Dissertation Abstracts

In this section, we feature abstracts of recently completed doctoral or master’s 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. We 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 help disseminate new research relating to interpreter and translator education.

Interpreting Linguistic Politeness from British Sign Language to English

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This thesis explores the way im/politeness is interpreted from British Sign Language into spoken English. This aspect of interpreting may significantly impact the dynamics of interpreted interactions, due to differences in the way im/politeness is both produced and received in the varied situations in which interpreters work. The study draws on rapport management theory (Spencer-Oatey 2005, 2008) and the concept of social networks (Watts, 2003) to frame the complex and multiple considerations involved.

Qualitative data were generated through a series of semi-structured group discussions centred on interpreting im/politeness, involving eight highly experienced professional BSL/English interpreters. Data were analysed thematically to identify how interpreters recognise im/politeness in BSL, the key influences on the way they interpret im/politeness and the interpreting strategies they might employ. To underpin this study, foundational research to explore how politeness is expressed in BSL was conducted, involving interviews with five Deaf participants.

Analysis reveals that interpreters’ knowledge about politeness in BSL and interpreting politeness is generally tacit and hard to articulate, and suggest the benefits of explicit tuition on the subject. The multiple influences on interpreters’ evaluations of im/politeness are dynamic, and coalesce differently in each interpreted interaction. Context emerges as a multi-layered influence that relates to not only the environment but also the characteristics, language use, goals and expectations of the people involved. Interpreters’ strategies may involve smoothing their interpretation to better ensure that the interactional goals are met and to manage rapport between clients. Interpreters’ familiarity with the context, and their clients, is a valuable resource that supports interpreters’
decision-making and strategy choices; a particular benefit given the temporal pressure of simultaneous interpreting.

The study contributes theoretically to im/politeness research and interpreting studies, and has practical value for interpreting professionals in both initial interpreter training programmes and continuing professional development.

Keywords: im/politeness, rapport management, interpreting, British Sign Language


**Productivity in Post-Editing and in Neural Interactive Translation Prediction: A Study of English-to-Spanish Translators**

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Machine translation (MT) generally cannot produce high-quality texts, so humans often intervene in the translation process. One such intervention is post-editing (PE), in which a human translator corrects the errors in the MT output. In interactive translation prediction (ITP), a more recent process, an MT system presents a translator with translation suggestions they can accept or reject, actions that the MT system then uses to present them with new, corrected suggestions.

In this thesis I present two empirical studies with professional English/Spanish translators investigating a number of translation productivity aspects of two such types of translation scenarios. Both studies use qualitative data used, where possible, to interpret quantitative findings. I found that in the traditional PE setting, decreases in MT quality are associated with increases in technical effort and processing time; whereas using ITP with an underlying neural machine translation system may be a viable alternative to PE. A number of translation productivity indicators collected over time, as well as translators’ qualitative feedback, validates these findings.

Key words: post-editing, neural machine translation, statistical machine translation, translation productivity
Healthcare Interpreting From a New Zealand Sign Language Interpreters’ Perspective

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This research examines healthcare interpreting from the perspective of New Zealand Sign Language (NZSL) interpreters. Healthcare interpreting is a growing topic of research globally. However, little focus has been given to the interpreters’ own perspectives. Interpreters who provide communication access to healthcare professionals and deaf clients encounter challenges ranging from interpersonal demands between the interpreter and the other participants to linguistic demands dealing with unfamiliar terminology. The aim of this study was to identify challenges encountered by NZSL interpreters working in healthcare settings and examine the coping strategies they employ. To the best of my knowledge, this research is the first of its kind in New Zealand.

The research was carried out using a mixed-methods approach with a quantitative online survey and qualitative interviews. A total of 28 NZSL interpreters responded to the survey and eight NZSL interpreters volunteered to be interviewed. The results indicated that the main challenges encountered in healthcare settings included a lack of understanding of the interpreter’s role by healthcare professionals, difficulty in dealing with unfamiliar healthcare terminology and in some cases interpreters’ belief that the deaf clients did not receive adequate access to full healthcare information. The participants shared coping strategies they use to deal with unfamiliar terminology. These strategies were discussed from a perspective of where the onus of decoding the message was placed.

The study suggests that NZSL interpreters working in healthcare situations should be more assertive in terms of their professional relationship building, give thought to moving the onus of providing clear information back to the healthcare professional and ensure that all participants are aware of the role of the interpreter. If consumers of healthcare interpreter services are educated on how to work effectively with interpreters, communication will be more effective and the risk to deaf clients will be reduced.

Keywords: Healthcare interpreting, NZSL, interpreter role

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1 A ten-minute summary of Delys’ study can also be accessed here, starting at 30:34: https://livestream.com/accounts/5183627/events/7944731/videos/166352481 (accessible in New Zealand Sign Language and English)