NARRATING SURVIVAL
Exploring Digital Storytelling as a Tool for Language Mediation Practices

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Abstract

(EN) This article explores the potential role of digital storytelling (DST) in improving interpreting services for migrant survivors of gender-based violence (GBV). By conducting narrative interviews with language mediators, the study aims to shed light on how digital storytelling can mitigate power imbalances and improve communication and support (Moenandar, 2024; Myumbo, 2023). The findings will provide insights for policymakers, service providers, and researchers to develop ethical GBV interpretation methods and improve the well-being of survivors.

KEYWORDS: Digital storytelling; Gender-Based Violence (GBV); Migration; Interpreting Services.

(ITA) Questo articolo esplora il ruolo del digital storytelling (DST) nel migliorare i servizi di interpretariato per le migranti sopravvissute alla violenza di genere (GBV). Attraverso interviste narrative con mediatori\mediatrici linguistiche, lo studio analizza come il digital storytelling possa ridurre gli squilibri di potere, favorire una comunicazione più efficace e rafforzare il supporto alle sopravvissute (Moenandar, 2024; Myumbo, 2023). I risultati offriranno spunti utili per policy maker, operatori\operatrici del settore e ricercatori\ricercatrici, contribuendo allo sviluppo di pratiche etiche nell'interpretariato in contesti di GBV e al miglioramento del benessere delle sopravvissute.

PAROLE CHIAVE: Digital storytelling; Gender-Based Violence (GBV); migrazione; servizi di interpretariato.

1. Introduction

In recent years, migration policies and border controls have tightened, making travelling to Europe increasingly dangerous, expensive and time-consuming. In this complex scenario, migrants, especially *the second sex[1]*, are often at increased risk of gender-based violence (GBV) in their home countries, during migration and after arrival (Sahraoui 2020). Although the framework for GBV interventions has become more structured, language and cultural barriers remain one of the biggest

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[1] In this study, *second sex* is used in a way that goes beyond any heteronormative framework and encompasses all different types of "women", including lesbian, bisexual, trans, cis, asexual, AFAB, AMAB, feminine and masculine women, as well as body types that always identify as queer, by adopting Bottici's (2022) framework of trans-individual ontology and expanding the concept of woman as 'femininity'.

obstacles preventing survivors[2] from accessing appropriate support services. For instance, Menjívar and Salcido (2002) show that Latin American immigrant women – who move to the United States, Canada, Western Europe and Australia and experience domestic violence in the host countries – are often unable to access essential services because they are forced to rely on their abusers or untrained interpreters. Similarly, Chocrón Giráldez (2011) highlights that migrant women with irregular status in Spain face additional systemic barriers, including economic insecurity, cultural norms that reinforce male dominance, and mistrust of public institutions. These barriers discourage survivors from seeking help and increase their vulnerability and isolation. In this scenario, language mediators play an important but often invisible role in bridging this gap by ensuring survivors can effectively communicate their experiences in the legal, medical, and social service systems. Mediators working in GBV contexts do not simply translate words. They facilitate meaning-making, manage trauma-sensitive communication and bridge the cultural gap in institutions that would otherwise remain inaccessible. Yet despite the complexity of their role, they often work in precarious conditions, with limited training, minimal institutional recognition and a lack of support (Vaccarelli 2024).

To address such professional imbalances, the study resorts to narrative inquiry (NI), which emphasises the relational and interpretative nature of storytelling and provides a framework for analysing how mediators construct and communicate their professional experiences (Reid 2020). Based on the participants' reflections, it then explores how the potential use of digital storytelling (DST) as a multimodal and participatory approach can improve interpreting in GBV contexts. In particular, it will focus on how DST can serve as a method for structured self-reflection, as well as a medium to advocate the work, ethical dilemmas and emotional distress while informing institutions.

2. Narrative Inquiry as a Methodological Foundation

Before examining the potential role of digital storytelling (DST) in language mediation, it is important to establish this study's theoretical and applied methodological basis: narrative inquiry (NI). Defined by Connelly and Clandinin (1990) as both a phenomenon and a method, NI is rooted in social constructivist traditions and emphasises the central role of storytelling in the way people make sense of their experiences, construct identities and navigate social structures. Narratives are not a passive reflection of reality but are relational, interpretative and situated — they are co-constructed, adapted and negotiated within a broader social, institutional and cultural context (Reid 2020). Following Dewey's (1938) principles of experience, interaction and continuity, NI assumes that personal narratives emerge in response to lived interactions and are continually reshaped over time. This is significant insofar as mediators' personal migration histories often overlap with the narratives they have to interpret. This process of meaning-making profoundly shapes professional status in interpreting gender-based violence (GBV): trauma, fear and cultural constraints determine how meaning is constructed and communicated, shaped by the emotional state of the teller, the relationship with the listener and the institutional setting, as research on shared trauma in disaster contexts has shown (Boasso et al. 2015). In this framework, mediators act as situated actors whose identities shape — and are shaped by — the stories they convey. In this sense, Bahadır (2004) describes mediators as «mini-ethnographers» who observe, interpret and reconstruct meaning based on cultural, legal and

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[2] The term "survivor" is intentionally used instead of "victim" to emphasise agency, resilience and the ability to reclaim one's history. As Amal Elmohandes (2014) argues, labelling women as "victims" often serves a patriarchal discourse that portrays them as passive subjects in need of protection, reinforces social stigmatisation and reduces their identity to the trauma they have suffered. In contrast, the term "survivor" recognises the active process of overcoming trauma, resisting marginalisation and regaining agency. This shift in language is critical to gender-sensitive approaches as it challenges the cultural and institutional structures that perpetuate shame, blame and silence, while promoting empowerment and self-determination in the healing process.

emotional contexts, thus reconciling the «three-dimensional narrative inquiry space» (Clandinin et al. 2011) in which mediators, migrants and carers participate in an evolving, recursive narrative process.

However, as Worcester (2021) criticises, due to the highly sensitive context of the encounter, power asymmetries determine which narratives are foregrounded, weakened or omitted altogether in institutional discourse. For that, the notion that researchers «study an individual's experience in the world and, through the study, seek ways of enriching and transforming that experience for themselves and others» (Clandinin, Rosiek 2006: 42) is directly applicable to language mediation, where interventions can either empower survivors or reinforce institutional barriers. This process of meaning-making thus raises critical ethical questions about how narratives are constructed, interpreted and positioned in institutions and research organisations. Who has the power to tell a story? How are these narratives shaped to meet institutional expectations? Myumbo (2023), for example, shows how Participatory Narrative Inquiry (PNI) has been used to empower the voices of marginalised women in the Tanzanian sex work industry, enabling them to share their experiences in a way that promotes agency, confidence and empowerment. Similarly, language mediation brings this ethical complexity into focus, as narrating trauma is often shared between survivors and mediators. Their narratives are articulations of embodied knowledge enriched by their transcultural capital (Arias Cubas et al. 2023) rooted in lived experience, affective labour and physical encounters with vulnerability and violence - their actions are thus not abstract or detached but shaped by material and emotional conditions. In other words, through narrative inquiry, mediators' own stories take centre stage, bringing to light this embodied positionality, identity and social complexity, where the telling of another's story engages the self, the body and the system.

Another crucial aspect that adds to the ethical complexity outlined so far is the emotional impact of the survivors' stories. A narrative's emotional tone significantly impacts how it is received — stories that express suffering tend to elicit stronger emotional and relational responses from listeners. Mediators, situated as both listeners and co-narrators, are particularly vulnerable to vicarious trauma (Degani, De Stefani 2020) due to the deep emotional impact of survivors' experiences. The institutional expectation of emotional neutrality starkly contrasts the mediator's deep affective entanglement, leading to what Costa (2021) describes as emotional dissonance — the psychological strain between professional distance and human solidarity. To overcome this tension, the mediators' narratives must be brought to the fore not only as reflective accounts but also as diagnostic tools that reveal the structural weaknesses of mediation itself. Their stories can serve as a starting point for rethinking institutional practices and creating a trauma-informed, gender-sensitive framework. In this regard, Working Discussion Groups (WDGs) — spaces for reflection widely used in social work — provide a model for institutionalising emotional support and ethical reflection (Ferguson et al. 2021). These group-based practices enable case-based discussion, collegial insight and collective meaning-making, and help to inform best practice and professional guidelines. Finally, NI emphasises the active role of the researcher in shaping, framing and interpreting narratives. The mediation process is not a neutral act, and the researcher is not merely an observer. Both are involved in a dynamic process of meaning-making that requires rigorous reflexivity to critically examine one's own positioning, bias and ethical responsibility (Clandinin, Rosiek 2006).

3. Digital Storytelling as NI extension

While NI enables the emergence of rich, situated narratives, it has its limitations when it comes to capturing the fragmented, non-linear and unconscious dimensions of trauma narratives (Brushwood Rose, Granger 2013). In this sense, digital storytelling (DST) emerges as an advanced methodological tool that, unlike traditional narrative methods, integrates visual, auditory and textual elements and

allows for the expression of emotions, contradictions and evolving self-perceptions that are often difficult to articulate. DST can «redistribute the ability to represent oneself» (Couldry 2008: 386) by challenging «the dominant culture» (Lambert 2009: 81) and «representations» (Thumim 2009: 207) while giving «participants a sense of agency and control in telling stories about situations in which they normally had little or no control». As Brushwood Rose and Granger (2013) show in their study of migrant women, digital narratives often evolve beyond the conscious intention of the storyteller, thereby emphasising their ability to enable self-expression and deeper reflection. This process of decentralisation is consistent with the aims of narrative inquiry, which emphasises the personal and relational dimensions of lived experience.

Beyond individual self-expression, DST functions as a collaborative and multimodal socio-cultural tool that fosters the creation, sharing and exchange of innovative narratives (Knobel, Lankshear 2015). It provides a space for resistant storytelling that feminist and human rights organisations have strategically used to challenge dominant narratives and deconstruct stereotypes (Thas 2015; Demaria, 2023). Nevertheless, without an intentionally gender-sensitive design based on shared experiences and critical reflexivity, DST processes can unintentionally reproduce the oppressive narratives they seek to dismantle (Birchall, 2018). In parallel, DST has been increasingly applied at an institutional level in educational contexts such as teacher training (Del-Moral at al. 2016) and at-risk education (Mangione at al. 2014), but is still under-researched in high-risk professions such as language mediation. Research findings from the ALICE project on emotion-based DST in teaching (Mangione et al. 2014) show that structured narrative training, collaborative storytelling and expressive writing improve professional awareness, empathy and burnout mitigation in trauma-intensive professions.

Given these findings, embedding DST in institutional training programmes and maintaining digital archives of case studies and best practices (Gregori-Signes 2014) could address the current gap in structured professional development for mediators by enabling institutions to document cultural nuances, ethical challenges and effective strategies. In other words, drawing on experiences in DST has the potential to promote Corrao's (1995: 22) psychoanalytic concept of *mente gruppale* – a group consciousness that emerges in small groups where «thoughts and emotions circulate among participants, generating new insights that transcend individual perspectives» to «transforms fragmented professional knowledge into a structured, collective discourse». This collective dimension is particularly important when considering the fragmented role of language mediators. DST deeply challenges the myth of neutrality by conceptualising mediation as an interactive, co-constructed process in which stories are negotiated between survivors, mediators and institutional actors. Following Dempsey's (2011) concept of feminist counter-spaces, collective storytelling becomes a means of criticising systemic injustices and creating alternative forms of knowledge. Applied to mediation processes, DST can therefore function as a form of narrative resistance that enables mediators to reclaim visibility, articulate their position and assert their political agency within a system that has often rendered their professional status invisible. Finally, due to its narrative nature, DST's potential to reshape professional narratives and support community building must be accompanied by a careful ethical framework. As Lambert (2013) warns, the institutional appropriation of digital stories can lead to narratives being distorted to suit bureaucratic agendas rather than serving the needs of participants. Ethical challenges such as ensuring confidentiality, avoiding re-traumatisation and preserving the autonomy of storytellers must be central to any DST-based mediation initiative. In addition, barriers such as digital literacy and unequal access to technology must be addressed to ensure that DST remains an inclusive and participatory tool (Hull, Katz 2006).

4. Methodology

4.1. Research Design

The study adopts a qualitative NI research design to explore the experiences, challenges and agency of language mediators working in GBV contexts, as it foregrounds the voices and perspectives of participants. The aim was to allow mediators to empower their narratives by reflecting on critical events and everyday practices. As a narrative consequence, the concept of DST emerged organically as a participant-inspired direction for future research and is presented in the study as an analytical and methodological framework — a potential tool that could be developed and managed by the researchers together with the mediators, allowing them to create and share digital narratives that reflect their professional roles and personal migration experiences.

4.2. Participant Selection

Eight language mediators (seven women, and one man) working with survivors of GBV were recruited through professional and community networks, including NGOs, refugee support services, legal aid clinics, and women's shelters. All participants had at least one year of mediation experience in GBV-related contexts and were fluent in both Italian and one or more additional languages spoken by survivors. The interviewees come from different geographical regions but all work in mediation in Italy and offer a range of perspectives informed by both their cultural heritage and their professional experience in the Italian context. Their engagement was central not only to the richness of the material gathered, but also to the emergence of storytelling as a space of potential transformation, both personal and professional.

4.3. Data Collection

Each of the eight participants took part in an in-depth individual interview guided by the principles of narrative inquiry. The aim was to collect stories that show how the mediators understand their role, how they feel about their work and how they deal with the emotional, ethical and political dimensions of this work. The interviews were semi-structured but with open-ended questions that served as a flexible roadmap, such as: "Can you tell me about a situation that stuck in your mind?", "How did you feel at that moment?" or "Has your understanding of your role changed over time?". These prompts encouraged participants to go beyond abstract reflections and instead share concrete, time-anchored experiences. Each interview lasted approximately 30-60 minutes and was recorded (with prior consent) and then transcribed verbatim.

4.4. Data Analysis

The interview transcripts were analysed using a thematic-narrative analysis approach. This method combines inductive coding — to identify recurring themes — with attention to the form, structure and positioning of the narrative. The aim was to appreciate the richness of the individual stories while recognising patterns across the data set. This process enabled the researcher to understand both what was said (thematic content) and how it was said (narrative structure and positioning), providing a multi-layered understanding of the mediators' experiences. The findings presented in the next chapter therefore emerge not only from what the participants said explicitly but also from how they formulated their stories — what they emphasised, what they left unsaid and how they orientated themselves towards others and the institutions in which they operate.

4.5. Ethical Considerations

As the study focused on professionals working closely with survivors of GBV, ethical sensitivity was essential. Whilst the mediators were not survivors themselves, the research involved vicarious exposure to traumatic narratives, emotional vulnerability and professional disclosures about institutional dynamics. To address ethical considerations, participants were informed of the purpose and procedures of the study and written informed consent was obtained. Confidentiality was maintained through pseudonyms and secure data storage. Emotional safety was ensured through trauma-informed interviews that were conducted in a private setting and focused on active listening and emotional care. Participants were encouraged to generalise or omit sensitive details.

5. Bridging the gap between narrative research and language mediation in GBV

As narrative inquiry emphasises storytelling as a relational and meaning-making process, the interviews show how mediation in GBV contexts becomes an emotionally embodied and ethically charged form of care work. One of the most pressing issues raised by participants is the emotional burden of repeatedly narrating trauma. Mediators are often the only consistent and trusted point of contact for survivors navigating complex and hostile systems. Their role goes far beyond translation — they become confidants and sometimes informal counsellors. One mediator describes this strain:

> B. T.: Migrants have the mediator as a reference point in all conversations. This creates a tangible bond because mediation is often the only place where these people feel heard. But this also brings with it a great deal of emotional responsibility. When you mediate in cases of violence or human trafficking, you are constantly confronted with extreme suffering. If you don't have a support network […] it becomes an exhausting profession.

Mediators not only collect the stories of others — they are embedded in them. This emotional intensity often intersects with processes of identification, especially when mediators share similar migratory or gendered experiences with survivors. While such identification can foster trust and deeper connection, it also generates emotional dissonance and vulnerability, as migrant survivors often fear the legal consequences of reporting violence (Costa, 2021; Moenandar 2024). This ethical strain puts mediators in a precarious position where they must balance institutional requirements with the safety of survivors. As one mediator poignantly observes:

> C. G.: Sometimes I know that the survivor could withdraw completely if I push too hard. But if I don't push at all, they might not get the help they need. We're constantly negotiating what's ethical, what's right and what's possible within the system […] You work for both — for the institution and for the person. But when the two don't align, you have to decide which is more humane.

Cultural expectations further complicate the process, especially when survivors do not recognise certain acts as violence, which, due to their systemic and structured nature, are perpetrated through «social arrangements that systematically disadvantage certain groups while making such disadvantages appear natural or inevitable» (Vorobej 2008: 92). This requires mediators to facilitate conceptual change in terms of justice, gender rights and legal protection, while respecting the survivor's cultural perspective. In these interactions, mediation functions as a narrative space of

hospitality and care in which professionals deal with the unpredictable vulnerabilities of the people they support. The following describes this challenge:

> N.J..: I met a woman who refused to report her abuse […] She was more afraid of being ostracized than staying in the abusive situation. […] Violence is not even recognized as such. A woman may say, 'My husband hit me,' but she presents it as something normal or acceptable. The role of the mediator is to explain, guide, and help survivors understand that these behaviors are unacceptable while respecting their cultural background and building trust.

The systematic marginalisation of the profession further complicates the context. Language mediation is often treated as an ancillary service rather than a specialised profession. Professionals work under precarious, project-based contracts through NGOs or private co-operatives rather than being integrated into public institutions (Amato, Garwood 2011). This outsourcing model increases professional insecurity and denies mediators access to structured training and accreditation, resulting in multiple, often conflicting roles (Blini 2008). This multifaceted workload, combined with a lack of formal training in trauma-informed communication and gender-sensitive interventions, places mediators in high-risk professional situations where they receive little systemic support. One mediator expresses frustration at the lack of a standardised professional framework:

> A. C.: The main problem is the lack of standard roles as well as stronger network and real communication between services and institutions. The current model, which entrusts these services almost exclusively to private co-operatives, encourages competition rather than co-operation. This distorts the human mission behind the goal of inclusion. Strengthening professional networks and prioritizing collective engagement over market-based approaches are crucial to ensuring a people-centred model of mediation.

This intuition suggests that without structured spaces for reflection and support, this proximity can lead to vicarious trauma, as is widely recognised in trauma-related professions (Mento 2020). The mediators' reflections point to the urgent need for supervised, trauma-informed spaces for reflection, such as working discussion groups (WDGs), where experiences can be processed together and outside of isolation to achieve what Wenger (1999) calls «communities of practice»: resorting to individual experiences to construct a network that supports shared learning and emotional support while improving the effectiveness of services. These results reinforce NI's fundamental insight: storytelling is not only a way of presenting experiences but also a way of communicating knowledge, care and critique. In this sense, digital storytelling (DST) can be adopted as a structured tool to support long-term reflection and share meaning-making among practitioners.

6. From challenges to action: Building mediators' networks through DST

The systemic challenges outlined above — including a lack of professional recognition, emotional distress, ethical dilemmas, and fragmented institutional support — emphasize the urgent need for structured, sustainable interventions. In crafting their stories, mediators articulate desires — to craft stories, to be heard, to show the complexity of their work through other formats beyond written reports — resonated strongly with the core principles of DST. Narrating the self in this context can be understood through what Séllei (2017) describes as *quilt-making*: just as a quilt is composed of fragments of fabric sewn together into a meaningful whole, a personal narrative is composed of

fragments of memories, experiences and emotions that all contribute to the larger pattern of life. For mediators, reflecting on their experiences was synonymous with selecting moments that had stayed with them over time and weaving them into a coherent narrative that ranged from their rich migration experiences to their current professional practice. For instance, one mediator discovers an underlying theme in her work: the idea of *giving hope a voice*.

> N. J.: I once worked with a woman who [...] struggled to put her experiences into words. She hesitated, paused, retreated into silence [...] During our interventions, I tried to help her recover the parts that had been erased, the emotions, the contradictions, the unfinished sentences that still had meaning. […] I knew what it meant […] It is a way of resisting all the abuse she has suffered […] Mediation became a space that reclaimed a long-silenced voice […] Giving hope a voice.

This kind of meta-reflection is a common outcome. It aligns with the literature on narrative approaches, which suggests that storytelling can lead to personal insight and growth – when participants effectively re-narrate their experiences, they can find new meaning or resolution (Couldry 2008). Following this, participants reflect on the importance of being able to share their experiences with peers. The often-untapped power of collective support for professional resilience, where gender-sensitive, survivor-centred approaches emerge from experience, can actively co-create intervention strategies. As the following words illustrate:

> A.M.: After crossing the Mediterranean, I experienced such overwhelming emotions [...] one person almost shared a photo of what I had experienced and I had to ask for a break because the impact was too great [...] Now, in my daily work as a mediator, I often feel that we are all on our own. Every day we are confronted with devastating stories and situations that challenge us, and when we go home, we often don't know how to process these experiences [...] If we had a space where we could talk about what we are going through and learn from each other, it would change everything.

In practice, this imaginary engagement with DST became a space of narrative rehearsal — a preparatory step that addresses the method's potential for reorganising one's own professional identity and personal journey. For example, one mediator reflecting on a difficult case describes how the idea of sharing stories – her own and those of the survivors – helped to move from internalised guilt to a sense of meaning:

> S.B.B.: If I could tell it, maybe I would see that I did my best — maybe others would too […] Sometimes, I replay this case in my head and wonder if I missed something if I could have done more. But when I think about turning it into a story, with a beginning, a middle and an end, I realise that I was there, that I listened, and that I was with her in the worst moments. Perhaps the story would show the effort that often goes unseen — the small acts of presence, the silences, the words I had to find in two languages.

Thus, one of DST's most significant contributions to language mediation is its capacity to foster professional solidarity and mitigate the isolation mediators often experience. This aligns perfectly with research that finds digital stories can «educate and raise awareness among viewing audiences about issues presented in the stories» (Gubrium *et al.* 2014: 1606). DST addresses this gap by creating a platform for mediators to document their experiences, reflect on their practices, and disseminate knowledge across institutional and geographical boundaries to inform institutional guidelines from experiences. It is consistent with the following testimony:

B. T.: If you meet a woman who has suffered violence, sometimes she won't tell you everything straight away. Out of pride, fear or shame. But you can see it in her eyes, in the way she looks at you, in her silence. […] The more I got involved in mediation, the more I learnt — not only from the victims I met, but also from my colleagues [...] Mediation is not a solitary act […] We need to create spaces where we can share our experiences, process difficult feelings and exchange knowledge […] Because we are not supported by institutions.

As Frank (2010) suggests, stories «breathe» when they are shared — they generate resonance, recognition and collective movement. DST is more than a medium: it is a method that gives visibility to those working on the margins of care systems and transforms solitary experiences into shared insights. Furthermore, its multimodal nature — integrating visual, auditory and textual elements — allows for the articulation of emotions and cultural nuances that might otherwise be lost in language-based narratives. In this sense, a central concept that emerges is agency. By writing their own stories, language mediators exercise control over their narrative and decide how they want to portray themselves and their work. This theme underlines the main aim of the study: to show that mediators' voices, when collectively recognised, have a transformative power — particularly when the narratives highlight gendered dynamics, relational ethics and trauma-sensitive approaches. These digital stories can serve as credible, more human tools for advocacy and offer stakeholders more impact than statistics or reports. For this reason, DST is often used in public health and community advocacy — to humanise issues and influence hearts and minds (Gubrium et al. 2014). Beyond advocacy, DST can also strengthen facilitators' sense of belonging and enhance their ability to accompany survivors through processes of acknowledgement, narrative and reparation. In other words, the more support, visibility and narrative power the mediator receives, the more ethically grounded and trauma-sensitive their interpretation of survivors of GBV can be.

7. Concluding remarks

This study has emphasised the transformative potential of DST as a methodological and reflexive tool in the field of language mediation for survivors of GBV. The findings show that language mediation is not just a technical exercise in language mediation, but a complex practice of relational negotiation, affective labour and trauma-informed communication. Integrating DST into mediation work can provide professionals with a multimodal platform to articulate the affective, ethical and political dimensions of their work. In contrast to traditional narrative methods, DST enables the expression of silences, contradictions and embodied knowledge — allowing fragmented experiences to be reshaped into coherent, meaningful narratives. For mediators, this encourages self-reflection, strengthens peer support and contributes to a more grounded sense of professional identity. For institutions, digital narratives can serve as powerful tools for training and advocacy, providing authentic, emotionally engaging insights that often speak more effectively to stakeholders than reports or statistics.

From a methodological perspective, this research also emphasises the intervening capacity of participatory approaches. While the primary goal was data collection, the narrative-inspired interviews served as a prompt for storytelling, acknowledgement and mutual validation. In this way, the research process itself contributed to the empowerment of participants and underpinned the idea that qualitative research can serve not only as an enquiry but also as an intervention. Nevertheless, the implementation of DST needs to be ethically guided and structurally supported.

Although the findings point to the transformative potential of DST, this study has its limitations. Firstly, DST is emphasised, but appears as a conceptual and exploratory lens without being fully realised. Secondly, the narratives were collected through interviews rather than actual digital

production, and the focus is on the perspectives of language mediators in a particular national setting. Future research could build on this exploratory phase by developing and testing DST-based workshops with mediators and assessing their impact on professional well-being, institutional awareness and survivor-centred approaches. To summarise, this paper calls for a fundamental rethinking of language mediation — a rethinking that goes beyond the technical aspects of translation to include participatory, survivor-centred and practitioner-empowering approaches. While DST does not offer a linear, causal solution (Thas 2015), its strength lies in its ability to reshape narrative landscapes, disrupt dominant institutional discourses and foster new forms of collective advocacy and professional recognition.

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