

RESSENYES

BAIGORRI, Jesús

Interpreters at the United Nations: A History.

Salamanca: Ediciones Universidad de Salamanca, 2004. 181 p. Translated from Spanish by Anne Barr.

Though the institution itself may have temporarily lost its pivotal role in world affairs, having been side-tracked (when not simply ignored) in favour of unilateralism as a means of solving the world's problems, the UN still has the aura of the international organisation *par excellence* from an interpreter's standpoint, even though it has long been superseded by the European Union as an employer of interpreters.

This book takes up the story of interpreting at the UN where the same author's previous study (*La interpretación de conferencias: El nacimiento de una profesión*, Comares, 2000) leaves off, and provides a generally well-researched, often intriguing and sometimes surprising behind-the-scenes account of how interpreting has evolved in the UN since the organization came into being.

Chapter 1 is an introductory chapter on how the UN became the multilingual institution it currently is. There is an account of the struggle to maintain French as an official language (a «close run thing» if ever there was one) and the recruiting of interpreters in the fledgling UN. Chapter 2 tells the story of the early years, providing thumb-nail sketches of the first generation

of legendary, nigh-on mythical, interpreters, plus a blow-by-blow account of the running battle between defenders of consecutive and the (then) new-fangled modality of simultaneous during the transition period between the two modes. Chapter 3 takes a look at the so-called «second generation», and the transition period from interpreting as a «marvel» to interpreting as a «profession»; it also describes the rise of interpreting schools and their effect on recruiting at the UN. Interesting too is the account of the growing concern for decent working conditions, as evidenced in the first medical report on interpreter health and the 1974 «strike». Chapter 4 talks about the new generations of interpreters and the growing influence of the schools on interpreter intake in the UN. The chapter entitled «Conclusions» is in fact a review chapter of the book as a whole, while also containing remarks about the conference interpreter of today and tomorrow (issues of remote interpreting and the growth of English as a lingua franca in international meetings).

Within the larger scope of the UN as a whole, Baigorri provides a candid picture of legendary interpreters and shows the very human side of their nature — interpreters

possessed of hubris and pettiness in equal measure — witness the last-ditch attempt on the part of the *consecutivistes* (even resorting to sabotage of technical equipment in meetings) to prevent simultaneous interpreting from getting a foothold in the UN.

But above all this, the great irony of the whole story of interpreters at the UN is that the first generation (unselected and untrained), looked down on the second generation (selected but untrained) who in turn treated the following generations (both selected and trained) with the same disdain meted out to themselves.

And as a final irony, the interest in Buddhism shown by some of the earlier interpreters has been «dumbed down» to doing crosswords (in the booth?) in a typical profile provided by the author of later generations of UN interpreters.

The original was written in Spanish, and it must be said that the English translation

does it a disservice. Perhaps there was awe of the master, and no courage to stray beyond the confines of literalness. But the end result cannot be considered to be good.

To begin with, the literal translation of the first person plural Spanish academic «nosotros» (similar to the royal «we» for English readers) is translated literally as «we» throughout the book —giving rising to the false impression for the uninitiated that there are several authors— all my colleagues shown parts of the book thought that this was indeed the case. And surely there is a better way of translating *diplomates manqués* than «diplomats who flubbed it»? The underlying Spanish shines —nay, beams— through on each page, and that is a great pity.

John Matthews

Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona

Facultat d'Interpretació i
d'Interpretació

BAIGORRI JALÓN, Jesús (dir.); ALONSO ARAGUÁS, Icíar; PASCUAL OLAGUÍBEL, Marina *Materiales para interpretación consecutiva y simultánea (alemán, francés e inglés) I* (Format CD-Rom), Ediciones Universidad de Salamanca, 2004.

Aquest CD-Rom es presenta com un suport a la iniciació a la interpretació consecutiva i simultània; correspon, per tant, a les assignatures troncal de tercer curs Tècniques d'Interpretació Consecutiva (TIC) i Tècniques d'Interpretació Simultània (TIS). La iniciativa, segons indica el fulletó informatiu, va sorgir del professorat del departament de Traducció i Interpretació de la Universitat de Salamanca i va rebre suport financer de la Junta de Castella i Lleó; ahora, amb la metodologia emprada al CD-Rom els autors reflecteixen com s'ensenyen les beceroles de l'ofici d'interpret.

A l'Estat espanyol és, que sapiguem, el primer material àudio comercialitzat per fer pràctiques d'interpretació en tres llengües —de fet, per exemple, ja n'existeixen des de fa almenys tres anys com a material d'ús intern per a professorat i alumnes al depar-

tament del qual jo mateixa formo part. Seria interessant que d'ara endavant sortissin a la llum altres projectes en la mateixa línia, de nivells més avançats o bé que incloguessin diferents modalitats d'interpretació. Se'ns anuncia que aquest CD és només un punt de partida (al qual seguiran un d'«intermedi» i un d'«avançat»).

El CD-Rom té com a primer element del menú una exhaustiva presentació, amb una definició d'interpretació (I) per part de Jean Delisle, seguida dels fonaments metodològics (II) i d'una bibliografia (III). La part II és una justificació excel·lent raonada de com s'ha d'ensenyar —i aprendre— la interpretació: així, recalca la idea no gaire assimilada que «la interpretació es pot ensenyar i aprendre», i justifica la metodologia progressiva, la varietat i la importància de la pràctica real. Segueix a la presentació una