

Translation and diaspora: the role of translation in immigrant communities

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While the topic of translation and migration has received increasing attention in Translation Studies and related fields since the early nineties, most of the research has focused on individual migrants or on the migrant as abstraction. This panel seeks to extend the discussion by focusing on immigrant communities and the role of translation in their newspapers and publishing houses. In doing so, the panel hopes to complicate traditional binary models of the migration experience (the migrant and the receiving culture), as immigrant communities typically construct themselves as mediators between the receiving culture and the home country. Although serving as “a vehicle of group coherence” (Jenswold 1992: 6), these immigrant publications have a somewhat contradictory mission: to preserve and promote knowledge of and an affective attachment to the immigrants’ native language and culture, on the one hand, while facilitating immigrants’ survival and inclusion, if not assimilation, into the host country, on the other. As a site of import and export of ideas and beliefs, translation within diasporic communities is, therefore, deeply implicated in “identity formation” (Gentzler 2008) with members negotiating their position as a distinct but still constituent part of the larger and encompassing host culture.

Moreover, immigrant communities are themselves internally varied, often composed of multiple sub-groups, which traditionally express their identity through different publications and newspapers, defined by different, often competing, political and regional affiliations. The role of translation within these sub-groups also warrants further study. By contributing to the construction of cultural identity through the production of cultural images (cf. Gentzler 2011; Van Doorslaer, Flynn, and Leerssen 2016), translation becomes a means of establishing intra-cultural communication within the diasporic community (i.e., between the first and the second generation of immigrants), across immigrant communities, and between the immigrant community and the dominant host-country community. The focus of the panel will not be on different representations of migrancy/immigrants in translation but rather in diaspora/migrancy as a site of enunciation, shaped by the migrant’s complex “dual” relationship to home country and adopted land. The panel “Translation and Diaspora” therefore invites research that addresses these issues and attempts to outline the role of translation within the specific context of diasporic communities.

Possible subtopics:

- the role of translation in the immigrant press and in immigrant publishing houses
- publication venues for translations within immigrant communities
- different methodologies for identifying, classifying and analyzing translated texts in immigrant publications
- directionality of translation in immigrant publications
- profile of immigrant translators and cultural mediators, including publishers
- translation flows between immigrant and other language communities
- contemporary and historical outlines of translational activity within immigrant communities
- studies of individual migrant translators or of immigrant-supported institutions, such as newspapers and publishing houses, that sponsor and frame translations
- reviews/evaluations of translation by members of the immigrant community (e.g., reviews of translations in immigrant newspapers)
- critical evaluations of the self-translations of members of immigrant communities

References

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