

Interlanguage

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I'm going to try to outline some theoretical considerations related to intercultural transfer that depend on graphics —on visual representations of the theoretical models— without using graphics.

Model One: an adaptation of Karl Popper's Three World model —three mutually interlocking circles (forming a triangle, like three-fifths of the symbol of the Olympic Games). One represents the material world (physical world, Nature), another represents the social world (Culture), the third represents the world of the individual.

In this model the material world overlaps partly with the social world and also with the individual world; the social world overlaps partly with the material world and also with the individual world; the individual world overlaps partly with the material world and also with the social world.

There is a zone in the centre of the image where all three worlds meet, and there is a part of each of the three worlds that does not overlap anywhere.

Let us read «to overlap» as «to condition» or «to overdetermine».

To some extent the material world conditions (overdetermines) the social world and the individual; to some extent the social world intervenes in (modifies the conditions of) the material world and conditions (overdetermines) the individual;

dual; to some extent the individual can intervene in (modify the conditions of) the material world and the social world.

Now let's adapt the model further.

For social world read «language» and «language usage» (including rhetoric, registers, literary traditions, text types, styles, etc. —the poststructuralist notion of «écriture»/writing); for individual world read «writer».

Repeat the model, so that there are now two models side by side. In the second model replace «writer» with «reader» (and «écriture» with «lecture»/reading).

Now we could ask ourselves to what extent these two models MUST overlap in order for «understanding» to occur. To what extent must the reader and the writer share the same material and social worlds, including the same language and its usages? To what extent is each individual too isolated to «really» understand the experience of another?

(I won't answer that question here, but I think that the answer lies somewhere in the realm of «imagination» or «empathy» —the ability to create a real experience through an imaginary one; the «hermeneutic circle» also comes to bear on this.)

Enter Model Two: an adaptation of Hans Georg Gadamer's notion of a cultural «horizon» of understanding shared by the members of the same cultural

group at the same point in space and time.

Let it be a new circle which englobes the two Three Worlds models —to that extent there is intersubjectivity and some guarantee of mutual understanding between reader and writer.

Let this new circle, that englobes my two Three Worlds models of reader and writer, be the left-hand circle of Anthony Pym's diagram of three interlocked circles that represent two different cultures with the translator situated in an interlanguage space between them (his are arranged horizontally, mine have formed a triangle).

Repeat this process to produce the right-hand circle of Pym's model.

For the moment, leave out Pym's middle circle.

We now have two independent worlds, each with its own cultural horizon, each separated from the other, no overlap.

Now let us add in Pym's third circle —the translator or the intercultural mediator.

Enter Model Three, «No-Man's Land»: the translator or intercultural mediator has gone through a process of «endoculturation», of socialisation in his or her own native culture, through which he or she has acquired his or her «native» cultural horizon. He or she «belongs to» one of the two worlds.

To achieve the status of intercultural mediator, he or she must go through (have gone through) a process of «acculturation», of assimilation, through contact, of the cultural horizon of the second culture, or of as much of that cultural horizon as may be possible for a non-native to assimilate (and depending on the amount of time and effort involved).

This person resides, for me, in a «no-man's land» between the two cultures.

For me, if not for him, Pym's middle circle includes that no-man's land.

The intercultural mediator shares some things with Culture One and some things

with Culture Two, but neither the writer (or communicator or negotiator or agent) from Culture One, nor the reader (or communicator or negotiator or agent) from Culture Two share these things.

In terms of Pym's diagram, part of the translator's circle overlaps with Culture One, and part overlaps with Culture Two, but there is a zone of the translator's circle that does not overlap with either—it does not belong to either of the two cultural horizons, it is outside of the cultural «ken» of either of the two worlds, it is a horizon shared only by the intercultural mediator.

I think that, for Pym, this does not matter, because the circle is, for him, I think, a continuum that carries elements of one culture over into the other and viceversa.

From my point of view it does matter.

There is an aspect of intercultural mediation that cannot be shared between the two worlds —exactly that part which corresponds to the process of acculturation that the intercultural mediator has undergone, and that neither the reader from Culture Two nor the writer from Culture One has undergone.

That reader is looking for the writer, not for the translator.

The translator understands much more than he or she can communicate to the reader of the translation, because the translator shares the horizon of the author, but the reader does not.

(Of course the translator also shares the horizon of the reader, which helps the translator to find ways of communicating some understanding of the other horizon.)

Perhaps this is another reason for advocating a long-term policy of «acculturation» rather than a short-term policy of translation? Perhaps this is the short-term status of the translator —perhaps prolonged intercultural transactions would bring about this acculturation to some extent.

In this context, the contrast between Pym's and Michael Cronin's priorities could become more clear. My description of the translator in no-man's land might correspond much more to the role of the purveyor of culture, someone who is trying to further the acculturation of the reader of a translation, trying to broaden the reader's cultural horizon, whereas Pym's description might correspond to the purveyor of commodities, someone who is trying to facilitate socio-economic transactions, which might not require such a broadening of cultural horizons.

(Of course the question of what «cultural» means here has gone begging —let's say it refers to Pym's row of Schleirmachers...) Perhaps the introduction of new terms, such as «intercultural mediator» might avoid unnecessary misunderstandings. «Purveyor» is not the nicest of terms, I suppose, but it does imply a marketplace somewhere in the process. Otherwise my description of the translator trying to broaden cultural horizons comes dangerously close to the role of a «missionary», which is no neutral term either.