

Theorizing Diaspora as a Site of Translation

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In recent years, Translation Studies has begun to investigate translation outside the traditional nationalist framework, focusing, for example, on non-standard forms of language, languaging on borders and in cities, translation before the rise of Romantic nationalism, and the experience of individual emigré writer-translators. One understudied area, however, remains translation as practiced in diasporic communities. This paper maps out some key considerations in theorizing diaspora as a distinct site of translational activity. That theoretical discussion will be supported by the preliminary results from a collaborative study of two diasporic communities in the USA during the inter-war period. The purpose of the study is to explore the uses of translation both into and out of the dominant language in the newspapers of these communities, highlighting commonalities as well as differences in order to delineate the various socio-cultural factors shaping the selection and translation of texts. Special attention is paid to the ways in which translations allow these communities to exert a certain degree of agency in constructing an image of themselves for Anglophone audiences. Preliminary results reveal translation in the context of diaspora to be a complex and contested site of positioning between the minority language community and the metropole, where diaspora identities “are constantly producing and reproducing themselves anew, through transformation and difference” (Hall 1990:235). On a methodological level, this study seeks to present a methodology that can be applied and adapted to the study of other diasporic communities in the U.S. and in other cultural and political contexts.

Works Cited

Hall, Stuart. 1990. “Cultural Identity and Diaspora.” In *Identity, Community, Culture, Difference*, J. Rutherford (ed.), 222-237. London: Lawrence and Wishart.