

Power relationships between languages in translation

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This presentation discusses unequal linguistic power relations in translation through a Translation Studies and language-policy lens, construing publishing policy as a constitutive apparatus of epistemic distribution rather than a neutral editorial protocol. It argues that translation mediates not merely interlingual transfer but the scalar organization of cognitive authority, visibility, and circulation. Accordingly, asymmetries between widely spoken and less widely spoken languages must be theorized beyond demography alone, in relation to geographical dispersion, literacy regimes, institutional embeddedness, and infrastructural presence across education, research, and digital platforms. It will also be argued that knowledge circulation is co-determined by migration-driven reconfiguration of linguistic landscapes within and beyond national borders, which recalibrates multilingual communicative needs and the sociotextual conditions of access, mediation, and legitimacy. Epistemic inequality, moreover, cannot be reduced to a Western canon-versus-margin problematic; it must also be analyzed through technological mediation, since machine translation, speech technologies, and AI systems may either widen multilingual dissemination or intensify asymmetry through data scarcity, platform bias, and uneven language support. Recent evidence indicates that fewer than 7% of journals, as of late 2021, permitted publication in languages other than English. Against this background, the central question becomes pressing: how can scholars and practitioners rebalance these inequalities? The presentation addresses this question by advocating a reciprocal open-access translation policy whereby publishers not only authorize translation into English but also systematically enable reverse translation from English into less widely spoken languages under rights frameworks that secure authorial ownership and translatorial agency through explicit attribution, licensing, and republication terms.