Abstract
Title: Jury perceptions of interpreted testimony
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Research into courtroom discourse has found that witnesses are judged not only on what they say but also on how they say it. This may be related to their speech style or their accent. Studies into the effect of speech style has shown that the style that is predominantly associated with lower socio economic groups tends to receive the least favourable evaluations of credibility and trustworthiness from jurors (Giles & Sasoon, 1983; O'Barr, 1982; Conley and O'Barr, 1990). Some studies have also shown that foreign accent can have an impact on jury perceptions (Wodak-Engels, 1984), with some accents eliciting less favourable responses than others (Frumkin, 2007). These studies have direct implications for the work of interpreters. Little is known about the impact of the interpreter’s intervention on jurors’ perceptions and evaluations of the non-mainstream language speaker. Experimental studies have shown that interpreters’ changes to the style of the original, such as the addition or omission of hesitations or fillers and hedges, can have a significant impact on the jurors’ evaluation of the credibility of the witness (Stephan and Stephan, 1986; Berk-Seligson, 1989, 1990; Mendoza, Hosch, Ponder, & Carrillo, 2000; Hale, 1997, 2002, 2004). Conversely, it’s also been found that the opposite is true: when interpreters maintain accuracy of style as well as of content, there seems to be no significant differences between the evaluations of the original version and the interpreted version (Hale, 2004). While issues of propositional and stylistic accuracy can be addressed through adequate interpreter training, issues of prejudice based on accent, gender and ethnicity fall beyond the interpreter’s control. This presentation will discuss these issues in light of a current research project which aims to ascertain whether jurors are influenced by the language of the witness and the accent of the interpreter. It will also discuss the need for further research to inform the training and the practice of court interpreters as well as of those who use their services.

References
