

INTERVIEW WITH PROFESSOR DOROTHY KELLY

Entrevista com a Profa. Dra. Dorothy Kelly

DOI: [10.14393/LL63-v35n2-2019-12](https://doi.org/10.14393/LL63-v35n2-2019-12)

Marileide Dias Esqueda*
(Interviewer)

This interview was carried out in December 2019, via e-mail, with Dorothy Kelly, Professor of Translation at the University of Granada, Spain, where she is also Vice-President for International Relations and Development Cooperation. She obtained her B.A. in Translating and Interpreting at Heriot-Watt University, Edinburgh (Scotland), and her doctoral degree from the University of Granada. Her main research interests are translator training, directionality in translation and intercultural competence. She is the founding editor of *Interpreter and Translator Trainer* (Taylor & Francis publishing house), the only indexed journal devoted specifically to translator education, and consultant editor of the Translation Practices Explained series (Taylor & Francis). She was a member of the European Group of Translation Experts appointed by the European Commission. Among her main works is *A Handbook for Translator Trainers* (2005), a book specially dedicated to translation teaching, with special emphasis on translation teachers. Professor Dorothy Kelly provides several important contributions in the following interview on the topic "evaluation of translations".

1. Interviewer: Prof. Kelly, first of all, thank you very much for giving this interview to the Journal *Letras & Letras*, of the Institute of Linguistics and Literature at Universidade Federal de Uberlândia, State of Minas Gerais State. This special issue of the journal has the main goal of grouping together contributions on the topic "Evaluation of

* Marileide Dias Esqueda is an associate professor of the Graduate Program in Linguistics and of the Undergraduate Program in Translation at Universidade Federal de Uberlândia (Brazil). ORCID: [0000-0002-6941-7926](https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6941-7926). E-mail: [marileide.esqueda\(AT\)ufu.br](mailto:marileide.esqueda(AT)ufu.br)

Translations”, with great emphasis on the translation teaching and learning setting. To get started, could you please tell us about your professional and academic background on the Translation field?

Prof. Kelly: *I studied Translating and Interpreting in the late 1970s at Heriot-Watt University, Edinburgh (Scotland) and, following a time teaching English in Geneva (Switzerland), joined the staff of the newly set-up School of Translating and Interpreting at the University of Granada (Spain). In my early years, I combined my teaching with professional commissions as both a translator and interpreter, but soon decided to devote myself 100% to teaching, research and university administration. My main research interests have been translator education, translator competence, intercultural competence and directionality in translation, on all of which I have published and lectured internationally.*

2. Interviewer: We have been following some of your works on translation teaching, which not only deal with possible didactic guidelines for translation classrooms, but also with an array of approaches translation teachers can use in order to better plan and organize their courses, as it is the case of your 2005 book *A Handbook for Translator Trainers*. We consider this book of special importance because it is designed to help teachers develop their teaching skills. Few scholars effectively dedicate their investigations to teachers, usually putting more emphasis on content of original and translated texts or on students’ competences. What motivates your research on translation teaching and learning processes?

Prof. Kelly: *I think my main initial motivation was the desire to improve my own teaching and my own students’ learning experience. The very positive response to my work, both in print and at conferences, seminars and training events, from fellow staff around the world then proved to be a further motivation. I firmly believe that universities and university systems around the world need to devote more attention to their teaching mission, and in order to do so, to the professional development of their teaching staff.*

Teachers at all other levels of education receive formal training, whereas at university it is assumed that academics specializing in a field automatically know how to facilitate student learning. This is of course not the case, and we are in need of bespoke intervention programmes for staff development, preferably at departmental level, taking into account the specificities of each discipline or group of disciplines and the cultural and institutional context.

3. Interviewer: The number of university translation programs has steadily increased in the last three decades. This increase has encompassed investigations not only related to the translator's training, but also to the training of teachers and researchers in Translation Studies. While, on the one hand, we can celebrate the creation of new translation programs, on the other hand, we need to learn about current and prospective classroom practices related to the teaching and learning of both translation theory and practice. Assessment of the learning process is one of these practices that deserve special attention. When one decides to investigate the topic in Translation Studies, mainly assessment practices and approaches, a certain dearth of works on the subject is perceived. However, teachers are required to evaluate their students' learning processes and their acquisition of translation competence. Teachers have the social responsibility of ensuring society that the new professionals have acquired the knowledge and skills necessary to deliver a professional translation. Regardless of the configurations of translation programs or in-class methodologies, all teachers need to be sure, through the process of assessment, that students' learning has taken place. Teachers need to check that students are progressing according to the program's objectives. Could you please share with us your experiences and concepts of evaluation of translation specially focusing on translation teaching and the learning setting?

Prof. Kelly: My research into teacher/trainer attitudes to their work indicates that assessment is by far the element which provokes most concern. Teachers feel insecure about their assessment methods and criteria, and on the whole resort to summative assessment based on quality criteria for translations as products. Yet, in the educational

context, what we really need to assess is not the quality of the product, but whether or not student learning has taken place. And of particular importance is the formative and diagnostic function of assessment. Clearly, as you say, at the end of a programme, teachers and institutions have the responsibility of certifying for society that new professionals have the competences necessary to undertake professional work and deliver professional services and products, but the most important assessment takes place during the learning process over the whole programme, not just at the end. Teachers need to develop a whole battery of different instruments to measure initial competence, and then how each individual student progresses, and where problems are arising. Only on very rare occasions are actual translations alone sufficient evidence to allow in-depth analysis of individual learning. Depending on the actual aspect of translator competence which is being assessed, teachers need to use questionnaires, commented translations, pre-translation tasks such as documentary research exercises, terminology searches, revision tasks, problem identification tasks and so on in order to identify where students are facing difficulties and then to assist them to overcome them.

4. Interviewer: In your opinion, what is the role of translation students in the evaluation process of their translation projects?

Prof. Kelly: Alongside multiple assessment instruments, I believe it is very enriching to involve a range of assessors in the process. These may be external assessors who do not know the students (real-life clients, subject-matter experts, teachers from other modules, programmes or universities). Or they can be fellow students who can carry out peer assessment, reviewing and commenting on their peers' translation work – a very demanding but highly productive learning experience. Or indeed they can be the students themselves carrying out self-assessment of their own work. The ability to identify one's own errors or deficiencies is an important part of any professional's expertise. Self-assessment helps students develop this critical competence.

5. Interviewer: Should different translation practices (literary, specialized, legal, commercial, audiovisual, etc.) require different evaluation systems, criteria, and rubrics?

Prof. Kelly: *Of course, detailed rubrics require adaptation to the actual module they are written for, but perhaps more important (and more demanding on the teacher) than adapting to different translation practices or fields is adapting to different levels. Setting tasks of the right level for learners (not too easy, not too hard) and then assessing for each stage in the acquisition of translator competence is an area of translator education which still requires further development.*

6. Interviewer: Should teachers design different assessment instruments to evaluate the translation process and the final product produced by students?

Prof. Kelly: *As I have said above, yes, I believe teachers need a whole battery of instruments to assess different aspects and elements of the translation process and the product of that process. In the early stages of learning, grasping the process is much more important than the actual product, so more emphasis needs to be placed on assessing procedural aspects of student work; at the end of the learning programme, the product takes on more importance, and more attention should be paid to it. It is unlikely, however, that one-off translations actually prove that a student has acquired (or not) overall translation competence. For that reason, portfolio approaches containing various samples of each student's work are much more indicative of actual competence than traditional translation examinations, whether they be open-book or not.*

7. Interviewer: We can affirm that translation technologies, such as translation memory systems, machine translation technologies, systems for localizing software and applications, translation software for producing subtitles and dubbing for the audiovisual media, among others, have influenced the practice of translation inside and

outside translation classrooms. However, during evaluation sessions, many students are forced to take their tests with pencil and paper. In your opinion, what could be the best evaluation practices to be used in today's digital world?

Prof. Kelly: *In my opinion, the conditions in which students carry out individual assessment tasks should depend on exactly what the assessor wants to test. Clearly, for example, documentary research skills cannot be tested in a classroom with only pencil and paper; students will need access to all the usual tools available to translators. When the assessment instrument is a translation exercise, if we are to be able to measure each student's level of translator competence, the students should have access to all the usual professional tools; in fact, asking students to work without them could be construed as promoting non-professional attitudes and practices. In all assessment exercises, students should be aware of what specific learning is being measured, of what tools and resources they will have at their disposal, and, very importantly, of why that is the case. Only if students fully understand what is being required of them and why, will they develop their capacity for critical thought and analysis which is essential not only for translators, but for any university graduate for the ever more complex XXIst century in which they will live, work and (hopefully) participate as engaged citizens.*

8. Interviewer: Many teachers perceive that all efforts devoted to correcting and commenting on student exams and class activities are lost because many students are satisfied to look at the result of the evaluation (the grade) and pay little attention to the comments provided by the teacher. In your opinion, what initiatives can best contribute to making feedback more efficient in translation teaching classrooms?

Prof. Kelly: *Our education systems often lead students (and teachers) to become over-concerned with grades alone. But grades are only actually needed for summative assessment. During the learning process, formative assessment is much more important for students. If classwork reviewed by teachers, by externals or by fellow students does not carry a grade, but rather only comment, then students will be more motivated to*

take that comment into account, as we eliminate the short-cut to seeing how they are faring. Similarly, not all comment has to be given in written form, but rather can also be given in individual, small-group or even large-group sessions in oral form, promoting debate and exchange. Similarly, comment can take the form of questions rather than simply statements, requiring students to respond, whether in writing or orally. In this context, small-group work, involving peer assessment and debate, without the pressure of teacher participation, can also prove particularly useful. Similarly, students may be required to act on feedback, carrying out extra tasks or improving on their initial work in some way. This makes the feedback much more meaningful.

9. Interviewer: What types of research could or should be carried out in Translation Studies in order to promote a more in-depth debate on evaluation practices for translation teaching?

Prof. Kelly: There is a need for studies into the effectiveness of different kinds of assessment instruments, and into student and teacher attitudes to assessment in different learning environments. Similarly, more research into the actual process by which translator competence develops in different contexts would help us to establish patterns, levels, descriptors and rubrics to assist in improving and localizing assessment methods, instruments and practices.

10. Interviewer: To conclude, and taking this final question to thank you once again for your participation in this interview, would you like to add any comments that we may not have included in the previous questions?

Prof. Kelly: I would like to thank you for taking up the issue of assessment in translator training for this special issue of your journal and for giving me this opportunity to comment briefly on some of the issues. I believe that assessment of student learning continues to be one of the areas most in need of attention in translator education in general, so your initiative is very welcome.

Reference

KELLY, D. **A handbook for translator trainers**. A Guide to Reflective Practice. Manchester: St. Jerome, 2005.

Recebido em: 14.12.2019

Aprovado em: 25.12.2019