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The Language Project: language as a goal and not as a means

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The profession of translation is often misunderstood and its significance becomes underestimated, especially in the Greek community. As a result, the Greek translators' status is underdeveloped and unsatisfactory for the professionals. Apart from that, the Greek society is not familiar with language as a means of cultural and artistic activity.

The initiative under the title *The Language Project* was created in order to highlight an underestimated aspect of language; *language as a goal and not as a means*, promoting multilingualism, the magic of words, sounds and values of every culture. It can also be described as a network of professionals working as interpreters, translators and educators. Our two main fields of action are the humanitarian and the cultural field.

First of all, we are very engaged by the current need of the Greek society in the communication. As professionals, on the one hand we use our knowledge and long-term experience to provide our services to NGOs in Greece working in the refugee crisis, which are in urgent need of translation and interpreting. On the other hand, we provide training on intercultural mediation. Intercultural mediation is often compared to or confused with the formal concept of interpreting or even the simple bilingualism, given the fact that there is a lack of formal and non-formal education tailor-made to the needs of the humanitarian aid provision in Greece. However, specialized training is absolutely essential for those working in a refugee context, providing intercultural mediation for NGO's that focus on refugees' education, medical care, integration, and access to rights. The benefits of using trained intercultural mediators are vast and include the provision of high-quality aid, the assurance of unhindered communication with especially vulnerable groups (i.e. minors, women, special ethnic and linguistic groups) and the gradual autonomy of refugees' population based on cultural competence. On the other hand, the lack of trained

intercultural mediators increases the damages due to confidentiality breaches, as well as the risk of limited access to rights and customized support to refugees.

Apart from our presence in the humanitarian sector in Greece, our goal is also to promote the cultural aspect of the language. Aspiring to have an effect on steadfast mindsets and attitudes, we create challenges by setting language as the driving force for the establishment of relationships, the exposure and extroversion of those who work their entire lives behind words, and for the active participation in events based on language being viewed as a cultural, entertaining and co-creative good. Specifically, *The Language Project* produces versatile translation-based events promoting translation, foreign languages and interculturalism. Through the collaboration with European and Greek institutions, we organize events aiming at getting the translator out of his/her cocoon and making translation a co-creative process. We engage people in order for them to produce, to be part of and to attend translation slams, real-time translation events (e.g. the *Transparent Translator* event), cartoon translation workshops, subtitling workshops, to state their personal connection with foreign languages, to share their thoughts through participatory videos and to become members of a translators' online network and blogging platform.

Our last collaboration is a great example of international collaboration towards the promotion of the translation of books written in languages which are not spoken widely. In September 2017, we had the chance to organize a Translation Workshop in Catalan and Greek, based on an abstract from the book "ΝυχτερινόΔελτίο» of Petros Markaris. Two exceptional translators, Quim Gesti and Montserrat Franquesa under the moderation of Kleri Skandami from the Official School of Foreign Languages EOIBD in Barcelona, presented in front of the audience of the CCCB their translations, and discussed in public their course of action and choices. The two translations were produced during a Cooperative Translation Workshop, where the two professional translators collaborated with two teams of students and learners of Greek.

Our challenge is to remain always active and to be open to new and innovative ways of using translation and interpreting in the cultural, the education and the humanitarian fields.