

On Students of Translation (...A What?)

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There are many arduous situations all students of Translation have to endure from the very moment that the hopes of becoming a real-life hero of communication glimmer in their hearts. We, as masters of the language, knights of the verbal expression, bodyguards of terminological accuracy, bridges of linguistic dissimilarities (and in other words, the most annoying people to watch a subtitled movie with) constantly have to overcome unpleasant situations. From having only a couple of hours to answer extensive questionnaires based on novels about mice, traps, *carpinchos* and *armadillos*, to having to write equally long articles on those unexciting and not at all creativity-developing topics; the list is exhaustive. There is also the everyday stress due to the fear of having to be constantly measured by the walking-dictionaries, world's-knowledge-owners and the representation of everything we desire to become one day: the lecturers. However, contrary to what may be assumed, the biggest problem of every Translation student is in no way related to those issues. Nonetheless, it does start with an article and involves a question. It is the most frequently heard response to their mention to the eagerness of becoming a translator: "A what?"

In order to avoid being completely isolated from the world (that magnificent part of reality which is not inside a dictionary or a book), Translation undergraduates must participate in social activities. Otherwise they may fall in the trap of believing that scandalizing when discovering some World-War-Three-possible-trigger and life-threatening grammar mistakes (on something as insignificant as a bottle of shampoo) is an actual commonsense hobby. Therefore, they maintain friendships. And to do so, they are often obliged to tolerate the utterly unsettling ignorance of their friends. Friends, who find it acceptable to encase the rich world of Translation under the broad term "English", and will brutally come up with phrases such as "my friend who studies English" to refer to you. Of course, it is sensible of us to accept the fact that "my friend the knight of the verbal expression" would be perhaps a little sumptuous. But as we see it, there is no correspondence between our perception of what we study and theirs. Whereas novels in the field of "restraining oneself from becoming a murderer" may attempt to explain that difference, experts (graduates from the art of "counting to ten") tend to smile and nod with repressed frustration.

Had students of Translation chosen to become doctors, lawyers or architects, their friends would have no problem to refer to them properly. Unfortunately, a Translation undergraduate has the certainty that he will forever be called as the "English-stuff-knower". Therefore, the most advisable posture to take is that of acceptance of the fact that there are people who do not possess such an impressively vast knowledge of the world (because, of course, it has been self-proven by translators that they know everything and more). They ought to stomach this ordeal, and feel the

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exclusivity of enduring something characteristic of their course of studies (as it goes without saying that it only happens to those who study Translation). After having done this, and only then, will future translators be able to coexist with their “stuff-fixer” friends who study Engineering, their “stuff-painter” friends who study Arts, their “old-stuff-lover” friends who study History. I consider myself a living proof that with a little patience, one or two thousand yoga classes, and the invaluable support of future colleagues, it is possible to be a sociable student of Translation and not die in the attempt.