

CARA A CARA: ENTREVISTA ANTHONY PYM

Interview for *Info.Net-Translations* (mes 12, diciembre 2000). The publication was in Spanish. The following is the English original of the responses:

1. Sintetice cuál es su teoría sobre la traducción

I am a sociologist who works on relations between cultures. Translation interests me because:

- a) Translators are often members of interculturalities, i.e. cultures that exist in the intersections or overlaps of sedentary cultures. These interculturalities are also often nomadic, especially as assisted by electronic communications. Nomadic culture may be opposed to the sedentary cultures of nation-states and official languages.
- b) Translators are particularly interesting members of interculturalities in that they use languages, and languages are among the most powerful instruments of sedentary cultural identity (i.e. the thing that makes a Spanish person feel Spanish, etc.). Translators are thus by definition in a difficult and contradictory situation: without wholly or only belonging to a sedentary culture (since they by definition know at least one foreign language), they are employed to work in the interests of sedentary cultures.

2. ¿Hasta qué punto considera factible aplicar las teorías de la traducción en el mundo laboral?

Hasta ningún punto, en cuanto a las teorías actuales. The intellectual challenge is to identify real-world problems ensuing from the labour market and then produce tools able to help solve them. Those problems now involve the integration of language-processing technology of many kinds (voice-recognition, TM software, MT programmes) and close collaboration with controlled writing and post-editing. They thus require far more than translation theory, just as the market requires far more than translators.

3. ¿Por qué están mitificados los traductores literarios?

I am not aware of any mythologization. Adulation is now more likely to accrue to the new-economy localizers. As André Lefevere once put it, the sacred values once attached to the literary genius (and thus at a lesser level to literary translators) now apply to the technical text: no longer do we care about getting the right tone or nuance, it is enough that one can read the text then push the right button.

4. ¿Cuál ha sido su proyecto más ambicioso?

Setting up the Tarragona Masters in Spanish-English Technical Translation. This has required forgetting about what is done in the university system. Instead, we have had to think about the new labour demands, the real needs of students, and the integration of distance learning.

5. ¿Quién es para Ud. un modelo a seguir como traductor?

The market is changing so fast that there are no valid models to follow. One should absorb information, mistrust the hype, and then experiment so that you become your own model.

6. ¿Qué opina de la traducción automática?

MT is now part of the language services we must offer, mostly in situations where it can be combined with controlled writing. I am less enthusiastic about MT systems with heavy post-editing.

Beware of the politics of MT. The transfer-based EU-Systran system is now highly performative for official EU texts between French, Spanish and Portuguese, simply because a

great deal of programming has been invested in these cognate language pairs. The end result will be an artificial prolongation of French as an EU source language and a significant delay in accepting an interlingua architecture for MT.

I believe that an interlingua MT system is the only logical solution for a Europe of not 11 but 60 or so official languages, including Catalan, Basque and Galician.

7. ¿Cómo influyen las nuevas tecnologías en el trabajo del traductor?

They are making translators do things like controlled technical writing, revision, pre- and post-editing for MT, cross-cultural consulting, website designing, formatting of all kinds, project managing, various degrees of IT reengineering, and the general use of voice rather than fingers to communicate (voice-recognition software is now a necessity). All these things are much better than rendering words on a computer screen all day. They should combine into integrated language services of which translation is becoming just one small part. The providers of those services are being paid much more than the translators who do no more than translate.

8. ¿Cuál es el destino de la traducción?

I don't think I understand the question. I believe that translation fundamentally exists to separate languages or cultures, and thereby to prop up sedentary cultural nationalism. Translational language is more standardized and less innovative than nontranslational language, and the more a culture translates the less it is in direct exchange with the foreign. In sum, I believe that the interests of nomadic interculturalities are not well served by translation, and I welcome with enthusiasm the transformation of translation into more high-profile modes of cultural mediation.

9. ¿Qué libro de traducción es para Ud. una obra maestra?

El Quijote, of course.