

The Conversion of Asylum Applicants' Narratives into Legal Discourses in the UK and France: A Comparative Study of Problems of Cultural Translation

Aims and Objectives

The primary objective of the research is to compare processes of cultural translation involved in the writing down and re-presentation of asylum applicants' narratives of persecution by their legal representatives in the UK and France. The focus is primarily on how these narratives of persecution are structured into legally-acceptable forms of discourse, rather than on interpretation in the narrow linguistic sense.

A related objective is to investigate the implications of these processes for the witness statement which emerges as the end product. What, if any, are the different expectations entailed by the respective legal systems? Do inquisitorial and adversarial legal proceedings require that asylum applicants' written statements be presented differently?

By examining these questions, the research aims to enhance understanding of the following key issues:

- How are asylum applicants' experiences of persecution and migration represented in ordinary and formal legal languages?
- What issues and problems of cultural translation arise in the conversion of asylum applicants' narratives into legally-acceptable forms of discourse?
- How is effective legal representation of asylum applicants affected by problems of cultural translation and interpretation and ongoing changes in asylum law?

A secondary set of objectives, grounded in more general observation of the work of legal and paralegal staff, as well as interviews and archival research, is to document, assess, and compare the practical activities of the selected NGOs. The research aims thereby to analyse the wider structural contexts in both countries, including: the impact of recent legislation; relationships between NGOs and the state; and inter-NGO cooperation in lobbying, information-sharing, and efforts to achieve ideological and policy convergence

The research aims to contribute to more effective representation by NGOs providing legal support to asylum applicants, and to policy-related and academic debates about the adjudication of asylum claims.

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