**The politics and ethics of translation, navigating generational dialogue and linguistic borders shaped by colonial histories and future- oriented resistance**

**Abstract:**

This article explores the politics of translation as a critical and decolonial framework for understanding intergenerational dialogue and knowledge co-creation in global contexts. Situated at the intersection of decolonial theory, translation studies, Indigenous scholarship, and critical intergenerational studies, it examines how translation operates as a contested relational practice through which power, culture, and identity are negotiated across generations. Drawing on decolonial thought and debates on epistemic justice and relational ethics, the analysis foregrounds translation as an ethical and political act rather than a neutral linguistic bridge. Through a comparative analysis of two case studies - Māori language revitalisation initiatives in Aotearoa New Zealand and Sámi youth political councils in Northern Europe - the article illustrates how intergenerational translation mediates between ancestral epistemologies and contemporary sociopolitical realities. These cases reveal translation as a site of both continuity and struggle, where linguistic, cultural, and digital borders are navigated in ways that sustain collective well-being while also exposing tensions around authority, representation, and legitimacy. Engaging critically with traditions in decolonial pedagogy, Indigenous language revitalisation, and critical dialogue studies, the article situates translation as a practice shaped by colonial histories and future-oriented resistance. It advances the position that ethical translation demands attentiveness to untranslatability, refusal, and difference, challenging dominant Western assumptions of equivalence, transparency, and universal intelligibility. In an era of digital expansion and algorithmic mediation, translation emerges as a key site for interrogating how Indigenous and intergenerational knowledges are preserved, transformed, and governed. By reframing translation as a decolonial praxis of care and co-existence, grounded in these scholarly traditions, the article contributes to contemporary debates on collective futures, intergenerational well-being, and the epistemic responsibilities of intercultural engagement.

**Keywords:** Intergenerational dialogue; Decolonial translation; Epistemic justice; Knowledge co-creation; Indigenous futures; Digital colonialism

## 1. Introduction

Translation is often thought of as a technical task, the carrying of meaning from one language into another. Yet in contexts marked by colonialism, displacement, and cultural suppression, translation cannot be reduced to mere linguistic **practice**. It is instead a deeply political, ethical, and generational act that determines whose knowledge survives, whose values are dignified, and how communities sustain belonging across time. In societies where language has been a site of domination, translation becomes a process through which communities not only articulate methods of survival but also envision alternative futures. Translation is therefore better understood as an interplay of practice and belonging: an intergenerational negotiation that involves memory, cosmology, and lived experience as much as it does words. In this sense, translation is inseparable from intergenerational dialogue, understood here not simply as communication between age groups, but as a structured relational process through which knowledge, authority, and responsibility are negotiated across time.

This paper situates translation within the wider frame of intergenerational dialogue, responding directly to the conversation on how intergenerational practices shape collective wellbeing futures. The intention here is to move beyond narrow linguistic or technical accounts of translation and critically engage with its political and ethical dimensions. Translation operates at the intersection of power, language, and identity, and its role in intergenerational dialogue reveals how communities navigate historical injustices and the asymmetries of the present while imagining futures that are inclusive, just, and sustainable. The argument advanced is that translation is not a neutral mechanism of communication but a relational practice through which belonging either sustained or eroded. Intergenerational dialogue, within this framing, becomes both the condition and the consequence of translation: it is through dialogical encounters between elders and youth that meanings are contested, reworked, and made viable for the future.

### 1.1 Colonial variance, language, and the politics of memory

This requires careful attention to the colonial histories that have shaped contemporary translation practices. Too often, colonialism is framed as a singular project, but in reality, it operated in diverse and sometimes contradictory ways, including in non-settler colonial and imperial formations where linguistic governance functioned differently but no less forcefully. British settler-colonialism frequently sought to erase Indigenous languages entirely, often through the imposition of schooling systems designed to assimilate children into English-speaking norms. French colonialism, by contrast, relied on the *mission civilisatrice*, an ideology of cultural assimilation that imposed the French language as a marker of civilisation and progress. Russian and Soviet imperial legacies took different forms, combining Orthodox Christianity and socialist ideologies to suppress Indigenous, Muslim, and Turkic identities across vast territories (Cooper, 2005; Tlostanova, 2015). In Northern Europe, Sámi communities were subject to internal colonial practices through nation-state expansion, border-making, and assimilationist language

policies, including boarding schools and the restriction of Sámi languages in public and political life. These practices were not only linguistic but mnemonic: they shaped whose histories could be narrated as national memory and whose knowledge was relegated to the margins or rendered unintelligible within state archives and political discourse. Each of these trajectories reveals that colonial power was, in part, exercised through language and translation, yet in ways that varied according to ideological, territorial, and cultural logics. By acknowledging these differences, this article resists the tendency to homogenise colonialism and instead foregrounds how translation is always contextually situated.

**1.2 Belonging and intergenerational transmission**

Translation, then, is simultaneously about the politics of memory and the politics of the future. When Indigenous languages were suppressed in schools and public life, the act of speaking one's mother tongue became undignified, marked as inferior, or actively punished. Generations of families experienced shame and disruption as their cultural lifeworlds were rendered illegitimate (Battiste, 2013). Translation in these contexts is not just a question of rendering one language into another, but of negotiating the very possibility of being: whether communities are able to pass down values, beliefs, and practices in ways that affirm rather than diminish their identities. The revitalisation of suppressed languages, as seen in Māori contexts, demonstrates that translation can also serve as a site of reclamation, revalorising that which had been silenced and affirming the collective being of a people (Higgins, Rewi & Olsen-Reeder, 2014). Such revitalisation efforts depend upon sustained intergenerational dialogue, in which memory is not merely preserved but actively reactivated through pedagogical, cultural, and political exchange.

At the same time, translation mediates cultural belonging. Belonging is not an abstract condition but a lived practice of mutual and intergenerational recognition, inclusion, and participation in collective life (Yuval-Davis, 2011). Intergenerational dialogue makes these processes explicit: it requires communities to reflect on what knowledge, heritage and practices are held as valuable, how it is described and how these cultural values are transmitted across generations. Translation is therefore not only about ensuring continuity but also about reinterpreting traditions informed by the ways in which these traditions have been lost and disrupted via colonial processes, in ways that resonate with younger generations. This involves negotiation: elders act as custodians of memory and values, while younger generations may challenge, adapt, or reframe these traditions in response to contemporary realities. Translation mediates this process, carrying meaning but also adapting it, ensuring that belonging remains dynamic rather than static. Here, intergenerational dialogue can be understood as a site of ethical tension and creative possibility, where asymmetries of authority, experience, and expectation must be navigated rather than assumed away.

The paper argues that translation should be understood as a decolonial praxis, not only in the sense of resisting historical domination but in line with Mignolo's (2011) insistence that decoloniality is about

being “for” something rather than only “against” colonial legacies. If communities are against the silencing of their languages and traditions, what are they for? What values do they hold close, and how do these values guide the work of intergenerational dialogue? Translation becomes the site where such questions are negotiated. It is here, at the site of translation as process, that communities articulate being not as constituting recognition by the dominant order, but as the capacity to live well on their own terms with regards to autonomous and authentic belonging. It is here, too, that belonging is affirmed through collective practices that anchor communities to their past while orienting them towards futures of justice and well-being. **Ethical challenges surrounding translation, such as the risk of extraction, misrepresentation, or retraumatisation, are therefore inseparable from decolonial concerns with power, positionality, and relational accountability.**

This article therefore advances a clear statement of intent: to critically examine translation as a practice of intergenerational dialogue that holds profound implications for how communities confront colonial legacies and build futures of belonging. It develops this argument in three steps. First, it situates translation within broader theoretical debates about colonial variances, epistemic justice, and intergenerational praxis. Second, it explores two detailed case studies: Māori language revitalisation in Aotearoa New Zealand and Sámi youth political councils in Northern Europe. These cases are not treated as interchangeable but as sites of comparison that reveal both convergences and divergences in how translation operates across different colonial contexts Third, it reflects on the ethical and methodological challenges of studying translation, particularly in a digital age where Indigenous knowledges risk being “archived” into static forms, potentially undermining the living and relational character of these traditions.

## 2. Conceptual foundations and politics of belonging

Translation has often been understood through the narrow lens of linguistic transfer, yet in contexts of coloniality and postcoloniality it is more accurately described as a deeply political act that mediates power, identity, and knowledge. Scholars have long cautioned that translation cannot be reduced to a neutral or mechanical process. Spivak (1993), for instance, highlights how translation frequently silences or domesticates subaltern voices by forcing them into dominant epistemic frames, while Cronin (2006) emphasises the “micro-politics” of translation in everyday exchanges. The decision of what to translate, how to translate it, and for whom, is always implicated in broader struggles over recognition and epistemic justice. Translation is therefore inseparable from colonial histories in which language became a central tool of domination but also of resistance, and where the politics of belonging were - and continue to be - negotiated through practices of linguistic and cultural mediation.

Colonialism cannot, however, be treated as a singular or homogeneous phenomenon. Empires deployed language and translation differently depending on territorial, cultural, and ideological conditions. French

colonialism is often associated with an assimilationist model that elevated the French language as a universal medium of civilisation. British colonialism, by contrast, relied on a complex combination of indirect rule and linguistic hierarchy, in which English was institutionalised as a superior language of administration and education, even while local vernaculars were tolerated as markers of the "native" (Pennycook, 1998). Russian colonial expansion entailed different logics altogether: in parts of Central Asia and the Arctic, Orthodox Christianisation and Russification overlapped with attempts to manage linguistic diversity across Muslim, Turkic, and Indigenous communities (Tlostanova, 2012). These trajectories illustrate how translation was mobilised variably as assimilation, stratification, or management that has been always bound to the imposition of political authority, yet never in identical ways. A critical analysis of translation in intergenerational dialogue must remain attentive to such variances, recognising that colonial translation produced not one singular legacy but multiple fractured inheritances.

Translation in these settings was never only linguistic; it also entailed cultural, spiritual, and epistemological conversion. Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o (1986) has described the colonial imposition of European languages as the theft of memory, where children schooled in English were alienated from ancestral knowledge systems. At the same time, translation could become a site of refusal: oral traditions sustained in local languages resisted codification, hybrid linguistic forms undermined colonial categories, and silence itself became a strategy of withholding sacred knowledge from colonial capture (Simpson, 2017). These acts of generational continuity highlight translation not only as a mechanism of domination but also as a praxis of survival, where communities preserved being by controlling what was shared and what remained untranslatable.

It is within intergenerational dialogue that the stakes of translation are perhaps most visible. Elders often speak in a way that carries the weight of ancestral histories, cosmologies, and lived experiences of colonial disruption. Younger generations may inhabit hybrid cultural spaces shaped by migration, globalisation, and digital technologies, which provide new idioms but also risk distancing them from the depth of ancestral expression. Translation across these generational positions is both a possibility and a danger: it can bridge gaps of understanding and belonging, but it can also reduce complex traditions to consumable fragments. The critical question becomes not whether translation occurs, but how it is practised and under what conditions being is preserved or eroded.

Dialogue is frequently celebrated as a space of reciprocity and mutual respect. Freire (1970) framed dialogue as an act of co-creation, essential for liberation from oppressive systems. Yet the promise of dialogue cannot be taken at face value. In contexts where intergenerational or intercultural encounters are mediated through digital infrastructures, what is called dialogue may resemble one-sided consumption. Knowledge uploaded to online archives, for example, risks being stripped from its relational and ritual contexts, transforming living traditions into static "resources" to be browsed without accountability (Christen, 2011). Couldry and Mejias (2019) extend this critique to argue that digital

platforms are infrastructures of extraction, where human relations and cultural knowledge are translated into data commodities. When intergenerational dialogue unfolds within such structures, translation risks becoming a form of epistemic dispossession rather than an act of mutual recognition.

Belonging is not a static identity but a lived process of being situated within narratives of past, present, and future (Yuval-Davis, 2011). Intergenerational belonging is particularly precarious where language loss, displacement, and assimilation have fractured cultural transmission. Younger generations may experience alienation from ancestral traditions, while elders may grieve the erosion of linguistic worlds. Translation becomes a site where belonging is renegotiated: it can serve as a bridge that reweaves generational continuity, but it can also expose tensions between continuity and transformation. Battiste (2013) has argued that decolonising education requires precisely this negotiation highlighting opportunities for creating conditions for Indigenous knowledge to flourish in contemporary forms without being fossilised or commodified. Translation in intergenerational dialogue is thus not simply about preservation, but about cultivating dynamic belonging that affirms both heritage and change.

To conceptualise translation in this way demands a shift from resistance alone to affirmation. Mignolo (2011) cautions that decoloniality cannot be defined solely by opposition to coloniality. If the aim is only to dismantle, the question remains: what is being built in its place? Translation as a decolonial praxis must therefore be understood as world-making, as a commitment to values that communities want to carry forward into the future. This reframes translation not merely as an act of bridging linguistic or generational gaps, but as an epistemological framework. An orientation towards relationality, reciprocity, and the construction of plural futures. Mignolo and Walsh (2018) describe this as a politics of being “for” rather than “against”: affirming knowledge systems, the continuity of cultural values, and the possibility of intergenerational flourishing.

Such a rethinking of translation situates it at the heart of the broader project of intergenerational dialogue. It is not only a technical means but a political and ethical commitment that determines whether dialogue can move beyond tokenism towards collective well-being. Understanding translation as both a practice and a framework illuminates the stakes of the case studies that follow, where the revitalisation of Te Reo Māori and the political activism of Sámi youth are not simply examples of cultural survival, but complex negotiations of belonging, and epistemic justice through translation. These cases reveal the promises and tensions of intergenerational translation in distinct contexts, yet also provide a comparative lens for re-imagining dialogue as a practice of healing and future-making.

## 3. Case studies in translation and intergenerational dialogue

As discussed, intergenerational translation is neither a neutral exercise of linguistic transfer nor a straightforward mechanism of cultural preservation. Instead, it is always an epistemic and political negotiation, shaped by historical trajectories of colonialism, contemporary power structures, and the

aspirations of younger and older generations. To illuminate these complexities, this section turns to two case studies: Māori language revitalisation in Aotearoa New Zealand and Sámi youth political mobilisation in Northern Europe. Both reveal how translation functions as a site of intergenerational dialogue, continuity, and rupture. They also expose the risks of epistemic flattening when Indigenous knowledges are mediated through dominant institutions, digital technologies, and international policy discourses. Importantly, by comparing these contexts side by side, a more nuanced understanding emerges of translation as a situated praxis - one that cannot be theorised monolithically but must account for diverse colonial histories and epistemological orientations.

**3.1 Māori language revitalisation - translation as healing and adaptation**

Māori language revitalisation exemplifies translation as a process of both cultural survival and transformation. Following the devastating effects of British settler colonialism - including the systemic prohibition of *te reo Māori* in schools, punitive assimilationist policies, and urbanisation that disrupted intergenerational transmission (Walker, 2004; Smith, 2021) - by the mid-20th century Māori language was in precipitous decline. Census data from 1976 showed that fewer than 20% of Māori children could speak the language fluently (King, 2018). This rupture spurred a grassroots mobilisation to reclaim linguistic ownership, culminating in the *kōhanga reo* (language nest) movement launched in 1982.

*Kōhanga reo* represent more than immersion preschools; they embody intergenerational healing. By positioning elders (*kaumātua*) as linguistic and cultural anchors, the movement re-inscribed translation as a collective and spiritual practice, drawing on whakapapa (genealogy) and tikanga (customs) to situate children within ancestral knowledge systems (Higgins & Rewi, 2014). Translation here is not the neutral transfer of vocabulary but a process of epistemic continuity where ways of speaking are inseparable from ontologies of land (*whenua*), kinship, and spirituality.

Yet revitalisation simultaneously demands adaptation. New vocabulary creation, such as *rorohiko* (computer, “electric brain”), illustrates how translation stretches to accommodate technological modernity (Harlow, 2007). This raises critical questions: does such adaptation preserve epistemological integrity, or does it risk assimilating Indigenous worldviews into Western conceptual logics? Digitalisation intensifies this dilemma. Online dictionaries, AI-driven translation tools, and gamified language apps expand accessibility but risk decontextualising language from its cultural lifeworlds.

The Māori case thus highlights the tension between translation as epistemic survival and translation as epistemic reduction. On one hand, intergenerational dialogue sustains belonging and identity; on the other, the translation of *te reo*into digital and institutional frameworks risks stripping away spiritual dimensions, reducing living language to static data. The stakes are not only linguistic but existential: as Smith (2021) argues, revitalising *te reo* is inseparable from decolonising epistemologies themselves.

### 3.2 Sámi youth political councils - translation as representation and visibility

In contrast, Sámi political mobilisation demonstrates translation as a strategy of intergenerational negotiation across linguistic, institutional, and geopolitical borders. The Sámi, Indigenous peoples inhabiting Sápmi (spanning Norway, Sweden, Finland, and Russia), have historically faced cultural suppression under assimilationist policies, including forced boarding schools, linguistic prohibition, and land dispossession (Porsanger, 2011). While revitalisation efforts continue for Sámi languages, many of which are critically endangered, youth political councils illustrate how translation is not confined to language but extends to political representation and epistemic recognition.

Sámi youth councils (*Sámi Nuorat*, *Sámi Ungdomsråd*) emerged to bridge generational divides and provide institutional platforms for young Sámi voices (Josefsen, Mörkenstam & Saglie, 2014). They serve as translational forums in two senses: first, linguistically, by negotiating between the multiplicity of Sámi languages and dominant state languages (Norwegian, Swedish, Finnish); second, epistemologically, by translating Sámi values of land stewardship, collective decision-making, and spiritual relations into frameworks legible to state institutions and international bodies like the UN.

However, these translations come at a cost. To secure recognition, youth leaders often adopt the idioms of rights-based discourses, which privilege individual rights and liberal-democratic language over relational, collective epistemologies (Kuokkanen, 2007). This generates epistemic friction: the Sámi concept of *siida* (a community-based unit of governance tied to land and kinship) resists neat translation into Western political categories of “council” or “association.” The act of translation thus risks epistemic dilution, even as it facilitates visibility and advocacy.

Digital platforms both extend and constrain Sámi youth politics. Social media campaigns, such as protests against mining projects in Jokkmokk, Sweden, enable transnational solidarity through hashtags like #DecolonizeSápmi. Yet the affordances of digital media often demand simplification: nuanced epistemological debates are compressed into viral slogans, privileging visibility over relational accountability. Furthermore, linguistic hierarchies persist online, where dominant Scandinavian languages often overshadow smaller Sámi languages, exacerbating internal inequalities (Pietikäinen, 2015).

The Sámi case thus foregrounds translation as political visibility and intergenerational negotiation but also highlights the risks of reduction when epistemologies are mediated through institutional or digital filters. Unlike Māori revitalisation, where translation centres on continuity of language, Sámi youth politics foreground translation as a balancing act between recognition and reduction, continuity and compromise.

### 3.3 Translation as situated praxis

Placing these cases in comparison illustrates that translation is not a singular practice but a situated praxis shaped by colonial histories, sociolinguistic conditions, and political economies. Māori revitalisation and Sámi youth politics both demonstrate that translation is not only about words but about epistemic survival and futurity. Yet they diverge in how translation is institutionalised and operationalised.

Māori revitalisation centres community-driven institutions such as *kōhanga reo*, where intergenerational dialogue is embodied through elders teaching children. Translation here is primarily horizontal (within communities) although it extends into vertical negotiations with the state and digital platforms. Sámi youth councils, by contrast, exemplify translation as vertical negotiation, where young leaders act as intermediaries between Indigenous communities and state/international institutions. This structural positioning shifts the locus of power: while Māori revitalisation foregrounds epistemic continuity, Sámi youth politics foreground epistemic negotiation.

Furthermore, both cases raise urgent questions about digital translation. While digital tools expand access, they risk turning Indigenous knowledge into what Hennessy (2012) terms "digital artefacts" which can exist detached from their spiritual, relational, and performative contexts. In Māori revitalisation, this manifests in concerns over AI-driven translation eroding the spiritual depth of *te reo*. In Sámi youth politics, social media amplifies Indigenous visibility but risks flattening epistemic complexity. Together, these dynamics reveal the double bind of digital futures: necessary for survival but potentially undermining the very relationalities they seek to preserve.

At stake across both cases is what Mignolo (2011) describes as a shift from being "against" coloniality to being "for" alternative epistemologies. Māori and Sámi practices of translation illustrate this generative orientation: revitalisation and youth mobilisation are not only defensive struggles but affirmative acts of world-making. Translation thus emerges as a practice of belonging, where intergenerational dialogue is not simply preservation but the continual negotiation of values, identities, and futures.

## 4. Translation in digital futures and reflexive translation

The previous sections have situated translation as a contested epistemic practice within intergenerational and intercultural dialogue and this contemporary moment demands that this understanding be reimagined in light of digital transformation. As dialogue increasingly migrates into online spaces, digital infrastructures which includes social media platforms, AI-driven translation tools, and data repositories reconfigure the conditions under which intergenerational knowledge is created, stored, and shared. These shifts hold both promise and peril for the politics of intergenerational translation. They make possible unprecedented connections across geographic and cultural borders, yet they also risk flattening epistemic diversity and disembedding Indigenous and local knowledges from their relational contexts.

Thus, Digital technologies act as new sites of translation: not merely linguistic or cultural, but algorithmic and infrastructural. Algorithms, archives, and data flows mediate which knowledges are visible, which are valued, and which are erased. In this sense, the politics of translation extends beyond language to encompass what Couldry and Mejias (2019) term *data colonialism*: the appropriation of human life, relationships, and knowledge as data resources within capitalist systems. When Indigenous stories or languages are digitised without community control, they risk becoming what Christen (2011) calls "digital cultural property" - circulating as detached cultural artefacts rather than as living expressions of community and spirituality.

**4.1 Digital translation as opportunity and risk**

In the context of Māori and Sámi futures, the digital sphere embodies this double edge. Māori *te reo* revitalisation increasingly relies on digital platforms from online dictionaries like *Te Aka*, to gamified learning applications, to speech recognition projects that use machine learning to improve pronunciation. These tools democratise access, especially for diaspora Māori who may lack immersion environments. Yet when digital systems model linguistic "correctness" according to computational rather than cultural logics, they risk institutionalising a form of algorithmic authority (Carlson, 2017).

Similarly, Sámi digital initiatives such as *Giellatekno* (language technology research) and *Divvun* (proofing tools) have made Sámi languages visible in cyberspace, yet these achievements coexist with persistent hierarchies. Dominant languages (Norwegian, Finnish, Swedish) remain default system languages, while smaller Sámi languages receive less investment. The Sámi case foregrounds how digital infrastructures reproduce the very asymmetries they purport to dismantle (Pietikäinen, 2015). While digital translation amplifies visibility, it simultaneously enacts what Couldry and Mejias (2018) describe as a "colonial continuum," embedding historical patterns of extraction within digital architectures.

This raises a deeper question: what happens when knowledge, which in Indigenous cosmologies is fundamentally relational and performative, becomes archived in static digital forms? Hennessy (2012) warns that such digitisation risks transforming living practices into "dead heritage" - detached from the affective and spiritual bonds that give them meaning. Digital archiving can unintentionally perpetuate colonial epistemologies by privileging permanence, legibility, and universal access over transience, secrecy, and sacredness. Values central to many Indigenous knowledge systems. The digital, in this sense, both extends and constrains intergenerational dialogue, opening possibilities for new forms of relational knowledge while simultaneously raising complex ontological and ethical questions about presence, embodiment, and the mediation of cultural memory. These are issues that extend beyond the scope of this article but warrant further critical exploration in future research.

**4.2 Intergenerational dialogue, belonging, and the digital**

At the heart of these dilemmas lies the question of belonging. belonging is not a static identity but a lived and relational process of being situated within narratives of past, present, and future. Within intergenerational and decolonial contexts, belonging becomes deeply entangled with epistemic recognition: the extent to which one's ways of knowing are acknowledged, authorised, and sustained across generations. Rather than constituting an epistemic condition in itself, belonging shapes the social and political conditions under which knowledge is recognised as legitimate, transmissible, and meaningful. In this sense, struggles over language, translation, and dialogue are simultaneously struggles over who is able to participate in the making of collective memory and future imaginaries. In the Māori and Sámi examples, belonging is continuously negotiated through acts of translation between ancestors and descendants, between oral and digital forms, and between community and state.

Digital spaces complicate these negotiations. While social media platforms have enabled youth-led movements like *#DecolonizeSápmi* or Māori content creators on TikTok to reach global audiences, they also mediate belonging through performative visibility. The demand for constant representation can flatten complex intergenerational dialogues into consumable narratives. As Ahmed (2012) reminds us, visibility does not equate to inclusion; indeed, it can sometimes reproduce marginality by situating the visible subject as an object of gaze rather than a participant in dialogue.

At the same time, younger generations increasingly treat digital platforms as legitimate sites of cultural authorship and epistemic belonging. The emergence of Indigenous digital storytellers, artists, and educators demonstrates how translation can become a creative, future-oriented practice. These actors engage in what Lewis et al. (2018) term *Indigenous futurisms*: the reimagining of digital and technological spaces through Indigenous epistemologies, within, and often in tension with, Western state and technological infrastructures. Rather than positioning modernity as something external to or wholly rejected by Indigenous communities, these practices demonstrate how modernity is selectively reworked, inhabited, and re-signified through Indigenous priorities, values, and temporalities. In this sense, the digital is not opposed to Western modernity but becomes a site where its assumptions are unsettled through Indigenous presence, agency, and continuity. The digital, then, can be reclaimed as a decolonial site of imagination. It presents a medium for intergenerational storytelling that affirms continuity within transformation while remaining embedded in, and constrained by, broader Western sociotechnical systems.

**4.3 Studying translation in digital and intergenerational contexts**

Examining translation within these entangled digital and intergenerational contexts demands methodological reflexivity. Traditional ethnography, often oriented toward static cultural representation, struggles to capture the fluid, networked, and algorithmic dynamics of digital dialogue. Scholars such as Pink et al. (2016) advocate for *digital ethnography*. This is a methodology attentive to relationality,

temporality, and mediation. In studying intergenerational dialogue, this requires not only observing interaction but tracing how meaning circulates through platforms, interfaces, and infrastructures.

However, a decolonial methodological stance also calls for ethical humility. As Smith (2021) and Kovach (2009) emphasise, research with Indigenous and marginalised communities must prioritise relational accountability, informed consent, and the co-production of knowledge. Translation itself becomes a methodological metaphor: researchers must translate between academic and community epistemologies without appropriating or distorting either. This involves asking not only *how* we study translation, but *for whom* and *to what ends*.

**4.4 Towards ethical and reflexive translation**

Across these reflections, a central thread emerges: the future of intergenerational dialogue depends on cultivating an ethics of translation grounded in relationality, and epistemic plurality. This entails recognising that translation is not an end in itself but a continual process of negotiation that must remain open to untranslatability. As Apter (2013) notes, moments of opacity - where meanings cannot be perfectly rendered - are not failures but opportunities to preserve difference and complexity. Such opacity can be reinterpreted as a form of epistemic being, allowing knowledge to remain embedded in its context rather than subsumed into universal categories.

Ethical translation, then, requires attentiveness to both what is said and what cannot (or should not) be said. In intergenerational contexts, this means honouring the right of elders to withhold sacred knowledge and the right of youth to reinterpret tradition in their own terms. It also involves designing digital systems that respect these boundaries: for instance, Indigenous data sovereignty frameworks like the CARE principles (Collective Benefit, Authority to Control, Responsibility, and Ethics) offer a blueprint for ensuring community ownership over digital knowledge (Carroll et al., 2020).

Ultimately, the politics of translation in intergenerational dialogue is inseparable from the politics of future-making. As Mignolo and Walsh (2018) argue, decoloniality is not simply about deconstructing the past but constructing the conditions for pluriversal futures in which multiple worlds and ways of knowing can coexist with being. The challenge lies in balancing continuity with transformation, openness with protection, and global connectedness with local rootedness.

To reimagine translation as an ethical, reflexive, and decolonial praxis is to envision dialogue not as consensus but as co-existence; not as the erasure of difference but as its recognition. In a world increasingly mediated by digital technologies, this means designing infrastructures that honour intergenerational relationality as spaces that allow ancestral wisdom and emerging knowledge to meet on equal terms.

## 5. Conclusion

Translation, as explored throughout this paper, emerges not merely as a linguistic process but as an ethical, relational, and decolonial practice that sustains intergenerational dialogue and cultural continuity. Across contexts - from Indigenous knowledge transmission to digital and algorithmic mediation - translation is shown to be both a site of possibility and tension. It can bridge generations, languages, and epistemologies, yet it can also reproduce historical asymmetries when detached from context and relational accountability. The Māori and Sámi case studies demonstrate that translation is most powerful when grounded in reciprocity, belonging, and respect for epistemic plurality.

In digital futures, the politics of translation takes on renewed urgency: technologies that promise inclusion can simultaneously entrench exclusion if not critically designed and governed. An ethics of translation therefore requires reflexivity, humility, and recognition of untranslatability as a space of being rather than deficit. To imagine translation as a practice of coexistence rather than assimilation is to envision intergenerational dialogue as a collective act of care. It means creating spaces, dialogue and minds to honour difference, sustain connection, and to shape more just and plural futures.

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