

Entrevista con el Profesor

PETER NEWMARK

por JOYCE GREER

El Profesor Peter Newmark, de la Universidad de Surrey, conocido en España y en casi todo el mundo por sus libros sobre teoría y práctica de la traducción, participó en los *V Encuentros Complutenses en Torno a la Traducción*, celebrados en Madrid, en febrero de 1994. Durante dichos Encuentros impartió una brillante conferencia en la que trató ciertos aspectos de la traducción en términos de correlaciones. Al final de los Encuentros, el Profesor Newmark tuvo la amabilidad de concederle a Joyce Greer, profesora del IULMyT, la entrevista que se reproduce a continuación:

QUESTION: How did you first become interested, or involved, in the field of translation?

PETER NEWMARK: For a number of reasons.

I went up with the system. I used to be a language teacher; in the early 70's I was expected to specialize more, so I specialized in translation. I went against the current, which was the over-emphasis on the spoken language, which had long been neglected. And I'd always liked translation. I got one or two translation jobs. All this made me reflect on translation. I'm a compulsive writer, and for twenty years I'd published articles on language teaching. Now, I suddenly started writing about translation, and I was read by far more people.

Q. What qualities do you feel are indispensable in the person who wants to become a translator?

N. First, endless curiosity, because a translator has to translate all kinds of texts and has to become a temporary expert in all kinds of subjects. Secondly, ability to write his or her own language well. Thirdly, knowledge of one or more foreign languages.

Q. What, in your opinion, is the value of formal translation studies in the translator's formation?

N. This can vary, but as translation is a profession now, I think that all translators should take a professional course in formal translation studies, because that is how they become qualified. There are natural actors and there are natural translators, but in 1994, this natural talent either for acting or translating is not enough. This is the age of CVs, and a translator's CV should show a qualification in formal translation studies.

Q. What aspect of formal translation studies is, in your opinion, of most value to students?

N. Two or three: One, the practice of translation in two or three topics, which is the core of formal translation studies. Secondly, a type of educational training in writing his or her target language in various registers, i.e. formal English, if English is the language, informal English (and those are the two great divides), but also academic English and technical English where appropriate. Thirdly, an introduction, or a basic course, in what I call principles

and methods of translation and other people call translation studies and others, so help me, call translatology. This is, I think, a core course, and it should not be historical but practical; I'm not being antihistorical, but history is not the main point of it.

Q. Do you consider translating and interpreting two sides of the same coin or two distinct disciplines? Can one person do both professionally?

A. That's an excellent question. I think they are two distinct disciplines, and there are wide differences between them. Interpreting is often a matter of temperament, of ability to react quickly, of summarizing and explaining, and extemporizing, and diplomacy. It needs a quick-witted person. Translating, which means written to written, normally gives you more time. I know deadlines rule translation, but it's not the same thing as interpreting. In translation you go over the original text, and you can't do this in interpreting, and therefore, Selleskovitch is a hundredfold wrong in trying to identify interpreting with translating. When she talks about deverbalization, she's really talking about interpreting. Translating is a more considered subject, a more accurate subject, where there is time to revise one's version, to reflect.

Now, can one person do both professionally? Yes. It does not happen infrequently that somebody starts as an interpreter and then finds the work too strenuous, because it is extremely strenuous for short periods, and finds that translating, which does not require the same sort of high-powered temperament, is more congenial.

Q. Must a translator specialize?

A. I think translators should specialize in one or two topics; I think that he or she is

disadvantaged if she cannot say, I specialize in medicine, or in computer terminology, computers, or business. These are three of the sort of *professions de pointe*, to use a French term, I mean these are really needed, and I think the translator advertises herself best if she can do this. But she must be versatile; she must be able to get up other topics as well.

Q. Where do you see the most promising future for young translators?

A. This depends on the market, the good old market. It seems to me that there ought to be a promising future for communication of what's normally called technology transfer to Third World countries who need the knowledge, and in parallel with organizations such as Amnesty International, which needs translators. But here, as I say, it's finally the market that counts, and I can't really prophesy; I've given you two possibilities.

Q. You use the term *service translation* for what the Spanish call *traducción inversa*. What can an employer or client reasonably expect from a service translation.

A. Well, this depends on the fluency of the translators in translating out of their own language, and this may vary a lot. But what the employer should reasonably expect is a comprehensible maybe paraphrase, maybe extended paraphrase, of the version or text that is written in the translator's own language. Hopefully, this can be revised by somebody who has this second language as his language of habitual use, that there can be some cooperation. But really, strictly, one knows that this *service translation* (which by the way is Anthony Crane's term, and as far as I know has not gone into general use), realistically has to be done. And I was rightly criticized by Gerald McAllister,

an English translation teacher in Finland, for not taking it seriously enough. But I've always known that it has to be done, and people ought to do some translating out of their own language, although I can't go into detail. Certainly at Surrey I have students, Scandinavian students and French students, who have to do the service translation.

Then back to the question *reasonably be expected*, well, something that is comprehensible but is not as close as the normal close translation. And something where the sense is clear but the idioms, the particular characteristics of the language may not be naturally rendered.

Q. What books in translation have you most enjoyed reading?

A. I ought to start by saying that I love poetry, and I much appreciated the poems translated by Stefan George from English into German, Roy Campbell from Spanish or French into English, and Michael Hamburger from German into English. Having said that, all my reading of Russian has been in translation, and I've really been dependent on Constance Garnett, as far as I remember, for the Russian classics. I've certainly enjoyed them, and I've enjoyed reading Chekhov plays, although here Michael Frayn is the modern translator of Chekhov, whom I've enjoyed. And I think that's all, because although I'm very keen on the theatre, I haven't particularly liked any translations in reading of Racine, for instance, though I've been quite fascinated by John Cairncross.

Q. What have you most enjoyed translating?

A. That's also a good question. Well, I enjoyed recently very much having to translate professionally a medical article on

the Diogenes syndrome, which means old people like me who go wild, lead their own life, as apparently Diogenes did. Technically, there were technical words, but it wasn't too bad, and it was quite a fascinating description. I did that for the local hospital.

I enjoyed doing a sort of *big speech* of a German industrialist, a rather humane retirement speech, where he included both technical terms and rather general vocabulary. These are often the most challenging both linguistically and referentially, or, if you like, from an encyclopedia point of view. And these are the most recent ones, because I am an occasional translator. I have translated books, but those so long ago that I can't really say much about them now. So, I'll mention those two - a medical translation on the Diogenes syndrome and this speech of the Chairman of the Board of a large German pharmaceutical firm, which I was asked to translate.