

Wine Tesseur (2022). *Translation as Social Justice. Translation Policies and Practices in Non-Governmental Organisations*. New York and London: Routledge, New Perspectives in Translation and Interpreting Studies, pp. 196, €130. ISBN: 9780367646882.

In recent years, the intersection between translation and society has garnered significant attention within the scope of translation and interpreting studies. The late 2000s witnessed a notable surge in scholarly interest (Wolf 2007), marking a crucial moment often referred to as the "sociological turn in translation studies" (Angelelli 2015). This shift has led to a growing body of research that examines the complex interplay between translation, societal dynamics, and the pursuit of justice (Monzó-Nebot & Jiménez-Salcedo 2017, Monzó-Nebot & Mellinger 2023). From facilitating asylum-seeking procedures to navigating the complexities of humanitarian actions, administrative processes, or peacekeeping missions in war zones, among other contexts, translation—and by extension, translators—has acquired a pivotal role in various societal endeavours. Amidst this scholarly landscape, Wine Tesseur's groundbreaking work, *Translation as Social Justice: Translation Policies and Practices in Non-Governmental Organisations*, stands out as a pioneering contribution. Tesseur's book represents the first comprehensive exploration that intertwines the study of translation policies within non-governmental organisations (NGOs) with theories of social justice. In doing so, the text sheds light on the indispensable role played by translation within NGO contexts, offering invaluable insights into an underexplored yet profoundly significant dimension of translation studies.

This book, which is divided into eight chapters, is the result from three main projects that the author conducted over a decade of research. They all had in common that they shared a general focus on language and translation policies and practices in international non-governmental organisations (INGOs), combining policy analysis of key documentation with ethnographic studies (on aspects including placements, field notes, observations and interviews with key participants). Chapter 1 introduces a conceptual map exploring translation policies and practices within the context of the INGO sector, alongside ongoing debates. The traditional definition of translation policy, as outlined by Meylaerts & González Núñez (2018), aligns with Spolsky's (2004) conception of language policy, which encompasses language management, practices, and ideological beliefs. In this book, Tesseur conceptualises translation as an integral component of language policies, positing that they are essential for ensuring social justice. Through her work, she argues that, while social justice has not received significant attention in language and translation policy research (Fettes, 2015), it can be understood both as a process and a goal. In this regard, she advocates a bottom-up approach to studying the role of language and translation in international organisations, adopting a "translation-as-empowerment" perspective. Under this framework, translation is viewed as a tool that can facilitate better access to information, hold INGOs accountable, and foster equitable dialogue. The author contends that, despite the paramount importance of humanitarian development within INGOs, translation and interpreting (T&I) often receive insufficient attention in organisational planning. Drawing on prior research by Delgado Luchner (2020), Federici *et al.* (2019), Federici & O'Brien (2019), and Footitt *et al.* (2020), the author elucidates a prevalent trend wherein T&I are relegated to secondary status. However, this assertion is nuanced by conflicting findings, such as those put forth by Tesseur (2017), which suggest that T&I are integral to internal organisational capacities.

Throughout this volume, the author highlights this paradox: while many INGOs lack dedicated translation departments, translation-related tasks are routinely undertaken by multilingual staff members or other intermediaries, referred to as "brokers" (7). From this observation, two primary conclusions emerge: firstly, there is a widespread lack of awareness regarding the significance of language and translation policies within INGOs; secondly, this leads to constraints on the budgets allocated for language and translation-related activities.

In Chapters 2 and 3, Tesseur delves into the language and translation policies of several INGOs, namely Save the Children, Amnesty International, Oxfam GB, and Tearfund. Through a meticulous historical examination, this book contends that translation within these organisations has evolved into a tool for *inclusion*, whereby staff members engaged in translation-related activities perceive advocating for language diversity and translation as integral to their daily responsibilities, thereby heightening awareness of translation's importance. Through a series of interviews and surveys, the author has managed to scrutinise the beliefs about translation, not only as an activity, but as a professionally-oriented essentially ethical practice. In doing so, she has underscored a widespread consensus among INGO staff regarding the vulnerability of translation funding to cuts on numerous occasions. An inference drawn from Tesseur's arguments is that individuals involved in translation activities develop an activist consciousness, leveraging social capital to "give their work some visibility and argue for its importance" (41).

One notable strength of this book lies in its original approach to ethnographic research within translation studies: Tesseur combines multi-sited ethnography with a meticulous analysis of a corpus of institutional texts from Amnesty International. As an insider researcher, she has observed that while this INGO publishes a single international press release, multiple local versions are created by various regional offices. Consequently, the role of "translators" within Amnesty International is fulfilled by in-house professionals, local section staff, volunteers, as well as news agencies and local journalists. Through this nuanced analysis of translation practices, the author underscores the adaptable nature of translation: while some organisations maintain dedicated translation teams staffed by professional translators, the frequent participation of journalists and multilingual personnel underscores the versatile nature of translation as a purpose-driven activity. Under this mandate, the management of "volunteer translation" is explored in Chapter 4. Various situations arise in which humanitarian actions and migration emergencies require urgent access to T&I (Moreno-Rivero, 2018; Tesseur, 2018), necessitating innovative approaches to ensure effective mediation across language barriers. Tesseur scrutinises the operations of Amnesty International's Urgent Action network, comprising 165,000 activists worldwide, dedicated to fortifying human rights campaigns through letter-writing (69). Translation emerges as a central activity within this network, with the author reporting on 16 different languages used in translation. Of particular interest in this chapter is the examination of staff members' reflections on the reliance on volunteer translators for this task. On the one hand, perceived risks associated with volunteer translations were deemed limited. Tesseur highlights that her analysis of written translations revealed errors in Amnesty International reports that "do constitute a reputational risk" (77) –for instance, she cites an instance where a mistranslation of "systematic torture" elicited strong criticism from governmental authorities toward this INGO's stance on a particular case. On the other hand, the chapter delves into the disparity between staff

members' beliefs and the discourse within translation studies regarding the quality and ethics of volunteer translations. While translation studies often equate quality with grammatical correctness and terminological accuracy, Amnesty International views quality as the effective conveyance of a message, irrespective of precise language usage. In this context, the author aligns with Orrego-Carmona's (2019) assertion in prior scholarship that a holistic definition of quality should be embraced within the discipline.

The book proceeds to engage in an insightful debate surrounding translation ideologies or beliefs, as defined by González Núñez (2016) as "the value [...] of offering translation in certain contexts for certain groups or to achieve certain ends." While previous scholarship has extensively examined translation management and practices, there remains a notable gap in the need of further exploration of language ideologies. In this regard, Tesseur endeavours to bridge this gap in the literature by investigating whether INGO staff perceive translation as a necessity or as a helpful tool contributing to the establishment of linguistically inclusive working practices. Although her discussion is limited to two interviews, the data presented and analysed offers a valuable resource for examining how individual ideologies may influence the formulation of language and translation policies. The two beliefs scrutinised here posit, on the one hand, the use of English as a lingua franca, and, on the other hand, the promotion of mutual language learning (or plurilingualism) and translation. Transitioning from a minimalist to a maximalist approach, Tesseur articulates a key aspect through a series of examples, focusing on factors including cost-effectiveness and efficiency. Interestingly, while there exist mixed views regarding the cost-benefits of translation, her interview data suggests that T&I practices are perceived as indispensable to the successful delivery of programmes in NGOs.

I am inclined to suggest that the most compelling sections in this monograph are contained in Chapters 6 and 7. Expanding on the voluntary nature of translation, Chapter 6 delves into an examination of 'informal' T&I practices. In contrast to the traditional critique from professionals and researchers, who often dismiss any form of "non-professional" translation, Tesseur argues not only that informal practices are integral within the context of NGOs, but also that they are "often better than no translation at all, and their absence would automatically lead to more exclusion" (130). She arrives at this conclusion by investigating three case studies on informal T&I practices. I concur with the author's assertion that ad hoc practices (or policies, I would argue) contribute to bridging the gap between a maximalist translation approach (where translation is normalised and offered as a standard practice) and a minimalist approach (where zero translation, and thus no linguistic diversity, is offered). In this vein, a significant finding of this study is the lack of awareness regarding what constitutes T&I from the perspective of INGOs: while many informants argued against the provision of in-house translation due to the associated financial costs, Tesseur's investigation revealed that staff devoted a portion of their working day to translation tasks, contributing to a conception of T&I linked to what she defines as "non-integral strategic elements".

Chapter 7 comprises two primary sections: one on a series of actions that INGOs could potentially undertake to foster a more socially just approach to languages and translation, and an extensive discussion about the implications of this book for translation research and training. Tesseur adeptly advocates for organisations to

formulate written language policies that encompass translation activities, while also recognising the value of multilingual and inclusive communication, as well as the use of Machine Translation (MT), among other strategies (140-141). Furthermore, she emphasises the necessity for equitable access to information translation solutions, affording organisations greater flexibility to redistribute power and resources in order to acknowledge and address frequently unnoticed language inequalities. Through her analysis of INGO practices, Tesseur offers nuanced insights into the "strategic multilingualism" approach embraced by institutions, particularly NGOs. As outlined throughout this book, Tesseur innovatively expands the definition of translation policy (Meylaerts & González Núñez 2018; Moreno-Rivero 2023) to encompass a textual examination of translation policy outputs, revealing that "written language policies and translation policies often overlap" (147). Overall, the author advocates for further research in this area, proposing a more comprehensive exploration of the losses and gains associated with language access and translation, with the aim of providing data and evidence not only for researchers, but also for professional and informal translators, as well as INGO staff members and management alike.

In conclusion, Wine Tesseur's seminal work, *Translation as Social Justice: Translation Policies and Practices in Non-Governmental Organisations*, represents a significant milestone not only in the field of translation studies, but also in sociolinguistics, language policy and planning, international relations, and political science. Through a meticulous examination of language and translation policies within the context of INGOs, Tesseur not only illuminates the critical role played by translation in fostering social justice but also offers invaluable insights into the complexities of translation practices within NGO settings. As outlined above, one of the most striking aspects of Tesseur's book is her expert analysis of informal translation practices, which challenges traditional expectations about professional translation. By highlighting the importance of informal practices within NGOs and emphasising their role in promoting inclusion, Tesseur encourages a reevaluation of the value placed on non-professional translation. Moreover, her exploration of ad hoc translation practices underscores the pivotal role played by translation in bridging linguistic gaps and promoting diversity within organisational contexts. Tesseur's advocacy for the development of written language policies encompassing translation activities reflects a forward-thinking approach to addressing language inequalities within NGOs. Her call for greater recognition of the value of multilingual and inclusive communication, as well as the utilisation of MT, underscores the need for organisations to adapt to the linguistic diversity of the modern world.

In my view, Tesseur's book serves as more than just an academic exploration: it represents a call to action for researchers, translators, and NGO staff alike. As Tesseur aptly states: "As an activist researcher, I see it as my role to become involved in these discussions with INGOs, ask questions, propose ideas and solutions, and push for better recognition of language diversity and the need for translation" (41). In a quote inserted in the book, it is emphasised that "this book serves as an example of T&I research designed to generate non-academic impact," highlighting its potential to inspire real-world change within NGOs and beyond, which is of paramount importance in the discipline of translation studies, in line with the "outward turn" (Bassnett & Johnston, 2019; Vidal Claramonte 2022). In essence, this book is a groundbreaking work that not only advances our understanding of translation policies and practices within NGOs but also advocates for a more inclusive and socially just approach to

language and translation. Tesseur's insightful analysis and impassioned advocacy make this book an essential read for scholars, practitioners, and activists alike, and it is sure to leave a lasting impact on the field of translation studies.

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