

The Politics of Translation and Cultural Transformation in Preserving Indigenous Oral Histories

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Abstract: The role of the translation method in the preservation and transformation of the local oral histories in the face of cultural diversity will be discussed in the paper. The controversial question is whether the oral traditions were original and whether or not ought to be employed to make the translation more popular. Indigenous stories can be translated into a variety of languages, becoming diluted or modified in their existing local language, symbolic language, and place, which is community-specific. The answer to this topic is presented by a qualitative and theoretical approach, which is founded on the interpretive theories of the sphere of postcolonial discourse, cultural studies and translation studies. The focus of these works lies in the manner in which the decision-making of language, culture mediations and the power relations in the presentation of the indigenous knowledge systems. These outcomes lead to the fact that translation is not a neutral place, but a dynamic negotiating place of cultures and that meanings are renegotiable and in certain cases, may result in transformation and preservation. The translation might help the oral histories of the natives, but it might be done to perpetuate the existing cultural beliefs and alter the identity of the natives. The research assumes that the translation systems based on morals and understanding of culture are needed to introduce an equilibrium between accessibility and integrity. It emphasises the value of the translation practice in cooperation with the indigenous voices to enable cultural integrity and make such stories closer.

Key Words: translation politics, indigenous oral histories, cultural transformation, linguistic representation, knowledge preservation, postcolonial discourse, cultural mediation

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Introduction

One of the main concerns of modern cultural and linguistic studies, and particularly in the context of increased globalisation and linguistic homogenization, is the fact that indigenous oral histories are being maintained in ever-increasing numbers. The collective memory, identity and epistemic structures that are highly linked to a given cultural environment may exist in the oral traditions. The fact that these kinds of stories find their way into the usual body of knowledge, however, shows the advanced machinations of politics and cultural influence that can, in any event, tamper with the presentation and interpretation of such knowledge. No longer is it a performance of language to become a transfiguration performance within this space of intercultural contact and frequently of the ideological stance and the relations of power (Daghigh & Amini, 2022; Chow, 2023).

The translation processes also add to the fact that the endangered narratives cannot only be reinterpreted or distorted, but also preserved, as has been observed by researchers. The problem with it is that: on the one hand, it has to maintain cultural integrity of oral histories and on the other hand, on the one hand, it has to be made more accessible to a broader audience (Bandia, 2023; Barcz & Cronin, 2023). The symbols, metaphorical and performative nature of indigenous narrative are highly contextual and may not

easily be translated across cultural boundaries, questioning the issue of representation and authenticity (Al-Tarawneh et al., 2024; O'Brien, 2024). In addition, the pre-eminence of world languages in the translation processes can relegate native voices to the margins, which can reinforce unequal power relations in knowledge creation processes (Kaindl, 2024).

According to the latest studies, language translators have an ethical obligation to accept the culturally conscious practices that would prefer the indigenous epistemologies and participative systems (Fitria, 2024). To address these issues and have more representation, collaborative translation strategies where community members are invited to the translation process have been proposed (Zhu & Aryadoust, 2023). Despite these trends in the development, the understanding of how translation may create identity and transform culture within an indigenous setting is still very wanting (Wang & Daghigh, 2024).

Key Contributions

- To understand the process of preservation and transformation of indigenous oral histories, a new conceptual framework that combines translation, cultural mediation, and power relations is created based on this study.
- It transcends the traditional definition of translation as a non-partisan process of language and takes a critical examination of the way in which translation has come to be a politically and culturally motivated process.
- The paper also emphasises the importance of participatory and community-based strategies to translation in the preservation of cultural authenticity and the correct representation of the indigenous knowledge system.
- It provides a methodical approach to analysis, relating preservation outcomes with other issues of history and sociocultural interests, an idea that is theoretically leading in translation and cultural studies.

The paper is also separated into different parts in order to render it both logically and academically sound. In section I, the subject of the research is introduced, its importance, as well as its objectives and the background of the indigenous oral histories and politics of translation. Section II presents a summary of the Literature Survey that shows that there are gaps in theoretical and conceptual literature that will be addressed by the current study. Section III will discuss the methodology, the conceptual framework on which the study will be conducted, and the interpretative research approach. The most important aspects are presented in tabular and theoretical associations, which are discussed in Results and Discussion in Section IV. Section V is the Conclusion and Future Work, where the main conclusions are provided, and the directions of the future research. This is a systematic arrangement of ensuring that the content is introduced in a systematic and comprehensive way.

Literature Survey

In the case of recent studies of translation and indigenous oral traditions, there is a complex relationship of language, culture and power in the process of imparting knowledge. The researchers assert that translation is a negotiating site as well, where the cultural meanings are changed and transformed in the new language and ideological settings rather than imported (Lang et al., 2025; Schögler, 2024). It is further observed in the translation of the oral narratives where the usual means of translation is crippled by the performance nature of the narratives, and the fact that the narratives are not written (Osei-Tutu, 2023). Research shows that indigenous storytelling can have a shared memory and sense of spirituality, which can be difficult to maintain, particularly across language barriers (Sirkinti, 2025).

The other new literature is the translation as a force in the resurgence and opposition to the cultural hegemony. According to researchers, native cultures are also retold in dominant languages, but in a way that can be accepted by a global audience, which leaves an impact on the perception and understanding of cultures (Şenel, 2025; James Baer, 2025). Other approaches that have also been regarded as community-based and participatory translation methods have been thought to assist in preserving authenticity and giving the indigenous people a voice (Cruchinho et al., 2024). These approaches are concerned with cooperation and, therefore, ensuring that the cultural insiders are incorporated in the meaning-making processes and not the passive subjects of translation.

The problem of cultural sensitivity and epistemic erasure in the work of the translator has been touched upon, and the ethical side of translation has been investigated further (Song, 2022). Translation has been found to play an important role in mediating identity and maintaining heritage because the interdisciplinary perspective of combining anthropology and cultural studies has been more evident (Rędzioch-Korkuz, 2023). Despite these gains, the impact of translation on cultural continuity and change in the long run is not well understood, especially regarding the sociocultural contexts that are swiftly changing (Mohamed et al., 2024).

Analysis of the literature on the research reveals that it is widely accepted that translation is a culturally embedded activity that affects the existing conservation and reproduction of the local oral histories as compared to an unbiased and technical practice. Additional models that would strike the balance between accessibility and cultural integrity are required, even though the new models stress the significance of inclusivity and ethics.

Methodology

Theoretical Orientation and Research Approach

The research process and strategy embraced in the study is qualitative research, a method that aims at exploring the problem of translation politics in the preservation of indigenous oral history. The theoretical question is subjective and based on the ideas of translation studies, cultural theory, and postcolonial discourse, compared to the empirical measure. It is suggested to critically analyse the perspective on translation as a cultural practice, which is the origin of meaning, representation and identity. The paper attempts to think about the contribution of linguistic choice and ideological implication of language in relation to the maintenance and metamorphosis of indigenous narratives in relation to the contextualization of translation within the framework of the greater sociocultural and historical setting. This allows perceiving translation as a dynamic process and not the transfer of information in a neutral manner.

Conceptual Framing of Translation and Cultural Dynamics

The theoretical context of the research is the understanding that the indigenous oral histories always occupy a cultural context, where the meaning is not just provided by the language but also by the performance, symbolism, and collective memory. In this case, translation is viewed as a mediator that connects the local knowledge systems with a wider audience. However, this mediation and the construction and telling of stories are characterised by power relations, hegemonic discourses and institutional constructs. The paper describes translation as an in-between subject which involves interaction of linguistic, cultural and political factors. Such a view can be critically examined with regard to the way the translation process encourages the emergence of new cultural practices or how it legitimises and subverts the pre-existing types of hierarchy.

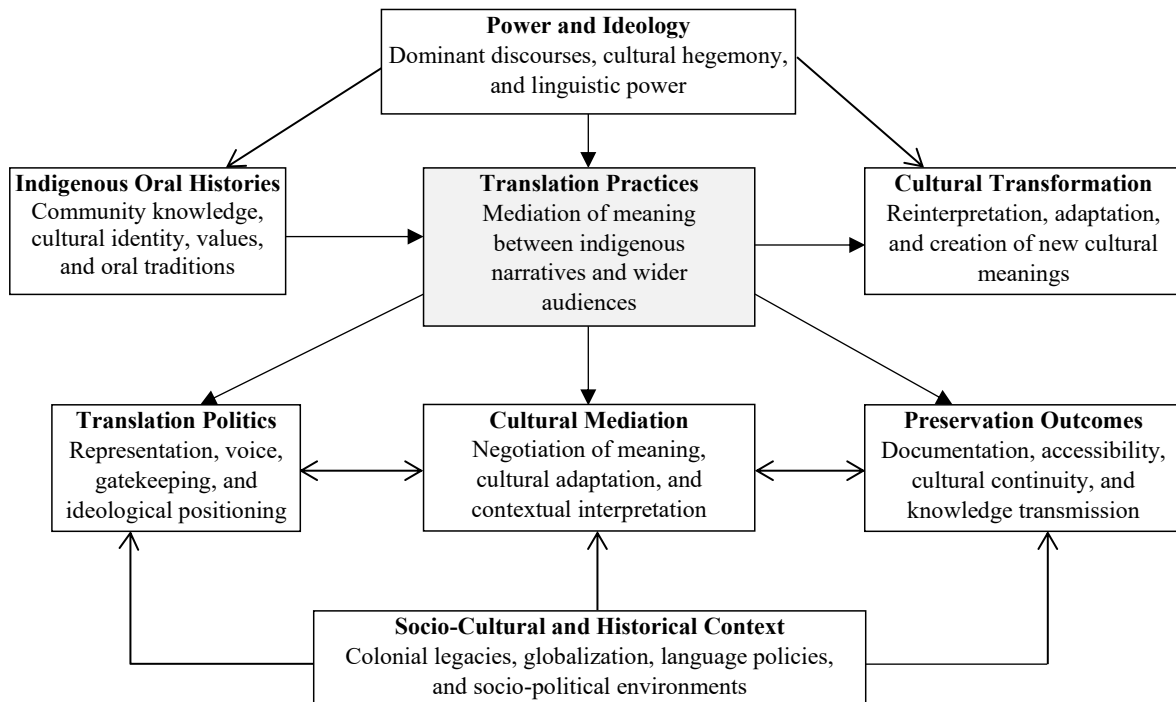


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework of Translation Politics in Indigenous Oral Histories

A conceptual diagram is developed to indicate the linkages between the key constructs of the research so as to support a theoretical argument. Figure 1 expounds on how indigenous oral histories are connected with translation processes, cultural mediation and the results of preservation on a wider socio-cultural and historical background. The only mark on the diagram represents the methods of translation, which are considered to be the primary mediating process that connects indigenous stories with larger audiences. Interrelation concepts like translation politics, cultural mediation, and cultural transformation fill in this central component and are all different manifestations of the process of negotiation and construction of meaning. The power and ideology forces are also represented in the diagram and are of higher rank than the rest of the aspects and affect the translation procedures and, thus, their results. The main part of the source of cultural knowledge is the indigenous oral history, and the outcomes of the preservation demonstrate the possible consequences of the translation, including the recording, availability and maintenance of the traditions. The sociocultural and historical context shows how all these processes are embedded in the larger patterns of language regulations, globalisation, and the colonial past. Therefore, figure 1 is a conceptual map that will be used to formulate the analytical framework of the study and how different factors interact with each other in the process of translation and preservation.

Analytical Interpretation and Synthesis

The research adopts a thematic and interpretive approach to explore the relationships that are determined in the conceptual map. Regarding the practice of translation, the principal concerns of power, representation, cultural mediation, and change of identity are discussed. To develop a unified conceptualisation of the effects translation has on indigenous oral histories, the research synthesises the experience of the numerous theoretical paradigms.

Special emphasis is given to how the translators may be actively engaged in the process of meaning-making as cultural actors rather than as agents of the passive mediator. It also discusses the level

of cultural preservation impacted by various strategies of translation, such as community-based and collaborative translations.

Ethical and Contextual Considerations

The research methodology is not only ethical but also sensitive to the knowledge systems of locals, therefore prioritising respect, inclusion and sensitivity to context. This partnership with communities whose stories is being narrated is considered to be included in translation work. This entails taking into consideration the worth of cultural ownership and participatory methods that entail engaging the voices of the indigenous in the translation process. To introduce translation to help the culture recall the original story, without distorting it, it also means that accessibility and authenticity bring in the ethical implications on the conceptualisation. In total, this kind of treatment of the research provides a systematic but flexible paradigm of researching the politics of translation in the Aboriginal context and combining the theory with the sense of cultural sensitivity to produce a useful and original piece of scholarly writing.

Results and Discussion

Translating is a complicated process that influences the preservation and transformation of oral histories among indigenous people, as is depicted by the interpretative analysis in terms of conceptual frameworks. The findings reveal how cultural mediation, power relations and contextual issues influence translation processes, which explains how indigenous knowledge is translated. The process of translation is rendered passive, although it has turned out to be a site of exchange and renegotiation of meanings. This analysis also reveals that the level of cultural sensitivity and involvement of the community in the process can influence the results of the translation.

Table 1: Key Conceptual Relationships in Translation and Cultural Preservation

Core Element	Role in Framework	Observed Influence on Outcomes
Indigenous Oral Histories	Source of cultural knowledge and identity	Provides original meaning and context
Translation Practices	Mediating mechanism between cultures	Alters or preserves meaning depending on the approach
Cultural Mediation	Interpretation and contextual adaptation	Ensures relatability but may reshape narratives
Translation Politics	Power and ideological influence	Affects representation and voice
Cultural Transformation	Outcome of reinterpretation	Leads to adaptation or reconfiguration of meanings
Preservation Outcomes	Final result of the translation process	Determines continuity and accessibility of knowledge

Table 1 has enumerated the major elements of the conceptual framework and their usage. It emphasises the interdependence of the process of cultural development and maintenance and shows the importance of each component in the translation process as a whole. The table highlights the interaction of various factors such as power, mediation and translation techniques to influence the preservation outcomes, which are never independent outcomes.

Table 2 will compare various methods of translation and their impact on cultural integrity. It describes how more authentic and dignified representations of oral histories will emerge due to more sensitive

approaches to cultural differences and involving the indigenous populations. On the other hand, fewer inclusion practices will either minimise or misunderstand culture.

Table 2: Impact of Translation Approaches on Cultural Integrity

Translation Approach	Level of Cultural Sensitivity	Degree of Community Involvement	Impact on Cultural Integrity
Literal Translation	Low	Minimal	High risk of meaning distortion
Adaptive Translation	Moderate	Limited	Partial preservation with changes
Interpretive Translation	Moderate to High	Occasional	Balanced representation
Collaborative Translation	High	Strong	High preservation of authenticity
Community-Based Translation	Very High	Full involvement	Strongest cultural integrity

Discussion

The findings have provided some credibility to the hypothesis that translation is a political and cultural aspect. The most important factors that define the manner in which indigenous narratives are produced and interpreted are translation processes and power systems. The results show that the likelihood of cultural dilution or redefinition based on outside perspectives is higher when the translation is guided by the superior language or institutional structures. However, the indigenous knowledge systems can be better preserved with the help of approaches that are oriented to the collective work and cultural sensitivity. This highlights the importance of re-examining translation as a phenomenon that is more ethically than linguistically oriented and as a participatory phenomenon. The conceptual framework also presupposes that cultural change does not always turn out to be a negative phenomenon, but it could be a flexible process where customs could adapt to the new conditions without forgetting their original values. However, such a balance should be achieved through particular consideration of the context, aim, and description.

Conclusion and Future Work

The paper examined how translation, preservation, and transformation of the oral history of indigenous peoples takes place on the basis of a conceptual and interpretive framework. The findings suggest that translation is a culturally and politically constrained practice that is recreative reconstitute of meaning and not a detached language transfer practice. The study helps support the fact that it is the interaction of the internal conditions of the community and the outer forces of institutionalisation that affect the manifestation of the indigenous narratives, as it demonstrates the interaction of the translation practices and the forces of power and cultural mediation. It is also revealed in the discussion that culturally sensitive and collaborative approaches to translation have more moderate outcomes because preserve authenticity and, at the same time, enable more individuals to access them. Meanwhile, the study recognises that cultural change is an unavoidable element of translation that demonstrates the changing complexity of knowledge regimes within situations. All in all, the research could help gain a better insight into the role of translation as an active process of cultural evolution and sustainability.

The conceptual schema can be further elaborated in future studies with the use of empirical case studies of particular indigenous groups and translation processes. These studies would help to gain a better

understanding of the working mechanisms of collaborative translation models and how the various parties' bargain over meaning and representation. Moreover, since digital media and new media are beginning to be involved in the spread of knowledge, it could be a good idea to explore more of them as a means of documenting and translating oral histories. The interdisciplinary approach of studying such areas as anthropology, linguistics, and media studies can contribute to the level of understanding of translation as a complex cultural activity as well.

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