

Trapping history like a butterfly and imprisoning reality: photographs of interpreters

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Photography is an area which has hardly been linked to Translation Studies. Indeed, the only major work in the area is *Framing the Interpreter: Towards a visual perspective*, ed. Anxo Fernández-Ocampo, Michaela Wolf (Routledge 2014). This presentation, following on from this work, uses various photographs of interpreters: 19th century US indigenous interpreters; 19th century French diplomats in China; 20th and 21st century interpreters of indigenous tribes in Brazil, and examines these photographs from the following angles:

Photograph as artistic composition - how is the space used, and how are the positions of the figures composed? (*Reading Images*, Gunther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen, Routledge 1996)

The Photograph as capturing a moment in time, making a historical record, showing past customs and habits: class stratification; sartorial customs; distance and/or closeness between human beings, and how one society both at itself and at another in terms of friendship and/or hostility.

In *On Photography* (Penguin 1979), Susan Sontag writes: "Photographs are always evocative, trapping history – or one individual's momentary view of it – like a butterfly and 'imprisoning reality'. How can this both positive and negative view of photography relate to our pictures of interpreters?"

Photographs can show us relations between people - interpreter and those he/she is interpreting and can tell us about the profession of interpreting and translating, its status, different forms of translating and interpreting. Basically, a photo "is worth a thousand words".

In *Camera Lucida* (Hill and Wang 1981), Roland Barthes describes two essential elements of the photograph: is a often study (*studium*) of a topic with a strong didactic element; but frequently there is an odd, disconcerting or contradictory element (*punctum*), which may destroy the "truth" the photograph is intending to convey.