Interpreting modes in question-answer dialogues in Danish courts

Associate Professor Bente Jacobsen, PhD
Department of Languages and Business Communication
Aarhus School of Business, Aarhus University, Denmark

The Danish legal system recommends that question-answer dialogues be interpreted in the consecutive mode, because it believes that this mode, contrary to the simultaneous mode, will produce complete renditions of source texts. However, personal observations and recordings of interpreted question-answer dialogues have revealed that a number of formally trained and experienced court interpreters use the simultaneous mode for questions (and sometimes for answers also). Moreover, an interpreter assisting in a high-profile appellate case before the Danish High Court in August 2009 used a mix of the simultaneous and the consecutive modes for both questions and answers. His “mixed” mode not only resulted in a great number of disjointed and incomplete target texts, but in some instances also caused an overlap between source texts and target texts, possibly making both inaudible to the intended receivers. When questioned about his strategy, the interpreter explained that he always used this “mixed” mode for question-answer dialogues, and that he was merely complying with the request of courts. The fact that none of the lawyers in the appellate case (1 prosecutor, 1 assistant prosecutor, 1 defence counsel, 3 judges) objected to it suggests that he may be right.

This seminar will present results from a comprehensive survey of Danish court interpreters which attempted, among other things, to answer the following questions: Which mode or modes do the interpreters typically use for rendering questions and answers, and who typically determines which mode or modes shall be used?

Thursday 14 October, 2010
1 to 2pm – Building 23: BA.23.G.40
Bankstown campus, UWS

Please RSVP to itrg@uws.edu.au

Coming up:

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Attendance at this seminar series entitles AUSIT members to 10 PD points