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## Review of *The Routledge Handbook of Conference Interpreting*

Edited by Michaela Albl-Mikasa and Elisabet Tiselius (2021). Routledge. 616 pages, US \$42.36, eBook, ISBN 9780429297878

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As the world is in the process of recovering from the COVID-19 pandemic, international economic, political, and cultural exchanges are coming back on track, and the demand for conference interpreting has exploded again. While conference interpreting services were primarily delivered via online platforms,<sup>1</sup> data shows that by March 2022 the conference interpreting market has regained any lost momentum.<sup>2</sup> However, conference interpreters in the “post-pandemic era” now face new challenges, such as longer sessions, inconvenient collaboration, and insufficient internet network connections. The importance of conference interpreting in international communication goes without saying, yet research outcomes in the field have not been as productive as they could be (Pym, 2013). The academic field of interpreting needs a volume that connects theory and practice, upholds a global vision, and adopts systematic research methods.

*The Routledge Handbook of Conference Interpreting* (2022), edited and published by Dr. Michaela Albl-Mikasa from Zurich University of Applied Sciences (Switzerland) and Dr. Elisabet Tiselius from Stockholm University (Sweden), provides a comprehensive overview of the profession at this critical juncture. This collection brings together over 70 experts, scholars, and professional interpreters from around the world who contributed their chapters in response to the issues of conference interpreting, including theories, practices, professions, training, and other aspects related to the demand and development of this field. The book contains 40 chapters over seven parts and covers various topics in jargon-free and well-organized styles, spanning the breadth and depth of the research in conference interpreting.

1 [https://ec.europa.eu/education/knowledge-centre-interpretation/news/esit-research-project-remote-simultaneous-interpreting\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/education/knowledge-centre-interpretation/news/esit-research-project-remote-simultaneous-interpreting_en), last accessed on September 11, 2023.

2 <https://slator.com/job-index-climbs-two-points-in-april-2022/>, last accessed on September 11, 2023.

Part I (Fundamentals) consists of four chapters, beginning with historical developments in conference interpreting, focusing on the intrinsic links between interpreting and key human activities such as war, commerce, and diplomacy. It also touches upon the process of professionalization and institutionalization of interpreting and ends with an outlook on this profession in the post-pandemic era (Chapter 1). Then the focus shifts to comparing two modes of interpreting (simultaneous vs. consecutive, Chapter 2) and note-taking skills in conference interpreting (Chapter 3). The last chapter attempts to discover the similarities and differences between conference interpreting and community interpreting—covering aspects such as settings, skills training, audiences, and working conditions (Chapter 4).

Part II (Settings) deals with the settings in conference interpreting. Chapter 5 addresses diplomatic conference interpreting, including the selection criteria, working modes, and professional prospects of diplomatic interpreters in various countries. Chapter 6 focuses on press conference interpreting and lists the uniqueness of such a setting and the challenges for interpreters. In media interpreting, interpreters must be subject to the rules of entertainment (Chapter 7). The subsequent chapters explore conference interpreting as an occupation in two major institutional employers: the EU (Chapter 8) and the UN (Chapter 9).

Part III (Regions) re-examines the current situation of the conference interpreting market in nine countries (and regions) around the world and provides relevant information regarding the interpreting market. For example, the United Nations is the largest employer of conference interpreters in the United States (Chapter 10). Russia boasts abundant well-qualified interpreters, and the interpretation market has an impressive variety of available language combinations. However, being an interpreter is not a promising job in Russia due to volatility, seasonality, and Russia's relations with other countries (Chapter 11). Japan's conference interpreting market faces many problems, such as the underdeveloped training program at both postgraduate and undergraduate levels (Chapter 12), while South Korea's conference interpreting market is small, and the industry is also affected by political developments in East Asia (Chapter 13). Australia has a strong presence in community interpreting, but the conference interpreting market is still underperforming (Chapter 14). The Chinese Mainland has seen rapid developments in conference interpreting research, practice, and teaching, although there are still several problems, such as the insufficiency of native speakers to co-teach interpreting training sessions (Chapter 15). India has a rich multilingual background, but the interpreting market has not been developed due to a lack of official policy support (Chapter 16). The next chapter views conference interpreting from various aspects, such as geopolitics; the effect of institutional contexts on the interpreting process; and the influence of directionality, conference interpreter training, and new technologies (Chapter 17). The final chapter of this part attempts to answer why the conference interpreting market in Brazil is still underdeveloped and local interpreters' training opportunities may decline in the future (Chapter 18).

Part IV (Professional Issues) elaborates on the quality and standards of conference interpreting and calls for more research exploring the quality of it (Chapter 19). Then the authors emphasize the evaluation of tests for professional qualifications in conference interpreting and the need for test developers and testing bodies to design, develop, administer, and validate tests following basic testing standards (Chapter 20). The next chapter stresses the status of interpreters, pointing out the significant challenges of professionalizing the field (Chapter 21). The last chapter of this part discusses the ethical issues that arise with adopting new technologies in conference interpreting (Chapter 22).

Part V (Training and Education) contains chapters on conference interpreter training and education. The authors touch upon key topics regarding interpreters' aptitude, pointing out that the potential tests can hardly evaluate an interpreter's potential objectively (Chapter 23). Moreover, scholars discuss the training and teaching of conference interpreting (Chapter 24) and hold that interpreters must be able to specialize in various areas of knowledge. The next chapter moves on to the connections between interpreting research and training (Chapter 25). It explores to what extent the latest research results contribute to the training and education of conference interpreters.

Part VI (Research Perspectives: Theoretical and Empirical) is a collection of some most relevant research in conference interpreting, such as working memory and cognitive process (Chapter 26), and

the authors conclude that in simultaneous interpreting, interpreters rely on the “symmetry in structure” of the source language and target language to enhance their prediction. In the next chapter, the authors discuss the relationship between interpreting strategies and capacity management and present a debate using strategies instead of tactics (Chapter 27). Research on “expertise” and the ways to define and obtain interpreting expertise are the focuses of Chapter 28. Following this, the authors dive into pressure and emotion in conference interpreting and how to measure and manage such stress and emotion (Chapter 29). Chapter 30 is devoted to the discussion of gender in conference interpreting. Also, scholars think that interpreting products constitute a discourse analysis research area. Thus, Interpreting Studies can adopt approaches in discourse analysis and the discourse-in-interaction paradigm (Chapter 31). Part VI also reviews corpus-based methodologies and research outputs in conference interpreting and maintains that corpus-based research can shed light on interpreter training (Chapter 32). The next chapter focuses on visual input and constructs a model to present the sophisticated cognitive processes of interpreting through eye-tracking data (Chapter 33). The last chapter is devoted to the neuroimaging of simultaneous interpreting and illustrates “language-juggling” as a unique cognitive process that interpreters must sustain while working (Chapter 34).

Part VII (Recent Developments) discusses recent research in conference interpreting, including the current situation and solutions for interpreters’ increased cognitive load in remote interpreting (Chapter 35). Finding answers to some questions requires the joint efforts of interpreting researchers, practitioners, and technology developers (Chapter 36). The next chapter articulates the need and importance of promoting collaboration between conference interpreting practitioners and researchers (Chapter 37). Scholars point out the major challenges facing sign language interpreting (Chapter 38). In Chapter 39, the authors discuss the challenges of the spread of English as Lingua Franca (ELF) to conference interpreting and argue that it is necessary to strengthen interpreting research and interpreter education. The final chapter suggests that “mindfulness training” is cutting-edge research that can provide a deeper understanding of interpreters’ cognitive load, self-regulation, performance, and expertise (Chapter 40).

The volume is a comprehensive collection of output in interpreting theories and practices. Grounded in the demands of the post-pandemic era, the book updates current research paradigms and contributes to the conference interpreting industry. Inclusive and forward-looking, the book can inspire research, teaching, and practice in areas such as the interpreter’s role, interpreting technologies, remote conference interpreting, and quality evaluation. Having gone through the main parts of the collection, we consider it an enlightenment to interpreter training and education in various aspects.

First, the book is well-grounded in current trends and serves as an answer to real issues, which can inspire interpreter training, education, and pedagogical reform. The COVID-19 pandemic has forced teaching programs to be carried out online, creating unprecedented challenges. Therefore, the fifth part of this collection is devoted to teaching and training of conference interpreting, which commences with conference interpreting aptitude (Chapter 23), continues with conference interpreting learning and teaching (Chapter 24), and concludes with conference interpreting theory and training (Chapter 25). Scholars call our attention to formulating permanent online training or virtual learning environments (Sandrelli, 2015), and adopting AI-driven technologies such as machine learning (Vogler et al., 2019). Scholars call our attention to formulating permanent online training or virtual learning environments (Sandrelli, 2015), and adopting AI-driven technologies such as machine learning (Volger et al. 2019) and speech recognition technologies (Pochhacker, 2022) to assist online learning. In light of the above, the book explores the theories and research that could relate traditional interpreter training courses to current demands, such as training distance conference interpreting skills (Chapter 35). Artificial intelligence (AI), another notable factor that could revolutionize conference interpreting, is also touched upon in the book in order to shed light on interpreter training and education. Chapter 36 focuses on technologies used in interpreter training, tools to augment the interpreting process, and AI-powered machines that can enhance conference interpreting. Scholars argue that AI’s usage in conference interpreting is still limited. For example, diplomatic interpreting is high-risk and the effects of diplomatic conferences are far-

reaching (Chapter 5). Instead of replacing human interpreters, AI can empower interpreter performance and training (International Association of Conference Interpreters [AIIC], 2020). Nevertheless, recent technological advancements have induced adaptation in many aspects of the profession, and it has become imperative to shift teaching and training towards new trends.

The book also covers many cutting-edge areas with excellent research potential and fields that reflect the multi-disciplinary nature and inclusiveness of Interpreting Studies, which need to be jointly explored by researchers worldwide. In the past, Interpreting Studies focused on Process (Pöchhacker, 2022, p. 201), Product (Gile, 2009), Profession (Pöchhacker, 2022, p. 167), Pedagogy (p. 200), and Paradigm (p. 70). However, these research areas are often limited by scholars' own experience and perspectives, and inevitably, previous research was "rather narrow compared to the breadth of the field to be covered" (Pöchhacker, 2004, p. 1). Building on previous theoretical foundations, the book begins with a study of the history of interpreting, broadening the scope of the study and analyzing the unique challenges interpreters face in different settings. Part III is a pioneering step to focus on the regions (and countries) of interpreting, trying to bridge the gap between countries (regions) in terms of interpreting research, profession, and technology. The volume fully draws on research results from psychology and neuroscience, pays attention to the interpreting process, and attaches importance to the health and well-being of interpreters. By capturing and expanding Interpreting Studies, this book strives to contribute to interpreting practice and teaching.

Another highlight of this book lies in its effort to update the paradigms of Interpreting Studies. While Interpreting Studies has become an independent area of research in the past few decades, its theories and paradigms still depend heavily on those in Translation Studies. Paradigms exclusive to Interpreting Studies are rare. This book, therefore, endeavors to innovate interpreting theories by using psychological paradigms (Chi et al., 1982) to explore how talents, training, motivation, and other factors can help or hinder interpreters from building up their expertise. The book also explores why Interpreting Studies has not included "sex/gender" in the research scope. Further, it borrows cognitive science and sociology paradigms to construe the differences and similarities between male and female interpreters regarding power, cooperation, and other areas. What's more, the review of the code of professional ethics in AIIC and the European Union leads to an in-depth discussion on ethics (Chapter 22), inspiring conference interpreting training in various aspects such as professional values of competence and integrity that are based on solidarity, collegiality, and professionalism (Setton & Dawrant, 2016). These discussions shed light on interpreters' aptitude, interpreter education, and how theories can inspire the teaching of interpreters in the future.

Last but not least, *The Routledge Handbook of Conference Interpreting* offers insights into further development of the interpreting industry. In the post-pandemic world, distance interpreting (DI) is widely recognized and accepted by interpreters, clients, and the industry. With rapid technological advances, the field faces new, non-traditional challenges. Against this backdrop, the book re-thinks issues concerning the industry, the interpreters' profession, and interpreting standards. The book strives to foster a more comprehensive interpreter evaluation "battery" (Shaw, 2011). It analyzes the multi-dimensional nature of "interpreting quality" to enhance the validity and reliability of interpreters' aptitude tests (Chapter 23). Also, some chapters touch upon interpreters' roles and social status (Chapter 21), and the results deserve more attention from the academic field and the industry. The book also takes on the task of describing the global landscape of interpreting and highlighting concerns that must be addressed.

Given that the book covers many frontiers of Interpreting Studies, most chapters are potentially inspiring to interpreter training and education. However, as an essential form of interpreting, business conference interpreting is missing in the book. This non-inclusion may be because high-level international exchanges such as business conferences (e.g., UN Summits, bilateral treaty negotiations) involve business secrets and privacy that are not privy to open discussion. For another, the book has not covered some important regions (and countries). In Part III, the authors cover the status quo of interpreting in several countries/regions, but it would be better if the book could expand its coverage. For example, European countries outside the EU have been neglected (such as the United Kingdom), and countries in Southeast Asia were not presented



in the book. These imperfections, however, will in no way compromise the significant contribution of this book as providing a panorama of Interpreting Studies and offering new orientations for future research. As a sub-discipline requiring a considerable amount of practice, Interpreting Studies has seen an emerging number of research outcomes in recent years. However, the interpreting industry is facing many changes, and interpreting research and practice urgently need systematic and theoretical thinking. The editors have presented a well-organized book with well-informed chapters that will help teachers, students, researchers, and practitioners grasp the cutting-edge areas of this discipline.

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