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## REVIEW

**Vorya Dastyar:**  
***Dictionary of education and assessment in  
translation and interpreting studies (TIS)***

(New York and London: Routledge, 2020. 289 pages)

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The volume under review, titled *Dictionary of education and assessment in translation and interpreting studies (TIS)*, is authored by Vorya Dastyar and published by Cambridge Scholars Publishing in 2019. According to the author, the dictionary aims to “offer an in-depth, comprehensive coverage of key terms and topics with regard to training, educating, and assessing translators and interpreters in academic settings” (p. xi). It is believed that several groups of stakeholders will find it “a very useful reference book”, including translation and interpreting (T&I) researchers, educators and trainers, university students, as well as practitioners and assessors. It is therefore the duty of the reviewer to ascertain whether the volume has achieved its intended goals.

The volume consists of four major components: 1) the table of contents; 2) the introduction section, in which the author describes the background, objective and methodology of compiling the dictionary; 3) the main component of the dictionary, where a selection of key terms/entries is alphabetically listed, along with their explanation and discussion (pp. 1-215); and 4) the bibliography section, which contains more than 1600 references (pp. 217-320). Specifically, according to the author (p. xii), a total of 245 terms/entries are included in the volume, with 116 terms being explained in detail and the remaining 129 terms being left as blind entries cross-referenced in the dictionary. In evaluating this volume, the reviewer focuses on its methodological rigor, informativeness, substantiveness, appropriateness and readability.

What first struck the reviewer as a surprise is that the volume fails to help potential readers to gain a quick and overall understanding of its content. The reviewer expected a list of the selected terms/entries and their page number in the table of contents or in an index. But nowhere can this crucial piece of information be found, which is somewhat disappointing. Without such information, the reviewer had to go through the volume, identifying and noting down each term/entry, so as to develop an overall appreciation of the dictionary.

Another crucial area that needs to be described, or, perhaps, explained and justified, pertains to the methodology the author relied on to select the 245 terms. In the introduction section of the volume, the author (p. xii) briefly states that the deliberate selection was based on his inspection of “subject indices of many works of various types (dictionaries, encyclopedias, research monographs, journal articles, published and unpublished theses, etc.)” and on the analysis of “a list of keywords that occurred to mind, in the *Benjamins Translation Studies Bibliography*”. This description may be inadequate to justify the author’s selection of 245 terms and his decision to explain 116 terms and to leave others unexplained. The reviewer was expecting a thorough and transparent description and documentation of how the author had identified an initial pool of relevant terms, what selection criteria were used to select a core body of 245 key terms, what decision-making processes were involved when it came to writing on a subset ( $n = 116$ ) of the selected terms, what principle(s) had guided the author in explaining the 116 terms, and what was the common/typical structure of an entry. Regretta-

bly, such important information concerning research methodology is left undescribed and undiscussed, which may ultimately render potential audience question the legitimacy, justifiability and comprehensiveness of the entries included.

Regarding the main body of the dictionary (i.e., the alphabetically listed entries), the reviewer read and examined each entry, with a keen interest to evaluate their informativeness, substantiveness, appropriateness and readability, while also calculating some descriptive statistics about the distribution and percentage of the terms/entries. Again, surprisingly, the reviewer found that the number of the explained terms/entries seems to be 120 (not 116), whereas that of the blind terms/entries 125 (not 129). Overall, there are 186 entries (76%) relating to T&I education and training, while 59 entries (24%) to assessment. More specifically, among the 120 explained and 125 blind entries, the majority of them pertain to T&I education (78%,  $n = 93$ ; 74%,  $n = 93$ , respectively), indicating that the volume assigns a larger weight to T&I education than assessment. In addition, readers may need to be aware that although the volume seems to present key terms from A to Z, it actually spans over 21 letters (no terms/entries under J, K, L, X and Y), with most terms/entries concentrating on only seven letters (i.e., A, C, E, I, P, S and T) accounting for 72% of the total number of the entries ( $n = 176$ ).

When it comes to the coverage of the entries, the reviewer feels that, overall, the volume has a fair representation of key terms and topics concerning T&I education and assessment. Nonetheless, on the one hand, it may include a few superfluous or non-significant terms/entries. For example, such terms as “demand-control schema”, “small group learning” and “webinar” could be done away with, as they are less discussed in the literature. Plus, the author does not seem to provide an engaging and detailed description and discussion of these terms. Additionally, the term “halo effect” may not be necessary, as it only represents one of many rater effects and is too specific to be justified as a stand-alone entry. It may be subsumed under an entry called “rater effect”, in which rater severity, central tendency and rater drift are discussed. On the other hand, the volume may have missed a number of important and trending topics in T&I education and assessment. For instance, “teaching translation/interpretation into B language” is one such topic that has attracted much attention, which is directly related to “directionality”. Another missed entry would be “audio-visual translation” (alternatively, “subtitling”) and its teaching and assessment. Also, given the increasing use of machine translation (e.g., Google Translate), such terms as “revision” and “post-editing” could be introduced as new entries. Furthermore, despite that the volume includes “performance-(based) assessment” as an independent entry and also discusses authentic assessment under the entry of “authenticity”, it should also pay attention to “rater-mediated assessment” and “automated assessment”, with the former highlighting the predominant nature of T&I assessment and the latter foreseeing an emergent trend. Finally, although the volume touches on sign language interpreting (SLI) under a number of generic entries (e.g., curriculum), it does not discuss any topics uniquely related to SLI training.

With respect to the content of the entries, a reasonable proportion of the entries, particularly such generic terms/entries as “authenticity”, “aptitude”, “assessment”, “curriculum”, “model”, “quality” and “expertise”, are largely informative and substantive, because the author discussed such terms from multiple perspectives. In effect, each entry resembles a multi-part mini-review of a given term/concept, focusing on different subtopics that are often associated with the generic term. However, the reviewer found it difficult to obtain a key take-away message from the explanation and discussion of certain entries, because the author sometimes failed to integrate and structure information from previous literature in a logical and accessible manner and also failed to prioritize and focus. Take the entry “authenticity” for example: in discussing the ways to enhance authenticity (p. 35), the author shifted focus rapidly and constantly between translation and interpreting, between training/pedagogy and assessment, and between learning environment and use of technology, leaving potential readers struggling to identify concrete measures (e.g., listed as bulletin points) to improve authenticity. In addition, the way the author composes sentences introduces another layer of complexity that causes high cognitive load and reduces readability. Essentially, the author has an inclination to construct unnecessarily long and syntactically complicated sentences (often one-third or even a half of a page), in which lengthy lists of references are inserted in inappropriate places. Such sentences are abundant, and can be found every three or four pages (see, e.g., on p. 17, p. 20, p. 21, p. 23, p. 37). Comprehending such sentences takes time and requires multiple readings, to which the reviewer did not quite get accustomed until half way through the volume.

Apart from the comprehension problems above, the reviewer would like to point out some factually questionable content. For example, in discussing “authenticity”, the author writes (p. 34) “authenticity, being an important aspect of test RELIABILITY and VALIDITY ...”. In language testing literature, while authenticity could be regarded as one specific aspect of the overall concept of validity, it is a property that is distinguished from reliability. In fact, the more authentic a test is, the less reliable test scores may tend to be. This is because an authentic assessment context that incorporates all sorts of uncontrolled variables would introduce more sources of measurement error. It is sometimes referred to as reliability-validity paradox. On page 162, the author also writes “Rubrics, as one aspect of testing theory ...”. However, test theory, be it classical or modern, typically concerns statistical estimation of person and item parameters, and has little to do with rubrics, although rubrics may be used to generate raw ratings or scores. Furthermore, when describing test validity, the author lists several different kinds of “validities”, including “ecological validity” (see p. 211). However, ecological validity is usually not categorized as one type of validity evidence in testing and assessment literature; instead, it is ordinarily discussed in the context of experimental design to refer to the degree to which elicited performance in experiment predicts behaviors in real-world settings.

One last concern with the content of the entries is the author’s description and characterization of “inter-rater reliability”, which is treated synonymously to “inter-coder reliability” (p.

154, see also “intra-rater/coder reliability”, p. 155). This may be problematic, because the word “coder” typically refers to a person who codes qualitative data in qualitative analysis, while a “rater” provides quantitative metrics in performance assessment. Regarding the concept of inter-rater reliability, the reviewer suggests distinguishing *rater consistency* from *rater consensus*. While rater consistency concerns the degree to which raters provide consistent estimates of a given phenomenon (i.e., rank-ordering or relative consistency), rater consensus refers to the extent to which raters make exactly the same decisions or judgments about the object of particular concern (i.e., absolute agreement).

The final component of the volume is arguably “one of the most comprehensive and relevant bibliographies” (p. xii), which indeed represents a valuable source of bibliographic information concerning T&I education and assessment. Particularly, when reading a given entry, future readers have opportunity to consult relevant references to develop an in-depth understanding.

Overall, the reviewer is impressed with the author’s effort to compile such a volume, especially considering that it is completed within a relatively short period of time (see p. xii, “the fruit of more than a year of labour”). Despite its informativeness, the volume has a number of obvious downsides (e.g., lack of justification for the inclusion of the entries, lack of readability concerning description of some generic terms, failure to incorporate numerous important topics), as has been illustrated above.

Currently, there are a number of reference books in T&I studies (e.g., a series of Routledge Handbooks in Translation and Interpreting Studies), including the two widely acknowledged and distributed encyclopedias: 1) the *Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies* (the third edition) (Baker and Saldanha, 2019) and 2) the *Routledge Encyclopedia of Interpreting Studies* (Pöchhacker, 2015). Undoubtedly, these two edited volumes, incorporating contributions from established scholars and researchers worldwide, provide a more authoritative and systematic discussion of core concepts and topics involved in a diverse array of subfields in T&I studies. In contrast, the volume under review targets a specific subfield (i.e., T&I education and assessment) and is a culmination of hard work of a single author. The granularity and diversity of specific terms/entries may (somewhat) compensate for the lack of authority and readability.

So, in the final analysis, the reviewer believes that the current volume is a useful source of information on T&I education and assessment, as far as experienced T&I researchers and educators are concerned. With sufficient background knowledge, researchers and educators could consult the dictionary and develop further understanding based on key references provided in each entry. But the same cannot be said to T&I students, who may not have accumulated relevant knowledge, given that discussion of most generic terms is unfocused and the writing is reader-unfriendly. To improve readability and enhance relevance, the reviewer would suggest that the author revise the table of contents by adding an alphabetically list of the terms/entries and their page number, rewrite syntactically complicated sentences into relatively

concise and digestible ones, as well as prioritize the most important content and discussion relating to a given term/entry and cut trivial, distracting details. Hopefully, the second version of the dictionary would provide better reading experience to its audiences.

## References

BAKER, Mona, and Gabriela SALDANHA, 2019: *Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies* (3rd ed.), London: Routledge.

PÖCHHACKER, Franz, 2015: *Routledge Encyclopedia of Interpreting Studies*, London: Routledge.