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Dissertation Abstracts

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Dissertation Abstracts

In this section, we regularly feature abstracts of recently completed doctoral or masters theses. If you have recently completed a master's or PhD thesis in this field and would like it to be included, please send an abstract of 200–300 words to citjournaleditor@gmail.com. For this issue we have opted to include two abstracts submitted by PhD students whose work is nearing completion. We would urge all academic supervisors to encourage their students to submit abstracts of their completed dissertations for inclusion in the next issue of the journal, in order to inform our readers of new research relating to interpreter and translator education.

Intercultural communication: Challenges in interpreter-mediated medical encounters

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Degree: PhD dissertation, University of New South Wales (in progress)

This study set out to examine crosscultural issues that may cause a challenge in interpreter-mediated medical encounters, as well as interpreters' perceptions as to what extent they might be able to offer cultural brokerage in similar contexts. A total of 20 interpreter-mediated medical encounters were observed in a large hospital in Sydney, Australia, followed by semi-structured interviews with five of the interpreters. This hospital was chosen because it serves a large population of migrants from a range of different ethnic backgrounds. Findings suggested that interpreters face challenges relating to end-of-life situations, family involvement, patient autonomy and informed decision making, as well as non-verbal communication. The study also identified institutional barriers resulting in a lack of briefing or debriefing sessions for interpreters. Finally, both medical professionals or patients seemed to entertain unrealistic expectations about the role of the interpreters. The study found that cross-cultural misunderstanding was less of an issue for the interpreters involved than first thought. The study also explores the potential risk of interpreters playing the role of cultural advisors.

Dissertation abstracts

Achieving accuracy in a bilingual courtroom: Pragmalinguistic challenges and the role of specialized legal interpreter training

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This study used a mixed methods approach to examine the most common pragmalinguistic challenges for trainee interpreters in achieving accuracy when interpreting cross-examination questions from English to Chinese, as well as the role of specialized legal interpreter training. In an adversarial courtroom, questions are used strategically by legal professionals to maintain control over witness testimony. In a bilingual courtroom, it is crucial that lawyers' intended questioning strategies be adequately relayed from one language to another. Failure to do so can affect the effectiveness of courtroom questioning and potentially even the outcome of a case. However, achieving such a high level of accuracy is extremely demanding due to the intricacy of courtroom discourse. This thesis consists of two components: a discourse analytical study of trainee interpreters' pragmatic accuracy in a moot court exercise and a quasi-experiment with trainee interpreters from the Master of Interpreting & Translation program at the University of New South Wales in Australia.