Translation in non-governmental organisations

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Recent advances in Translation Studies have increasingly considered translation as a sociological act, in which translators make decisions depending on their social, political, and ethical positions and the institutional context in which they are working. The factors that have an impact on meaning-making become particularly important when considering translation in specific institutions, where translators are subordinate to the overall aims of the institution and the intra-institutional procedures (Koskinen 2008). Research on institutional translation has covered a wide variety of institutions, including news agencies, publishing companies, as well as supra-national and to some extent non-governmental organisations (Kang 2014; Schäffner, Tcaciuc, and Tesseur 2014).

However, the body of research on non-governmental organisations (NGOs) has remained limited, and translation studies has largely overlooked the role that NGOs play as important providers and translators of information in the new information- and knowledge-based economy (Castells 2000). Some work that has been conducted up until now on translation in NGOs includes research on international, UK-based NGOs such as Amnesty International (Tesseur 2014; Tesseur 2017) and Oxfam GB (Footitt 2017), and on Spanish NGOs working on the national level (Arranz de la Torre 2001; Valero Garcés and Cata 2006). By extension, aspects of translation and language policy have also been discussed in sociolinguistic studies such as Codó & Garrido (2010), and Kahn & Heller (2006). Yet much remains to be said on translation in these NGOs, as well as on NGOs working in other national and international contexts. This special issue thus aims to extend the small but growing body of research on translation in NGOs by presenting case studies on a variety of organisations.

The Special Issue seeks to address the following questions:

- What are the language and translation policies and practices of these organisations?
- How have these evolved over time?
- What are the variables that affect choices on translation policy (e.g. focus of work, size of the organisation, national vs. international, geographical basis)?
- How do language and translation policies and practices shape power relationships?
- How do translation policies and practices impact on translation agency and constrain or allow translators' choices?
- How do insights on translation policies and practices at NGOs change or extend our understanding of other areas of Translation Studies, including:
    - Translation policy
    - Institutional translation
    - Volunteer translation, activism and non-professional translation
    - Development and translation
- What can insights on translation in NGOs add to discussions in other research disciplines such as sociolinguistics, development studies and international relations? What can we learn from these disciplines to understand the phenomenon of translation at NGOs better?
- What insights and tools can translation studies offer to NGOs?

The term 'non-governmental organisation' has remained difficult to define ever since it was first used by the UN in its Charter in 1945. Some authors have pointed out that NGOs are easier to define by what they are not (non-profit, non-governmental) than by what they are (Florini 2006; Willetts 2011). Since the purpose of this Special Issue is to make a start at mapping translation activities in a sector that has remained largely overlooked, the Special Issue proposes a broad interpretation of the term NGO, where the main rationale is to distinguish NGOs from other types of organisations such as intergovernmental organisations (EU, UN) and multinational companies, which are characterised by a different working ethos. This Special Issue proposes to explore organisations that share the following characteristics (following Willets 2011: 9):

- Organisations that are non-profit-making or not engaged in commercial activities
- Organisations that are independent from governments, or that can be defined as 'hybrid' organisations, such as the Red Cross
- Established organisations, thus excluding ephemeral groups, informal associations, and unstructured networks

This special issue aims to map translation practices in NGOs, covering a wide variety of geographical locations, thematic areas, languages, and organisations that work on the national or international level. This broad approach will allow more insight into the extent to which findings on translation policies and practices in NGOs can be generalised and whether NGOs' approaches are different from those of other types of organisations.

The Special Issue is open to proposals that take an interdisciplinary approach and link translation at NGOs to areas such as sociolinguistics, development studies or international relations. Furthermore, practitioners who are interested in contributing are encouraged to contact the guest-editor to discuss possible contents and format.

Instructions for contributors

Articles should be no more than 8,000 words long and should follow the journal's house style. Articles will also need to be submitted to the Journal online. Full instructions for authors can be found at http://benjamins.com/#catalog/journals/ts/guidelines.

Contact details

Please e-mail proposals (working title and abstract) to Wine Tesseur at w.tesseur@reading.ac.uk.

Schedule

October 27 - deadline for author names and abstracts

December 20 - deadline for completed articles by authors to guest editor for peer review

February 1 - feedback from peer-review to authors

March 1 - deadline for authors' revised articles to guest editor

March 15 – feedback from guest editor on revised articles

March 25 – submission of final version

April 1 - guest editor deadline to submit formatted articles to JBP

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