INSTITUT INTERUNIVERSITARI

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Part of the series "Public Health, Communication and History - the Challenges of a Pandemic"

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**Crisis Translation:
Communicating Risks in Multilingual Settings**

Tuesday 23 June at 16:00 CEST

Speaker: Federico M. Federici, University College London
Respondent: Vicent Montalt, IILP-Universitat Jaume I

Perception of risk is conditioned by emotive and cognitive responses (Ponari et al., 2015); humans avoid taking risks or engage with risks, because of our evolutionary adaptive abilities (we adapt to the environment and adapt the environment to us). "People judge a risk not only by what they think about it but also by how they feel about it" (Slovic & Peters, 2006, p. 323), and we interact with risks in culture-specific ways (Appleby-Arnold et al. 2018; Cornia, Dressel, & Pfeil, 2014; Douglas & Wildavsky, 1983). Within social groups, humans underestimate certain risks and over-estimate others. Suddenly, we pay a price when health messages require attention and concerted action. In fact, WHO's

Communicating Risk in Public Health Emergencies guidelines (2017: ix) acknowledge the function of language-specific communication of hazards: "Accurate information provided early, often, and in languages and channels that people understand, trust and use, enables individuals to make choices and take actions to protect themselves, their families and communities from threatening health hazards".

Perception of risk is a social construct: altering social perceptions of risks (e.g. migration as a source of dangers to host societies) means controlling group dynamics (Douglas & Wildavsky, 1983) and resources to mitigate known risks. Whereas social factors transform risks into vulnerabilities (Cannon, 2008) and increase the potential impact of cascading crises.

Risk reduction scientists accept the cultural dimensions of risk perception yet continue to underestimate its links with using appropriate languages to communicate risk among multilingual communities. Experimental psychologists have shown connections between cognition, language, and risk (Rodríguez-Pujadas et al., 2013).

ÁOn these premises, the talk discusses the role of translation in crisis settings. It seeks to understand how multilingual societies can provide crucial information, with the purpose of mitigating real risks, in languages that local populations can understand (Federici, 2020; Federici & O'Brien, 2020; O'Brien & Federici, 2019). It focuses on recent recommendations for enhanced language policies in crisis communication (Federici et al. 2019) as a point of departure for discussing how further research – including action research – conducted by cross-disciplinary research teams in collaboration with crisis managers may help reduce the impact of poor risk communication in complex multilingual settings.

Which research methods could foreground studies focusing on the complexity of studying the role of linguistic and cultural identities in defining risks? Which type of studies could better prepare multilingual communities to act when at risk? What impact do financial resources have in mitigating growingly unpredictable natural hazards and public health risks in multilingual societies?

Federico M. Federici is an Associate Professor in Translation Studies at the Centre for Translation Studies, UCL, UK. Previously, he designed the curriculum, founded, and directed the EMT MA in Translation Studies at Durham University, UK (2008-2014), where he also founded and directed the Centre for Intercultural Mediation. He served as member of the Board of the European Master's in Translation Network (2011-2014) at the European Commission. He has been involved in 3 EU-funded research projects (2 funded by the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency; 1 funded by a H2020 Marie Skłodowska-Curie action) and is co-investigator in Rutherford Discovery Fellowship project in New Zealand, led by Associate Professor Jay Marlowe (2019-2024).

Federico has published peer-reviewed articles in journals across different disciplines from *The Italianist* and *Translation Spaces*, to the *International Journal of Disaster Risk Reduction*. Federici authored *Translation as Stylistic Evolution* (2009). He edited *Mediating Emergencies and Conflicts* (2016), co-edited with Callum Walker, *Eye-tracking and Multidisciplinary Studies on Translation* (2018), co-edited with Christophe Declercq, *Intercultural Crisis Communication* (2019), co-edited with Sharon O'Brien, *Translation in Cascading Crises* (2020).

His research interests have always focused on the role of translators and interpreters as intercultural mediators and on the impact of translated texts onto target audiences. Federico's current research focuses on online translated news in Italy and the study of

translation and translators' role in crises. Federico was a member of the EU-funded INTERACT Crisis Translation Network (2017-2020) led by Sharon O'Brien (Dublin City University) with whom he is developing cross-disciplinary projects in Crisis Translation.

Cited Works

Appleby-Arnold, S., Brockdorff, N., Jakovljev, I., & Zdravković, S. 2018. Applying cultural values to encourage disaster preparedness: Lessons from a low-hazard country. *International Journal of Disaster Risk Reduction,* 31, 37-44. doi: 10.1016/j.ijdrr.2018.04.015.

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Slovic, P., & Peters, E. 2006. Risk Perception and Affect. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 15(6), 322-325. doi:10.1111/j.1467-8721.2006.00461.x.

This seminar will take place on June 23 at 16:00 CEST on Blackboard Collaborate. Free access on this link: bit.ly/30ud5su

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