The Rendering of Sex-Related Expressions by Court Interpreters in Hong Kong: A Corpus-Based Approach

Authors : Yee Yan Crystal Kwong

Abstract : The essence of rape is the absence of consent to sexual intercourse. Yet, the definition of consent is not absolute and allows for subjectivity. In this case, the accuracy of oral interpretation becomes very important as the narratives of events and situation, as well as the register and style of speakers would influence the juror decision making. This paper first adopts a corpus-based approach to investigate how court interpreters in Hong Kong handle expressions that refer to sexual activities. The data of this study will be based on online corpus :From legislation to translation, from translation to interpretation: The narrative of sexual offences. The corpus comprises the transcription of five separate rape trials and all of these trials were heard with the presence of an interpreter. Since there are plenty of sex-related expressions used by witnesses and defendants in the five cases, emphasis will be put on those which have an impact on the definition of rape. With an in-depth analysis of the interpreted utterances, different interpreting approaches will be identified to observe how interpreters retain the intended meanings. Interviews with experienced court interpreters will also be conducted to revisit the validity of the traditional verbatim standard. At the end of this research, various interpreting approaches will be compared and evaluated. A redefinition of interpreters' institutional role, as well as recommendations for interpreting learners will be provided.