

Translation, Power Asymmetry, Minority Language Cultures

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In tune with the overall theme of this Congress, “Living Translation”, my talk will explore “The role of translation in the lived experience of the Other.” This study is done in light of the inherent practice of translation in contexts where multilingualism is the norm, as well as within the scientific discourse on alterity and representation of otherness in contemporary global languages. The evocation of translation in contexts of multilingualism and expressions of the lived experience of the Other often imply recourse to the intersection between translation and power relations to account for the impact of global inequalities be they linguistic, economic or technological on the translation process. To the extent that African literature is a window into life in contemporary African society, the role of translation will be discussed with respect to the power imbalance between orality and writing, between indigenous languages and the languages of colonization. This power differential is enhanced further by the ever-increasing gap between languages of officialdom and the evolving and rapidly assertive languages of creolization. African literary discourse lays bare the power differentials that have characterized relations historically in the contexts of colonization, post-colonialism, neo-colonialism and globalization. Translation has indeed been pivotal in negotiating and asserting the African experience within global discourses on inequality, power asymmetry and intercultural relations and communication.