

# Cultural Implications in Translation employing Hofstede's Sub-culture Dimensions : Focusing on Appeal-focused Texts

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## I. Introduction

Translation is defined as an act of communication and in translation, there exist relevance of cultural differences (Katan, 11-18). From the perspective of effective communication, the impact of cultural differences and accompanied language use in translation is especially profound in appeal-focused texts.<sup>1)</sup> Appeal-focused texts are those where appeal function dominates. In other words, the function of appeal-focused text is

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1) According to Katharina Reiss (1981), the classification of text is determined by the role it plays in the given text. The text types can be classified into four categories: (1) content-focused texts in which the descriptive function dominates (2) form-focused texts in which the expressive function dominates, (3) appeal-focused texts where the appeal function dominates and (4) audio-medial text type that reaches the receptor not via printed media.

to influence the target audience, often to provoke reactions such as change in a behavior or behaviors that have economic value such as commercials, advertisements, texts related to missionary work and propaganda materials (Reiss, 121–131). Hence in order for appeal–focused texts to accomplish its appeal–function successfully, a thorough consideration on culture must precede. This in turn will trigger proper selection of language use. When discussing translation as a process, there exists occurrence of ‘shift’ due to systemic differences between languages. Shift process in translation denotes departures from formal correspondence in the process of going from the SL to TL (Munday, 225). It is often the case that the very nature of appeal–focused text also calls for trans–editing like approach. In this article, it is assumed that within the large boundary of translation where ST and TT exist, different degree of shift process should be expected depending on the translating text type. To this ground, this study attempts to investigate causal principle behind shift process in translation from cultural perspective, in particular for appeal–focused texts at sub–cultural levels. In order to locate the position of culture in translation, first a relevant previous study which bridge translation and culture will be explored. In this process, detailed description of Hofstede’s culture dimensions will be outlined to lay the theoretical background of this research (87–616). Then in–depth sample text analysis of both the source and the target texts will be conducted in order to identify culture specificity residing at sub–cultural levels. Employing Hofstede’s sub–categorization of culture, this study hypothesizes that the causal principle behind shift process in translation resides at sub–cultural levels. Of course it is not believed that culture or its sub–categories of culture is the sole causal principle behind shift process. Other factors shall influence shifts in translation such as level of knowledge possessed by readers of the text. However, this article will not investigate further into these other

factors as the focus of this research is cultural implications in translation. Clear existence of cultural specificity at sub-cultural level present in the ST and the TT will confirm the hypothesis of the present study. Let us first explore a literature conducted by another scholar in the area of culture and translation.

## II. A Literature Review

In his epoch-making book *Descriptive Translation Studies—and beyond*, Toury stated that “... text’s position and functions...are determined first and foremost by considerations originating in the culture that would host it” (20). Toury also introduced the concept of norms, which, in his terms, refer to all regular patterns of behavior within actual translations, present in the target culture. Through this concept, he explained how cultural implications are embedded in translation, with a focus on the target culture and on the importance of acceptability. Let us take a closer look at culture and its culture dimensions. Hofstede conducted survey with a sample data of 116,000 collected from a multinational corporation IBM and the result was a score in each of the dimensions for forty different countries including U.S. and Korea, which are the two countries subject for this study. Still today, despite many challenges to the work of Hofstede due to rapid globalization trend worldwide, there does not exist any research that surpasses Hofstede’s magnitude of research to come to concrete conclusions regarding cultural implications by country.

Hofstede sub-categorized culture dimensions into four categories depending on cultural variability: power distance, individualism, uncertainty avoidance, and masculinity (87–616). Power distance can be defined as

the degree to which a person is able to influence other person's ideas and behavior. Individualism is described as the strength of the ties people have towards the others within a community as well as the degree to which a culture relies on and has allegiance to the self or the group. The third dimension, uncertainty avoidance, refers to the degree in which people tolerate risk and prefer structured over unstructured situations. The last dimension, masculinity, refers to how much a society sticks with values and traditional male and female roles (Hofstede, 87-616). In this article, the identified four culture dimensions are analyzed through selected sample texts to test whether these specific culture dimensions also exist in translated texts, both from and to English and Korean. Supporting evidences that there does exist culture dimensions at sub-cultural levels in ST and TT will confirm the hypothesis that the causal principle behind the shift process in translation reside at sub-cultural levels.

### III. Research Method

#### III. i. Expectancy Mechanism

When conducting sample ST and TT analysis, an objective and analytic reference points and tools are called for. Expectancy mechanism is a methodology to analyze texts, explored and suggested by Jones and Estes, which has important implications for many practical areas of study such as the development of reading skills, gerontology, and other related fields including translation (3-16). For example, the source text "dans la fraicheur du soir," where its translation reads as "in the cool of the evening," would seem welcoming to the ST readers who are used to hot

days where fresh temperature provide a welcome relief. To British readers however, this may not produce the identical pleasurable effect intended by the author and care must be taken by the translator to convey the drop in temperature positively, to suit what is expected in the target culture. Expectancy mechanism in translation refers to how the participant, the translator in our case, generates a set of expected target words that typically follow or match the prime word, the source text. In analysis of sample ST and TT, it is assumed that the choice of TT words reflects what is expected to be translated in the target culture. In order to objectively analyze and track the fore-mentioned sub-cultural dimensions in the sample appeal-focused texts, expectancy mechanism has been employed in this research.

### III. ii . Culture-driven Key Indicators in translation

For effective and objective sample text analysis, in addition to the use of expectancy mechanism, a set of key indicators have been summarized, based on the characteristics of the four culture dimensions identified by Hofstede (87-616). Based on the research findings of Hofstede, a key indicator table is summarized below:

[Table 1. Key Indicators]

| Culture dimension                        | Culture-driven key indicators for translation |  |
|--|---|--|
| Power Distance<br>(Low U.S., High Korea) | High  | 1.Accept a hierarchical order and further justification / explanation is not needed.   |
|  |   | 2.When social title, reputation, age, endorsement (ie. Celebrity), educational degree is expressed, such expressions are easily accepted without questioning or refusal. |

|   |      |   |
|---|------|---|
|   |      | 3.Inequalities are excepted   |
|   |      | 4.Focus on leader's power   |
|   | Low  | 1.Greater equalities are observed between societal levels, government, organizations and within families.                             |
|   |      | 2.Focus on teamwork   |
| Individualism<br>(High U.S., Low Korea) | High | 1.People tend to only look after themselves and their immediate families, and do not rely (too much) on authorities for support.      |
|   |      | 2.Focus is on the individual and value privacy.   |
|   | Low  | 1.People belong to "in-groups" that take care of them in exchange for unquestioning loyalty (Collectivist society)                    |
|   |      | 2.Strong relationships are fostered where everyone takes responsibility for fellow members of their group                             |
|   |      | 3.Respect for age and wisdom, tradition, focus on harmony   |
|   |      |   |
| Masculinity<br>(High U.S., Low Korea)   | High | 1.Assessment systems are based on precise target setting. (ie. To show how well the job is done) and expressions are more descriptive |
|   |      | 2.Have tendency to strive to the best they can be and that "winner takes it all"  |
|   |      | 3.Shows 'Can Do' mentality.   |
|   |      | 4.Clear male and female role differentiation in society.  |
|   | Low  | 1.More emotionally expressive. (Feminine society)   |
|   |      | 2.Focus on quality of life, motivation, feelings, well-being, like  |
|   |      | 3.Shows tendency for compromise and negotiation   |
|   |      | 4.Male and female role blurred.   |
| Uncertainty avoidance                   | High | 1.Intolerant of unorthodox behaviors and ideas. There is an emotional need for rules even if  |

|                        |     |   |
|------------------------|-----|---|
| (Low U.S., High Korea) |     | the rules never seem to work.<br>(Formal business conduct with lots of rules)                 |
|                        |     | 2.Emphasis on speed and result  |
|                        | Low | 1.Need for many rules and regulations are low.<br>(Informal business conduct with less rules) |
|                        |     | 2.Less emotionally expressive than those in the higher scoring cultures.                      |
|                        |     | 3.Emphasis on process   |
|                        |     | 4.New ideas, challenges and innovative products are more easily accepted                      |

The Table 1 above include four sub-categorization of the culture dimensions, high-low cultural tendency score by country at sub-cultural levels, and outlines key characteristics that enable tracking of shift in translation. This is based on the assumption that during the translation process, a translator endeavors to choose a set of translation texts that are commonly expected and that are well accepted in a given culture. In the case of appeal-focused texts, the choice of words will be those that will seem most appealing to the target audience. Let us now take a deep dive into sample text analysis. With regard to the choice of sample texts, two product promotional texts and two corporate promotional texts that have been publicized during the recent 5 years have been chosen, considering its dominant role it plays in terms of appeal functionality. For this purpose, propaganda texts have been excluded from the selection of the sample texts. To test validity of the analysis, both from and to English and Korean written text samples have been chosen and explored. The choice of ST sample texts was limited to the STs that are original. For example, ST whose original version is non-English texts was not selected for analysis in this article in order to minimize dilution of cultural implications that can be observed in English and Korean texts. In total, 29 sentences and over 400 words have been analyzed throughout this article.

## IV. Analysis and Discussion

A high score of power distance, which is the case for Korea, refers to tendency to accept inequalities and hierarchical order. A low score on the other hand, like in the U.S., represents greater equality between societal levels, including government, organizations, and within families (Hofstede, 87-616). Keeping this in mind, let us take a closer look at a corporate promotional sample text from P&G Korea web site:

(Sample1)

**ENG (ST):** For more than 170 years, P&G brands and people have touched and improved consumers' lives. This commitment extends to our social investments. Our people and our brands are our greatest assets, and together, they are a tremendous force that can make an impact that matters. Through P&G's Live, Learn and Thrive cause, we are helping children in need around the world get off to a healthy start, receive access to education and build skills for life.

([http://korea.experiencepg.com/home/social\\_responsibility\\_0.html](http://korea.experiencepg.com/home/social_responsibility_0.html))

**KOR (TT):** P&G는 기업이 단순히 이익만 추구 하는 것이 아니라 이를 사회에 환원하여 지역사회와 함께 발전해 나가는 것이 기업의 역할이라고 믿습니다. 사회공헌활동이라는 기업의무를 가장 효과적으로 수행하기 위하여 P&G는 사회에 대한 무분별한 지원보다는 우리들의 미래를 설계할 아동 및 청소년에 초점을 맞추어 “Live, Learn, Thrive”란 틀 안에서 사회공헌 활동을 전개하고 있습니다.

([http://korea.experiencepg.com/home/social\\_responsibility\\_0.html](http://korea.experiencepg.com/home/social_responsibility_0.html))

**Back translation into English:** P&G, not only promoting simply



the profitability, it believes that a role of a company include developing together with the society through social investments. In order to effectively carry out the corporate responsibility of social investments, P&G focuses its investment towards children and adolescents who will share our future within the framework of 'Live, Learn, Thrive', instead of uncontrolled support.

One can easily notice that in case of the ST, the concept of 'us' was repeatedly used, constantly reminding the audience of the importance of a behavior that is common regardless of age, gender or social status. Indeed, U.S. is a society where power distance score is low. However in TT ST words 'us' were often omitted. Instead of translating the concept of 'us', a set of TT words included more societal norm terminology like 'corporate responsibility'. Here, explicit translation of 'us' is not needed as power distance is easily accepted in the TT culture. It is worthwhile to note here that the very nature of appeal-focused text also calls for trans-editing like approach. However, it is also important to address that within the large boundary of translation where ST and TT exist, different degree of shift process should be expected depending on the translating text type. Bearing this in mind, notably more frequent use of 'We/Our' terminologies can be considered as a clear signal for lower score in power distance in the ST. Hence it can be inferred that power distance culture dimension is witnessed in this sample text.

Second, for the dimension of individualism, a high score in individualism suggests that in individualist societies, people are only supposed to look after themselves. In collectivist societies, people belong to "in groups" that take care of them in exchange for unquestioning loyalty (Hofstede, 87-616). U.S. scored 91 out of 100 in this dimension and South Korea

scored 18, which indicates South Korea to be a strong collectivist society (Hofstede, 87–616). Again keeping this in mind, a product promotional sample text from Samsung electronics on promotion of Galaxy S5 has been analyzed as follows:

(Sample2)

**KOR (ST):** 일상생활 속 위험을 대비하는 방수/방진 기능, 국제보호 규격 IP(Ingress Protection) 67등급의 방수/방진 기능을 탑재하여 생활 방수 기능이 강화되었습니다. ※ 수심 1 m, 30 분 이내의 일시적인 침수에 대해 방수 가능 (단, 모든 외관 커버가 닫힌 경우에 한합니다.)

(<http://www.samsung.com/sec/consumer/mobile-phone/mobile-phone/skt/SM-G900SZKESKO-features#0-feature-3>)

**ENG (TT):** Protecting Your Freedom from Dust & Water, Dust & Water Resistant, Made to last longer and stronger, With an IP67 certification, Galaxy S5 is resistant to sweat, rain, liquids, sand and dust, so your phone is protected for any activity and situation.

(<http://www.samsung.com/global/microsite/galaxys5/features.html>)

**Back translation into Korean:** 먼지와 침수 걱정으로부터 해방되세요. 방수 / 방진 기능. 보다 강력하고 오래도록 지켜드립니다. 국제보호규격(IP) 67 등급 인증을 획득한, 갤럭시 S5는 땀, 비, 액체류, 모래와 먼지까지 막아줌으로써, 모든 일상활동과 돌발상황에서 당신의 셀폰을 지켜줍니다.

In the ST, the focus is in the description of the technology itself, whereas in TT, the technology related terminologies were primed in the TT with words alluding individualism, such as ‘Protecting Your Freedom’ and ‘Your phone’. A generated set of expected target text in individualistic

society, U.S. in this case, was focused on individualism triggering word, 'you', re-assuring the individualism culture dimension embedded in this translation text. It is also important to note here that the usage of possessive cases here is not to fit into the inevitable grammatical composition but to emphasize the focus on 'you'. Indeed, in this case, it is also perfectly and grammatically correct to translate the ST as 'the phone', without using possessive word 'you'. Also, the concept of 'You' in this example is analogous to that of 'Our' concept in the sample 1 since 'Our brand' and 'Our people' regards to 'P&G', focusing on 'P&G' group itself. Hence the dimension of individualism is once again assured through sample 1 as well as in sample 2. As already addressed, Korea being a strong collectivist society, more frequent use of 'us' and 'our' words are indeed expected, as in frequent expression of 'our home' or 'our neighborhood' in Korea. However, it is also important to note here that the boundary of interpretation is different in this example. For example, whereas expression of 'our home' is rather habitual in Korea without specific connotation, reference to 'Our brand' in this example does have specific connotation, referring directly to 'P&G'.

Third dimension is uncertainty avoidance. In this dimension, a high score implies intolerance to unorthodox behaviors and ideas. In such cultures, like that of South Korea, there are emotional needs for rules even if the rules never seem to work and expressions are more emotional than in the case of U.S. A low score suggests that the people in such culture, like in the case of U.S., do not require many rules and are less emotionally expressive than those in the higher-scoring cultures (Hofstede, 87-616). Let us explore another example of product promotional sample text;

(Sample3)

**ENG (ST):** The gold standard. Also available in silver and

gray, iPhone 5s is precision crafted down to the micron. And it's evident throughout. The beautiful aluminum housing. The sleekness of metal and glass. Sapphire crystal in the Home button. And more sapphire crystal protecting the iSight camera. Design and construction of this level is unmatched. As a result, iPhone 5s looks and feels unbelievably thin and light. And it's available in three elegant expressions: gold, silver, and space gray. (<https://www.apple.com/iphone-5s/features/>)

**KOR (TT):** 외관의 아름다움에서도 느껴지는 내면의 가치. iPhone 5s는 미크론 단위까지 정교하게 제작됩니다. 그 점은 겉모습 전체에서도 느껴집니다. 아름다운 알루미늄 외장. 세련된 메탈과 유리의 조합. 사파이어 크리스털로 된 홈 버튼. 그리고 iSight 카메라를 보호하는 또 다른 사파이어 크리스털까지. 디자인과 만듦새는 말 그대로 타의 추종을 불허합니다. 그래서 iPhone 5s는 믿을 수 없이 얇고 가볍죠. 골드, 실버, 스페이스 그레이의 3가지 우아한 모습의 외장이 준비되어 있습니다.

(<http://www.apple.com/kr/iphone-5s/features/>)

**Back translation into English:** Internal beauty witnessed in the external beauty. iPhone 5s is manufactured with precision at the level of micron. This can be felt from exterior appearance overall. Beautiful aluminum exterior. Combination of refined metal and glass. Home button made of sapphire crystal. And another sapphire crystal protecting the iSight camera. The design and the finished product exceeds all other products available in the market. That why iPhone 5s is unbelievably light. It is available in 3 glamorous exteriors, in Gold, Silver, and in Space grey.

Here, one can observe that in the TT, a component of emotional expressions have been newly added, which is key characteristics observed in the high uncertainty avoidance cultures. For example, simple list of three colors in the English ST has been translated as 'glamorous exteriors' available in three colors. Also more clearly, an expression 'feeling' is added in the Korean TT whereas it is absent in the ST. The very fact that the newly added target text was related to emotional expressions re-confirms uncertainty avoidance tendency in translation from ST to TT.

The fourth dimension is the dimension of masculinity. A high score in masculinity represents assessment systems that are based on precise target setting, which is the case for the U.S. Low Score characteristics include more focus on feelings. Let's take a closer look at an example of advertisement of UHD TV from LG electronics:

(Sample4)

**KOR (ST):** Full HD 4배 화질로 숨털 하나까지 섬세하게 표현되는 꿈의 화질

([http://www.lge.co.kr/lgekr/product/detail/LgekrProductDetailCmd.laf?catid=1100&prdid=EPRD.264783#tab\\_features\\_2](http://www.lge.co.kr/lgekr/product/detail/LgekrProductDetailCmd.laf?catid=1100&prdid=EPRD.264783#tab_features_2))

**ENG (TT):** 4K Resolution: Ultra HD is a new standard in picture quality, and it's the future of high-end video display in the home. 4K resolution is four times that of Full HD 1080p, with a whopping 8.3 million pixels to display a virtually flawless picture even when viewed up close. Enjoy incredibly vivid colors and picture details as never before. To see what we mean, simply mouse over the TV image.

(<http://www.lg.com/us/experience-tvs/lg-ultra-hd-4k-t>)

v/4k-resolution.jsp)

**Back translation to Korean:** 4 배나 선명한 초고해상도 : 울트라HD는 화질의 새로운 표준입니다 또한, 가정의 TV에서 구현할 수 있는 최고의 해상도 기술이 될 것 입니다. 기존 Full HD보다 4배나 높은, 무려 8백만 화소를 가진 초고해상도로, 근접거리에서도 거의 완벽한 영상을 제공합니다. 지금껏 경험해 보지 못한 선명한 색상과 정교한 영상을 즐겨보세요. 궁금하시다면, TV 화면에 리모컨을 움직여 보세요.

When expression on the quality is considered, ST uses expressions related to one's feelings such as 'delicate', whereas TT uses descriptive expressions like 'vivid colors and picture details'. Here, the emotional expression 'delicate' in the ST was primed with a descriptive word 'vivid'. Descriptive expressions are objective in nature, encompassing masculine characteristics. On the contrary, emotional expressions are more subjective and therefore more feminine in characteristics. Thorough analysis of the aforementioned four sample texts, it was observed that the source and the target text differ, embodying different characteristics of specific culture dimensions.

## V. Concluding Remarks

Translation is an act of communication and possesses cultural relevance. As mentioned in Hofstede, it can be rightfully stated that the larger the difference in culture, the bigger the difference in the language use. The first and the only mega-scale structured approach to study cultural difference is Hofstede's sub-categorization of culture into four dimensions, power distance, individualism, uncertainty avoidance and masculinity. Using

this four sub-categorization of culture dimensions and the existence of shift in translation, this article confirmed that the causal principle behind shift process in translation also reside at sub-cultural levels. One shall view cultural aspect only as a component of causal principle behind the shift process as there are other causal components that shall influence shift process such as situation of discourse, interpersonal knowledge or contextual knowledge. Testing and proving these other contextual components also as causal factors behind shift process in translation should be a separate research topic. The focus of this study was on cultural aspect in translation process at sub-cultural level and analyzed sample texts from appeal-focused texts considering the role of text's attractiveness to the target audience. Without doubt, it was proved that the source and the target texts differ, embodying different characteristics of specific culture dimensions. Now that the causal principle behind shift process is identified to reside at sub-cultural levels, one may suggest that a translator shall this under consideration and choose TT set of words bearing in mind key characteristics of the target culture dimensions in order to make the translation more attractive to the target audience especially when it comes to translating appeal-focused texts. There are of course, limitations to this study: the sample analysis was limited to appeal-focused texts, and only consisted of four sample texts. A larger scale sample text analysis using texts from different genres is called for to add further value to this study.

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Abstract

## **Cultural Implications in Translation Employing Hofstede's Sub-Culture Dimensions: Focusing on Appeal-focused Texts**

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At large, translation is an act of communication and possesses cultural relevance. As mentioned by Hofstede, it can be rightfully stated that the larger the difference in culture, the bigger the difference in the language use. Many prior researches on cultural implication in translation focused on identification of the link between culture and translation, often limited to literary texts. To this end, the present study aims to initiate a study in search for the causal principle behind the shift process in the context of culture focusing on appeal-focused texts. In this regard, Hofstede's four culture dimensions were referenced, namely power distance, individualism, uncertainty avoidance, and masculinity (87-616). Using the identified key characteristics for the four culture dimensions, ST and TT samples from South Korea and U.S. were selected amongst appeal-focused texts. Once the causal principle behind the shift process is identified to reside at sub-cultural levels, one may suggest that a translator shall take this under consideration and choose TT set of words bearing in mind key characteristics of the target culture dimensions in order to make the translation more attractive to the target audience especially when it comes to translating appeal-focused texts.

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**Key Words:** Appeal-focused texts, Culture, Communicative function,  
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