



The agency of indigenous translators-interpreters and the new opportunities offered by the state: A Peruvian example of supposed self-management

Talk given by Luis Andrade Ciudad,

Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú

Invited by the Chair of Spanish and French Linguistics

Date: June 23.^d, 2025, 16:15

Place: Campus Neues Palais, Haus 19, Raum 4.15

Abstract. In the field of language and translation policies, the agency of translators and interpreters is often studied as a set of initiatives emerging “from below,” framed within a horizon of social justice and the defence of citizens’ rights. These actions are frequently conceived as being in radical opposition to state initiatives and structures. Based on an examination of a Peruvian example of supposed “self-management,” we argue that the dichotomy between “from below” initiatives and “top-down” policies fails to fully capture the complex interconnections that emerge during times of crisis between both dimensions. The example we analyse focuses on the swift reaction of a group of Quechua and Aymara translators and interpreters in January 2023, during a period of citizen protests that followed Pedro Castillo’s failed self-coup and the subsequent violent response from the new government of Dina Boluarte. In this context, Quechua and Aymara speakers who had travelled to protest from rural southern regions to Lima, the capital of Peru, were arbitrarily arrested. A detailed review of eight interviews with translators and interpreters who assisted these detainees, together with parallel documentation, reveals that they acted in coordination with representatives from state agencies, who likely needed to remain in the background due to political caution. This case invites the development of an integrative vision of public policies, one that is attentive to the fluidity between citizen agency and the new multicultural opportunities offered by the state.

If you are interested in attending the talk, please register at: melanie.uth@uni-potsdam.de, so that we can determine whether the presentation should be given in Spanish or English.