

2010

Dissertation Abstracts

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Recommended Citation

Ibrahim-González, Noraini; Mendoza, Elizabeth; Smith, Melissa; Nilsson, Anna-Lena; and Shaw, Risa (2010) "Dissertation Abstracts," *International Journal of Interpreter Education*: Vol. 2 : Iss. 1 , Article 18. Available at: <https://tigerprints.clemson.edu/ijie/vol2/iss1/18>

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Dissertation Abstracts

In order to inform our readers of current research on translator and interpreter education and training, we will regularly feature abstracts of recently completed doctoral theses in each issue. If you have recently finished a master's or PhD thesis in this field and would like it to be included, please send an abstract of 200-300 words, along with details of the institution where the thesis was completed, the year in which it was submitted, and a contact email address. Submissions should be sent to Dissertation Abstracts Section Editor, Carol Patrie, at carol.patrie@gmail.com.

Conference Interpreting in Malaysia: Professional and Training Perspectives

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Degree: PhD dissertation, Universidad de Granada, 2008

The primary aim of this research is to provide an exhaustive description of the situation of conference interpreting in Malaysia, from two different but very closely related perspectives: professional practice and interpreter education and training. This description may serve as a compass that helps relevant parties such as the interpreting service providers, the practitioners, the educators and trainers and the training institutions take crucial steps in order to move forward.

This research consists of three studies in three distinctive areas: (1) Conventions and Meetings industry, (2) the practice and market of conference interpreting, and (3) interpreter education and training. In the first study, the principal objective is to identify the major players that are directly or indirectly related to the field of conference interpreting in Malaysia and provide a map of interconnection among them. In the second study, the prime objective is to describe the practice and profession of conference interpreting in Malaysia. This is a comparative study between the local conference interpreters and professionally trained conference interpreters who are members of the International Association of Conference Interpreters practicing in the Malaysian market. The third study aims to provide a description of interpreter education and training in Malaysia for future interpreters and already practising interpreters in the Malaysian conference market. The research strategy adopted for this research is the survey approach, combining multiple sources of data; review documents, observation, questionnaires, and interviews.

The main conclusions drawn from this research are: (1) the Conventions and Meetings industry in Malaysia has shown positive growth and conference interpreting as an important service that can further boost the industry's growth should take advantage of this situation, (2) the absence of a professional association for interpreters, code of ethics, standards or guidelines on working conditions and remuneration scale, as well as the lack of training and continuing education show that interpreting cannot be considered just yet as a true profession in Malaysia, (3) the current interpreter education programme in Malaysia does not meet the criteria of an interpreter training program and the graduates it produces are not qualified to present themselves as professional conference interpreters.

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Thinking Through Ethics: The Processes of Ethical Decision-making by Novice and Expert American Sign Language Interpreters

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Degree: Ed.D dissertation, University of California, San Diego, 2010

In the course of their work, sign language interpreters are faced with ethical dilemmas that require prioritizing competing moral beliefs and views on professional practice. There are several decision-making models, however, little research has been done on how sign language interpreters learn to identify and make ethical decisions. Through surveys and interviews on ethical decision-making, this study investigates how expert and novice interpreters discuss their ethical decision-making processes and prioritize prima facie duties, also called meta-ethical principles (Ross 2001).

The survey participants included 225 novice interpreters who have three or fewer years experience as a nationally certified interpreter, and 168 expert interpreters who have ten or more years as a certified interpreter. Three novice and three expert interpreters were chosen to participate in the face-to-face interviews. The findings show that both novices and experts similarly prioritize the prima facie duties of 'fidelity,' 'do good' and 'reparation.' The variability between the groups indicate that novice interpreters' responses include citing their professional ethical code, rubric decision-making guidelines, and using low-context discourse to analyze individual-focused responses. Expert interpreters, conversely, drew upon tacit knowledge built upon a foundation of Code of Professional Conduct, used high-context discourse to develop a collective-focused response.

More than Meets the Eye: Revealing the Complexities of K-12 Interpreting

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Although many deaf and hard of hearing children access education through interpreters, research on educational interpreters is scant and has focused on inadequacies of under-qualified interpreters rather than examining exactly what it is that qualified interpreters do. To determine the skills and knowledge interpreters need to work in K-12 schools, it is crucial to identify current practices of educational interpreters. For this research, three interpreters working in fifth and sixth grade classrooms at three school sites were videotaped and interviewed to explore what interpreters do in the course of their work, and to illuminate the factors that inform their decisions.

This study reveals not only five primary tasks that interpreters perform, but describes in detail what interpreters do as they strive to optimize visual access, to facilitate the learning of language and content, and to cultivate opportunities for participation. Data indicate that even qualified interpreters are not always well-equipped to meet the essential needs of deaf and hard of hearing students in K-12 settings. Results of this study contribute to our understanding of the complexities of interpreters' decisions in light of multiple and competing demands. Findings highlight the need for further research and serve as a call to action to improve the educational experiences of mainstreamed students.

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Studies in Swedish Sign Language: Reference, Real Space Blending, and Interpretation

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Degree: PhD dissertation, Stockholm University, 2010

This thesis comprises four separate studies of the same material: a ten-minute Swedish Sign Language monologue. *Study I* describes the form, meaning, and use of the sign INDEX-c, a pointing toward the chest traditionally described as a first person pronoun. It is argued that INDEX-c is used not only with specific reference to the signer or a quoted signer, but also with non-specific reference. Contrary to what has been reported, INDEX-c is used not only for constructed dialogue, but also in constructed action. The analysis reveals two separate forms, as well, labeled as reduced INDEX-c and distinct INDEX-c, respectively.

Study II describes the activities of the non-dominant hand when it is not part of a two-handed sign. A continuum is suggested, moving from different rest positions that do not contribute to the discourse content, via mirroring of the dominant hand, for example, to instances where the non-dominant hand produces signs of its own while the dominant hand remains inactive, i.e. dominance reversal. Several of the activities of the non-dominant hand, including the four types of buoys that are described, help structure the discourse by indicating the current topic.

Study III uses Mental Space Theory and Conceptual Blending Theory to describe the use of signing space for reference. A correlation is shown between discourse content and the area in the signing space toward which signs are meaningfully directed, and also between these directions and which types of Real Space blends the signer mainly uses: token blends or surrogate blends.

Finally *Study IV* looks in more detail at three segments of the discourse and their Real Space blend structure. An initial analysis of eight interpretations into spoken Swedish is also conducted, focusing on whether preselected content units (discourse entities and relations) are identified. A large number of Real Space blends and blended entities are argued to result in less successful renditions measured in terms of preselected content units.

Meaning in Context: The Role of Context and Language in Narratives of Disclosure of Sibling Sexual Assault

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This sociolinguistic study explored how female survivors of brother-sister incest talked about disclosing that abuse to family members. It examined how contextual factors influenced discourse usage and narrative structure in American Sign Language (ASL) and American English across two contexts – a conversation between two survivors, and an interview between a survivor and a person with no history of sexual abuse – allowing comparison across languages and across contexts.

The data included a first-time-told and first-time-retold narrative. The first-time-telling lacked cohesion and clarity, which increased significantly on retelling. The data show the vocabulary choices the participants used to index the perpetrators, themselves, and the abuse were highly context dependent. The ASL disclosure narratives revealed ways in which audism and linguicism exacerbated the traumatic experiences of the Deaf participants. The data also uncovered

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backchanneling that functioned to display shared identity. This study suggests that non-verbal information captured through video-taping is essential to understanding spoken language interactions as well as signed language interactions.

The sociolinguistic and trauma findings suggest implications for the field of interpreting regarding how one conceptualizes the task of interpreting, the meaning of context, where meaning lies, and how an interpreter can gain access to the meaning in a particular interaction.