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FOREWORD

Doing the Work with Honesty, Care, and Respect

Laura Gonzales

I was recently part of an academic conversation where a panelist urged that scholars at all levels should work harder to "separate scholarship from advocacy." This claim is long-ingrained in Western knowledge systems—academic and otherwise. In academia, and in technical communication research contexts more specifically, there are ongoing and longstanding demands to remain "neutral and objective" in our research—demands that researchers provide "both sides" of clearly delineated arguments in order to be respected. Yet, as scholars such as Natasha Jones and Miriam Williams (2018) consistently demonstrate, technical communication, and research more broadly, is always imbued with value systems. Scholarship is always advocating for something. Indeed, much existing scholarship advocates for white supremacist values while ignoring and degrading nonwhite, non-Western perspectives (Haas, 2012).

In *The Rhetorical Mediator*, Nora K. Rivera shows us another way. Rather than shying away from naming scholarship as advocacy, Rivera positions this book as advocating for Indigenous language rights and liberation—and she invites technical communicators and user experience (UX) researchers to do the same. This book traces Rivera's collaboration with various communities, stakeholders, and participants, including the Centro Profesional Indígena de Asesoría, Defensa y Traducción, an NGO in Oaxaca de Juárez, Mexico, that advocates for Indigenous rights across Mexico, Latin America, and the world. Through this collaboration, Rivera demonstrates what it can look like for technical communication and user experience researchers to learn about and embrace Indigenous approaches to UX when we engage with community-based research in various contexts. Drawing from and

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extending design thinking frameworks, Rivera explains that if technical communication and user experience researchers truly want to work to redress oppression in their research, then we should not only acknowledge but intentionally join decolonial research practices already being enacted in various capacities by Indigenous people.

Structuring her book largely around the five phases of popular design thinking models (Empathizing, Defining the Issue[s], Ideating, Prototyping, and Testing), Rivera illustrates how user-experience researchers can build from important foundations for engaging participants and stakeholders while also asking important questions. For example, Rivera encourages design thinking researchers to consider: what does empathy mean through an Indigenous cosmovision that makes space for emotion and complexity rather than strictly aiming for efficiency? For Rivera, empathizing with participants is about much more than trying to "put yourself in someone else's shoes." Empathizing requires an attunement to testimonios—to narratives that "carry an underlying factor that urges civic engagement to produce social change." Rivera's connections between UX and testimonios is, in my opinion, one of the strongest contributions of this book. As Rivera explains, testimonios are about much more than venting—they are a process for collective listening, community building, and turning emotion into action. When technical communication and user experience researchers engage with frameworks for listening that expand beyond white, Western, monolingual ideologies, we can begin to better understand how methods of participation commonly used in our professional practices and methodologies can be exclusionary to marginalized communities. Asking someone to simply "provide feedback," "identify pain points," or "trace their journey" with an interface assumes that those individuals come from particular (i.e., white) traditions in which power and privilege don't influence participation.

When user experience researchers ask participants to share their perspectives, Rivera suggests we should consider how these perspectives are embodied and tied to lived experiences that may require processing and sharing. Through incorporating testimonios in their practices, UX researchers who understand, embrace, and respect Indigenous epistemologies can make space for acts of *desahogo* that can provide some release for people carrying a "distressful sentiment that keeps a person on the brink of not being able to breathe." Too often, UX research claims to seek participation and engagement while also prioritizing efficiency. For Indigenous communities and other communities of color, efficient models of participation may be extractive, superficial, and oppressive, seeking to assimilate or undermine "outlier" perspectives in the name of democratization and under the guise of equality rather than justice.

Rivera describes a two-day event created with and for Indigenous language interpreters, where participants and collaborators got the opportunity to discuss current issues impacting Indigenous communities, and Indigenous language interpreters and translators more specifically, all over the world. Using empathy mapping as a primary method, Rivera analyzes interviews that she conducted with Indigenous language interpreters and translators in this space, and she also provides insights from group conversations. Through this analysis, Rivera demonstrates the pitfalls of trying to simply follow design thinking protocols without providing space for participants to share their stories and build trust. Often, in UX research, we focus on individualistic perspectives gathered through different methods that help us identify larger patterns in the data. Contrastingly, the conversations that took place in Rivera's project foster collaborative sharing, healing, and strategizing. As Rivera explains, by engaging in design thinking that included opportunities for participants to share their testimonios, the group was able not only to make space for individual desahogos but also to build up from individual testimonios to a larger collective story and breaking point that led to change. As Rivera explains, through their conversations, Indigenous language interpreters and translators at this event were able to develop a "collective metatestimonio where the group built from one conversation to another until reaching a point of a collective desahogo that yielded the conscious feeling of 'enough is enough' of the group." This point of collective breaking and healing is a critical component for activities organized not just for or on behalf of but, more important, *by* and *with* marginalized communities. Without this space for sharing and processing, UX activities and other feedback and conversational practices may remain superficial and only to the benefit of those who do not share in the experiences of oppression being discussed or targeted.

An Indigenous approach to UX, as Rivera illustrates, is not about providing insights, detailing pain points, and testing prototypes for the benefit of corporate stakeholders. Instead, Indigenous approaches to UX provide space for building collective action toward the redressing of oppression for and with Indigenous people. In this way, Rivera's model for Indigenous UX directly addresses technical communication's social justice turn, which emphasizes moving from critique to action to directly redress oppressive structures and systems (Walton, Moore, and Jones 2019).

Rather than outlining the specific chapters in Rivera's book (which she does herself brilliantly in the preface and introduction), I conclude by sharing two specific strategies that Rivera executes and models for other technical communication and user experience researchers. First, Rivera makes clear that in order to work with community partners through a social justice perspective, researchers need to research how colonization impacts that community. In the case of Indigenous language translators and interpreters, Rivera highlights how Western notions of writing and documentation have been, and continue to be, imposed upon Indigenous communities. As Rivera clarifies, interpretation was always a part of communication for Indigenous people, for whom oral communication and storytelling are central methods of documentation. Yet, through colonization, "from a European lens, which regarded its own rhetorical and composition systems as objective and factual, Mesoamerican rhetorical traditions became known as unreliable and unstable practices." Thus, imposing methods of communication, research, and collaboration on Indigenous people can perpetuate colonial violence that erases Indigenous values. As Rivera demonstrates, Western alphabetic writing systems are used to dominate and erase Indigenous languages. At the same time, UX research methods that foreground Western modes of participation can also contribute to this oppression, even in projects framed as having social justice agendas. To embrace and practice social justice methods, Rivera argues, researchers need to understand the historical underpinnings of colonization and recognize how colonial ideologies are still at play.

When discussing community-based research, I've often been asked the questions, Who should be doing this work? How do we do work with communities we don't belong to? How do we contribute to social justice issues that don't directly impact us personally?

One of the most powerful contributions Rivera provides the fields of UX and technical communication is the careful, thorough, and continuous way in which she addresses her own positionality, "not as Indigenous woman but as a Mestiza." From the opening chapters tracing her work on the Mexico-US Borderland, to the way she attunes to positionality as a listener of testimonios, to the way she concludes the book by urging "Mestize, Latinx, and Hispanic scholars to grapple with and work through our own relationships with indigeneity in ethical ways," Rivera so clearly demonstrates that positionality is not a simple statement researchers make at the beginning of a project. Researchers shouldn't just name their whiteness and then move on from it. Instead, as Rivera shows us, researchers can be up front about why they are choosing to do work in a community, centralize the perspectives of people from that community, and make contributions to community advocacy work without centralizing their own needs, values, and perspectives. As a whole, Rivera's work shows us that there is a way to ethically collaborate across difference—if those of us with the most privilege are willing to read and listen beyond our own perspectives; put our personal agendas aside; and contribute to, rather than try to redirect or influence, the activist work already being enacted around our classrooms, our workspaces, and our institutions.

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PREFACE

Dramatic changes in the demographic of immigrants arriving in the United States have brought to light the inadequate systems to address the needs of the hundreds of Indigenous language speakers seeking asylum at the US-Mexico border. Whereas Indigenous diasporas throughout the Americas have been ongoing since before European immigrants settled in these lands, violence and poverty have forced more and more Indigenous people to migrate to the United States during the last decades.

Before the year 2000, the great majority of undocumented immigrants came from Mexico, and approximately 90 percent were men who came to the United States to work. Among these statistics was my uncle, who moved to New Mexico as part of the Bracero Program, and my cousin, who joined the thousands of agricultural workers in the 1980s. My uncle died from cancer caused by pesticides, and my cousin died in a truck accident transporting farm workers without safety measures. My uncle and cousin are only two of many stories of Mexican immigrants who navigated inadequate systems that ignored their basic needs at the turn of the new millennium.

Between 2012 and 2019, however, the demographic of immigrants shifted drastically. After the year 2012, the percentage of arrests of undocumented immigrants from Honduras, Guatemala, and El Salvador increased consistently (O'Connor, Batalova, and Bolter 2019). By 2018 more than half of the undocumented immigrants that arrived at the US-Mexico border were from these three countries, and many of these immigrants were monolingual speakers of Indigenous languages (Jawetz and Shuchart 2019). Another major shift was that these undocumented immigrants were not primarily men anymore; whole families and unaccompanied minors made their way to the Borderland in large groups known as the caravans.

This Indigenous diaspora became more visible as a result of the shortage of Indigenous interpreters to meet the needs of the Indigenous immigrants that arrived at the Borderland. Indigenous interpreters became highly coveted in the United States but also became trapped

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in the middle of a dogmatic rhetoric of immigration emerging from the Trump administration between the years 2017 and 2019, dogmatic rhetoric that without a doubt would have continued had it not been for the major global disruption of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The caravans exposed the many systemic issues inside the US government in relation to immigration. Most importantly, this diaspora revealed an immigration system that only thinks of Latin Americans as Spanish speakers and is only prepared to “process” undocumented immigrants who speak Spanish. This issue, coupled with the lack of professionalization systems for Indigenous interpreters, plus the government policies of the week (literally, because they changed almost weekly), and the politicized rhetoric against immigrants, exacerbated a situation at the Borderland that caused hundreds of asylum seekers to live in tents in the Chamizal Park in Juarez, Mexico, and ultimately triggered a mass shooting at a Walmart in El Paso, Texas, a hate crime against the many Mexicans and Mexican Americans who work and frequently shop at this local store. The mass shooting took place on August 3, 2019. The first International Unconference for Indigenous Interpreters and Translators, the event at the core of this study, took place on August 8 and 9, 2019. This was the context in which my collaboration with Indigenous interpreters and translators took place.

Interactions between El Paso, Texas, and Juarez, Mexico, have been peaceful for as long as I can remember, albeit what the news and politicians often portray. Thousands of commuters live on one side and work on the other, and Mexican American students of all ages living in Juarez cross the border daily to attend schools in El Paso. Although the car lanes at the ports of entry are long, the vivid sounds of people crossing and street vendors talking and playing music made the tiresome commute entertaining before the Trump administration. To stop asylum seekers from crossing into the United States, the Trump administration overwhelmed the border with barbed wire fences and other “reinforcing measures” that produced jams at the ports of entry for up to four hours at a time, causing tremendous distress in the local community, disturbing the many transborder students who live in Juarez and (legally) go to school in El Paso, and, most importantly, provoking a traumatic strain on the asylum seekers stranded, living in tents, at the Chamizal Park in Juarez. As a Borderlander, I witnessed the consequences of every single issue expressed by the Indigenous interpreters and translators I met during the event at the center of this study. My journey into this research started at the end, at seeing firsthand the global implications of unstable governments, low and irregular wages, loose professionalization systems, lack of awareness about Indigenous matters, and, particularly, discrimination.

I finished writing the contents of this book in the midst of the COVID-19 global pandemic that forced our world to depend on digital technologies. The pandemic exposed many other issues of inequality in digital spaces. While some of us had the privilege to work from the safety of our homes with the help of technology, others had no choice but to continue business as usual with little to no protection against the virus. Race, as Anibal Quijano (2000) points out, continues to be "the fundamental criterion for the distribution of the world population into ranks, places, and roles in the new society's structure of power" (535). And despite the marked technological inequalities, Indigenous organizations have found in social media a powerful ally that the global pandemic also amplified. Indigenous social media advocacy has exploded, giving their fight global visibility, which I am sure will continue to expand in the future.

As I reflect on my participation as a collaborator, ally, and accomplice of Indigenous interpreters and translators, I think of my own journey navigating multicultural and multilingual spaces throughout my career as an educator. I think of the many students I have taught at US schools whose linguistic and cultural challenges are not much different from the issues Indigenous people face in Latin America. I think of the hundreds of Tarahumaras I used to see at the Bridge of the Americas as I crossed the border from Juarez to El Paso. I think of the mass shooting. And one image comes to mind, a small sculpture of children playing, holding hands, located at the Bridge of the Americas. The sculpture has an inscription in Spanish signed by Grupo Intercitadino that reads as follows:

> Soy parte de un círculo unido por amor y compañerismo, para llevar a cabo una misión de ejemplo, de ayuda mutua, y de progreso para la humanidad. Un ejemplo de amor en las razas, costumbres, e idiomas, una muestra de trabajo mutuo. —Grupo Intercitadino. Agosto 1999.
>
> [I am part of a circle united by love and partnership to carry out a mission of example, mutual help, and progress for humanity. An example of love among races, traditions, and languages, a demonstration of mutual work. —Intercity Group. August 1999.]

This study is a clear work of language activism that advocates for Indigenous language rights and Indigenous language practices, which Western scholarships and systems have greatly sidelined. Ultimately, I hope this work will guide those individuals in the legal, medical, and educational sectors who work with Indigenous individuals to consider the moral and ethical obligations that we all have not only to raise awareness about Indigenous language rights but also to enact upon these rights.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This book was written in the US-Mexico Borderland, in spaces located in Santa Teresa, New Mexico; El Paso, Texas; and Juarez, Mexico, on the traditional lands of the Tampachoa, Mescalero Apache, Chiricahua Apache, Lipan Apache, Tigua, Piro, and Sumas. I hope that this land acknowledgment echoes throughout the book.

A significant portion of chapter 5, "Synthesizing Needs and Issues," was originally published in "Understanding Agency through Testimonios: An Indigenous Approach to UX Research," in *Technical Communication*, volume 69, number 4, in November 2022.

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THE RHETORICAL MEDIATOR

Introduction

A BRIEF HISTORY OF INTERPRETATION AND TRANSLATION IN THE AMERICAS

Before the arrival of Europeans, Mesoamerican cultures maintained sophisticated systems to record stories, rituals, and histories. During the Postclassic period (from 900 CE to the European invasion), for example, Maya "writing and painting" thrived on the walls of their buildings and on "the pages of books" (Tedlock 1996, 23). Maya books were written using a complex system that combined phonograms (symbols that represent sounds) with logograms (symbols that represent ideas) that were *interpreted* only by elites (Houston, Robertson, and Stuart 2000). Evidence shows that *written* translation also took place as early as the first century between Nahua and Maya,[1] as seen in the Maya ceramic vessel found in Rio Azul, Guatemala, encircled with Nahua words written in Maya glyphs to describe the preparation of cacao (Macri 2005). Most of what we know today about this important writing system stems from the writings of the infamous Fray Diego de Landa, who, after burning the vast majority of the Maya codices in the Yucatán Peninsula, wrote a detailed description of their writing system (circa 1566) with the help of Maya interpreters and translators Juan Cocom and Gaspar Antonio Chi (Ceribelli 2013). The practice of writing with Maya classic symbols faded away gradually after the colonization of the Americas until its demise in the eighteenth century.

Like the Maya, the Mexica (a.k.a. Aztec) recorded their culture and history, *itolaca,* in pictographic books called *amoxtli.* The Mexica concept of writing, *tlacuilolitztli,* was intertwined with painting, so much that writing was also described as the action of using the red and the black ink,

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and writers or *tlacuilos* were trained in both painting and history (León Portilla 2010). Pictographic books (amoxtli) were stored in libraries called *amoxcalli.* Many amoxtli had an accordion-like structure, and they could be read linearly by spreading all the sheets at once, or they could be read in a nonlinear manner by strategically folding pages to apply a different interface flow of space and time, as it is evident in the *Codex Borgia*, one of the few surviving manuscripts written in the late fifteenth century (Díaz and Rodgers 1993). Mesoamerican books were read by *interpreters* trained in reading pictographs and glyphs and versed in the histories and rituals of their cultures.

When reading the stories in the images, interpreters had as much agency in constructing meaning as the images and as the writers (Rivera 2020). A clear illustration of this is the alphabetic version of the *Popol Vuh*, the book that tells the culture and the mythology of the K'iche' people. The original K'iche' authors of the alphabetic *Popol Vuh* quoted what the oral interpreters of the ancient hieroglyphic text "would say when they gave long performances, telling the full story that lay behind the charts, pictures, and plot outlines of the ancient book" (Tedlock 1996, 30); nevertheless, at one point in the book these *interpreters/translators* also become performers by "*speaking directly to us* as if we were members of a live audience rather than mere readers," as shown in the K'iche'-Spanish translation of the book by the friar Francisco Ximénez written between 1701 and 1703 (Tedlock 1996, 30). The agency of Mesoamerican interpreters became clear to the Spanish colonizers when they observed that the interpretation of a Mesoamerican book changed once the interpreter died or was replaced by a ruler (Mignolo 2003). From a European lens, which regarded its own rhetorical and composition systems as objective and factual, Mesoamerican rhetorical traditions became known as unreliable and unstable practices.

While Indigenous people continue to live under colonizing systems (Quijano 2000), long has it been since the cultures of the Americas first clashed with Europeans. Interpretation and translation practices have taken many forms since then. In central Mexico, tlacuilolitztli was replaced with alphabetic writing by training *Nahuatlatos*—a term given to Nahua speakers by Spanish colonizers—to write their Indigenous language using European alphabetic technology and then teaching them to translate Nahua into Spanish and vice versa (Alonso and Payás 2008). Spanish priests used Nahua as a lingua franca to make sense of the hundreds of languages spoken by the Indigenous communities across the New Spain before imposing Spanish. In spite of this, many of these American languages continue to function as official languages within Indigenous communities across the continent, particularly in Latin America, and Indigenous translators and interpreters continue to grapple with what it means to be mediators of languages, cultures, and worldviews.

UNDERSTANDING INDIGENOUS INTERPRETING AND TRANSLATING PRACTICES TODAY

Historiographies of Indigenous rhetorics and their influence on contemporary practices remain rare, abnormal subtopics of dominant Western academic traditions that persist in regarding Indigenous worldviews and practices as unreliable, especially in matters of technology and technical and professional communication. In places where Indigenous language translation and interpretation are greatly needed, Indigenous translators and interpreters face the lack of adequate systems to professionalize their field, withstanding public sector policies that do not align with the cosmovision of their cultures (Castellanos García et al. 2022).[2] They navigate monocultural and monolingual systems in multicultural, multilingual, and multiethnic societies.

Technical and professional communication—a field that often discusses matters of translation—and the field of translation and interpreting studies have not sufficiently examined the role of translators and interpreters within an Indigenous language context. This is surprising given that in Mexico alone there are 364 Indigenous linguistic variants treated as autonomous languages (INALI 2008) and that many monolingual speakers of these Indigenous languages migrate to the United States every year seeking a better, more stable life. These shortcomings prompted my research.

In 2018, I became involved in a collaborative community-based project to co-organize an event to collect resources to help in the professionalization efforts of Indigenous translators and interpreters. Under the leadership of the Centro Profesional Indígena de Asesoría, Defensa y Traducción (CEPIADET), an NGO from Oaxaca, Mexico, mainly composed of young Indigenous attorneys and interpreters, and with the help of scholars from the University of British Columbia in Canada, the Universidad de Veracruz in Mexico, and the University of Florida, we successfully co-produced the first International Unconference for Indigenous Interpreters and Translators in Oaxaca, Mexico,[3] converging approximately 370 participants from Mexico, Peru, and the United States, most of whom were Indigenous translators and interpreters.

This book analyzes the work carried out before, during, and after this event through an Indigenous approach to user experience research as a means to understand the role of agency within Indigenous translation and interpreting practices.

Drawing on the experiences shared by Indigenous interpreters and translators during the event, I primarily aim to examine how technical and professional communication (TPC), translation and interpreting studies (TIS), and user experience (UX) research can better support the needs of Indigenous language interpreters and translators. Specifically, this project is motivated by five guiding questions:

1. What are the needs of Indigenous interpreters and what are the critical issues they face?
2. How do Indigenous interpreters and translators understand and experience agency?
3. Why is it important to place equity rather than usability at the core of UX research?
4. How can analyzing Indigenous interpreting events as rhetorical negotiations of *truths* and recognizing the ambiguity within these negotiations help us understand agency in technical communication?
5. How can Indigenous approaches to UX help expand the fields of TPC and TIS?

This study advocates for Indigenous language practices that have been significantly sidelined by Western scholarship and systems. This work speaks directly to TPC scholars and UX researchers, urging them to include Indigenous technical communicators and their oral practices—interpreting, specifically—in disciplinary conversations. My work also speaks to TIS scholars, urging them to reexamine current translation and interpreting systems, for they are based on Western ideas and interfaces that disenfranchise Indigenous worldviews. Ultimately, this book calls upon those individuals working in the legal, medical, and educational sectors who work with Indigenous users to consider the moral and ethical obligations we all have not only to raise awareness about Indigenous language rights but also to enact upon these rights, and not in the way we think we should but in the way Indigenous people dictate.

FRAMEWORK AND DEFINITIONS

My work draws on Indigenous and decolonial theories and the scholarship of TPC and TIS. Because my primary research was conducted in collaboration with Indigenous people for Indigenous people, this work is strongly anchored in Indigenous theories with which I have a strong bond, not as an Indigenous woman but as a Mestiza who respects and values the common heritage and the shared history.[4] While Indigenous people widely use the term "Indigenous" to identify themselves and their communities, the term is complex and does not universally describe all individuals of Indigenous heritage. There are variants to this term depending on the region. In the United States, for example, it is common to use the terms "Native Americans," "Native American languages," and "Native Nations." In Mexico, the terms *pueblos indígenas* (Indigenous Peoples) and *lenguas indígenas* (Indigenous languages) are common. And in Peru, as I realized during the event in which I participated, it is more common to hear the terms *pueblos originarios* (Native Peoples) and *lenguas originarias* (native languages). Some members of Peru's Native Peoples also self-identify as *comuneras/os* (community members). In this research, I primarily use the term "Indigenous" because it was the term with which most of the participants in the event self-identified. Indigenous is also the term proposed by the United Nations (UN) Commission on Human Rights *Report of the Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities on Its 34th Session: Study of the Problem of Discrimination against Indigenous Populations* (a.k.a. Martínez Cobo Study) (1982) as the most generally accepted to refer to an individual who self-identifies as Indigenous and who is recognized and accepted by an Indigenous community. I also use the United Nation's working definition of the term "Indigenous community":

> Indigenous communities, peoples and nations are those which, having a historical continuity with pre-invasion and pre-colonial societies that develop on their territories, consider themselves distinct from the sectors of the societies now prevailing on those territories, or parts of them. They form at present non-dominant sectors of society and are determined to preserve, develop and transmit to future generations their ancestral territories, and their ethnic identity, as the basis of their continued existence as peoples, in accordance with their own cultural patterns, social institutions, and legal system. (UN 1982)

It should be noted that although there are similarities among Indigenous communities, many differences make each one of these communities unique, such as their cultures and languages. To be clear, Indigenous communities are multicultural, multiethnic, and multilingual.

Moreover, while some of the Indigenous theories discussed in my work are also decolonial, it is important to point out that there are significant differences between decolonial theories by Indigenous scholars and non-Indigenous scholars. The work by or with Indigenous people goes well beyond theoretical frameworks as Indigenous scholars contend for the “recognition of [their] sovereignty” and the recognition of their “immediate context” (Tuck and Yang 2012, 3). Although non-Indigenous scholars often develop decolonial theories, they are based on Indigenous epistemologies aimed at disrupting monocultural Western knowledge-making practices. Thus, decolonial thought is central for Latinx and Latin American scholars in and outside the United States. In spite of the different positionality of Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars with Latin American heritage, our histories and cultures and personal and professional lives are all marked by the colonial moment, which triggered a historical record that ignored the histories and ways of knowing of people of color on the basis of race and ethnicity. Therefore, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous decolonial theories are important for analyzing Indigenous translation and interpreting practices.

Translation and interpreting (T&I) practices have not only been addressed in the field of TIS but have also been discussed in the field of TPC, hence the influence of these two fields on my work. On the one hand, TIS has challenged theories that imagine translators and interpreters as machine-like conduits with models that understand T&I events as mediated dialogical practices and with sociological perspectives that acknowledge the contexts of T&I events. More recently, decolonial views have also contributed to TIS by historicizing Indigenous T&I, highlighting power imbalances in T&I events when marginalized languages come into play, and problematizing the role of translators and interpreters’ agency during T&I events. On the other hand, analyzing T&I from the perspective of TPC studies adds a critical perspective from which to see the role of agency in a T&I rhetorical event.

It is important to clarify that TIS scholars mark clear differences between translation and interpretation as professional practices (Angelelli 2004; Angelelli and Baer 2016; Biernacka 2008; Inghilleri 2012; Kleinert 2015, 2016; Niño Moral 2008; Strowe 2016; Tyulenev 2016; Wadensjö 2013), and thus this work also makes those distinctions. Whereas translation is seen as the act of interpreting *written* information to transfer it into a different written language, language interpretation is seen as the act of interpreting information *orally* from one language to another, or from oral to signed language and vice versa in the case of sign language interpreting.

Translation is an element of technical communication that has helped researchers and practitioners work toward more inclusive practices. TPC scholars have questioned neutrality in translation for decades, integrating contexts, power imbalances, and ethics in discipline conversation.

Some advocate for social justice approaches that address oppression in global arenas, particularly in the Global South (Agboka 2014; Savage and Agboka 2015),[5] and some incorporate human rights concepts to mold human-centered methodologies for technical communicators (Walton 2016).

TPC scholars have also advocated for participatory and localization research methods that can bring more just approaches to the theories and practices studied in this field (Dorpenyo 2020; Durá, Gonzales, and Solis 2019; Gonzales et al. 2022; Gonzales and Zantjer 2015). One such methodology is UX, a research approach widely used in technology fields but rarely applied to the contexts of Indigenous groups. UX is an interdisciplinary research methodology that focuses on the users and what they need and value with the purpose of designing better, more usable products and more effective content and processes. Users and usability are at the core of UX research. Peter Morville (2014), for instance, denotes that successful UX research should involve designing products, content, and processes that are useful, usable, desirable, findable, accessible, credible, and valuable. Whereas user-centered approaches are commonly used to examine the experiences of users in digital spaces and are starting to take hold in TIS through language-localization approaches—also primarily as they relate to translation in digital spaces[6]—these approaches are rarely used to examine the needs and values of Indigenous users, let alone to bring to light the complexities surrounding Indigenous translation and interpretation.

To analyze the experiences of Indigenous interpreters and translators, I examine the work done during the International Unconference for Indigenous Interpreters and Translators through *design thinking*, a solution-based approach aimed at solving complex problems through a process that typically involves the following phases as outlined by the Stanford d.school (2020): (1) Empathizing, (2) Defining the Issue(s), (3) Ideating, (4) Prototyping, and (5) Testing. Nevertheless, because my work is localized in the cosmovision of the Indigenous interpreters and translators who attended the event, it has important variations to the typical design thinking model, variations that I examine through a comparative analysis in chapter 2.

I analyze the Empathizing phase of the design process through interviews that are examined using user empathy maps. User empathy maps help initiate conversations focused on local contexts, eliciting new knowledge, which can disrupt preconceived positions (Wible 2020). Further, instead of defining the issues through personas (pseudo users that simulate real people's attitudes and behaviors), as in the typical design thinking process, I analyze this phase through *testimonios* by mapping the individual and collective *pain points* in each testimonio. Pain points are specific problems experienced by the users (Stanford d.school 2020). Testimonios are narratives that construct, and reconstruct (Mora 2007), a personal account that embodies a shared collective experience (Benmayor 2012). They carry an underlying factor that urges civic engagement to produce social change, hence their importance in my research. Many testimonios also involve the act of *desahogarse* (Rivera 2022b), the act of releasing a distressful sentiment that keeps a person on the brink of not being able to breathe (Flores and Garcia 2009). It is much more than just venting because desahogarse comes from experiencing extreme and painful sentiments. It is a cathartic act that openly releases suffocating anguish, providing a therapeutic feeling after the affliction is liberated from the body (Rivera, 2022b). While testimonios have been largely overlooked in UX research, they are a central part of this study.

Moreover, my work understands rhetoric as the way we negotiate truths (meaning) through the interfaces (relationships) we build between contexts, values, emotions, biases, power dynamics, loyalties, and dispositions. All in all, this book analyzes the data yielded by my UX research methodology through an Indigenous decolonial theoretical lens that weaves important scholarship from TIS and TPC as a means for analyzing the work of Indigenous translators and interpreters both as users and as technical communicators.

STRUCTURE OF THE BOOK

As previously stated, I examine the data gathered in my research through a design thinking process localized in the cosmovision of the Indigenous interpreters and translators who attended the event. Therefore, I chose to organize the chapters of this book around this process. Chapter 1, "Intersecting Theories and Disciplines," traces the intercultural and interdisciplinary scholarship that intersect the work that Indigenous interpreters and translators do day to day. The chapter highlights the significance of differentiating Indigenous and non-Indigenous decolonial theories. It also addresses the importance of examining Indigenous interpretation and translation not only from the standpoint of translation and interpreting studies but also from the technical and professional communication lens.

Chapter 2, "Designing the Research," examines my positionality as a Mestiza scholar collaborating with Indigenous groups through an autoethnographic approach that echoes throughout the book. This chapter introduces the design thinking process from which the methodology of the project is drawn and articulates interviews and testimonios as the central methods used in this UX study. In chapter 3, “Empathizing,” I build on a critical approach to empathy to reflect on the importance of building long-term alliances with Indigenous communities and to preface the background of most Indigenous interpreters and translators as child language brokers. The chapter delineates my process for mapping interviews by displaying each of the user empathy maps I used to gather the raw data. Chapter 4, “Defining the Issues,” puts forward testimonios as a UX method highlighting dialogue and desahogo as important Indigenous practices. This chapter also delineates my process when mapping testimonios and presents each of the testimonio maps I used to trace the experiences of the research participants.

In chapter 5, “Synthesizing Needs and Issues,” I synthesize the raw data by identifying the participants’ motivations, challenges, feelings, and self-perception of their role as Indigenous interpreters and translators. I also identify the participants’ needs and the specific issues with which they grapple. Chapter 6, “Ideating and Re-Designing,” emphasizes the importance of placing equity at the core of UX research. The chapter examines three projects presented by the participants at the event. It also identifies strategies to help improve employment conditions and opportunities for Indigenous interpreters and translators working in the public sector. The book concludes with the implications of this interdisciplinary project for practitioners, researchers, and educators.

The Rhetorical Mediator positions Indigenous interpreters and translators as technical communicators with rhetorical agency who understand the complexities of their work as acts of activism that help address the needs of their Indigenous communities. As the lack of awareness of Indigenous matters and discrimination continues to have a strong effect on Indigenous professionals, this book points out that TPC, TIS, and UX research can aid not only by raising awareness about Indigenous matters and practices but also by helping Indigenous professionals create methods and systems that better address their needs when working in the legal, medical, and educational fields. By and large this book is a work of language activism that advocates for Indigenous language rights and Indigenous language practices.