

“Note-taking for consecutive interpreting – a short course” by Andrew Gillies

Book review by Roderick Jones



Andrew Gillies is a freelance colleague known to many of us, particularly in the English booth. He is also an experienced interpreter trainer, working in particular at the Jagiellonian University in Cracow. He already has a number of publications to his name, including a translation of Rozan’s classic, Note-taking in Consecutive Interpreting.

The aim of Gillies’ book is “to help student interpreters to work progressively towards a system for note-taking in consecutive interpreting which is consistent, simple to learn, adaptable and efficient.” It is conceived as a practical manual, with many exercises for students, and would certainly be an invaluable adjunct to any interpreter training course. Although the target audience is students, the book may well be profitable reading for all colleagues, particularly if they have an interest in training.

In the introduction there is a simple, step-by-step presentation of consecutive interpreting, what it is and what is the usefulness of notes. The first main part of the book then deals with acquiring the basic skills of note-taking. I particularly like the way in which the progressivity aimed at by the author is achieved. He begins with the basic skill of speech analysis, then builds gradually to such well-known concepts as identification and separation of ideas, links, the hierarchy of values... For each particular conceptual area and skill to be developed he uses the same structure, providing a systematic and effective method for students. First, he introduces the notion and explains the skill to be acquired; secondly, he provides examples of speeches, with a commentary, using real speeches, often by politicians; thirdly, he sets exercises, which can often be done alone but then used

in a class setting, providing for feedback between students in a group; and fourthly, he provides indications as to how a student may practise further on their own.

The second part of the book is devoted to what Gillies calls “fine-tuning”. However, it contains a number of key elements in note-taking which come up repeatedly when one is teaching: use of abbreviation, symbols, the margin, and so on. This part does not include exercises for students, but does provide a fount of ideas and should certainly be consulted by any of us involved in teaching. In particular, anyone doing a pedagogical assistance mission involving an introduction to note-taking should take this as compulsory reading before the mission.

The third and last part, although more for consultation than for reading, is excellent. It contains, first, a series of example speeches with model notes accompanied by a commentary. Further, there are cribs for some of the exercises set in part one of the book, which will be very valuable for students. Lastly, there are useful references for students as to where to find further practice material.

The book is well written; above all it is highly readable. The examples are well presented, with a uniform lay-out using clear frames - necessary to reflect the reality of the interpreter’s notepad - thus making the examples user-friendly. In conclusion, it is a book to be highly recommended, and in my view indispensable reading for those of us involved in, or even just interested in, interpreter training. It is available in the SCIC library.

To purchase “Note taking”, please follow this link, to St Jerome publishing.

<http://www.stjerome.co.uk/page.php?id=221&doctype=Translation%20Practices%20Explained&ion=3>

Source Roderick Jones, SCIC.A.1

Open University MBA-project

Knowledge management in DG SCIC

In the framework of the MBA I am completing with the Open University I have to prepare a thesis based on a real-life project. I have decided to do it in a field I am interested in - Knowledge Management - and in a place I am interested in - DG SCIC. I have asked Franz Lemaitre and others to join me and we have decided to base our work on the following analysis of the situation:

At individual level not only is it important for interpreters to know the area of work of a Committee (what we call “Title of the meeting”), but also the scope of the meeting (horizontal dimension) and the depth of discussion (vertical dimension). However, knowledge about these is acquired mainly on the day of the meeting through a briefing (if planned) or during the meeting. Such knowledge remains tacit and localised.

► **Potential cost for SCIC:** impact on quality of interpretation, change in quality when team is changed during meeting, de-motivation of interpreters that do not “own” the larger process they are part of?

At group level, even if interpreters work in teams they prepare meetings individually. The knowledge generated during this phase (concepts, terminology) is not shared nor stored on a common platform. The same is true for knowledge generated during the meeting because it often remains confined to interpreters working in the same booth. Knowledge can be tacit or explicit, but it is lost for SCIC as a whole, like any meeting related knowledge generated by other Directorates.

► **Potential cost for SCIC:** duplicated work, having to re-learn reduces effectiveness, de-motivation of interpreters that have no tools to build upon or retain the work they do?

At organisation level SCIC has a task culture and the value chain is cut in clear spheres of competence that follow functions boundaries. Interpreters work in a matrix structure involving their own Directorate A and the operational Directorate C which assigns them to meetings and effectively controls them. The “mould” for organising meetings (DOR) was set up some years ago to serve another environment with less member countries

