



The International Journal for
Translation & Interpreting
Research
trans-int.org

Book Review

Rachelle Antonini, Letizia Cirillo, Linda Rossato and Ira Torresi (Eds.) (2017). *Non-professional interpreting and translation. State of the art and future of an emerging field of research.*

**Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins. 415 pp.
ISBN: 9789027258755**

Reviewed by Mireia Vargas-Urpi
Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, Spain
Mireia.Vargas@uab.cat

DOI : 10.12807/ti.112201.2020.r01

In 2012, the University of Bologna at Forlì held the First International Conference on Non-Professional Interpreting and Translation (NPIT). This event rapidly became a milestone in NPIT studies, as it contributed significantly to the recognition and visibilization of NPIT as a field of research on its own within the discipline of translation and interpreting studies. The book reviewed here, *Non-professional interpreting and translation. State of the art and future of an emerging field of research*, edited by Rachelle Antonini, Letizia Cirillo, Linda Rossato and Ira Torresi was conceived during that conference and has naturally become the written counterpart to that very first event. The volume is a fundamental reading to understand the role and significance of NPIT in current translation and interpreting studies, as well as to learn about pioneering methods to approach this field.

The chapters selected for the monograph cover a wide range of themes within the field of NPIT, thus reflecting not only some of the mainstream topics (e.g. child language brokering), but also other less researched realities, such as NPIT in disaster relief situations. Despite a certain bias towards interpreting – important topics of research such as fansubbing are not represented in the book – this bias contributes toward a focus on similar phenomena, thus making it easier for the reader to establish parallelisms among the various studies presented in the volume.

The introduction, written by the editors of the book, contextualises the volume and presents some key definitions to understand NPIT as a field of research. The discussion about the umbrella term adopted for this field of interpreting and translation – i.e. “non-professional” instead of “ad hoc”, “natural” or “unprofessional”, among other descriptors – recalls similar discussions that have been held in neighbouring areas (e.g. public service interpreting), and reflects the importance of fixing terms when new fields of research emerge. However, other essentially equivalent terms (e.g. “language brokering”) are used in the various chapters throughout the book, a fact that reflects a certain inconsistency in terminology. The introduction also successfully confronts the reluctance to study NPIT shown by academics in the last decades and discusses “why NPIT is worth studying”.

The first section, “State of the art of research on NPIT and general issues” includes three chapters that are certainly complementary to each other, as they seek to provide general overviews of research on NPIT from different perspectives. In Chapter 2, Brian Harris revisits his own *Unprofessional Translation* blog and provides a brief thematic selection of some of the topics discussed in it: from the hypothesis of “natural translation”, a term coined by Harris himself, to much more specific topics, such as sports interpreting or crowdsourcing. In Chapter 3, Boguslawa Whyatt posits that “the human mind is predisposed to translate if the need arises” (p. 61). Based on previous studies, Whyatt suggests that translation is an inherent ability that with training can be developed into a professional skill. Chapter 4, “Dialoguing across differences: The past and future of language brokering research”, by Marjorie Faulstich Orellana, is one of the key contributions in this volume, as it provides an overview of the research in the field of language brokering (another of the terms used for NPIT) over the last three decades. Faulstich Orellana shares her own critical perspective of how research in language brokering can continue expanding in the future to avoid becoming stagnant in certain methods or approaches. This chapter is certainly essential for anyone looking for an introduction to research in NPIT.

The second section, “NPIT in healthcare, community and public services” includes eight chapters. This section is the most heterogeneous. There are three chapters concerning healthcare. First, Claudio Baraldi and Laura Gavioli question the notion of ‘professionalism’ as it has been understood in public service interpreting studies – i.e., very much equated to the adoption of rigid deontological codes. In Chapter 6, Anna Claudia Ticca presents a multimodal analysis of video-recorded consultations in a rural clinic in Yucatan (Mexico), where lay interpreters between Spanish and Yucatec Maya showed multiple identities. In Chapter 7, Sonja Pöllabauer focuses on the analysis of non-professional interpreters’ strategies when dealing with specialist terminology.

Next, Linda Rossato presents the only study in this volume dealing with NPIT in prison settings. More specifically, she explores NPIT by inmates in Italian prisons using a questionnaire approach.

Chapters 9 and 10 analyse NPIT in religious settings, a field that is increasingly gaining attention in publications concerning dialogue interpreting in general (cf. Tipton & Furmanek, 2016). More specifically, Adelina Hild presents an ethnographic study of non-professional church interpreters, while Sari Konnanen analyses her own experiences based on the principles of autoethnography.

There are two more chapters in this section. In Chapter 11, Nadja Grbic explains a case study of sign language translation that took place in a museum and, in Chapter 12, Regina Rogl presents a detailed description of the organisation of language-related services during disaster relief in Haiti, where NPIT turned to have a very important role.

The third section concerns “NPIT performed by children”, also referred to as “child language brokering” (CLB) in the volume. The thematic homogeneity among the chapters included in this section makes it more cohesive and reader-friendly, since all the chapters focus on virtually the same phenomenon, but approach it from different angles. This section starts with Claudia V. Angelelli’s contribution, where she presents IPRI Junior, a valid and reliable instrument to measure bilingual youngsters’ perceptions of their role as family interpreters/translators. This chapter becomes the perfect companion to Faulstich Orellana’s, as they both present critical literature revisions that may be especially useful for prospective studies in the field of CLB.

In Chapter 14, Tony Cline, Sarah Crafter, Guida de Abreu and Lindsay O’Dell use an interesting method to approach young people: the use of vignettes to make them reflect and to extract their opinions and reactions to certain

situations. The case studies presented in this chapter demonstrate the usefulness of this method.

Chapters 15, 16 and 17 are all related to InMedIO PUER(I), a research project focusing on CLB conducted in Northern Italy. In Chapter 15, Letizia Cirillo describes the main characteristics of CLB in the region of Emilia Romagna based on the results of two different questionnaires – one for young brokers and one for teachers. In Chapter 16, Rachele Antonini analyses narratives produced by children in the context of a school competition, while in Chapter 17 Ira Torresi uses artwork elicitation to analyse drawings submitted by young children for the same competition. Thanks to the use of these original methods, Antonini and Torresi could gain access to information that is not always easy to obtain otherwise, especially considering the young ages of the informants. The results in these chapters become complementary conclusions that confirm the advantages of the methods adopted.

In Chapter 18, Elaine Bauer shifts to adults to discuss issues of agency and censorship that they encountered when they used to perform CLB tasks. Retrospective childhood experiences are another useful strategy to collect data in CLB research.

Finally, in Chapter 19, Jemina Napier presents the results of an international questionnaire distributed among children of deaf adults. The questionnaire aimed to measure the correlation between childhood performance of CLB tasks and sign-language interpreter professionalisation in adulthood.

In sum, this volume is a must-read for researchers interested in NPIT or CLB, as it provides a wide overview of the state of the art in this field, both by means of literature reviews and by sharing ground-breaking research in terms of methods, approaches or results. The section about CLB is especially relevant and demonstrates the healthy development of research around this topic, which will surely merit further specific attention in future monographs.

References

Tipton, R., & Furmanek, O. (2016). *Dialogue interpreting. A guide to interpreting in public services and the community*. London and New York: Routledge.