

Linguistic and Cultural Blending, Emerging Forms of Mediation

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Contemporary societies are the theater of linguistic and cultural blending. While this is not a new phenomenon, it is accelerating, amplifying and complexifying in novel ways due to geographical and online mobility. Boundaries between the real and the virtual are becoming ever more permeable as technology and innovation reach ever new heights in speed and sophistication.

In this context the circulation of people, the diffusion of political, scientific and cultural information, as well as the blending which is now characteristic of an increasingly globalized world, all work in a way that radically impacts how we perceive others and how we apprehend ideas, share our thoughts or make decisions. Progress in the human sciences, notably biology and cognitive neuroscience, redefine our relations with others and with our environment. The paradox of such a profusion of multi-linguistic and multicultural exchange lies in the constraints it entails in terms of increased difficulty in interpersonal communication and growing sociopolitical confusion, which both tend to elude traditional actors and indicators.

The question is how this reconfiguration of contemporary societies can be conceived and analyzed through the prism of the languages, which both unite and separate us. Through adaptative logic, contemporary societies are torn between two antagonistic quests: i) one either one pursues simplistic, often binary responses, which are often expressed through identity closure in areas such as the choice of dominant languages in school to facilitate integration of individuals to the dominant culture, the dwindling of languages used in social media, the predominant diffusion of research publications in English, the multiplication of Newspeak jargons, which fundamentally dis-acknowledge the processes we seek to clarify, ii) or one accepts to address the challenge of complexity. But how? Incited to move continuously in and out of diverse cultural spaces, has it become necessary to adopt several perspectives at once and to know several languages at varying levels of proficiency, which requires great mental plasticity and can undermine the need for a stable identity in a world where individuals are called upon to navigate among multiple identities (Lahire) or liquid identities (Bauman)?

For want of interindividual solutions, mediation necessarily comes into play. Forged from the Latin verb *mediare*, traditionally designating the intervention of a third party to reconcile two other parties, the notion of mediation is henceforth called upon to link up fuzzy, multidimensional realms. Is mediation suited to conciliate current schools of thought that seem to oppose, on the one hand, a universalistic approach that implies the existence of an abstract space of translinguistic communication and, on the other hand, “differentialist” approaches that insist upon the superdiversity of linguistic expressions?

We propose to question the notion of mediation in both plural and transdisciplinary configurations from the perspective of languages that are, implicitly and explicitly, at the heart of the blending phenomena they endeavor to clarify. Woven within cultures and contexts, language and languages are themselves complex systems that reflect various ways of perceiving and embodying our relations to the real. While a scientific consensus exists around the intrinsic wealth of each and every language, neither the postcolonial hierarchy of the statuses of various languages nor challenges to this paradigm are self-evident. The means for inter-comprehension in a globalizing and transcultural world must take into account blending phenomena as they emerge, for such phenomena are objects of critical inquiry for both researchers and actors.

This conference intends to spur analyses of multilingual and/or multicultural situations through their mediations, as they are expressed in concrete forms (in classrooms, in journalistic discourse, in political, economic or educative spheres, etc.), **or represented in virtual situations** (in literature, publicity, visual arts, etc.).

- How do translators, pedagogues, researchers, decision-makers, make choices when confronted with real-life challenges, when relating with others to interact or transmit, among individuals and groups and across borders, ideas, values, representations and regulations?
- What are the emerging paradigms which transcend the limits of triangular mediation?
- What are the transdisciplinary solutions required by the need to think and act along the instable local-global continuum?

We envisage this problematical theme along the following axes, non-exclusively, welcoming in particular inter- and trans-disciplinary contributions:

1. How does **translation** evolve faced with these new challenges? How does it position itself between the dream of a uniform and transparent global space of communication and the growth of linguistic singularities and idiosyncrasies? What is the place of translation between the project of universal meta-language and the “superdiversity” of contemporary linguistic practices?

2. Concerning **literature, theater and poetry**, we invite research, for instance, in the hybridation of internal forms of text, possibly the encounter of several languages within a singular work. We also question authors, mediators of their own works who, by translating themselves, spawn palimpsest universes.

3. **Literary mediation** is another field of transcultural blending in language, one of inventing new spaces: blogs, interactive writing in several languages, new forms of literary festivals which encourage more direct exchange among authors and readers the world over, exchanges among authors developing collective translinguistic projects... How should emerging semiotic forms occupy this space? How do they facilitate the development of hybrid cultures? In the age of Amazon, of on-line publication, of integrated translators, are these new forms of literary mediation gate-keepers of knowledge enrichment or do they engender massified systems of shattered or impoverished knowledge?

4. In the **field of linguistics**, phenomena of blending question the very concept of transmission and intersubjective regulation. For Antoine Culioli, for example, every *utterance* implies a “minimum of regulation without which exchange cannot exist, i.e. the access of one subject to another” (A. Culioli [1998] 1999: 137). The implication is that one cannot accept the idea according to which speakers have at their disposal “ready-made” or “ready-to-use” *referents*, in other words “what is referred to”.

Our focus is thus upon the referential values that suppose modes of utterances including constant adjustments. How are these adjustments applied in multilinguistic situations, for example, interpretation or translation? What kinds of adjustments intervene within reformulations that occur at every moment during discourse? In relation to these questions, we welcome research based on empirical data dealing with precise linguistic markers (lexical, syntactic, prosodic), present in various languages.

5. In **civilization and the social sciences**, interactions and comparison among institutions, actors, territories and temporalities have never been so complex as in the era of globalization. While resulting in a certain standardization, globalization is especially the theater of growing differentiations, tensions and blending that result in growing local cultural and multi-scale specificities in evolution. For the social sciences “translation” of terms and concepts, even “functional equivalents” are often neither operational, nor an end in themselves. This is the case, for instance, of conceptual forms of mediation, which allow for the establishment of international statistics with the aim of comparing national situations or answering comparative interrogations, formulating recommendations for public practices or policies. How do actors answer these challenges to reach reliable results?

6. Concerning **language didactics and education**, the diversity of languages in class raises questions about mass education in some dominant languages. From pre-school to university, research attempts to formulate new models that include mediations among languages and cultures of the learners. How can language teaching heighten joint understanding and acting in communion through mutual respect and in a plurilinguistic and pluricultural perspective? To meet this unprecedented challenge, some researchers explore corporal and emotional mediation through artistic practices (theater, dance) and an aesthetic and “performative” approach to *languages* (Aden, Lapaire, Schewe, Soulaine). Others mobilize the notion of language mediation from an interactionist (Delamotte-Legrand) or sociolinguistic perspective through notions such as translanguaging (Garcia), *translangager* (Aden), code-meshing (Canagarajah) or taking into account linguistic landscapes and *superdiversity* (Blommaert) in an ethnographic approach to linguistic diversity.

Calendar

Deadline for submitting contribution proposals: **15 March 2017**

Response from Scientific Committee: **15 April 2017**

Proposals may be written in English, French, German, Italian or Spanish. They must include a title and a 700 word maximum résumé, including bibliography. They must be accompanied by the surname/s, name/s, and scientific affiliation/s of the author/s.

Submissions must be send, in word format, indication in the mail object “Mediation Conference” to the three following addresses:

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