of this Confucian doctrine, Chinese culture greatly honors authority and seniority (Chen & Chung, 1994).

As a result, all the behaviors demonstrated by the Chinese delegations could be explained by this cultural tradition. At the negotiation table, only the head of the Chinese delegation would talk because he have the authority over his subordinates. Even if the subordinates know more on some subject matters, they tend not to speak out freely unless they are asked to do so as a way to show their honor and respect to the head. People at the lower rank bringing tea to people of higher rank also is a way to show respect to seniority and authority. Chinese people prefer to be introduced by their business titles since it serves to make clear a person’s position and affiliation

(Ahmed & Li, 1996).

As coping strategies, my participants would try their best to get the list of attendees before the actual conference and familiarize themselves with the titles and rankings. If they were not certain about the titles, they would try to promote their Chinese clients by referring to them at a higher ranking. As Sophie said, “I would always call them general managers. It works so well ... Even if they are vice managers, I would remove the vice and call them managers. They always accept it. Call them a higher title than the lower always work.” Sophie mainly worked as a freelance for private businesses for 12 years and her answer was quite representative among the participants.

On the contrary, the Americans were not so sensitive about titles. Using honorific titles might sound awkward to the Americans. As a native English speaker, Beck pointed out:

When going from Chinese to English, I sometimes throw away the titles that are being used because it sounds very silly in English to call somebody CEO to their face. It is just not in the American habit. But, I try to work in the respectful tone in other ways ... For instance, depending on the context, I may say sir, mister, madam ... I will work in the politeness another way.

*Face Saving.* My data analysis revealed that Chinese people were more concerned about saving face for themselves and for their American counterparts. The Chinese may not express their true feelings to their American partners as a means of saving their own face or saving the face of their American partners. Sophie recalled a situation when the Chinese visitors were not used to eating cold sandwiches for every lunch but did not want to tell their American hosts. In the Chinese visitors' mind, if they told the American hosts that they did not like the lunch provided, they would hurt their hosts' face.

My participants would observe the situation first, and then make the decision whether to mediate or not. In Sophie's case, once she learned about the Chinese visitors' complaint, she decided to first "play by ear to see if the host is generous enough." Once Sophie was sure that the American hosts were easy and generous, she told them, "If you guys can bring some hot soup instead of cold sandwiches every day, the Chinese visitors probably will more appreciate it." Usually, the American hosts would follow the suggestion and change accordingly if their budget allowed. However, if after observation, Sophie felt that her American clients were really rigid, she would not say anything. As Sophie concluded, "As interpreters, you have to be really observant ... be aware of the situation, observe all the indications and signs from both parties."

My participants also noticed the Chinese audience rarely asked questions even if the American speakers kept on inviting questions. Cale had 15 years of experience doing conference interpreting and training interpreting students in the US. He observed that the Chinese audience were concerned about "losing face" in those situations. Jade, who was freelance in China with 10 years of experience, also observed:

If there are some points that are really confused, the delegates [Americans] will openly say: "I haven't got the full ideas or haven't fully understood this part." And they will even ask the speaker to go back to certain slide to make further elaboration. But for Chinese ... they are more reserved ... and tend not to openly say: "I can't understand this part and go back for this slide."

It can be seen that no matter the Chinese delegations were in the US or China, they were concerned about face saving. My data further suggested that when the Chinese audience members were not sure about a critical point, they would rather consult each other privately or

consult the interpreter during the breaks. As interpreters, they should anticipate situations when the Chinese listeners would approach them for clarifications during breaks.

Face saving also was manifested in being implicit or explicit when talking about unknown future. My analysis demonstrated that when the Chinese side was asked about things happening in the future, they tended to give implicit answers. In this way, they would not risk losing face if their predictions were proven wrong later. On the contrary, Americans focused on facts and numbers. Even if they were aware that things could change in the future, they still preferred to get quantifiable data. Using Winnie's example:

In a meeting, the Chinese side said: "We think that we are going to have a mild growth."

The American client said: "What do you mean by mild? I don't understand. Give me a number. Are you expecting double-digit growth?" The Chinese side answered: "Well, I don't know. There are so many variables. We are doing well and we will probably achieve a double-digit growth. But I don't know."

As for the coping strategy, it was thought that even though this cultural difference could potentially lead to more rounds of questions and answers, there was nothing that the interpreters could do on the spot to solve this issue. Instead, interpreters should simply interpret the message faithfully.

Face saving also was manifested in being direct or indirect in voicing disagreement. My data showed that the Americans were more direct when voicing disagreements whereas the Chinese preferred not to confront people directly. As Winnie described:

If the American clients don't agree, they would say: "I don't agree." And they want to discuss the disagreements directly. But Chinese people would say: "I don't know. I kind

of agree with you.” But actually, they don't agree with the American side and don't want to work with them anymore.

It also was found that when the Chinese side did not feel comfortable answering questions, they tended to say irrelevant things rather than telling the Americans up in front that they did not want to answer the question. As for the coping strategy, my participants chose to interpret faithfully. As Hannah explained: “If they [American side] didn't pick it up the first time, they would pursue with a couple more questions. If the Chinese side was not answering the question directly, they would analyze if the Chinese side was trying to avoid the question or that he/she really did not know. Usually, they [American side] will figure that out.” Harry had 27 years of experience working for the UN and he made it further clear that he would “never take a Chinese person's subtle hint and turn it into a direct statement because that would be taking things too far.”

Most of the American clients were able to determine the real intentions of the Chinese side after several rounds of questions and answers, in particular those who had dealt with Chinese people before. Yet there were still some who were ignorant and could blame the interpreters for not doing a good job. Under such circumstances, my participants would seek clarification with the clients during the break or after the meeting to make sure that they were not blamed. Once, when the Chinese side kept on avoiding the question by saying irrelevant things, the American side actually said at the meeting: “I think this is an interpretation problem.” My participant observed the situation and did not think that it was appropriate to explain the situation at the meeting. Instead, my participant went to the American side during the break and said, “I want to tell you this in private what was going on. It had nothing to do with interpretation. It was because they wanted to avoid this question.” In this way, the faces of both sides were saved and

the interpreter cleared the accusation.

*Culture-specific Expressions.* Even though there could be numerous cultural-specific words and expressions, I still asked my participants to come up with one or two examples on the spot. My goal was to see if there were some commonalities among those examples. Interestingly, this was the challenge that the focus group discussed most and gave the most examples. It could be that the students were still at the learning stage and they dealt with texts and recorded videos most of the time. Therefore, they tended to focus on finding the best solutions for particular words and expressions rather than looking at the whole picture. It also could be that the students were not able to provide rich and insightful examples on the other intercultural challenges because those challenges require more actual interactions with the clients to uncover. As students, they still lacked enough actual interaction and experiences.

My data suggested that a major challenge for interpreters were those expressions that existed in both cultures but had different connotations. According to the examples given by my participants, there were many expressions that seemed to be equivalent in the two languages but actually, they were not. For instance, the word dragon [龙] existed in both Chinese and English. However, Chinese culture regards dragon as an auspicious animal that brings people good luck, whereas the Americans associate dragon with fierce and evil forces. The coping strategy for this types of challenge was to figure out the correct meaning and explain. My participants also mentioned that if they were not certain which meaning the speaker was referring to, they would try to seek clarification with the speaker. Therefore, if dragon was mentioned, my participants would explain with sentences like: “In Chinese culture, dragon is considered as a positive thing. Dragon is considered a lucky animal.”

My participants also cautioned about matching Chinese idioms with American idioms because they might look alike but had complete different meanings. Take the Chinese expression 亡羊补牢 [mend the bolt after the sheep have left] for example. “Mend the bolt after the sheep have left” had the connotation that it was not too late to fix things in Chinese. Interestingly, this Chinese idiom had a seemingly equivalent phrase in English, “close the barn door after the horses have left”. However, “close the barn door after the horses have left” meant that there was nothing you could do to fix things and it was stupid to even try, as Beck explained. Since those two expressions looked so similar, they could cause confusion. The coping strategy was to observe and figure out if the speaker meant that it was too late or it was not too late to fix things. My participants would try to seek clarification if the meaning was not obvious.

Another type of expressions that posed challenges to interpreters were those expressions that only existed in one culture. For instance, several of my participant mentioned that it was difficult to find a perfect English word for the Chinese word 缘分. When Chinese people ran into each other several times coincidentally, they tended to say, “我们很有缘分啊, 又再次见面了” [We have 缘分, so we are seeing each other again]. According to my participants, 缘分 had some Buddhist connotation that contained both positive and negative meanings. In English, the word “destiny” has similar meaning but it is only for positive things. Another English word “fate” strongly suggests negative connotations. As for the coping strategy, focusing on explaining the actual meaning was considered to be the best solution. 缘分 was suggested to be interpreted as “it was meant to be”. For the Chinese sentence above, the suggested interpretation in English would be, “We are meant to be seeing each other again.” As another example, when asked direct questions, Chinese people often replied, “不方便说 [It is not convenient to say].” My participants felt that if this sentence was literally interpreted, the Americans would be

offended and wonder, “What is not convenient to say?” Haley struggled with the interpretation of this Chinese phrase at the beginning of her career but eventually found that the best way was to explain the underlining meaning of the Chinese clients by interpreting it as, “I am not in the position to say”.

On the other hand, many English words and expressions were found to lack equivalent expressions in Chinese as well. My participants found it difficult to interpret for English words like profile, project, pipelines or institute etc. As Haley illustrated, “Profile can mean the outline of a person. Profile can mean the combination of products. Profile can mean the analysis of something. It really depends on the context that profile is being used.” Unfortunately, there was no singular Chinese word that represented all those meanings. As for the coping strategy, my data suggested that there was no easy solution. Preparation and anticipation were what my participants mentioned most. “You [interpreters] know your subject matter and know what your speaker is going to talk about”, as many participants commented.

My data also revealed that the Americans were more likely to mention sports in their speeches and conversations. Americans preferred to make jokes about sports or use sport terms as metaphors. However, many of the sports-related expressions are not easy to render in the Chinese context. Some popular American sports, like baseball and football, were not popular in China. Chinese people were not familiar with the sport stars or the sports terms. Therefore, my participants felt that if they simply did a faithful interpretation, the Chinese people would be lost.

As for the coping strategy, many participants said they would give priority to explain the meaning. If they had extra time during the interpretation, they might mention the correspondent sports term in Chinese. For instance, one commonly used expression was: “It is a home run.” Beck did not think that it even was necessary to mention the analogy at all because the “Chinese

people did not care so much about baseball”. Instead, Beck chose to simply interpret it as, “it is a success.” Another coping strategy was to anticipate and do research on local sport games as part of the preparation. Mia recalled a time when she was told that the location of the meeting she was going to interpret for was at a hockey stadium. Right after learning the location of her assignment, Mia anticipated that the local host would mention hockey in the meeting. So she did research and found out that a hockey game had been held at that stadium the night before. Mia made sure that she checked the scores to see if the local team won or lost and if anything particular happened during the game. Sure enough, at the meeting, the local host said, “Oh, our Penguins did a good job last night!” Thanks to the anticipation, Mia immediately knew that the local host was referring to their hockey team. So, Mia started her interpretation by explaining: “This is a hockey stadium and there was a game last night. Our host beat ...”

Last but not least, all my participants agreed that jokes and humor often were lost in interpretation. It was very difficult for jokes and humor to achieve similar effects in another culture. As some participants jokingly said, “You hope and you pray that it is funny in the other language.” Unfortunately, my data did not reveal any effective solution to interpret jokes and humor. But all my participants agreed that they would try their best to explain the underlining meanings and depending on time constraints, they might or might not get to the literal meanings.

*Attitude towards Interpreters as Professionals.* My data suggested that the Chinese and the Americans had different understandings of what interpreters should and could do. First of all, the Americans thought that interpreters were hired for the sole purpose of providing interpreting service at the meetings. On the contrary, the Chinese tended to expect interpreters to provide a wider realm of services, such as photo copying, translation etc. As some of the participants complained, “The Chinese clients would ask us to do other things that are out of the realm of our

work.” As the coping strategy, when my participants were asked to do “other things”, they would explain politely but firmly that according to their contracts, they did not sign up for those “other things”.

Second, the different attitude towards interpreters as professionals also was manifested in treating interpreters with different levels of respect between the two cultures. To be specific, some felt that they received more respect when working for the American side. It was thought that the Americans regarded interpreting as a highly skillful profession that only a few people actually can do at a high level. Whereas the Chinese people tended to have less respect for the interpreter.

My data also revealed that Chinese clients were more likely to assume that interpreters should know anything and everything. They do not think it is necessary to provide background materials to interpreters in advance. As a consequence, my participants sometimes ended up not getting any materials from the Chinese side. The American side were more responsive to my participants’ requests and tried to provide meeting-related materials whenever possible.

My participants expressed their frustration but offered little constructive advice on how to raise the awareness of conference interpreting as a highly skilled profession among the Chinese clients. In my opinion, interpreters alone are not able to change this situation. Researchers in interpreting studies and interpreter associations should take upon the responsibility. More research should be conducted to further define the roles of professional conference interpreters. Interpreter associations also should work on raising the awareness of interpreting as a highly skilled professional among the end-users of interpreting services.

*Eye-contact.* My data analysis showed that American people preferred to make more eye-contact during conversations compared with the Chinese people. As Beck put it:

I think in general, Chinese use less direct eye contact, especially when meeting someone for the first time. And Americans use more direct eye-contact and would not trust somebody who won't give them direct eye contact.

In actual conferences, when awkward moments about eye-contact occurred, my participants admitted that there was not much they could do to encourage eye-contact between the two sides. It was difficult to directly tell the Chinese side to maintain more eye-contact or to tell the American side to reduce the frequency of eye-contact. But some participants also mentioned that if they were consulted for cultural insights before, during, or after the meeting, they would try to mention this cultural difference on eye-contact to their clients.

It also was found that the Chinese delegates were more likely to look at the interpreters instead of their American counterparts. Winnie observed that the Americans would find it weird “if a person [Chinese] is looking at somewhere else while talking to them.” As for the coping strategy, my participants would observe and then, decide what to do. One strategy would be to channel the eye-contact between the two primary parties of the meeting. Winnie said, “I would look at the Chinese speaker, and then look at the American listener. I use this way to remind the Chinese speaker that he should maintain some eye-contact with the American side.” Some other interpreters, on the other hand, would try to lower their eyes when realizing that the Chinese side was looking at them instead of looking at their American partners.

### **3. Two Examples**

To further illustrate how the Interpreters' Intercultural Mediation Process works, I hereby give two examples.

First, interpreter A gets an interpreting assignment from a new client that he has never worked with before. Interpreter A also learns that this new client represents a US government

agency and needs simultaneous interpreting service for a conference that they are having with a Chinese government agency. After going through the four evaluation criteria listed in the Process, interpreter A determines that the interpreting mode is simultaneous, the interpreting context is government, and he is not familiar with his new client. Interpreter A also deduces that he would not know his new client's intentions very well during the conference. As a result, interpreter A makes several informed decisions based on the Process. He would follow the two procedural guidelines and try to schedule a meeting with his client ahead of time to understand the goals of the conference and to get background materials. He also would try to take that opportunity to offer some cultural insights to his new client before the start of the conference in the hope that fewer intercultural misunderstandings would occur during the actual conferences. Interpreter A also decides that during the actual conference, he would focus on being a conduit and would not mediate any intercultural communication challenge even if they occur. That being said, interpreter A is prepared to offer intercultural insights if he is consulted by his new client.

Second, interpreter B gets an interpreting assignment from an old client that she has worked for before. She learns that it is a business negotiation between a private American company and a private Chinese company. Her service is needed in the consecutive mode. Interpreter B refers to the four evaluation criteria in the Process and decides that interpreting mode is consecutive, the interpreting context is private business, and she is quite familiar with this American client and his company. Interpreter B makes several informed decisions based on the Process. She follows the two procedural guidelines and tries to schedule a meeting with this client ahead of time to understand the goals of this particular business negotiation and to get background materials. She also prepares a list of cultural insights for this old client based on her previous interactions with him before the negotiation starts to prevent certain anticipated

intercultural misunderstandings from happening during the actual business meeting. During the actual negotiation, when this old client gives a brief introduction on his company, he mistakenly says that his company has 200 staff whereas actually, his company has over 2,000 staff.

Interpreter B is familiar with the company size of this old client due to previous interactions, so she analyzes the intentions of her client and decides to intervene. She seeks clarification with her client about the actual number of his staff before interpreting the number 200 directly. After the client confirms with her that the actual number of staff in his company is 2,000, interpreter B uses the number 2,000 to in her interpretation. In addition, despite interpreter B's effort to provide a list of intercultural insights to her client, she still experiences the challenges caused by the differences in power distance between the Chinese side and the American side. When the American client refers to a Chinese delegate as "manager" when this Chinese delegate's actual title is "general manager", interpreter B adds the word "general" in her interpretation. Based on the Process, she is alerted that the Chinese can be very particular of their titles being accurately mentioned. On the other hand, interpreter B keeps on hearing the Chinese side referring to the American client as "CEO Smith". She refers to the Process and the examples provided under the challenge of power distance, and decides to throw away the title "CEO" that is used by the Chinese side because it sounds very silly in English to call somebody "CEO" to their face. Instead, interpreter B works on politeness in other ways that are more accepted by English-speakers. She uses "Mr. Smith" or "sir" intermittently to replace "CEO" in her interpretation.

#### **4. Comparing the Interview Dataset with the Focus Group Dataset**

The interview dataset is much richer than the focus group dataset. The interview dataset was contributed by 20 top-level conference interpreters who had at least five years of professional conference interpreting experience. Moreover, I got to have an in-depth discussion

with each of them respectively.

On the contrary, the focus group dataset consisted of seven postgraduate students in interpreting and only lasted about an hour. I had intended to organize a focus group discussion with experienced professional interpreters. But I was not able to do so because their schedules were very tight. Instead, I organized a focus group discussion with the interpreting student who were competitively selected to study in the GSIT program. My thought was that those interpreting students practiced with real-life materials, had internship experience, and took intercultural communication courses. Therefore, they could answer my questions with a fresh pairs of eyes that might be different and even complementary to the professional interpreters' experience. Unfortunately, due to the lack of practical experience, those students were not able to offer any additional insights to the intercultural challenges in interpreting. Nor were they able to offer much suggestion on the coping strategies. In their group discussion, they briefly discussed the challenges they encountered that were caused by the flow of logic, power distance, face saving, cultural-specific expressions, and attitude towards interpreters as professionals. In particular, they focused their discussion on the challenges caused by cultural-specific expressions and gave lots of examples to show their struggles when interpreting between Chinese and English. For example, they discussed the possible implications of some Chinese expressions like 蛮拼得, 你懂得, 任性, 冤大头 etc. They also discussed the possible Chinese interpretations of some English expressions like: raining cats and dogs; letting the cat out of the bag; squeaky wheel gets the oil etc. Liam and Gram were the two students who had actual interpreting experience though very limited. As a result, they were able to feel the challenges caused by the different power distances between Chinese delegations and American delegations. Liam gave an example that when he was asked to call an "assistant minister" from the Chinese government as

the “minister” to honor him. Gram mentioned that he had to take a deep breath and just accepted it when his Chinese clients were getting bossy. The focus group was not able to comment on the challenges caused by in-group vs. out-group or the lack of eye-contact. After reflecting on the data, I found that was not surprising. Most of the students had little experience working for actual conferences. They mainly practiced from texts, recorded videos, and mock conferences. And those two challenges only could be observed when interpreters are actually working in the field. In addition, even if some students had limited actual interpreting experience, they still were quite inexperienced. Their focus could be all on following the logic of the speeches or dealing with specific words and expressions without even noticing some other challenges, not to mention addressing those challenges.

As a result, most of the examples I listed in my findings were from the professional interpreters because their examples were more representative and insightful. Moreover, those professional interpreters were better at explaining the examples and providing credible solutions.

That being said, on the broader sense, even though the student group did not have insightful discussions on each intercultural challenges, they did share similar views with professional interpreters on the types of intercultural challenges that they experienced during practicing. As a result, I still was able to triangulate my data set and ensure the reliability of my findings.

## **5. Summary**

To sum up, throughout my data analysis, two procedural guidelines and a process emerged. Interpreters were found to follow two procedural guidelines to provide the most appropriate and effective service: (1) meet with the clients beforehand; (2) be prepared to offer intercultural insights when consulted. Despite following the two procedural guidelines,

intercultural communication challenges still were inevitable. My data analysis led to the formation of the Interpreters' Intercultural Mediation Process. This Process illustrates the procedure interpreters follow to decide when and how to mediate intercultural communication challenges at work.

To be specific, the Interpreters' Intercultural Mediation Process includes four criteria, seven types of intercultural challenges, and seven coping strategies. Conference interpreters go through the following four criteria to evaluate the situations before doing any mediation: (1) interpreting mode; (2) interpreting context; (3) intentions of the clients; (4) familiarity with the clients. After going through those four criteria, if interpreters still feel it necessary to mediate the intercultural challenges to facilitate the communication, they generally are faced with the following seven types of challenges: (1) flow of logic; (2) in-group vs. out-group; (3) power distance; (4) face saving; (5) culture-specific expressions; (6) attitude towards interpreters as professionals; (7) eye-contact. To address those different types of challenges, interpreters adopt seven coping strategies: (1) interpret faithfully; (2) explain; (3) observe and anticipate; (4) correct; (5) seek clarification; (6) maintain a professional distance with clients; (7) channel eye-contact between the primary participants.

## **Chapter 5—Discussion**

In this chapter, I will examine the significance of my study. I will discuss both its theoretical and practical implications. I then will explore the limitations of this study and conclude with suggestions for future research directions.

### **1. Theoretical Implications**

Using a qualitative case study method, my findings lead me to conclude that the interpreting process should be viewed as an intercultural communication process. Interpreters

work in an intercultural context and are powerful co-constructors of interpreter-mediated interactions. Interpreters adopt various verbal and non-verbal strategies to exercise their power. My findings also suggest that interpreters vary their use of power depending on the setting and principles for which they are interpreting. The interpreting mode, the formality of the setting, and the familiarity with the clients all play a role. This project contributes to theory building in both the field of intercultural communication and the field of interpreting studies.

### 1.1 Intercultural Communication

This project is driven by an intercultural communication approach. Intercultural communication theories are systematically applied to examine the communication between Chinese and Americans. The research and interview questions are informed by combining intercultural communication theories with interpreting models. The findings confirm that interpreters are at the frontlines in observing and experiencing intercultural differences. Interpreters constitute a valuable source in understanding intercultural communication. Yet, their voice is rarely heard in the field of intercultural communication. This study makes efforts to make interpreters' voices heard and valued by intercultural communication scholars.

This project also contributes to the study of intercultural communication. It reveals the intercultural communication challenges when Chinese and American people are communicating with each other. Much of the research in this field has been done cross-culturally rather than inter-culturally. Take Hofstede's cultural value dimensions, for example. Hofstede collected his data from individual countries and then compared them to form the cultural value dimensions. Many scholars questioned if the five dimensions would stand if applied at the individual level (Kirkman, Lowe, & Gibson, 2006). My data further confirms that most of the cultural factors will stand when people from different cultures are communicating face-to-face. A majority of the

intercultural factors are agreed upon by the interpreters. Intercultural communication challenges caused by high-context/low-context, collectivism vs. individualism, power distance, uncertainty avoidance, and face saving are present throughout the interpreters' work.

However, some other cultural factors like long-term vs. short-term orientation and punctuality cannot be agreed upon. My data suggest that the interpreters considered both Chinese culture and American culture to be rather short-term oriented. In addition, both cultures were thought to be punctual and understanding the importance of being on time for important meetings and conferences.

The reasons for those different opinions are worth exploring. It could be that the Chinese culture is changing in the era of globalization. People from both cultures are becoming more aware of the other's cultural preferences and are adjusting their behaviors accordingly. It also could be that those cultural factors are found cross culturally and, thus do not apply in an intercultural context. People could react differently when communicating with someone from their own culture versus with someone from another culture. For instance, when Chinese people are meeting with each other, they could be more flexible in terms of punctuality. But when the Chinese people are meeting with the American people, they tend to be more punctual. While the findings of this case study confirm that most intercultural communication theories apply in the interpreting context, they also challenge the applicability of some other cultural factors.

## 1.2 Interpreting Studies

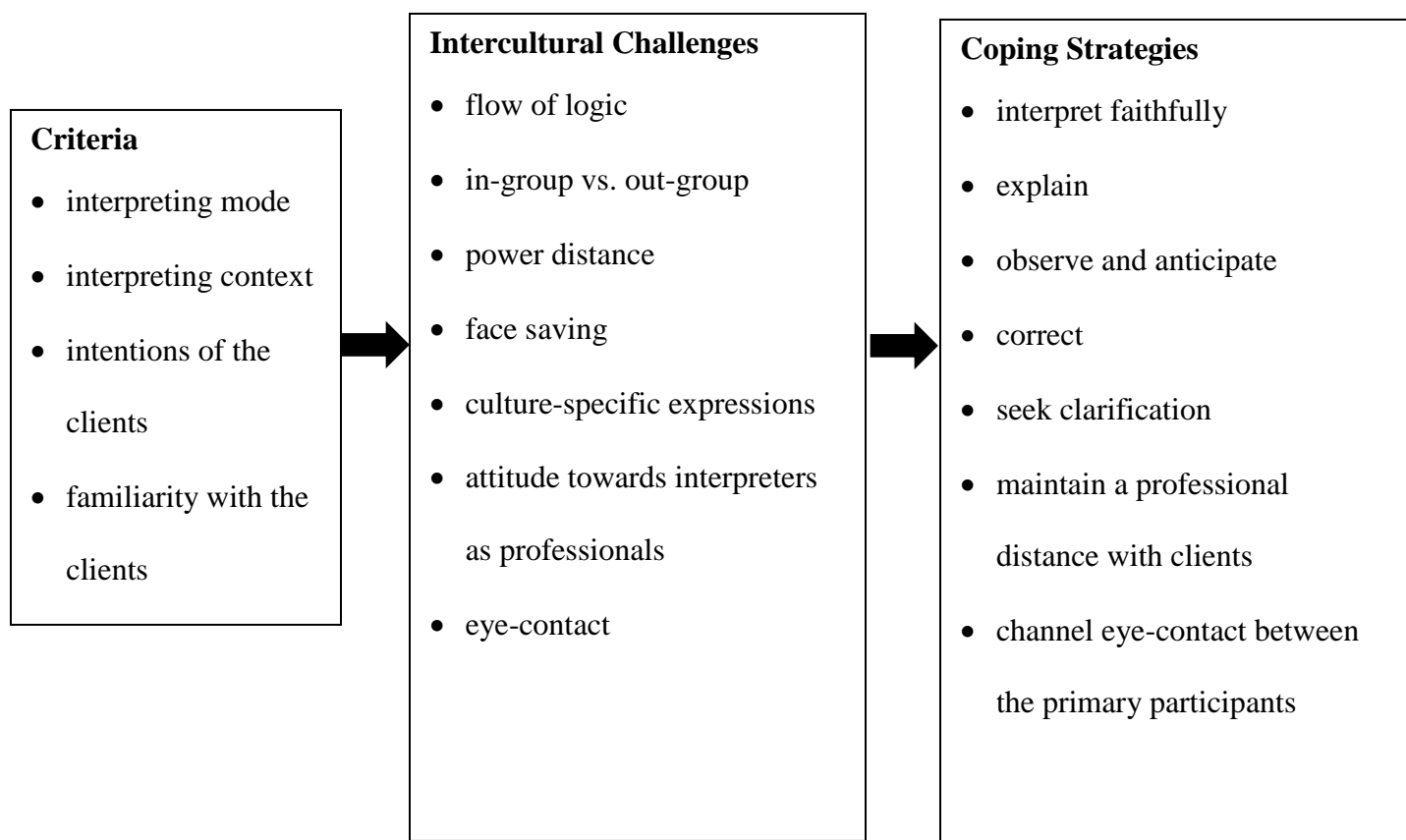
This project contributes to the call for a cultural turn in interpreting studies. It is an exploratory study that focuses on the role of culture in conference interpreting. Previously, most of the research on the cultural turn focused on legal and community domains. This case study takes an initial step in filling the research gap by examining the role of culture in Chinese-

English conference interpreting. This case study also is the first empirical study that systematically applies intercultural communication frameworks to examine the interpreting process. Most of the previous studies only focused on one or two cultural factors. Some studies did mention a variety of cultural factors, but they were conceptual papers rather than empirical studies.

The findings also contribute to the understanding of the complex roles of conference interpreters. Previous research in this area focused mainly on community interpreting, legal interpreting and healthcare interpreting. This study confirms that in order to best facilitate intercultural communication, conference interpreters also take upon roles like message clarifier and cultural broker. That being said, this study further points out that conference interpreters do not always take upon such roles. Instead, they evaluate the situations by applying several criteria to make the judgement calls.

This project reveals that conference interpreters follow two procedural guidelines to work appropriately and effectively. They try to meet with the clients ahead of scheduled meetings. They are prepared to offer intercultural insights when consulted. Despite following the two procedural guidelines, intercultural communication challenges still exist. This study demonstrates that conference interpreters, in particular when they are working in the consecutive mode, are faced with challenges caused by intercultural differences. To address the challenges, this study also contributes to theory building by proposing the Interpreters' Intercultural Mediation Process.

#### Interpreters' Intercultural Mediation Process



This process illustrates the procedure interpreters follow to decide when and how to mediate intercultural communication challenges at work. To be specific, the Interpreters' Intercultural Mediation Process includes four criteria, seven types of intercultural challenges, and seven coping strategies. Conference interpreters apply the following four criteria to evaluate the situations before doing any mediation: (1) interpreting mode; (2) interpreting context; (3) intentions of the clients; (4) familiarity with the clients. After going through those four criteria, if interpreters still feel it necessary to mediate the intercultural communication, they generally are faced with the following seven types of challenges: (1) flow of logic; (2) in-group vs. out-group; (3) power distance; (4) face saving; (5) culture-specific expressions; (6) attitude towards interpreters as professionals; (7) eye-contact. To address those different types of challenges,

interpreters adopt seven coping strategies: (1) interpret faithfully; (2) explain; (3) observe and anticipate; (4) correct; (5) seek clarification; (6) maintain a professional distance with clients; (7) channel eye-contact between the primary participants.

By applying an intercultural communication approach to understand the experiences of conference interpreters, this case study uncovers many nuances and sheds new light in the field of interpreting studies. Future interpreting scholars could use similar frameworks to study other domains of interpreting and other language combinations.

The Interpreters' Intercultural Mediation Process further supports interpreting scholars' argument that the conduit model of interpreters does not work. Interpreters do not work in a social vacuum because cultural differences make it impossible for interpreters to simply perform word-for-word interpretation without personal involvement. Instead, interpreters need to evaluate the circumstances they are in and make decisions on whether, what, and how to mediate intercultural challenges.

The Interpreters' Intercultural Mediation Process is guided and further contributes to the multi-parameter model of interpreting constellations (Alexieva, 1997). In conceiving my research questions, I compared the popular frameworks in intercultural communication (i.e., high-context/low-context; cultural value dimensions; face saving; nonverbal communication) with the seven scales in the universality vs. cultural-specificity continuum suggested in Alexieva's model. I found that high-context/low-context corresponds with the scale of cooperativeness/directness vs. non-cooperativeness/indirectness; cultural value dimensions corresponds scales of equality/solidarity vs. non-equality/power and shared goals vs. conflicting goals; nonverbal communication corresponds with the scale of distance vs. proximity and non-involvement vs. involvement. Therefore, when designing my research and interview questions,

those areas were what I focused on.

In my data analysis stage, when I was arranging and making connections among the core variable I discovered from my data, Alexieva's (1997) model inspired me to set evaluation criteria in my Process. Alexieva's model proposed that interpreting activities should be classified in terms of the degree of interpreters' cultural embeddedness. In my data, I found that consecutive interpreting requires more cultural embeddedness from the interpreters than simultaneous interpreting. Therefore, I decided to make interpreting mode as one of the evaluation criteria. Another scale in Alexieva's model is formal setting vs. informal setting. In my data, I found that interpreters made a distinction between government context and private business context. Although the setting of private businesses is not necessarily less formal than the setting of government agencies, her scale did remind me that the setting played a role, and thus I created another evaluation criteria and named it interpreting context.

In return, my Process contributes to the validity of Alexieva's model. During the literature review, it was noted that one weakness of Alexieva's model was that it was a theoretical one and had not been empirically tested. Although my study is not designed to test her model, it confirms the validity of some of the scales in Alexieva's model. For instance, one of Alexieva's scales is about the status of all participants in an interpreter-mediated event and my Process confirms that power distance between the primary meeting participants and the interpreters does exist and is more prominent between the Chinese participants and the interpreters. My own analysis traces this characteristic back to the influence of Confucianism on Chinese culture and society. As another example, cooperativeness/directness vs. non-cooperativeness/indirectness is another important scale in Alexieva's model and my Process confirms that challenges caused by this scale do exist in Chinese-English conference interpreting.

Moreover, my study further identifies that the indirect Chinese communication style is caused by the concern for face and harmony in Chinese culture.

Furthermore, the Interpreters' Intercultural Mediation Process offers rich real-life examples on the intercultural communication challenges in conference interpreting and provides informed coping strategies. This part could be complementary to Alexieva's model.

The participant pool of this study also is very valuable to the field of interpreting studies. I feel honored to have been able to recruit 20 top-level conference interpreters who are willing to share their experiences and insights. Many of them are well-known and well-respected in this profession and have busy schedules. It is very kind of them to spare time to support my research. Their rich experiences and insightful viewpoints add great value and credibility to my research. I also feel fortunate to have been able to organize a focus group discussion with seven postgraduate interpreting students. Those students are competitively selected to study in the GSIT program. They have great potential to become top-level interpreters in the future. It is very kind of the students to spare time from their practice to share their thoughts with me. Moreover, since the students share similar views with professional interpreters about the challenges caused by cultural differences in their practices, I am able to triangulate my data set and ensure the reliability of my findings.

According to my participants, the focus of my research is very timely and necessary. They are constantly challenged by intercultural communication differences at work but could find limited resources regarding how to manage those challenges appropriately and effectively. It is their hope that by sharing their observations, struggles and strategies, more discussions and research in this direction could be stimulated. This study serves as the initial step to have conference interpreters' experience with intercultural communication heard by interpreting

scholars.

## **2. Practical Applications**

This study proposes an Interpreters' Intercultural Mediation Process. This Process serves to guide interpreters in managing intercultural communication challenges. First, it illustrates the evaluation criteria that interpreters should apply to decide whether or not to mediate intercultural challenges. It should be noted that not all intercultural communication challenges need to be addressed. By following the suggested criteria, interpreting professionals are able to make informed judgements, enabling them to work appropriately and effectively.

Moreover, this Process lists the seven most commonly encountered intercultural communication challenges in the interpreting process and provides suggested strategies. Importantly, it fills a void by providing guidance in an area that is often left to an intuitive approach based on experience. By being aware of the challenges and the coping strategies, Chinese-English conference interpreters will be able to work more confidently and handle challenges more competently. In addition, by being aware of this Process, interpreters are able to do more focused preparation prior to conferences.

The findings of this study also contribute to interpreter training. The Process is a very useful construct for students of interpreting. It helps generate awareness and provide guidance on actions the students could consider taking while working as interpreters. Utilizing the findings of this study, interpreting students can improve their intercultural competence. Intercultural training methods, such as contrast culture, cross-cultural dialogue, cross-culture analysis, can benefit from the findings of this study (Fowler & Blohm, 2004; Landis, Bennett, & Bennett, 2004). I will briefly introduce each training method and then, illustrate how it can benefit from the findings of this study.

Contrast culture, which also is known as the contrast-American method because it has been largely used in America, has become very popular in intercultural competence training (Landis, Bennett, & Bennett, 2004; Kimmel, 1995). This exercise often uses American culture as the reference point to create contrasting culture patterns, but it can be modified to use another culture as the reference point (Fowler & Blohm, 2004). Trainers will design situations that simulate the real world issues that trainees would face in the field. Trainees from the reference culture would interact with an experienced actor who represents the contrast culture. Through dialogues in a role-playing situation, this method is designed for trainees to become aware of their own cultural assumptions, values, and patterns of thinking (DeMello, 1995; Kimmel, 1995). This training method provides the opportunity for trainees to practice communicating with people from different cultures. In my particular study, American culture is used as the reference point to compare with Chinese culture. A great deal of real-world comparisons are included. Interpreting trainers can design situations based on the examples provided in this study to purposefully serve the need of interpreting trainees. Moreover, experienced interpreters can serve as the actor to represent either the Chinese or the American culture.

Cross-cultural dialogues are conducted by two people of different cultures based on a pre-written dialogue provided by the trainer (Fowler & Blohm, 2004). Each dialogue is designed to contain a mistaken assumption and the possibility for misunderstanding or even offense. Trainees are expected to be struck by the subtlety of intercultural differences and realize the need to make adjustment to their verbal and nonverbal behaviors accordingly. Storti (1994, 1999) is the main contributor to this training method. Storti (1994) provided 74 brief intercultural dialogues based on social settings, the workplace, and the world of business. Trainers who use this training method can draw upon Storti's (1994) examples. Storti (1994) also teaches trainers

how to write their own dialogues. Dialogues provide the opportunity for trainees to experience how real culture is in classroom settings. Its weakness lies in that trainees may miss the point of the dialogues and deny that they would say anything like what they say in the dialogue in real life (Fowler & Blohm, 2004). The findings of my study provide extra materials for creating more relevant dialogues for interpreting trainees. In this way, trainees can be trained to spot intercultural misunderstandings that will occur in their future work. Students also can be challenged to come up with appropriate interpretations for those dialogues.

Cross-cultural analysis is designed for trainees to write down the position of their own culture in regard to the contrasting position of the target culture presented in the instrument. Trainees then will form groups and have group discussions about their beliefs, attitudes, assumptions, and expectations. Often, a resource person from the target culture will join the group discussion (Wight, 1999). Both content and process are flexible in this training method. Trainers can refine or rewrite the instrument to meet the specific needs of trainees (Fowler & Blohm, 2004). This method encourages trainees to reflect on cultural differences. It often is used before role plays when trainees need to apply what they have learned to practice (Fowler & Blohm, 2004). The intercultural communication frameworks applied in this case study serve as references for interpreting students to reflect upon the cultural differences. Trainers also could organize students to discuss the pros and cons of the coping strategies provided in this study.

To sum up, this case study informs trainers which cultural factors are most relevant to interpreters' work. The rich, in-depth, and empirical findings of this case study provide first-hand and updated materials for interpreter training.

However, it also should be noted that this Interpreters' Intercultural Mediation Process is drawn from a qualitative case study. While it generates extremely rich data in understanding the

intercultural communication challenges in interpreting, it does not yield generalizability. I cannot assert that my participants represent the general population of Chinese-English conference interpreters. Thus, there is no guarantee that the Process proposed in this study will apply to all Chinese-English conference interpreting contexts. However, the value of this Process lies in its transferability (Lincoln & Cuba, 2000). This Process may be transferable to other domains of Chinese-English interpreting or interpreting activities in other language combinations.

### **3. Limitations of the Study**

Despite the attempts made within this study to utilize the most effective methods and procedures, there are a number of limitations to note. One of the limitations is the inaccessibility to the actual sites where conference interpreting is performed. In international conferences, confidentiality is a big concern. Researchers rarely are permitted to get inside the venue to observe the actual conferences, not to mention recording conversations. As a result, I am not able to do nonparticipant observation to observe interpreters' actual performance and check that against their answers in interviews.

Another limitation is the researcher's own language combination. My language combination is Chinese and English. I was trained as professional interpreter between those two languages. I am not able to understand a Spanish-English interpretation and get much meaning out of it. Therefore, in this case study, I focus only on Chinese-English language combination. It limits my participant pool to only include interpreters with Chinese and English as their language combination.

In addition, the participant pool in this study is not well balanced. Most of my participants are native Chinese speakers with English as their second language. Only a few are native English speakers with acquired Chinese. It is possible that interpreters with different

native languages encounter different types of intercultural communication challenges or could use different coping strategies. But with an unbalanced number of participants, a comparison is not possible. However, this unbalanced percentage between native Chinese speakers and native English speakers represents the reality in this profession. Most of the professional Chinese-English interpreters have Chinese as their mother tongue.

#### **4. Future Research**

The present study offers insight into interpreters' intercultural experience at work. Through in-depth interviews and focus group discussion, this study gives voice to interpreters' perceptions on the role of culture in interpreting. Given its exploratory nature, this study accomplishes its goal in providing "preliminary insights into the key issues to help shape future research" in this area (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011, p. 10). However, it should be noted that more related lines of research ought to be pursued.

*Intercultural Communication.* As mentioned above, the data suggest that some cultural factors like long-term vs. short-term orientation are questioned by interpreters. For instance, many argue that both Chinese and American cultures focuses on short-term, immediate goals. Whether those cultural factors are outdated or whether they only apply under certain circumstances, intercultural communication scholars should further investigate it.

Moreover, my data also include many interpreters' observations on the differences between Chinese and American culture that do not present challenges to their work. Since this paper focuses on the intercultural communication differences that present challenges to interpreters' work, those differences that do not present challenges are not included. However, this could be a potential direction for my future research. I could further investigate the general cultural differences between China and America through the eyes of interpreters.

*Interpreting Studies*. By taking an intercultural communication approach to examine the interpreting process, an Interpreters' Intercultural Mediation Process is formed. I hope to continue testing and modifying this model by designing questionnaires to reach the wider interpreter community and quantify my data.

I also envision applying this approach to systematically investigate other domains of Chinese-English interpreting activities. I plan to use a similar interview guide to interview Chinese-English legal interpreters and healthcare interpreters. Then, I will be able to compare my findings with the findings of this project and draw more conclusions. I also would like to collaborate with scholars from other language combinations to research into the intercultural communication challenges faced by interpreters whose language combination is not Chinese-English. In this way, I will be able to compare the similarities and differences between different language combinations. Last but not least, it also is my hope that more interpreting scholars can be inspired by this intercultural communication approach to interpreting. Together, the call for a cultural turn in interpreting studies will be better answered.

## **5. Conclusion**

The purpose of this case study is to understand the role of culture in Chinese-English conference interpreting. Based on an intercultural communication approach, this study utilizes empirical research to understand the types of intercultural communication challenges Chinese-English conference interpreters encounter and their coping strategies.

This case study reveals two procedural guidelines and a process. Interpreters are found to follow two procedural guidelines to provide the most appropriate and effective service. They try to meet with the clients beforehand. They are prepared to offer intercultural insights when consulted. They do not offer intercultural insights or mediate intercultural communication

challenges under all circumstances.

The Interpreters' Intercultural Mediation Process is uncovered to illustrate the procedure that interpreters follow to decide when and how to mediate intercultural communication challenges at work. This Process includes four criteria, seven types of intercultural challenges, and seven coping strategies. Interpreters apply four criteria to evaluate the situations before taking any action: (1) interpreting mode; (2) interpreting context; (3) intentions of the clients; (4) familiarity with the clients.

After going through those four criteria, if interpreters still feel it necessary to mediate the intercultural challenges to facilitate the communication, they generally are faced with the following seven types of challenges: (1) flow of logic; (2) in-group vs. out-group; (3) power distance; (4) face saving; (5) culture-specific expressions; (6) attitude towards interpreters as professionals; (7) eye-contact. To address those different types of challenges, interpreters adopt seven coping strategies: (1) interpret faithfully; (2) explain; (3) observe and anticipate; (4) correct; (5) seek clarification; (6) maintain a professional distance with clients; (7) channel eye-contact between the primary participants.

This project confirms that interpreting process should be viewed as an intercultural communication process. Chinese-English conference interpreters are faced with intercultural communication challenges at work. This project further uncovers the evaluation criteria and strategies conference interpreters apply to manage the challenges caused by Chinese and American cultural differences. It answers the call for a "cultural turn" and dedicates to the discussion on the role of culture in the interpreting process. It is an empirical study that takes on an intercultural communication approach to systematically examine the conference interpreting

context. It endeavors to make interpreters' voices heard and valued by intercultural communication scholars.

One significant contribution of this project is that it distinguishes the types of intercultural differences that present challenges to a conference interpreter's work from those differences that do not present challenges in the interpreting process. It achieves the goal of sifting through major intercultural communication theories to identify the key factors that have a stake in Chinese-English conference interpreting. This project confirms that high-context/low-context and face saving present great challenges in conference interpreting. It also finds that only three value dimensions (i.e., individualism/collectivism, power distance, and uncertainty avoidance) out of Hofstede's five cultural value dimensions are crucial to a conference interpreter's work. Many factors within those three value dimensions can be explained by the concern for face saving in Chinese culture. The concern for face plays such a crucial role in Chinese culture that it can be used to explain a great part of Hofstede's theory.

The findings of this project also have applied value in the profession of conference interpreting. Drawn from the collective experience of 27 top-level conference interpreters and interpreter trainees, this project is of great value to any individual who plans to advance a career in conference interpreting or is interested in pursuing a career in this profession. By learning the two procedural guidelines, conference interpreters can be more confident and better prepared for their work. By following the Interpreters' Intercultural Mediation Process, conference interpreters can better manage the intercultural challenges at work, thus enhancing their intercultural communication competence. This study also informs interpreting students what to expect in their future career. Trainers can design discussions and case studies based on the myriad of real-life examples provide by this project to enhance students' intercultural

competence. The findings also give interpreting students a glimpse into the professional world they aspire to work for. The procedural guidelines and the Process can serve as good references when students are trying to elevate their interpreting skills.

To sum up, the project offers insight into interpreters' intercultural experience at work. Through in-depth interviews and focus group discussion, this project gives voice to interpreters' perceptions on the role of culture in conference interpreting. Given its exploratory nature, this study accomplishes its goal in providing preliminary insights into the key intercultural communication challenges in Chinese-English conference interpreting and helps shape future research in this direction (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011). And former Chinese foreign minister Li, Zhaoxing's (Li, 2012) viewpoint is confirmed: interpreters are indeed bridges to intercultural communication.

## Appendix A: IRB Initial Application, Consent Forms and Approval Letter

### 1. Abstract:

The main purpose of this case study is to apply an intercultural communication approach to examine the role of culture in interpreting. This case study will attempt to identify the types of intercultural challenges professional Chinese-English interpreters encounter in their work and their strategies in managing those challenges. This case study also will hear the students' voice on the intercultural challenges they experience during their training and practice. It is hoped that the findings from this case study can make some initial theoretical contribution to bridge the field of intercultural communication with the field of interpreting and inspire more research in this direction. It also is envisioned that both professional interpreters and students can improve their understanding and management of intercultural challenges through the findings of this case study.

Interview and focus group discussion will jointly be used for data collection. Interview participants will be recruited from GSIT (Graduate Studies in Interpreting and Translation program at Department of Communication in University of Maryland) instructors and students as well as professional interpreters from America and China. Focus group discussions will be organized among GSIT students.

There is no deception involved in this the study.

### 2. Subject Selection:

- a. **Recruitment:** The researcher plans to recruit GSIT instructors and students as the initial participants in person. The researcher also will use snowball sampling data collection technique to ask the initial participants for referrals of more professional Chinese-English conference interpreters from American and China. Once the researcher gets referrals, the researcher will email them to recruit.
- b. **Eligibility Criteria:** Participants will be selected based on
  - (a) whether they are at least 18 years old;
  - (b) participants for interviews will be instructors and students in the GSIT program as well as professional conference interpreters from American and China;
  - (c) participants for interviews must have at least 5 years of professional experiences as conference interpreters;
  - (d) participants for interviews must have accreditations from a recognized postgraduate interpreter training institution or be affiliated with a well-known professional association for interpreters, such as International Association of Conference Interpreters (AIIC);
  - (e) participants for focus group discussions will be GSIT students.
- c. **Rationale:** For the interview portion, Chinese-English interpreting instructors in GSIT program are active professional conference interpreters who have years of experience in

conference interpreting and teaching. They are carefully selected to teach GSIT program in Department of Communication. Therefore, they are the ideal interviewees for my proposed case study on understanding the role of culture in interpreting.

In addition, they all are well-connected in this profession and can refer me to more qualified participants for me to interview with. Several students in GSIT program also are experienced professional interpreters who meet all my criteria above and will be included in my interview participant pool as well.

Also, I would like to use my personal contact to recruit some interviewees from China. Professional conference interpreters from China may offer different perspectives on the role of culture in the interpreting process than professional conference interpreters from U.S. side. I plan to conduct online skype interviews with them.

For the focus group discussion, I would like to organize GSIT students to have a group discussion on the role of culture in interpreting. They have all taken one or two intercultural communication courses and have done some real-life practices. As trainees, they may encounter intercultural challenges differently from professional interpreters who already have years of actual working experiences. The students' voice may complement the professional interpreters' voice and even offer new perspectives in this case study.

- d. **Enrollment Numbers:** The maximum number of interview participants sought is 20. The maximum number of focus group participants sought is 20.

### 3. Procedures:

The methods used to collect data will be interviews and focus group discussions. Both interviews and focus group discussions will be conducted in English only.

The interviews will take place at UMCP campus or at the convenience of the participants or online via Skype. The researcher plans to conduct interviews with qualified GSIT instructors and students as well as professional conference interpreters from America and China. Participation is voluntary.

The focus group discussions will take place at UMCP campus, with 8 to 10 people in each group. The researcher plans to recruit the participants for focus groups by providing a sign-up sheet for GSIT students to sign up voluntarily. GSIT instructors will not be asked to participate in focus group discussions. The researcher plans to hold one or two group discussions depending on the sign-up numbers.

Both the in-depth interviews and focus group discussions will take approximately 45-60 minutes. They will be using the same protocol. Questions to be asked covering participant background and experience, their thoughts on the importance of intercultural communication in actual conference interpreting practices. A list of topics for interviews and focus group discussion is attached as Supporting Document.

All participants will be provided with a standard consent form of University of Maryland to sign prior to the interviews and focus group discussions respectively. For online skype interviewees, the researcher will email the consent forms to them and ask them to sign it and email the forms back to the researcher before conducting the interviews. See Appendix for consent forms.

The researcher also will ask participants for consent to record the conversation in interview and focus group discussions respectively. If the participant consents, the in-depth interviews will be recorded with an audio recorder and the focus group discussion will be recorded with a video recorder if the researcher can book Oral Communication Center (OCC) on the 2nd Floor of Skinner Building. That center is equipped with camera and the researcher knows how to operate it. The researcher will close the door of the room and explain to the focus group participants before starting the recording. Using a camera will make it easier for the research to tell the voices apart for data analysis. If by any reason the researcher is not able to book OCC or find a camera, the researcher will record focus group discussion with an audio recorder.

The interviews and focus group discussions will be transcribed by the researcher.

Each interview participant will be rewarded with a \$10 Starbucks gift card as appreciation for their time. Focus group participants will not have any compensation.

#### **4. Risks:**

There are no known physical or psychological risks to the subjects. There might be a potential risk for a breach of confidentiality. The research should not affect the employment status or academic standing of participants. Participants may have the opportunity to assess the information presented in the final report.

#### **5. Benefits:**

There are no direct benefits to participants. However, there is a potential that this research could shed new light on the direction of future interpreting studies.

#### **6. Confidentiality:**

Standard methods to protect privacy will be maintained. The identities of participants will remain confidential. Only the researcher will have access to the names and usernames of participants. The researcher does not intend to use any personally identifying information in future presentations of the research, such as names linked to direct quotations.

All the recordings and transcription documents will be securely stored in the researcher's locked offices on the computers and on a flash drive, both in password protected files. The audio and video recordings will only be heard and viewed by the researcher for

research purposes. The video and audio recordings will be stored in the researcher's computer in password-protected or encrypted data files, and will not be labeled with any personally identifying information about the participants. Hard copies of data will remain in the Principal Investigator's file cabinet in the locked offices. All data will be destroyed (i.e., shredded or erased) when their use is no longer needed but not before a minimum of five years after data collection.

All the email exchanges and questionnaires that contain identifying information will be kept in a password protected file on the researcher's computer and cannot be accessed by people other than the designated researchers. Participants' identity will be protected to the maximum extent possible. Information may be shared with representatives of the University of Maryland, College Park or governmental authorities if participants or someone else is in danger or if the researchers are required to do so by law.

## **7. Consent Process:**

There is no deception in either interviews or focus group discussions of this study.

For face-to face interviews, participants will be asked to indicate their consents by signing the written consent forms and giving them back to the researcher or returning the signed consent forms via postal mail. For online skype interviews, the researcher will email the consent form to the online participants, ask them to read and sign it, and email the signed form back to the researcher.

The written informed consent forms will contain information about the study, the investigator, participants' rights, and contact information for the investigator. Participants will be encouraged to ask questions about the study before signing the written consents. The researcher plan to record interviews with an audio-recorder and will ask the interviewee to sign the consent form prior to the proceeding of the interview and check the box if they agree to be audio recorded.

For focus group discussion, the participants can return the signed consent to the researcher in person or send it back via mail. The researcher will not conduct the focus group discussion until she collects all the signed consents from the participants in that focus group. Participants will be informed that participation is voluntary.

A document that will be stored in the secure location will include a list of all those who have given their consent. Participants will be given a copy of the consent from.

We do not expect that subjects will need any additional information. If they do need additional information they will have the investigator's contact information and will be encourage to ask questions or request additional information.

## **8. Conflict of Interest:**

No conflict of Interest.

**9. HIPAA Compliance:**

Not applicable.

**10. Research Outside of the United States:**

I have never conducted research with Chinese participants residing in China. I was trained as a professional conference interpreter in China and still have some contacts there. My professors at University of Maryland also help me obtain some potential contacts. I would like to make use of those contacts to get some online interviews. I don't plan to actually go to China to collect data. I plan to conduct some interviews with Chinese-English conference interpreters from China online via Skype.

There is no regulations or policies in China that regulates this type of research on this subject. I do not anticipate any risks to the research participants in China, taking into account the population involved, the geographic location, and the culture. I do not anticipate that subjects who participate in this research will be exposed to any physical, psychological, social, legal and financial risks. I do not anticipate that subjects who participate in this research will be placed at risk of criminal or civil liability.

**11. Research Involving Prisoners:**

Not applicable.

**12. SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS**

Your Initial Application must include a **completed Initial Application Part 1 (On-Line Document)**, the information required in items 1-11 above, and all relevant supporting documents including: consent forms, letters sent to recruit participants, questionnaires completed by participants, and any other material that will be presented, viewed or read to human subject participants.

For funded research, a copy of the Awarded Grant Application (minus the budgetary information) must be uploaded. If the Grant has not been awarded at the time of submission of this Initial Application, a statement must be added to the Abstract Section stating that an Addendum will be submitted to include the Grant Application once it has been awarded.

### Interview Consent Form

<b>Project Title</b>	<p>Overcoming Intercultural Challenges in Interpreting:</p> <p>---A Case Study on Chinese-English Conference Interpreting</p>
<b>Purpose of the Study</b>	<p><i>This research is being conducted by Jennifer Bourne at the University of Maryland, College Park. We are inviting you to participate in this research project because you are older than 18 and you are an experienced professional interpreter. The purpose of this research project is to investigate the role of culture in Chinese-English conference interpreting. This research project would like to explore the types of intercultural challenges that you, as professional Chinese-English conference interpreter, encounter in your work and your strategies in managing those challenges.</i></p>
<b>Procedures</b>	<p><i>The researcher would like to conduct an in-depth interview with you at UMCP campus or at a place that is convenient to you or online via Skype. The interview may take between 45 and 60 minutes. The researcher will ask your consent to record the conversation with an audio recorder. You will be asked open-ended questions about the importance of intercultural communication in interpreting.</i></p> <p><i>Sample questions include: (1) Do you think intercultural factors create challenges in interpreting and how? Can you think of some specific examples and explain how you handled those challenges? (2) Based on your explanation of the strategies you use to overcome intercultural difficulties, is there a general principle/procedure that you follow whenever you spot cultural red flags/challenges? (3) Were you taught intercultural communication course or similar content courses during your training?</i></p> <p><i>The researcher will request contact information in the event there are any further questions or a need for clarification arises.</i></p> <p>_____ I give my consent to have my interview recorded</p>

	_____ I do not give my consent to have my interview recorded
<b>Potential Risks and Discomforts</b>	<i>There are no known physical or psychological risks to you. There might be a potential risk for a breach of confidentiality. The research should not affect your employment status or academic standing. You may have the opportunity to assess the information presented in the final report.</i>
<b>Potential Benefits</b>	<i>There are no direct benefits to you.</i>  <i>However, we hope that, in the future, other people might benefit from this study through improved understanding of the role of intercultural communication in interpreting and learning how to effectively incorporate the new knowledge in interpreter training.</i>
<b>Confidentiality</b>	<i>Any potential loss of confidentiality will be minimized by the following procedures.</i>  <i>Your identities will remain confidential. Only the researcher will have access your names and usernames. The researcher does not intend to use any personally identifying information in future presentations of the research, such as names linked to direct quotations. Data will be securely stored in the researcher's locked offices on her computers and on a flash drive, both in password protected files. Hard copies of data will remain in the researcher's file cabinet in the locked offices. For transcripts and coded information: (1) your name will not be included on collected data or transcripts; (2) a code will be placed on the collected data; (3) through the use of an identification key, the researcher will be able to link your responses to your identity; and (4) only the researcher will have access to the identification key.</i>  <i>All data will be destroyed (i.e., shredded or erased) when their use is no longer needed but not before a minimum of five years after data collection.</i>  <i>All the email exchanges and questionnaires that contain identifying information will be kept in a password protected file on the researcher's computer and cannot be accessed by people other than the designated researchers. If we write a report or article about this research project, your identity will be protected to the maximum</i>

	<p><i>extent possible. In accordance with legal requirements and/or professional standards, we will disclose to the appropriate individuals and/or authorities information that comes to our attention concerning potential harm to you or others.</i></p> <p><i>Your information may be shared with representatives of the University of Maryland, College Park or governmental authorities if you or someone else is in danger or if we are required to do so by law.</i></p>
<p><b>Compensation</b></p>	<p><i>You will receive a \$10 Starbucks gift card at the end of the interview as appreciation for your participation. You will be responsible for any taxes assessed on the compensation.</i></p> <p><i>If you expect to earn over \$100 as a research participant in this study, you must provide your name, address and SSN to receive compensation.</i></p> <p><i>If you do not earn over \$100 only your name and address will be collected to receive compensation.</i></p>
<p><b>Right to Withdraw and Questions</b></p>	<p><i>If you are an employee or student, your employment status or academic standing at UMD will not be affected by your participation or non-participation in this study.</i></p> <p><i>Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. You may choose not to take part at all. If you decide to participate in this research, you may stop participating at any time. If you decide not to participate in this study or if you stop participating at any time, you will not be penalized or lose any benefits to which you otherwise qualify.</i></p> <p><i>If you decide to stop taking part in the study, if you have questions, concerns, or complaints, or if you need to report an injury related to the research, please contact the researcher:</i></p> <p><i>Jennifer Bourne</i></p> <p><i>Cell: 443-823-2310; Email: jennys.umd@gmail.com; Address: 2100 Skinner Building, University of Maryland, College Park, MD 20742-7635.</i></p>

<b>Participant Rights</b>	<p><i>If you have questions about your rights as a research participant or wish to report a research-related injury, please contact:</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>University of Maryland College Park</b>  <b>Institutional Review Board Office</b>  <b>1204 Marie Mount Hall</b>  <b>College Park, Maryland, 20742</b>  <b>E-mail: <u><a href="mailto:irb@umd.edu">irb@umd.edu</a></u></b>  <b>Telephone: 301-405-0678</b></p> <p><i>This research has been reviewed according to the University of Maryland, College Park IRB procedures for research involving human subjects.</i></p>	
<b>Statement of Consent</b>	<p><i>Your signature indicates that you are at least 18 years of age; you have read this consent form or have had it read to you; your questions have been answered to your satisfaction and you voluntarily agree to participate in this research study. You will receive a copy of this signed consent form.</i></p> <p><i>If you agree to participate, please sign your name below.</i></p>	
<b>Signature and Date</b>	<b>NAME OF PARTICIPANT</b> <b>[Please Print]</b>	
	<b>SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT</b>	
	<b>DATE</b>	

### Focus Group Consent Form

<b>Project Title</b>	<p>Overcoming Intercultural Challenges in Interpreting:</p> <p>---A Case Study on Chinese-English Conference Interpreting</p>
<b>Purpose of the Study</b>	<p><i>This research is being conducted by Jennifer Bourne at the University of Maryland, College Park. We are inviting you to participate in this research project because you are older than 18 and you are enrolled in Graduate Studies in Translation and Interpreting (GSIT). The purpose of this research project is to investigate the role of culture in Chinese-English conference interpreting. This research project would like to explore the types of intercultural challenges that you encounter during your training, or practices or internships. This study would also like to learn about your strategies in managing those challenges.</i></p>
<b>Procedures</b>	<p><i>The researcher would like to invite you to a focus group discussion on UMCP campus. The focus group discussion will consist of 8 to 10 people and may take between 45 and 60 minutes. The researcher will ask your consent to video record the group discussion if circumstance allows and you agree. Otherwise, the researcher will ask your consent to audio record the group discussion. You will be asked open-ended questions about the importance of intercultural communication in interpreting.</i></p> <p><i>Sample questions include: (1) Do you think intercultural factors create challenges in interpreting and how? Can you think of some specific examples and explain how you handled those challenges? (2) Based on your explanation of the strategies you use to overcome intercultural difficulties, is there a general principle/procedure that you follow whenever you spot cultural red flags/challenges? (3) Were you taught intercultural communication course or similar content courses during your training?</i></p> <p><i>The researcher will request contact information in the event there are any further questions or a need for clarification arises.</i></p>

	<p>Consent to Video Recordings:  _____ I give my consent to have my interview video recorded if circumstances allow  _____ I do not give my consent to have my interview video recorded</p> <p>Consent to Audio Recordings:  _____ I give my consent to have my interview audio recorded  _____ I do not give my consent to have my interview audio recorded</p>
<p><b>Potential Risks and Discomforts</b></p>	<p><i>There are no known physical or psychological risks to you. There might be a potential risk for a breach of confidentiality. The research should not affect your employment status or academic standing. You may have the opportunity to assess the information presented in the final report.</i></p>
<p><b>Potential Benefits</b></p>	<p><i>There are no direct benefits to you.</i></p> <p><i>However, we hope that, in the future, other people might benefit from this study through improved understanding of the role of intercultural communication in interpreting and learning how to effectively incorporate the new knowledge in interpreter training.</i></p>
<p><b>Confidentiality</b></p>	<p><i>Any potential loss of confidentiality will be minimized by the following procedures.</i></p> <p><i>Your identities will remain confidential. Only the researcher will have access to your names and usernames. The researcher does not intend to use any personally identifying information in future presentations of the research, such as names linked to direct quotations. Data will be securely stored in the researcher's locked offices on her computers and on a flash drive, both in password protected files. Hard copies of data will remain in the researcher's file cabinet in the locked offices. For transcripts and coded information: (1) your name will not be included on collected data or transcripts; (2) a code will be placed on the collected data; (3) through the use of an identification key, the researcher will be able to link your responses to your identity; and (4) only the researcher will have access to the identification key.</i></p>

	<p><i>All data will be destroyed (i.e., shredded or erased) when their use is no longer needed but not before a minimum of five years after data collection.</i></p> <p><i>All the email exchanges and questionnaires that contain identifying information will be kept in a password protected file on the researcher's computer and cannot be accessed by people other than the designated researchers. If we write a report or article about this research project, your identity will be protected to the maximum extent possible. In accordance with legal requirements and/or professional standards, we will disclose to the appropriate individuals and/or authorities information that comes to our attention concerning potential harm to you or others.</i></p> <p><i>Your information may be shared with representatives of the University of Maryland, College Park or governmental authorities if you or someone else is in danger or if we are required to do so by law.</i></p>
<p><b>Right to Withdraw and Questions</b></p>	<p><i>If you are an employee or student, your employment status or academic standing at UMD will not be affected by your participation or non-participation in this study.</i></p> <p><i>Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. You may choose not to take part at all. If you decide to participate in this research, you may stop participating at any time. If you decide not to participate in this study or if you stop participating at any time, you will not be penalized or lose any benefits to which you otherwise qualify.</i></p> <p><i>If you decide to stop taking part in the study, if you have questions, concerns, or complaints, or if you need to report an injury related to the research, please contact the researcher:</i></p> <p><i>Jennifer Bourne</i></p> <p><i>Cell: 443-823-2310; Email: jennys.umd@gmail.com; Address: 2100 Skinner Building, University of Maryland, College Park, MD 20742-7635.</i></p>

<b>Participant Rights</b>	<p><i>If you have questions about your rights as a research participant or wish to report a research-related injury, please contact:</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>University of Maryland College Park</b>  <b>Institutional Review Board Office</b>  <b>1204 Marie Mount Hall</b>  <b>College Park, Maryland, 20742</b>  <b>E-mail: <u>irb@umd.edu</u></b>  <b>Telephone: 301-405-0678</b></p> <p><i>This research has been reviewed according to the University of Maryland, College Park IRB procedures for research involving human subjects.</i></p>	
<b>Statement of Consent</b>	<p><i>Your signature indicates that you are at least 18 years of age; you have read this consent form or have had it read to you; your questions have been answered to your satisfaction and you voluntarily agree to participate in this research study. You will receive a copy of this signed consent form.</i></p> <p><i>If you agree to participate, please sign your name below.</i></p>	
<b>Signature and Date</b>	<b>NAME OF PARTICIPANT</b> <b>[Please Print]</b>	
	<b>SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT</b>	
	<b>DATE</b>	



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DATE: January 26, 2015

TO: Jennifer Bourne  
 FROM: University of Maryland College Park (UMCP) IRB

PROJECT TITLE: [683597-1] Overcoming Intercultural Challenges in Interpreting: A Case Study on Chinese-English Conference Interpreting

REFERENCE #:  
 SUBMISSION TYPE: New Project

ACTION: APPROVED  
 APPROVAL DATE: January 26, 2015  
 EXPIRATION DATE: January 25, 2016  
 REVIEW TYPE: Expedited Review

REVIEW CATEGORY: Expedited review category # 6 & 7

Thank you for your submission of New Project materials for this project. The University of Maryland College Park (UMCP) IRB has APPROVED your submission. This approval is based on an appropriate risk/benefit ratio and a project design wherein the risks have been minimized. All research must be conducted in accordance with this approved submission.

Prior to submission to the IRB Office, this project received scientific review from the departmental IRB Liaison.

This submission has received Expedited Review based on the applicable federal regulations.

Please remember that informed consent is a process beginning with a description of the project and insurance of participant understanding followed by a signed consent form. Informed consent must continue throughout the project via a dialogue between the researcher and research participant. Unless a consent waiver or alteration has been approved, Federal regulations require that each participant receives a copy of the consent document.

Please note that any revision to previously approved materials must be approved by this committee prior to initiation. Please use the appropriate revision forms for this procedure.

All UNANTICIPATED PROBLEMS involving risks to subjects or others (UPIRSOs) and SERIOUS and UNEXPECTED adverse events must be reported promptly to this office. Please use the appropriate reporting forms for this procedure. All FDA and sponsor reporting requirements should also be followed.

All NON-COMPLIANCE issues or COMPLAINTS regarding this project must be reported promptly to this office.

This project has been determined to be a Minimal Risk project. Based on the risks, this project requires continuing review by this committee on an annual basis. Please use the appropriate forms for this procedure. Your documentation for continuing review must be received with sufficient time for review and continued approval before the expiration date of January 25, 2016.

## Appendix B: Interview Guide

### Project Title: Overcoming Intercultural Challenges in Interpreting: ---A Case Study on Chinese-English Conference Interpreting

*Thank you for taking the time to speak with me today. Before we begin, may I have your permission to record the interview so that I can review details later?*

*I'm interested in the role of culture in conference interpreting. I'm hoping that you can kindly share about your experience in dealing with intercultural communicating differences when you interpret for Chinese-English conferences. Before we get started with the main questions, I'd like to get some basic biographical information from you.*

#### Baseline Questions:

- a. Could you please tell me your name and your language combination? Is your mother tongue Chinese or English? Do you consider yourself bilingual?
- b. Are you a member or have you been a member of any professional associations? If so, which ones?
- c. How many years have you worked as a professional conference interpreter?
- d. When and where were you trained as a professional interpreter?
- e. Were you exposed to intercultural communication courses or similar content during your training? If so, in what ways were they offered? Could you please describe the course/content?
- f. As a professional conference interpreter, do you do more simultaneous interpreting (SI) or consecutive interpreting (CI)? What is the percentage of each?
- g. What kind of content do you normally interpret: political, technical or business subject matters?

#### Research Questions:

1. In Chinese culture, information often lies implicitly in the context and important issues may only be inferred to rather than being verbalized. In American culture, information is straightforward and important issues are openly and exhaustively discussed.
  - a) *Have you observed such differences while interpreting?*
  - b) *Do such differences present challenges to your interpreting?*
  - c) *Can you think of some specific examples of such challenges and explain what strategies you use?*
  
2. American speeches are logically structured and easy to follow. Chinese speeches, on the contrary, are free-flowing and difficult to follow the logics.
  - a) *Have you observed such differences while interpreting?*
  - b) *Do such differences present challenges to your interpreting?*
  - c) *Can you think of some specific examples of such challenges and explain what strategies you use?*

3. In Chinese culture, the needs and goals of the group as a whole is emphasized over the needs and goals of each individual. Thus, individuals tend not to stand out or to openly disagree with their group members. In American culture, on the contrary, individual needs and goals are valued. Individuals talk more freely and there are less unified group voices.
  - a) *Have you observed such differences while interpreting?*
  - b) *Do such differences present challenges to your interpreting?*
  - c) *Can you think of some specific examples of such challenges and explain what strategies you use?*
  
4. Chinese people distinguish between in-group and out-group members. In-group members are considered the favorite and are shown more commitment. Americans are more independent and do not distinguish much between in-group and out-group members.
  - a) *Have you observed such differences while interpreting?*
  - b) *Do such differences present challenges to your interpreting?*
  - c) *Can you think of some specific examples of such challenges and explain what strategies you use?*
  
5. In conferences, Chinese superiors are expected to make difficult decisions and to resolve disputes. The subordinates normally do not challenge their superiors' decision or power. Thus, it is important to identify the person in charge and seek approval. American leaders, on the contrary, encourage independent thoughts and contributions to problem solving and expect (within reason) to be challenged.
  - a) *Have you observed such differences while interpreting?*
  - b) *Do such differences present challenges to your interpreting?*
  - c) *Can you think of some specific examples of such challenges and explain what strategies you use?*
  
6. Chinese and American culture have different attitude towards the unknown future. Compared with Chinese people, Americans feel more threatened by the unknown future and prefer to establish more rules and regulations to avoid uncertainty and ambiguity.
  - a) *Have you observed such differences while interpreting?*
  - b) *Do such differences present challenges to your interpreting?*
  - c) *Can you think of some specific examples of such challenges and explain what strategies you use?*
  
7. Chinese people tend to make long-term plans. Americans, on the contrary, tend to make only short-term plans.
  - a) *Have you observed such differences while interpreting?*
  - b) *Do such differences present challenges to your interpreting?*
  - c) *Can you think of some specific examples of such challenges and explain what strategies you use?*
  
8. Chinese people value face saving for self and others. They tend to communicate disagreement indirectly to save face. Americans, on the contrary, value being straightforward and communicate disagreement directly.
  - a) *Have you observed such differences while interpreting?*

*b) Do such differences present challenges to your interpreting?*

*c) Can you think of some specific examples of such challenges and explain what strategies you use?*

9. Could you think of some culture-specific concepts or words that present difficulties to your interpreting? What are your strategies to communicate those difficulties?
  
10. Now, I am going to ask some questions about how different nonverbal communication styles between Chinese culture and American culture might pose challenges when you do conference interpreting.
  - a) Have you observed any gestures (e.g. head, eye-contact, hand, arm, leg, foot) that are different between Chinese and American culture, which present challenges when you do conference interpreting? Can you think of some specific examples and explain your strategies to manage the differences?
  - b) Have you observed any differences in interpersonal space distance/seating arrangement when the Chinese and Americans are interacting? Do you sense any discomfort for one or both parties. If so, can you think of some specific examples to illustrate if you intervened and how/why?
  - c) Have you observed any different attitudes towards being on time to a meeting between the Chinese and the Americans? Do you sense any discomfort for one or both parties. If so, can you think of some specific examples to illustrate if you intervened and how/why?
  - d) Have you observed any different attitudes towards meeting a deadline between the Chinese and the Americans? Do you sense any discomfort for one or both parties. If so, can you think of some specific examples to illustrate if you intervened and how/why?
  
11. In addition to the cultural factors that I mentioned above, have you observed any other cultural factors that present challenges during the interpreting process? Please explain.
  
12. Based on your explanation of the strategies you use to overcome intercultural difficulties, is there a general principle or procedure that you follow whenever you encounter intercultural challenges in your interpreting?
  
13. Do you have any other observations that you would like to share with me?

Thank you very much for your time!

## Appendix C: Focus Group Guide

### Project Title: Overcoming Intercultural Challenges in Interpreting: ---A Case Study on Chinese-English Conference Interpreting

*Thank you for taking the time to speak with me today. Before we begin, may I have your permission to video record this discussion so that I can review details later?*

*I'm interested in the role of culture in conference interpreting. I'm hoping that you can kindly share about your experience in dealing with intercultural communicating differences either during your training or during your internship experiences. Since all of you have taken intercultural communication courses and are familiar with the intercultural concepts I am going to ask, I will give the floor to you all and probe questions when I see necessary.*

#### Research Questions:

1. In Chinese culture, information often lies implicitly in the context and important issues may only be inferred to rather than being verbalized. In American culture, information is straightforward and important issues are openly and exhaustively discussed.
  - a) Have you observed such differences while interpreting?*
  - b) Do such differences present challenges to your interpreting?*
  - c) Can you think of some specific examples of such challenges?*
  
2. American speeches are logically structured and easy to follow. Chinese speeches, on the contrary, are free-flowing and difficult to follow the logics.
  - a) Have you observed such differences while interpreting?*
  - b) Do such differences present challenges to your interpreting?*
  - c) Can you think of some specific examples of such challenges?*
  
3. In Chinese culture, the needs and goals of the group as a whole is emphasized over the needs and goals of each individual. Thus, individuals tend not to stand out or to openly disagree with their group members. In American culture, on the contrary, individual needs and goals are valued. Individuals talk more freely and there are less unified group voices.
  - a) Have you observed such differences while interpreting?*
  - b) Do such differences present challenges to your interpreting?*
  - c) Can you think of some specific examples of such challenges?*
  
4. Chinese people distinguish between in-group and out-group members. In-group members are considered the favorite and are shown more commitment. Americans are more independent and do not distinguish much between in-group and out-group members.
  - a) Have you observed such differences while interpreting?*
  - b) Do such differences present challenges to your interpreting?*
  - c) Can you think of some specific examples of such challenges?*
  
5. In conferences, Chinese superiors are expected to make difficult decisions and to resolve disputes. The subordinates normally do not challenge their superiors' decision or power.

Thus, it is important to identify the person in charge and seek approval. American leaders, on the contrary, encourage independent thoughts and contributions to problem solving and expect (within reason) to be challenged.

*a) Have you observed such differences while interpreting?*

*b) Do such differences present challenges to your interpreting?*

*c) Can you think of some specific examples of such challenges?*

6. Chinese people value face saving for self and others. They tend to communicate disagreement indirectly to save face. Americans, on the contrary, value being straightforward and communicate disagreement directly.

*a) Have you observed such differences while interpreting?*

*b) Do such differences present challenges to your interpreting?*

*c) Can you think of some specific examples of such challenges?*

7. Could you think of some culture-specific concepts or words that present difficulties to your interpreting? What are your strategies to communicate those difficulties?

8. Now, I am going to ask some questions about how different nonverbal communication styles between Chinese culture and American culture might pose challenges when you do conference interpreting.

a) Have you observed any gestures (e.g. head, eye-contact, hand, arm, leg, foot) that are different between Chinese and American culture, which present challenges when you do conference interpreting? Can you think of some specific examples and explain your strategies to manage the differences?

b) Have you observed any different attitudes towards being on time to a meeting between the Chinese and the Americans? Do you sense any discomfort for one or both parties. If so, can you think of some specific examples to illustrate if you intervened and how/why?

9. In addition to the cultural factors that I mentioned above, have you observed any other cultural factors that present challenges during the interpreting process? Please explain.

10. Do you have any other observations that you would like to share with me?

Thank you very much for your time!

### **Appendix D: Interview Recruitment Announcement**

Dear Sir or Madam,

My name is Jenny Bourne and I am a doctoral candidate in intercultural communication in the Department of Communication of the University of Maryland. Before joining University of Maryland, I gained my M.A. in Translation and Interpreting from Newcastle University, UK. My Ph.D. research endeavors to understand the role of culture in Chinese-English conference interpreting. For this study, I am reaching out to experienced conference interpreters and doing qualitative interviews of their experiences in dealing with cultural differences and strategies to manage or mitigate those differences.

Given your accomplishments as an experienced conference interpreter, I would be honored to have the opportunity to interview you for the study. Your experience would bring much value to my research and to the field of interpreting studies in general. I would really appreciate it if you could make some time for a short series of questions.

I understand that as professionals, you are very busy. So, the interview will be less than an hour and I can come to any place that is convenient to you if you are located in the Greater DC area. If you are interested in my research but are inconvenient for a face-to-face interview, we can do a skype or telephone interview. The interview questions can be made available to you in advance if that is your preference.

Please be assured that your participation is completely voluntary. This study is not backed by strong funding but you will be given a \$10 Starbucks gift card as appreciation for your participation at the end of the interview. All your information will be kept confidential.

Thank you very much for your consideration and I am looking forward to hearing from you!

### **Appendix E: Focus Group Recruitment Announcement**

Hello everyone,

I hope all is well! I am reaching out to you because I need your help in my dissertation research.

I would like to invite you to a one-hour long group discussion on the role of culture in Chinese-English interpreting. I would like to hear about your experience in the role of culture in your practice and/or perhaps your internship. During the discussion, we will discuss together what difficulties those cultural-related concepts and expressions present and how to address them. You have taken COMM 683, so it should be pretty easy.

Please be assured that your participation is completely voluntary. This study is not backed by strong funding but as incentives, pizzas will be provided. I would be very grateful if you can spare one hour out of your busy schedule to help with the research. Your help is very much appreciated!

Please let me know your availability if you are interested.

Thank you so much for your help in advance!

Please feel free to email if you have any question.

### Appendix F: Participants' Profiles

<b>Interviews</b>						
<b>Name</b>	<b>Length</b>	<b>Years of Experience</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Data Collected</b>	<b>Code</b>
Harry	35 min	27	M	UN	in person	P1
Sarah	48 min	23	F	US State Dept. contractor	in person	P2
Hannah	51 min	20	F	US State Dept. contractor	in person	P3
Gina	45 min	5	F	freelance	phone	P4
Mia	59 min	15	F	freelance	in person	P5
Tom	55 min	10	M	freelance	in person	P6
Calvin	70 min	27	M	UN	in person	P7
Rosa	57 min	8	M	freelance and lecturer	phone	P8
Kala	58 min	5	M	freelance	in person	P9
Sophie	82 min	12	F	freelance	phone	P10
Haley	60 min	15	F	freelance	in person	P11
Gabby	65 min	14	F	US State Dept. contractor	in person	P12
Rachel	54 min	5	F	freelance and lecturer in interpreting	phone	P13
Cale	57 min	15	M	professor in interpreting	skype	P14
Lily	50 min	5	F	US State Dept. contractor	in person	P15
Jade	59 min	10	F	freelance	skype	P16
Luke	55 min	6	M	freelance	skype	P17
Mike	37 min	5	M	freelance	skype	P18
Winnie	86 min	5	F	freelance	skype	P19
Beck	64 min	20	F	professor in interpreting	Skype	P20

<b>Focus Group</b>						
<b>Name</b>	<b>Length</b>	<b>Years of Experience</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Data Collected</b>	<b>Code</b>
Gram	55 min	n/a	M	GSIT student	in person	P21
Lucy	55 min	n/a	F	GSIT student	in person	P22
Wen	55 min	n/a	F	GSIT student	in person	P23
Lara	55 min	n/a	F	GSIT student	in person	P24
Hans	55 min	n/a	M	GSIT student	in person	P25
Gloria	55 min	n/a	F	GSIT student	in person	P26
Liam	55 min	n/a	M	GSIT student	in person	P27

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