

The Consecutive Conference Interpreter as Intercultural Mediator: a Cognitive-pragmatic Approach to the Interpreter's Role

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is an empirical and interdisciplinary investigation into the consecutive conference interpreter's (CCIr) role as intercultural mediator. It seeks to determine whether there is a case for intercultural mediation in conference interpreting despite the greater degree of cultural transparency that characterises discourse in conference interpreting situations (CISs) when compared with other settings such as community and/or court interpreting. It also proposes an account of the CCIr's role as intercultural mediator as an alternative to other accounts of the interpreter's role in the literature on conference interpreting because such accounts do not explain clearly the CCIr's role or are in conflict with very well-established concepts and principles associated with translation/interpreting such as faithfulness, accuracy, neutrality or accessibility. The account of the CCIr's role as intercultural mediator is derived from the principles of a theoretical framework that draws on the findings of the theory of sense (Seleskovitch and Lederer 1995) and Sperber and Wilson's (1986; 1995) relevance theory of communication (RT). The account provides the basis for formulating a clearer definition of the concept of intercultural mediation in the context of consecutive conference interpreting (CCI).

Analyses of two types of data underpin the investigation: data from authentic examples from interpreters' actual performance and data from 295 responses to a worldwide survey of professional conference interpreters conducted by this researcher for use in this thesis.

Results of both analyses confirm the case for intercultural mediation in CISs and the validity of the proposed account of the CCIr's role as intercultural mediator though situationality has been found to play an important role in the extent to which intercultural mediation is needed. Results also shed light on CCIrs' use of cultural mediation procedures and the role of interpreters' professional status, experience and language direction on their ability/willingness to perform intercultural mediation.

KEYWORDS: conference interpreting, faithfulness, intercultural mediation, pragmatic approach, relevance theory of communication, theory of sense.

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