

New research reveals the importance of accurate court interpreting

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(PhysOrg.com) -- The competency of court interpreters can make the difference between a conviction and an acquittal in a criminal trial, according to research from the University of Western Sydney.

Associate Professor Sandra Hale, from the UWS Interpreting and Translation Research Group, has conducted a study of the influence of court interpreters on the credibility of individuals and their testimonies.

The findings, presented recently at the 'Jury Research and Practice Conference' at NSW Parliament House, indicate that without specialist training court interpreters are prone to mistakes which can lead to unjust legal outcomes.

"In the court of law, witnesses and defendants are judged not only on what they say, but how they say it," says Associate Professor Hale.

"When the testimony of a person who cannot speak English is required, the impression they make within the court is completely in the hands of their interpreter.

"If even the smallest change is made to the person's style or the content of their speech, the believability of their testimony could be affected."

According to Associate Professor Hale, human beings naturally assess each other's intelligence, credibility, personality, trustworthiness, and competence based on the way they speak.

"During legal proceedings, magistrates and juries may inadvertently judge the testimony of a witness or defendant based on the speech and mannerisms of the interpreter," she says.

"As the perceptions of the magistrate and [jury](#) often dictate a person's future, it is of the utmost importance that court interpreters undergo training to ensure that their interpretations of testimonies are complete and accurate."

Provided by University of Western Sydney

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