

Ethical issues in intercultural mediation in language teaching and learning/

An English/French bilingual symposium within a plurilingual perspective

Theoretical framework

This symposium seeks to deepen the intersection of two working languages, French and English, which have different historical roots in the construction of a common field, that of applied linguistics in language teaching and learning, and which more particularly raise questions about ethical issues for intercultural mediation. The work carried out since 2013 by an international network set up within the framework of AILA has enabled a co-constructed dialogue on intercultural mediation between the research fields, lines of enquiry and diverse perspectives produced in relation to the two major contexts of research and languages used: French as the language of communication of Francophone research and English as the language of communication of Anglophone research. These spaces are crossed by multiple languages and cultural contexts, which also nourish them. This involves a strong and recognised ethical perspective that is plurilingual and pluricultural located in these in-between spaces of intercultural mediation. English and French become bridge languages between the different languages present and working languages where the limits of translatability and communication are explored as a means to push back misunderstandings, misconceptions and misinterpretations. The pragmatic choice of French and English as working languages and languages of reflection is not based on a logic of efficiency but on an operational ethic of multilingualism and multiculturalism. Intercultural mediation between French and English, nourished by the other languages present among the researchers, and between these languages and contexts, aims to broaden and deepen the meanings expressed in knowledge, skills, attitudes and learning, to use the terminology of the CEFR. This intercultural mediation, on the other hand, differs radically from that developed by the CEFR in that it explores the possibilities of communication in its varying situations, and questions the words, values and meanings that intersect between the various researchers in this field. It is therefore prospective, open to hazards and uncertainties and cannot be confined to fixed descriptors of graduated skills for immediate employability. The global situations of pandemics and wars prove the need to work on intercultural mediation and its ethics of taking into account the other as oneself, and what is similar and different within the teaching and learning of languages. The brutality of pandemic situations, and global warming on social involvement and mobility, to which are added wars that once again threaten international geo-political balances, and upset ethical principles between humans with ethnic and nationalist divisions and call, at the level of language teaching/learning, and necessitate thinking towards a renewed conception of language teaching and learning. Co-constructing intercultural mediation between contextualised multilingual and multicultural situations reverses the limited, even ideologised conception of the teaching and learning of a single language and of the monolingual speaker.

Method

The network will present various communications in English/French (a powerpoint in French and an expression in English and vice versa) with the expression of other languages in written or oral form and a written or oral translation into French and English.