



Book Review: Conference Interpreting: A Student's Practice Book (2nd Edition)

Ibrahim Talaat Ibrahim

College of Arts, Al-Iraqia University, Baghdad, Iraq.

Email: Ibrahim_al-bayati@aliraqia.edu.iq

Received: April 13, 2025

Reviewed: April 20, 2025

Accepted: May 25, 2025

Published: June 07, 2025

Introduction

Full Title and Author: Conference Interpreting: A Student's Practice Book (2nd Edition), by Andrew Gillies. Routledge, 2024. Total pages: 320. ISBN: 978-1-032-36048-5.

Thesis Statement: Gillies' practice-led book offers a critical, skills-based model of interpreting students that greatly adds value to interpreter education in terms of practical training, but can be enhanced further through deeper theoretical embedding.

Purpose of the Review: It will evaluate the pedagogical worth and academic contribution of the book to interpreting studies and interpreter education.

Background: Andrew Gillies is a well-known conference interpreter and pedagogue with numerous contributions in interpreter pedagogy. The book was crafted from the author's own classroom practice, aimed at supplementing training courses and bridging the gap in practical materials for trainee interpreters.

Summary of the Content

Major Arguments: The book emphasizes developing the core interpreting skills through precise exercises rather than the transfer of theoretical principles. It develops the idea that interpreting is a set of learnable sub-skills, which include listening, analysis, memory, note-taking, and reformulation.

Book Emphasis:

1. General Exercises
2. Listening and Analysis
3. Memory
4. Reformulation
5. Note-taking
6. Sight Translation
7. Consecutive Interpreting
8. Simultaneous Interpreting

There are numerous step-by-step exercises in each section with clear instructions and learning objectives.

Scope and Focus: The book's core focus is on conference interpreting, concentrating on consecutive and simultaneous modes. It is a practice manual, applicable to all language pairs and transferable to the majority of classroom or self-study settings.

Critical Evaluation

A. Strengths

Originality and Contribution: The volume is distinctive among the few comprehensive practice manuals in the field, filling an important gap in interpreter training. Its task-based organization aligns with current pedagogical priorities with respect to experiential learning.

Clarity of Argument and Style: The directions are readable, clear, and adaptable. Exercises are described unambiguously, enabling practice by either group or individual.

Quality of Research and Evidence: Although not research-based, the book is informed by interpreter training theory and pedagogical practice and supported by citation of pre-eminent authors like Rozan and Seleskovitch.

Relevance and Depth: Activities range from fundamental to intermediate. The inclusion of metacognitive strategies (e.g., self-assessment) adds depth to the book.

B. Weaknesses

Gaps in Argument or Analysis: The book deliberately avoids in-depth theoretical discussion. While this makes it more readable, it limits its appeal for researchers or those who want an academic foundation for interpretation.

Lack of Critical Engagement: The book has limited interaction with current debates or recent research into interpreting studies, such as cognitive load theory or technology in interpreting.

Overgeneralizations: Certain exercises presume that all language combinations and interpreting situations are equivalent in cognitive load, which is not the case with the heterogeneity of professional environments.

C. Comparison

Compared to other interpreter training materials like *Note-Taking for Consecutive Interpreting* by Rozan (1956) or *The Interpreter's Resource* by Gillies himself (2001), this book gives more importance to skill-building than theory. It is a complement to the likes of *The Interpreter's Companion* by Mikkelsen (2000), which provides terminologies, by concentrating instead on procedural exercises. It is different from theoretical works like *Teaching Conference Interpreting* by Seleskovitch & Lederer (1995), which are more academic in their approach.

Theoretical or Disciplinary Relevance

Contribution to Theory: Although not a theory-driven book, the book provides evidence for constructivist and experiential learning theories in giving precedence to skills acquisition through practice.

Methodologies Used: Exercises are task-based learning methodologies and principles of learner autonomy. The book indirectly confirms Kolb's cycle of experiential learning through the emphasis on doing, reflecting, and improving.

Relevance for Audiences: Highly relevant for training students, trainers, and interpreters transitioning into interpreting. Less useful for researchers requiring theoretical understanding or comparative analysis.

Conclusion

Overall Assessment: *Conference Interpreting: A Student's Practice Book* is a practical and effective guide for studying the practical skills needed for conference interpreting. While its theoretical underpinning is very minimal, its pedagogical clarity and exercises' richness make it a fundamental textbook for interpreter training.

Audience Recommendation: undergraduate and postgraduate students of interpreting, trainee language professionals, and interpreter trainers seeking material to teach from.

Final Remarks: The book's practical focus ensures that it will last as a core textbook in interpreter training, especially when complemented by more theory-based books in order to provide a balanced pedagogical experience.

References

- Gillies, A. (2024). *Conference Interpreting: A Student's Practice Book* (2nd ed.). Routledge.
- Rozan, J. F. (1956). *Note-taking in Consecutive Interpreting*. Geneva: Librairie de l'Université.
- Seleskovitch, D., & Lederer, M. (1995). *A Systematic Approach to Teaching Interpretation*. RID.
- Mikkelsen, H. (2000). *The Interpreter's Companion* (4th ed.). ACEBO.
- Kolb, D. A. (2015). *Experiential Learning: Experience as the Source of Learning and Development*. Pearson Education.