The translation challenges of INGOs

Professional and non-professional translation at Amnesty International

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In the current climate where the legitimacy of Western-based international Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) is increasingly put under pressure, some NGOs have started to change their approach to translation, often as a consequence of structural changes within the organisation. This article focuses on the translation challenges of one such organisation, namely Amnesty International, and how it has aimed to deal with these. Drawing on ethnographic data, it describes the mission of Amnesty's Language Resource Centre, which aims to support translation at Amnesty into a variety of languages. The article reveals some of the tensions between the use of professional translators, particularly for languages such as French, Spanish and Arabic, and the continued reliance of smaller Amnesty offices on volunteer translators. It demonstrates that despite the trend towards professionalisation, volunteer translation continues to represent a significant portion of Amnesty's translation work.

Keywords: institutional translation, volunteer translation, NGOs, academic-NGO collaboration, linguistic ethnography, translation policy

1. Introduction

In the globalised economy, international non-governmental organisations (NGOs) have emerged as new global workplaces that form an important part of the information- and knowledge-based economy (Castells 2000). International NGOs are inherently different from other organisations working across borders, such as multinational companies or intergovernmental organisations, as NGOs work from a humanist ethos (Rubenstein 2015), with different budget priorities and different motivations of staff and volunteers. Yet Translation Studies has paid little attention to these organisations as "translating institutions", and studies have instead

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focused on translation at intergovernmental organisations such as the EU and the UN (Cao and Zhao 2008; Koskinen 2008; Schäffner 2001; Tosi 2003).

This gap perhaps is related to the fact that translation and interpreting for NGOs has been widely associated with volunteerism. Pym (2008, 77) notes that NGOs "rarely have the funding necessary for symbolic translation practices; their use of translation is closer to what might precariously be termed 'real needs', they are far less likely to employ in-house staff translators or interpreters". In line with this assumption, NGOs have mostly been mentioned in Translation Studies in the context of volunteer and activist translation, and specifically as part of studies that have looked at contemporary activist translator and interpreting groups, such as Babels and ECOS (Baker 2006; Baker 2009; Boéri and Maier 2010; Gambier 2007). Research in this area tends to focus on volunteer translators and interpreters as agents, or on the activist networks, rather than on the NGOs that rely on the services of these groups. Equally, in other academic disciplines such as International Relations and Development Studies, and in the NGO sector itself, little attention has been paid to how international NGOs approach multilingualism and language and translation policies.

This article draws on data from my doctoral research project on translation policies at the international human rights NGO Amnesty International (Tesseur 2014a), which made a start at exploring translation at international NGOs (henceforth 'INGOs'). Tesseur (2014b) has described Amnesty's strategic approach to multilingualism and translation by analysing policy documents. This article explores how policy is put into practice by focusing on translation practices on different organisation levels, and focuses particularly on the use of professional versus volunteer translators. Drawing on the concept of professionalisation, this article contends that it is no longer sufficient to characterize translation and interpreting practices at INGOs from the perspective of volunteerism alone, as this perspective cannot account for the wide variety of translation practices at these institutions, or, in particular, the changing organisational approaches of INGOs to translation. With the establishment of its own Language Resource Centre (AILRC) in 2010, Amnesty is a prime example of such change. Its AILRC network aims to support the various translation needs of the organisation. While it unites pre-existing Amnesty translation services for a number of large languages (e.g. Arabic, French, German, Spanish, Japanese), many Amnesty offices still cater for their own translation needs. The article thus explores the establishment of the AILRC as a sign of the professionalisation of some translation practices within Amnesty, and contrasts this with the wide variety of non-professional translation practices ongoing in other offices.

The article aims to make a number of contributions to Translation Studies. Firstly, by focusing on a non-governmental organisation, it aims to contribute to

the area of institutional translation. Secondly, it offers new insights into non-professional translation by exploring who carries out translation work at Amnesty, and by contrasting professional and non-professional translation practices within one organisation. Finally, on volunteer translation specifically, it explores if and how the use of volunteer translators can be considered as a threat to the professional status of translators.

2. INGOs, professionalisation, and translation

INGOs have become powerful political players since the 20th century, with their numbers rising to about 60,000 (Union of International Associations 2014). The breadth of activities they cover is vast, and many organisations are active in the field of development, advocacy, and humanitarian or environmental intervention. Although the phenomenon of organisations working internationally is not new per se (Davies 2014), the way these organisations work has changed significantly in the globalised information- and knowledge-based economy, with more information being produced ever faster and made available through a large variety of channels and to a wide variety of people. INGOs have gained more recognition and prestige as information and knowledge producers and as global political players over the years, for example by increasing their involvement at the United Nations (Martens 2006; Otto 1996).

INGOs have started to professionalise their services, with a peak in professionalisation during the 1990s. Davies (2014) holds that the foundation of societies such at the Society for International Development (1957) and the Institute of Development Studies (founded at the University of Sussex in 1966) was an early sign of increasing professionalisation. The tendency to professionalise became evident from the 1970s onwards, when voluntary membership organisations saw their membership dwindle, while the number of highly specialised INGOs that tended to be professionally managed increased remarkably in the 1990s (Davies 2014, 161). Some scholars have pointed out that this increase was linked to a growth in donor funding, which allowed activists to make careers out of being professional movement leaders (Edwards and Hulme 1996; Staggenborg 1988). The professionalisation of INGOs' involvement at the UN has been gradual. Martens (2006, 22) describes how NGO representation to the UN was for a long time conducted predominantly by retired volunteers, who had but little professional affiliation with their organisation. Representation to the UN was more a source of status and prestige than a mechanism for NGOs to exert influence. Only since the late 1980s have NGOs started to recognise the potential of their activities with the UN, and to invest in professional representation.

International Relations scholars have commented extensively on the trend towards increasing professionalisation of the NGO sector, with organisations expanding gradually over the years and aiming to increase their international influence. Professionalisation in NGOs has been explored mainly from the perspective of NGOs' core business (concentrating, e.g., on the hiring of specialised human rights lawyers at organisations such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, as described in Martens 2006). By comparison, however, we know little about this process in the context of translation and interpreting work, although the working spaces of INGOs cross geographical and linguistic boundaries and are thus inherently multilingual.

In Translation and Interpreting Studies, discussions on professionalisation have been linked to the establishment of the disciplines, i.e. to the introduction of training programmes from the 1970s onwards. Wadensjö (2007, 2) has described the process of professionalisation as implying

> a range of individual and collective efforts, including struggles to achieve a certain social status, suggestions to define standards of best practice, to control access to professional knowledge – theoretical models and practical skills – and to control education and work opportunities.

Indeed, many of the discussions on professionalisation have focused on efforts to establish translation and interpreting as fully-fledged professions, and on potential threats to this acquired professional status (Dam and Korning Zethsen 2010; Dam and Koskinen 2016; Wadensjö et al. 2007). The growth of volunteer translation, particularly linked to the emergence of web-based collaborative practices, is one of the areas that has been explored in particular. Flanagan (2016) has described professional translators' fears that the phenomenon of volunteer translation will increase organisations' and companies' perceptions of translation as a non-professional activity, i.e. that it will reinforce the assumption that translation does not require formal training but can be done by anyone who has sufficient knowledge of two languages. In addition, there are fears that the phenomenon could reinforce the idea that translations could or should be easily obtained for free, especially for non-profit organisations.

Since NGOs have been associated frequently with the phenomena of volunteer and non-professional translation, this article explores the place of these practices at Amnesty and discusses them in light of recent trends towards professionalisation. It reveals the wide variety of translation practices Amnesty draws on, and reflects on the implications of the increasing professionalisation of translation work at Amnesty through its Language Resource Centre, the AILRC.

3. Methodology

The data used in this study were collected as part of an ethnographic study on translation practices and policies at Amnesty. Knowledge of some of the specifics of the project is important to understand how and why the data presented in this article were collected. This relates particularly to the arrangements that were made with Amnesty International to gain access to 'the field', in this case Amnesty offices where translation was taking place.

Gaining access is one of the main challenges of ethnographic research, and much previous ethnographic research on translation in institutional settings has been carried out by scholars who worked in the institutional context they were examining before or during the research (Cao and Zhao 2008; Hursti 2000; Koskinen 2008; Tosi 2003; Wagner, Bech, and Martínez 2002). Access to the field is largely dependent on the willingness of the research participants or institution to collaborate. In the context of my specific project, access was negotiated as part of the larger project it was part of, i.e. the Marie Curie Initial Training Network (ITN) "TIME: Translation Research Training: An Integrated and Intersectoral Model for Europe" (FP7-PEOPLE-2010-ITN-263954, 2011–2014). The ITN required the researchers involved to carry out work placements to train in complementary skills. These placements could also be used to collect data for research. Amnesty International was identified as a potential collaborative partner, especially given the absence of Translation Studies research on translation at NGOs. Involving Amnesty actively in the project thus had two purposes, i.e. (1) to comply with the EU-requirements of being seconded to a non-academic partner; and (2) to collect data as part of ongoing research.

Contacts were established with both Amnesty's Language Resource Centre, and with a local office in Flanders, Belgium, i.e. Amnesty International Vlaanderen (AIVL). Discussions took place in preparation for my placement with the AILRC-ES head office in Madrid, the AILRC-FR office in Paris, and with AIVL. These were focused on setting out an agreement and working boundaries, and included a discussion on what I could offer to the organisation. A number of tasks were identified. AILRC, which had only been founded just over a year before these conversations took place, was interested in data on how other Amnesty offices dealt with translation. My own research interests thus overlapped with those of Amnesty: we were both interested in exploring questions on the translation policies and practices of various Amnesty offices. I was asked to design a questionnaire on translation practices to send out to various Amnesty offices, and to collect specific data on how AIVL was dealing with translation during my time there. For AIVL, Urgent Actions were identified as an area to which I could contribute my knowledge and skills, particularly because the texts involved were translated by

volunteer translators.[1] AIVL was keen to gain feedback and ideas on how to improve the quality of the service. My activities in relation to AIVL's Urgent Actions will be explored in more depth in Section 4.3.

Data were collected during three field phases at three Amnesty offices: at AIVL in Antwerp (2 months in 2012), the AILRC-ES head office in Madrid (2 months in 2012), and the AILRC-FR office in Paris (1 month in 2013). Data drawn on in this article include policy documents, fieldnotes on meetings and discussions with staff, questionnaires, and semi-structured interviews with translators, press officers, and managers. I overtly introduced myself as a researcher, and extra care was taken at AIVL to present the purposes of my project during team meetings so as to ensure maximum visibility and engagement from staff.

As the fieldwork was conducted during a time of huge organisational change, some practices and working realities have changed since the data were collected. For example, after having been based in Antwerp for 43 years, the AIVL office recently moved to Brussels to share an office with Amnesty Belgique Francophone, the French-speaking Belgian section (Van Remoortere 2016). Secondly, the composition of the translation teams for Spanish and French have changed. During the time of fieldwork, all AILRC staff members for translation into French and Spanish were based in the Paris and Madrid offices. Since then, AILRC has expanded its team with translators who are based in different geographical regions, such as Africa. Moreover, whereas traditionally the bulk of translation work was from English into other languages, this has started to change. There has been an increased need for translation *into* English, and for translation in other language combinations, such as French-Arabic.[2] It should therefore be emphasised that the data described in this article present a screenshot of a specific moment in time at the Amnesty offices under study. However, the main argument in this article, i.e. the fact that Amnesty is professionalising its translation services for a number of languages but not for others, remains valid.

1. Urgent Actions are issued regularly by Amnesty International calling on activists to contact political institutions to pressure them into responding to a particular case of human rights abuse. They set out the case in question, specify which government officials to contact, give contact information, and provide suggestions as to what activists might "write, say or tweet" (see https://www.amnestyusa.org/take-action/urgent-action-network/).

2. Interview with AILRC staff member, 17 July 2017.

4. Translating for Amnesty International

4.1 Amnesty International's Language Resource Centre (AILRC)

Founded in 1961 by the British lawyer Peter Benenson, Amnesty had an international orientation from the beginning. However, its organisational heart has always been in London, where Benenson opened an office and a library within the first few months of Amnesty's establishment. The organisation has expanded immensely over the years, both in terms of geographical reach as well as scope of work. Today, Amnesty has offices in about 70 countries and has more than 7 million members worldwide.[3]

Amnesty's expansion has gone hand in hand with many changes to its organisational structure, of which the most recent has been the opening of 'hub offices' in key capitals around the world, including Hong Kong, Bangkok, Nairobi, Johannesburg, Mexico City, Lima and Beirut. The establishment of these hubs had mainly as its goal to redistribute power from Amnesty's London-based headquarters. In the words of Amnesty's current Director General, these changes allow Amnesty "to act with greater legitimacy, speed, capacity and relevance as we stand alongside those whose rights are violated" (Shetty 2016). The new organisational structure implied new language and translation challenges. Whereas documents had mainly been produced in Amnesty's head office in English, a new context opened up in which some of these documents would be produced in other locations, possibly in other languages.

In its effort to truly become 'one global Amnesty' and to offer more support to tackle these challenges, Amnesty set up its Language Resource Centre (AILRC) in 2010. The AILRC is a virtual network that has as one of its main aims to streamline the language and translation work that occurs in Amnesty, aiming to avoid duplication so that funds would be spent more efficiently. Up until then, the translation services of Amnesty had not been managed centrally. For some languages, there were 'translation teams', but these did not collaborate with each other. Translation services into Amnesty's 'core' languages, i.e. Arabic, French and Spanish, were well established. These had been set up during the 1970s and 1980s through the International Secretariat (IS). While initially all three language programmes were based at the IS, the French and Spanish translation services were decentralised in the 1980s to separate offices in Paris and Madrid. The Arabic translation service was decentralised in 1991, but moved back to the IS in 2000. The fact that the three translation teams had been based in different locations for many years and had an independent, client-service relationship with the IS contributed to these teams

3. See https://www.amnesty.org/en/who-we-are/.

working separately from one another, to such an extent that the use of translation software varied between offices and languages: Trados and Multiterm for Spanish, Wordfast for French.

Whereas French, Spanish and Arabic-speaking offices could largely rely on translations produced by these three translation teams, Amnesty offices that used other languages needed to develop their own solutions. Regional language programmes that were run from the IS had been established in the early 1990s for Portuguese and Asian languages, but this was mostly a matter of budget being made available: offices using these languages could apply for funding to the regional language programmes, but there was no full service as with French, Spanish and Arabic. Other, smaller languages had to cater for their own needs. This meant that information on how Amnesty dealt with translation was scattered around the different services and offices, and the organisation did not have an overview of how much of its budget was being spent on translation and interpreting work.

One of the first big tasks of the AILRC was thus to collect data on translation practices of local offices, so that the Centre could start developing ways in which it could offer support. Another important part of its work was to integrate all the already existing language teams into the AILRC, such as the teams mentioned above for Arabic (AILRC-AR), French (AILRC-FR) and Spanish (AILRC-ES), and other existing teams including those for German, Italian and Japanese, which had been set up through local initiatives. Areas of work for the AILRC to focus on in the future would include the development of:

- common criteria for selection and revision of translations
- shared quality standards
- training
- procedures for localisation
- a 'single commission root' system for translation
- a shared terminology database in a variety of languages

The AILRC would also seek to:

- promote translation and ensure that translation is taken into account in the planning process at the IS, at regional hubs, and at local offices.

The next section discusses some of the varying translation practices at Amnesty offices.

4.2 Who is translating what?

Amnesty produces a huge amount of information, which it publishes in a variety of forms. Amnesty documents can be roughly divided into four categories:

1. Media documents, including press releases, articles and web news;
2. Campaign materials, including Urgent Actions (UAs), the international Amnesty magazine "The Wire", newsletters (internal), web campaign content (blogs, campaign posts), and material such as posters, banners, postcards, etc.;
3. Position documents, including research reports and Amnesty's annual report;
4. Governance documents, including policy documents, strategy and planning documents, and internal communications, all of which are internal.

Fieldwork found that translation practices vary according to the text type. This was the case both at the local office AIVL as well as at the translation offices AILRC-FR and AILRC-ES. However, practices at the translation offices were found to be more streamlined and professionalised. Translation at these offices was done by professional translators: i.e. a handful of internal translators who translated, revised and managed translation assignments, with the bulk of translation work done by a pool of professionally trained freelancers. Practices were well regulated and varied little: training was in place for new translators, translation tools were used, revision mechanisms were in place, and no volunteers were relied on for any of the translation work. In comparison, translation practices at local offices were non-professional: translation was done by staff whose main task was not translation and who had not received any formal translation training, or it was done by volunteers. In some cases, a small portion of the work was outsourced to translation agencies or freelancers. Practices were more varied and ad hoc, differing between offices and between text types. Aiming to capture some of these differences, Table 1 presents an overview of translation practices at two offices where fieldwork was carried out, i.e. AILRC-FR and AIVL. Rather than discussing all the details, the following paragraphs highlight some of the main differences and similarities, and complement the data in Table 1 with information on other sections.

Table 1 highlights the variety of practices at AIVL. The text type and by extension the audience defines the practice, e.g. press releases are translated by the press officer or an intern when intended for local media, but are translated by the online communications desk (either the online communications officer or an in-house volunteer) when translated for the website only. When press releases are translated for local media, they are revised thoroughly and legal terminology is checked in particular. When a press release is translated as 'web news', revision is limited and focuses on style. Table 1 also reveals that there are different practices for different text types at AILRC-FR, e.g. Urgent Actions (UAs) are translated by new freelancers and thoroughly revised as part of freelancers' training; press releases are translated by experienced freelancers but are not revised because of time constraints; the annual report is translated by 'highly experienced' freelancers only, who are typically translators who have been freelancing for Amnesty for over 20 years. The

Table 1. Translation practices at AILRC-FR and AIVL

	AILRC-FR	AIVL
Office size	6 internal translators/revisers 20 freelancers	20 paid staff 20 in-house volunteers
Who selects?	– Planned work (annual report; research reports; campaigns; magazine): via 'Translation Request Form'. IS requests, AILRC-FR director takes final decision. – Reactive work: Urgent Actions (UAs): all translated; press releases and web news: translation coordinators decide.	– Annual report and research reports: not translated unless relevant for local context. Decided at team meeting. – Campaign materials: relevant team decides. – Press releases: press officer decides and informs online communications officer + briefs on planned work at team meeting. – Web news: online communications officer – UAs: all translated = office policy
Who translates?	– UAs: new freelancers – Annual report: highly experienced freelancers – Research reports: experienced freelancers – Press releases: experienced freelancers – Web news: new freelancers – Campaign materials: experienced freelancers	– UAs: volunteers at home – Press releases: press officer; intern; when translated for web only: online communications manager; in-house volunteer – Web news: online communications manager; in-house volunteer. Sometimes copied from AI the Netherlands. – Campaign materials: by relevant team or outsourced to PR agency
Revision?	– UAs: yes, with detailed feedback for training – Annual report and research reports: yes – Press releases: no (time-pressure)	– UAs: no – Press releases: yes, especially terminology (checked with legal team) – Web news: yes, but focus on style – Campaign materials: depends on context
What tools are used?	– CAT-tools: WordFast (since 2006) as translation memory and terminology database – Typographic guide – Bilingual glossary (not updated since 2007)* – Country files with key terms	– 2-page description on UAs, focused on lay-out – Style guide for writers includes basic list of legal terminology and names of treaties in Dutch and English. – Personal terminology list of press officer

Note: *Since the office started using a translation memory and terminology database in 2006, there was no need to keep the Word-file containing the previously used bilingual glossary updated. However, the glossary was considered as a useful tool for new Amnesty translators, as it provided a good introduction to Amnesty terminology.

process is thus thoroughly streamlined with specific practices in place for specific text types.

As already mentioned, AILRC-FR and AILRC-ES are similar offices. The main business of both offices is translation and they employ professional translators. There were, however, differences between their working methods, such as the use of different CAT-tools. Another difference was the amount of information sent to freelance translators with a translation assignment, which tended to be much more extensive at AILRC-FR. The office employed two staff members whose main task was archiving material and preparing information packages that accompanied translation assignments for freelancers. AILRC-ES, however, did not employ such staff and spent considerably less time on briefing translators.

The different practices of AILRC-FR and AILRC-ES started to be aligned in 2011 as part of AILRC's set-up and can be seen as further signs of professionalisation. However, professionalisation in the first instance affected only the established translation teams. For other offices, the AILRC's aim is not to professionalise translation practices overall, but rather to offer support and guidance. Thus, the establishment of the AILRC did not change the fact that many other Amnesty offices carry out their own translation work. It should also be noted that not all translation work for French and Spanish is done by the AILRC. For example, Amnesty Mexico worked with a volunteer translator to carry out urgent translation work. Amnesty USA and Amnesty Canada did a lot of translation for English-Spanish and English-French respectively that is specific to their countries and for which they cannot rely on the AILRC. Instead, these offices relied on a mixture of non-professional translation staff, volunteers, and freelancers to whom translation was outsourced.

Other sections that use smaller languages and where translation is perhaps less obvious in the local context relied on similar solutions. The text types most frequently translated included Urgent Actions and press releases. Whereas press releases tended to be translated and adapted by press officers, such as at AIVL, Amnesty Denmark, Amnesty Greece and Amnesty Hong Kong, Urgent Actions were often dealt with by volunteers, as was the case at AIVL and Amnesty Japan. Furthermore, the fragmentation of local translation practices was reflected in the limited collaboration that existed between offices that use the same language, such as AIVL and Amnesty the Netherlands. Although differences in legal terminology were brought up as a constraint for collaboration, this would also be the case for other offices that have French or Spanish as a common language but work in different legal contexts. However, since neither AIVL nor Amnesty the Netherlands employed professional translation staff or invested considerably in translation, opportunities for knowledge exchange on translation and sharing of translation work were not optimised.

These examples illustrate the wide variety of translation practices at Amnesty. They show the potential for the AILRC to start streamlining translation work in a wider variety of languages, but they also demonstrate the huge challenge of professionalising translation practices, which are present in nearly every aspect of Amnesty's work. The next section aims to provide more insight into Amnesty's work with volunteer translators.[4]

4.3 Working with volunteer translators: translation of Urgent Actions at AIVL

This section explores the phenomenon of volunteer translation at AIVL, and focuses in particular on the office's translation network for Urgent Actions. It explores the extent to which fears harboured by professional translators about the use of volunteer translators (and as described in Flanagan 2016) are warranted. These fears are based on the assumption that the use of volunteer translation increases an organisation's expectations of receiving translations for free, and the assumption that volunteer translation encourages the view that translation is an easy activity for which no professional training is needed. Reference will be made to translation work with volunteers at Amnesty France and a previous translation service run with volunteers at AILRC-FR, to extend our comprehension of the phenomenon of volunteer translation at Amnesty.

4.3.1 *Translation is free?*

At the time of fieldwork, the translations of Urgent Actions at AIVL were carried out by a pool of 80 volunteers who translate from home. AIVL's Urgent Action network was managed by two in-house volunteers, who came to the Amnesty office a few days per week. They sent out the English source texts to volunteer translators, and sent the finished translations on to AIVL's Urgent Action network once they had been completed.

The reliance on volunteer translators for Urgent Actions was explained by staff as due to a lack of financial resources. However, it should be noted that UAs were the only text type for which AIVL completely relied on volunteers. In most

4. Although some individual practices of local offices may have changed since the time of fieldwork, the overall approach to translation at Amnesty has remained the same: the AILRC offers full services for Arabic, French and Spanish translation, and local offices decide on their own approach for other languages. In order to support other languages, the AILRC has started to offer a service comparable to that of translation agencies: local offices can put in a translation request with AILRC, and AILRC will then look for the appropriate professional services outside of Amnesty. However, local offices are in no way obliged to use this service and continue to make their own decisions on how to manage and pay for translation work.

cases, translation was part of the AIVL staff's day-to-day role, most obviously for the press office and online communication office. Many other staff also relied on English source texts for their work, although they generally did not think of this process as translation. In some cases, translation would be outsourced to professionals, e.g. in the exceptional case that a report needed to be translated into Dutch. Overall, translation at AIVL was only obtained for free (i.e. without the use of AIVL's financial resources or staff time) in the case of Urgent Actions. Staff members gave a number of reasons why this was the case, and particularly noted that because Urgent Actions were intended for people who were already supporting Amnesty's aims and activities, the quality of the language and the writing style were not a priority. AIVL's concern was with communication intended for a larger audience, such as press releases.

These views should be placed in their specific local context. Generally, English is widely spoken in Flanders, and staff at various organisations and companies would be expected to be able to understand and translate English source texts whenever needed in their job (see e.g. also Van Hout, 2010). The fact that few research reports would need to be translated into Dutch is also specifically linked to the local context. Politicians in Belgium will generally understand and accept to use English. On this topic, a translator at Amnesty France commented:

> The problem we have here [in France] is not really about understanding of English, English publications, it's mostly, for you, for example in Belgium, if you go to a ministery or any authority, you can go with the English copy and they will read it and no problem. In France, that's a problem, because, well, even if they can read English, they are not going to like it, there is a cultural thing that, well, if you go are going to write to a minister or a high-ranking politician, well, you're going to write it in French. (Interview #05)

The assumption that English is widely spoken was further confirmed in the guidelines that AIVL provided for Urgent Action volunteer translators. This two-page document focused on the layout of the Urgent Action rather than on actual translation tips. Some of the rare translation advice that was included states:

> Misschien erop letten dat je de Nederlandstalige zinnen kort houdt. We weten allemaal dat je in het Engels een zin kan maken van bijna een bladzijde lang. In het Nederlands houden wij eerder van korte en krachtige zinnen, die gemakkelijk lezen.
> [Maybe pay attention that you keep the Dutch sentences short. We all know that you can make sentences in English that are nearly one page long. In Dutch we rather prefer short and powerful sentences that are easy to read.]

This quotation manifests a view of English as the language that everyone knows and understands: it is considered general knowledge that long sentences are

common in English. An understanding of translation as a relatively simple task seems to lie at the basis of the document. This idea is further explored below.

4.3.2 *Translation is easy?*

New volunteer translators at AIVL were asked to pass a translation test upon recruitment, which was more of an administrative issue than anything else: no one had ever failed the test. As explained above, guidelines were limited and manifested a view of translation from English into Dutch as a relatively simple task. With just a few basic tips, a volunteer translator can complete the translation work. In this case, the fears harboured by professional translators that volunteer translation can reinforce the assumption that translation is 'easy' seem to be justified. This was further confirmed by the absence of any training or revision mechanisms for volunteer translation at AIVL, and the absence of sharing any translation resources such as terminology lists, dictionaries, or previous translations.

However, it needs to be noted that the absence of these mechanisms was rather exceptional for Amnesty. Amnesty Japan, for example, which also relied on volunteer translators for Urgent Actions, supported the work of its volunteers through a website that featured a set of translation resources, where translators could share translations and terminology. The website also offered training opportunities for volunteers, where different revisions of new volunteers' drafts by more experienced translators could be saved and thus used as a learning tool (Utiyama et al. 2010). Other data also pointed to the widespread practice of reviewing volunteers' work. For example, in an Amnesty questionnaire regarding the budget that offices spend on translation, many sections commented that considerable staff time was spent on supervising and proofreading volunteers' translation work.[5] Furthermore, the absence of revision and training mechanisms at AIVL were specific to the text type. Other translated materials, such as press releases, were subjected to revision processes.

Concluding that the absence of revision mechanisms, recruitment criteria and resources for translation at AIVL point to an underlying view of translation as easy may be too simplistic. An additional theme that arose during discussions with AIVL staff and in-house volunteers revolved around the difficulty of managing volunteer translators. Several staff commented on the challenges involved in maintaining a balance between showing "gratefulness" and providing instructions and guidelines for volunteers. Staff as well as in-house volunteers at AIVL emphasised that the contribution of volunteer translators was "worth gold", was "indispensable", and that any initiative needed to "show them we care", and that "we are

5. "AI new draft language policy and strategy: Questionnaire regarding translation costs", Internal Amnesty questionnaire to Amnesty sections and programmes, May 2007.

grateful for their work". Emphasis was placed on making volunteers feel appreciated, not "threatened".[6] Providing clear and extensive instructions to volunteers was considered as problematic. An in-house translator at Amnesty France, who coordinated a small translation service with volunteer translators, noted similar issues. When developing a document with tips for translation, care was taken on how this was introduced to volunteers. She noted:

> What we did was send it to them saying this is a guide for NEW translators, and we would like to know what you think about it, and if you think of other things –, and maybe in it, you will find some tips, or… JUST tips (laughs), not some guidelines, some tips, which might be useful for you too. (Interview #05)

She further explained the difficulty of providing training and tips that all translators would find useful, since their backgrounds and experience were extremely varied. One example illustrated the difficulty of requesting volunteers to follow up on particular translation tips or implement specific ways of working. The coordinator related a case where a translator said he would not follow specific guidelines if they were implemented:

> He said: "No, I'm sorry, I'm not going to follow such guidelines, and to check things on Internet and all that". But it's something –, we've got an agreement, he and I. He says: "Okay, I can translate very fast. But I don't want to go and check on the Internet." And he works with voice recognition software, so he just wants to read the text and translate and […] he's doing very good, good work about style and all that, it's really great, you cannot find one mistake in the text, but you know you need to check everything, and every time, he just puts, he just highlights all the words he has not checked (laughs) […] and I mean, what can I say? I mean, he's 75 years old, I mean, it's okay, that's the way we, we work together, and I think that's pretty much it, I have to adapt to my volunteers, because everyone has a different approach and, uh, they are volunteers, they are not professionals who have to deliver something final because they are going to be paid for the job, so… that's the way, we adapt to it. (Interview #05)

The difficulty of working with volunteers was also noted by professional translators at AILRC-FR. This office used to run a small service called the Regional Action Network, which translated public statements and their accompanying internal documents. The service was run by one full-time and one part-time staff member, both professional translators, and volunteer translators would come into the office whenever they were available. One interviewee at AILRC-FR noted:

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6. These quotations are taken from my fieldnotes and draw on discussions with several AIVL staff members and in-house volunteers.

> You cannot have the same attitude to someone who is working for you for free than to someone who is working on a professional and paid basis […] You also have to deal with their moods (laughs). All of them are very nice, but some were a bit particular. You also need to have lunch with them, organise events for Christmas and so on, to tighten the bonds. It is very difficult, and sometimes tiring, but also a very nice experience. (Interview #09)

These issues also surfaced in discussions at AIVL and provide an additional explanation for the absence of any revision mechanisms and guidelines.

4.3.3 *From translation as 'easy' and 'free' to a more nuanced understanding*

The above discussion indicates that the fears held by professional translators on the use of volunteers are indeed partly warranted for volunteer translation at AIVL. However, the discussion also aimed to contextualise AIVL in its specific local context and within Amnesty as a whole. It emphasised that not all offices deal with volunteer translation in this particular way, and that the absence of revision mechanisms in particular is exceptional. As noted in Section 3, one of the aims of my placements at Amnesty was to carry out work for the AILRC and for AIVL itself. In order to illustrate the type of contributions Translation Studies researchers can make to an organisation like Amnesty, I comment here on the outcomes of my work placement.

As to the use of volunteers at AIVL, there were two main outcomes. In accordance with practices at Amnesty France, a brochure of tips and tricks for translators was developed and was overtly introduced as a tool for 'new translators'. The importance of this aspect was particularly emphasised by the two in-house volunteers who ran the Urgent Actions service. Furthermore, discussions with staff members who worked with other Amnesty volunteers (e.g. those involved in campaigning and marketing) revealed that volunteer translators were the only activists who were not involved in other Amnesty activities. They were not invited to workshops, the New Year's reception, and did not receive AIVL's news magazine, or a New Year's 'Thank You' card. They were the only volunteers to remain completely invisible. Having become aware of this blind spot in their volunteer service, staff were keen to involve volunteer translators more actively in the Amnesty movement, which may result in longer-term engagement of these volunteers with the organisation (see, e.g., O'Brien and Schäler [2010] on the aim of the organisation as an important motivational factor for volunteer translators).

For these reasons, staff proposed to include a session on translation during AIVL's annual "Amnesty Day", providing me with the opportunity to introduce the brochure with translation tips and to see how it was received by translators. It also provided a first-time opportunity for volunteer translators to meet Amnesty staff and other volunteers. Furthermore, the workshop was open to other Amnesty staff

and activists, thus further raising the profile of translation at Amnesty. As to my work with the AILRC, my placement at AIVL provided AILRC with better insights into local translation practices. It also enhanced the Centre's understanding of the kind of support it could offer to local offices, even if it does not have the specific target language used by those local offices. Finally, my involvement also increased the AILRC's understanding of research interests in Translation Studies, and highlighted possibilities for academic collaboration.[7]

5. Final remarks

This article has focused on translation challenges at the human rights NGO Amnesty International, and has shown that (a) the new decentralised structure with hubs in key capitals has increased translation needs at Amnesty from and into more languages; (b) the new structure has led Amnesty to start professionalising its translation services to a much higher degree by the establishment of its own Language Resource Centre; and (c) that despite the trend towards professionalisation, volunteer translation continues to represent a significant portion of Amnesty's translation work. The article also described some of the challenges that Amnesty comes across in working with volunteers.

Although this article has focused on but one INGO, its findings are relevant to the sector more widely. The changes that Amnesty International has implemented to its organisational structure, and the increased professionalisation of its translation service, are not specific to Amnesty alone. In recent years, there has been a wider move in the aid field towards decentralisation. INGOs have increasingly been criticised for not being accountable to those they wish to empower, and questions about on whose behalf they are speaking have become more mainstream (Anderson et al. 2012; Bond 2015; Crack 2013; Lang 2014). In response to these criticisms, INGOs have started to move their head offices out of the West (e.g. Action Aid moved its headquarters to Johannesburg in 2004, and Oxfam International has plans to move its headquarters from Oxford to Nairobi), or have taken away much of the decision-making power that has traditionally been based in Western headquarters by establishing federations, international networks, and global alliances (e.g. Family for Every Child, CARE International). These moves across the globe and the redistribution of power have given rise to new language needs and challenges throughout the sector: Oxfam launched its internal translation service in 2011; Save the Children has employed a translations manager

7. The AILRC's continued interest in academic collaboration is expressed, for example, in Combeaud Bonallack et al. (2014) and Marking (2016).

since 2006; and Tearfund appointed its first translations editor in 2008 after decentralisation.[8] Although none of these organisations have gone as far as Amnesty by establishing their own Language Resource Centre, these cases provide ample evidence of the increase in the need for translation from and into more languages, and for increased professionalisation.

This implies that firstly, this article can make an important contribution to discussions on professionalisation in International Relations, which have remained focused on INGOs' core business and have not included discussions on languages and translation. However, Amnesty, and by extension other organisations such as Oxfam and Save the Children, claim to represent the voices of the powerless and the people on the grassroots level. Translation is key to be able to communicate with these groups and to ensure their representation. Exploring the place of translation and of linguistic rights as part of these organisations' human rights rhetoric is an important potential area for future research, and one where Translation Studies can make a particular contribution to discussions in International Relations and Development Studies.

Secondly, for Translation Studies specifically, the trend towards professionalisation implies that assumptions about INGOs as organisations that are far less likely to employ in-house staff translators or interpreters because they have limited funding (e.g. Pym 2008) and the overt association of NGOs with volunteer translation need to be revisited and relativized. Nevertheless, it remains true that INGOs have limited funding available and work towards a 'real needs' policy for translation (Pym 2008), and INGOs will keep relying on volunteers for part of their translation work. Rather than perceiving volunteer translation as a threat, the tensions between professionalisation and non-professional translation at Amnesty can be viewed as an opportunity for Translation Studies to contribute more actively to the sector, be it by developing new possibilities involving translation technology, or by exploring more theoretical issues regarding the relationships between human rights, Amnesty as a movement, and language and translation.

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