English as an L2 in Europe? The view from the coalface

Thursday, June 23, 2005, 13.45-14.15

A small but important group affected by the tide of English sweeping over continental Europe has hitherto been neglected: the translators and editors who have traditionally assured intercultural communication by helping continental Europeans to communicate effectively in written English. Interested less in theory and more in finding pragmatic solutions to cope with Europeans’ growing assertiveness in and about English, these language professionals are increasingly having to negotiate with continental European users of English. These negotiations about acceptable and appropriate English reflect the power relationships, time constraints and economics at the coalface. The concerns, challenges, hopes and strategies of the coalface workers therefore shed light on the state of English in Europe today and on how Europe is Englishing.

From my vantage point within the translating and editing profession I will examine the various – often conflicting – aspects of “acceptability” applied at the coalface to continental European English. I aim to articulate the views of colleagues in the translation and academic publishing industries and in the European Union, as expressed in professional and academic publications and in response to informal surveys. And instead of Kachru’s concentric circles, I will use a more dynamic paradigm.

Selected references


