

Constructing Institutional Identity in Professional Practice: A Discourse Analysis of China's In-house Interpreters' Practice

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Abstract

This study investigates the institutional identity of Chinese government inhouse interpreters at work. Using systemic functional linguistics (SFL) to analyze the data of five interpreters collected from seven interpreting sessions of China's Two-Session Press Conference (CTSPC), it examines translational shifts associated with the interpersonal meaning between the source speech and target rendition, but with a focus on the attitudinal resources.

The findings indicate that the interpreters chose to position themselves in different interpersonal relationships. They consistently aligned themselves with the Chinese Premier, keeping the positivity of his speech by rendering its meaning more explicitly while neutralizing negative comments by overseas journalists on some damning issues. Despite reprimanding overtones of some overseas journalists, their interpretations are found somehow agreeable to Chinese audience and the Premier. The interpreters' institutional identity is indeed constructed by exercising social and professional roles in practice. Because of the need to travel between the two, they must balance themselves all the time in the tug of war. To this end, the best strategy, as discovered in this study, is to manipulate attitudinal resources.