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5 Towards a Digital Translation Policy

5.1 Introduction

Every human action takes place under constraints, with society as a whole, being the decisive determinant. To avoid confusion and disorder, a certain amount of structure and planning is needed: in this sense, a policy is focused on action, stating what is to be done and by whom; a policy states matters of principle, being an authoritative statement, made by a person or body with the power to do so.

Seen from this perspective, language also resembles a social phenomenon which may be addressed from various angles and disciplines. As such, it is a highly debated issue in society: 'Language issues are raised and considered in connection with cost, effectiveness, the language rights of minority groups, the democratic deficit and the need for a common European identity' (Fischer, 2007: 485). Many components need to be considered when structure and planning should be introduced into the use of languages in society: 'A host of non-linguistic factors (political, demographic, social, religious, cultural, psychological, bureaucratic, and so on) regularly account for any attempt of persons or groups to intervene in the language practices and the beliefs of other persons or group' (Spolsky, 2005: 2153).

Planning the use of language for a certain part of society – be it a minority, a territory, an organization, an institution or a company, requires well-considered rules and regulation, not just for determining the individual and collective use of languages in specific contexts, but also for setting up instructions on how to use the instrument of translation and all things that translation entails, among them translation technology.

The current paper focuses on translation as an integral part of a language policy and tries to sketch the contours of a digital translation policy in the sense of a translation technology policy as an essential component of a translation policy.

5.2 Language Policy

Language policy is a standard topic in linguistics which has seen a wealth of research interest in the 1950s to 1960s. It covers any 'deliberate attempt to change an individual's or community's use of a language or languages or a variety or varieties' (Kennedy, 2011) and was mainly subdivided into status planning and corpus planning. A language policy makes decisions about the status, use, domains, and territories of language(s) and the rights of speakers of the languages in question and, thus, governs mono- or multilingual communication in companies, organizations and institutions, even more

so in a multilingual and multicultural society, where multilingual communication is common place.

There are four basic notions of a language policy as outlined by Spolsky (2006): 1) the division of a language policy into language practices, language beliefs, and ideology, and the explicit policies and plans resulting from language management or planning activities; 2) a language policy is concerned not just with named varieties of language, but with all the individual elements at all levels that make up a language (pronunciation, spelling, lexical choice, grammar, style, and bad language, racist language, obscene language, or correct language); 3) the domain of language policy may be any defined social, political or religious group or community (family, a sports team, neighborhood, village, workplace, organization, city, nation–state or regional alliance); and 4) a language policy functions in a complex ecological relationship among a wide range of linguistic and non-linguistic elements, variables, and factors.

Language has to be dealt with, intuitively or consciously: 'language policy exists even where it has not been made explicit or established by authority' (Spolsky, 2005: 2154). Such an implicit or informal language policy states a de facto standard without any written down rules or regulations, by adhering to covert practices. In most contexts, however, written down rules and regulations do exist and give explicit and formalized instructions on how language is to be used resulting in an explicit de jure language policy.

International organizations tend to limit the number of languages they use actively by choosing a limited number of official languages; supra-regional institutions also try to adhere to the principle of official languages; nation states often wish to guard their national language against the pressure from other language communities; linguistic minorities strive for language equality and preservation of their minority language against a majority language; multinational corporations set up strategic language policies to boost their international revenues, etc.

When a language policy is put in place, it may take the form of different types and outcomes: assimilation, non-intervention, establishment of a predominant official language, official bilingualism, strategic multilingualism, linguistic internationalization depending on the power relation between linguistic communities and the type of community or domain involved.

Multinational companies, for example, set up a strategic orientation with regard to language and culture in terms of ethnocentricity, polycentricity, or geocentricity (van den Born/Peltokorpi, 2010: 99) concepts which describe the degree of homogeneity, control, and local adaptation of business communication decisions. This not only affects marketing and sales, strategic orientation, but also human resource management and return on investment calculus in global companies (van den Born/Peltokorpi, 2010: 100).

A similar model reflecting internationalization and localization practices by global companies was presented by Lockwood (2000: 15) who distinguishes three approaches to global communication strategies: 1) the monarchistic approach with

a strict top-down strategy, more or less following the ethnocentric model; 2) the anarchistic approach, a bottom-up model where all subsidiaries do what they want without any global strategy, similar to the polycentric approach, and 3) the federalist orientation, a mixed model with a central global strategy complemented by local adaptations, mirroring the geocentric approach.

The more linguistically oriented concept of language policy was abandoned by Spolsky in his following book (Spolsky, 2009) in favor of the more pragmatic notion of language management defined as an 'explicit and observable effort by someone or some group that has or claims authority over the participants in the domain to modify their practices or beliefs' (Spolsky, 2009: 4). A domain is 'distinguished by three characteristics' (Spolsky, 2009: 3): participants – social roles and relationships communicating, a location – physical reality of communication, and topic – the reason for speaking or writing. Spolsky lists some domain types, among them are the family domain, the religious domain, the workplace, the public linguistic space, the school domain, courts, hospitals and police, military language management, governments managing language and minority rights.

Translation may occur in all of these domains and it has to be managed or planned in some way. Unfortunately, translation has not been among the topics covered by a traditional language policy, nor is it touched upon by Spolsky's book (2009) on language management. Only recently, research on translation policy stirred the interest of researchers, in spite of it being a necessary component of language policy.

5.3 Translation Policy

In fact, Meylaerts (2009) makes translation policy an indispensable part of a language policy whether it is implicit, in the sense that it is not defined or written down, or explicit, i.e., written down or stated in a regulation: 'there is no language policy without a translation policy' (Meylaerts, 2009).

In the same online video, she defines a translation policy as the 'regulation of translation in official institutions' and applies it to linguistic minorities and their relation to the majority language. Three types may be differentiated according to Meylaerts (2009): 1) institutional monolingualism and non-translation, where translation is, at the same time, prohibited (for the direction from the majority language into the minority language) and obligatory (from the minority into the majority language) since only one language can be used in official documents; 2) institutional monolingualism and occasional translation, where translation is accepted as a granted exception, and 3) institutional multilingualism and multi-directional obligatory translation, which in most cases, is not feasible in strict application or different territorial levels of translation policy are applied.

In a later publication, Meylaerts (2011) extends the concepts of a translation policy to include international bodies as well for which analogous three types are

identified: 1) non-translation or the use of a lingua franca in which case translation is still necessary on a personal level, i.e., institutional non-translation presupposes individual translation; 2) non-translation within the institution combined with translation for communication between the institution and the outside; and 3) multilateral translation when all languages are translated into all other languages.

Based on what has been said before about the general concept of a language policy, we may argue that a translation policy cannot be confined to official institutions and international bodies, it may very well be applied to multinational companies or international organizations as well. The very three types of a translation policy outlined by Meylaerts (2009) may be linked to the localization strategies of global companies, as stated by Lockwood (2000). Basically, all types of domains, according to Spolsky (2009), may be submitted to the management or regulation of translation in one way or another.

In this sense, a translation policy may be characterized by applying Spolsky's features of a language policy: 1) translation can be subdivided into translation practices, beliefs and ideology, and the explicit policies and plans resulting from translation management or planning activities that attempt to modify the practices and ideologies of a group of translators, meaning that, there always is some kind of theoretical address in translation, in the sense of an implicit or explicit statement about what is really done and how it is done; 2) translation policy is concerned not just with named varieties of translation and localization, but also with all the individual elements at all levels that make up translation; it can apply to the lexical choice, style, textual factors, decisional strategies in the sense of what is translated and what is not, and all levels of quality management, assessment, post-editing, etc.; 3) a translation policy operates within a community, of whatever size, be it professional – ethical codes of conduct by professional organizations, training institutions, translation departments – or voluntary translators – like Translators-without-Borders, The Rosetta Foundation, free software translators communities, fan translator communities and many more – or even a given social group like a regional minority or a refugee community, for example; 4) it is determined by a complex ecological relationship among many linguistic and non-linguistic factors and variables: that translation cannot be reduced to a purely linguistic activity that has been discussed in translation studies again and again for the last 40 years, where different influences on translation, such as components from sociology, action theory, information technology, communication studies, as well as cultural theory, have been analyzed.

To clarify the concept of a translation policy, we may apply the set of standard W-questions: who, what, when, where, why, in what way, by what means. This brings us closer to the substance and contents of such a policy.

– *Who* is going to translate? Should there be in-house staff or freelancers? Fundamental issues may be raised by this question, such as: Are multilingual individuals expected to translate, or is professional translation promoted?

Some linguistic minorities opted for the first, arguing that there is no need for professional translators when a proper language education is put in place. International organizations and companies chose professional translation by experience. Another basic question could be: Should domain experts translate or should translation be reserved for trained professional translators? This was and still is the object of intense debates between buyers of translation services and language service providers. Closely related to this, the following question arises: Where are translators coming from? Are there translators training institutions or plans to set them up?, et*c*.

– *What* is going to be translated? What kind of texts are going to be subject to translation according to the status of a text (official or non-official text), according to a specific domain (legal texts), to text types, media types, etc. What languages are translated into what other languages? What are the translation volumes produced by these decisions? And most importantly, what is not translated and what are the reasons for excluding translation in some cases?

– *When* is a text translated? Should translations be available immediately or is there a time gap between the publication of the source text and its translation corresponding to the necessary production time? In localization, the concept of 'simship' or simultaneous shipping of a product describes the synchronized release of a software product in all its language versions at the same time. In a few multilingual settings, different language versions of official texts are produced together by subject specialists and linguists at the same time. A time lag between the publication of the original version of a text and its translation could very well indicate an inferior social role or legal status of the target language; and vice-versa a synchronous multilingual publication could underline the equal status of the language involved.

– *Where* are translations produced? Do central translation offices exist where translation efforts are coordinated and translation resources are shared? Do specific institutions have translation offices that possibly pursue a different translation policy? Are there in-house translators, are freelance translators involved or is translation outsourced to translation agencies? What are the common guidelines and regulations for translation tenders?

– *Why* is something translated? Reasons for translation could be political ideology, minority rights, accessibility of official documentation, etc. This reflects the ideology behind translation as well as the legal and social status of languages.

– *In what way* is translation taking place? This involves translation strategies and methodology, translation management and efficiency, reuse of translations, quality assurance, revealing the overall organization of translation and its workflow.

– *By what means* is translation produced? This concerns, above all, the impact and use of translation technology, especially the use of automatic machine translation systems or semi-automatic translation environments, translation memory systems, multilingual corpus and terminology support for translation.

5.4 Digital Translation Policy

Today, in the age of globalization and after the 'technological turn in translation' (Cronin, 2010), we may say that there is no translation policy without a digital translation policy; i.e., no decisions about translation can be taken without taking into account the digital environment of communication and text production or the influence of digital technology on the production of translation. Translation Technology has become a core concept for modern translation practice and theory. Translators not only need to be proficient in translation technology, but they should master it, individually and as a community: 'In general, the way to advance within the profession usually involves more conceptual control over technology, not less' (Biau Gil/Pym, 2007: 19). Technology dominates the process of translation and 'only when translators are critically aware of the available tools can they hope to be in control of their work' (Biau Gil/Pym, 2007: 19). Translation can only survive as a profession and as an autonomous academic discipline if it integrates technology: 'La definición de un espacio profesional autónomo y digno supone no renunciar a mantener el mayor grado posible de control sobre los procesos de traducción' (Diaz – Fouces, 2011: 10).

The use of technology in translation presupposes planning and management to avoid uncoordinated deployment and usage. This is the task of a digital translation policy, a term which may be paraphrased as a translation technology policy stating the matters of principle on how to deal with translation in a digital environment and what is to be done and by whom. To achieve this, a coordination unit or decisional body on translation technology has to be appointed, if it is not already existing for translation in general, which has the political and administrative power to make authoritative statements.

There may be different degrees of such a decisional authority on translation technology which can be described by the three strategies outlined already for a language policy and a translation policy: the two extreme approaches, either strict regulation from a central coordination representing the top-down, monarchistic approach, or everybody does what she wants representing the bottom-up, anarchistic approach, or the third mixed or federalist approach with some central guidelines in conjunction with limited autonomy.

In analogy to the contents of a translation policy, the decisions a translation technology policy has to deal with may be described by asking the fundamental W-questions.

– *Who* is in charge of translation technology? Where lies the responsibility? With each individual translator, with every translation office, or with a central coordination unit? In addition, who takes care of installation, networking, and servicing of translation technology applications? Again, there is an option of a central coordination unit or a decentralized management.
– *What* digital text formats are dealt with as source and target texts? What kind of translation technology is adopted, MT, TM, etc.?

– *When* is translation technology integrated into the translation workflow? There could be some kind of pre-editing of source texts to adapt them to a particular machine translation system, or post-editing and quality assurance measures applied to target texts.
– *Where* is translation technology installed and made use of? Only in dedicated translation offices, in every administrative office that deals with bi- or multilingual texts?
– *Why* is translation technology used? Why is one kind of application preferred over another? What are the reasons for adopting it in the first place, meaning what are the particular benefits, and what the costs involved?
– *In what way* is translation technology adopted? Are there single desktop applications, one central web interface, etc.? Are commercial solutions or readymade free software applications put in place, or do they develop their own proprietary systems?

The motivation for adopting a translation technology policy corresponds more or less to the reasons for actually using translation technology: increase in productivity, consistency of texts and terminology, streamlining of translation process, exchange of linguistic data. In addition, with a sensible translation technology policy in place, a careful and balanced adoption, application and use of translation technology is possible, thus increasing the benefits mentioned above. Furthermore, a digital translation policy provides the basis for the allocation and distribution of human and financial resources to this purpose.

A well-thought-out digital translation policy also includes evaluation criteria (Gazzola, 2014) to check and monitor the allocation of these resources periodically by carefully weighing the advantages and disadvantages of alternative technology policy options. The two main factors of such an evaluation are efficiency and fairness in the sense of assessing who wins and who loses relatively (Gazzola, 2014: 2).

By having a look at the subdivision of translation technology (Quah, 2006: 42), we may envisage a translation technology policy with three specific sub-domains next to a more general aspect with the integration of translation into a digital workflow of text production and publication: computer-aided translation (CAT) tools policy, automatic or machine translation policy as well as a translation data policy, the first two being already devised by Quah (2006: 42).

5.4.1 Computer Aided Translation (CAT) Policy

A CAT policy encompasses all decisions about the adoption and use of computer-aided translation tools. This includes not only the decision which commercial or open source product is most suitable for the specific environment, but also how the chosen tool is adopted, installed, supported and evaluated. CAT includes translation

memory applications, terminology management and term extraction tools, alignment tools, bilingual digital text corpora applications, quality assurance applications, localization tools, web localization tools – either autonomous or integrated into web content management systems, translation management tools, as well as the adoption of controlled language and standard file formats.

5.4.2 Machine Translation Policy

Machine translation may be adopted in two different ways: as an automatic translation service or in support of human translators. Both ways need careful planning; in the first case, machine translation systems can be customized to the specific requirements and made available to the general public, in the second case, it needs to be integrated into a translation environment tool like a translation memory system. Whichever way machine translation is used, you may choose between different types of systems: rule-based systems, statistical systems or hybrid applications.

Licensing may also play a role in adoption of MT systems: there are commercial systems or open source engines available. One example for the latter worth mentioning is the freely available Moses statistical MT engine developed with the financial support from the European Union; a platform that serves as a basis for many successful machine translation adoptions either out-of-the-box or as a customized system. When customizing a machine translation system, large amounts of bilingual text data are required and decisions are needed as to which text types, domains or languages should be chosen.

There is also a choice between offline and online system installations; there is even the possibility to use a general-purpose online system like Google Translate and integrate into CAT tools.

5.4.3 Translation Data Policy

Big Data has become a buzzword these days in almost all business domains and translation is no exception. Great amounts of linguistic data are produced by translators day by day in the form of translation memories, terminology files or bilingual texts. These data can be leveraged for future translations, thus increasing efficiency and productivity.

In this regard, we may state explicitly that there is no translation technology policy without a translation data policy. Planning and decisions affect the choice of data formats, storage options, licensing and accessibility of data, etc.

Reuse of linguistic data and dissemination of translations affect particularly Public Service Translation since this kind of translation aims at making texts accessible

to minorities and smaller cultural groups; free access to these data facilitates new translations.

5.5 Conclusion

Speaking of translation technology, Diaz-Fouces (2011) postulates an integration of technology in all translation courses and says that 'esa transversalidad debería complementarse necesariamente con una apertura a la pluralidad de opciones, que lleva aparejada una imprescindible formación en criterios para elegir' (Diaz–Fouces, 2011: 14) (these transversal skills must necessarily be complemented by an opening up to the plurality of options which necessarily entails teaching selection criteria). This not only applies to translator training, but as well to translation practice in general. A policy is precisely about weighing different options by applying appropriate criteria, and the integration of such transversal decisional skills into translators training would not only complement the curricula, but introduce badly needed managerial or executive functions for translators as well. A translator with an academic background and a university diploma should have all necessary skills to be able to make autonomous and well-founded decisions regarding the use of translation technology.

Planning the use of translation technology is a necessity in all cases where translation fulfills a social function and more people are involved in translation. Translation technology has become rather complex and, thus, successful adoption demands careful consideration in each of the three subfields mentioned above. Once in place, translation technology must be monitored and evaluated periodically.

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