

Van De Geuchte, S. (2015). [Review of the book *Kinder als Dolmetscher in der Arzt-Patienten-Interaktion*, by A. Schmidt-Glenewinkel]. *Linguistica Antverpiensia, New Series: Themes in Translation Studies*, 14, 245–247.

Schmidt-Glenewinkel, A. (2013). *Kinder als Dolmetscher in der Arzt-Patienten-Interaktion*. Frank & Timme: Berlin. 121 p.

Healthcare providers all over the world are increasingly confronted with foreign-language-speaking patients. The resulting language barriers can pose great problems in medical settings, so there is a fundamental need to overcome such barriers, which is where professional community interpreters can help. They are not only trained for these specific settings, but also have a deontological code to follow, which addresses aspects related to, for example, neutrality, confidentiality and accuracy. However, hospitals often do not work with professional community interpreters and, instead, people without any kind of interpreting training (i.e., laypeople) serve as interpreters: bilingual nurses, cleaning staff, family members and even children.

In *Kinder als Dolmetscher in der Arzt-Patienten-Interaktion*, Annika Schmidt-Glenewinkel raises this issue in four chapters. Her aim is to examine the risks and implications of children acting as interpreters for their parents or family members in medical settings. In the book, Schmidt-Glenewinkel uses several studies from different countries and different research disciplines (e.g., linguistics, psychology, public health, communication studies, sociology).

Before addressing the main theme of the book, Schmidt-Glenewinkel positions community interpreting within translation studies (pp. 15–24). It was only in the 1990s that community interpreting became a popular research topic. Before this period, all research endeavours were focused on conference interpreters. Unfortunately, doctors and hospitals often call on bilingual laypeople – instead of professional community interpreters – to interpret. The author rightfully remarks that bilingualism does not automatically entail the ability to translate. Laypeople can support the communication process, but they are not trained for the interpreting job. In this book, the author combines research results from different research disciplines, because the field of translation studies is *de facto* interdisciplinary (pp. 22–24). Translation studies evolved out of different disciplines, such as sociology, public health, linguistics and communication studies.

The second chapter (pp. 25–54) focuses on interpreting in a healthcare setting in Germany and in Berlin in particular. First, Schmidt-Glenewinkel provides a statistical overview of the number of migrants and the results of some surveys among doctors (pp. 25–26). When migrants end up requiring medical care, communication difficulties may arise (pp. 27–31). This can lead to ‘over-care’ (e.g., unnecessary medicine), ‘under-care’ (e.g., prevention and information) and incorrect care (e.g., wrong medicine and therapy). Doctor–patient communication is a complex phenomenon (pp. 31–37): both parties are at different

hierarchical levels and do not have the same knowledge (expert–layperson). If cultural differences are added to this mixture, it is hardly surprising that such communication sometimes goes wrong, especially in specific medical settings, such as psychiatry, where language is of great importance. Nevertheless, German hospitals only seldom call on external interpreter services and, instead, use bilingual staff or family members as interpreters. There are no regulations on this topic and on the funding of community interpreters, which often leads to confusion and ambiguity (pp. 37–45).

Schmidt-Glenewinkel portrays the ideal interpreter from the point of view of translation studies. The image provided shows that interpreting is a complex job, which demands a varied set of skills, knowledge and professionalism (pp. 45–46). The author compares what users expect from interpreters in theory (pp. 47–49) with how different the actual interpreting practice is (pp. 49–54). Medical reality shows that non-professional interpreters are omnipresent in the medical sector and that they often make mistakes: the message is transformed or misunderstood, details remain untranslated, non-professionals decide what is important and what (not) to translate, they answer questions directly instead of allowing patients to do so, etc. Nevertheless, doctors are satisfied with the interpreters' performances because these problematic practices often remain invisible.

The consequences of children acting as interpreters in healthcare settings are discussed in the third chapter (pp. 55–88). The author highlights the topic from four different perspectives: doctor, patient/parent, child and society. One problem that arises in almost every perspective is censorship, which may be in the form of doctors being unable to pose every question that they would like to pose, parents being ashamed to talk about certain topics and children possibly not translating everything because they do not want to hurt one of the parents. Moreover, children are not neutral and accurate. It is remarkable that all parties believe that having children act as interpreters has many advantages (e.g., cost saving, continuity, availability, assertiveness). This may indeed be the case in the short term. However, in the long term, disadvantages dominate: changes in family dynamics, damaged development of the child, identity crises, inefficient care, compliance problems, etc.

The last chapter (pp. 89–103) discusses the need for the professionalization of community interpreting in German healthcare. Schmidt-Glenewinkel concludes that there is a need for professional interpreters and that Germany is lagging behind. Some good practices from all over the world are examined (Australia, United Kingdom, USA, Sweden, Netherlands) (pp. 91–94). In addition, national initiatives or intentions are examined, such as the interpreting service in Berlin and the Federal Association of Interpreters and Translators (*Bundesverband der Dolmetscher und Übersetzer*), the professional association of interpreters and translators in Germany (pp. 94–96). The author remarks that the main

focus of interpreting studies is on the integration of community interpreting into university programmes and on remote interpreting as an alternative for face-to-face interpreting.

Finally, the author suggests some priorities in a professionalization strategy. She states that complete professionalization is not yet possible in Germany, because there is still no political will, there are no trained interpreters for many languages, there is no professional profile, and remuneration is bad.

Previous research has focused on laypeople acting as interpreters in healthcare, but only seldom was the focus specifically on children, although children serving as interpreters is a widespread phenomenon. Annika Schmidt-Glenewinkel's aim with this book is twofold: to raise the issue of child interpreters in healthcare settings and to create greater awareness of the implications and risks inherent in using child interpreters in such settings. She has definitely succeeded in realizing those aims. By highlighting four different perspectives and including studies from different research disciplines and different countries, the author has provided a comprehensive overview of the situation in Germany and beyond, and of the problems associated with children interpreting for their parents. This achievement makes the book a valuable contribution to translation studies.

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