


Interview with de Pedro Ricoy, Full Professor of Translation and Interpreting at the University of Stirling

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Raquel De Pedro Ricoy is a Full Professor of Translation and Interpreting at the University of Stirling. She has spent most of her academic career training translators and interpreters and has also worked as a lexicographer, freelance translator and interpreter. She has been a visiting professor at the universities of Bologna (Italy), Havana (Cuba) and the Pontifical Catholic University of Peru. She was also co-investigator on a British Research Council AHRC-funded project (2014-2016) studying the role of state-trained indigenous translators and interpreters in the legislated mediation of indigenous rights in Peru today. She was the principal investigator on a follow-up project (2018-2019) funded by the AHRC/GCRF, which focused on the role of untrained indigenous interpreters in ensuring the exercise of the human rights of indigenous Peruvian women in the Andean region in the areas of justice, education and health. She is an associate researcher in the MELINCO project, funded by the Dirección Xeral de Relacións Exteriores e coa Unión Europea (Spain), which studies linguistic mediation for development cooperation.

C.V.G. The European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (1992) explicitly indicates that the term ‘regional or minority languages’ means *languages that are traditionally used within a given territory of a State by nationals of that State*, and ‘[...] does not include [...] the languages of migrants.’ Nevertheless, the number of speakers of those languages is increasing noticeably, and it doesn’t seem that progress is being made when it comes to providing answers to the communication problems that arise. What do you think about this? What solutions or steps forward would you propose?

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The impetus behind the EU Charter for Regional or Minority Languages was to protect and promote historical regional and minority languages *within* Nation-States, which explains the exclusion of the languages of migrants. This is a policy issue that does not, in principle, detract from the provision of language support to guarantee the linguistic human rights of migrants in matters related to health and justice, for instance. Thus, regulated Translation and Interpreting Support is provided across the EU member States, and beyond, to speakers of non-autochthonous languages, whether these are minority or global ones (such as English or Arabic). It is true that challenges related to interlingual communication remain in everyday life, and that community members who speak an official language of the State often act as *ad hoc* interpreters. Raising awareness among institutions and migrant populations alike of how to access TIS and what it covers is crucial to ensure that such challenges can be overcome.

C.V.G. The COVID-19 pandemic had undoubtedly a very negative impact on migrants whose situation worsened by the lack of resources and communication in those languages in which provision was needed. Do you think that social awareness of the important role of translators and interpreters has increased? Have institutions become more aware of this issue?

The disproportionate effect that the Covid-19 pandemic had on ethnic minority communities (not only on migrant communities) in the Global North attracted a lot of media coverage. However, the key role that translators and interpreters play in a global health crisis was rarely acknowledged. Instead, community initiatives were highlighted, and rightly so, as they provided culturally appropriate support and assistance for people who had limited or no competence in their host country language. For this reason, my opinion is that social awareness of the value of T&I did not increase. The expectation that migrant communities should learn an official language of the State where they reside, which focuses on integration rather than inclusion, still has considerable traction.

C.V.G. The recent Ukrainian crisis has posed a challenge to the EU which has activated in record time measures never thought of before. However, there are other crisis such as the war in Syria and the fall of Afghanistan which, after an initial aid, seem to have been forgotten or the aid has been reduced. The use of bilingual people with no training, a low remuneration, and volunteering are still common practice. What is your opinion about this? What solutions would you propose to move forward in crisis situations? What role should governments play? And the Academia?

When displacement is the result of an armed conflict, the boundaries between (temporary) migrants, asylum seekers and refugees can be blurred, if not legally, at least in public opinion. Official support from local, regional or national governments may be hampered by a lack of professional translators and interpreters who have the required language combination. Anecdotally, when the Russian invasion of Ukraine reportedly forced millions of Ukrainian citizens to leave their country, I received requests from two NGOs to help identify Ukrainian and/or Russian speakers with competence in English who would be willing to volunteer as interpreters in Scotland. As was the case during the Syrian war, community members who were already living in the host country mobilised to offer support to the new incomers. As for the role of academia, I believe that socialising the findings of previous studies and the lessons learned, as well as providing expert advice to relevant institutions, can make a valuable contribution.

C.V.G. The CIUTI International Conference was held in Lima and in Latin America for the first time. One of its themes was focused on indigenous languages, where research on interculturality, decoloniality and T&I was presented. Given that you have worked with indigenous languages and know them well, can you tell us what those projects consisted of?

First of all, many congratulations to CIUTI's Peruvian LOC! Previously, Lima had hosted the XII International FIT Forum in 2015, which also included indigenous languages as a main theme. This is an indication that Peru is making inroads into addressing the complexity that surrounds T&I in postcolonial contexts. I was involved in two projects that allowed me to experience such complexity first hand: "Translating Cultures: The legislated mediation of indigenous rights in contemporary Peru" (funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council, UK, 2014-2017) and "Improving Women's Lives Through The Role Of Female Social Interpreters In Rural Peru" (funded by the Global Challenges Research Fund and the Arts and Humanities Research Council, UK, 2018-2019). Both of them were conducted in collaboration with Prof. Luis Andrade Ciudad (PUCP) and Prof. Rosaleen Howard (Newcastle University), with the NGO *Asociación Servicios Educativos Rurales* (SER) as a partner in both, and the Peruvian Vice-Ministry for Interculturality as a partner in the former.

The first project focused on the State-led provision for translation and interpreting between Spanish and the indigenous languages of Peru. It addressed language policy planning and implementation, including the State-sponsored training of indigenous translators and interpreters. The second project focused on the role that female community leaders play in cross-cultural, interlinguistic mediation between members of their communities and representatives of the State. They do so routinely, without training or remuneration and, in a way, fill in a gap in official provision. A collection of outputs (in Spanish with links to English versions) can be found at <https://editorial.upc.edu.pe/traducir-derechos-traducir-culturas-dog2q.html>.

C.V.G. Given your research experience both in indigenous languages and in PSIT, what similarities do you find in these two realities – indigenous languages and the languages of migrants? What differences?

I see a key difference between these two scenarios. Indigenous or aboriginal (aka originary) languages had been spoken for centuries in territories where conquest and colonisation resulted in the languages of the foreign imperial powers becoming the official, hegemonic ones in the newly created States. In contrast, migrants settle in a country with whose social, political and economic structures, as well as its official language(s), they are not necessarily conversant. While asymmetries related to the status of languages and cultures apply in both cases, policy needs to address them differently. Historical discrimination against originary peoples, their languages and their cultures in postcolonial contexts warrants this, especially as it has been perpetuated to a large extent.

C.V.G. Scientific production on PSIT has progressed significantly while in practice, it hasn't advanced so much. There are still different responses, little training, lack of an appropriate budget and resources, lack of a record of translators and interpreters in languages of lesser diffusion (LLD), lack of accreditation systems... What is your opinion about this? Why this standstill when it is clear that we live in a global multilingual society?

The gap between theory and/or critical analysis, on the one hand, and practice, on the other, needs to be breached. It is undeniable that what has been labelled as "superdiversity" poses

significant challenges in terms of adequate provision to ensure fair treatment for all, and academics need to liaise efficiently with institutions and service providers to meet these challenges. Training in PSIT is essential, but professional rewards (pay, working conditions, etc.) need to match the investment in time and money that trainees make.

C.V.G. We now find ourselves in a double transition – both ecological and digital – what challenges does TIPS face in this 21st century? How can those changes or are they affecting the training of translators and interpreters?

The need for remote interpreting has never been more apparent than it is now. Training in this area for both T&I practitioners and public service clients is essential.

C.V.G. How is PSIT being affected by digitalisation? Or how do you think it affects PSIT, particularly when considering LLD? What about the interest in boosting the use of a *lingua franca*? Is the digital divide increasing? Or on the contrary, are linguistic and cultural barriers being removed and thus, promoting the integration of migrant peoples?

The use of a *lingua franca* is not unusual in PSIT contexts, often resulting in partial interpreting (a tricky situation for practitioners to navigate) or the production of written texts that are not accessible to their intended beneficiaries for literacy or socialisation reasons. A *lingua franca* can be perceived as a useful shortcut when, say, a speaker of a minority language from a postcolonial country is presumed to have competence in the colonial, hegemonic language of their country, or when a migrant displays some level of understanding of an official language of the host country. However, these scenarios may fall short of complying with issues relates to informed consent or access to justice, for instance.

C.V.G. Do you think a paradigm shift in T&I is taking place as there are quite different ways of translating a text – written and spoken – from one language to another (subtitling, transcreation, respawning, machine translation...)?

If a paradigm shift is happening, my opinion is that it should translate (no pun intended) into closer links between academia and the T&I industry.

C.V.G. Do you consider PSIT a specialization within T&I Studies? Should it be included in university curricula and/or in secondary education? What training should be provided? What would you recommend?

Yes, PSIT is a specific area within T&I. I have no doubt that some secondary school students interpret or sight-translate *ad hoc* regularly. More broadly, studies indicate that grass-roots responses to everyday language-access needs are common. The integration of specialised training in university curricula, a stage at which students can be expected to have a high level of both competence and performance in at least two languages, should be complemented by subject area-specific (e.g., legal systems, health) and ethics input. Furthermore, the development of skills to undertake research and to engage with autonomous learning and continuous professional development should be encouraged. As I mentioned previously, personal and financial investment in what is a very challenging profession needs to be recognised and properly rewarded. Otherwise, conference interpreting will remain by far a more attractive proposition. The response to T&I needs in PS needs to be articulated around institutional practices. Procurement mechanisms for TIS provision (increasingly

common) should be strengthened, to ensure that access to human rights and wellbeing is not compromised.

C.V.G. Any advice for Translators and Interpreters in minority languages?

The main one would be collaboration between native speakers of majority (host-country) languages and of minority languages, as required. Also, translators and interpreters need to be properly insured in case something goes awry. In addition, interpreters and their clients should be fully aware of the scope and limits of the interpreter's role. A clear understanding of disclosure and confidentiality clauses is particularly important in the case of minority linguistic communities

THANKS FOR YOUR COOPERATION