

polgrave  
macmillan

INTERPRETING IN THE COMMUNITY AND WORKPLACE

Mette Rudvin and Elena Tomassini

# Interpreting in the Community and Workplace

A Practical Teaching Guide

Mette Rudvin

*Università di Bologna, Italy*

Elena Tomassini

*SSML Fondazione Universitaria San Pellegrino*



palgrave  
macmillan



© Mette Rudvin and Elena Tomassini 2011

All rights reserved. No reproduction, copy or transmission of this publication may be made without written permission.

No portion of this publication may be reproduced, copied or transmitted save with written permission or in accordance with the provisions of the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988, or under the terms of any licence permitting limited copying issued by the Copyright Licensing Agency, Saffron House, 6–10 Kirby Street, London EC1N 8TS.

Any person who does any unauthorized act in relation to this publication may be liable to criminal prosecution and civil claims for damages.

The authors have asserted their rights to be identified as the authors of this work in accordance with the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

First published 2011 by  
PALGRAVE MACMILLAN

Palgrave Macmillan in the UK is an imprint of Macmillan Publishers Limited, registered in England, company number 785998, of Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire RG21 6XS.

Palgrave Macmillan in the US is a division of St Martin's Press LLC,  
175 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10010.

Palgrave Macmillan is the global academic imprint of the above companies and has companies and representatives throughout the world.

Palgrave® and Macmillan® are registered trademarks in the United States, the United Kingdom, Europe and other countries.

ISBN 978-0-230-28514-9      hardback  
ISBN 978-0-230-28515-6      paperback

This book is printed on paper suitable for recycling and made from fully managed and sustained forest sources. Logging, pulping and manufacturing processes are expected to conform to the environmental regulations of the country of origin.

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data  
Rudvin, Mette.

Interpreting in the community and workplace: a practical teaching guide/  
Mette Rudvin, Elena Tomassini.

p. cm.

Includes index.

ISBN 978-0-230-28515-6 (pbk.)

1. Translating and interpreting. I. Tomassini, Elena. II. Title.

P306.R83 2011

418'.02—dc22

2011004348

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

20 19 18 17 16 15 14 13 12 11

Printed and bound in Great Britain by  
CPI Antony Rowe, Chippenham and Eastbourne

## Interpreting in the Community and Workplace

*Also by Mette Rudvin*

THE ROLE OF ORAL NARRATIVE IN FORMING NATIONAL IDENTITY:  
A NORWEGIAN CASE STUDY (2000)

DOMAIN-SPECIFIC ENGLISH LANGUAGE MEDIATION IN A PROFESSIONAL  
AND INSTITUTIONAL SETTING (2003, joint author with G. Garzone)

# Acknowledgments

This book is dedicated to our students in Forlì, in Bologna, in Misano-Adriatico and in Milan. They have not only given us the opportunity to share with others the thoughts and ideas contained in this book, but their motivation, enthusiasm, insights, questions and hard work have deeply enriched our lives.

We would also like to thank colleagues and friends Chris Garwood, Dominic Stewart, Peter Mead and Maria Chiara Russo, who were kind enough to read through our manuscript at various stages, for their helpful comments. Lastly, we would like to thank Jill Lake, copyeditor at Palgrave Macmillan, for her valuable help and infinite patience.

Mette Rudvin has received financial support from the Norwegian Non-fiction Literature Fund. The support – and patience – of the NFFO fund has been invaluable to this project, and the book would not have been published without it. So to them also goes our gratitude.

# Contents

<i>List of Tables</i>	ix
<i>Acknowledgments</i>	x
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>1 Interpreting In and For the Community, Between Practice and Practitioners: A Few Theoretical Premises</b>	<b>11</b>
1.1 Interpreting and migration: migration in context	13
1.1.1 Relations of asymmetry between developing and developed: givers and takers?	14
1.1.2 Eurocentric bias	16
1.2 Language, culture and the translation process	17
1.3 Classifying by technique and areas of application: terminological confusion	20
1.3.1 Dialogue and face-to-face interpreting	21
1.3.2 Community versus conference interpreting	22
1.3.3 Sign language interpreting	23
1.4 Creating a positive global effect by educating service providers	23
<b>2 Theoretical Issues: The Impact of Cross-cultural Communication, Institutional Hierarchies and Professional Ethics on Interpreting</b>	<b>25</b>
2.1 The impact of cultures on translating	25
2.1.1 How to deal with hierarchical communication	27
2.1.2 Politeness management	28
2.1.3 Business settings	30
2.1.4 Greetings and non-verbal communication	32
2.2 Bridging cross-cultural differences: intercultural transfer competence	33
2.2.1 Coordinating discourse: cross-cultural variation in conversation management	35
2.2.2 Coordinating talk: coordinating emotional talk	37
2.2.3 When the interpreter is drawn into the conversation	37

2.3	The code of ethics: the interpreter's role, responsibility and tasks	37
2.3.1	Knowledge and competence	37
2.3.2	Attitude	38
2.3.3	Conduct	40
2.3.4	Personal responsibility: acceptance of assignments	43
<b>3</b>	<b>Background: Health Services, Legal Institutions and the Business Sector</b>	<b>44</b>
3.1	Interpreting for the health services	47
3.1.1	Organization and structure	47
3.1.2	Sector-specific contents	49
3.2	Interpreting for legal services	58
3.2.1	Organization and structure	58
3.2.2	Sector-specific contents	63
3.3	Interpreting for the business sector	67
3.3.1	Organization and structure	67
3.3.2	Sector-specific contents	70
3.4	Interpreting modes: consecutive, chuchotage, dialogue versus working in booths	74
<b>4</b>	<b>Teaching Methods and Objectives: Course Structure</b>	<b>79</b>
4.1	You <i>can</i> teach an old dog new tricks: adapting old methods to new challenges	79
4.1.1	Teaching objectives: interpreting faculties versus modern language faculties	80
4.1.2	Course format: language-specific or language-generic?	81
4.1.3	Which languages?	83
4.2	Assessing students' competence	84
4.3	Interpreting skills and competencies	85
4.4	The a-b-c of interpreting competence	86
4.4.1	Passive skills	86
4.4.2	Active skills	87
<b>5</b>	<b>In the Classroom</b>	<b>89</b>
5.1	Structure and organization	89
5.1.1	Lesson format – from general to specific to practical exercises	89
5.1.2	Role play and pre-prepared dialogue simulation	94
5.1.3	Preparing the dialogue at home	96
5.1.4	Trainer–single student role play	97
5.1.5	Recording student deliveries	99



5.1.6	Evaluating delivery through peer critique and self-assessment	99
5.1.7	Evaluating accuracy in student delivery	100
5.1.8	Trainer–student rapport: the advantages of two trainers versus one	102
5.1.9	Writing dialogues	103
5.1.10	Examples of cross-cultural pragmatic features that can be built into dialogues	104
5.1.11	Making life even more difficult	107
5.1.12	Authenticity	109
5.1.13	Guest speakers – lectures and role play	109
5.2	The basics of floor-management in the classroom: memory, turn-taking and interruption strategies	111
5.2.1	Identifying and translating units of meaning: mnemonic challenges	112
5.2.2	Interrupting strategies	113
5.2.3	Conversation topics and predictability	114
5.2.4	Mode of address/direction: first person or third person?	114
5.2.5	Instructions for the service provider: sharing responsibility for better quality performance	115
5.3	Practical exercises: building competence and self-confidence	115
5.3.1	Suggestions at the beginning of the course	116
5.3.2	‘Breaking the ice’ exercises	116
5.3.3	Memory exercises	116
5.3.4	Chuchotage exercises	118
5.3.5	Enhancing listening and comprehension L2 skills at home: strengthening cultural competence and general knowledge as well as language skills	119
5.3.6	Keeping abreast of new features in language and society	120
5.3.7	Listening practice: the importance of L2 comprehension	120
5.3.8	Sight translation and reformulating	121
5.3.9	Vocabulary practice	122
5.3.10	Paraphrasing and summarizing	123
5.3.11	Terminology	124
5.3.12	Practising register variety: verbal and non-verbal aspects	124
5.3.13	Public speaking	125

5.3.14	Glossaries	127
5.3.15	Note-taking	127
5.3.16	Cross-cultural simulation games	128
5.3.17	Using training videos in the class	129
5.3.18	Useful material: research tools and sources	130
5.4	A guide	131
5.5	Assessment	133
5.5.1	Theoretical component	134
5.5.2	Practical component	135
5.6	Students in the workplace	138
5.6.1	Placements	138
5.6.2	Making connections between the classroom and the community	138
<b>6</b>	<b>Annotated Dialogues</b>	<b>140</b>
6.1	The business sector	143
Dialogue 1	Interpreting for an Italian pasta producer	143
Dialogue 2	Starting a business collaboration	150
Dialogue 3	Interpreting for the leather goods industry	154
Dialogue 4	Interpreting for the Swatch company	159
Dialogue 5	Interview with an Italian fresh pasta producer	166
6.2	The health sector	171
Dialogue 6	A flu vaccination	171
Dialogue 7	High drama in the Seychelles	178
Dialogue 8	A delivery in Australia	184
Dialogue 9	Interpreting at the Casualty Department	189
Dialogue 10	Interpreting for an osteoporosis awareness campaign	192
6.3	The legal sector	197
Dialogue 11	Applying for a residence permit	197
Dialogue 12	A charge of manslaughter	200
Dialogue 13	A charge of assault and bodily harm	205
Dialogue 14	Interpreting for a burglary case	211
Dialogue 15	Interpreting for a breaking and entering case	214
	<i>Notes</i>	218
	<i>Bibliography</i>	221
	<i>Index</i>	234

# List of Tables

5.1	Sample of course programme	91
5.2	Jacobsen's model: the main categories of interpreters' additions	101
5.3	General assessment criteria	136

# Introduction

This book attempts to fill a gap in the literature on training interpreters in the workplace, in both public and private institutions. Although the main focus of the book is on interpreting for public institutions, commonly known as ‘community interpreting’ and/or ‘public service interpreting’, we have chosen to include interpreting for private, commercially driven institutions and enterprises, which would usually be known as ‘business interpreting’ and ‘liaison interpreting’. We believe this is the pedagogically innovative contribution of this book.

Pedagogically speaking, the goals, strategies, skills and competencies of these otherwise disparate sectors have more in common than they have differences. Since the goal of this book is first and foremost pedagogical, we have therefore decided to put together forms of interpreting that share the same basic face-to-face format but not the same institutional context. Because the techniques are so similar, the strategies we describe in this book could be applied to many other sectors too: interpreting in diplomacy, tourism, the media, indeed any interlingual oral translation situation in a face-to-face, or conversational, context. The authors of this book are based in Italy, where they have been working as interpreter- and translator trainers for the last two decades, and therefore the default language pair is Italian–English. All of the teaching strategies we describe here, however, are general and not language-specific, and all the language-specific examples can be adapted through English to any other language combination.

## The literature

The literature on community interpreting and public service interpreting has been growing steadily along with the emergence of the discipline

and establishment of the profession, and there is now a wealth of material on a large number of related issues: the history of the discipline, ethics, the role of the interpreter, cross-cultural issues, quality of performance, institutional aspects, accreditation, psychological aspects, sociological and political/ideological aspects, linguistic/discoursal aspects and more. Until recently, training issues have not really been focussed on, however (as is typical of emerging disciplines), except for issues of testing and assessment (Campbell and Hale 2003; Elder *et al.* 2006; Angelelli and Jacobson 2009). Much of the literature that deals with training issues has addressed quality evaluation (see the *Critical Link* volumes especially). There are some short focussed discussions on training, such as Helge Niska's (2005) 'Training interpreters: programmes, curricula, practices' and also Downing and Tillery's (1992) *Professional Training for Community Interpreters*. Kainz, Prunc and Schögler's (2010) *Modelling the Field of Community Interpreting: Questions of Methodology in Research and Training*, dealing with different didactic models and the development of research-based curricula, also looks very promising and we believe it will be a significant contribution to the literature.

The last few years have also seen a growing interest in interpreting training in specific sectors (especially medical and legal), illustrated by the 2010 International Medical Interpreters Association medical training conference at Harvard University. The large national interpreter organizations, such as NAATI (The National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters) in Australia, offer training courses for trainee interpreters who are planning to apply for accreditation (see <http://www.naati.com.au/>). The new frontier of online training techniques for third-level education is being explored by people like Hanne Skaaden (2007). Countries like Canada, Australia, the UK, the US, South Africa and the Scandinavian countries now have systematic and well-organized training systems functioning at regional or even national level for interpreting in healthcare, in the legal system and in local government. The accreditation of interpreters to ensure high quality interpreting standards is another crucial point that is now being addressed at many levels in these and other countries. Pan-national schemes for the training and accreditation of legal interpreters are currently being implemented in the EU, e.g. the Grotius-Aegis project (*Building Mutual Trust: A Framework Project for Implementing EU Common Standards in Legal Interpreting and Translation* (JLS/2007/IPEN/219)).

There are, however, few textbooks that are suitable for use in the classroom, the exception being Gentile, Ozolins and Vasilakakos's 1996 publication, *Liaison Interpreting: A Handbook*, covering interpreting for

public services, business and diplomacy, and more recently, Sandra Hale's valuable 2007 volume, *Community Interpreting*. There is even less, however, by way of practical literature on interpreter training. Chapter 6 in Hale (2007) is an exception: she provides succinct but excellent training suggestions in this chapter. As elsewhere in the literature, research in sign language interpreting is in many ways far ahead of spoken language interpreting, and Cynthia Roy's (2009) volume, *Innovative Practices for Teaching Sign Language Interpreters*, is one such example. Although the essays are of course directed at sign language trainers, they provide much useful information on assessment and also, for example, on the use of portfolios in the class.

The present book attempts to fill the gap by providing a practical guide for trainers of community interpreters, public service interpreters and interpreters working with dialogue interpreting in other areas, with a range of suggestions on how and what to teach interpreter trainees. We hope this book will benefit trainers who are still fumbling in what is still in many countries an undefined field of practice and research.

## The profession

A gradual awareness of the need to organize language services systematically (thus acknowledging of course the underlying importance of the need for communication) has led many institutions around the world to invest in the recruitment and training of freelance or permanent staff who are able to provide these services; it has also led to a tentative clarification of the role that these professionals should embody. In the medical sector, in particular, the need for adequate communication has been recognized because of the potential dangers of misdiagnoses and the subsequent legal liability of health professionals. Issues such as informed consent and professional liability in cases of misdiagnosis or omitted diagnosis, are very serious indeed, primarily for the patient but also for the health professional and the institution. If the law prescribes that patients must receive clear and exhaustive information to be able to give their informed consent, the interpreter's/translator's role becomes vital. Where many public institutions in the past generally relied on 'informal' and ad hoc freelance interpreters, on the principle that 'knowing the language is sufficient' – often using relatives, children, friends and bilingual staff to interpret – a slow realization of the dangers involved in using non-qualified staff has begun to emerge. What is needed, then, is a professional pool of trained interpreters to cater

for hospitals, businesses, clinics, schools, police stations, prisons, job centres, immigration offices, and social service institutions.

Research in, and an increasing awareness of the importance of, sign language interpreting, as well as huge strides in the academic disciplines of translation and interpreting studies, have also given impetus to a gradual but definite process of professionalization in this area. International conferences specializing in this area were organized in the 1990s (their heritage contained in the valuable *Critical Link* volumes) and the existence of the discipline was by the end of the decade an established fact. The pioneer countries that led the way in the emergence and establishment of public service and community interpreting were Australia, Canada, Sweden and the Low Countries, followed by the US and UK and a host of others. In the wake of this development then, interpreting for public institutions is also emerging as an independent academic discipline with empirical and theoretical research on technique, terminology, legal aspects, institutional aspects and cultural aspects, through a variety of methodologies.

The practical and institutional application of this discipline is today crucial in a more and more demographically complex world where high-quality professional communication in science and technology, welfare, medicine and the judiciary has become essential. With ever-growing numbers of migrants and a growing bureaucratization of public institutions, neither clients nor service providers should today rely on the informal networks of ad hoc communication channels such as friends and relatives functioning as interpreters, but rather on a well-organized, professional and safe system of implementing communication across languages, based on clear-cut and systematic training and accreditation procedures. Organization and clarification are desperately needed in terms of interpreter roles and job descriptions and it is crucial that this is developed collaboratively between training institutions and public services. Ideally, then, training institutions – be they academic, state-based (federal or local) or NGO-run – should be able to train their students to become the type of interpreters public and private institutions need in order to provide quality care in health, legal, social, commercial and other services for people who do not speak the majority language.

## **The genesis of this book**

The authors of this book began teaching a course together in 2001 at the then School for Modern Languages for Interpreters and Translators at the

University of Bologna. At the time, the course was still called 'trattativa' ('negotiation' in Italian), the presumed setting being interpreting in the business sector. Although we had no pedagogical experience from either business or interpreting for public services, we did have a great deal of experience in conference interpreting in medical and legal settings, and in translation (both theory and practice). This proved to be an exciting challenge, as neither of us had taught this form of interpreting before; the types of situations and the registers used in a conference setting differ greatly from those used in a typical face-to-face interpreting session in the workplace. Basing the new coursework on past experience and adjusting the materials and experience acquired to the new teaching needs was a stimulating challenge, and a continuing learning experience that we believe we can share with other trainers who are starting out in this field, possibly coming from entirely different areas of language-related disciplines and with those trainers who are looking for new ideas for the classroom. We believe that many interpreter trainers, certainly in those countries where the discipline is still largely undeveloped, find themselves in a similar situation to ours – namely that of having to 're-invent' themselves from being language teachers and interpreter/translator trainers to this more specific application of interpreter training in a field and profession that has not yet been fully established in many countries around the world.

After several years of teaching together at an institution for translators and interpreters, we then taught separately at other translation and interpreting institutions and on 'language mediation' courses in traditional modern language faculties. Although many of the students, especially those in the ordinary modern language faculties (i.e. not translators' and interpreters' schools or faculties), were unaware of the existence of the profession before starting our course, and despite all the dire predictions regarding job opportunities, many were highly enthusiastic and showed a keen desire to try their hand at it and to study further. Unsurprisingly, most of the students from modern language faculties who were unfamiliar with interpreting found it to be far more challenging than they had imagined – their preconceptions about 'interpreting being easy if you know the language' were regularly disproved, often to their amusement and sometimes to their frustration.

This mutability is also very much the spirit of our book: we would like it to be used as a blueprint that provides the trainer with theoretical and practical tools that can be used directly in the classroom. The book is written with this hesitant readership specifically in mind, to give ideas, support and practical hints to teachers who are new to this



field. Indeed, each trainer's specific needs will set the tone for, as well as the limits to, classroom activities, and ultimately the 'chemistry' in the class will be the real measure of success. As all teachers know, this chemistry is related to so many unpredictable factors, not least student dynamics, but it can be enhanced by using a student-focussed approach where students engage actively in interpreting, discussions and preparatory work.

### **Pedagogical aims: why include the business sector?**

Although this book, as most of the literature, deals primarily with interpreting in public institutions, we chose to include interpreting in the business sector for two main reasons. The first reason, suggested above, is that the technical skills acquired by the students are very similar to those used in the other areas we deal with. An interpreter who has been trained to interpret in hospitals and police stations can quite easily use those same technical interpreting skills in other areas by learning new terminology and extra-linguistic knowledge about systems and institutions. We believe, therefore, that by including the private commercial sector we can offer future interpreters a wider scope for job opportunities, not just for public institutions and commerce but for those areas mentioned above: tourism, media, diplomacy, education. The second reason is that in many countries where the profession and infrastructure are as yet undeveloped, most interpreters are forced to make ends meet by working in a variety of sectors. The business sector, for example at trade-fairs, is an area in which newly trained interpreters can quite easily find freelance work to gain experience and more competence, although it will rarely be sufficient to provide a regular salary. Nevertheless, despite their commonalities, the private commercial sector does to some extent fall outside our main area of concern in this book, namely where macro-structural aspects affect the interpreting process: issues such as institutional discourse, institutional power asymmetry and hierarchies, immigration, etc. Having said that, cross-cultural issues are also crucial in international business communication, as the vast literature on intercultural business management demonstrates.

The similarities between community and business interpreting lie, of course, in their mode – they both adopt the same range of face-to-face interpreting techniques in a consecutive, semi-consecutive or chuchotage mode (to be discussed in chapter 1). This is the other reason which has led us to include business interpreting in this book: as a pedagogical tool for face-to-face interpreting *tout court* it is useful because