

Translation Studies: An Interview with Mary Snell-Hornby

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Mary Snell-Hornby, catedrática de la Universidad de Viena y presidenta de la European Society for Translation Studies, inauguró el I Congreso de la EST, celebrado en la Universidad Carolina de Praga en septiembre de 1995, en el transcurso del cual se realizó esta entrevista, que recoge algunas de las tendencias actuales de los estudios de traducción en el mundo académico europeo.

- Q. Dr. Snell-Hornby, as president of the EST (European Society for Translation Studies), could you outline the society's main objectives?
- A. The European Society for Translation Studies (EST) sees itself as an international forum for those engaged in the scholarly study of translation and interpreting. Its objectives, as laid down in the Constitution, are to promote research in the field of translating and interpreting, to promote further education for teachers and trainers, to offer consulting services on issues of teaching and training, and to facilitate contacts between the profession and the academic training institutions.
- Q. Given that Translation is becoming an independent discipline, what would you say will be its role in the near future?
- A. Now that Translation Studies are emancipated itself largely from Literary Studies and Linguistics, I see its role mainly as an interdiscipline, overlapping with other disciplines (such as psychology, computer science, ethnology, etc.) according to the particular focus of study or research. It cannot develop in total isolation from these other fields, but is not actually dependent on any of them - this interdisciplinary, dynamic approach is characteristic of many other fields of study today.

- Q.** What are the current trends in the field of Translation and Interpretation?
- A.** As stated above, interdisciplinary cooperation, with a strong tendency towards computer-aided research on the one hand, and culturally oriented studies on the other, along with an increasing tendency to incorporate the concrete needs of the market. Further trends seem to be an increased interest in guided research training and new teaching methods (such as distance learning).
- Q.** Despite the fact that recent translation theories seem to ignore the contribution of Linguistics, in your *Translation Studies* you still value the role of some aspects of Linguistics in Translation. Could you explain some of the reasons for this?
- A.** For a long time Translation Studies was considered to be merely a branch of Applied Linguistics and was dominated by linguistic concepts and methods even where had little to do with the concrete realities of translation (such as transformational grammar in the 1960s) and even hindered the development of Translation Studies. Hence the violent reaction against the linguistic tutelage. However, some of the more pragmatic linguistic approaches (such as the speech act theory, prototype semantics and text linguistics) can indeed be made relevant for translation, as many studies over the last two decades have shown.
- Q.** As an expert in Literary Translation, what would you consider to be the most important factors in literary adaptation which will lead to the desired effect on today's reader and, consequently, to editorial success?
- A.** The key words, I think, are cooperation and transparency. In the case of prose fiction this means cooperation with the publisher, and where possible with the author, whereby the role of the translator as multicultural expert needs to be given due prominence (and should be reflected in both the time allowed for the translation and the fee paid

for it). The motivation for the translation, along with its purpose and intended readership should then be made quite clear in a note or preface to the book. In the case of translation for stage and screen, the hack role of the “rough translator” should be abolished, and the translator should be integrated into the production team and take full responsibility for his text.

- Q.** Do you think the status of an author who has been, to use a simplistic expression, badly translated may not be fully appreciated or even ignored within the literature and readership of the target language?
- A.** Of course, the translation can influence the reception of an author in the target culture. To take one example: for a long time Chechov was unappreciated in Germany, because the translations of his plays were considered “unutterably boring.”
- Q.** As you know, in Spanish Universities, Translation is beginning to establish itself as an independent discipline, and we hope that before long we will be on a par with other European countries. Could you comment on Spain’s future in this field?
- A.** I find the dynamic development of Translation Studies in Spain extremely exciting, and I am full of admiration for those who are working so hard in the field. There may be a tendency to provide too many centres for too many students, because the market is after all limited. For those who have the necessary talent and determination however, there is certainly room for development in the future.
- Q.** It is obvious that the Spanish language, in spite of its demographic expansion and literary history, is not a common medium of communication in conferences or international meetings even on a European level. As president of the EST and an expert in this field, what do you think are the reasons for this situation?

- A. The reasons are, I think, partly historical and partly economic. French was the international language of diplomacy until after the First World War, and English has now emerged as the world lingua franca. Germany is an economic power (and German has recently reemerged as lingua franca of much of Central Europe). Spain joined the European Community as a relative latecomer - and Latin America, where Spanish is spoken, is far away. Hence the “language structure” of the “European family” - a pragmatic, geopolitical affair.