

The Transcoding of “Women’s Empowerment” as “Empoderamiento de la Mujer”



A Post-Colonial Translation Theory for Transnational Feminist Rhetorics

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Transnational feminist scholars share an interest in investigating the colonial practices that affect women’s lives around the globe. In “Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses,” Chandra Talpade Mohanty claims that scholars in the field should “detect (...) colonialist move(s) in the case of a hegemonic first-third world connection in scholarship” in order to recognize the peculiarities of the cultures whose discourses are being created and thus avoid the universalization and “homogenization of class, race, religious, cultural and historical specificities of the lives of women” (Mohanty, 1986, 348-9). In “Transnational Feminist Crossings: On Neoliberalism and Radical Critique,” Mohanty analyzes how her work as a feminist scholar has traveled, developed, and adapted to specific cultures by looking at the uses of the translations of her work. Hence, the role of language seems vital in transnational rhetorics (Mohanty, 2013). What are the languages most commonly used to create, promote, and disseminate feminist rhetorics? According to Barbara Seidlhofer, “It cannot be denied that English functions as a global lingua franca” (Seidlhofer, 2005, 339). However, “There is still a tendency for native speakers to be regarded as custodians over what is acceptable usage” (Seidlhofer, 2005, 339). Thus, we must ask ourselves, What practices do different agents in the creation and promotion of feminist rhetorics engage in? What Englishes are put into practice and by whom? What are the effects of the use of English as a hegemonic language in transnational contexts? How

are women and women's organizations represented by means of the English language? Are those representations accurate and/or appropriate? Are linguistic practices about feminist discourses and concepts like "gender, race, class and nationalism" still linked to political agendas related to "earlier histories of colonization" (Grewal, 2005, 27)?

Regarding the role of language in the manifestation and representation of women across different contexts, Rebecca Dingo touches upon the vital role of translations in the transcoding of arguments of transnational feminist rhetorics:

The way policy makers and development experts translate the term *gender mainstreaming* into policy documents should be a crucial concern for feminist rhetoricians because *this act of translation demonstrates how arguments shift and change due to economic and geopolitical contexts and thus shows how power informs rhetorics* (emphasis added, Dingo, 2012, 31).

Dingo's conceptualization of the term "translation" is ambiguous, sometimes referring to "transcoding"—resituating a taken-for-granted term within the same language in order to fit certain ideologies (Dingo, 2012, 31)—and at other times as the transfer of words from the source language to the target language (Dingo, 2012, 104). The latter definition of translation will be the main point of discussion in this article, since I aim to investigate the "transcoding" of one concept (women's empowerment) from English to Spanish as it has appeared in several documents from different institutions. By using a post-colonial approach to translation studies and transnational rhetorical feminism, I attempt to "make visible the ways in which all of our knowledge is mediated" in the creation and promotion of transnational feminist rhetorics (Queen, 2008, 486). Finally, I would like to find evidence to answer the following questions: Are translations specific types of transcoding? What makes these types of transcoding distinctive? What are the ideological nuances and political and economic forces that allow for the promotion of certain translations over others?

Investigating Colonial Linguistic Practices

In *The Rhetoric of Empire*, David Spurr discusses several colonial tropes. Although he points at "nomination" and "substantivization" as grammatical forms of "appropriation," we can generalize such "grammatical forms of appropriation" to the act of translation itself

(Spurr, 1993, 32). According to Kim Kyoung-yim, English is the dominant language in translation traffic. Therefore, the production and distribution of knowledge is asymmetrical, favoring English-speaking populations (Kim, 2013).

The notion of “translation as manipulation” extends the trope of appropriation. Translation scholar André Lefevere has approached the act of translation as the rewriting and thus manipulation of an original piece, and hence of its culture. In fact, Lefevere claims that “(t)ranslators (...) have to be traitors, but most of the time they don’t know it, and nearly all the time they have no other choice, not as long as they remain within the boundaries of the culture that is theirs by birth or adoption” (Lefevere, 1992, 13). In other words, in rewriting a text from a culture other than hers into a text for her own culture, the translator manipulates the original to “adapt to the system, to stay within the parameters delimited by its constraints” or “choose(s) to oppose the system, to try to operate outside of its constraints” (Lefevere, 1992, 13)—therefore, betraying either the original culture or the target.

To address this issue and investigate potential forms of mediation between the original and target cultures, post-colonial theories of translation seek to scrutinize how translations contribute to constructing the identities of both colonizers and colonized and how translation “has operated as a discursive practice in the service of colonialism and imperialism” (Çulhaoğlu, 2014, 61). Some scholars in the field claim that translations must be rethought and rewritten in order to preserve heterogeneity in translation by means of unfamiliar language (Çulhaoğlu, 2014, 62).

From the perspective of an ethics of difference, translations must account for cultural differences and responsibility for “the Other.” According to Lawrence Venuti, the best known proponent of this perspective, “Translations should be written, read, and evaluated with greater respect for linguistic and cultural differences,” thus preserving heterogeneity and difference in the foreign text (Venuti, 1998, 6; Çulhaoğlu, 2014, 60).

Susan Bassnett and Esperança Bielsa explain, by quoting Venuti, that translations are mainly divided into two types when they are categorized according to the way ideology is carried out in them: domesticated and foreignized. A translation is domesticated if it is adapted to the norms of the target culture, and it is foreignized if the results seem unfamiliar and strange to the receiving audience by retaining traces of the source culture (Bielsa and Bassnett, 2008, 9). Kim claims that translations that do not foster a “third space” or allow for an engagement in “a

decolonializing dialogue” (Carbonell, 1995, in Kim, 2013, 343) promote, in Kim’s opinion, North American monolingualism and “monolithic meaning systems” (Kim, 2013, 343). Therefore, translators have the capacity to resist colonizing practices by choosing words and expressions that represent the idiosyncrasy of the “colonized” cultures.

According to Ingrid Palmary, anti-colonial translation choices have helped to construct feminist discourses and scholarship (Palmary, 2014). Thus, we should pay attention to specific translation practices that are often neglected by scholars from the English-speaking world, creating “the illusion that the social world is produced and mediated in English and demands that non-English speakers conform to the linguistic normal of the English language with English-speaking writers reading the end product of these translated texts as simply an authentic reflection of the original” (Palmary, 2014, 576). For example, Kathleen M. de Onís examines the language used in U.S. discussions on reproductive rights by looking at one specific term in particular: <choice>. According to de Onís, the term “<choice>” fails to represent linguistically and culturally Spanish-speaking Latinas and, potentially, other minority groups. “<Choice>” is thus an ideograph, “a building block of ideology” that enables misidentifications as well as “bordering” of non-white populations by reconfiguring their identities as outsiders and relegating them to the margins (de Onís, 2015, 3-7). In other words, de Onís claims that terms such as “<choice>,” created from a monolingual English perspective, do not align with the identities of diverse cultural groups. For example, “<choice>” does not reflect the complexity of the situations in which many Latinas have to make decisions regarding their reproductive health, since it does not take into consideration aspects such as socioeconomic status and cultural values and is associated with privilege. *Justicia reproductiva* (reproductive justice), on the other hand, offers an alternative that, according to de Onís, reflects the complex factors that minority groups such as Latinas have to consider before making decisions regarding their reproductive rights. Therefore, the linguistic and cultural nuances conveyed by terms that are used to represent diverse cultural groups should be brought to light with the purpose of uncovering ideologies and frameworks that shape hegemonic discourses. From a transnational feminist perspective that focuses on rhetorics, we should “illuminate the various ways arguments are collected, composed, and assembled” (Dingo, 2012, 21) and look at “the relationship between language and power and consider how power works in specific historical moments and within specific

texts” (Dingo, 2012, 13). Translation choices help us visualize these power dynamics since they show how knowledge circulates and is disseminated. In the following section, I apply Dingo’s concept of “transcoding” to the translations of a single concept in Spanish.

Transcoding “Women’s Empowerment” in Spanish

Although the term “transcoding” originally refers to “the practice of translating digital data so that it works in several platforms” (Dingo, 2012, 31), scholars in the field of transnational rhetorics such as Inderpal Grewal have employed the term transcoding to, in Dingo’s words, “describe how neoliberal logics travel along transnational networks, subtly shifting and changing to fit various situations while seemingly maintaining a common ideology” (Dingo, 2012, 31). In fact, Grewal’s notion of connectivity accounts for how discourses are enacted and translated as they move across contexts, since connectivity is not only understood as the “degree and variety of connections that exist” in transnational spaces, but also as a metaphor that illustrates “the asymmetries produced by the discourses of difference between the West and the Rest” (Grewal, 2005, 23-25). Therefore, connectivity allows us to see how the construction of discourses as uneven becomes exposed through the transcoding of concepts. Transcoding implies that “as rhetorics move, their meanings may shift to fit with various political agendas such as the implementation of neoliberal economics across the globe” (Dingo, 2012, 31). Although Dingo does not specify the linguistic implications for this “movement of rhetorics across transnational networks,” it seems obvious that writers, speakers, and other stakeholders involved in the construction of meaning via translation will engage in meaning-making rhetorical practices by shifting languages and/or varieties of the same language. These translations, like other types of transcoding, also carry ideologies with them.

The English term “empowerment” conceptualizes, according to Manoranjan Mohanty, political and economic values of Western capitalism, “something to be understood in the context of production and investment” (Mohanty, 1995, 1434). Mohanty looks at several documents related to the World Summit for Social Development held in Copenhagen in 1995 to uncover other meanings associated with this term. For example, in the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action, Mohanty notices that “empowerment” is used as the act of making people

“strengthen their capacities,” which, in her opinion, does not take account of the “bondages that have historically constrained fuller realization of human potential in the case of the deprived sections” (Mohanty, 1995, 1434). “Empowerment,” as presented in the documents in question, does not include connotations of socioeconomic realities and/or political ideologies, which turn out to be the cause of the “lack of empowerment” of many people. Nonetheless, the term has been adopted by scholars and activists of social movements, unaware of these implications—namely, that people cannot be empowered without the guidance of an NGO, a democratic, Western institution (Mohanty, 1995, 1435-1436). As a consequence, and taking into consideration that terms like “empowerment” are transcoded (carrying ideological issues with them) in different contexts, Aihwa Ong claims that, “We urgently need detailed explorations of how concepts first proposed (in Beijing) are translated and modified on the ground” (Ong, 2011, 44).

For instance, in “*Traducción institucional y neologismos: El caso de «género»*,” Isabel Carbajal describes the creation of the term *género* (gender) in Spanish as a consequence of the introduction of the English term “gender” at the 1995 Beijing conference (Carbajal, 2002). Because of the great impact of the conference on feminist discourses, the term “gender” became widespread and popularized among English speakers and institutions whose work language is English, resulting in the adoption of neologisms in other languages in order to translate this word in official documents from English to those languages. Carbajal, a translator for the European Parliament, explains the process that she and other translators went through in order to come up with a solution for what, before 2001, was an untranslatable concept in Spanish and other languages. According to her, most translators of other languages decided to opt for the calque/loan word from the English language because it was the most efficient way to deal with the problem. This decision, in Carbajal’s opinion, brought more richness and creativity to the languages that adopted the word. However, she does not uncover the ideological implications of the process. For example, she does not question why English was the language from which the rest of languages were being translated or the implications of using it as the primary source.

As far as the lexical object of this study is concerned, “women’s empowerment” was employed in English in the report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing in 1995. However, the same document translated into Spanish (“*Informe de la Cuarta*

Conferencia Mundial sobre la Mujer, Beijing, 1995”) does not talk about *empoderamiento* (a literal translation of “empowerment”) but about *potenciación* (promotion/enhancement).

The English text:

Dedicate ourselves unreservedly to addressing these constraints and obstacles and thus enhancing further the **advancement and empowerment of women** all over the world, and agree that this requires urgent action in the spirit of determination, hope, cooperation and solidarity, now and to carry us forward into the next century.

The Spanish translation:

Nos comprometemos sin reservas a combatir estas limitaciones y obstáculos y a promover así **el adelanto y la potenciación del papel de la mujer** en todo el mundo, y convenimos en que esta tarea exige una acción urgente, con espíritu decidido, esperanza, cooperación y solidaridad, ahora y en los albores del nuevo siglo.

According to Fundéu, the Fundación del Español Urgente (an institution that collaborates with the news agency EFE and the Real Academia Española in order to assess the “proper use of Spanish”), the definition of the term *empoderamiento* has its roots in the English language. Therefore, it has become a calque, a loan translation, that has become popularized because of its appearance in news media and normative European documents (Fundéu BBVA, 2012). In 1995, however, this term was not used in the *Informe de la Cuarta Conferencia Mundial sobre la Mujer* (“The Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women”). The term *potenciación* was chosen instead.

In addition, in more recent documents, such as the logo for the 20th anniversary of the Beijing Platform for Action, we see that *empoderamiento* has replaced *potenciación*. Moreover, it has also been conjugated as a progressive form, *empoderando* (see figures 1 and 2).



Entidad de las Naciones Unidas para la Igualdad de Género y el Empoderamiento de las Mujeres



Figure 1. “Empoderando a las Mujeres”



United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women



Figure 2. “Empowering Women”

On the UN Women website (<http://www.unwomen.org/en>), we can also see that “Women’s Empowerment Principles” has been translated as *Principios para el empoderamiento de las mujeres*, again using the term *empoderamiento*, an English loan translation.

At this point, it is important to note that if we search in the online database translation tool/cross-language corpus/dictionary Linguee (<http://www.linguee.com/>) for the phrase *empoderamiento de las mujeres*, we only get one English translation: “the empowerment of women” (see figure 3):

Diccionario inglés-español

empoderamiento *m* — empowerment *s*
 de lado — sideways *adj*
 de lado *adv* — edgewise *adv*
 mujer *f* — woman *s* · female *s* · wife *s*

© Diccionario Linguee, 2015

Fuentes externas

Esta nueva entidad respetará el mandato de cada uno de los mecanismos de promoción de la igualdad entre los géneros y el empoderamiento de la mujer . daccess-ods.un.org	The new entity would respect the mandates of each of the institutional mechanisms for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women . daccess-ods.un.org
[...] utilidad para el trabajo más amplio de las Naciones Unidas a favor del empoderamiento de la mujer y la equidad de género. daccess-ods.un.org	In short, it seems to us that the indicators will be useful to the wider work of the United Nations for the empowerment of women and gender equality . daccess-ods.un.org
Sin embargo, Bangladesh considera que debe asignarse mayor importancia al empoderamiento de la mujer y a la participación de las organizaciones de [...] daccess-ods.un.org	Bangladesh felt, however, that greater importance should be given to the empowerment of women and to the involvement of civil society and NGOs [...] daccess-ods.un.org
El empoderamiento de la mujer en reducción del riesgo de desastres consolida las inversiones en igualdad de género en el [...] unisd.org	Empowering women in disaster risk reduction consolidates investments in gender equality in development at both the national and local level. unisd.org
Estos niveles reflejan además los diversos enfoques que han sido aplicados para promover el empoderamiento de la mujer a lo largo de los años. liz-dvv.de	These levels also reflect the various approaches that have been used to promote the empowerment of women over the years . liz-dvv.de

Figure 3. One Translation for *empoderamiento de la mujer*

However, if we do a reverse translation, from English to Spanish, we find quite a few options (see figure 4):

Diccionario inglés-español

women *s* — mujeres *f pl*
 empowerment *s* — empoderamiento *m* · potenciación *f* · autonomía *f* · habilitación *f*

© Diccionario Linguee, 2015

Fuentes externas

North-East (India): fertilizer-free rice and maize production, rubber production, dairy production and women empowerment projects mijarc.com	Noreste (India): producción de arroz y maíz sin fertilizantes, producción de caucho, productos lácteos y proyectos de empoderamiento de las mujeres . mijarc.com
To reach these objectives cooperation strategies for Gender Equality and women empowerment will have to adapt to the new aid architecture, primarily budget support. eur-lex.europa.eu	[...] pro de la igualdad de género y la capacitación de las mujeres tendrá que adaptarse a la nueva arquitectura de la ayuda, [...] eur-lex.europa.eu
In a large number of cases trade has been an opportunity for women's empowerment and improvement in livelihood. unctad.org	En numerosos casos, el comercio ha sido la oportunidad para empoderar a la mujer y mejorar sus medios de vida. unctad.org
The Ministry of Women Empowerment and the Family has opened centres for the promotion of women and the family in urban and [...] daccess-ods.un.org	El Ministerio de Promoción de la Mujer y la Familia ha abierto centros de promoción de la mujer en zonas rurales y urbanas, [...] daccess-ods.un.org
CARE - the world's third-largest aid organisation - is a perfect case in hand with its Nepal project entitled "SHAKTI - Women Empowerment Program ". mambaby.com	CARE - la tercera organización de ayuda más grande del mundo - con su proyecto en Nepal "SHAKTI - Women Empowerment Program" es un objetivo perfecto. mambaby.com
[...] of their importance by Member States, including for women empowerment and poverty alleviation strategies as well as for the unesdoc.unesco.org	[...] estrategias destinadas a conceder una mayor autonomía a la mujer y a mitigar la pobreza y la promoción del turismo cultural; [...] unesdoc.unesco.org

Figure 4. Translation Choices for “women empowerment”

Although there was only one choice for *empoderamiento de la mujer* in English (i.e., women empowerment), when we reverse our search (“women empowerment”), we have four options in Spanish. The first is the loan translation we have already seen and searched for before—the noun phrase *empoderamiento de las mujeres* or the verb phrase *empoderar a las mujeres*. The second option is *capacitación de las mujeres*, which in English might translate as “qualification/training/capacity of women” and emphasizes the role of education. The next is *promoción de las mujeres* (development/promotion of women). Finally, the last option is *autonomía de la mujer*, whose literal translation is “the autonomy of the woman.”

It is important to note that in the early stages of this analysis I decided to search “women empowerment” in the online database translation tool/cross-language corpus/dictionary Linguee as this phrase would allow for a broader search. In other words, I typed in “women empowerment” rather than “women’s empowerment,” hoping to get results for both options. However, at a later stage I realized that the subtleties involved in my search choices could provide further information relevant to the analysis.

The Spanish phrase *el empoderamiento de la mujer* has several syntactic equivalents in English, namely, “women’s empowerment,” “women empowerment,” and “the empowerment of women.” Figure 5 shows the multiple ways in which “women’s empowerment” is translated into Spanish:

The screenshot shows the Linguee search interface. At the top, there is a search bar with 'español ↔ inglés' and a dropdown menu showing 'á é í ó ú ü ñ'. The search term 'women's empowerment' is entered in the search bar. Below the search bar, there is a section titled 'Diccionario inglés-español' and a section titled 'Fuentes externas'. The 'Fuentes externas' section contains five rows of search results, each with an English text snippet on the left and a Spanish text snippet on the right, along with a source link.

English Text	Spanish Text	Source
The government created a ministry dedicated to women's empowerment and a national gender policy was drawn up in 2001.	El gobierno creó un ministerio dedicado a la habilitación de las mujeres y se diseñó una política nacional de género en el año 2001.	internationalalert.org
In today's world, promoting gender equality and women's empowerment in the developing countries is not an easy task.	En el mundo actual, la promoción de la igualdad de género y la capacitación de las mujeres en los países en desarrollo no es una tarea fácil.	europarl.europa.eu
The selected practices were associated with social support systems linked with, inter alia, poverty reduction and women's empowerment .	[...] otras cosas, con los sistemas sociales de apoyo vinculados a la reducción de la pobreza y el empoderamiento de la mujer .	daccess-ods.un.org
Through the task force, UNIFEM supports NEPAD effort to mainstream gender equality and women's empowerment in its work.	[...] apoya los esfuerzos de la NEPAD para incorporar la igualdad entre los géneros y el empoderamiento de la mujer en su labor.	daccess-ods.un.org
Support the overall United Nations system to enhance its performance on strengthening women's empowerment	Apoyar al sistema de las Naciones Unidas en general a fin de aumentar su eficacia para fortalecer la potenciación de la mujer .	daccess-ods.un.org

Figure 5. Translation Choices for “women’s empowerment”

While the four options found when searching “women empowerment” (*empoderamiento, capacitación, promoción, and autonomía*) are also included in the results for “women’s empowerment,” the translation choices for this phrase are more varied. Although *empoderamiento* continues to be the most common choice, we find the following in the first five results: *habilitación* (qualification), *potenciación*, and *fortalecer la potenciación de la mujer* (strengthening the promotion of the woman). Apart from these, other translation options appear among the top fifteen results: *facultar a la mujer* (the qualification/education of women), *fortalecimiento de la mujer* (the strengthening of the woman), and *emancipación de la mujer* (the emancipation of the woman). A similar array of possibilities is generated when searching “the empowerment of women.” Figure 6 shows the top five results:

The screenshot shows the Linguee website interface. At the top, there is a language selector set to 'español' and 'inglés', and a search bar containing the text 'the empowerment of women'. Below the search bar, the page is titled 'Diccionario inglés-español'. A section labeled 'Fuentes externas' (External sources) displays five search results in a two-column format. Each result consists of an English snippet, a Spanish translation, and a source link. The results are as follows:

English Snippet	Spanish Translation	Source
It will pay particular attention to the empowerment of women and their organizations in this process.	El Comité prestará especial atención al empoderamiento de la mujer y de sus organizaciones en este proceso.	daccess-ods.un.org
(DE) I vote for gender equality and the empowerment of women in development cooperation.	(DE) He votado a favor de la igualdad de géneros y la capacitación de las mujeres en la cooperación al desarrollo.	europarl.europa.eu
The empowerment of women in urban and rural areas had become one of the priority areas of national plans for economic and social development.	La potenciación de la mujer en el medio urbano y rural ha pasado a ser una de las prioridades de los planes nacionales de [...]	daccess-ods.un.org
These initiatives need to be linked, integrated and strengthened to generate a nationwide movement for the empowerment of women.	Estas iniciativas necesitan ser vinculadas, integradas y fortalecidas para generar un movimiento nacional para el fortalecimiento de las mujeres.	embassyindia.es
In my opinion, a worthwhile contribution to this event would be the concept that the empowerment of women can be regarded as a strategy for the development of society as a whole.	Creo que merece la pena que llevemos allí la idea de que la consolidación de la posición de la mujer puede ser considerada como una estrategia de desarrollo de la sociedad.	europarl.europa.eu

Figure 6. Translation Choices for “the empowerment of women”

As seen in figure 6, the translation choices for the phrase “the empowerment of women” are not limited to the literal translation *empoderamiento de la mujer*, though this is the first result. Three of the results, *capacitación* (qualification/training/capacity), *potenciación*, and *fortalecimiento*, appear in other searches. In addition, the translation *consolidación de la posición de la mujer* (the consolidation of women’s position) emerges as the fifth result.

In our analysis of the results stemming from these searches, it is important to note that there was a gap of almost two years between the search for “women empowerment” and the searches for “women’s empowerment” and “the empowerment of women.” I carried out the first search in April of 2015. After realizing the

subtleties related to syntactic variation, I performed the second search in March 2017. The implications of the timing of the analyses are worth discussing.

Empoderamiento was the first result when searching translation choices for “women empowerment” in 2015 (see figure 4). It was also the first choice when I searched “the empowerment of women” in 2017 (see figure 6). Although *empoderamiento* did not appear as the first result when I searched “women’s empowerment” in 2017, it was still the dominant result. In fact, *empoderamiento* appeared in the third and fourth results (see figure 5) and in a total number of six times out of the first ten results. Therefore, it can be assumed that *empoderamiento* is the most prevalent choice among all the other possibilities in the searches I conducted over a two-year span. The loan term *empoderamiento* continues to spread, despite the rich and more appropriate connotations of other possible translations.

Discussion

From some of the different ways in which “women’s empowerment” has been translated into Spanish in a variety of documents it can be inferred first, that *empoderamiento*, the loan translation for “empowerment,” was not the preferred choice in 1995, when “The Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women” was written. However, as the analysis shows, *empoderamiento* became the dominant choice in translations into Spanish found between 2015 and 2017. Further, “empowerment” has a wider semantic range than *empoderamiento*, the English loan. The fact that translators resort to several expressions in order to translate “empowerment” tells us that this English concept may be hard to grasp or adapt to Spanish-speaking audiences. *Empoderamiento* does not fit easily in the linguistic and cultural repertoire of Spanish/Hispanic cultures; its use requires commentary. On the other hand, other translation choices in Spanish such as *capacitación*, *fortalecimiento*, *potenciación*, *autonomía*, and *emancipación*, among others, offer broader lexical connotations that disappear in the term *empoderamiento*, as well as being absent from its English original. For example, *capacitación* or *habilitación* imply the undergoing of a learning process; *fortalecimiento* conveys the idea of building one’s own skills, knowledge, and qualities; likewise, *potenciación* entails the enhancement of something that already exists rather than a deficit.

Why did *empoderamiento*, then, become the preferred choice for the UN documents? What are the connotations of “empowerment” that do not map well onto the cultures of Spanish-speaking populations? Why has this term spread rather than the other ones? What does this tell us about the circulation of transnational rhetorics?

Because we know that *empoderamiento* comes from the English “empowerment,” that English is the dominant language in transnational rhetorics, and that, according to Mohanty, “empowerment” reinforces neoliberal political and economic agendas (Mohanty, 1995), we can assert that the concept “empowerment” is being transcoded in transnational settings to further extend the ideologies of neoliberalism with the support of institutions such as the United Nations. In this sense, an important consideration is that the verb “to empower”—at root, to give someone power—is transitive in this context, which means that it requires a direct object in order to be grammatical and to make sense. One does not normally say “I empower.” In order for the verb to be grammatical, someone has to empower someone else. In other words, the direct object necessitates the actions of the subject. As for “women’s empowerment,” we assume that “women” have to be empowered by someone who “generously” allows them to grow, to feel fulfilled. This also reinforces neoliberal ideologies as well as “rescue narratives” (Hesford, 2011).

We have seen that *empoderamiento* has become the preferred term for several international organizations, such as the UN, and is the most commonly used word for translating “empowerment” in online sources.

To prospective post-colonial translation students, the translation choices involved in transnational feminist rhetorical practices should attempt to capture the idiosyncrasies of the target culture. Translators can avoid the pressures of economic and political ideologies by engaging in a decolonizing dialogue and the creation of a third space with foreignizing linguistic choices rather than domesticating ones (Carbonell, 1996; Bhabha, 1994). In the example analyzed, the loan word *empoderamiento*, from the English “empowerment,” becomes a “domesticating” choice, since its original meaning fits the source culture, but not the target one. The foreignization of translations would contribute to painting a more diverse and localized linguistic landscape in transnational spaces. We can resist and counterbalance the dominance of English in translation practices through mediational rhetorical strategies and localized linguistic choices.

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