

Institutional Multilingualism in NGOs: Amnesty International's Strategic Understanding of Multilingualism

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ABSTRACT

Institutional multilingualism is most often associated with large intergovernmental institutions such as the European Union and the United Nations. Multilingualism in non-governmental organisations (NGOs), however, has remained invisible to a large extent. Yet these organisations have been identified as very powerful in world politics in the globalised 21st century. Like international governmental organisations (IGOs), they operate across linguistic and language borders. This raises the questions if NGOs actually use language and translation in the same way as IGOs. This article examines Amnesty International as a case study and explores what official multilingualism means for this organisation, how it is reflected in its language policy, and how it is put into practice. By gaining insight into the particular case of Amnesty International, this article aims to make a contribution to institutional translation studies.

KEYWORDS

Multilingualism; language policy; institutional translation; NGOs; official languages

1. Introduction

In the globalised world our societies deal with problems that need to be solved across country borders. To deal with these global problems, many international organisations have been established during the twentieth century. Both the number of intergovernmental organisations (IGOs) and that of international non-governmental organisations (NGOs) have increased exponentially. Whereas in 1909 there were 37 intergovernmental organisations (IGOs) and 176 international non-governmental organisations (NGOs), the Yearbook of International Organisations 1999-2000 already counted 23,325 NGOs and 5,170 IGOs (Cronin 2003: 109; Pym 2001). The increase in global institutional structures is often seen as a visual realisation of globalisation. Most of these organisations have an effect not just on a nation, but on the world, and thus they are powerful and important providers and users of information (Cronin 2003: 109). Power is exercised through language use and by making strategic choices about what information to make available in which languages. It is here where the importance of translation comes in. Governments and organisations regulate people's access to or exclusion from public life and services by means of translation policies (Meylaerts 2012: 165).

Multilingualism in organisations is a common phenomenon in today's global world. The European Union and the United Nations are well-known examples. Their multilingual policies and translation and interpreting practices have been studied from a variety of perspectives. Arzoz (2008), for example, addresses the challenge of respecting linguistic diversity in the EU from sociolinguistic and sociological perspectives, as well as discussing legal aspects. Duchêne (2008) focuses on the construction of linguistic minorities by the United Nations, basing himself on a thorough survey of the UN archives. In Translation Studies, Tosi (2003) looks at

multilingualism from a translation point of view, addressing the relationship between multilingual translation and the phenomenon of languages in contact in the European Union. Baigorri-Jalón (2004) traces the history of interpreting at the United Nations, based on original documents and oral testimonies. Other studies present a more contemporary and an insider's view of translation practices at these institutions. Wagner, Bech, and Martínez (2002) discusses the roles of the different EU institutions and their translation services, and other practical issues such as what the day-to-day job of a translator involves and how to become an EU translator. Cao and Zhao (2008) describes and discusses linguistic and institutional features of UN translation, arguing that translation for the UN is a specialized activity. From an ethnographical and anthropological point of view, Koskinen (2011) argues that the European Commission has a culture of its own, in which translators are mediators between the EU culture and their own national culture.

Research on translation policies and practices at NGOs has attracted far less attention, even though there are around five times as many international NGOs as IGOs, as the numbers presented above illustrate. However, research that has been carried out on IGOs cannot be taken as representing all types of international organisations. The question of what official multilingualism means for an NGO is highly relevant. As pointed out by Cronin (2009), the human rights NGO Amnesty International is also has foundational multilingualism as a feature of its internal organisation, just as the EU, but what does this mean in practice? Are concepts such as multilingualism and official languages used in the same way by these organisations, which are very different in their function and historical background? NGOs also often work with volunteers instead of having in-house translators. This raises questions concerning translation ethics and activism (e.g. to what extent do translators identify with the organisation they are working for?), as well as on translation quality, consistency, deadlines and the use of translation guidelines (cf. Pym 2012).

The present article looks at how multilingualism is defined by NGOs and IGOs, and how the concepts of multilingualism and official and working languages are used in policy documents. After briefly pursuing the historical foundations of a number of international organisations, I focus on multilingualism and translation at one NGO in particular, namely Amnesty International. I demonstrate how the NGO has come to attach more importance to multilingualism and translation over the years in light of movement growth and impact. Attention is paid to how language is used as a strategic tool on its own, and how recent developments affect the organisation of translation at Amnesty.

The article is part of an ongoing doctoral research project on translation services at Amnesty International and contributes to sociological approaches to translation, where the focus is on the institutional context and on the translators. My doctoral research project uses a three-level design of studying the institutional framework, studying the translators, and studying the translated documents, held together by an overall ethnographical framework (cf. Koskinen, 2008). The current article focuses on the institutional framework of Amnesty, looking at various policy document and guidelines to trace how Amnesty's multilingualism and language policies developed over the years, and how these policies are put into practice today. Data for the doctoral research was collected during fieldwork at three Amnesty offices: Amnesty International Vlaanderen (AIVL), Amnesty International Language Resource Centre Head Office Madrid (AILRC-ES), and Amnesty International Language Resource Centre Paris (AILRS-FR). The data used in this article mainly consists of internal policy documents and additional information collected through interviews with translators and other Amnesty staff members. However, interview data is kept to a minimum in the current article, as the focus is on the institutional framework as expressed in Amnesty's policy documents rather than on the

translators themselves. The descriptive approach used here combines findings from fieldwork and policy documents with concepts from Translation Studies.

2. Multilingualism and official and working languages in international organisations

2.1. Multilingualism and official language use

Multilingualism, generally understood as the co-presence of two or more languages, is not only a feature of society but also of many private and public institutions (Meylaerts 2010: 227). Well-known examples of official multilingual institutions are the European Union (EU) and the United Nations (UN), where multilingualism is built into the foundational charters by referring to official languages of the organisation. Making a language official can mean different things. It may relate to the use in public space, or to the use of languages in official documents, for example. Also, declaring a language official does not guarantee it will be practiced, or that other languages will not be used (Shohamy 2006: 61). Degrees to which official language use is implemented may differ from organisation to organisation. Pym (2008: 8) identifies three types of strategies for cross-cultural communication within international non-profit organisations: (1) language learning, where an institution has one or two official languages and speakers of other languages are obliged to learn and operate in them. Examples of institutions which apply these strategy are the OECD or NATO; (2) multilateral translation, where all languages are translated into all other languages, as happens in the EU; and (3) translation from a central language, where multilingual ideals are reduced by introducing a division between internal communication performed in one or two working languages, and translation used for communication with the “client cultures”. Pym (2008: 9) argues that this third type of strategy “would seem to be the trend not only of international non-profit institutions such as we find them, but also of most multinational marketing”. However, he points out that the strategy is also often used by large institutions that claim to have a multilingual policy, such as the EU (Pym 2008: 9). I will here discuss how official language use is implemented in the EU, the UN and in Amnesty International. In addition, some elements of internal communication at Oxfam will be touched on. I will look at how these organisations understand official language use, how they implement the use of working languages and how this affects the working environment.

2.2. Official and working languages in IGOs

The constituent Charter of the United Nations was drawn up in five languages in 1945 (Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish), with the five texts considered as equally authentic.¹ The UN's General Assembly recognised these five languages as the organisation's official languages, with French and English as the working languages, in 1946.² The UN's multilingual policies have gradually changed over time. In 1948 Spanish was added as a third working language, and in 1968 Russian was added as a working language of the General Assembly, meaning that all official languages except Chinese were at that time working languages. In 1973, the General Assembly decided to make Chinese a working language as well, and to add Arabic as both an official and working language. The distinction between official and working language was abolished by the General Assembly in 1983, creating an equal status for the six languages.³ Other UN bodies also implemented this language policy over time. Both the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council use the six languages as official and working languages. The UN's Secretariat, however, only uses English and French as working languages.⁴

The use of six working languages in the different bodies has especially consequences for formal meetings. At the time when the General Assembly used only English and French as working languages, speeches at meetings were delivered in any of the other official languages, but would only be interpreted into English and French.⁵ In the present situation, however, simultaneous interpreting is provided in any of the other working languages, bringing with it a high increase in interpreting work.⁶ In terms of translation, the decision to use the official languages as working languages in particular UN bodies also has large consequences, even though the working languages of the UN Secretariat are limited to two. These two working languages are used for the drafting of documents (especially English). As they are the main source languages used, knowledge of at least one of them is a prime requirement for UN translators (Cao & Zhao 2008: 43).⁷

EU institutions also use a limited number of working languages in order to keep the amount of translation work manageable. Regulation No 1 that determines the languages to be used by the European Economic Community and dates back to 1958, sets out the official and the working languages of the European Union. At the time, these were Dutch, German, French and Italian, the languages of the six founding Member States (Wagner et al. 2002: 5). The Regulation has been amended several times over the years, adding the official languages of new member states that joined the EU on each occasion. In this way, the principle of equality was also maintained through language. Multilingualism for the EU has become a fundamental principle meaning “equal rights for all languages” and all laws and outgoing documents are thus drafted in all official languages (Wagner et al. 2002: 1). For the EU, “allowing citizens and institutions to understand legal documents and other relevant information in their language is a prerequisite not only for the proper functioning of the institutions but also for the democratic legitimacy of the Union” (Steconci 2010: 154). As such, the institutions of the EU now have 23 official and working languages. However, the working languages, also called “procedural languages”, of the European Commission are limited to English, French and German.⁸ These are the languages in which documents need to be provided before they can be adopted at a meeting. However, there is no legal basis for the use of the concept (Wagner et al. 2002: 10). These procedural languages are also often used for communication between EU staff, again without any formal agreement. Thus a clear distinction can be observed in language use at the formal level, where the mother tongue is used, and the informal level, where staff get by with using English, French, or to a lesser extent, German (Steconci 2010: 147). O’Driscoll (2001: 486) suggests that on the informal level, the use of languages other than English or French in fact symbolises a lack of co-operation and may come across as obstructive. Thus, staff members opt for English and French, showing their willingness to cooperate. In this way, it could be said that the equal status of languages on the formal level in fact contributes to the marginalisation of many of them in everyday use O’Driscoll (2001: 486).

2.3 Official and working languages in NGOs: working languages and discrimination

The use of English as a lingua franca in informal institutional settings can be perceived in many international organisations. In the context of NGOs that are fighting for human rights and equality, such a language use is in fact contradictory with many of these organisations’ core values and can be conceived as limiting and even discriminating.

A study on the role of language in international communications at Oxfam showed that many employees find the priority that given to English within Oxfam limiting to their careers (Lehtovaara 2009). Although Oxfam has four official languages (English, French, Portuguese and Spanish), many employees indicated that they feel the four languages are not operating equally and priority is given to English. Oxfam’s headquarters primarily uses English and

translations often become available at a later point in time, or not at all (Lehtovaara 2009: 93). The primary use of English can be explained by the fact that it was Oxfam's only official language until 1991. At this time, the organisation decided its communication strategy should reflect the diversity of the organisation, taking into account differences and embracing them. Employees that took part in Lehtovaara's study (2009) indicated that they feel Oxfam has taken steps to become more linguistically diverse, but that there are still many areas that need improvement. The fact that the Oxfam headquarters keeps communicating in mainly English is perceived as discriminating to some employees, as it means you can only apply to an international post if you know English (Lehtovaara 2009: 87).

This feeling of discrimination due to a focus on English in the head office is also present in Amnesty International. Although Amnesty as well has four official languages (Arabic, English, French and Spanish), its International Secretariat (IS) in London uses English as its working language. This results in a largely English-speaking and UK staff at the IS, although the organisation presents itself as global, like Oxfam. Non-native speakers who are competent enough in English to first of all move to London to work at the IS and to master a large and complex literature in English are also rarely from the poorer classes in their own countries, thus not giving equal chances to people from different backgrounds, cultures and social classes (Hopgood 2006: 176). The English and UK bias also implies a negative influence on Amnesty's work. As the International Secretariat is the place where most research is carried out (whereas national sections are responsible for campaigning), the consequence of such an English bias is that most of the researchers do not actually speak the local languages of the areas they are researching, as they are often from the UK instead of from the geographical areas under study (Hopgood 2006: 132). This is also due to Amnesty's Work On Own Country rule (WOOC) that prohibits researchers to work on their own country for neutrality reasons. WOOC thus makes chances of attracting grassroots activists who are more likely to be poor relatively small. Instead, Amnesty attracts most often members of a small educated urban elite, who are Westernised to a great extent and have a good command of English (Hopgood 2006: 174). The focus on English is also limiting in terms of Amnesty's international membership. Amnesty has remained a very white organisation in terms of both members and staff throughout the years. In recent years, the organisation has increased efforts in order to gain more international members, especially in the global east and south (Hopgood 2006: 161). As will be discussed below, Amnesty's language strategy has become an integrated part of these efforts.

2.4 Strategic language use and communication

The previous sections have demonstrated that multilingual language use in NGOs and IGOs has similarities on a general level, with both types of organisations selecting a number of official languages whereas reducing the amount of internal translation by also using "working language". However, the definition of the concept of "working language" is not clear. This is because organisations often want to maintain the principle of language equality in their official policy documents, while a large amount of "working languages" is not feasible in practice.

However, when looking beyond the general level, communication strategies used by NGOs and IGOs appear to be quite different. These differences are the result of the different foundations and functions of IGOs and NGOs. The symbolic language use of IGOs goes to much greater length than the implementation of official language use at NGOs like Oxfam and Amnesty International. As has been pointed out, both these NGOs have four official languages, but nevertheless their headquarters mainly work in English, bringing with it issues of inequality and discrimination within the organisation. That NGOs nevertheless opt to work with only a small number of official languages is related to the limited funds they have available for

translation. Thus, their translation services are more tuned to their actual needs, creating a much more strategic use of language and translation (cf. Pym 2001). The importance for NGOs of strategic communication and language use has been demonstrated by research in media and communication studies. These studies have shown that as the number of NGOs has increased considerably, many aid organisations now co-exist and in fact compete for media attention and donor funds (Cottle & Nolan, 2007: 863). Their communication strategies have developed and changed over the years in order to answer to the news media's call for faster news and a preference for regionalised news angles. For NGOs, disseminating their message through the news media remains crucial to maintain a high public profile and to reach potential donors and activists. As such, the translation policies and strategies of NGOs are highly related to their communication and growth strategy. In what follows, I will look at Amnesty's interpretation of multilingualism and official language translation in relation to these issues. It sheds light on how Amnesty's language policy and strategy have evolved over the years in light of their goal to increase the organisation's impact and to grow globally.

3. Amnesty International and multilingualism

3.1. The early years

Amnesty's roots go back to 1961, when the British lawyer Peter Benenson published an article in *The Observer* about prisoners of conscience. Benenson was outraged after learning about the fate of two Portuguese students who were imprisoned for raising a toast to freedom. Benenson's article "Forgotten Prisoners" (28 May 1961) launched the "Appeal for Amnesty 1961", a worldwide campaign that provoked great response.⁹ What began as a modest campaign grew quickly into an international phenomenon, with participants all over Europe responding by forming groups and resonating the values and aspirations Benenson addressed (Wong 2012: 88). The first international meeting was organised in July 1961, with participants from Belgium, the UK, France, Germany, Ireland, Switzerland and the USA. Here it was decided that Amnesty would be established as a "permanent international movement in defence of freedom of opinion and religion".¹⁰ Soon after, Benenson opened an office and library in London, which would later become the International Secretariat (IS), Amnesty's headquarters to this day. As discussed above, the London-based central unit has far-reaching consequences for multiculturalism and multilingualism within Amnesty, causing an unintentional focus on the use of English and a bias towards English-speaking and UK staff.

During the first few years the ideas and principles of Amnesty were received best in northern Europe, with groups and national sections opening up in Britain, Sweden, Germany, Norway, the Netherlands and Denmark (soon followed by Austria, Belgium and France), and in mainly English-speaking countries such as Australia, New Zealand, the United States and Canada (Hopgood 2006: 56). Amnesty's awareness of the centrality of language can be perceived in this early stage in the composition of a five-man International Executive formed in 1963, where each of the members was selected to represent a particular language or language group (English, Scandinavian, German, Flemish-Dutch, and French), instead of a country (Hopgood 2006: 69).

Nevertheless, it took until 1974 for Amnesty to recognise the importance of communication in other languages than English. Amnesty's 1974 ICM called for publishing all important information in at least English, French and Spanish, whereas the 1975 ICM adopted a major statement on development and multilingualism, identifying links between the two.¹¹ These two decisions paved the road for important changes to Amnesty's language and

translation services. Documents generated at Amnesty's headquarters are drafted in English, and thus translation services for French and Spanish were set up at the IS. The initial choice to start translating into these languages was based on the expectation that Amnesty would grow considerably in Latin America and Africa. French and Spanish also covered many of the already existing Amnesty sections at the time (Interview #2, 18 May 2012).¹² However, three of these official languages are European, and the countries Amnesty targets worldwide use many more languages. Thus, at the 1977 ICM, a core program for multilingualism was adopted, with not only a budget for French and Spanish translation, but also for language-related work in South Asia and Africa, and a general IS translation fund; and in 1985, the ICM voted to add Arabic to Amnesty's official languages. In the same year, the translation services for French and Spanish at the IS were partly moved to two Decentralised Units for French and Spanish translation, Editorial Amnistia Internacional (EDAI) in Madrid, and Editions Francophones d'Amnesty International (EFAI) in Paris. Finally in 1997, the translation services for French and Spanish at the IS would be disestablished and moved to the Decentralised Units completely.

It took until 1987 for Amnesty to document its language policy, after the internal Committee of Long term Organization and Development (CLOD) called for "the development of AI's multilingual and multicultural character" (ORG 52/01/1993).¹³ The language policy identifies English as the movement's working language, while English, French, Spanish and Arabic were identified as the movement's official languages.¹⁴ The focus on multilingualism and multiculturalism remains pertinent throughout the years. The 1989 ICM identifies development and multilingualism as super-priorities, which lead to the decision to establish regional language programs for Portuguese and Asian languages, and to allocate the Arabic translation service ARABAI its own budget. ARABAI was set up as a Decentralised Unit in 1991 (first in Egypt, later in Cyprus), although it was relocated to the IS in 2000, mainly because of high operating costs (Interview #12, 20 June 2013). The Arabic language service is nowadays still part of the IS, although discussions on whether ARABAI should be re-established have continued for years.

3.2. From language policy to strategy: language as a strategic tool for increasing impact and growth

After Amnesty documented its language policy in 1987, the organisation soon started working on developing a language strategy as well. Whereas the language policy set out general principles of language use, the strategy was developed as a response to the organisation's need for adequate tools to communicate and maximise the impact of its message and thus on human rights changes. In order to better understand the need for this language strategy, it is insightful to look at Amnesty on a more general level and to consider its vision and mission and the ways in which these can be achieved in a globalised world. In its official statute, Amnesty defines itself as follows:

Amnesty International's vision is of a world in which every person enjoys all of the human rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international human rights instruments. In pursuit of this vision, Amnesty International's mission is to undertake research and action focused on preventing and ending grave abuses of these rights.¹⁵

Amnesty's work thus consists of two main elements: (1) to research facts of individual cases and patterns of human rights abuses; and (2) to address governments, international organisations, armed political groups, companies and other non-state actors to stop these abuses. To have a positive impact on human right, it is essential for Amnesty to maintain a high public profile, thus increasing general awareness of human rights abuses and public pressure

on governments, but also increasing its number of activists, campaigners and donor funds. The larger the movement, the more pressure it is able to exert on governments and other organisations. It is therefore essential that Amnesty continues to grow, especially in the geographical areas where it does not yet have a large number of activists or is not present at all.

In light of this, the 1993 ICM identified the need for a new international language policy that would cover all the language programs: the IS, the translation and publication units, and any other Amnesty structures with specific attention for those countries and regions that were not covered by existing language programs at the time. In light of this decision, Amnesty's existing language policy and language programs were reviewed around this period as well. The new policy, which would result from this review, needed to clarify the existing conceptual framework of the language policy, which was often unclear or inadequate in relation to the needs of Amnesty. For example, the definitions and roles of "official languages" and "working languages" were unclear, leading to a production of materials in the official languages that are not proportionate to the actual needs and capacity (ORG 33/01/1994). Amnesty emphasised that messages needed to be spread to a wider public, not just users of the four official languages, and thus a redefinition of the different language roles was needed. Therefore, Amnesty decided to replace the use of "official language" by that of "core language", which was defined as "a major international language shared by several countries and used by Amnesty for communication with governments, and interpretation and documentation for international meetings" (ORG 33/01/1994).¹⁶

The change in terminology marked the start of a different and much more strategic use of language and translation, and a strategic interpretation of multilingualism. By using "official language", the understanding was generated that the organisation was committed to and responsible for the production of most external and internal materials in official languages, with the same budget allotted to all these four languages (ORG 33/01/1994). By the time of the language review 1991/1993, Amnesty had come to realise there is no need to translate all documents into all of the four languages, and that budget also needed to be allotted to translation into other languages. The use of "core language" fitted this approach, answering better to the organisation's needs and capacity. The decision also indicates Amnesty's awareness of the consequences of using particular terminology. As described above, Oxfam also uses four official languages, yet many staff members feel the four languages do not operate equally and that their use causes issues and inequality instead of improving communication. Yet the overall majority of staff agreed that Oxfam should continue to have four "corporate" languages, regardless if they are equal or not (Lehtovaara, 2009: 82). Amnesty attempts to by-pass this confusion by changing its terminology, an act that would be repeated a few years later when "core language" is substituted with "strategic language", as will be discussed below.

In line with the strategic approach that aimed to make available materials in more languages, a Portuguese and Asian Language Program were established, and the IS provided ongoing funding of translation services for non-core languages, mostly for external documents.¹⁷ However, this funding was limited and sections had to rely on their own resources for most of their translation needs. This resulted in diverging translation practices along the various sections, with little or no communication on these practices among the sections or between the IS and the sections. Whereas translation into the "core languages" was highly controlled and regulated by the IS and its related Decentralised translation Units, translation into non-core languages was decided on by the sections, often working with volunteers, and thus not guaranteeing movement-wide quality control or terminology consistency.

Although the "core languages" are still the main international languages that Amnesty uses, the terminology changed again in light of the language policy and strategy approved in 2007. The 2007 language strategy is highly focused on using language as a tool for increasing

the growth and impact of Amnesty in order to remain significant in the 21st century. Its main challenge is described as “to strengthen Amnesty’s impact in a multilingual world alongside finite human and financial resources”. Under this language strategy, translation becomes an integral part of the communication strategy rather than an afterthought, which entails considering what is the appropriate source language, and producing materials in a style that is clear and easy to read. In fact, a major resolution of the new language policy and strategy is the decision to translate into and from more languages. To make clear distinctions between the languages, the concepts of “core” and “non-core” languages are replaced by “strategic” and “tactical” languages. The reason for this is that “under the core language structure historically important languages absorb the majority of AI’s language resources” (ORG 50/007/2007). Resources should be made available for translation into more languages, which would be determined on the basis of a list of criteria and identified as a strategic or tactical language. The language strategy states that a language is considered as strategic when investing in that language for a substantial period of time (for example six years) would maximise Amnesty’s impact on human rights, its democracy and its growth; whereas a tactical language is considered as such as investing in that language would maximise the impact of a specific Amnesty human rights or growth project, and the language would thus be used for the duration of the project.

With this new terminology, Amnesty for the first time distinguishes between the four languages that had been used for years as “official” or “core” languages. Whereas English, French and Spanish are considered as the movement’s strategic languages, Arabic is at that time identified as a tactical language, meaning that only documents that target an Arabic speaking audience are translated for growth or campaigns, but that governance documents are not translated into Arabic as a matter of routine (ORG 33/001/2008). By making this distinction, the unclear definition of “official languages” is done away with, and it becomes clear that multilingualism within Amnesty is interpreted differently than at many IGOs. Amnesty has moved away from a use of language that was originally relatively close to IGOs by implementing official institutional languages and one working language, to a use of language and translation that is much more strategic and designed to increase the organisation’s impact and growth.

3.3. Being global and local: “One Amnesty” and “Moving closer to the ground”

The strategic use of language goes hand in hand with not only a communication strategy in general that is designed to fit a global world, but also by adapting the structure of the organisation itself. Already during the late 1980s and early 1990s, when Amnesty decentralised the French and Spanish translation units and established the Portuguese and Asian Language Programs, Amnesty made a clear move towards decentralising the language services. The organisation aimed at a pluralist approach, where sections and decentralised units “need not only to translate but also to adapt and to create materials suitable to their own languages and cultures”. At the same time, the organisation stresses that it needs to think carefully “about the ways in which we project the image of AI” (ORG 33/01/1994). These considerations announce the profound changes that are implemented during the 21st century, in order to adapt the organisation to a globalised world in which news spreads ever faster and the field of NGOs becomes increasingly crowded and competitive. In such a world, providing regionalised news packages that are customer-tailored and that come from a clearly profiled or “branded” organisation is pertinent in order for Amnesty, or for any other NGO, to maintain and increase impact on human rights (cf. Cottle, 2009).

In order to strengthen the organisation and to make sure Amnesty remains a significant human rights organisation in the 21st century, the movement identifies a number of key

operational areas in its 2011 growth strategy: (1) funding mechanisms; (2) language, communication and identity; (3) transparency and accountability; and (4) placing resources closer to the ground (ORG 30/002/2011). In term of translation and multilingualism, it is especially areas (2) and (4) that are of importance. For communication, identity and language, the growth strategy stresses the need of taking into account the local context, and thus encourages sections to adapt documents to their needs: communication needs to be “in the most appropriate language and format, and available across a range of platforms” (ORG 30/002/2011). This is in line with the tendency over the previous years to decentralise translation services and the encouragement mentioned earlier for sections and decentralised units to not only translate but also to *adapt* materials to their own languages and cultures.

Tesseur (2013, forthcoming) looks at what consequences such a regionalised approach has on translation, and what “adaptation” means in the context of media documents for Amnesty International. The study looks at the translation of an Amnesty press release from a textual as well as an institutional point of view, and compares translation practices and output from AILRC-FR, AILRC-ES, AI Belgique Francophone, AIVL, and AI The Netherlands. It demonstrates that different translation strategies are applied in different languages and sections, which leads to discrepancies in the message of the different language versions of a press release that the various sections issue. Whereas AILRC-ES and AILRC-FR create translations that are consistent to the original, their translations are in their turn localised by the sections using them, such as AI France and AI Spain. Furthermore, the study demonstrates that AI The Netherlands and AIVL, sections that have to cater for their own translation work, adapt the press releases to their localised audiences to a higher degree.

These differing practices on the level of media work are first of all a consequence of how translation at Amnesty is regulated, with small non-core or non-tactical languages like Dutch having to provide for their own translation work. But it is also a consequence of Amnesty’s encouragement to national sections to adapt material, as part of its tendency towards decentralisation that is to be found on a much more general level than only in the language services. For years, the International Secretariat has been the heart of the organisation, with the permanent professional staff and especially the researchers holding much of the decision-making power (Hopgood, 2006: 83). It is the IS that centralises research functions, whereas campaigning and action are decentralised and take place on the local level (cf. Wong, 2012). However, to get researchers in closer contact with the geographical areas they are researching, and to enable rights-holders to have easier access to the organisation, Amnesty has started to implement a “move closer to the ground” from 2013 onwards. As part of this, functions and staff of the IS are moved to several hub-offices around the world, including Johannesburg, Dakar, Nairobi, Hong Kong, Mexico City and Bangkok. This allows Amnesty to respond quickly to local developments, and to give local Amnesty offices and structures a faster and more qualitative support service.¹⁸ In addition to the regional hubs, Amnesty has created a number of “Centres of Expertise”, among them the Language Resource Centre (AILRC, see 3.5. for a detailed discussion). All these changes are part of the vision of “One Amnesty”, which strongly reaffirms the global nature of Amnesty and the need for more coordination and collaboration. It aims to make the organisation a truly global one on different levels. Next to the “move closer to the ground”, great efforts are made to also integrate the financial level of the organisation, and a Global Communications Strategy has been developed consisting of six sub-strategies, one of which is the language strategy.¹⁹

For multilingualism and translation, the decentralised structure developed as part of the moving to the ground initiative has two large consequences. As explained by AILRC’s Director (Interview #3, 22 May 2012), materials produced locally will be generated in other languages than English. For translation, this could mean two things: either Amnesty starts translating from

these languages into English, or Amnesty accepts that some content is produced in other languages and is not translated at all. The second consequence is for Amnesty's approval system. This needs to become more flexible. The following quote from AILRC's Director provides more context.

You know approving something in Amnesty is very difficult, because Amnesty needs to be really careful and completely sure that something is accurate and, and the approval system is a nightmare (...) Until something is produced and is finally approved, maybe just one page of paper needs to be read by ten different people, and then these ten different people will add some modifications (...) At the moment, everything is approved in English, so everything that is not done in English needs to be translated into English, needs to be approved in English, and then it needs to be back-translated into that language. This is the line of work. But one of the things that we are trying to implement is that, let's not approve everything in English. I mean, if something is generated in French or in Spanish, there should be someone able to say: okay, this content is correct, and I'm approving it in French, in Spanish, or Chinese (Interview #3, 22 May 2012).

These practices bring about the need for strong language and translation support throughout the movement. It is exactly here that the Language Resource Centre, which was officially established in January 2011, offers help. In the following sections I will look at how translation services are organised in the context of the AILRC.

3.4. The language policy and strategy put into practice

As the movement is going through profound changes, it is difficult to provide an accurate picture of how translation work is done at the moment at Amnesty. Since the establishment of the AILRC, many changes have been implemented, and the AILRC and other translation services are still changing continuously. Figure 1 presents an organisational chart of what the structure of the translation services looked like before the 2007 language strategy started to be implemented. The figure presents three different groups of languages and thus different translation services: the core languages and their translation service, which were set up by the IS, and the non-core languages, divided in "large" and "small" languages.

FIGURE 1

Organisation of translation services at Amnesty International before 2011

<insert META Tesseur_figure 1.jpeg>

The translation services provided for core vs. non-core languages under this structure were very different, and this remains as such to a large extent today. This is especially the case for small non-core languages, where sections mainly need to cater for their own translation needs. IS programs sometimes commission translation into small non-core languages for specific reports or issues, e.g. a report on Haiti is likely to be translated not only into French, but also into Creole (ORG 33/001/2005). Although the new structure under the AILRC is meant to support these small sections with their translation work, it will take time before such support can actually be offered, thus even at the moment all other translation work into small non-core languages is the responsibility of local sections and structures. Frequently there are no distribution plans or funds available, and translation in such cases is a key activity for staff and volunteers, as is the case for translation into Dutch at Amnesty International Vlaanderen (AIVL). For AIVL and for AI Netherlands, the need for translation is limited as the average Dutch speaker has a good knowledge of English, and so staff members do not require translations of internal documents. The Flemish and the Dutch sections hardly cooperate for translation as they have different priorities in terms of campaigning and action. Regional

language differences make shared translation less straightforward, although it could be argued that this would also be the case for French and Spanish translations shared with different countries. However, the non-need for translation of AI The Netherlands goes further than that of AIVL: whereas the Flemish section works with volunteer translators to translate Amnesty's Urgent Actions, the Dutch section does not translate these texts at all and uploads them in English on their website (cf. Tesseur 2013, forthcoming).²⁰

For large non-core languages, the IS offers more support. As mentioned above, Amnesty created a Portuguese and Asian Language Program through the years, both of which are largely funded by the IS, although through different structures. Next to this, there also exist distinct arrangements for Chinese, Russian and German. German-speaking countries for example have joined forces to organise a translation service, which is based in Munich (Interview #3, 22 May 2012). There is no harmonisation between these structures in terms of funding, selection criteria, or translation resources. In the Portuguese Language Program (PLP), it is the Portuguese section and the IS Americas Program that decide what to translate, although they often disagree as they have different priorities. In contrast, for Asian languages, regional sections and structures apply for the translation to the ALP service, and the IS Publications Program also undertakes some translation work into Asian languages on a random basis. Although most of the translation work at Amnesty is done *from* English, translation of local materials *into* English is also encouraged under the ALP. The most important guidelines for the ALP is that the translation undertaken reflects Amnesty's commitment to grow in reach and impact by supporting requests from countries with no sections that are considered high priority for research, action and growth (ORG 33/001/2005).

Even for translation into the core languages there were great organisational differences under this structure, for instance in the use of translation tools and guidelines. In terms of funding, EDAI and EFAI were mainly self-financed, whereas the Arabic translation team, operating from the IS in London, was financed by the IS. Translation into these three "core" languages was, and still is under the new AILRC structure, mainly done by professional translators, thus heavily contrasting with translation practices for small non-core languages. Naturally, this enhances differences in terms of translation quality, speed and consistency of terminology. Under the structure of core vs. non-core languages, translation services of different languages rarely cooperated or exchanged best practices. It is in these areas that the AILRC aims to make improvements.

3.5. The Language Resource Centre

Of key importance to implement the language strategy as part of One Amnesty in a successful way is to increase cooperation between sections and translation teams, and to liaise working procedures (ORG 33/002/2010). As demonstrated above, cooperation between different language services was limited before the establishment of the AILRC. The IS's knowledge of what sections are actually doing in terms of translation is highly limited, and thus one of the main tasks of the AILRC is to collect information on translation practices of the various sections.

The term *Centre* can be somewhat misleading: the structure of the AILRC should rather be understood as a virtual network operated from different locations. The AILRC Director is located at the EDAI premises, renamed AILRC-ES from 2011 onwards. This office also functions as the AILRC's head office. Rooted in the One Amnesty approach, AILRC aims to integrate all of the existing language teams and to create a single, tangible team of specialists, grouping language functions together under the same umbrella and coordinating their activities through the movement. Thus, the Centre's structure is based on functions rather than on

geographical locations (ORG 33/002/2010). For example, instead of having a person in charge of terminology in each office for each individual language, the centre appoints one terminology manager. The Centre faces a number of challenges, amongst them the demands to expand the language service on a tight budget and to invest less in the traditional language services to fund the One Amnesty priorities, and to embed the language strategy in the new structure of decentralised hub offices. Figure 2 presents what the LRC's organisation structure looked like in 2012, representing the language services that had been incorporated into the LRC at that time.

FIGURE 2

Organisation structure of AILRC (2012)²¹

<insert META Tesseur_Figure 2.jpg>

As pointed out above, one of the main challenges of the LRC is to liaise working procedures between the different services. Indeed, as represented in this structure, a reasonable expectation is that the services would maintain the same translation practices and procedures to a great extent. However, this is not the case, as the units developed separately from each other and grew quite organically. For example, AILRC-FR and AILRC-ES use different translation tools. This goes back to decisions made on the basis of particular needs that were felt in the separate units. Whereas EFAI found that texts contained many repetitions and their translation work would benefit from using a translation memory, EDAI started using a terminology tool before using a translation memory. EFAI chose to work with WordFast, since it answered to a number of criteria (such as easy use and great compatibility with other tools) and the tool provider agreed to offer a number of free licenses given the nature of Amnesty's work. EDAI, however, started by using MultiTerm, the tool that best answered to its needs at the time, and logically moved on to use Trados when it felt the need to start using a translation memory in 2010.²² This issue shows how the units have developed separately from each other and each unit has its own way of working. Naturally, this is one of the many problems that the AILRC is facing at the moment. It will take considerable time and effort before the Centre succeeds in liaising the main working procedures, let alone to provide support to small translating languages such as Dutch. More time, effort and resources are needed to exploit the possibilities of language and translation as strategic tools to increase Amnesty's impact and success.

4. Conclusion

This article has demonstrated that whereas IGOs and NGOs may both have official multilingualism built into their language policies, the ways in which this multilingualism is put into practice can differ greatly. It has looked at how multilingualism is defined by both types of organisations, and how the concepts of official and working languages are used in policy documents. By exploring Amnesty International as a case study, it has been shown that language at this particular NGO is used as a strategic tool to increase the organisation's impact and growth, rather than as a symbolic tool to express equality. Using internal policy documents and data from fieldwork, the article has mainly focused on the institutional framework of multilingualism. It has looked at how it has been put into practice for Amnesty's "official" or "strategic" languages, and has also briefly looked at the implications for a non-strategic and small language. Further research will explore how the changes in the language strategy at Amnesty International influence the status attached to translation throughout the organisation. As language and translation have become a central part of Amnesty's growth strategy, the expectation is that the status will have increased as well. Lastly, the present article has used

Amnesty International as a case study, yet further research could explore whether the translation practices here described can in fact also be observed at other NGOs.

NOTES

1. <<http://www.un.org/en/documents/charter/chapter19.shtml>>, visited on June 5, 2013.
2. <<http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/RESOLUTION/GEN/NR0/032/53/IMG/NR003253.pdf?OpenElement>>, visited on June 5, 2013.
3. <<http://www.un.org/documents/ga/res/35/a35r219e.pdf>>, visited on June 5, 2013.
4. <<http://www.un.org/en/aboutun/languages.shtml>>, visited on June 5, 2013.
5. <<http://www.unlanguage.org/Careers/Interpret/COV/Languages/default.aspx>>, visited on June 5, 2013.
6. <<http://www.un.org/en/aboutun/languages.shtml>>, visited on June 5, 2013.
7. Arabic, French, Russian and Spanish translators are required to have excellent knowledge of at least two other official languages. English translators must also have excellent knowledge of at least two other official languages, one of which must be French. Chinese translators must have excellent knowledge of English; knowledge of an additional official language is desirable.
8. <http://ec.europa.eu/languages/languages-of-europe/eu-languages_en.htm>, visited on June 5, 2013.
9. <<http://www.amnesty.org/en/who-we-are/history>>, visited on June 5, 2013.
10. <<http://www.amnesty.org/en/who-we-are/history>>, visited on June 5, 2013.
11. The information on early Amnesty's early language-related decisions and policies stems from the more recent AI internal document with reference number ORG 33/001/2005. Documents older than 1993 are only to be consulted in the archives. The present research data consists of document from 1993 onwards, of which electronic versions are available on the intranet and that could thus be consulted during fieldwork at the three sections AIVL, AILRC-ES and AILRC-FR.
12. For ethical reasons, interview data has been anonymised, unless the interviewee has given permission for their name or function to be used in publications.
13. All Amnesty documents have a unique index number, which is used for source indication in the text.
14. Amnesty's Language Policy was documented in ORG 33/001/1987.
15. <<http://www.amnesty.org/en/who-we-are/accountability/statute>>, visited on June 11, 2013.
16. For more information on interpreting services at Amnesty International, see <http://www.nationalnetworkforinterpreting.ac.uk/tasks/importance_of_interpreting/player.html>, visited on June 11, 2013.
17. The Asian Language Program was set up as a temporary program in 1991 and was made permanent by an ICM decision in 1995. The Portuguese Language Program was established in 1994 after a 1993 ICM decision.
18. <www.amnesty.org.uk/uploads/documents/doc_22399.doc>, visited on June 11, 2013, and <<http://www.amnesty.ie/sites/default/files/November%202012%20letter%20to%20Amnesty%20members%20from%20Pietro%20Antonioli.pdf>>, visited on June 11, 2013.
19. The other communication strategies are the media strategy, the digital strategy, and the publishing, news, and knowledge and information strategies, all of which were developed between 2006-2011.
20. Urgent Actions are a type of Amnesty documents that are intended for Amnesty members and encourage the members to write letters to particular political institution to reconsider the faith of certain individuals whose human rights are being threatened.
21. Based on an organisational chart provided by AILRC.
22. Information from personal e-mail correspondence with staff from AILRC-ES and AILRC-FR in October 2013 and June 2014.

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