

Valero-Garcés, C. (2004). Edwards, Alicia B. (1995). The Practice of Court Interpreting. *The Journal of Specialised Translation*, 2, 117-119. <https://doi.org/10.26034/cm.jostrans.2004.815>

This article is publish under a *Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International* (CC BY):
<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0>



© Carmen Valero-Garcés, 2004

Edwards, Alicia B. (1995). *The Practice of Court Interpreting*. Amsterdam /Philadelphia: John Benjamins, pp. 192. ISBN: 90 272 1603 7

The Practice of Court Interpreting is basically a practical book, addressed not only to bilingual people looking for training in Court Interpreting but also to professionals and trainers, especially in the English-Spanish combination. As the author indicates from the beginning, "this book describes the normal flow of work, how to train for it, how to find it, how to prepare a case, how to do the work, and subsequent reading to help us improve our work." These main aims are achieved. However, considering the date of its publication (1995), some parts – bibliographic references, electronic resources – need updating. The book covers all the areas that the court interpreter has to know or to practice. It is divided into nine chapters plus a bibliography and several appendixes related to U.S. legal documents and an index of authors and contents. At the end of each chapter there are recommended readings and practice material.

In Chapter 1 ("How to Become a Court Interpreter and a Brief Sketch of the Work") the author, herself a practicing Court Interpreter, presents the workplace and the tasks the Court Interpreter has to perform, clearly establishing the differences with conference interpreters and professional translators, and stressing the fact that the Court Interpreter has to combine translation and interpretation. The information relates mostly to U.S. courts, where Edwards worked on a contract basis as a translator and interpreter for years.

Chapters 2 and 3 contain explanations of and recommendations on the tools necessary to prepare and manage a case. Thus Chapter 2 ("Preparation Case. A: Context and Documents") is devoted to present types of documents that the Court Interpreter has to work with, followed by a section in which terms, expressions and abbreviations commonly used in a Case Form are explained. This section is particularly relevant for the untrained interpreter. Chapter 3 ("Case Preparation. B: Terminology, Reference Books and Dictionaries") is devoted to the resources necessary to work with these documents and includes a section on Forensic Reference, Dictionaries and Glossaries accompanied with practical tips, such as how to buy a dictionary. Nevertheless, as was pointed out before, this chapter could use a revision to include reference works which have appeared in the last few years.

Chapter 4 ("In the Courtroom: Ethics, Roles, Procedures") is dedicated to discussing issues related to a code of ethics and procedures that Edwards stresses with these words: "By following a good ethical code, we earn the respect and trust of all parties to a case, which we need to work effectively." She describes who is who in the courtroom, analyses

the kind of sound equipment usually found in U.S. courtrooms, and deals with topics related to procedural matters (transmission of angry speech, doubt as to meaning, interpreting at trial). The ignorance of service providers about how to work with interpreters is frequently criticized in circles related with interpretation. In her book, Edwards includes a checklist addressed to the judges who have to work with interpreters. Thus she tries, as indicated at the beginning, to make a book which can "help attorneys, judges, and administrators better understand the role and functions of the court interpreter, to better use her talent."

Chapter 5 ("The Rich Potential for Error") offers a classification of errors made by the interpreter or provoked by the counsel. Specific attention is paid to topics directly related to the combination English-Spanish (false friends, anglicisms, regionalisms, spanglish, etc.)

Chapter 6 ("Translation of Legal Documents") and Chapter 7 ("Tape Transcription and Translation") describe the specific tasks dealing with translation (sight translation, conversation transcriptions, and transcription translation with examples). In chapter 8 ("The Interpreter as Expert Witness") the author deals with topics related to the interpreter's opinion in aspects not directly related to the transfer of information from one language to another. This situation is quite common and it is not easy to find written advice about how to proceed. Chapter 9 ("Continuing Your Education and Enjoying it") emphasises the necessity of continuous training and education with tips about how to go about it: books, periodicals, TV, and tapes are some resources mentioned to maintain one's level and "understanding the changing in the legal, social and criminal contexts." The advice and ideas given are useful but, as in the case of bibliographic resources, a new edition would be appreciated.

The book continues to be useful mainly for U.S. Court Interpreters and for the English-Spanish combination, although it may sound too ambitious in some aspects.

Carmen Valero-Garcés,
University of Alcalá, Spain