Healthcare Interpreting in Small Bites: 50 Nourishing Selections from the Pacific Interpreters Newsletter, 2001-2010

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Type of work (dictionary, glossary): Compilation of essays

Cynthia E. Roat, known affectionately to colleagues and students as Cindy, is the author of several interpreting resources, notably Bridging the Gap, one of the most widely offered interpreter training programs in the U.S. An indefatigable advocate for language access, she is an educator, trainer, consultant, policy developer, researcher, and, last but not least, an interpreter. Healthcare Interpreting in Small Bites is a compilation of essays written for The Pacific Interpreters Newsletter published by Pacific Interpreters.

I first became acquainted with Cindy Roat’s work in 1999, when I took Bridging the Gap training. The goal of this 40-hour curriculum is to build a theoretical framework so an interpreter will be equipped to respond intelligently and effectively to real-life situations. Although Bridging the Gap training prepared me to face a variety of situations and has served me well over the years, I found Healthcare Interpreting in Small Bites to be extremely useful. It not only expands on several topics covered in medical interpreter training, it can also be used as a “stand-alone” resource.

Approach
The book is divided into two parts. Part I comprises articles arranged in four themes. Section 1, “Tips and Tricks of the Trade,” covers interpreting ethics and protocol, how to deal with challenging situations, and techniques for memory improvement, note-taking, controlling communication flow, and handling confrontation. This section also addresses advocacy and general sight translation. Section 2 (“The Key to Success Is Being Prepared”) provides background information and strategies for interpreting in various settings, including pediatrics, asthma clinic, pharmacy, genetics counseling, and behavioral health. Consent and sight translation of consent forms are discussed in detail and two articles are devoted to interpreting at the end of life. Section 3, “The Under-Appreciated Interpreter,” provides background information and strategies for dealing with awkward situations. These strategies include short-term solutions, such as on-the-spot handling of situations involving English-speaking family members, “bilingual” or uncooperative health care professionals, and what to do when a patient or provider challenges the quality of an interpreter’s work. Long-term solutions are discussed in “Training the Whole Team.” Section 4, “Rx for Interpreters,” provides advice on self-care (maintaining physical and mental health), business tips for independent contractors, community service opportunities, and continuing education. Two articles are devoted to background information and test-taking tips for health care interpreter testing. “Interpreting with a Broken Heart” focuses on the challenges encountered when providing interpreting services to patients with poor prognoses and their families and when dealing with emotions that accompany communicating bad news.

Part II uses crossword puzzles and vocabulary exercises to address additional topics for preparing interpreters. The exercises include matching and fill-in-the-blank, as well as “The Real Test” feature, which challenges the reader to put into practice what has been learned. Vocabulary exercises cover obstetrics, dentistry, housing services, domestic abuse, and the hospital financial office. Crossword puzzle topics include cardiology, musculoskeletal system, nutrition, and home health and safety.

Target Audience
With an extensive menu catering to
many tastes, Healthcare Interpreting in Small Bites is an apt title for this book. Its target audience is as extensive as it is diverse. This book is an invaluable resource for practicing on-site and over-the-phone (OTP) interpreters and aspiring interpreters. Trained health care and community interpreters, dual role interpreters (health care professionals with interpreter training), untrained interpreters, interpreting students, and professionals who use the services of interpreters will all find useful advice. Working interpreters will find common sense advice on such diverse topics as when and how to intervene in a conversation, how to handle “uncooperative providers,” and how to prepare for an interpreting skills test. Both on-site and OTP interpreters can benefit from note-taking tips and memory techniques. Students and aspiring interpreters will gain insight on challenging situations in the health care setting, such as interpreting for patients and their families when bad news is being delivered or when end-of-life issues are being discussed.

Professionals who use or arrange for the services of interpreters, including health care providers and administrators, will gain insight into the work and role of medical interpreters as well as techniques for working effectively with interpreters.

Errors/Missing Items

Only a few errors were identified. Genetic counseling is based on complex concepts in cytogenetics and molecular genetics, and simplifying these concepts for the layperson can be challenging. Section 18 (“The ABCs of DNA: Interpreting for Genetic Counseling”) contains the following explanation: “Normally, a sperm or egg starts with 46 chromosomes (23 pairs). During a process called meiosis, the sperm (or egg) splits into two sperm, each with only 23 chromosomes, one from every pair. Then these sperm replicate, forming four sperm, all with 23 chromosomes.” This is incorrect on several accounts.

“Gamete” is the general term for sperm or egg. The haploid number of chromosomes (n) is the number of chromosomes in a gamete. A somatic cell is any body cell other than a gamete, and in the human, each somatic cell is diploid, having twice as many (2n) chromosomes as a gamete. Thus a human somatic cell contains 46 chromosomes (2n=46 chromosomes), while a gamete (egg or sperm) has half as many (n=23). No human sperm or egg has 46 chromosomes, and no egg can split into two, four, or any number of sperm. It appears that what is being described here is the process of gametogenesis, during which diploid germ cells (oocytes or spermatoocytes) give rise to haploid gametes (eggs or sperm). A correct explanation of the process of meiosis would be: “During a cell division process called meiosis, the 46 chromosomes (23 pairs) of a diploid germ cell are first replicated then undergo two rounds of division, which results in haploid gametes (eggs or sperm), each with only 23 chromosomes.” However, this would require the explanation of terms and concepts relating to germ cell, gamete, diploid, haploid, spermatocyte, and oocyte.

The numbering of the figures in this section is a bit confusing. The text refers to Figures 1.2 and 1.3. Figure 1.3 does not appear at all, and Figure 1.1 is neither referred to, nor included. Figure 1.2, entitled “Nondisjunction at meiosis 1,” adds to the chromosome number confusion described above as it shows a “sperm” with 46 chromosomes undergoing two rounds of division to form disomic and nullisomic sperm. These sperm combine with a monosomic egg to form either trisomic or monosomic offspring. There is no explanation in the text of the following terms: nondisjunction, trisomic, and nullisomic. The 46-chromosome “sperm” in the figure is in fact a diploid primary spermatocyte, not a haploid sperm.

In both the Section 39 (“Vocabulary of Obstetrics”) terminology exercise and the answer key, the phrase “chorionic villi sampling” is rendered as “corionic villi sampling” (incorrect spelling); while the phrase used in Section 18 is “chorionic villus sampling.” The latter is the preferred term.

The only missing item is an index. Usually one can make do with a table of contents. Unfortunately, not all the page numbers in this book’s table of contents correspond to the actual text. This minor error can be corrected by penciling in the correct page numbers, and doubtless will be corrected in the next of many printings.
Overall Evaluation

In conclusion, this book is an excellent resource for practicing community and health care interpreters, aspiring interpreters, and professionals who use the services of interpreters. If you are a practicing interpreter, you will find invaluable practical advice to facilitate informed and intelligent decisions. If you are an aspiring interpreter, this book will increase your awareness of the knowledge base expected of professionals and the various situations facing professionals. If you are a health care provider or administrator, you will gain new respect for interpreters and learn techniques for harmonious collaboration. And even if you are not a health care interpreter and have no intention of becoming one, you will find some tasty morsels as well as food for thought in Healthcare Interpreting in Small Bites.

Langenscheidt New College Dictionary German (English-German/ German-English) with New German Spelling

Reviewed by: Geoffrey S. Koby
Edited by: Langenscheidt editorial staff
Publisher: Langenscheidt
Publication date: 2006
Number of pages/entries: 1,800 pages

English-to-German Section: 719 pages; about 105,000 keywords and idioms, with about 255,000 translations.

German-to-English section: 1,081 pages; about 165,000 keywords and idioms, with about 250,000 translations.

ISBNs: 1-58573-518-3 (plain) 1-58573-519-1 (thumb-indexed)

Price: $49.95 (plain) $52.95 (thumb-indexed)

Available from: Langenscheidt www.langenscheidt.com

Before the days of electronic and online dictionaries, the Langenscheidt New College Dictionary German would have made a good choice as one of the standard works on the desk of a translator working with German in either direction. Today, the paper version can only really be recommended as a backup reference or a learner’s dictionary; however, the content is truly extremely useful as a general reference work of the German language. For a professional, a better (and more up-to-date) choice from this publisher might be the Langenscheidt Collins Großwörterbuch Englisch, which, for around $74, includes access to the electronic version (presumably online) at www.langenscheidt.com.

The dictionary is hardbound, with a high-quality binding. It is lightweight with good-quality paper, thumb markings on the page edges, and clear printing in a Times-style typeface with bold Arial headwords. (The typeface in the English-to-German section appears slightly smaller than in the German-to-English section.) The body of dictionary is formatted into three columns. As is typical for larger general German dictionaries, the entries contain an extensive amount of information in addition to the translated words themselves, such as pronunciation (using the International Phonetic Alphabet), word class, collocations, idiomatic usage, and derived forms of the word. Individual definitions are also marked with symbols indicating the domain in which the word is used, such as law, transportation, or chemistry. According to the back cover, the dictionary is a completely new edition with new German spelling, up-to-date words and phrases, colloquial and idiomatic expressions, a large number of modern specialist terms from many fields, detailed grammatical information on German nouns and verbs, and useful appendices. Appendices include:

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