

# Simultaneous Interpreting of Code-Switching in Iranian Presidential Speeches on *PressTV*

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## Abstract

Iranian presidential speeches often include code-switching between Persian and Arabic, primarily through quotations from religious sources. This paper focuses on a single case study of a speech delivered by the late Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi and its simultaneous English interpreting on *PressTV*. It examines how the media interpreter handles the challenge of multilingual political discourse during simultaneous interpreting. The research identifies three main interpreting strategies: the interpreter renders Arabic quotes often partially, depending on whether the president provides a Persian translation in his speech. If no Persian translation is offered, the interpreter omits long or complex Arabic quotes. However, if the quote contains familiar phrases, such as common honorifics, the interpreter renders them into English. For religious Arabic terms and phrases, the interpreter either uses functional English equivalents, borrows original terms or omits them altogether. Overall, this study highlights the intricate challenge of interpreting multilingual political speeches, illuminating the real-time decisions media interpreters make under high-pressure conditions. The paper lays the foundation for further research into the interpretation of multilingual speeches.

**Keywords:** Code-switching, Media Interpreting, Multilingualism, Political Speech, Simultaneous Interpreting.

## 1. Introduction

Multilingualism refers to the coexistence of multiple languages or different varieties of the same language (Kelly-Holmes and Milani 2013). It has been a recurring issue in translation studies since languages are constantly interacting in today's globalized and post-multilingual societies (Chiaro 2019; Corrius 2024). However, multilingualism entails more than the ability to speak or understand two or three languages; it involves complex communicative repertoires that include not only linguistic elements but also different semiotic resources, such as visual, gestural and cultural cues (McKinney, Zavala, and Makoe 2024). Indeed, bilinguals often blend languages between or within utterances, consciously and deliberately drawing on their knowledge of multiple languages, for instance, to emphasize a particular point (Zhang, Fangwei, and Wang 2025; Lin and Li 2012). Rendering secondary languages in texts or speeches poses a particular challenge that requires thoughtful and creative solutions (Zabalbeascoa 2018; Corrius 2024). Especially in fictional

content, a problem-based approach may be appropriate that acknowledges the inherent distinctive qualities and nuances of languages (Meylaerts 2013).

Following Angermeyer (2024), interpreting could empower individuals, especially political actors in the political sphere to reach a wider audience with their speeches. Media interpreting is commonly understood as a kind of “cross-language interpreter-mediated communication” (Dal Fovo 2020, 315). Otherwise known as broadcast and television interpreting, it is a specialized form of language transfer used primarily in live television to broadcast real-time communication across languages (Pöchhacker 2010, 2018), offering an interlinguistic understanding of the event (Castillo Ortiz 2022). It is mainly conducted in the simultaneous mode (Dal Fovo 2020). Media interpreting is widely employed by international news channels, such as the Iranian media outlet *PressTV* to broadcast political affairs. Political speeches often have an extended situational dimension. Although the speaker addresses a live or in-person audience, the message is intended for a much broader public reached through the media, thereby necessitating interpreting (Dal Fovo 2017).

Nonetheless, this interpreter-mediated situation is influenced by factors related to the content and form of the input, such as informational density or formal features, which challenge the interpreter’s performance (Mead 2015). A largely ignored predictor of difficulty for media interpreting is language mixing in the original speech. In Iranian presidential speeches, multilingualism is expressed through the deliberate and strategic use of both Persian and Arabic. By combining Persian, the official language, with Arabic, particularly through quotations from the Qur’an, Hadith and Nahj al-Balagha, presidents draw upon the distinct rhetorical traditions and emotional depth of the two languages. This deliberate technique enhances the credibility, emotional appeal and persuasive power of their speeches. This matter, however, presents special difficulties for simultaneous interpreters on television. Borrowing the concept of ‘problem triggers’ from Gile (2015), the above matter could increase the interpreter’s mental processing capacity and expose them “to attention lapses and attention management errors” (136). Thus, they should have excellent interpreting strategies up their sleeve to effectively handle the situation.

This issue has however received little attention in interpreting studies (e.g., Angermeyer 2024; Wilson, Turner, and Perez 2012). To fill this gap, the current case study examines the approaches used by the *PressTV* simultaneous interpreter in rendering multilingual features in a presidential speech. The findings expect to broaden the theoretical perspective on a largely ignored

phenomenon by offering insights into simultaneous interpreters' decision-making and strategies for rendering code-switching in political speeches during live television broadcasts. By analyzing media interpreters' behaviors in high-pressure media contexts, the research presents a starting point on the interplay between the complexity of the original speech, the interpreter's competency, and techniques for handling code-switching.

## **2. Literature review**

### **2.1. Multilingualism and code-switching**

Globalization and digital communication have increased cross-border interactions. This promotes global multilingualism and highlights the growing need for translation and multilingual competence (Bandia 2021; Tymoczko 2021). Language variation is a dynamic aspect of multilingualism, which refers to “the co-presence, mixing or code-switching of different languages, dialects, sociolects, creoles, made-up languages, diglossia, jargons, slang, [etc.]” (Zabalbeascoa 2019, 19).

As a cornerstone of sociolinguistic studies, code-switching involves the use of elements from two or more languages within bilingual or multilingual interactions (Bhatt and Bolonyai 2020). Gumperz (1977, 1) describes it as “the juxtaposition of passages of speech belonging to two different grammatical systems or sub-systems, within the same exchange”. Myers-Scotton (2017) characterizes code-switching as a linguistic phenomenon where bilinguals weave morphemes from multiple varieties in their linguistic repertoire into a single conversational turn or across consecutive turns. Language switching is usually “a conscious and deliberate choice”, used to emphasize a point, express group identity and so forth (Zhang, Fangwei, and Wang 2025, 865). All in all, code-switching is the use of two languages within the same conversation, and demonstrates their ability to dynamically switch between languages (van Hell, Litcofsky, and Ting 2015).

### **2.2. Media interpreting of multilingualism**

A compelling example of the dynamic nature of code-switching can be found in Iranian presidential speeches. Drawing on their full linguistic repertoire, including the Qur'an and other religious sources, Iranian presidents often incorporate Arabic quotations in their speeches to

deliver more authoritative and persuasive messages. This practice challenges the traditional monolingual and monocultural frameworks of nation-states, illustrating the fluidity and interconnectedness of languages and cultures (Han, Wen, and Runcieman 2023). This situation may present itself as a novel challenge for media interpreters, who now have to interpret multilingual content in real-time and, at times, with no pre-interpreting preparation. This probably requires them to master new skills or learn coping techniques. In terms of research, multimedia translation scholars have so far offered ample evidence concerning the rendering of multilingual features, but it has been limited to dubbing and subtitling of fictional content (see, Chiaro and De Bonis 2020; Ranzato and Zabalbeascoa 2024). Scant attention has been paid to the simultaneous interpreting (SI) of political speeches on television.

As pointed out earlier, media interpreting is carried out in broadcast media, such as television (Dal Fovo 2020; Castillo Ortiz 2022). It primarily involves the simultaneous interpreting of high-profile speeches broadcast live, such as those by world leaders or influential figures (Pöchhacker 2018). The growth of interpreter-mediated mass media has been driven by the increasing globalization of the world, leading to a greater demand for news and information from different cultures and languages (Castillo 2015). While media interpreting research has seen a surge in recent years (Dal Fovo 2020), the interpreting of speeches with traces of multilingualism has not been explored. In fact, bilingualism, multilingualism and code-switching in interpreting studies have been approached from a broadly cognitive perspective (e.g., Schwieter and Ferreira 2017), rather than on how multilingual content is or should be rendered.

Interpreting political discourse on television is challenging due to its high status, carefully crafted language, and delivery to a large diverse audience. Factors such as lexical choice, information density, presentation mode and prosodic features, such as accent, intonation and speech rate may further increase the complexity of the act of interpreting (Dal Fovo 2015; Diriker 2015). Despite this, interpreters have developed strategies to cope with these difficulties. They intentionally omit, add, clarify or condense information when it seems unnecessary (Diriker 2015).

Understanding interpreting as a socially situated activity implies that intentional omissions are conscious decisions, often made when the interpreter perceives information as redundant or irrelevant, or when there is a lack of understanding or familiarity with a portion of the original utterance (Napier 2015). Omission has also been noted in analyses of errors in media interpreting

of Iranian presidential political speeches into English, although the illustrative examples did not include instances of multilingual utterances, which may be subject to omission by the interpreter (Mirzaee and Razavi 2021). In interpreting, deliberate departures from linguistic equivalence are often intentional, and fidelity becomes a dynamic, interpretive process shaped by situational factors, constraints and the interpreter's judgment (Setton 2025).

Given the limited research on interpreting multilingual speech and the need to address this gap, this paper investigates how Iranian media interpreters render multilingual presidential speeches into English.

### **3. Method**

#### **3.1. Context**

Iran is home to several languages and dialects, including Arabic and Azari, and only Persian is the official language. This is indicative of linguistic diversity in Iran. In terms of policy, Article 15 of the Iranian Constitution states that “the official and common language and script of the people of Iran is Persian. Official documents, correspondence, texts and school textbooks must be in this language and script” (Research Center of the Guardian Council 2018, 18). When it comes to Arabic, Article 16 mentions that “since Arabic is the language of the Qur'an and Islamic sciences, and Persian literature is deeply intertwined with it, Arabic must be taught in all classes and fields of study from the end of elementary school through the completion of secondary education” (2018, 18).

Therefore, Arabic is taught in Iranian schools, and students would learn the essentials of this language. This exposure to Arabic is further enhanced by the religious practices in Iran, where Islam is the predominant religion and the most important religious content is the Qur'an, and prayers are performed in Arabic. Therefore, it is common to observe traces of Arabic in Iranian presidents' speeches, particularly during significant events such as commemorations of the martyrdom of Iranian influential figures. It should also be noted Arabic, as the language of the Quran and a symbol of religious authority, holds a strong position in Islamic societies, including Iran. However, interpreting theory has not discussed this matter.

Simultaneous interpretation of Iranian presidents' speeches is a common practice in *PressTV*; the Iranian news channel which broadcasts news in English. The SI of political speeches makes them more accessible worldwide, creating a global audience beyond the Iranian borders. It also influences or shapes how non-Iranian individuals perceive Iranian politics and policies.

### **3.2. Corpus description**

The corpus includes the speech of late Iranian president, Ebrahim Raisi, delivered on January 3, 2022, during the second anniversary of the martyrdom of Commander Qasem Soleimani. The study utilizes a single case study design with exploratory purposes. Exploratory case studies can be valuable in generating hypotheses that can be further tested in other quantitative studies (Cohen, Manion, and Morrison 2018). This single case does not make any generalizations and only provides insights and inspires future researchers to examine this understudied phenomenon in media interpreting.

The original speech, delivered in Persian, lasted almost 30 minutes and was simultaneously interpreted into English by *PressTV* on its international news channel. In fact, it was a form of media interpretation broadcast live on the *PressTV* news channel. The original speech was downloaded from the website of the Islamic Republic News Agency (IRNA). The video of English interpreting was also available on *PressTV* website<sup>1</sup>.

The language of the speech is Persian, and as will be discussed later, the president frequently used Arabic quotes in the form of sentences, phrases or words. Therefore, this has made the language of the speech complex. Indeed, ten instances of code-switching between Arabic and Persian were identified, involving full sentences or extended phrases (more than three words), along with 24 standalone Arabic words or concepts used in his speech. The original speech was intended for Iranian audiences who can relate to the content; however, it poses a challenge for SI on television and for English-speaking viewers who may find it difficult to connect with the content, especially if the viewers' religion is not Islam. This may also affect the interpreter's decision-making behavior.

### **3.3. Data analysis**

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<sup>1</sup> While the original speech was approximately 30 minutes long, the English SI lasted 29.25 minutes. Therefore, the first 35 seconds, which were not part of the SI on *PressTV*, were excluded from the analysis.

A holistic analysis involved thoroughly listening to the original speech, followed by listening to the English SI. After analyzing the corpus to entirely understand the content, the original speech was carefully examined to identify traces of Arabic, particularly at the level of phrases and sentences, especially when the president makes reference to religious sources. It is worth noting that this study does not focus on Arabic loanwords that have become part of Persian, but rather on specific linguistic features and structures unique to Arabic. By distinguishing these features from common lexical borrowings, frequently found in Persian, the study highlights how Arabic quotes from religious sources are employed by the president.

The next phase analyzed the media interpreter's technique in rendering Arabic quotations from the Qur'an, Nahj al-Balagha and hadith. The analysis took a critical approach, considering the target audience's unfamiliarity or limited familiarity with Islamic nuances. Since the target language is English, and the audience is likely composed of native English speakers or individuals proficient in English but unfamiliar with Persian.

The two researchers independently analyzed the original speech for instances of Arabic usage. They then discussed their findings together to reach a consensus. The next step was conducted collaboratively, as each instance was compared and contrasted with the English SI multiple times to examine how the interpreter rendered them. The analysis, as shown in the tables, was not only limited to the Arabic parts. The preceding and following sentences, along with the interpreter's pauses were also examined to gain a deeper understanding of the interpreter's decision-making process. Through several in-person meetings, the interpreting strategies and patterns were identified.

## **4. Results**

### **4.1. Preliminary analysis**

In his speech addressing a gathering of Iranian mourners at the second anniversary of General Soleimani's martyrdom, president Ebrahim Raisi sometimes quoted from the Qur'an, hadiths and Nahj al-Balagha. They appear to function as authoritative religious discourse and intertextuality. He also occasionally used Arabic words and phrases to enhance his descriptions and statements.



This act is called register-switching (Yurchenko et al. 2023), using Arabic as a prestigious language to invoke religious and cultural authority.

A total of ten instances of code-switching between Arabic and Persian were identified, involving full sentences or extended phrases. The analysis identified three main interpreting strategies in rendering them. In three cases, neither the president nor the interpreter translated the Arabic sentences or extended phrases, leaving both Persian-speaking and English-speaking audiences without a rendering. For example, the president finishes his speech with “وصلی الله علی محمد وآله الطاهرين”; however, the interpreter does not interpret it. Perhaps, he considered it unimportant as this was the last sentence in the speech. In two other cases, the president did not translate the Arabic phrases, but the interpreter rendered them in English. This is particularly interesting because the Arabic phrase “Peace be upon him”, widely used in Persian, especially in religious contexts, is well understood by Iranian audiences. The interpreter, who is also Iranian and presumably familiar with this religious Arabic phrase, provided an English interpretation. There were also five cases in which the president translated or at least offered insights into the Arabic quote in Persian. In these cases, the media interpreter subsequently rendered them but often partially, using omission and compression techniques.

Additionally, 24 religious Arabic terms and concepts were noted in the original speech, reflecting language mixing. The interpreter employed three strategies to render these: deleting them, borrowing the original Arabic term into English, or finding a functional English equivalent. For example, in the earlier part of the speech, the president says “مقتدای بصیرت آفرین مان”, an honorific religious expression referring to the Iranian Supreme Leader. The interpreter chose a functional equivalent by saying “our leader”, rather than translating the phrase literally. Or, when he faced “صدیقه طاهره”, he rendered it as “Sedigheh Tahereh” using a borrowing technique even though he could have interpreted it as “Fatemeh al-Zahra” so the international audience would better understand it. The following examples from the corpus illustrate the above strategies.

#### 4.2. Detailed analysis

As shown in Table 1, one example of cod-switching occurs when the president cites a sermon from Imam Ali to Malik al-Ashtar. The president uses this to showcase *Martyr Soleimani*’s position in

Islamic society. Interestingly, the president leaves the Arabic sentence untranslated, assuming that the audience, being Iranian and not entirely unfamiliar with Arabic, will understand it. When interpreting this quote, the interpreter also leaves the Arabic sentence untranslated, instead focusing on conveying the overall meaning of the utterance. The interpreter's pause here also indicates his struggle in rendering the long Arabic sentence; in other words, a cognitive overload occurred. However, the audience of the interpreting might feel that something is missing, as the interpreter rendered the phrase "Imam Ali said in an enlightening remark" without including the actual statement by Imam Ali. This omission distorts the coherence of the utterance. It is possible that the interpreter was either unsure of the meaning of the original Arabic sentence, which was long and complex, or considered it unimportant to the overall speech. Also, the Arabic phrases "اميرالمومنين" and "عليه الصلّاة و السلام" were simplified as "Imam Ali" and "Peace on him" in the interpreting. Probably due to time constraints, the interpreter chose a ready-made equivalent for the nuanced Arabic phrase so as to avoid missing the following sentences. This also indicates the interpreter's priority on meaning rather than form and nuances.

**Table 1.** Example from Imam Ali's saying

Context	President spoke about the remarkable qualities of Martyr Soleimani, aiming to highlight his extraordinary character. In doing so, he referenced a quote from one of Imam Ali's saying.
Original	او یک شخص نیست یک مکتب است و این مکتب نه با ترور از بین می‌رود نه با موشک. مکتب می‌ماند مکتب بقاء دارد. امیرالمومنین علیه الصلّاة و السلام وقتی که مالک اشتر به شهادت رسید در یک کلام نورانی فرمودند أَلَا إِنَّ مَالِكَ بْنِ الْحَارِثِ قَدْ قَضَىٰ نَحْبَهُ وَ أَوْفَىٰ عَهْدَهُ وَ لَقِيَ رَبَّهُ فَرَجَمَ اللَّهُ مَالِكًا <sup>2</sup> . مالک اشتر برای امیرالمومنین (علیه السلام) دارای یک شخصیت برجسته‌ای بود.
Back Translation (BT)	He is not just an individual, he is a school of thought and such a school of thought cannot be destroyed with neither assassination nor missiles, this school will remain and it will remain. Amir al-Mu'minin, peace and blessings on him, when Malik al-Ashtar was martyred, he said in a glorious word, "Indeed, Malik ibn al-Harith has fulfilled his promise, completed his covenant, and met his Lord. May Allah have mercy on Malik". Malik al-Ashtar had an outstanding character for Amir al-Mu'minin.
SI	He is not just an individual, he is a school of thought and such a school of thought cannot be destroyed with an act of assassination and missiles. This school will remain and it will remain. Imam Ali, peace

<sup>2</sup> Imam Ali's saying

	on him, when Malek Ashtar was martyred, Imam Ali said in an enlightening remark. Malik Ashtar enjoyed a prominent personality for Imam Ali.
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As shown in Table 2, the president mentions a verse from the Qur'an to support *Martyr Soleimani's* beliefs. While the president does not provide a translation of the verse, his subsequent utterance paraphrases the core message: the necessity of fearing God when undertaking significant responsibilities. Leaving the Arabic text intact emphasizes the speaker's original words, thereby adding authenticity and highlighting the president's direct expression. Regarding SI, the interpreter consciously omitted this part, perhaps because, in the original speech, the president himself did not translate it for an audience that may include laypeople. The lack of cohesion in the original speech also made the interpreter's act more difficult. This part "خداوند به تمام انبیاءش به نبی مکرم اسلام" is somehow vague as it does not appear to well fit the preceding and succeeding sentences. Therefore, the interpreter did not risk correcting the speech, which may result in cognitive overload. He left this part untranslated. Regarding individual terms and phrases, only "صدق" and "اخلاص" were translated, literally and functionally, respectively. It appears the interpreter may have been uncertain about the meaning of "مراقبه" in this context. The overall meaning of this utterance was conveyed fairly well in the interpretation. This approach also reveals that the interpreter posterized informational content.

**Table 2.** Example from the Qur'an

Context	This portion of the President's speech highlights the importance of fearing only God, rather than others. He cites a verse from the Qur'an, emphasizing the importance of fearing God.
Original	او اهل مراقبه بود اهل صدق بود اهل دلدادگی به خدا و اخلاص بود. اولین نکته ای که در مکتب حاج قاسم سلیمانی باید دنبال کرد برای خدا اندیشیدن برای خدا عمل کردن و در مسیر خدا ایستادگی کردن بود. فَلَا تَخَافُوهُمْ وَخَافُوا إِن كُنْتُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ فَلَا تَخْشَوْهُمْ وَاخْشَوْنَ <sup>3</sup> برای کارهای بزرگ خشیت از خدا فقط می تواند کار را پیش ببرد. خداوند به تمام انبیاءش به نبی مکرم اسلام. کارهای بزرگی به دست او انجام شد همه با خشیت از خدا.
BT	He was a person of thinking, a person of truthfulness, a person of love for God and sincerity. The first point that should be followed in the school of Haj Qasem Soleimani was to think for God, act for God, and stand on the path of God <b>"That is only Satan frightening [you] of his followers! So, fear them not, and fear Me, should you be</b>

<sup>3</sup> Surah Al-Imran, verse 175

	<b>faithful”</b> . May God continue the work, to all his prophets, to the Holy Prophet of Islam, great works were done by him, all with the fear of God.
SI	He was a man of honesty and he was attached to God he was spiritually attached to God. The point that one should pursue in his school is to think and act for the sake of God to remain steadfast in the path of God. And in order to fulfil the major task one should be resort to God and he managed to accomplish major tasks by resorting to God.

Table 3 presents another example of code-switching, showcasing a speech by the president that pays tribute to *Martyr Soleimani*. The president highlights the nobility of his spirit and character by referencing a Qur’anic verse. By using this verse, the president attempts to explain the commander’s compassionate behavior toward the families of martyrs, while remaining resolute and strong against enemies. He cites the Arabic verse without providing a Persian translation, but attempts to draw a comparison between the behavior of the Prophet and that of the commander, helping the Iranian audience to grasp the meaning of the verse.

When the president cites the name of Islam’s Holy Prophet, he recites the customary Salavat (صلى الله عليه وآله وسلم). But he does not provide a Persian translation as Iranians frequently use these Arabic expressions in daily life and are fairly familiar with them. The interpreter, however, chose to render them into English using the established and accurate honorific “blessings of God be upon him and his progeny”. One possible reason is that these conventional renderings are readily available and require little effort to produce, making them a practical choice in real-time interpreting. This was also the case for the term “رسول الله”, which was rendered with a functional equivalent of “prophet”. Such a strategy suggests that the interpreter was more comfortable handling Arabic phrases that are frequently used and commonly understood in Persian.

The president then cites a verse from the Qur’an, which remains untranslated in his original speech. However, as before, his subsequent remarks clarify its relevance and intended meaning. The interpreter did not provide a direct translation of the Qur’anic verse but appears to have based his interpretation on the president’s contextual explanation.

**Table 3.** Example from the Qur’an

Context	The president described <i>Martyr Soleimani</i> ’s remarkable personality, highlighting both his military and cultural significance. As in the
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	earlier parts of the speech, the president focused on specific aspects of his character. In this instance, he cited a Qur’anic verse to emphasize that kindness.
Original	این فتح دل ها با پول با امکانات اتفاق نمی افتد فقط باید دست قدرت خدا این دل ها را متوجه بکند. او روح بزرگی بود که به تعبیر قرآن کریم در مورد باران رسول الله صلی الله واله و الصلم. محمد رسول الله و الَّذِينَ مَعَهُ أَشِدَّاءُ عَلَى الْكُفَّارِ رُحَمَاءُ بَيْنَهُمْ <sup>4</sup> . سخت بود در مقابل امریکایی ها در مقابل دشمنان دین، اما به به بچه شهیدی که می رسید به به خانواده محترمی که می رسید به یک مظلومی که می رسید، چگونه بیتاب می شد.
BT	This kind of winning of hearts doesn’t happen through money or material means; it only happens when God’s powerful hand directs hearts toward someone. He was a great soul, as described in the Holy Qur’an about the companions of the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings be upon him): “ <b>Muhammad is the messenger of Allah. And those with him are hard against the disbelievers and merciful among themselves</b> ”. He was hard in front of the Americans, in front of the enemies of the religion, but to a martyred child or a respectable family or an oppressed person, he became impatient.
SI	This cannot be realized through the money, only God can realize this. He had a lofty soul. The noble Qur’an referring to the companions of the prophet, blessings of God be upon him and his progeny, he was harsh towards the enemies but when he came across a martyr’s child an oppressed person, he acted in a different way.

In another example in Table 4, the president’s speech carries spiritual and philosophical meaning, suggesting that if one seeks truth and spiritual growth, one must expand their heart. The reference to Kumayl’s story illustrates this idea. At its core, the Arabic quote from Nahj al-Balagha is a call to cultivate a heart that is enriched and enlightened. Here, the president translates this Arabic quote into Persian. The Persian translation in the original likely made the interpreter’s task much easier as he interpreted it. However, the interpreter avoided a strict, word-for-word interpreting, he compressed the Persian translation by rendering only the main idea or the core message, resulting in a shorter target utterance: “the best hearts are the ones who have the highest capacities”. His long pause when hearing the Arabic sentence also indicates that he did not intend to interpret it.

**Table 4.** Example from Nahj al-Balagha

Context	The president continues to speak about <i>Martyr Soleimani</i> ’s personality and characteristics, highlighting his capabilities by borrowing an Arabic quote from Nahj al-Balagha.
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<sup>4</sup> Surah Al-Fath, verse 29

Original	کَمِيلُ بْنُ زِيَادٍ نَخَعِي مِيْگَه دَنْبَالِ اميرالمونين راه افتادم از اين كوچه به آن كوچه از اين نخلستان به آن نخلستان تا رفتيم بيرون شهر اميرالمؤمنين رو كرد به من گفت يا كَمِيلُ بْنُ زِيَادٍ اِنَّ هَذِهِ الْقُلُوبَ اَوْعِيَةً فَخَيْرُهَا اَوْعَاهَا <sup>5</sup> كَمِيلُ اين قلبها ظرفهاست، بهترين قلوب با ظرفيت‌ترين قلوب است.
BT	Kamil bin Ziyad Nakhai says, I followed Amir al-Mu'minin from this alley to that alley, from this grove to that grove, until we went outside the city, Amir al-Mu'minin told me. <b>“O Kumayl ibn Ziyad, these hearts are vessels, and the best of them is the most abundant of them.”</b> Kumayl, these hearts are vessels, the best hearts are the ones with the most capacity.
SI	Kamil bin Ziyad Nakhai says I followed Imam Ali passing alleys and until we got out of the town. Imam Ali looked at me and said oh Kmail, the best hearts are the ones who have the highest capacities.

President's use of Imam Ali's hadith in his Persian speech can be seen in Table 5. The quote “فقد البصر أهون من فقدان البصيرة” gives weight and formality, and it conveys a spiritual message about the value of inner vision. By contrasting physical blindness with a lack of inner awareness, the president emphasizes that true understanding arises from within. This is followed by the president's Persian translation of the hadith, which likely bases the interpreter's rendering. However, the Persian speech and its English interpreting do not align perfectly. Here, the interpreter decided to compress the whole message. When the president says the sentence “اینکه انسان چشم سر نداشته باشه”، the interpreter makes a long pause to process the message. Instead of translating the message literally, he renders the intent or function and it becomes “One should improve and strengthen his insight”. Once the president mentions the Arabic quote, the interpreter makes another pause, probably waiting to see if the president offers a Persian translation. Indeed, the president uses a metaphor, but it is lost in the SI. The interpreter's goal appears to be compressing the message and delivering the overall meaning of the utterance rather than staying close to the words.

**Table 5.** Example from Imam Ali's saying

Context	Moving on, the president's speech emphasized that while physical blindness is unfortunate, spiritual blindness is far more dangerous.
Original	اینکه انسان چشم سر نداشته باشه سخته اما بدتر از اون اینکه چشم دل نداشته باشه فَقَدْ الْبَصَرَ أَهْوَنُ مِنْ فَقْدَانِ الْبَصِيرَةِ <sup>6</sup> اینکه انسان چشم سر نداشته باشه خیلی آسون‌تر از این که چشم دل نداشته باشه با چشم دل انسان راه را می‌شناسد، دوست را می‌شناسد.

<sup>5</sup> Nahj al-balagha

<sup>6</sup> Imam Ali's saying

BT	It is difficult for a person not to have eyes and a head, but worse than not to have eyes for a heart. <b>“Losing sight is easier than losing insight”</b> . It is much easier for a person not to have eyes for the head than the heart. With the eyes of a person’s heart, one knows the path and one knows the friend.
SI	One should improve and strengthen his insight. In fact, one should be able to detect the right path by his heart.

As shown in Table 6, in the later part of his speech, he uses two Arabic terms, “سیاقت” and “قیادت”, to describe the commander as someone who leads by example and is actively involved, rather than merely directing others from a distance. The former term refers to “leadership/ come and be united with us” and the latter is indicative of “direction/ come and go and do alone”. The president does not clarify the meaning of these two Arabic terms in his Persian speech and only implies that true leadership involves active participation and leading by example, rather than merely directing or instructing others. The initial long pause in interpreting this part suggests that the media interpreter was struggling to process the information, which appeared to be complex and challenging. As a result, he skips the initial statements and attempts to provide a more holistic interpretation. Notably, the president’s explanation of the difference between the two terms is not interpreted, and even later, the interpreter does not offer any equivalent for these terms when they are repeated by the president.

**Table 6.** Example of religious terms

Context	This part of the president’s speech is dedicated to describing what <i>Martyr Soleimani</i> symbolized. The president explained that he was a symbol of courage and wisdom.
Original	به مردم هم نمی‌گفت بروید منطق او این بود، منطق <b>قیادت</b> نه <b>سیاقت</b> . فرق است بین سیاقت و قیادت. <b>مصلحان</b> در عالم بسیارند یکی با شعرش یکی با نثرش یکی با سخنش و نگارشش ادعای اصلاح در عالم دارد اما فرق بین حاج قاسم و دیگران این بود. حاج قاسم قیادت داشت، نه سیاقت. نمی‌گفت بروید بلکه می‌گفت بیاوید.
BT	He didn’t tell people to go either. His logic was the logic of <b>leadership</b> , not the <b>direction</b> . There is a difference between the direction and the leadership of <b>reformers</b> in the world. There are many, one with his poetry, one with his prose, one with his speech and writing, claiming to reform the world, but the difference between Haj Qasem and others was this.

SI	There are so many reformers in this world. One may claim to be a reformer through his poetry or writing texts. But there is a difference, he did not say to go, he said come and he was at the forefront.
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Finally, Table 7 presents examples of language mixing at a word level. The president expresses profound admiration for *Martyr Soleimani*, suggesting that through his adherence to the teachings of the Qur'an and the Ahl al-Bayt<sup>7</sup>, and by embodying the concept of Wilayat (guardianship or leadership in Shia Islam), he has achieved spiritual purity. Three Arabic terms are used to convey this core meaning: “عصمت”, meaning infallibility or purity from sin; “ولایت”, denoting guardianship or leadership in a religious context; and “طهارت”, signifying spiritual purity. Assuming the Iranian audience may know the meaning of these, the president left them untranslated in his Persian speech. The interpreter employed different approaches for rendering these Arabic terms. The word “عصمت” was translated as “infallible”, using a direct English equivalent. In contrast, “ولایت” was rendered as “Welayat”, a borrowing rather than a finding an English equivalent, though the term roughly corresponds to “guardianship” in English. Meanwhile, the term “طهارت”, which could be translated as “purity”, was omitted entirely in the SI. The reasons for using different approaches are unclear, but it is evident that both external factors such as time constraints, the speech complexity, and internal factors, including the interpreter's background knowledge and proficiency in Arabic affected the interpreter's performance.

Another Arabic religious term worth discussing is “شرح صدر”, derived from the Qur'an, meaning the expansiveness of the heart or spiritual openness as well as patience against difficulties. Here, the interpreter opted for the latter meaning “patience”. One issue worth noting is that the interpreter appears to have struggled to express this part clearly in English. This is partly because of the phrase “دارای یک عصمت وجودی شده است”, which becomes “this way he has been developed”. Indeed, the interpreter meant that the commander had developed his personality (i.e., acquiring an existential infallibility) by following the Qur'an. Thus, he focused on the sense of the sentence rather than its literal meaning even though the interpretation was not natural enough.

**Table 7.** Example of religious terms

Context	In this part, the president focused on how <i>Martyr Soleimani</i> achieved such a great personality.
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<sup>7</sup> The family of the Prophet Muhammad known for their purity



Original	حاج قاسم سلیمانی هم با پیروی از آیات قرآن و آموخته های اهل بیت عصمت و طهارت و تاسی از ولایت دارای یک عصمت وجودی شده است دارای یک شرح صدری شده که او یک شخص نیست یک مکتب است.
BT	Haj Qasim Soleimani, by following the verses of the Qur'an and the teachings of the Ahl al-Bayt, has acquired an existential infallibility by following the teachings of the Ahl al-Bayt, and has acquired an existential infallibility.
SI	Haj Qasem by obeying the verses of the noble Qur'an, the noble Qur'an and the tradition of infallible Imams and Welayat, this way he has been developed and enjoys great deal of patience. He is not just an individual he is a school of thought.

## 5. Discussion and conclusion

This research analyzed the English simultaneous interpreting of Arabic quotations from the Qur'an, hadith, and Nahj al-Balagha in a Persian speech by Iran's late President on *PressTV*. Three core strategies were identified. When the president translated the Arabic quotes in his Persian speech, the interpreter attempted to render them, sometimes fully, sometimes partially. It was evident that the interpreter's choices depended on whether the president provided a Persian translation, which made the interpreting easier. In a few cases where the president did not translate the Arabic quote, the interpreter still offered an English rendering, mostly for commonly used religious phrases in Persian. However, if the president left the Arabic quotes untranslated and they were long, the interpreter did not render them at all, likely due to the inherent difficulty of the third language that may not have been within the interpreter's language proficiency. Regarding single terms and culture-specific phrases in the speech, three strategies were observed: finding a functional equivalent in English rather than a literal translation (which might be unclear to a non-Iranian audience), borrowing the original term into English with the assumption that the audience might understand it, or omitting the term entirely, if felt redundant. Taken together, the interpreter seemed to follow a 'meaning-based interpreting' approach (Dam 2001) by sacrificing the nuances or stylistic features of the original.

These findings partly align with previous research in media interpreting, suggesting that interpreters may strategically omit or compress content (multilingual features in this context) to reduce their cognitive load and enhance clarity for target audiences (Pöchhacker 2007). Indeed, "quotations and various other rhetorical devices are likely to be lost, or lose their effectiveness" in

media interpreting (Pöchhacker 2010, 226). Notably, the interpreter's pauses during Arabic segments were indicative of ongoing analytical efforts or cognitive saturation, especially when the Persian segment included several religious Arabic words. In such cases, omission may serve as a conscious coping strategy when processing capacity nears its limit (Gile 2015). It may reveal that decision-making in interpreting is influenced not only by cognitive constraints but also by professional norms in that specific television channel (Diriker 2015) as well as the specific characteristics of media interpreting (Pöchhacker 2010).

The findings align with Dal Fovo's (2020) emphasis on prioritizing audience expectations over rigid fidelity. The intended audience for this SI was not Iranians, but English speakers, both Muslim and non-Muslim, resulting in a diverse viewership. They may not need the full depth of nuances in the original but rather informational content. The focus should often be on making content accessible and appealing to the widest possible audience, prioritizing broad reach and engagement over precise accuracy and fidelity (Castillo Ortiz 2022). Likewise, Pöchhacker (2010) notes that some speeches include cultural nuances that are difficult to convey to international audiences within the limits of SI. This may account for the interpreter's omission and compression strategies, as this paper demonstrated. No doubt, the absence of before-session access to scripts (Pöchhacker 2010) may also elucidate the interpreter's coping strategies.

Relatedly, 'displaced situationality', common in media interpreting, further explains the interpreter's meaning-based approach. Indeed, the original speech and its SI do not share the same *skopos*; therefore, the accurate rendering of the stylistic features becomes less important (Viezzi 2013, 385). It is crucial to note that this interpreter's knowledge of the subject matter was satisfactory, and his interpreting was fairly ideal, since *PressTV*'s interpreters are professional and well-trained.

In summary, this study unveiled the media interpreter's strategies in coping with the so-called problem trigger in SI (i.e., code-switching here). Functional equivalence, selective omissions and compression appear to be viable strategies to maintain the interpreting coherence, while effectively conveying the original message intent. The study problematizes the notion of fidelity. Indeed, the analysis showed when the interpreter faced this problem trigger in the original, he tried to remain faithful to the president's communicative intention rather than to words uttered. In the words of Downie (2016), his goal was to "deliver an event that fulfils its purpose" (4). However, this came

at the cost of the original speech's nuances, and the audience would not receive the message with the same impact. Despite all these, media interpreters should be well-trained to be able to handle such a situation effectively without compromising the original content information. This was observed in one or two instances, where a lack of understanding of certain Arabic terms caused the interpreter to struggle in conveying the overall meaning of the entire sentence. Beyond its theoretical contributions, the study provides practical insights for media interpreters, stressing the importance of balancing the speaker's intent with the audience understanding of rendering. The paper underscores the effectiveness of techniques, such as functional equivalence, selective omission or compression in effectively coping with the original speech's difficulty, while reproducing the intent of the speaker's message. Overall, quoting the well-known interpreting scholar, Jonathan Downie, this *PressTV* interpreter is "presenting clients with a picture of what 'ideal' interpreting would look like" (Downie 2016).

Finally, limitations should be addressed. This preliminary case study focused on a single political speech. While it offered rich insights, future research should examine additional speeches, as different presidents may have varying delivery styles that warrant investigation. Translanguaging could also serve as an interesting theoretical lens for studying political multilingual discourse and its media interpreting. To conclude, this paper calls for more research into the challenges, strategies and implications of media interpreting of multilingual discourse.

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Pre-print Version