

**Cecilia Wadensjö, Birgitta Englund Dimitrova, Anna-Lena Nilsson (eds.) 2007. *The Critical Link 4. Professionalisation of Interpreting in the Community*. Selected papers from the 4<sup>th</sup> International Conference on Interpreting in Legal, Health and Social Service Settings, Stockholm, Sweden, 20-23 May 2004. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 314 pages. ISBN 978 90 272 1678 6.**

As the name of the conference implies, it focuses on the many links of the interpreter: The fundamental object of interest of the conference is the interpreter as a critical link between people not sharing a common language, but at the same time the conference itself is a critical meeting point for people working with interpreting in the community and in this way it also links up interpreters and scholars within the field.

The present volume contains a selection of papers that were presented at the Critical Link 4 held in 2004 in Stockholm, Sweden, dealing with the theme **Professionalisation of Interpreting in the Community**, meaning interpreting in legal, health and social service settings. It focuses on “the professionalisation of interpreters, working in institutional environments, from a variety of angles” (p. 3) and is a mix of academic research and texts of a practical nature. Its six sections contain twenty four papers which “were selected because of their relevance to the theme of professionalisation of interpreting in the community” (back page). In addition, the book contains acknowledgements, a foreword, and an index.

The aim of this review is not to evaluate the individual contributions which deal with a variety of topics using various theoretical and methodological approaches. Instead, I briefly report on the topics and findings of each paper and focus on those features which contribute to the main theme of the book. Hence, the review investigates how the papers address the issue of professionalisation.

In her foreword, **Wadensjö** discusses what it means to be a professional in general and in the context of community interpreting in particular, defined as interpreting of communication in institutional settings, which are considered as professional fields, where people have to deal with a certain problem but do not share a language in which this can be achieved. To illuminate the concept of professionalism, Wadensjö refers to Parson’s classical definition of a professional as someone who (1) treats all clients equally, (2) provides the service restricted to the factual task for the collective good, and (3) has gained professionalism through training. Approaches like Parson’s establishing criteria to distinguish

professionals from non-professionals dominated studies of professionalisation until the 1970s. Research dealing with professionalism, however, no longer focuses only on *what* characteristics professionals share, but *how* professionalism is achieved. The selected papers reflect these two orientations very well.

The introductory chapter (Section 1) by **Franz Pöchhacker** looks for convergence in the discipline of Interpreting studies and reflects on current research on community interpreting. He discusses the role of research on interpreting in the professionalisation process. His underlying assumption is that the evolution of a profession implies systematic reflection and academic pursuit in order to link up 'profession' and research. He focuses on the distinctions applied to the concept of interpreting throughout time, for example consecutive versus simultaneous interpreting. He points out that in the light of the emergence of new settings and domains, interpreting, however, should be distinguished mainly by institutional settings (e.g. health care and legal interpreting). Furthermore, he lists various views on the concept of interpreting in terms of bipolar distinctions, for example interactant role (institutional representatives versus individuals). He points out that a more delicate distinction is that between more or less professional forms of interpreting, stressing that what is considered professional depends on specific social, political and economic realities and that the label 'professional' is not tied to a particular area on the various bipolar spectrums. As a key component in the professionalisation process, he mentions legal provisions governing the interpreting task and professional ethics. Furthermore he points out that for most of the twentieth century, the professionalisation of interpreting took place in the sphere of international organizations, conferences and publications, which are still considered as suitable pathways to travel along for future interpreting professionals.

Section two deals with the micro dynamics of interpreter-mediated interaction. Using data collected in an Italian rehabilitation institute, **Amalia Amato** investigates the interpreter's share of talk in multi-party health care encounters, and how it relates to the respective primary participants' discourse. She focuses on 'what' rather than on 'how' the interpreters choose to render. Her quantitative study shows that the interpreters tended to be oriented towards pleasing the doctor. Moreover, at times the interpreters were prioritising their own rapport with the doctor, before the conversational link between the doctor and the primary participants. **Sonja Pöllabauer** analyses the role of interpreters in asylum hearings in Austria and identifies specific factors influencing the speakers' behaviour, investigating particularly how interpreters deal with issues of saving their own or other participants' face, for example, by using different politeness strategies. On the basis of her authentic data she also demonstrates an orientation of the interpreter towards the person in charge, in this case, the asylum officer. Evidence from her study further suggests that interpreters seem to feel obliged to save both

the face of the participants as well as their own face. **Birgit Apfelbaum** uses samples from videotaped, technical interpreter training sessions and analyses how setting-specific tasks such as negotiating technical terms are interactionally achieved, for instance, through repair activities including ratifications and corrections. She also provides arguments for why, in interpreter training, focusing on the task of coordination of talk can improve role performance in real life interpreting. On the basis of his own experience as professional interpreter in the U.S.A. **Brett Allen Rosenberg** reports on the many aspects of telephone interpreting. He describes the linguistic characteristics (primarily speech style) of this particular mode of interpreting and offers a quantitative taxonomy of types of communicative configurations in interpreted telephone communication. He argues that future interpreters in their professionalisation process need to be trained to deal with the reality of this remote working environment. All papers in this section show that interpreters play out a variety of professional identities. Explicitly only the last two papers deal with the process of professionalisation, however, implicitly they all visualise Pöchhacker's suggestions that research and training should walk together on the pathway towards professionalisation.

Section three includes papers adopting macro-sociological perspectives. **Isabelle A. Perez and Christine W. L. Wilson** report on their own experience in training Scottish police officers working alongside interpreters. Pointing at initial problems and contrasting expectations, they suggest how these can be overcome through training of police officers which is considered as fundamental to the professionalisation of interpreting as is the training of interpreters. Based on a questionnaire survey they propose a Guide to Interpreting for professionalising the integration of interpreting into police settings, emphasising that police officers and interpreters must be able to work together as professional teams. **Malgorzata Tryuk** reports on a questionnaire-based investigation carried out among different types of community interpreters in Poland. She identifies a range of problems connected with community interpreting and ends with proposals for community-oriented education of interpreters. As part of the professionalisation process, the author emphasizes the need for working out norms, which are general enough to embrace all the diverse community interpreting settings. **Roger T. Bell** discusses the process of professionalisation in Malaysia and presents a case study of a single Malaysian institution. In Malaysia the market of interpreting is unregulated and any quality assurance for interpreting has, so far, been institution- rather than profession-driven. Bell deals with the issue of who is to regulate (an institution or the profession) and how they are to go about it. **Uldis Ozolins** sheds light on how aspects of professionalism are linked to the practice of interpreting agencies, using the development in Australia as a case in point. He states that interpreting agencies can play a crucial role in professionalisation by laying down common guidelines for the interpreters. To

sum up, the papers in section three deal with matters of control and regulation of interpreting in the community.

Section four reports on the development of local standards. **Leena Idh** outlines how the Swedish State-financed system authorizing interpreters is organised and reports on Swedish interpreting standards in terms of required interpreting skills. **Ann Corsellis, Jan Cambridge, Nicky Glegg and Sarah Robson** report on a UK National Register setting professional standards for public service providers. They suggest that interpreting should be a regulated profession and discuss what is meant by a profession. They discuss the benefits of having a professional register and state that the main advantage is that accredited interpreters become accessible. **Erik Hertog, Ann Corsellis, Kirsten Wølch Rasmussen, Yolanda van den Bosch, Evert-Jan van der Vlis and Helen Keijzer-Lombooy**, representing different EU member states, report on three European Union Grotius projects, arranged for the purpose of establishing equivalent professional standards as regards selection and training, codes of ethics and conduct and interdisciplinarity in legal interpreting and translation in the European Union member states. Furthermore, they introduce a 'new' interpreter category – the professional sub-group of legal interpreters (LITs). The first EU project sought to establish equivalencies or standards on the basis of existing national systems, the second project disseminated the established standards and encouraged other EU states to implement them, and the third project developed implementation strategies. The article demonstrates how research can guide practice. The concluding paper of **Claudia V. Angelelli, Niels Agger-Gupta, Carola E. Green and Linda Okahara** targets standards in medical interpreting in California. The authors present the California Standard for Healthcare Interpreters and describe the process of development and validation. Furthermore they report on the application of various professional principles and discuss the implications for training. To sum up, section four reports on the development and the, at times, very difficult implementation of interpreting standards.

The papers in the fifth section discuss professionalism and professionalisation of interpreting from ideological and philosophical standpoints. **Graham Turner** introduces the idea that a revised conception of how the interpreter can work *with* primary participants may develop our thinking on interpreter roles. He argues that capturing a relationship between the interpreters and their users within a Code of Ethics is considered crucial to professionalisation and outlines a model of interpreting as a collaborative activity between practising interpreters and those using their services. **Stephanie Jo Kent** discusses the effects of professionalisation. She states that at the macrosocial (legal and political) level, professionalisation is part of educational policy, language use and linguistic human rights, whereas on the microsocial level it will influence the relationship (exemplified by the concept of impartiality) and the interaction between

interpreters and interlocutors. She discusses the reasons why some instances of interpreter decision-making invite criticism and others do not. Her conclusion suggests that it is not *what* interpreters do, but rather *how* they do it. Also **Zubaidah Ibrahim** focuses on the principle of impartiality, drawing on the current Malaysian justice situation. He provides evidence that in many Malaysian courts the principle is regularly flouted by interpreters, working as officers of the court, thus having their neutrality compromised. **Adelhak Elghezouani**, dealing with mental health care interpreting, suggests that the professionalisation of the interpreter performing in mental health encounters should be based on the institutionally defined intentions and goals of the mental health care encounter, and on the needs of the patients. By deconstructing the codes of professional ethics for court interpreters in Finland **Satu Leinonen** discusses how a code of ethics in terms of shared knowledge of practitioners constructs the professional role of interpreters. She argues that the idealised image of interpreters built by ethical rules is by no means based on interpreter practice. She emphasizes that the gap between the ideal image and practice can only be linked up if we start to focus on settings as parameters defining interpreting, because settings are characterised by specific kinds of interaction. Also **Patrick Kermit** relates to the issues of professional ethics and professionalism. He discusses how 'good' interpreters ought to perform by using Aristotelian ethics. He argues that good interpreters combine skills and morality and should always focus on the function of their role as a whole. Altogether, the papers in this section give food for thought about how to stimulate the process of professionalisation within the field of community interpreting.

Section six contains papers dealing with how individual interpreters-to-be can assess professional knowledge and skills through interpreting training. **Yvonne Fowler** provides insight in the educational practice in the UK of peer assessment, self-assessment and evaluation. She demonstrates how (student) interpreters can use these tools to develop reflective skills and raise their awareness of their own interpreting performance. **Sheila Johnston** describes the initial outcome of a formalized pilot employer internship programme which allows student interpreters to manage the transition to professional interpreters. **Jane Straker** gives advice about how to produce glossaries using the Internet as a textual corpus. **Beppie van den Bogaerde** gives a concrete example of how to build up a Bachelor Programme in Interpreting. Finally, **Helge Niska**, describes the Swedish community interpreting scene including training opportunities for interpreters. All contributions in the final section demonstrate that training is the main path through which people achieve specialist knowledge and hence can claim professional authority.

Although the editors' agenda is quite ambitious, it is fair to say that some articulation of the central issues can be found in all of the selected papers.

By illustrating and discussing different facets of professionalisation within community interpreting and by using a variety of theoretical and analytical tools, the book makes an important contribution to the central question: what does it mean to be a professional interpreter and how do you become one? Due to the variety of approaches adopted, the picture that emerges is, however, a little blurred. Arguably, this is inevitable in an edited collection, whose strength lies in its scope and variety rather than in the solidity of its analyses. The main contribution of the volume is building up shared knowledge about interpreters and professionalism in interpreting. In this way it will itself be instrumental to the professionalisation process. The volume will be a rich source of knowledge for students, teachers and researchers and at the same time be rewarding reading for practitioners as well as for institutional users of community interpreters who also play an important role in the professionalisation process. To sum up, this volume is of central interest for people involved in the professionalisation development in order for this to continue. The book is well worth reading because it offers a valuable contribution to the contemporary debate centred on interpreting, which is finally attaching a much needed visibility to the fundamental role played by interpreters.

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