

Intercultural translation and indigenous articulation in higher education

Gabriela Borge Janetti

University of California Berkeley, U.S.

Intercultural translation is a salient feature of communicative interactions in multilingual institutional spaces. This article draws on a concept of intercultural translation that functions as a linguistically radical strategy through which other ways of knowing and being are introduced, with particular emphasis on institutions, multilingualism, and less-translated languages. It describes the modes in which indigenous actors used intercultural translation to modify Mexico's institutional tutoring program in higher education. It focuses on the selective appropriation of words and meanings, the standardization of concepts, and the configuring of an intercultural frame of reference, whereby members of an intercultural Mexican university introduced the Yucatec Maya word *iknal* as a hybrid educational system. In sum, the article posits intercultural translation as a critical communicative practice ubiquitous to the dynamics of language in socio-cultural spaces.

Keywords: intercultural translation, higher education, indigenous articulation, translation and multilingualism, less-translated languages, *iknal*

Introduction

Multilingual educational contexts and translation are inextricably connected and not confined to literary texts but include communication practices as well. Translation deserves special attention in multilingual contexts where minority or less-translated languages such as indigenous languages, interact with national and world languages. Translation is a form of intercultural communication and of an active relation between cultures (Pym 2010). In situations of contact, translation points to the limits of a culture, such that intercultural transfer becomes a precondition for translation. However, translation is often assumed to be a unidirectional process from one language, or source text, to another language, or target text. Thinking of translation as straightforward and mechanical strips

from it the multiple negotiation processes and directionalities that occur while generating possible translations. Translation, as a system of interaction, can be seen as a multidirectional movement guiding the articulation processes whereby incommensurable forms are juxtaposed to highlight equivalence assumptions and theorize new ones.

The aim of this study is to examine the processes through which professors and administrators of the Maya Intercultural University of Quintana Roo (henceforth UIMQROO) translated two Spanish educational concepts promoted by the national government, *tutoría* and *acompañamiento*, to the Yucatec Maya¹ institutional variant of *iknal*. It focuses on the distinct discursive operations of intercultural translation as a method whereby the university proposed the Yucatec Maya word *iknal* as a hybrid educational system. *Iknal* is an inalienable possessed noun that denotes the proximal region of the bodily space that is associated to an individual or thing working as a possessor in its grammatical capacity (Hanks, 1990, 91). At the same time the concept transcends the notions of *tutoría* and *acompañamiento*, by bringing the habitual place of an individual and those in his or her presence or absence (Castillo Cocom, Rodríguez, and Ashenbrenner 2017) into the educational sphere. As a linguistically radical strategy, it not only questions the single tutor-student unidirectional interaction but also sets up a system of relational dispositions between teachers, students and Maya communities in the co-production of knowledge.

Scholars doing research in indigenous Latin American contexts have found that intercultural translation is a salient feature in the appropriation of concepts, language referents, and sociocultural practices across backgrounds (Santos 2014; Mignolo and Schiwy 2003; Rappaport 2005). I propose that intercultural translation can be used to critically think about dominant educational paradigms. This study refers to the notion of intercultural translation as a way to reflect on epistemic spaces and ontological distinctions (Hanks and Severi 2014), where discursive translation actions function as localized responses and interventions to the homogenizing trends in higher education (Vaira 2004). With this in mind the study asks: How did the university use translation to transform the word for “tutoring” to one from a Maya perspective? How was the notion of *acompañamiento*, which is implicit in the concept of *tutoría*, re-conceptualized through the Yucatec Maya word *iknal*? How was translation used as a rationale for institutional design and implementation?

The decree for the founding of UIMQROO was published on October 30, 2006 as part of Mexico’s intercultural approach to higher education. According

1. Yucatec Maya is the largest linguistic variant of 264 in Mexico with 795, 499 self-identified speakers in the 2010 census (Briceño Chel, 2015).

to the first national coordinator Silvia Schmelkes (2009), intercultural universities were primarily a response to two needs. On the one hand, they were intended to increase the enrollment of indigenous populations in higher education.² On the other hand, the government proposed these universities as a post-*indigenismo*³ initiative that aspired to leave behind a homogenizing model of bilingual education that assimilated indigenous populations to a dominant *mestizo* hierarchy.⁴ Although the model of higher intercultural education in Mexico discursively promotes forms of cross-cultural understanding (CGEIB 2009), little is known of the degree to which intercultural universities move away or not from *indigenismo*. Therefore, one of the purposes of this study is to examine the ways in which intercultural translation can be used in higher education as a way to produce and recognize indigenous concepts and knowledge (Borge Janetti 2016). For instance, how do indigenous actors contest the current paradox of policies that support indigeneity at the same time as they exert a covert pressure towards assimilation to a *mestizo* hierarchy? How do students, professors and staff at UIMQROO in particular redefine their relationships with the state and federal governments, modify institutional enactments, and transform educational concepts, meanings, and practices through intercultural translation?

1. Intercultural translation

Language is not a neutral means of communication (Ahearn 2012). Translation processes render visible the dynamics of language as socio-political action, immersed in the confines of power and ideology, and permeated with different inclinations and identities. Talal Asad (1986, 149) explains that “translation is not

2. At the time of their conception, it was estimated that only 1% of 10 million people who spoke one of 68 native languages was enrolled in higher education programs. For the school year 2015–2016 there were eleven Intercultural Universities with 14,007 students and 36 indigenous languages.

3. *Indigenismo* is understood as the set of government institutions and policies defining the relations and role of indigenous peoples in post-revolutionary Mexico. It equates *mestizaje* (biological and cultural) with modernization, and indigeneity with remoteness and social stagnation (Taylor 2009). Through *indigenismo*, education for indigenous peoples in Mexico has been characterized by a dominant trend to suppress their languages, worldviews, and knowledge (Hamel 2008).

4. Walsh (2009) refers to dominant *mestizo* hierarchy as the practices and policies directed towards negating any sociocultural specificity, specifically in regards to indigenous peoples and Afro-descendants, and adopting certain values, traditions, attitudes, and knowledge as universal Reference A.

merely a matter of matching sentences in the abstract, but of *learning to live another form of life* and to speak another kind of language” (original emphasis). In this sense, intercultural translation can be seen as the discursive space where individuals learn to recognize and function in different sociocultural environments, exploring the tensions between conflicting cultural values and the conditions of cultural subordination. Translation (re)framed as a form of intercultural interaction implies thinking of translation not as “languages that are translated, but rather [as] texts that are socially and culturally situated” (Gambier 2016, 889).

Johanne Rappaport (2005) in her book *Intercultural Utopias* specifically focuses on how translation furnishes a strategy for the appropriation of concepts. She explicitly describes how linguists who had translated the Colombian constitution employed translation as a tool for reconceptualizing key political terms such as state, justice, and authority from a *Nasa Yuwe* perspective, which entailed reaching out to indigenous-inspired alternatives to current models of nationality and citizenship. Rappaport characterizes interculturalism as a “utopian political philosophy aimed at achieving interethnic dialogue based on relations of equivalence and at constructing a particular mode of indigenous citizenship in a plural nation” (2005, 7). In the Colombian case, translation was used strategically for appropriating ideas from outside the constitutional sphere, serving as a means by which to make sense of external pedagogical and social theory, to propose new regional administrative structures in the educational sphere, and to discover new ways of synthesizing the values of indigenous cultures. Moreover, she argues that even if the government forced indigenous peoples “to walk the path of culture” and to conform to age-worn notions of culture, it likewise opened at the same time a space for indigenous cultures to emerge as a strategic source to transform the state. Echoing Spivak’s and Grosz’s (1990) notion of “strategic essentialism”, whereby actors deploy essentialist identity constructs to respond to dominant political forces, she asserts that indigenous essentialist logic can inspire a process of instrumentalizing cultural difference.

In his book *Epistemologies of the South*, Boaventura de Sousa Santos (2014), portrays intercultural translation as an alternative both to the incommensurability between cultures and to the abstract universalism grounding western-centric theories. He posits intercultural translation as a political articulation process, and one of living interactions based on linguistic and extralinguistic phenomena. He argues that overlooking issues of translatability is what makes hegemony possible. For Santos: “Translatability is the acknowledgement of a difference and the motivation to deal with it” (2014, 216). Therefore, according to Santos, intercultural translation “consists of searching [out the] isomorphic concerns and underlying assumptions among cultures, identifying [the] differences and similarities, and developing [...] new hybrid forms of cultural understanding and intercommunication”

(212). In this way, he posits intercultural translation as a way of not only building awareness towards sameness in the processes and structures of organization, but also transforming normative, coercive, and mimetic forms into social relations of mediation and negotiation that are constitutive of dialogic intercultural spaces.

Walter D. Mignolo and Freya Schiwy (2003) in their chapter “Transculturation and the Colonial Difference: Double Translation” discuss hybridity through double translation. In their view translation is the process whereby colonial difference is articulated. For them, translation may be marked by the assimilation and imposition of a western imaginary, or seen as a crucial step in reshaping the double relation between modernity and coloniality. The authors argue that we must ask how translation and interpretation, when assuming one particular epistemic/theological perspective to be the correct one, conceive other forms of knowledge as deviant and insufficient. They advance double translation as a way to reverse a unidirectional and hierarchical translation model that is complicit in the processes of acculturation. They posit that the Zapatista movement in Mexico drastically changed this model by bringing “colonial difference to the foreground as a place of epistemic and political intervention” (2003, 7); translation becomes a double movement bridging Marxism and Amerindian histories, and reinscribing colonial difference from the perspective of the Other. They present Major Ana Maria’s opening address to the Intercontinental Encounter from the Zapatista movement as an example of double translation, in terms of how it responds and accommodates the hegemonic discourses of the Mexican state. The most important takeaway of this process is that the translation of Spanish into Amerindian languages no longer implies a unidirectional version of concepts and systems of understandings. Rather “Amerindian understanding is rendered in and even in violation of Spanish syntax, becoming transformed in the process but not entirely losing its difference from Western understanding” (2003, 12). Therefore, intervening literary conventions work against an equal footing between Spanish and Amerindian cosmologies.

Taken together, these understandings move away from translation understood as a unidirectional movement of converting texts from one language to another, to a strategic methodology: a strategy for the appropriation of concepts (Rappaport 2005); an interpolitical articulation procedure (Santos 2014); or a complex epistemic/theological double movement (Mignolo and Schiwy 2003). Together they turn to the target text as a site of potentiality for indigenous articulation. I will expand on these notions through an analysis of the ways in which intercultural translation is used in formal contexts of cultural representation, such as education, as a way to express ‘worlds’ rather than only words or concepts (Hanks and Severi 2014).

Translation beyond unidirectional understanding shares the impulse of what Jakobson (1959/2004) phrased as “equivalence in difference”, by opening up a space for the possibility of multiple articulations. It operates as a way to critically think about dominant educational paradigms. As such, it constitutes an invitation to reflect on epistemic spaces in education and on what Hanks and Severi (2014) call the epistemological space of translation in anthropology, where what is known, how it is known, and made known are all at stake. They argue that a prevailing trend in anthropology insists on discussing translation in technical terms and denies the epistemological import of cultural variation, unable to envision what an epistemology of translation could be. They propose studying translation as a site to reformulate anthropological epistemology.

Hanks and Severi’s (2014) arguments are related to Viveiros de Castro’s concept of *equivocation*, which rather than a failure to understand, is viewed as “a failure to understand that understandings are not the same, and that they are not related to imaginary ways of ‘seeing the world’ but to the real worlds that are being seen” (2004, 11). The question Viveiros de Castro (2004, 11) tackles is to know “of what world they *are* the point of view” (original emphasis). He posits, therefore, that to translate is to presume that *equivocation* always exists. Instead of asserting an equivocal status between discourses he proposes equivocation as a means to reconceptualize comparison, recognizing that comparability does not always signify translatability or epistemological transparency. Mutual incommensurability is what enables comparability and inspires a relationing through difference in perspectives. Through his description of Amerindian perspectivism, translation is seen as an operation of differentiation that “connects the two discourses to the precise extent to which they are not saying the same thing” (2004, 20). Therefore, by being named and addressed, *equivocation* stops being the condition that limits intercultural relations.

2. Intercultural education in Mexico

In July of 2000, Vicente Fox Quezada of the National Action Party (PAN) won Mexico’s federal elections and overthrew the long-ruling Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI). Two months after his inauguration the *Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional* (EZLN) led a march from Chiapas to Mexico City. Fox’s promise to resolve the conflict in Chiapas pushed the state to introduce a “new relationship” with indigenous peoples via the Constitutional recognition of indigenous rights (Hidalgo 2006). This process of transition brought the advancement of constitutional reforms, public policies, and legal frameworks, which depicted a

discursive and institutional transformation of the Mexican state's position towards ethnicity, indigenous languages, and education.

These reforms were directly related to the Zapatista movement in Chiapas and the ways in which the federal government failed to comply with the San Andres Larráinzar Accords signed on February 16, 1996⁵ (Hernandez and Sierra 2004). The new content of Article 2 of the Constitution presented serious obstacles to the peace agreements. Although it delineated recognition for the self-determination and autonomy of indigenous peoples, it blocked such a possibility by remitting to each state the authority to recognize such rights or not, thus creating a contradiction between state tutelage and indigenous autonomy.⁶ According to the constitutional reform, the state was in charge of guaranteeing and incrementing educational attainment levels of indigenous peoples and developing educational programs that would favor bilingual and intercultural education. This contradictory situation was in contrast to the indigenous propositions included in the peace agreements, which proposed defining and developing their own educational programs in consultation with the three levels of government.

Following the constitutional reform, the Commission for Indian Affairs, Public Education, and Educational Services organized a consultation that led to the General Law of Linguistic Rights of Indigenous Peoples (Hidalgo 2006). The new law contained four chapters regarding: the general notions of Mexico's indigenous languages; specific rights; federal, state, and municipal government responsibilities; and, the creation of the National Institute for Indigenous Languages (INALI). According to the new law, Mexico treats Spanish as the *de facto* principal language at the same time that it recognizes 68 indigenous languages with a *de jure* status. However, linguistic rights depend on state approval and on state concessions (Hidalgo 2006). As of this writing, no state has yet approved the law. Furthermore, as noted by Meylaerts (2010), translation policies (a challenge to multilingual societies) should accompany language policies as they are critical for "translational justice" and a paramount feature of linguistic rights in terms of delivery of information and access and participation in the public domains of societies.

Subsequent to the reforms of 2000, the National Ministry of Education proposed a bilingual and intercultural education model to serve indigenous peoples.

5. The San Andres Accords contained a series of commitments to the constitutional reforms signed by the federal government as a response to the Zapatista movement. The Concord and Pacification Commission (COCOPA) presented a reform initiative but the national congress never approved it. Demands for autonomy were the root of disagreement (Hidalgo 2006).

6. More than 300 indigenous municipalities presented a series of constitutional controversies to the Supreme Court contesting the reform. Two years later the Supreme Court ruled it had no authority to revise constitutional procedures.

One of its policies was to promote and create Intercultural Universities, which were established in 2001 under the initiative taken by the Ministry of Education's General Coordination for Intercultural and Bilingual Education (CGEIB 2009). These universities had as their mandate to provide higher education to indigenous and non-indigenous youth interested in the development of their communities and regions. Interculturalism was defined as a perspective, as one based on the recognition of multiple cultural identities and on the different ways knowledge is constructed. Discursively, intercultural universities were conceived as a way to move beyond a higher education system based on the study of indigenous populations and their languages according to the hegemonic organization of scientific knowledge – a system which in effect has neglected the knowledge and experience of indigenous peoples.

These discursive claims resonate with one of the central arguments of intercultural thinking, one viewed as a social, political, ethical, and epistemic process and project aimed at opposing the power and racialization dynamics that perpetuate colonialism (Walsh 2009). Intercultural education holds the potentiality to disrupt the hegemonic history of *mestizaje* that negates and subordinates indigeneity, and to speak from the historical and geopolitical position of indigenous peoples' cultural and epistemic differences. Intercultural thinking situates itself in the continuous process of contact and interchange, by looking at the relational dimensions that perpetuate or have the possibility of transforming conditions of oppression in higher education contexts. Therefore, the critical possibilities of intercultural education do not constitute something given but rather are a state of permanent construction, one situated in the understanding, interchange, and negotiation that takes place between people from various backgrounds.

3. *Ik'nal/Tutoría* as a product of intercultural translation

UIMQROO is located in the central southern part of the Yucatan peninsula in the city of José María Morelos.⁷ The university receives students from more than 130 communities, with a majority of them originating from the three states of the Peninsula: Campeche, Yucatán, and Quintana Roo. It offers courses in three

7. Historical studies refer to this area as a colonial frontier (Farriss 1984) where Maya peoples fled the colonial system as a radical form of protest. Different Maya groups inhabited the area during the Caste War (Villa Rojas 1945). The education promoted by the Mexican state reached this part of the peninsula through the military incursion of the dictator Porfirio Díaz to occupy the rebel capital Maya, renamed as Felipe Carrillo Puerto, and located 64 miles away from the university. Its captor, General Bravo, was at the head of the army and educational efforts (Ramos Díaz 1997).

languages: Yucatec Maya, Spanish, and English. Taken as a “translation zone” (Apter 2011) UIMQROO is a space of intense interaction, where “cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power” (Pratt 1991, 34) to create meaning. Contact zones such as UIMQROO become central to the study of the multiple ways in which translation becomes possible in contexts of asymmetrical relations of power between languages that are historically related and differentiated.

Two years after its creation, teachers and administrative personnel worked on revising and interpreting the Mexican intercultural education model. This exercise allowed not only for the model to become internalized, but also for the participants to clarify some of the western monolingual Spanish concepts and expectations. The working group’s document, entitled *Modelo Educativo Intercultural* (UIMQROO 2010), presents the institutional arrangement of the university.⁸ In what follows I shall focus on the translation processes relevant to the document that gave way to a hybrid conceptualization of *tutoría/iknal*. I start by briefly reviewing “tutoring” as defined by the National Association for Universities and Institutions of Higher Education (ANUIES), which guides the institutional arrangement of higher education and incorporates tutoring into its institutional development plans for higher education.⁹ This set of institutionalized procedures brought tutoring away from particular acts to an ensemble of institutional actions directed towards an individualized attention of the student. It is important to note that the reconceptualization of the tutoring system promoted by UIMQROO was unprecedented in the history of intercultural universities in Mexico but not to the history of Yucatec Maya survival (Farriss 1984). The preservation of core concepts and principles through a creative capacity to forge something new out of changing circumstances constitutes an element of collective Maya, and includes permanence, autonomy, and sovereignty.

8. For an explanation of the tutoring system see the work of UIMQROO’s president founder, Francisco Rosado May (2012). For *iknal* in relation to Yucatec Maya language see William Hanks (1990; 1993; 1996). For *iknal* in relation to Maya identity see the work of UIMQROO’s professor Juan Castillo Cocom and colleagues (Castillo Cocom, and Ríos Luviano 2012; Castillo Cocom, Rodríguez, and Ashenbrenner 2017).

9. ANUIES was created more than 65 years ago and influences the field of higher education policies (Álvarez Mendiola 2015) nationally. The institutional system of tutoring promoted by ANUIES has been adopted nationally. Public universities use the ANUIES definition of *tutoría* as it appears in the document.

3.1 From common usage to intellectualization

This section looks at the processes whereby the common usage and understanding of the Yucatec Maya word *iknal* was converted into an educational concept. Firstly, I will introduce the concept of *tutoría* as proposed by ANUIES, followed by the notion of *acompañamiento*. Secondly, I will introduce the concept of *iknal* by referring to its common usage and then to the educational meaning proposed by UIMQROO. I will discuss Havránek's notion (1964) of the intellectualization of the standard language, underlining the functional differentiation of standard language form in regards to its common usage. Finally, I will argue that standard and common language forms guide the semantics of understanding *tutoría/iknal*, producing an intercultural frame of reference, or a hybrid interpretative frame.

3.1.1 *Tutoría and acompañamiento*

The word *tutoría* was introduced by ANUIES (2001) as an institutional system in higher education designed with the goal of abating higher education problems such as student desertion, falling behind, and low graduation rates. In their proposal, ANUIES (2001) recognizes that their notion of a tutoring program is based on the conceptualization of tutoring in western countries such as England and Spain. They propose to consider the institutional tutoring system as an ensemble of actions directed towards the individualized attention of the student. They discuss the notion of *tutoría* as one opposed to academic advising, which according to ANUIES is used for precise objectives such as the supervision of senior theses, the provision of social services, and professional internships. Moreover, ANUIES (2001) argues that the creation of an institutional tutoring system would consist in defining the term beyond its etymological meaning, which in Spanish entails recognizing *tutoría* as a noun formed by another noun *-tutor-* plus the suffix *-ía*. The new noun *tutoría* means the position of the tutor or tutelage.

After noting this distinction, ANUIES provides a series of definitions based on the 1992 version of the *Diccionario de la Lengua Española* from the Spanish Royal Academy. According to ANUIES, a *tutor* is defined as a person in charge of orienting students in the course of a subject, and *tutoría* as the teaching method by which a student or a group of students receive personalized and individualized education from a professor (ANUIES 2001, 22). On the basis of these definitions, ANUIES revises and defines its concept of *tutoría*:

La tutoría consiste en un proceso de acompañamiento durante la formación de los estudiantes que se concreta mediante la atención personalizada a un alumno o a un grupo reducido de alumnos, por parte de los académicos competentes y formados para su función apoyándose conceptualmente en las teorías del aprendizaje más que las de la enseñanza (ANUIES 2001, 23)

[Tutoring consists of a process of accompaniment during the formation of students that is concretized by the personalized attention to a student, or a reduced group of students, by competent and trained academics conceptually relying on theories of learning rather than teaching (my translation).]

UIMQROO's (2010, 33) translation opens with a citation in Spanish of the above definition from ANUIES and centers its attention on the Spanish word *acompañamiento*. It is a discursive act which coincides with the view that posits a reference prerequisite for a translation to be a translation. Drawing from Nelson Goodman's work, Hanks states that "one representation is a translation of another if (and only if) it both refers to and paraphrases the other" (2014, 23). By citing the ANUIES definition of *tutoría*, UIMQROO was preparing the ground for their translation of the concept.

3.1.2 *Ikmal*

The term is offered by UIMQROO not only as an interlingual translation of the words *tutoría* and *acompañamiento*, but also as part of the UIMQROO imaginary during the crafting of its mission.

No existe una palabra en español que describa el sistema institucional de facilitación del aprendizaje de UIMQROO, pero si lo hay en Maya. Esa palabra es Ikmal.
(UIMQROO 2010, 34)

[There is no word in Spanish that describes the institutional system of learning facilitation of UIMQROO, but there is in Maya. The word is *Ikmal* (my translation).]

The quote presents the word *Ikmal* not as the target text equivalent of the interlingual translation of the words *tutoría* and *acompañamiento*, but as part of what UIMQROO is defining as their "institutional system of learning facilitation". Through this act a Yucatec Maya term, *ikmal* – not intelligible to Spanish speaking audiences – is introduced as a new source, different from the source text. The document continues by introducing the common usages of the Yucatec Maya word and continues by offering the translation of Hanks' (1990) understanding of *ikmal* as a corporeal field in his book *Referential Practice*.

Los hablantes del maya yucateco tienen una comprensión del sentido común del espacio corporal conocida como su ikmal-su lugar
(Hanks 1990). (UIMQROO 2010, 34)

[Yucatec Maya speakers have a commonsensical understanding of the corporeal space known as *ikmal*-their place (Hanks 1990) (my translation).]

The expression *ikmal* was introduced to Hanks when native speakers commented on spatial diexis. Hanks conceived *ikmal* as a concept "that figures centrality in Maya speakers' common sense of bodily space" where *ikmal* as place is "an

inalienable possessed noun stem which denotes the proximal region around the object or individual that functions as its possessor.” (1990, 91) However, Hanks also observed that this space is not fixed but rather a mobile field of action that is invoked in the glosses of deixis. A salient feature of this mobile space is that it denotes a joint interactive space between participants in interaction. Therefore, it is both egocentric and altercentric. *Ikmal* is both the product and context of speakers of Yucatec Maya (Castillo Cocom, Rodríguez, and Ashenbrenner 2017).

The document continues by citing the glosses of the word included in the Bricker (1998) and Barrera Vazquez (1980) bilingual dictionaries. These citations and common usages constitute the basis of the linguistic investigation that foregrounds the university’s intention to transform *ikmal* into an educational concept.

Bricker (1998) define ikmal como: “delante de, con, antes, presencia.” En el diccionario del Maya Cordemex (Barrera Vázquez 1980), se define ikmal como: con, en compañía, en poder, en casa, o donde alguno está”. (UIMQROO 2010, 34)

[Bricker (1998) defines *ikmal* as: “in front of, with, before, presence.” The Maya Cordemex dictionary (Barrera Vázquez 1980), defines *ikmal* as: in company, in power, in home, or where someone is (my translation).]

It is important to note that whereas ANUIES uses monolingual Spanish dictionaries to define *tutoría*, UIMQROO uses bilingual dictionaries.¹⁰ Hanks and Severi (2014) recognize that linguists perform multiple translations, of which semantic analysis is just one. Therefore, we can see how *ikmal* is objectified and “translated into [the] formalism of linguistics description” (Hanks and Severi 2014, 1).

El ikmal como contexto espacial y como producto de relaciones sociales es particularmente significativo cuando crea espacios colaborativos, participativos y de producción del conocimiento de los mayas. (UIMQROO 2010, 34).

[*Ikmal* as spatial context and as a product of social relations is particularly relevant when it creates Maya collaborative, participatory, and productive spaces of knowledge (my translation).]

This intellectualization of the noun is further accentuated by emphasizing that an education based in *ikmal* is a good way to optimize the quality of student learning, pedagogical performance, and school. Furthermore, it integrates respect for educational practice via the promotion of a collaborative, participatory, and productive

10. Amy Olen’s (2015) work on decolonial translation points to the burning of Maya codices as part of a trend in opposing translation which highlights how the lack of it serves as a way to erase Maya epistemology. Efforts to revitalize Yucatec Maya promote the publication of bilingual and trilingual editions where Yucatec Maya appears alongside the Spanish and English versions. Other scholars analyze these works through translation theories (e.g. Worley 2017).

dialogue through intercultural identification among students, facilitators, and their communities (UIMQROO 2010, 35).

Through these descriptions we observe how intralinguistic translation stands in relation to interlingual translation. Hanks (2014) has argued that intralinguistic translation is one of the mechanisms implicit in what actually shapes a language. These metalinguistic uses of language treat the target language and culture as an object of reference and description. Thus they can be considered expressions of what Maya speakers *think* they do (Hanks, 1993). They are social evaluations of language, which build a common reference and take the form of language ideology.

I argue that AUNIES and UIMQROO's processes of revising the words *tutoría* and *iknal* respectively constitute a differentiation between the everyday communicative function of a word and the function reserved for standard language. Havránek (1964) discusses intellectualization or rationalization as the process that makes possible "precise and rigorous, if necessarily abstract, statements, capable of expressing the continuity and complexity of thought, that is, to reinforce the intellectual side of speech." (1964, 6) He argues that theoretical speech is rendered possible at the same time as it standardizes language by adding devices that are not in general use. Furthermore, intellectualization is brought about through "*interrelationships and complexity of thought processes*, especially those of judgment and consideration" (7), thus affecting the lexical structure of the language by expanding the content of abstract meaning and rendering it alien to the common speaker. But it also adheres particular language ideologies to it. Intellectualized speech is used in situations that call for unambiguous, specialized, abstract, and transparent concepts to serve a particular function. In this manner, the intellectualization of the notions *tutoría* and *acompañamiento* has also involved expansion and specialization of the word *iknal*.

I argue that definitions and common usages of *tutoría*, *acompañamiento*, and *iknal* comprise an intercultural frame of reference. In relation to the concepts of *tutoría* and *acompañamiento*, *iknal* becomes an interpretant in the Peircean sense, a single sign and/or elaborated discourse that stands for someone on behalf of something in some respect or capacity. According to Hanks, frames are "prefabricated representations that structure the way actors perceive and interpret objects, events, and experiences" (1993, 128). In this manner, frames are the different lexical items and conceptual part that guide or influence an ongoing event. In the case of *iknal/tutoría* these schematic structures within Yucatec Maya and Spanish are also shaped by the definitions provided by UIMQROO, through meta-communicative schematizations that constitute different understandings of practice. Lastly, the standard and common usage sources guiding the semantics of understanding *tutoría* and *acompañamiento*, combined with the common usage and

standard variant of *iknal*, produce an intercultural frame of reference, or hybrid interpretative frame.

3.2 From equivocation to commensuration

Contrary to incommensurability, defined by Thomas S. Kuhn (2000) as the impossibility of defining the terms of one theory on the basis of the terms of another, commensuration processes rely on metalinguistic capacity. Equivocation, far from being an impediment to comparison, and therefore translation, becomes the enabler of comparability (Viveiros de Castro 2004). Equivocation assumes a heterogeneity of the premises at stake whereby culture may be understood, following Marilyn Starthern's (1992) work, as the way in which people draw analogies of their world through multidimensional processes of comparison. In the context of intercultural relations, culture is forged by external comparisons. It follows that for Viveiros de Castro, to translate is to situate and dwell in the space of equivocation -to open, to widen, and to potentialize the differences in perspectives of the languages in contact. He posits that to translate is to presume that equivocation always exists. Translation as an analytical method underwrites relativity and provides evidence of difference. By focusing on equivocation, the other stops being silenced, allowing us to see how "the Other of the Other [is] *not* exactly the same as the Other" (Viveiros de Castro 2004, 8). One of the ways in which the university spoke of an equivocation between *tutoría* and *iknal* was through *acompañamiento*.

Aún cuando en la UIMQROO compartimos los ideales del acompañamiento académico, al mismo tiempo consideramos que la palabra acompañamiento posee implícita y explícitamente un carácter paternalista, a veces autoritario y logocéntrico.
(UIMQROO 2010, 33)

[Even when at UIMQROO we share the ideals of academic accompaniment, at the same time we consider that the word accompaniment possesses implicitly and explicitly a sometimes authoritarian and logocentric paternalistic character (my translation).]

UIMQROO defines the word *acompañamiento* as "to be or to go in the company of another" (UIMQROO 2010, 33), a definition that approximates one of the senses of the Yucatec Maya word *iknal*, but faults it for being paternalist, logocentric, and authoritarian. They argue that even while it might be related to the teacher-student interaction, the term surreptitiously hides in its practice a connotation of supervision whereby the supervisor not only observes and directs the interchange of ideas, experiences and wisdom (*saberes*), but also 'orients' the student to develop what might not represent their educational objectives. Even more importantly, they argue, such educational objectives may not take into account the

student's language, culture, and ways of constructing knowledge. The document continues by saying that *acompañamiento* can be authoritarian in that it imposes a conventional model (i.e. by not taking into account the local philosophy) and a practical instrumentation of the notion of *interculturalidad*. They argue that *interculturalidad* is fundamental for establishing equity because its own praxis allows it to be understood as an educational model that seeks social transformation through inclusive dynamic intercultural processes. Moreover, *acompañamiento* is logocentric because it is situated at the center of the western educational system. Contrary to Quine's (1960) example of a radical translator in favor of the inscrutability of reference, UIMQROO's considerations provide an opportunity to state in their own words what *acompañamiento* means for them. In this manner, the intercultural model of UIMQROO constructs their notion of difference based on the intellectualization of the Maya Yucatec word, *iknal*.

Contrary to incommensurability, commensuration processes rely on meta-linguistic capacity. Colonial commensuration was addressed by Hanks (2010; 2013; 2014) when talking of the evangelization process in colonial Yucatan as a process that lied "in redescribing in grammatically correct Maya the objects or concepts stood for by the corresponding Spanish" (Hanks 2014, 30). The importance of this alteration is argued by Hanks as follows:

Translation was no longer a simple binary relation between [...] Spanish and Maya. Rather, it becomes a three-part relation between Spanish, Maya, and the neologized version of Maya, which we can call Maya*. The neologized Maya* has elements of both languages, and serves as a medium of exchange between them. (2014, 29)

Intercultural commensuration likewise entails a neologism process in which words acquire concepts derived both from Maya and Spanish. However, in the case of the Yucatec Maya word *iknal* we are considering a self-ascribed indigenous overlay of Maya and Spanish semantics. We can take the comparison one step further and look at the five principles proposed by Hanks in his work on colonial commensuration in "Language in Christian Conversion", where he notes that the neologisms produced "were economical (therefore interrelated), transparent (therefore intelligible), properly indexed to doctrine (therefore true) and pleasing to the mind and ear" (2013, 400). One could argue that intercultural commensuration through *iknal* shares part of this impulse. The interpretant word *iknal* and the Spanish words *tutoría* and *acompañamiento* are not identical, but rather counterparts overlapping a referent. *Iknal* as a noun stem is a concept that in itself takes several forms. In the case of *iknal*, given its inverted analysis, the meanings are rendered explicit for Maya speakers. Indexical grounding is achieved through the process of experiencing life at the university. Finally, it formulates a new memorable source

meaning with a self-ascribed Maya sense – the institutional variant of *iknal* – in regards to *tutoría* and *acompañamiento*. Another difference emerges between intercultural and colonial commensuration. Even when in the colonial cases “[t]he exchange was bidirectional [...] it was inevitably asymmetric with power residing clearly in the European doctrine.” (Hanks 2014, 30) By contrast, in the case of *iknal*, intercultural discourse allows for an institutional space through which UIMQROO presents an understanding of the Maya people of Yucatan.

3.3 *Ikmal* as a corporeal field to facilitate learning

What, then, makes the system of *iknal* unique within higher education practice? As previously mentioned, *iknal* is a central concept for Yucatec Maya speakers’ common sense understanding of bodily space. The first common usage of the word seems to be alienated from one of the senses of the Spanish word *acompañamiento*, the idea of being in the company of someone. However, it goes beyond this understanding when considering the other two common senses, one related to the field of action and the other referring to habitual ways.

El lugar de uno mismo (su iknal) es relativo al contexto emergente asociado al cuerpo como proceso social o del espacio construido. (UIMQROO 2010, 34)

[The space of oneself (one’s *iknal*) is relative to the emergent context associated to the body as a social process or built up space (my translation).]

This sense of the word *iknal* includes an understanding of the body space as emergent and in relation to a social process or built up space. It is noteworthy that body space is seen both as a fluctuating process in relation to others and as a constructed space. Therefore, the knowledge of the body is adapted in the course of practice. Hanks explains that this notion of *iknal* denotes “a joint interactive corporeal field containing reciprocal perspectives rather than an individual *schéma corporel*” (Hanks 1990, 92). This understanding of the bodily experience entails defining the actuality of the body as perceived in relation to its potentiality as part of the perception of the present phenomenal field (Hanks 1996). This socio-centric notion of *iknal* contrasts with the notion of *tutoría* provided by ANUIES where the tutor is portrayed as the competent one in relation to the student, directing their actuality and potentiality.

Furthermore, UIMQROO introduces Pierre Bourdieu’s concept of *habitus* to argue how the concept of *iknal* includes other frames of reference that are not possible to include through the concept of *habitus*.

Ikmal parece poseer la mayor parte de las características del concepto habitus de Bourdieu (1990), pero por otra parte conceptúa otros marcos de referencia o de

campos indicativos que no sean simplemente posibles con el concepto de habitus.
(UIMQROO 2010, 34)

[Iknal seems to possess the majority of the characteristics of Bourdieu's *habitus* concept, but on the other hand conceptualizes other frames of reference or indicative areas that are simply not possible using the concept of *habitus* (my translation).]

This distinction further accentuates an understanding of *iknal* linked to the bodily activity of the individual in relation to a field. Yet at the same time, it refers to the habitual place of a social agent. Thus *iknal* indexes both presence, the location of somebody, but also, absence, a locality where someone is not present at the time (Castillo Cocom, Rodríguez, and Ashbrener 2017).

The explanation given by UIMQROO continues by focusing on the community system in place to facilitate learning whereby all members participate in the process of supporting one another. They discuss differences in authority and how each person exerts his or her authority:

En las comunidades Mayas la facilitación del aprendizaje se logra mediante un sistema, el cual está integrado por diferentes integrantes de la familia y de la comunidad, básicamente cada uno de ellos tiene algo que ofrecer, una persona sabe más de un tema que los otros y está dispuesto a compartirlo, a enseñar lo que sabe.
(UIMQROO 2010, 34)

[In Maya communities the facilitation of learning is achieved via a system, which is integrated by different family and community members, basically each one of them has something to offer, one person knows more about a topic than another and is willing to share it, to teach what they know (my translation).]

Through this explanation UIMQROO has opened the learning space of the university to the facilitation spaces in Maya communities and among their members. In this way, *iknal* incorporates the relation of students to their communities. Thus, *iknal* goes beyond *tutoría* and its dependence on the student-professor relationship to include a participation framework in which community members are included. To foster these relationships the university has developed an extensive network of relations with community elders, and an outreach program between students and their communities.

Conclusion

Intercultural translation as a communicative practice ubiquitous to the dynamics of language in socio-cultural spaces can be used as a critical way to question and intervene in practices that replicate dominant trends in institutional domains.

This article has shown that members of UIMQROO made use of intercultural translation to transform Mexico's institutional tutoring system to one that reflects an indigenous perspective, despite the legal challenges that block indigenous autonomy and self-determination rights. Intercultural translation is understood as the combined processes of a selective appropriation of concepts, language referents, and socio-cultural practices. It demands that we leave behind any ingrained understanding of translation as straightforward and mechanical. In this way translation is "about moving 'in and out' of context. It is about deepening the human experience" (Castillo Cocom, Rodríguez, and Ashenbrenner 2017). As such, it comprises an invitation to dwell in the generative processes and directionalities that occur while engaging in translation. Investigating the processes of intercultural translation compels us to recognize certain assumptions of equivalence and to accept that understandings are not the same, thereby widening the realm of possibilities for thinking critically about that which we often assume as universal.

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Author's address

Gabriela Borge Janetti
PhD Candidate in Language, Literacy, and Culture
University of California Berkeley School of Graduate Education
1501 Tolman Hall
Berkeley, CA 94720
gborgej@berkeley.edu