

Translation between migrants, refugees and students

Andrew Samuel Walsh

Comillas Pontifical University Madrid

Abstract:

The paper is based on a project at Comillas Pontifical University Madrid to integrate migrants and refugees into Spanish society by providing them with a basic working knowledge of the Spanish language, socio-cultural practices and values, in addition to some essential skills to enter into the job market. The project is organized by a Jesuit NGO called *Pueblos Unidos* and is organized jointly by the workers from this NGO, the University's own Solidarity organization and staff from the Translation and Spanish Language departments. The volunteers to give these classes are students who largely come from the joint degree programmes in Translation and Interpreting and Communication, and their work is coordinated by a lecturer in Translation and another in Spanish Language. Although the methodology of the classes is meant to provide teaching through the medium of Spanish, the fact that many of the students are either French speakers or have some knowledge of English means that translation is constantly being called into play in the classes and the project as a whole, and the student volunteers (with the guidance of their lecturers) have to use their own skills in English and French to translate not only basic linguistic concepts, but also more complex social values and interactions. The paper presents and analyses the experience of this example of translation in society by professionals and non-professionals in a context of migrations which will characterize the 21st century and reflect these young people's practical response to this humanitarian crisis. The paper also explores the broader field of migration, dialogue and translation spaces in the 21st century, where encounters between languages and cultures have given birth to both conflict and exchange. In the last few decades, increasingly diverse urban environments have emerged, making coexistence between different communities a key contemporary issue. The paper examines translation as a tool for inclusion within this context, and a specific, practical example of a response to the growing challenge posed by the new patterns of migration and the mass movement of refugees.