Language rights in public service interpreting and translation

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While linguistic rights were first included as an international human right in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948, most European language-rights instruments were created only in the 1990s (Nic Shuibhne 2002). At the same time, European society started to undergo significant changes due to the fall of the iron curtain and the development of economic and social globalization. As a result, migration flows have diversified and intensified, and Europe has become linguistically super-diverse (Vertovec 2007; Monzó-Nebot & Jiménez Salcedo 2018). Similar developments have occurred in other continents.

In this new situation, it is more challenging to organize translation and interpreting services guaranteeing language rights. In fact, focus has shifted from language policies concerning "regional or minority languages" or "non-territorial languages," traditionally spoken within the territory of a state (Council of Europe 1992), towards languages spoken by migrants. However, it is not always easy to make the distinction between traditional minority languages and languages of migration in national language policies, and tensions between traditional and new minorities may occur (Grin 1994; Määttä 2005).

Translation and interpreting function as important instruments of language policies aimed at guaranteeing equal access to public services and to a participatory civil society. However, language rights are often overlooked in research on public service interpreting and translation (PSIT) because focus is either on the role and agency of the interpreter or the linguistic, interactional, and pragmatic features of language transfer (see e.g. Hale 2012). Consequently, the migrant's and the service provider's perspectives may be neglected. In fact, translation and interpreting studies lack theoretical and methodological tools for the analysis of language rights in PSIT. However, in order to understand the full impact of translation and interpreting processes and their products, it is important to consider the perspective of all people involved in them.

This thematic panel addresses language rights in PSIT from a variety of perspectives. We invite proposals for presentations based on empirical data and/or a theoretical or methodological reflection. Questions addressed in presentations include but are not limited to the following:

- How can language rights be theorized and what methods can be used in research on language rights in PSIT?
- What are the links between language-rights principles and language-rights practice in PSIT?
- How do language rights connect and intersect with power, ethics, and ideology?
- What is the meaning of language rights form different stakeholders' perspective (migrants, interpreters, service providers, researchers, etc.)?
- How does the role of PSIT as a tool of inclusion and access to services differ depending on the language (e.g. lingua francas vs. less-widely spoken languages) and the level of implementation of language policies (e.g. regional, national, international)?
- What are the links between language rights in PSIT, official language policies, and budgetary issues?

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