



A Space for Translation: Thresholds of Interpretation

Presentation Details	
Title of Paper:	On Mobile Languages and Fixed Territories: Space, Migration and Translation
Speaker:	Loredana POLEZZI Professor of Translation Studies, School of Modern Languages, Cardiff University; President, IATIS
Abstract:	<p>There is a profound disconnect between the geopolitics of the contemporary world and our ideological constructions of language and translation. In spite of increasing mobility on both the local and the global scale, the strong association between nation and language (singular) remains pervasive. Equally resilient are metaphorical images which describe monolingualism as “natural” and marginalize translation as a set of discrete, specialist skills. In this scenario, the notion of “mother tongue” sits side by side with the image of the “motherland.” The enduring power of this alignment is evidenced by the fact that the most common metaphorical representation of translation remains that of a bridge between self-contained linguistic and cultural islands. Equally significant is how the audibility of translation is particularly low when the space in which it is performed sits within the borders of the nation, or when the translator is a migrant rather than a “native speaker.”</p> <p>Taking as a starting point the enduring association between language (as a self-contained code) and space (as a delimited territory), I will examine how our understanding of translation is called into question by migration. Migrants use a continuum of translational practices, including self-translation, translanguaging, or the refusal to translate and to be translated. Such practices both inhabit and redefine spatial configurations, from the nation to the neighborhood, from public locations to spaces of intimacy. These tensions, played out in the arena of language, are always deeply political. Translation practices and attitudes towards them are a notable symptom of the ideological constructs that dominate our world, but also a crucial tool for our attempts to make it more hospitable.</p>

Author's Biography

Loredana POLEZZI is Professor of Translation Studies in the School of Modern Languages, Cardiff University, and President of the International Association for Translation and Intercultural Studies (IATIS). Her main research interests are in translation studies, comparative literature, and the history of travel writing. Her work focuses on how geographical and social mobilities are connected to the theories and practices of translation and self-translation. With Rita Wilson, she is co-editor of leading international journal *The Translator*. She is a co-investigator in the research projects “Transnationalizing Modern Languages” and “Transnationalizing Modern Languages: Global Challenges,” funded by the AHRC’s Translating Cultures and GCRF schemes, as well as a founding member of the “Cultural Literacy in Europe” network.