Robin Setton & Andrew Dawrant. (2016) *Conference interpreting: A complete course.* [Benjamins Translation Library 120]. Amsterdam: John Benjamins. ISBN 978 90 272 5861 8 (hb), 470 pp.

Robin Setton & Andrew Dawrant. (2016) *Conference interpreting: A trainer's guide* [Benjamins Translation Library 121]. Amsterdam: John Benjamins. ISBN 978 90 272 5863 2 (hb), 650 pp.

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Robin Setton and Andrew Dawrant, both experienced conference interpreters and interpreting trainers, have written the most voluminous and comprehensive work on conference interpreting (CI) training that, to this reviewer's knowledge, has ever been published. It comes in two volumes: the Trainer's Guide (TG), which is 650 pages long, is intended for use by instructors; the accompanying Complete Course (CC), slightly smaller at 470 pages, is for prospective, novice and advanced CI students. According to the publisher, in whose Translation Library series these volumes appear, the two books contain the most complete description to date of a training course for professional conference interpreters.

Both volumes are available hardbound and in paperback; an e-book version has been announced by Benjamins and, as even the paperback edition is quite weighty, may prove to be an attractive alternative.

Owing to the impressive number of topics covered, not all of them can be addressed in a review. A few topics of special interest will be highlighted, and a comparative look at the two books will be taken.

Conference Interpreting – A Complete Course

CC explains many points that are self-evident for instructors, but that prospective or beginner students of CI may not be familiar with. It starts out by explaining, in chapter 2, what interpreting is all about (in comparison to written translation), as well as the roles played by language and communication in interpreting. The different modes (consecutive, simultaneous and sight translation) are introduced, as are whispering and 'bidule' interpreting (which is in wider use today, despite the advances made in booth technology equipment).

Different settings such as community-based, public service and business interpreting are briefly described, as are legal and conflict interpreting, but the main emphasis is on conference, diplomatic and media interpreting.

After sketching out the required skill sets and recommended language combinations, chapter 3 provides an overview of prerequisites for admission to university CI programmes, adding useful recommendations on how students can prepare for an admission test. As a minimum educational level, they must hold a university degree which may have been obtained in a non-language subject, but the authors stress that a postgraduate degree improves the prospective student's chances of being accepted for testing (CC, p. 59; TG, p. 107).

Chapters 4 to 8 are intended as background material and guidance for CI courses; in greater depth than is usually possible during training classes, they explain the different cognitive processes at play and the ways these interact in the overall interpreting activity. While chapter 4 focuses on comprehension and speaking processes as such, chapter 5 introduces the consecutive mode, with a detailed description of note-taking methods and, in advanced consecutive, an emphasis on precision and coherence. There may be some redundancy in introducing the different phases (I, II and III) of note-taking in 5.1.4 of CC and then describing them all in more detail in 5.3, 5.4 and 5.5. The extensive description could have been left for TG, where the relevant sections are much shorter. One specific topic that can be mentioned in this respect is feedback in consecutive without notes (CC, p. 121), which would have appeared much more appropriate in TG. By contrast, a welcome feature is that the authors give recommendations for student group practice, since this is a topic dealt with all too rarely in relation to its importance.

Chapter 6 is devoted to sight translation, a skill that is of great use in CI training but is rarely given a prominent place in CI curricula. The preparatory text-based exercises suggested by the authors fulfil different objectives, such as flexibility in expression, compression and "syntacrobatics" (CC, p. 211), this being the term they use for the syntactic restructuring operations – either within or between languages – which are often required in interpreting. Sight translation is also recommended as a useful preparatory exercise for simultaneous and for working into the B language.

Finally, chapter 8 discusses the different stages of skill development in simultaneous interpreting – i.e., initiation, coordination, experimentation and consolidation. Since simultaneous is generally regarded as the most complex CI skill, the authors strongly defend the traditional Paris School (ESIT) course structure, for which they borrow Karla Déjean Le Féal's (1997) reference to the "training wheels" approach: this means that, in a two-year course, the first year is strictly dedicated to consecutive, simultaneous being taught only in the second year.

Chapter 9 gives a glimpse of professional reality, describing the different conditions and pitfalls that final-year students should be aware of. Chapters 10 and

11 offer a succinct overview of standards expected from a professional interpreter, going into questions of professional ethics such as confidentiality, neutrality and fidelity that guide interpreters' conduct and, finally, providing some useful advice on how to enter the CI market and how to present oneself as a professional.

As the CC volume is intended for (prospective) students of CI, one should keep in mind that, while it gives a very detailed overview of all the different fields related to CI, its real use will be as a permanent companion for learners to consult at different stages of their training. As they learn more about interpreting, they will find answers to questions that they wish to pursue in greater detail. For trainers, much of its content covers subjects they are (or should be) familiar with; their use of the volume will mainly be as a source of background reading material for students, coordinating reference to the various chapters with the sequence of skills developed in class. Students may also be assigned reading and presentation tasks accordingly.

Conference Interpreting – A Trainer's Guide

The general introduction in TG is identical to that in CC. Its first part makes points that trainers are generally aware of, and could perhaps have been dispensed with here; the second part touches upon questions that are all addressed in detail in the various chapters. Chapter 1, still essentially introductory in scope, offers a brief overview of some pertinent questions such as testing or the status of theory in training.

Chapters 2 to 12 are structured according to the chronological order in which the different CI skills are taught. Although the authors do not advocate the splitting up of training units into individual (sub)skills to be acquired, they emphasize the principle of progression and pursue a stepwise approach, moving from easier to more difficult and complex tasks, a pedagogical principle easy to follow for trainers/readers and which the authors ironically describe as "spoonfeeding". Each of these chapters has its own introduction and summary, and some are supplemented with suggestions for further reading. Chapter 2 introduces general principles of teaching conference interpreting; this line of thought is continued in chapter 3, which is about skill acquisition, progression and (self-)assessment, while chapter 4 gives a succinct description of how to organize admission testing. Chapters 5 to 8 cover initiation, consecutive, language knowledge, interpreting into B and finally, simultaneous; possibly language knowledge should have come before the detailed description of the modes of interpreting (in both volumes), but for trainers this is again self-evident.

The two final chapters address questions of best teaching practice and training of trainers. Interpreter training for settings other than CI is briefly touched upon at the very end, with references to other authors (e.g. Gentile et al. 1996; Shlesinger 2007); it would have been desirable to have more information about the relationship between different interpreting settings, and to know more about the authors' approach regarding the extent to which CI students should become acquainted with other interpreting types.

All the chapters that offer training suggestions, outlining course structure in extraordinary detail, reveal the wealth of training experience the authors have gathered over the years. They have attempted to cover each and every possible problem that may arise at any point in the course of training, and it sometimes appears as though one is reading an instructor's training diary of a full course from the very beginning to the successful end. Throughout the different sequences of exercises they suggest, it is evident that the authors essentially represent the line of thought of the Paris School. With its decades of successful CI training, this school has undeniably contributed more than any other to CI training and theory. And yet, other approaches have meanwhile turned out to be no less successful. Some of them are reflected on in this volume, whereas others are only mentioned quite briefly.

One of the subjects for which different approaches are discussed, and the relevant literature is referred to, is note-taking. The authors must be congratulated on having broken with the former Paris doctrine that note-taking should not be taught specifically, for which the rationale was that students would in any case develop their own personal technique. Rozan's (1956) standard method is used as a basis for a succinct description of how note-taking training can be structured. Different approaches to note-taking, either in the source or target language, are discussed, but the authors are reluctant to recommend the use of a host of symbols and instead introduce those suggested much earlier by Rozan and focus more on efficient ways of abbreviating. They also make many useful recommendations on how and when to teach the various steps of note-taking and consecutive, with and without notes; ideas from a wide range of sources (from Seleskovitch & Lederer 1989/2002 to Liu 1994) are integrated in a step-by-step approach that covers the various aspects of comprehension, taking into account cue-words as well as links, layout and coordination. Here, some of the subchapters in both volumes appear to be very similar in terms of the topics covered. And yet, the instructor-reader may be surprised to find a list of equipment for note-taking classes not in TG but in CC – one example of the difficulty of distinguishing between what is intended for students and what is required by trainers.

Another tenet of the Paris School, mentioned earlier, is that a two-year programme should introduce students to simultaneous only after they have

successfully completed year one and fully mastered consecutive. The famous Paris "midpoint exam" is exclusively in consecutive. What the authors suggest by way of preparation for simultaneous during year one is sight translation, to be pursued in parallel with consecutive training, and the suggestions they make for the relevant exercises are very useful. For this reason, it is regrettable that, while an extensive chapter of the CC is devoted to sight translation, it is not the subject of a chapter in its own right in TG (it is to be found there, in 3.3.5.2, but with far less detail for class use than in CC). After all, the authors rightly argue that it is a very effective preparatory exercise for simultaneous interpreting. Its inclusion in CC suggests that they have considered this mode as an exercise students can do on their own. In this respect, there could be more guidance for trainers on how to introduce students to self-training activities.

The authors refer to pedagogical principles, learning styles and learning curves throughout the volume; however, although a few key terms from educational studies are frequently used (expertise, deliberate practice, constructive feedback, incremental realism), there is no thorough theoretical discussion of these concepts. A positive exception is the "deliberate practice" approach, where some key studies of learning and education (e.g. Ericsson et al. 2007) are explicitly referred to. A more thorough introduction to these fields of knowledge may have been desirable, as this volume is intended for trainers who wish to obtain more expertise in teaching, and who often have been recruited by university departments on account of their professional experience without having been able to study questions of pedagogy and didactics.

Concluding remarks

As mentioned earlier, there is always a risk of overlap when one sets out to write a student handbook and a guide for trainers in parallel; in some cases, this cannot be avoided. Frequent cross-references (another inevitable concomitant of companion volumes like these) remain within reasonable limits here, but nevertheless require readers to have both volumes available on their desks.

The language is impeccable, with frequent metaphors that will make the reader smile and a style that even non-native speakers will find very readable. In addition, layout is attractive: overviews or brief explanations of selected points are set off from the body of the text in a reader-friendly box format, with sensible highlighting of ideas for further reading (full details of which can be found in the bibliography at the end of each volume).

As pointed out before, the two volumes, particularly TG, are strongly oriented to the Paris School and its (traditional) training method. The fact that almost all

universities now offer CI programmes as Master's courses, according to the guidelines of the Bologna Agreement, is not really covered. Comparability of modules offered by universities in different countries is one of the Bologna objectives; even so, trainers are often faced with problems when they have to assess equivalence for parts of a degree course completed abroad. It would have been desirable for the Trainer's Guide to provide a table with ECTS credits for the different course units, as this is something most universities are still experimenting with.

The lack of detail on equivalences is offset by the fact that the authors' perspective goes beyond European languages. Both of them work with Chinese, and interesting examples of differences between European and Asian languages as sources of difficulty for the interpreter are given; these make the volumes truly international in character.

When conference interpreting became a teaching subject, practically all interpreting trainers were professional interpreters who were lucky that an interpreting school existed in the city of their professional domicile, so that after a day of conference interpreting they could spend a few hours teaching and thus passing on their practical experience to their students. At the same time, some universities considered linguists without any professional interpreting practice able to teach consecutive and simultaneous interpreting.

Fortunately, there are now quite a number of professional interpreters who have taken a real interest in theory and teaching methodology, so that interpreting instructors today share a considerable amount of academic experience and have contributed greatly to the development of interpreting studies as a subdiscipline of translation studies. Both authors are part of this group, and they have made their wealth of training experience available to all. Probably there are still many trainers around who often take up a teaching assignment on the basis of their professional CI experience, but without any solid know-how concerning skills development, testing and didactics in general. Hopefully they will be better equipped to address this shortcoming after reading one, or both, of these volumes. Others will find it reassuring to see that much of what the authors describe is corroborated by their own experience.

For students, the CC volume is definitely attractive and informative – provided they understand that even the most diligent reading will not turn them into good interpreters. The need for continuous practice and exercises cannot be replaced by any book. Nevertheless, students will be better able to reflect upon what they do and why their trainers choose specific exercises for them. For trainers, it is advisable to have both volumes – not on their bookshelves, but on their office desks. Whenever they are in doubt about how to organize their courses and what material to use, a look into either volume will provide them with more suggestions than they will ever be in a position to put into practice.

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