

Farzad Sharifian
(Monash University)

Cultural conceptualisations lost in translation/interpreting

This paper offers a theoretical framework for translation/interpreting studies based on the notion of 'cultural conceptualisations (Sharifian, 2003, forthcoming). Cultural conceptualisations are units of cultural cognition, such as *schemas*, *categories*, and *metaphors*, that are indexed by various features of human languages. These conceptualisations emerge from the interactions between members of a cultural group and are constantly negotiated and renegotiated across time and space.

I maintain that the process of translation/interpreting should largely be viewed as attempts in rendering not only linguistic devices but also cultural conceptualisations, from a source to a target language. Often the words that are viewed as equivalent across the source and the target language capture different or even contrasting sets of cultural conceptualisations. For example, many words that are viewed as synonymous in bilingual dictionaries are associated with different cultural schemas and categories.

Depending on the context of translation/interpreting, translating words that are associated with different cultural conceptualisations in the two languages may lead into risks or rewards. The corollary to this observation is that the process of translation should involve a cultural-conceptual analysis of the source language text prior to any attempts at rendering it into the target language. This presentation elaborates on this theme by providing examples from various domains including politics. For example, it is observed that the metaphorical statement in Persian that literally reads 'Zionist regime should be eliminated from the page of the history', which comes from a recent position paper by the Iranian government, has been translated into English as 'Israel should be wiped off the map'. It can be seen that the two metaphorical statements target different domains, one 'time' and the other one 'space', one 'regime' and the other one 'country'.