

Roy, Cynthia B. & Napier, Jemina (eds) (2015). *The Sign Language Interpreting Studies Reader*. Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins, pp. 419, paperback, €36.00, \$54.00. ISBN: 9789027258588.

The Sign Language Interpreting Studies Reader, edited by Cynthia Roy and Jemina Napier, is an exciting compilation of some of the early seminal and influential papers that have shaped the field of signed language interpreting and translation worldwide. The Reader includes 29 papers (many abridged) published between 1965 and 1999, all of which have impacted on the research and pedagogy of the field. It is an illuminating read and will be a valuable resource for students, teachers and practitioners of signed language interpreting and translation. The Editors purposefully included obscure or particularly difficult to find papers, some of which were translated into English from other languages, for the purpose of this book. Papers published after 1999 were not included for the reason that these are much easier for readers to find themselves. This collection of seminal papers specific to signed language interpreting was inspired – as the Editors note – by earlier edited readers in *Interpreting Studies* (Pöchhacker & Shlesinger 2002) and *Translation Studies* (Venuti 2000).

The book is organized into 6 main chapters, each of which contain a collection of 4 or 5 papers which have been reprinted with permission. Papers include journal articles, book sections, newsletter items, and conference presentations. The chapters follow a somewhat chronological order, and are also grouped into themes, from the very beginnings of signed language interpreting as an occupation and an object of study, through to later empirical studies that challenged and changed how we understand the role of interpreters. The Reader overall, but particularly the earlier chapters, are noticeably focused on the United States, and American Sign Language (ASL). This is because, as the Editors explain, the United States is where most of the early development and research emerged, later mirrored in other parts of the world. Each chapter includes an introduction by the Editors and biographical information about the authors, which set the scene and provide a rich level of context.

The following section gives a brief overview of each chapter, and although there are too many individual papers to discuss them in detail, several examples are given as an idea of the types of contributions included within each theme.

Chapter 1 “Beginnings (1960s and early 1970s)” is a collection of papers written at a time when the need for signed language interpreting was only beginning to be recognised. It includes part of one of the first manuals of signed language interpreting which includes a description of why interpreting is needed (Quigley 1965), and an early article attempting to

map the skills required by competent interpreters (Brasel, Montanelli, & Quigley 1974).

Chapter 2 “Early empirical research (1975-1980)” focuses on early empirical research and the introduction includes a description of the policies, groups, and individuals who came together in the late 1970s to discuss and set research priorities for signed language interpreter education. I found this chapter particularly fascinating, in that it really helps us to understand some of the origins of our current practice (for example the idea that interpreter fatigue sets in after 20-30 minutes – from a study by Brasel first published in 1976). This chapter also includes one of the first studies into interpreter accuracy (Hurwitz 1980).

Chapter 3 “Practitioners become researchers (1980s)” is a collection of studies all conducted by researchers who are/were also interpreting practitioners and educators. It includes research on potential interference factors in a medical interpreting setting (Cokely 1982), and features of transliteration, or more literal interpretation of English into ASL (Winston 1989).

Chapter 4 “Insights into practice (1990s)” includes papers from a decade when signed language interpreting research grew and also started to focus on a wider range of settings, including early studies on university interpreting (Locker 1990) and court interpreting (Turner 1995).

Chapter 5 “Challenging perceptions of profession and role (1980s-1990s)” is a group of papers that exemplify the time when the conduit model (or ‘machine’ model of interpreting) was really starting to be questioned, particularly in its mismatch with the values of Deaf communities. It includes Roy’s (1992) groundbreaking study of a naturally occurring interpreted interaction, with an analysis of the interpreter’s active participation in managing turns at talk.

Chapter 6 “International perspectives on the emerging profession (1980s-1990s)” shows the emergence of the signed language interpreting research field in countries outside of the United States, with a selection of papers from countries including Australia (Flynn 1985), Sweden (Nilsson 1997) and South Africa (Akach and Morgan 1999).

Overall, having such varied – as well as old and rare – papers in one collection is a valuable resource. While I imagine it may mainly be of interest to signed language interpreters and translators there is relevance for spoken language interpreters too, particularly those working in community contexts. The Editors also highlight the intersection between signed and spoken interpreting fields throughout, and the events and researchers who have brought the two together over the decades.

The Reader would not be the same without the contextual information preceding each chapter which paints a very detailed picture and sets the scene for the selected papers. Importantly, the Reader honours the early pioneers in our field, and helps us to understand some of the key people and research studies that shaped where we are today.

Bibliography

- **Pöchhacker, Frank & Shlesinger, Miriam** (eds) (2002). *The Interpreting Studies Reader*. London & New York: Routledge.
- **Venuti, Lawrence** (ed.) (2000). *The Translation Studies Reader*. London & New York: Routledge.

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