Ms Maho Fukuno

PhD candidate, Australian National University

Maho Fukuno is a PhD student in Linguistics and Translation Studies at the School of Literature, Languages and Linguistics, Australian National University (Canberra, Australia). After receiving her BA from Osaka University in Japan, she completed a Master of Translating and Interpreting at RMIT University (Melbourne, Australia) in 2016. Her PhD project explores, from a social-cultural perspective, the relationship between translator ideology and translated texts in community translation settings, focusing on how translators negotiate their subjectivity and ethical responsibilities. She is also a NAATI certified
Community translation and interpreting (T&I), also known as public service T&I (e.g. Hale, 2007), is an essential service for all residents to secure basic human rights in a multicultural society. Japan, currently facing an urgent need for the establishment of T&I services in its rapid development towards a multicultural society, has seen a unique model of community interpreting emerge, called consultation interpreting (Tokyo University of Foreign Studies; also see Mizuno & Naito, 2015). Consultation interpreting, while it still recognises the importance of conventional ethical principles such as impartiality and accuracy, emphasises the role of the interpreter as an empathetic listener and mediator for the language-minority client. Such interpreters’ explicit goal is to help clients resolve their issue(s), as a team with other experts all present at the consultation session hosted by the municipal government. This “empathetic” model of interpreting is somewhat contrastive to the common discourse on interpreters’ role-images in Australia, which centres on the ethical principle of impartiality. How then can consultation interpreting be construed in relation to the prevalent role-image discourse? What ethical and cultural value underpins this model? After introducing the system of consultation interpreting, this paper will explore these questions by pointing to a cultural value, “omoiyari”, in Japanese society. As a conclusion, I will discuss how the value of “omoiyari” and the consultation interpreting model may contribute to ongoing academic and professional discussions about the dilemmas encountered by interpreters in Australia, who can feel torn between their ethical obligations and the expectations of their clients.
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