

## Dialogue Interpreting: A Guide to Interpreting in Public Services and the Community

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# Dialogue Interpreting: A Guide to Interpreting in Public Services and the Community

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With more global attention being paid to migrant and asylum issues, people have noticed the important role of interpreting in this regard. In fact, interpreting in the community, or community-based interpreting has begun to attract attention since the 1980s; hence it comes this book under review. Not only does this book cover different fields of community-based interpreting, but also it explores their latest development. This article will briefly summarize the main chapters of the book and analyse its advantages and the aspects that warrant improvement.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, with more global attention being paid to migrant and asylum issues, people have noticed the important role of interpreting in this regard. In fact, interpreting in the community, or community-based interpreting has begun to attract attention since the 1980s when people were faced with mounting communication problems in the public-sector institutions (e.g. health-care, social services). It has been gaining a gradually growing popularity in the interpreting studies community as well; hence it comes this book under review now as a general guideline on this topic. Not only does it cover different fields of community-based interpreting, but also it explores their latest development. This article will briefly summarize the main chapters of the book and analyse its advantages and the aspects that warrant improvement.

This book, co-authored by Dr Rebecca Tipton at the University of Manchester and Prof. Olga Furmanek at the Wake Forest University, aims to provide an essential guide for practising interpreters and for all students of interpreting, Modern Languages, Applied Linguistics and Intercultural Communication. Both authors are well-known scholars on public service and Community Interpreting Studies.

Structurally, this book is organized into three parts. Part One generally introduces the topic of the book, including the scope and purpose of this guide, terminology and taxonomy in dialogue interpreting. Part Two (Chapters 1-7) firstly talks about the continuing professional development (CPD) required for the practice of dialogue interpreting and then further classifies dialogue interpreting into six concrete domains (i.e. criminal procedure, asylum procedure, healthcare setting, education setting, social care-related setting and religious setting) and discusses each of them in detail. Part Three concludes the work.

## 2. EVALUATION

In fact, researchers have to be innovative in writing a book on introducing a subject, as this probably has been done by many scholars before. Dialogue interpreting is no exception in this regard and many previous introductory books have their own characteristics. For instance, *Coordinating Participation in Dialogue Interpreting* (2012), edited by Claudio Baraldi and Laura Gavioli revolves around a single concept, or the concept of coordination, which was first introduced by Cecilia Wadensjö in her 1998 book *Interpreting as Interaction*. The volume has proved that this concept is a productive and useful tool to describe features of interpreter-mediated interaction.

Overall, the studies in this book are of high quality and have some innovations as well both in structure and in content. These qualities guarantee that it has largely achieved its aim of presenting the field of dialogue interpreting. Firstly, unlike some stipulated documentations such as *International Standard ISO 13611 Interpreting – Guidelines for Community Interpreting, 2014*,<sup>1</sup> which put the thematic competencies under core competencies for interpreters, this book places emphasis on the need for a broader and more complex understanding of thematic competencies in specific settings. The authors believe that thematic competencies can be a complementary part to core and developmental competencies. That is why the chapters are structured around the concept of competency in each specific domain. It is like a thread that can lead and link every chapter. This made the book well-designed and readers can quickly locate the domain they are looking for. What's more, the legal domain was further divided into criminal and asylum procedures, which reflect the new development and need in dialogue interpreting. This made us think of the 'European migrant crisis' taking place in 2015. From here, we can see that the authors closely follow the new trend in dialogue interpreting.

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<sup>1</sup> International Standard ISO 13611 Interpreting – Guidelines for Community Interpreting: [http://www.iso.org/iso/catalogue\\_detail.htm?csnumber=54082](http://www.iso.org/iso/catalogue_detail.htm?csnumber=54082) (accessed 31 Dec. 2016)

Secondly, as a professional guide, this book focuses on analysing many examples and case studies, which make it very engaging, rather than only discussing interpreting concepts or theories. By providing many hands-on activities for illustration purpose, the book can motivate readers and let them explore different settings in interpreting. For instance, in Chapter 3, which explores interpreted events concerning claims for asylum, learners are encouraged to look for the position regarding the involvement of asylum and immigration court interpreters in their own country. In Chapter 6, a case study revolving around Freedom from Torture, an organization in the non-profit sector in the United Kingdom was discussed in detail. The authors introduce the establishment of this organization, how it recruits interpreters and how it functions. Through analysis, they emphasize the importance of development and training for interpreters in social care domain.

Thirdly, the guide can offer sufficient and practical background information for beginners. At the beginning of each chapter, the authors illustrate the modes, scope and nature of each specific domain, which can help interpreters prepare well before they embark on their career. For instance, in chapter 3 for asylum procedures, which is a relatively new area in dialogue interpreting, they introduce some international laws and many useful resources in this regard. In chapter 4 for healthcare interpreting, the authors talk about many related projects in some countries and the relevant conditions of healthcare interpreting in these countries in order for the readers to familiarize with the context of this field. In effect, all the domains in community interpreting are covered in this book. Traditional community interpreting usually revolves around medical and legal settings (see Hale 2007; Valero-Garcés and Martin 2008). This book can balance between the new areas in community interpreting such as education and social care and the traditional settings. For professional interpreters, who can learn or train themselves through the reflections on case studies, it provides a working guideline by thorough and comprehensive coverage of various topics, scenes, procedures and ethics, etc., while for the academics, who can choose some

underdeveloped topics or issues for research, it offers a reservoir of research topics. Also, for the purpose of interpreting teaching or training, it supplies many resources. The broad coverage of this book can be useful references to design curriculum for interpreting courses and many case studies can be introduced to class directly.

However, some aspects can be further improved in this book. Firstly, there is not much theoretical underpinning. This is an introductory book that is suitable for beginners or practitioners in dialogue interpreting to acquire some background knowledge and skills required in this field, but not suitable for academics to carry out research. It focuses on practices rather than theories. There are many macroscopic, summative or contextual contents on different domains of dialogue interpreting. Like in Chapter 7, the background of interpreting in religious settings and their four subtypes are generally introduced. However, it lacks in-depth analyses in some specific aspects. For instance, there are many kinds of interpreter-mediated interviews or dialogues mentioned, but more specific and recent research have begun to pay attention to some details such as the patterns of gaze and other non-verbal signals during the interpreting process, which are bound up with role, status, issues of identity and power, etc. (Mason 2012: 177). So, learners must bear in mind their purpose before reading this book. Secondly, the differences in dialogue interpreting caused by geographical locations are not fully manifested. In Table 1.2 on page 5 of this book, the authors introduce a lot of terms of dialogue interpreting in different countries. It seemed that they would pay attention to the different conditions of dialogue interpreting in those areas, but this respect was not well illustrated. Also, it is known that dialogue interpreting usually takes place in the multicultural and multilingual public procedural contexts (Inghilleri 2012: 72). However, this would not be the case, for instance, in China, which largely is a mono-cultural and mono-linguistic society. For example, in one study, Su (2009: 42-45) outlines every aspect of interpreting in China and finds that Chinese community interpreting developed rather late, especially in healthcare interpreting. Su finds that until today, many foreign

patients in China will choose to communicate directly with Chinese doctors who can speak English rather than looking for an interpreter. That means, the condition of development of dialogue interpreting can vary in different places. Some scholars have noticed this point and have a much clearer target. For instance, in their book, Colin and Morris (1996) focus attention on analysing various aspects of interpreting issues in legal process in the United Kingdom, especially in England and Wales, and at the end, only very briefly review the situation in other countries such as Canada, Sweden and the United States. Rudvin and Tomassini (2008: 245-266) also give us a good example. They examine the language mediator's role in educational and medical settings specifically in Italy and find that the local demographical, historical and socio-political situation impact radically on professional categories, especially those professions which are related to the politically volatile area of migration. Last but not least, though this book claims it is a guide for both practicing interpreters and all the students, it did not strike a balance. It actually focuses much attention on CPD, while the initial professional development, or institutional learning was not reflected. However, formal schooling was also of importance for working in this field. Edwards (1995: 4) maintains that for federal certification exam for Spanish court interpreting, one needs at least 14 years of schooling in English to understand the English used in court, not to mention university degree requirement. Thus, we believe formal education could lay a solid foundation for dialogue interpreters. But this guide may not be suitable for schooling.

To sum up, for further improvement, this book could have introduced more theoretical underpinnings and combined them with interpreting practice. Despite this, it has to a great extent introduced the latest development of dialogue interpreting, covered all the relevant fields and outlined their major trends and achieved its purpose. It can benefit both interpreting practitioners and academics. It is recommended.

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