



Loyalty Means Loyalty under Circumstances? – An Analysis of Shifts in Interpreter-mediated Political Dialogues

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This paper presents the findings of a corpus-based research project on dialogue interpreting of the consecutive mode in political settings in China. Based on a detailed analysis of discourse documented in authentic interpreter-facilitated encounters between senior officials of Guangdong Province and their foreign visitors, the paper attempts to explore the different levels of “shifts” in this type of interpreting with government staff interpreter playing the role as a mediator.

It is generally believed that the higher the level of an interpreting task and the more formal its setting, the less room the interpreter is allowed for the performance of the mediation role. Building on a parallel corpus of the target language output and source language input in interpreter-facilitated political dialogues, and adopting the critical discourse analytical methods, the paper classifies the shifts found in the interpretation done in political meetings.

Setting out from a new perspective of understanding the social face of interpreting, the paper suggests that the interpreter’s role as a mediator is conspicuous even in high-level political interpreting, and that the ideology, both externally imposed from the institution in which the interpreter works and internally from the interpreter him/herself, influences the way interpreter understands the source language utterances as well as reproduce in the target language. Seen in this angle, loyalty of the interpreter is often loyalty under circumstances, and should therefore not be taken for granted.