

Gile, D. (2004). Pöchhacker, Franz and Miriam Shlesinger (eds) (2002). The Interpreting Studies Reader. *The Journal of Specialised Translation*, 2, 126-127.

<https://doi.org/10.26034/cm.jostrans.2004.817>

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



© Daniel Gile, 2004

Pöchhacker, Franz and Miriam Shlesinger (eds) (2002). *The Interpreting Studies Reader*. London and New York : Routledge. 436 pages. ISBN 0-415-22477-2 (hbk). Isbn 0-415-22478-0 (pbk)

The Interpreting Studies Reader is a collection of 26 (mostly abridged) papers, covering interpreting research from its beginnings, and extending through most of its branches. It is the first attempt of its kind – other collections focused on one particular branch of research into interpreting, or only included recent studies. In the *Reader*, besides the papers themselves, introductions and notes provide a wealth of biographical and bibliographical information, with very few errors and inaccuracies, and the list of references at the end of the book is rich. Another strength of this collection is that it introduces English translations of texts which were only available in French, German or Spanish until now.

The *Reader* was meant to afford the reader a panoramic view of research on interpreting in its cognitive, social and communicational dimensions (p.1). It does, brilliantly. It was also supposed to be up-to-date and comprehensive (p.2), but inevitably fails in this, if only due to space limitations. The editors acknowledge that it does not address the more fundamental epistemological issues (p. 10), nor working conditions and professional ecology, the neuropsychological/neurolinguistic paradigm, and computer-science related work (p.11). Neither does it address the extensive and important literature on interpreter training. Only one paper is on sign-language interpreting, and broadcast interpreting is missing. All 'classical' Western authors from conference interpreting are included (including Hella Kirchhoff, a welcome decision), and Chernov and Alexieva stand for Eastern Europe (with valuable information on research in the USSR and in East Germany), but no Japanese author is represented - one text on broadcast interpreting by Mizuno could have added both a country and a branch to the sample. Nor are Chinese and Korean authors included, whereas valuable research is being carried out in the Far East.

The *Reader* provides not only access to documents that are difficult to find in libraries and bookstores, but also, through both the papers and the editors' comments, an interesting view of interpreting research, and ample opportunities to reconsider pre-conceived ideas. In particular, the comments of pioneers from psychology and psycholinguistics (Oléron and Nanpon, Barik, Gerver, Goldman-Eisler) show that they were aware of ecological validity problems and other methodological issues in their experiments, as well as of the interpreters' goal-oriented strategies, but deliberately used their experimental methods for first approximations in their study of interpreting phenomena (also see Gerver 1976, where this is worded very clearly). The *Reader* also highlights the contribution of linguistics-based input, as well as the importance of sociological and legal issues, and stresses the links between various types of interpreting research and TS (Translation Studies).

The editors were too modest in deciding not to include their own texts in the collection. Their personal contribution to the field would have

made it more than legitimate for their work to be represented. Franz Pöchhacker has been a strong advocate of integration of interpreting studies into TS, and of various branches of interpreting research into one Interpreting Studies entity. He is also the author of extensive research into interpreting in Viennese hospitals; Miriam Shlesinger is the author of several innovative empirical studies, including the first linguistic analysis of an interpreting corpus, in her MA thesis, in 1989.

In a collection where selection decisions must be made, individual preferences may diverge. Setting aside the absence of broadcast interpreting and of authors from the Far East, my only regret is that the editors did not choose Gerver's classical 1976 review, which would have given a good summary of research on interpreting in the late 1960s and early 1970s and provided more value than Gerver's paper which was selected.

One weakness of the *Reader* which can easily be corrected in the next edition is a small set of doubtful claims, evaluations and judgements in the introductory notes: A "rather disdainful" use of the word "interprétariat" (p. 3) ? A "major empirical investigation" with five subjects (p. 250)? A "sizeable corpus" of two speeches (p. 300) ? Has the role of norms in experimental tasks been "demonstrated" (p. 296), or has it only become a plausible explanation for a phenomenon observed by the experimenter, pending further investigation ?

These reservations are minor in a book like the *Reader*, which I view as the best existing reference for a good overall view of interpreting research to date.

Gerver, David (1976). "Empirical studies of Simultaneous Interpretation: A Review and a Model", in R.W. Brislin (ed.) *Translation: Applications and Research*, New York: Gardner Press, pp. 165-207.

Pöchhacker, Franz (2000). *Dolmetschen. Konzeptuelle Grundlagen und deskriptive Untersuchungen*. Tübingen: Stauffenburg.

Shlesinger, Miriam (1989). "Simultaneous Interpretation as a Factor in Effecting Shifts in the Position of Texts on the Oral-Literate Continuum," unpublished MA thesis, Tel Aviv University.

Reviewer: Daniel Gile