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Abstract

Understanding community interpreting services: Diversity and access in Australia and beyond by Dr. Oktay Eser aims to provide a comprehensive description of the status of community interpreting services (CIS) in Australia. Australia has always been a spot of attraction for migrants from all over the world, rendering it the quality of a highly diverse and multicultural country. In parallel with the White Australian Policy and multiculturalism policy, Australia has started taking serious steps to help overcome communication barriers of culturally and linguistically diverse people to access public services as of the 1900s. Building on his background experience as a researcher in the fields of translation and interpreting studies and management studies, the author addresses community interpreting as a professional service requiring the preservation of quality and sustainability. The critical analysis of Australia, specifically the case of the State of Victoria, very deftly reflects the challenges experienced by the stakeholders in the country for years as well as the strategies developed to establish intricate policies. The author does contribute to enriching the discussion by presenting the context of Türkiye to the readers as a comparison point where community interpreting is yet to be a fully-fledged profession but is making significant strides on the way to professionalization. Thus, Australia, as suggested by the author, may serve as a "road map" to navigate stakeholders and policy makers in CIS industry for countries like Türkiye where there is still a route to go for the management of the delivery of quality-based CIS in a sustainable way.

Keywords: Community interpreting, community interpreting services, cultural and linguistic diversity, translation and interpreting profession, professionalization

Öz

*Dr. Oktay Eser **Understanding community interpreting services: Diversity and access in Australia and beyond [Hizmet paradigması ile toplum çevirmenliğini anlamak: Bir yol haritası olarak Avustralya örneğinde dilsel ve kültürel çeşitlilik ve toplum çevirmenliği hizmetlerine erişim]** başlıklı kitapta Avustralya'daki toplum çevirmenliği hizmetleri ile ilgili kapsamlı bir durum analizi sunmayı hedeflemiştir. Avustralya, dünyanın dört bir yanından gelen göçmenler için her zaman cazip bir ülke olagelmiştir ve bu durum da Avustralya'yı çok çeşitli dil ve kültürlerin buluştuğu çokkültürlü bir ülke haline getirmiştir. Avustralya, uyguladığı Beyaz Avustralya Politikası ve çokkültürlülük politikası ile bağlantılı olarak, 1900'lü yıllardan bu yana, kültürel ve dilsel farklılıkları olan insanların toplum hizmetlerine erişirken karşı karşıya kalabilecekleri iletişim engellerinin ortadan kaldırılabilmesi amacıyla çok önemli çalışmalar yapmaktadır. Dr. Eser bu kitapta, çeviribilim ve işletme alanlarındaki bilgi birikimini birleştirerek, toplum çevirmenliğini kalite ve sürdürülebilirlik gerektiren profesyonel bir hizmet alanı olarak ele almaktadır. Yazar, Viktorya Eyaleti özelinde Avustralya üzerine yaptığı incelemede, ülkede toplum çevirmenliği bağlamında farklı sektör paydaşlarının uzun yıllardır deneyimlediği zorlukların yanı sıra titizlikle oluşturulan politikaların nasıl geliştirildiğini de etkili bir anlatımla ortaya koymaktadır. Kitapta, Türkiye'deki toplum çevirmenliği uygulamaları ile ilgili bilgilere de yer verilmiştir. Toplum çevirmenliğinin henüz profesyonel bir meslek statüsünde olmadığı ancak meslekleşme yolunda önemli çalışmalara imza atılan bir ülke örneği ve referans noktası olarak Türkiye bağlamında sunulan bu bilgiler kitabın kapsamına ayrı bir derinlik katmıştır. Dolayısıyla, kalite odaklı toplum çevirmenliği hizmetleri için uygun altyapının oluşturulması ve bu hizmetlerin sürdürülebilirliğinin sağlanması için henüz mesafeli bir yol kat etmesi gereken Türkiye gibi ülkeler için Avustralya'nın, yazarın deyimiyle, sektör paydaşlarını ve politika belirleyicileri yönlendirebilecek bir "yol haritası" sunduğunu söylemek isabetli olacaktır.*

Anahtar Sözcükler: *Toplum çevirmenliği, toplum çevirmenliği hizmetleri, kültürel ve dilsel çeşitlilik, çevirmenlik mesleği, meslekleşme*

1. Introduction

Owing to the nature of its focus of inquiry, translation and interpreting studies (TIS) have always been in cooperation with a wide range of disciplines and investigated from a myriad of lenses. The 21st century profile of the translation and interpreting (TI) activities, required and/or accompanied by a large number of industries, indicates that TI today is deemed to have a "professional service" provision as a rapidly expanding and growing industry, commonly referred to as the "language/TI service industry". When investigated from the scope of a professional service, TI can be critically viewed pertaining to an array of points, including but not limited to service quality, supply and demand balance, recruitment of employees, etc. This sort of investigation necessitates the adoption of the lens of another discipline, thereby converging TIS with management studies. For this very reason, this book review aims to present a pioneering book entitled *Understanding community interpreting services: Diversity and access in Australia and beyond* by Dr. Oktay Eser, Department of Translation and Interpreting, Amasya University, Türkiye.[1] It is noteworthy to mention that the merge of these two disciplines is also embodied by the author of the book, as Dr. Eser holds a master's degree in management studies and a PhD in TIS. This union is deftly referred to as the "outsider-insider" gaze of the author by Dr. Ineke H.M. Crezee, who writes the foreword to the book. Dr. Crezee states that the book presents a comprehensive description of the status quo of community interpreting services (CIS) in Australia, which is a leading country for the maintenance of these services for a long period of time for people experiencing language and communication barriers, in other words, "culturally and linguistically diverse people", as is called in the book.

Understanding community interpreting services: Diversity and access in Australia and beyond was published in 2020 by Palgrave Macmillan as part of the Palgrave Studies in Translation and Interpreting book series.[2] The series editor of the book is Emerita Professor Margaret Rogers, School of Literature and Languages, University of Surrey, Guildford, UK. The cover illustration is by Ron Evans from Getty Images. The book comes as a fruit of the post-doctoral studies of Dr. Eser on community interpreting (CI) at RMIT University in Melbourne under the supervision of Dr. Miranda Lai and is dedicated to Dr. Sedat Mülayim who stimulated the author to dive into the research area of CI.

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[1] Dr. Eser is the co-author and/or co-editor of significant books in TIS, to name a few *Çeviribilimde Araştırma ve Yayın Sorunları [Research and Publication Issues in Translation & Interpreting Studies]* (Pegem Publishing, 2021); *Introduction to Healthcare for Turkish-speaking Interpreters and Translators* (John Benjamins, 2022), and *Educating Community Interpreters and Translators in Unprecedented Times* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2023).

[2] The ISBN numbers for hardcopy and eBook versions of the book are ISBN 978-3-030-55860-4 and ISBN 978-3-030-55861-1, respectively, and DOI number is https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-55861-1.

2. Analysis and evaluation

Understanding community interpreting services: Diversity and access in Australia and beyond involves seven chapters, including the introduction section. Each chapter in the book starts with an abstract and ends with references. The **introduction part** sets the context of CI as well as dwelling on the configuration of a career as a community interpreter. Dr. Eser utilizes reports released by the United Nations to set forth the concept of international mobility focusing on the rapid increase in international mobility (over 250 million) on the global scale as well as the status of Türkiye in that regard (about 4 million) as of 2019. In this section, readers can find a detailed definition of what CI is with a focus on a wide variety of settings where CI may take place, and potential roles community interpreters may undertake specifically in Australia. The chapter enriches the definition of CI indicating the career paths available to community interpreters in Australia and possible challenges awaiting the candidates on this career path.

In **Chapter Two**, readers are presented with the research approach along with the outline of the study, which sets the rationale of the study, the purpose of the study and research questions directed, the role of the researcher, and the setting and participants in the study. The study adopts a case study method as an instance of qualitative methods because the main goal of the research is the depiction of the CI system in Australia from the lens of different stakeholders including the challenges experienced and strategies adapted. Dr. Eser selects the State of Victoria as the setting for the study due to the profile of migration, where the residents, as the non-fluent speakers of English, are provided with government-funded TI services for accessing public services. The qualitative data collected through interviews and documents is analyzed using QSR NVivo v.11 data analysis software. The participant pool covers representatives of various governmental and non-governmental organizations predominantly in Australia and in Türkiye, to name All Graduates-Interpreting and Translating, Australia; the Department of Human Services in Australia; Translators and Interpreters Australia within the Union of Professionals Australia; Victorian Interpreting and Translation Services, also Language Loop and the National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters (NAATI) in Australia, and the Translation and Interpreting Association, Turkey.

In **Chapter Three**, Dr. Eser situates CI within the paradigm of services from the scope of management studies, introducing readers to a new viewpoint to explore the concept of CI. Eser (2020) defines CI;

> as a service, i.e. a form of product, operates predominantly in governmental markets. Through the lens of a *services paradigm*, community interpreting can be defined here as an oral or signed interlingual service as a market offering in the interpreting market to satisfy the needs of the culturally and linguistically diverse members of a community so that

government departments and agencies can deliver public services effectively and efficiently. (p. 26)

This innovative and inspiring frame where CI is incorporated into is strengthened with the presentation of another concept called externality. The concept of externality, as indicated by Eser (2020, p. 27), offers significant nuances CI may deploy in relation to diversity. When considered cooperatively with the concept of externality/externalities, it becomes feasible to conceptualize CIS from the following scopes: how the need for CI arises and members become vulnerable, paving the way for the need for CIS, why external factors are related to CI, and responsibilities governments are expected of. To that end, the chapter elucidates a general and historical overview of CI in the Australian context starting from the 1900s with the White Australian Policy as part of Australia's nation-building policy in parallel with multiculturalism. CIS has been systematized and successfully preserved with the contributions of several stakeholders in the following years, and this makes Australia a pioneer in CIS around the globe today.

Chapter Four stands out as an introspection of the State of Victoria, Australia where the author discusses challenges for the execution of the diverse instances of CIS, addressing issues of technology, quality, supply and demand, sustainability, and work-specific factors. Australia remains a highly diverse and multicultural country and has always been a spot of attraction for migrants from all over the world. This brings about a diversity in languages spoken and used around the country. Established and indigenous languages are spoken in the country as well as rare and emerging languages, and CIS attempts to meet the communication needs arising in this diverse spectrum of languages. The prosecution of well-established CIS is a complex issue by nature, and the sustainability of these services becomes a huge concern for most countries to which Australia is no exception. Although Australia is a pioneer in the execution of quality CIS, it would be wrong to assert that the process is hassle-free. Eser (2020) critically contends the major challenges Australia is experiencing in the process of conducting efficacious CIS. The author mentions that diversity of cultures and languages poses a problem in the way of providing quality CIS carried out by professional practitioners of the profession. Another threat arises from technology-related issues of today's CI industry, such as technical inadequacies experienced through remote interpreting types like telephone interpreting and video remote interpreting. Lack of briefing and healthy communication between parties or stress and concentration problems can be considered among the other difficulties experienced by community interpreters working in the State of Victoria.

Provision of service quality is yet another issue declared with respect to challenges. Assignment of unprofessional community interpreters by private agencies may create problems on the one hand and credentialing and certification of skilled professionals on the other. Lack of professionalism, bilingual incompetency, low levels of recognition from clients, and training-related issues are declared to be some other concerns as potential problems. The supply and demand balance is a further consideration as it

binds to a variety of issues like geographical restrictions for the recruitment of professional community interpreters to distant locations, language-specific issues addressing the richness and diversity of languages in the country, social considerations like gender preference (the demands of the clients for the gender of the interpreter), religious and political sensitivities, and the size of the community. Another concern, labelled as unmet demand, may arise when CI demand exceeds the limit of supply of services or when clients have a feeling of dissatisfaction because the quality of the service does not meet their expectations. On the other hand, sustainability is a key asset for CIS in Australia, and the author discusses the concept of sustainability both from the perspective of the professionals' staying in the industry and the industry's potential of attracting and retaining qualified professionals, which could be considered a contributing factor to the sustainability of the profession. On the other hand, attrition and casualization are claimed to be the foremost threats in the way of protecting the sustainability of CI as a profession. The final challenge discussed is the psychological resilience of community interpreters who may occasionally be at the risk of being exposed to stressful and traumatic environments that may lead to psychological problems. They may suffer from the effects of long-term distress, such as vicarious trauma or secondary traumatic stress.

Chapter Five explores the strategies Australia employs with the aim of providing and preserving effective and efficient provision of CIS. These strategies are referred to as capacity building practices for interpreting services, maintenance of healthy communication and cooperation among stakeholders, and political commitment to diversity. As an integral component of capacity building, a pool of interpreters accredited by NAATI has been established for the provision of both telephone and face-to-face delivery of interpreting services. In addition to this pool system, language service units have been set up for the interpreting assignments to be carried out in different settings. Australia gives priority to the investments in technological tools and applications used by interpreters as this support is deemed a crucial step for rising productivity of the professionals and service quality. Online delivery of courses for interpreting technologies in TI training is also supported especially to attract professionals in remote areas or for those unable to attend professional development facilities in person. Statistical records of interpreting services are kept regularly to foresee a systematic future provision of TIS. The author stresses the essence of a strong collaboration of different stakeholders like government departments, private agencies, universities, and the relevant trade unions to manage the challenges of the industry and improve the working conditions of the professionals. To that end, Eser (2020) pinpoints the certification system implemented by NAATI for a long period of time stating that "[t]he certification system that NAATI is implementing, and the requirements associated with that are already a big reform, bringing about a tiered remuneration" (p. 86).

The increase in the level of professional certification brings about better pay rates. As stated earlier, Australia is a country where service and industry trends are regularly checked and planned ahead;

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therefore, relevant government departments carry out consultation programs with the stakeholders from the industry to make sure that an ideal remuneration where an optimal work-pay balance is achieved. A regulatory body like NAATI, professional associations like AUSIT and ASLIA, and trade unions like Professionals Australia work together with the aim of improving professionalization and increasing recognition from clients, which is a key component for the promotion of the profession. As an output of this cooperation between different representative bodies, standards and informative documents have been released with a view to the importance of high-quality TIS and the skills and competences expected of qualified professionals.[3] The author points out that lobbying is a prominent parameter projecting the status quo of the profession and professionals, and it has been effectively utilized in CI industry in Australia. Lobbying has been a pillar for better remuneration and supporting the delivery of better interpreting services (Eser, 2020, p. 95). It is without doubt that representation of individuals by relevant bodies is vital for impactful lobbying practices; thus, professionals are encouraged to be members of the relevant organizations to engage commitment to the profession. Well-established communication and cooperation channels have a positive influence on policy setting actions and effective training of TI candidates, and professional development facilities have been supported to help increase supply of qualified professionals.

Chapter Six is allocated for the discussion on the status quo of the CIS in Türkiye. The increasing refugee population, specifically as of the first decade of the 2000s, which is addressed in the United Nations and UNHCR reports, posits the country to a status deserving to be a focus of enquiry for the (dis)regard of CIS. Eser (2020) takes up the discussion on Türkiye explaining the diversity in the country, exploring the potential challenges in the main settings, attempts of Türkiye on the way to the professionalization of CIS, and how Australia can be taken as a road map for Türkiye, respectively. With an attempt to describe the diversity in Türkiye, the author states that from the historical and cultural roots, Türkiye has long been home to various civilizations, thereby a county of diversity starting from the early times in history. Today, diversity in Türkiye mainly arises from the protection needs of the refugees from the conflict zones within the east and southeast borders of the country. Yet, international patients visiting the country for healthcare services and those who live in Türkiye with residence permits connected to family and work-related concerns and education purposes also make up the diversity in the population of Türkiye in recent years. Healthcare, law, education, and social welfare are considered the main settings for CI in the country, and the Department of Home Affairs Directorate General for Migration Management is depicted as the main governmental institution to deal with the delivery of CIS. It should be noted that the Department of Home Affairs, the Department of Education, the Department of Healthcare Services, the Department of Justice and the Directorate General of Police

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[3] Examples of these standards are "Recommended National Standards for Working with Interpreters in Courts and Tribunals" and "Recommended Standards for Courts" (Eser, 2020, p. 92).

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Force are among the government departments where the linguistically and culturally diverse people are in need of accessing public services. Therefore, the Department of Home Affairs Directorate General for Migration Management is in close connection with these institutions for the construction of CIS. Basic challenges in CI settings in the country can be summarized as the disregard of the significant competencies -other than bilingual literacy- interpreting profession requires, issues of quality like assigning qualified interpreters and credentialing, issues of training and sustainability like attrition and remuneration, and a lack of a trade union for regulating the profession. Thus, CI cannot be visible enough as a profession, which automatically leads to the invisibility of community interpreters in related settings. On the other hand, the supply and demand balance is not stable as the demand in rare languages like Arabic, Dari Pashto and Persian cannot be supplied with the qualified professionals trained in these languages. Another challenge is related to training facilities. The number of training programs for CI seems to be scarce in quantity, and quality of the course content in terms of theory and practice balance may pose a problem. The sworn interpreting system affiliated with the notaries in Türkiye is declared as one other concern, since the accreditation of sworn interpreters is at the mercy of the notaries who are actually not qualified to assess the competencies of translators/interpreters, and the notary-accredited candidates can act as community interpreters, which brings about the challenge of liability.

As for the steps taken on the way to the professionalization of TI in Türkiye, the author highlights the significance of the increasing and diversifying training facilities in tertiary education in TI, and this continual commitment to education is marked as a positive asset. The foundation of a not-for-profit organization entitled Afette Rehber Çevirmenlik-ARÇ [Emergency and Disaster Interpreting] with the aim of organizing the delivery of interpreting services voluntarily to the search and rescue teams coming to Türkiye from overseas in times of disasters is another well-appreciated development. Some other initiatives that may impact the delivery of CIS on the local scale are noted as the 2015-dated guideline by the Disaster and Emergency Management Presidency on the management of temporary shelters for refugees and the provision of the 24-hour immediate telephone interpreting services by the Department of Healthcare Services. Moreover, the release of an occupational standard by Vocational Qualifications Authority in 2013 (and revised in 2020) titled the National Occupational Standard for Translator/Interpreter (Level 6), hereafter NOSTI, is a critical attempt to support the professionalization steps, as NOSTI defines the working conditions, competencies, and the professional conduct of translators and interpreters. Representatives of leading stakeholders in the TI industry and academy have worked in cooperation for the preparation of NOSTI. This cooperative work has further been conducted for the preparation of the occupational qualifications based on NOSTI, and the provision is the transition to the certification stage. The author emphasizes the contributing role of NOSTI asserting that it can function as a source of quality assurance with clients in the maintenance of TIS though the future certification process has not been welcomed by some of the professionals in the field. CI has been an

area of research in academic studies in Türkiye especially in the last two decades, and the proliferation of master's and doctoral dissertations on the phenomenon of CI is another positive development in Türkiye context enlisted by the author. The chapter concludes with a critical analysis and comparison of Türkiye with Australia, and Eser (2020) makes a remarkable contribution presenting a straightforward evaluation of how Türkiye can proceed so as to establish quality CIS, taking Australia as a sample of good conduct.

The book ends with a **conclusion section** covering a brief evaluation. Yet, besides introducing an overall summary of the discussions in the previous chapters, Dr. Eser concentrates on how the issue of diversity, which can be seen both/either as a great opportunity and/or a big challenge by nations, can be governed at different levels, including transnational, national, and organizational aspects. As a final word, the author sets forth certain recommended strategies for the organization of CI as a quality-based and sustainable service.

3. Conclusion

Understanding community interpreting services: Diversity and access in Australia and beyond aims to present a snapshot of CIS in Australia dwelling on the status quo of CI as a profession, the challenges experienced in the provision of CIS in Australia along with the strategies adopted by the stakeholders in the industry to preserve the quality and sustainability of the services in the industry of CIS in Australia. The author allocates a chapter to describe CIS in the context of Türkiye and provides a thorough comparison of Türkiye and Australia to illustrate how Australian CIS industry can be utilized as a point of reference for countries like Türkiye where CI is (yet) on the way to establishing its professional norms to construct a well-established professional identity. Two unique features of the book make it an invaluable source of reference material to researchers interested in CI. First and foremost, Dr. Eser, building on his background experience as a researcher in the fields of TIS and management studies, unifies the richness and depth of both disciplines to configure CI as a professional service. *Understanding community interpreting services: Diversity and access in Australia and beyond* also proves a significant source as it elucidates a detailed discussion of both the challenges to be taken into consideration and the strategies to be used as a basis by all the stakeholders in the TI industry aiming to establish implications for a bright future of CI as a professional service.

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