



Translation and Time: Exploring the Temporal Dimension of Cross-cultural Transfer

Presentation Details
Title of Paper: Temporality of Interpreting in War
<p>Abstract:</p> <p>Language brokering in war is an activity that has been performed since antiquity. Although recorded evidence about the role and status of interpreters in war is relatively scarce, their presence in conflict scenarios has been noted in documents from Ancient History—in the biblical references after the incidents of the Tower of Babel, the hieroglyphs and biography of Harkhuf in Ancient Egypt, the historical records dating back to Assyria and Babylon and Ancient Egypt, the references in Polybius’ <i>Histories</i> and Xenophon’s <i>Anabasis</i> in Ancient Greece, and the <i>Bellum Gallicum</i> in the Roman Empire. But also the Middle Ages or Postclassical Era left us with documents mentioning language brokers in the Crusades. Modern History recalls them in the chronicles of the Conquest of the Americas or the Peace of Westphalia. And documents from the Contemporary Period also reference the role of interpreters in the world wars and current conflicts. Studies on the interpreters’ role throughout history do exist, but very few of them have compared their status in different time frames. History does not only narrate the passing of time; it has an impact that goes beyond a mere date and fact-finding exercise. Observing and analysing the role played by any professional in the “mirror” of time allows us to understand the complexity of that role in its context. The analysis of the history of interpreting in war offers a storehouse of information on how interpreters behave, hence allowing us to assess these situations more precisely because they occur within a well-defined time and situational context. Against this background, the authors drew on primary and secondary written sources in order to delve deeper into interpreting in war throughout history and determine whether the role of the interpreter has changed. The analysis sheds light on a number of important issues, such as interpreters’ profile and status, their occupation, and their consideration and recognition by other stakeholders in each time frame. The findings also highlight gaps related to the definition of activities performed, working practices and procedures, training and protection received. The presenters will discuss these findings in detail. They will argue their relevance for understanding the historic-societal elements that have influenced interpreting in war throughout history.</p>

Authors' biographies:

Clementina Persaud studied translation and interpreting at the University of Granada. She has worked for 25 years as a conference interpreter in the private market. Since 2006 she has been working at the University Pablo de Olavide teaching conference interpreting. In 2010 she obtained the MAS in Interpreter Training from the University of Geneva. Her research interests include interpreter training and the role of interpreters in conflict zones and scenarios.

Lucía Ruiz Rosendo earned her PhD at the University of Granada in the field of conference interpreting in 2006. From 2004 to 2015 she worked at the University Pablo de Olavide teaching conference interpreting. In 2012 she obtained the MAS in Interpreter Training from the University of Geneva. Currently she is assistant professor at the FTI's Interpreting Department, University of Geneva. Her research interests include simultaneous interpreting of scientific discourse, interpreter training and the role of interpreters in conflict zones and scenarios.