

○ **A. GILLIES, *CONFERENCE INTERPRETING. A STUDENT'S PRACTICE BOOK***

(LONDON, ROUTLEDGE. 2013. PP. VII, 285)

Review by **Sovannarith Lim** School of Education, University of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia

I feel the urge to begin this review by recommending that Andrew Gillies' *Conference Interpreting. A Student's Practice Book* is a must-read book by every student interpreter.

Amidst high demand for competent conference interpreters for our ever-integrated societies where communications occur between people of different languages comes the need to have accountable interpreter training programs with their stakeholders being the trainers, program developers, material writers, but also—and more importantly—the student interpreters themselves. By “accountable”, I mean the students themselves need to take initiatives in learning, practicing and developing their skills and expertise in this highly cognitive and complex profession. In this regard, what student interpreters need in achieving their cause is a quality practice book that is accessible for them to practice on their own. And by ‘accessible,’ I mean a book that can motivate and engage the students in practicing their interpreting skills.

Andrew Gillies' *Conference Interpreting. A Student's Practice Book* is one such quality practice book for students of conference interpreting. The book has been written to accommodate this purpose - being accountable and accessible. It is written free of the contemporary academic conventions; for example, the use of in-text citation styles that usually is a barrier preventing student interpreters from consulting a practice book. From my experience as an interpreter trainer, most student interpreters would opt for a book that is written in a less academic style. For the same reason, this book can be very useful material for interpreter trainers, but not as a course book in itself as Gillies states.

The book is divided into four parts, with each part comprising of sub-skills or elements of conference interpreting that the students need to be successful interpreters. Adopting a bottom-up approach to practicing interpreting skills, Gillies wrote the book with an assumption that the sub-skills can be practiced in isolation and the knowledge and expertise gained from such practice can be amassed. This implies also that the order of acquiring each of the skills is not important. It follows, in this regard, that the readers can jump to any section that matches their need for practice.

Part A: Practice provides various practical guidelines for students to prepare themselves and to practice skills associated with interpreting. These include *How to Practise, Practice Material, Preparation, and Feedback*. The first section of Part A, as the heading suggests, guides student interpreters not to start off with actual interpreting - which actually is what

most student interpreters expect they would be doing when they undertake an interpreting training program. Rather, as Gillies correctly notes, the students should work on associated skills, such as learning to be a good listener, before they begin to actually interpret. In this part of the book, readers also will find examples of appropriate materials students can use to practice their interpreting (associated) skills. Gillies also includes, in this first part of the book, suggestions as to how student interpreters can prepare themselves for upcoming interpreting tasks and overcome anticipated difficulties as they arise when performing the tasks. The last section of *Part A* provides guidelines as to how students can give both positive feedback and points for improvement to their fellow students so that they continue to stay motivated when practicing.

The second part of the book *Part B: Language* contains useful activities that students can work on to improve their working languages - both active and passive. The readers will find practical activities that they can engage in to enhance their linguistic competences and to experience different types of genres in both their working languages. Some activities are reading and writing different text types and registers, and building vocabulary size for various topics. Also found in *Part B* of the book is a recommendation for the students to keep on broadening their general knowledge. Gillies writes that ‘general knowledge and language knowledge are very much part of the same process’ (p.43). That is why student interpreters should also improve their general knowledge as much as their language knowledge. It is worth noting also that sound knowledge of international affairs and general information is a requirement for conference interpreting professional training programs (Niska, 2005).

The last two parts of the book are indeed the main sections. Gillies devotes more pages to each of them (90 pages to *Part C* and 77 pages to *Part D*) compared to the previous two parts. *Part C: Consecutive Interpreting* suggests that students work on a number of skills in isolation, instead of beginning to practice consecutive interpreting straightaway. Gillies calls them the “main elements” of consecutive interpreting; they include working on delivering interpretation, active listening and analysis, improving and helping one’s own memory and recall, note-taking, reformulating language, self-monitoring one’s language, and splitting attention. By mastering these activities, student interpreters will be able to hone the consecutive interpreting skills required of every conference interpreter who normally would be called on to deliver such a service at conference (sideline) meetings. Consecutive interpreting is thus a crucial skill in its own right. At the same time, consecutive interpreting complements simultaneous interpreting.

Part D: Simultaneous Interpreting follows the preceding part: the readers will not find activities that suggest them to work directly on practicing simultaneous interpreting. Rather, they can work on separate activities to improve their simultaneous interpreting skills. Gillies explains the separations of these sub-skills as follows:

Simultaneous interpreting is quite a shock to the system, mostly because we are doing so many difficult things at once, and we need to concentrate on all of them. Many of the exercises in this section serve to ease you into full simultaneous by slowing down or breaking up the process of listening, analyzing, reformulating and speaking at the same time. (p.195)

Some activities used to practice consecutive interpreting skills are also found in this part because they can be used to practice simultaneous interpreting skills too. They include delivery, reformulation, self-monitoring, and split attention. In addition to these practice activities, readers also find in this part such activities as time lag, anticipation, and stress management.

Bringing these parts together, the entire book provides viable practice activities considered as essential elements of conference interpreting training. Its contents reflect most of what are found in a standard conference interpreting training program (Gile, 2005). Therefore, Gillies' *Conference Interpreting* is once again a must-read book by student interpreters. Given its pedagogical applicability, interpreter trainers can also use this book as a reference or supplementary material.

The volume itself has been written as a practice book; therefore, readers will not find theoretical accounts or debates from mainstream translation research. Nonetheless, personally, I do believe the book would be more valuable if there was a section devoted to descriptions of translation and interpreting theories, to provide background knowledge and to allow readers to appreciate this intriguing discipline.

REFERENCES

- Gile, D. (2005). Teaching conference interpreting. In M. Tennent (Ed.). *Training for the new millennium* (pp. 127–151). Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Niska, H. (2005). Training interpreters: programmes, curricula, practices. In M. Tennent (Ed.). *Training for the new millennium* (pp. 35–64). Amsterdam: John Benjamins.