The Quality of Mercy: A corpus-based analysis of the quality of volunteer translations for non-profit organizations (NPOs)

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ABSTRACT

This paper summarizes the results of a wider exploratory study consisting of a corpus-based quality evaluation of three sets of texts translated by volunteers for non-profit organizations (NPOs) and based on a purpose-built theoretical framework drawn from a number of sources. The central aim of this investigation, therefore, is to analyze the quality of a body of texts translated by volunteers attached to volunteer translation organizations (VTOs) and reach pertinent conclusions based on a purpose-built theoretical framework. In order to do this, the study also involved sourcing a parallel corpus consisting of three sets of target texts and their corresponding originals in another language. The study found that the quality of translations undertaken by volunteers for NPOs is generally poor, although there were also some examples of good work.

KEYWORDS: translation quality, quality of NPO translations, pro bono translations, volunteer translators, NPOs, professional translators.

1. Introduction

Non-profit organizations (NPOs) play a pivotal role in alleviating poverty, both internationally and within individual countries (Sabert and Graham 2014), and have been described as "an avenue through which minority demands for public goods can be channelled" (Othman and Ali 2014:205). Many NPOs rely on web-based translations by volunteers to promote their work in other languages, often involving material of a critical nature that should be "easily understood […] and culturally appropriate" (Core Humanitarian Standard 2014:13).

This voluntary effort must be viewed in the context of the recent growth in web-based volunteer translation initiatives which have prompted scholars to search for suitable definitions. Crowdsourcing, the term favoured by most, describes initiatives whereby "the

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Internet provides a platform for completing tasks by a self-selected community of volunteers" (Jiménez-Crespo 2013b:193). The cooperative nature of these tasks has led others to use interchangeable terms such as 'collective', 'community' or 'collaborative' to underline the participatory character of such endeavours (Kelly 2009; Cronin 2010; O'Hagan 2011; McDonough Dolmaya 2011, 2012; Fernández Costales 2012; Jiménez-Crespo 2013a).

Some scholars (McDonough Dolmaya 2011; Jiménez-Crespo 2013a) include volunteer translation for NPOs under crowdsourcing initiatives because of its reliance on "unpaid volunteers who do not often have any formal translation training" (McDonough Dolmaya 2011:103). However, the small-scale study summarized in this paper contends that this inclusion is not entirely accurate, as not all associations providing volunteer translators to humanitarian organizations use digital translation platforms. The lack of such platforms significantly reduces the scope for collaborative work, which is arguably one advantage of crowdsourcing in terms of the potential for improved quality through peer correction (García 2010; Cronin 2010; O'Hagan 2011; Fernández Costales 2012).

2. Rationale and research aims

Various volunteer translation organizations (VTOs) use students and novices for their services (Permondo n.d.; Translators for Progress n.d.). While some research shows that non-professionals are capable of producing good work (Jääskeläinen, 1996), this study seeks to investigate whether this relative inexperience may give rise to potential issues of quality. Moreover, as discussed in the Introduction to this paper, volunteers translating for NPOs tend not to benefit from the advantage of collaborative work that has the potential to improve quality.

A review of the available literature shows that the quality of volunteer translations undertaken specifically for NPOs is an under-researched area of study, despite the often crucial nature of the material involved. Research in related areas includes analysis of other types of crowdsourced project such as TED, Wikipedia and Facebook (Olohan 2004; Cronin 2010; McDonough Dolmaya 2012; Jiménez-Crespo 2013a), fansubbing (Díaz Cintas and Muñoz Sánchez 2006; Lee 2011; O'Hagan 2011) and activist translations (Boéri 2008; Brownlie 2009; Baker 2009, 2013). However, volunteer translations for NPOs have received far less attention.

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Olohan (2014) and Fernàndez Costales (2012) have looked at this area from the perspective of altruism and motivation, whereas Izwaini (2014) and Jiménez-Crespo (2013a) have analyzed the quality of amateur translations, but not in relation to NPOs. Accordingly, this study is a preliminary attempt to address this first research gap given the importance of translation accuracy for NPOs' work.

The central aim of this investigation, therefore, is to analyze the quality of a body of texts translated by volunteers attached to VTOs and reach pertinent conclusions based on a purpose-built theoretical framework. For the purposes of the study in question, quality is defined as the text's ability to achieve its communicative purpose in relation to the intended target audience (Nord 1997b:41).

3. Corpus information

The central area of empirical research addressed in the study involved sourcing and analyzing a parallel corpus consisting of three sets of target texts and their corresponding originals in another language (Olohan, 2004; Teubert and Cermakova, 2004). The corpus was sourced through online searches from the websites of VTOs and then cross-referenced on the websites of the recipient organization. In line with the stated aim of the study, only texts that had clearly been translated by volunteers attached to VTOs (because the texts themselves stated this to be the case) were selected.

In part, the relatively limited size of the corpus is a reflection of the difficulty encountered in sourcing texts that could be proved to have been translated by volunteers attached to VTOs, and is in line with the observation that "the size of a corpus may ultimately depend on the availability of suitable texts" (Hunston 2002:26). To some degree, however, it could be argued that this difficulty restricted the "subjectivity of decisions about what material is included or excluded" (Olohan, 2004:48), as choice was largely dictated by the limited number of texts that met the stated research criteria.

A possible explanation for this may be that in such cases volunteers undertake behind-the-scenes translation of emails and other unpublished material, rather than more visible content. Fernández Costales appears to confirm this when he states that volunteers translate letters

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between children and sponsors for child sponsorship organizations (2012, p. 15). On the other hand, an NPO may state that it benefits from pro bono translations provided by a certain VTO, but that some of its webpages may not carry an actual credit for the translator or the VTO concerned (e.g. Cesvitem Onlus 2015). Finally, another difficulty was that many organizations listed on VTO databases have offices in other countries (ActionAid, n.d.; Special Olympics Italiae n.d.), thus significantly reducing the need for pro bono translations.

Finally, for the purposes of this investigation, it was important to establish the experience of volunteers involved in the translation of the selected texts to determine whether they were novices or professionals. When this experience was not clearly stated on VTOs' websites, online searches provided the answer in most cases through sites such as Linkedin and Prozcom. In all, translators were students or novices (including eight who collaborated on one single text), three were professionals with at least four years' translating experience – including one who similarly worked on the above text - and two were unverifiable. To preserve anonymity with regard to research ethics, individual translators' names are blanked out when they appear in screenshots.

Corpus selection

Each of the three sets of documents forming the parallel corpus consisted of four texts, mainly in the form of webpages, although some were reports. They were unidirectional, namely from Spanish into English, and bidirectional (English into Italian and Italian into English). This configuration, reflecting the author's working languages, was chosen to encompass the widest possible range of language provision within the limited scope of this investigation. Each text was between 350 and 480 words long, with the whole corpus totalling just under 5000 words. This choice was based on the average length of available webpages that met the selection criteria and is in line with Hunston's observation on the abundance of smaller corpora, "some comprising only a few thousand words and designed for a particular piece of research" (2002, p. 26).

All texts shared the same time-frame from 2011 to 2015, determined either by the date shown on the webpage or by the events occurring within this period. Apart from reflecting some of the content being translated for NPOs, the texts were heterogeneous in that they did not share text type or subject matter. For space reasons, this paper will show only one example from each language combination.

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Evaluative framework

The corpus texts were assessed by manual analysis (Matthiessen, 2009) without the use of any computer software and based on a purpose-built evaluative framework drawn from a variety of sources (Hague at al. 2011; Angelelli 2009; Kim 2009; Gambier 2009; STMS 2013; Colina 2008). The underlying principle for this framework was a 'componential' model that approached Translation Quality Assessment (TQA) as a multidimensional concept (Colina 2008). This multifaceted approach had at its base a functionalist and skopos-based focus (Nord 1997a, 1997b; Vermeer 1978/2004) that took account of extratextual factors (such as cultural and historical influences affecting style and register) as well as linguistic considerations (use of appropriate terminology or specialized vocabulary). The corpus texts were analyzed according to three main criteria reflecting the most frequent textual weaknesses: *Source Text Interference*, *Mistranslations or Misunderstanding of Source Text* and *Treatment of Culture-Specific Items*. The evaluative framework is shown in full in Section 10.

4. Key players

Online searches using specific keywords revealed four main organizations providing pro bono translations to NPOs. Other major associations relying on volunteer translators, such as Kiva and Global Voices were not included as they source volunteers directly through their own websites.

Translators without Borders (TWB)

This US-based organization aims "to increase access to knowledge through humanitarian translations" (Translators Without Borders n.d.). They use a dedicated open-source platform called 'the TWB Workspace' that connects 2,800 volunteers to 459 NPOs. To date, they have donated over twenty-five million translated words. TWB has close ties with the commercial enterprise Lexcelera (Lexcelera n.d.).

The Rosetta Foundation (TRF)

Based in Ireland, TRF uses an open-source platform called 'Trommons' to link over 8,000 volunteers with 190 NPOs and aims to "bridge the knowledge gap based on linguistic discrimination" (The Rosetta Foundation n.d.). In 2014 alone they donated over two million

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translated words to NPOs around the world (The Rosetta Foundation 2014). TRF works closely with the University of Limerick Localization Research Centre (Localization Research Centre n.d.).

PerMondo

This is the non-profit branch of the Mondo Agit translation agency (see Figure 7) and its aim is "to be part of something positive" (Permondo n.d.). No figures are available for the number of donated words or participating volunteers and NPOs. PerMondo openly display translated texts and the corresponding volunteers and for this reason they account for the largest number of evaluated texts, reflecting another limitation of this study.

Translations for Progress (TFP)

TFP do not appear to have any ties to commercial enterprises and currently work with 2182 translators, 1748 editors and 176 NPOs (Translations for Progress n.d.). Their aim is to provide translations to NPOs and "to help students get involved in social issues" (Translations for Progress n.d.).

5. Vetting of volunteers and quality control

These organizations show differing approaches to Quality Assessment and the selection of volunteers. TWB appear to be the most stringent in this regard, stating that the organization "carefully screens its volunteer translators and strives to provide high quality translation" (Translators Withouth Borders Workspace 2015). However, this rigorous approach does not seem to extend to post-translation editing and revision, as shown in Figure 1:
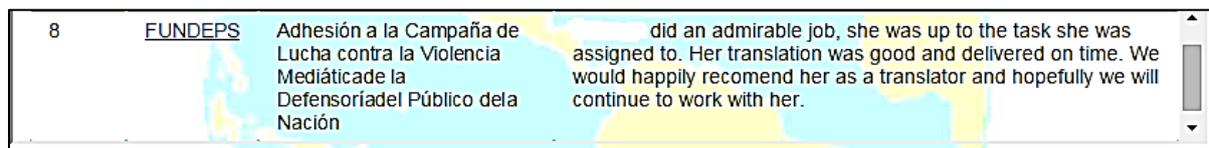
Figure 1: NPO User Manual for NGO Clients (TWB, 2015.)

Translators without Borders carefully screens its volunteer translators and strives to provide high quality translation. Translators without Borders cannot guarantee that a given translation request will be accepted by our volunteers, or that the translation will be delivered in time, or will be adequate for its intended purposes. Clients should carefully review all translations.

This shifts the responsibility for quality control to the client who often lacks the time, skills and resources to undertake such a specialized task. In this regard, Pym et al. (2013: vii) state that "almost by definition, someone who needs a translator cannot judge [...] how that translator performs". This point is illustrated by the feedback left on the website of another NPO about one of the translations in this study:
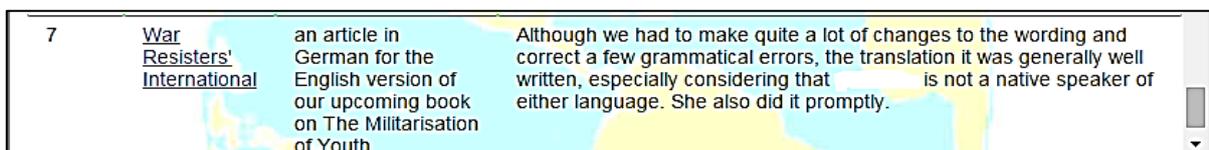
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Figure 2: Feedback on website (TFP n.d).

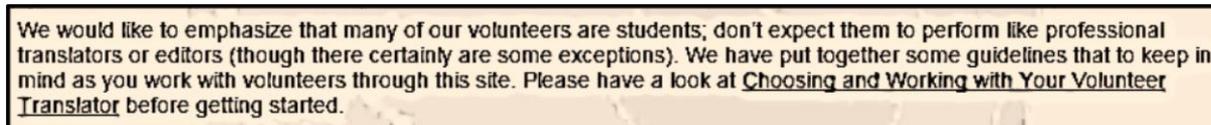| 8 | FUNDEPS | Adhesión a la Campaña de Lucha contra la Violencia Mediáticade la Defensoríadel Público dela Nación | did an admirable job, she was up to the task she was assigned to. Her translation was good and delivered on time. We would happily recomend her as a translator and hopefully we will continue to work with her. |

As shown in Section 10, the translation in question (Text 1) displays a number of weaknesses which the NPO was not qualified to detect. On the other hand, some NPOs are able to review the quality of volunteers' translations, as shown in the following example from the same website:

Figure 3: Feedback on Translations for Progress website (TFP n.d.)

| 7 | War Resisters' International | an article in German for the English version of our upcoming book on The Militarisation of Youth | Although we had to make quite a lot of changes to the wording and correct a few grammatical errors, the translation it was generally well written, especially considering that   is not a native speaker of either language. She also did it promptly. |

As well as indicating the use of translators who are not native speakers of either source or target language, the above feedback would appear to be a reflection of TFP's reliance on non-professional translators, as shown in Figure 4:

Figure 4: Information for NPOs (TFP n.d.)

> We would like to emphasize that many of our volunteers are students; don't expect them to perform like professional translators or editors (though there certainly are some exceptions). We have put together some guidelines that to keep in mind as you work with volunteers through this site. Please have a look at Choosing and Working with Your Volunteer Translator before getting started.

Although TRF's approach to volunteer selection is more rigorous by prioritising professionals, they also accept individuals who are 'just interested in translation' as shown in Figure 5:

Figure 5: Information for volunteers (TF n.d.)

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> If you are a professional translator or just interested in translation or providing information in other languages you are welcome to sign up as a volunteer with The Rosetta Foundation.
>
> **Register as a volunteer**

This is supported by a survey into the motivations to volunteer for TRF which found that the second most important reason was "to gain professional translation experience" (O'Brien and Schäler 2010). That volunteering for NPOs is used as a training opportunity for novices and students is confirmed by this TRF volunteer's comment: "A student at the time, I found your organisation while searching for opportunities to translate pro bono in order to hone my

Who can collaborate as a volunteer translator?

We originally focused our attentions on professional translators, translation students and teachers, and language and philology students. However, we encourage the participation of anyone with a sufficient grounding in any foreign language and their mother tongue to carry out translations.

skills" (The Rosetta Foundation 2013).

Finally, PerMondo appear to have changed their initially high expectations by now accepting anyone with a 'sufficient grounding' in languages:

Figure 6: Information for volunteers (PerMondo n.d.)

Moreover, PerMondo appear to be aware of the difference in the standards of service provided by their volunteers and professional translators, as shown in Figure 7:

Figure 7: Information for clients (PerMondo n.d.)

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6. Wider implications

It is one of this study's contentions that the quality issues outlined above may have implications for NPOs, particularly in relation to vital content that needs to be communicated accurately. This point is acknowledged by TWB, who state that "Often the documentation they need translated is critical medical, humanitarian or educational material that must be translated well" (Translators Without Borders n.d.). In addition to quality considerations, however, the provision of this type of pro bono work raises a number of other concerns.

One is the possible erosion of professional translators' status stemming from the perceived view that translations can be undertaken by anyone, with little or no training. According to McDonough Dolmaya (2011:106), when outsourcers do not stress the skills and training involved in translation - as is arguably the case with some of the VTOs in this study - this "contributes to lowering the occupational status of professional translators". This, in turn, may lead to the financial devaluing of translation, as confirmed by Fernández Costales's analysis that "quality does matter, since the normalisation of poor standards could be understood by customers as a good opportunity to reduce rates [as] translation [is seen] as a minor service that can be provided by anyone" (2012:19).

These concerns must be viewed in the context of the enduring "denial of translation as a profession" (Gambier 2012:13), the belief amongst translators that "translator status is [...] decidedly low" (Dam and Korning Zethsen 2008:71), the "thorny issue" of remuneration (McDonough Dolmaya 2011:99), and the ongoing efforts to raise public recognition of translators' professionalism and competence by relevant trade union organizations (Unite 2012).

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Baker raises a different point, linked to the "lack of internal consistency" (2006:10) of organizations like TWB having close links to commercial concerns, in this case the Eurotext (now Lexcelera) translation agency. She argues that this agency's use of TWB "as a selling point" (Baker 2006:11) to enhance its image amounts to the "commodification of the humanitarian work of the group" (ibid).

Baker raises another issue when she posits that TWB's commercial associate may be using their partner's good works to divert attention from some of their clients being "directly or indirectly implicated" (2006: 10) in the very injustices that TWB oppose. To support her case, Baker cites defence contractors General Electrics, who have been the target of anti-war protests (ibid). While Lexcelera's website no longer features this particular client, it does list Rio Tinto (Lexcelera n.d.), another controversial company linked to environmental and human rights abuses (Facing Finance n.d.). It is reasonable to assume that many translators offering their free services to TWB would not be comfortable with such practices, were they aware of them.

Translators themselves have raised different but related concerns. These include an over-representation on TWB's Board of individuals not involved in volunteer translations themselves, agencies paying translators very low rates and the possible use of volunteers to test translation platforms that are then utilized for commercial purposes (Lossner 2014). These concerns may have wider relevance for other VTOs, as PerMondo also has ties to a commercial enterprise and TRF uses a similar open-source platform, as pointed out by Cronin (2013:97) who posits this may have the aim of "opening up markets to corporate penetration".

Some of the concerns discussed in this section reflect the tensions between volunteers and professionals analyzed in a number of recent studies, albeit in areas outside the scope of this study. Boéri (2008) discusses a professional's critique of the 2005 World Social Forum's hiring of volunteer interpreters, whereas McDonough Dolmaya (2011) addresses the reaction of professional translators to Linkedin's proposal that its website be translated for free. However, both scholars also stress the positive aspects of volunteering, such as the scope for "dynamism and change" (Boéri 2008: 47) and the opportunity to "enhance the visibility of

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translation, showcase its value to society and help minor languages become more visible" (McDonough Dolmaya 2011:106).

7. Translation Quality Assessment

TQA is a much-debated topic within TS because of its subjectivity and lack of universally applicable evaluative tools (Reiss 2000; House 2001; Lauscher 2000; Colina 2008; Rabadán et al. 2009; Kim 2009). Despite these concerns, however, translations are assessed on a daily basis in countless commercial, governmental and academic environments, and a number of standards setting out TQA criteria have emerged over the last decade attempting to regularize this sphere of work. In 2006, the European Commission published EN 15038 (Biel 2011), an industry-specific quality standard, while in the US, the Standard Guide for Quality Assurance in Translation published in 2014 (ASTM F2575-14 n.d.) is endorsed by the American Translators Association (ATA 2014).

Alongside these mainly "procedure-based" standards (Gouadec 2010: 270), several approaches for a more product-oriented evaluation of translation quality have also been discussed by translation scholars within academia (Hague at al. 2011; Angelelli 2009; Kim 2009; Colina 2008). Furthermore, the European Masters in Translation (EMT) Expert Group's quality framework outlines a practice-based approach to TQA given the "clear need to search for and apply criteria of excellence" (Gambier 2009:1).

Evaluative framework in detail

The framework used in this paper includes the main evaluation areas addressed by the above scholars.[1] In addition, this evaluative framework also draws on the EMT's work (Gambier 2009) and on the Specialised Translation Marking Sheet (STMS 2013) produced by Portsmouth University, a member of the EMT network. In particular, the STMS concept of 'usability' has been employed to assess the texts' ability to fulfil their communicative function (Nord 1997a:73; 1997b:48) based on all preceding criteria and on "how well a given reader can read a text [and] understand it" (Byrne 2014: 145). Table 1 shows the evaluative

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[1] The author has been alerted by the reviewers to relevant work by Katharina Reiss and Juliane House. However, the original thesis from which this paper is derived focused on authors who have developed usable TQA tools that share similar features capable of being incorporated into the paper's evaluative framework. As far as the author is aware, Katharina Reiss and Juliane House have produced more theoretical, albeit invaluable, work.

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framework used in the analysis of the corpus texts (dates in the table are shown on first appearance only):

Table 1: Evaluative Framework

Competence	Evaluation area	Adapted from
Target language competence	Grammar, syntax, spelling and punctuation	Neubert, APTE and Kelly (all cited in Hague at al. 2011); STMS (2013); Gambier (2009); Colina (2008); Angelelli (2009); Kim (2009)
Textual competence	Coherence and cohesion	Neubert; PACTE; STMS; Gambier; Angelelli; Kim
Accuracy	Omissions/inaccurate renditions/inconsistencies	Colina; STMS; Kim
Cultural competence/Text type	Style/register/use of appropriate terminology/ specialized vocabulary in line with skopos/ function/ intended audience and social/ geographical/historical considerations	Neubert; PACTE; Kelly; STMS; Gambier; Colina; Angelelli; Kim
Strategic/instrumental/ information-mining competence	Use of appropriate research tools and resources	Orozco (cited in Angelelli, 2009); PACTE; Kelly; Gambier

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Usability	Extent to which the translation is adequate to its intended function based on all the above factors and on how well the reader can read and understand the text.	STMS, Byrne (2014)

The following pages report on the main findings of this investigation, based on the above evaluative framework and applied to three main areas of analysis: *ST Interference, ST Misunderstanding* and *Treatment of Culture-Specific Items (CSIs).* The reason for this choice was that these three areas of weakness were the ones most frequently observed in the text under consideration. For space reasons, only one example from each language combination will be shown as required to support the argument of this paper. However, more examples and data are available in the original study.

Source Text Interference

One feature of many of the evaluated texts is the sometimes significant degree of transfer of elements from the ST (Toury 2012; Laviosa 2009; Presas 2000), at both word and sentence level. In a number of instances, this affects readability and comprehension to the extent that the text's communicative function is not fulfilled.

Spanish ST	English TT	Suggested translation
(**Text 1**) Nuestras propuestas tuvieron como principio rector la necesidad de mejorar la efectividad de los procesos de sanción establecidos por la ley 26.522 de Servicios de Comunicación Audiovisual, para aquellos medios que emitan contenidos que promuevan o inciten tratos	Our proposals consisted of, as a guiding principal, the need to improve the effectiveness of sanctioning processes set out within law 26.522 of the Audio-visual Communication Services Law, for all media which broadcasts content that provokes or incites discriminatory treatment based	The guiding principle behind our proposals was the need to improve the effectiveness of sanctions contained in Arts.70 and 71 of Audio-Visual Communications Services Law n. 26.522. The sanctions apply to all media broadcasting content that promotes or incites discrimination based on

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discriminatorios basados en la raza, el color, el sexo, la orientación sexual, el idioma, la religión, las opiniones políticas o de cualquier otra índole, el origen nacional o social, la posición económica, el nacimiento, el aspecto físico, la presencia de discapacidades o que menoscaben la dignidad humana o induzcan a comportamientos perjudiciales para el ambiente o para la salud de las personas y la integridad de los niños, niñas o adolescentes, como es establecido por los art. 70 y 71 de la mencionada ley.	on race, colour, gender, sexual orientation, language, religion, political opinions or of any other nature, social or national origin, economic position, birth, physical appearance, presence of disabilities or which diminishes human dignity or induces behaviour that is harmful to the environment or to the health of individuals and the integrity of children or adolescents, as is established in papers 70 and 71 of the stated law.	race, colour, gender, sexual orientation, language, religion, political or other opinion, social or national origin, economic status, birth, physical appearance or disability. They also apply to content that diminishes human dignity or induces behaviours that are harmful to the environment or health of individuals and the integrity of children or young people.

Text 1 is a newspaper article on media violence against women aimed at international media activists. Its function is therefore both informative and appellative as it speaks to readers' "disposition to act" (Nord 1997b: 48). The ST structure is evident in the extremely long sentence construction. The suggested changes aim for register-appropriate concision by thematizing 'guiding principle' (Baker 1992:122), removing the repetition of 'law' and shortening 'sanctioning processes', 'discriminatory treatments' and 'presence of disabilities' to 'sanctions', 'discrimination' and 'disabilities'. The thematic structure of the sentence is then rearranged (Baker 1992:124) so that 'Papers 70 and 71' are brought forward to enable the list of discriminatory grounds to flow syntactically from this. To aid readability, the proposed changes then introduce a second clause with 'The sanctions also…' by repetition as anaphoric reference (Baker 1992:178), as well as a third clause with 'They also…' by pronominal reference. The sentence also contains a spelling error ('principal') and an inaccurate rendition ('provokes'). Furthermore, 'adolescents' is not

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appropriate in context and the changes use 'young people' instead (Queen's University Belfast 2017). The TT sentence therefore lacks coherence and cohesion, thus failing to fulfil its communicative function which renders it unusable in its current form.

Italian ST	English TT	Suggested translation
(Text 2) Inoltre, aderendo dal 2000 alla Carta dei Principi del Sad e alla Carta dei Criteri di Qualità del Sad, due codici di autoregolamentazione elaborati dalle associazione del settore, il Cesvitem si impegna ad utilizzare l'80% dei fondi per le attività progettuali [...]	Furthermore, in accordance with the Charter of Principles of Sponsorship and the Charter of Quality Criteria of Sponsorship, 2 codes of self-regulation devised by the sector's associations, Cesvitem has, since 2000, committed itself to using 80% of its funds for project ventures [...]	Furthermore, since 2000 Cesvitem has committed itself to using 80% of its funds on project ventures, in accordance with the sponsorship Charter of Principles and Charter of Quality, two self-regulation codes devised by the sector's organizations [...]

Text 2 describes the transparency measures put in place by an Italian child sponsorship NPO. As in the previous example, its function is both informative and appellative as it also seeks to enlist the financial support of prospective international donors. The text follows closely the ST syntactic pattern and the proposed changes aim to improve readability by fronting the time adjunct 'since 2000' (Baker 1992:132) and thematizing the clause element 'Cesvitem has…'. Moreover, the ST transfer evident in the rendition of the two charters is addressed by adjectivising 'Sponsorship' and 'self-regulation'. In the case of the former, this has the added benefit of avoiding repetition. In conclusion, the significant reliance on ST structure affects readability (Aixelá 2009), limiting the sentence's communicative function for potential donors and resulting in reduced usability.

Italian ST	English TT	Suggested translation
(Text 3) L'Organizzazione non lucrativa di utilità sociale (ONLUS) "Changamano" (parola della lingua [swahili](#)	This non profit organisation that benefits society´s (ONLUS=Organizzazione Non Lucrativa di Utilità Sociale)	The aim of the NPO "Changamano" ([Swahili](#) for Co-operation, Collaboration and Solidarity) is to start a

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che significa Cooperazione, Collaborazione, Solidarietà) ha lo scopo di avviare una serie di iniziative per la promozione della crescita sociale ed economica delle popolazioni della Tanzania […]	"Changamano"(a Swahili word meaning Co-operation, Collaboration, Solidarity) main aim is to start a series of initiatives encouraging social and economic growth within Tanzania's population […]	number of initiatives promoting social and economic growth for Tanzania's populations.

Text 3 is provided as an additional example in order to offset the lack of ST interference in the Italian into English texts. This raises an interesting point as it appears to suggest that the well-documented infiltration of English loan-words into Italian (Vettorel 2013; Fusari 2012:325) does not extend to syntax. Given the small size of the evaluated sample, however, more research would be needed to confirm this preliminary observation.

The text describes to potential patrons the work of an Italian NPO undertaking development projects in Tanzania, thus discharging, again, an informative and appellative function. The sentence reveals serious TL proficiency weaknesses to the point of incomprehensibility. The acronym 'Onlus' is used in the ST as the subject and as such it should be translated, although its meaning should not, nor should its Italian definition be included. This adds confusion to a badly organized sentence which places the genitive ('society's') at considerable distance from its referent. The proposed changes thematize 'aim', shorten 'a Swahili word meaning' to 'Swahili for' and retain the plural form ('populations') to reflect Tanzania's many ethnic groups, which the TT fails to convey. The considerable reading effort demanded by this sentence, therefore, makes it unusable in terms of adequately describing the NPO's activities to international patrons.

Mistranslations/misunderstanding of ST meaning

Significant mistranslations linked to poor understanding of ST meaning were detected in all language combinations. In many of the following examples, appropriate use of online and traditional research tools as outlined by Orozco (cited in Angelelli 2009:36) might have gone some way towards producing more usable translations.

Spanish ST	English TT	Suggested translation

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(**Text 4**) El presupuesto del Ministerio de Defensa sufre innumerables alteraciones durante su ejecución que lo modifica substancialmente, de tal manera, que al finalizar el año puede haber sufrido un cambio radical sobre el inicialmente aprobado.	Ministry of Defense expenditures vary far from the initial estimates in the budget, so that the final total at the end of the year may be vastly greater than that which was initially approved.	In Spain, the Ministry of Defence budget undergoes countless changes during its implementation. This means that at the end of the year it may be radically different from the one initially approved.

Text 4 is a Financial Report on Spain's military expenditure aimed at English-speaking peace campaigners. The text's function is therefore 'referential informative' as it makes "(objective) reference to the […] phenomena of the world" (Nord 1997b:48). ST mistranslation stems from the initial misreading of 'presupuesto' as 'expenditures'. Suggested amendments include using 'budget' instead and replacing 'vary far' with 'undergoes countless changes', as well as rendering 'ejecuciòn' with 'implementation'. Moreover, the place adjunct 'In Spain' has been added as an intratextual gloss (Aixelá 1996:62) and fronted (Baker 1992:132) to inform the reader that the text does indeed refer to that country. This strategy is particularly important because of the sentence prominence at the beginning of the Executive Summary (Williams 1989:23; Kim 2009:137). Finally, the ST states that the budget 'may be radically different', not that it will be 'vastly greater' as declared in the TT. Accordingly, campaigners interested in military spending in Spain will not receive the ST's intended message (Kim 2009:137), which renders the sentence unusable in terms of its referential/informative function.

Italian ST	**English TT**	**Suggested translation**
(**Text 5**) […] anziani, cassa-integrati, persone sole, esodati, giovani che non vedono un futuro.	[…] the elderly, unemployed, single and exiled, who see no future for themselves.	[…] the elderly, unemployed, lonely, workers with no pension or salary and young people who see no future for themselves.

Text 5 is a letter from a Catholic nun to her international followers, informing them of events at her Ethiopian mission over the previous year. Accordingly, its function is both

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informative and 'phatic' as it establishes "(social) contact between sender and receiver" (Nord 1997b: 48). Mistranslations in this sentence include 'persone sole' rendered with 'single' as an incongruous reference to relationship status rather than loneliness, and 'esodati', which bears no connection to 'exiled' people and is a neologism describing workers who have no salary or pension (Roe 2012; WordSense Eu Dictionary n.d.). Moreover, the translator omits 'young people' from the list of individuals the nun's followers should be holding in their thoughts, thus preventing the sentence from fulfilling its communicative function, which renders it unusable.

English ST	Italian TT	Suggested translation
(**Text 6**) Through its awareness programs, such as Action Carbone, Good Planet aims to protect 510000 hectares in Madagascar.	[…] attraverso i nostri programmi di consapevolezza e il programma Action Carbone, solo per citarne uno, che ha portato avanti la protezione di 510.000 ettari in Madagascar.	[…] attraverso i nostri programmi di consapevolezza, quali l'Action Carbone, Good Planet si prefigge di proteggere 510.000 ettari in Madagascar.

Text 6 describes the International Year of Forests to Italian environmentalists and it therefore fulfils an informative function. The sentence in question misconstrues the subject by attributing the action to a single programme rather than to the NPO in question. This leads to significant loss of meaning as the large-scale protection of land in Madagascar is credited to one scheme rather than to the organization as a whole. The phrase 'aims to protect' is also mistranslated as 'has undertaken the protection' [back translation], again conveying incorrect information to Italian readers interested in forest protection. Accordingly, although the overall quality of the text is good, this particular sentence is unusable without substantial rewriting.

Treatment of CSIs

This section looks in detail at the particular issues arising from the treatment of this feature in all three language texts, based on the range of strategies suggested by Aixelá (1996:52-77). As in the previous examples, more effective use of research tools might have prevented many errors.

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Spanish ST	English TT	Suggested translation
(**Text 7**) Cada año encargamos una auditoría sobre las cuentas anuales consolidadas a GMP Auditores.	Each year we undergo an audit of our annual accounts with GMP auditors.	Each year we undergo an audit of our consolidated annual accounts by GMP Auditores.

Text 7 describes to potential donors the work of a Spanish NPO helping vulnerable children. As well as informative, therefore, the text is also appellative as it seeks to enlist financial support from prospective sponsors. This example displays some creative handling of sentence structure through a change of point of view (Vinay and Darbelnet 1995:246) whereby 'encargamos' is rendered with 'we undergo'. However, besides omitting the important adjective 'consolidated', the text also exhibits inadequate CSI treatment by translating the name of the auditing company which should be retained through conservation (Aixelá 1996: 61). As a result, some loss of meaning has occurred and usability is reduced.

Italian ST	English TT	Suggested translation
(**Text 8**) Sarà premura della Fondazione Butterfly onlus coinvolgere, su richiesta, le aziende che avranno effettuato le donazioni […]	The Butterfly Foundation has been thoughtful enough, upon request, to involve companies who have donated […]	On request, Fondazione Butterfly Onlus will ensure that donor companies are involved […]

Text 8 provides technical information to international companies donating unused IT equipment to an Italian NPO building schools in Africa. Besides the incongruously-worded 'has been thoughtful enough', the text displays inadequate CSI handling by translating the NPO's name which should be retained by conservation (Aixelá 1996:61), also avoiding confusion with other similarly-named organizations (The Butterfly Foundation n.d.). This will puzzle readers all the more as the name of the NPO has been left untranslated elsewhere in the text, thus making the sentence unusable in its present form.

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English ST	Italian TT	Suggested translation
(**Text 9**) A quiet villa and a Big Bang	Una tranquilla villetta e un Big Bang	Una tranquilla villa e un Big Bang

The text describes, to an Italian audience, the history of an international NPO campaigning on global issues. Its function is therefore informative. In this example, 'villa' is rendered with the diminutive form 'villetta', thus conveying a culturally inappropriate description of Villa Farnesina, one of Rome's most beautiful historic houses (Olivero n.d.), which Italian readers would find baffling. This is all the more significant because of the CSI's prominent position in the title, which renders the example unusable in its current form.

8. Overview of results

The above analysis is only a snapshot of a much wider investigation. The following charts provide full details of that investigation in terms of types and frequency of inaccuracies:

Chart 1: Prevalence of ST interference in all three language combinations
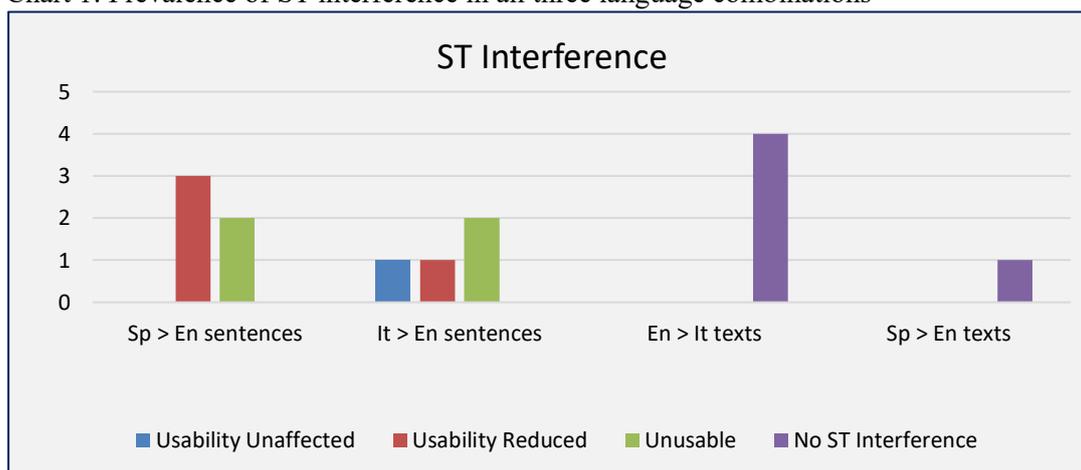
Chart 2: Prevalence of mistranslations in all three language combinations

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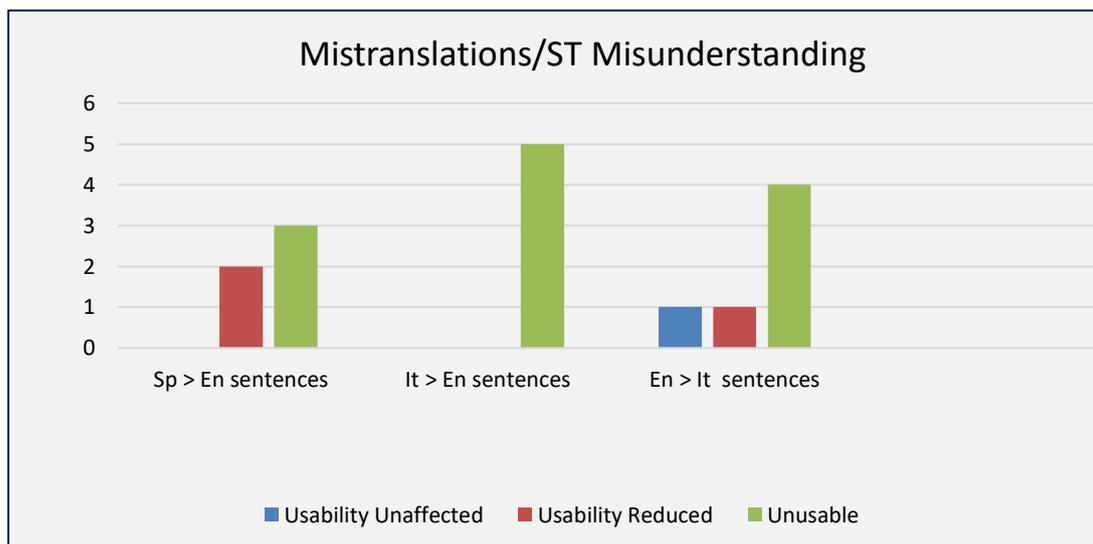
Four English into Italian texts and one Spanish into English text displayed no ST interference. Additionally, one Italian into English and two English into Italian texts exhibited no inadequate CSI treatment. However, all other texts contained sentences displaying errors in all three areas of analysis. The concept of usability was employed to describe the severity of errors in relation to the text's intended function: usability was unaffected in two sentences and reduced in 11, while 22 examples were deemed unusable. Most translations were done by non-professionals, with the best work produced by the two verified professional translators with at least 4 years' translation experience.

Chart 3: Prevalence of inadequate CSI treatment in all three language combinations

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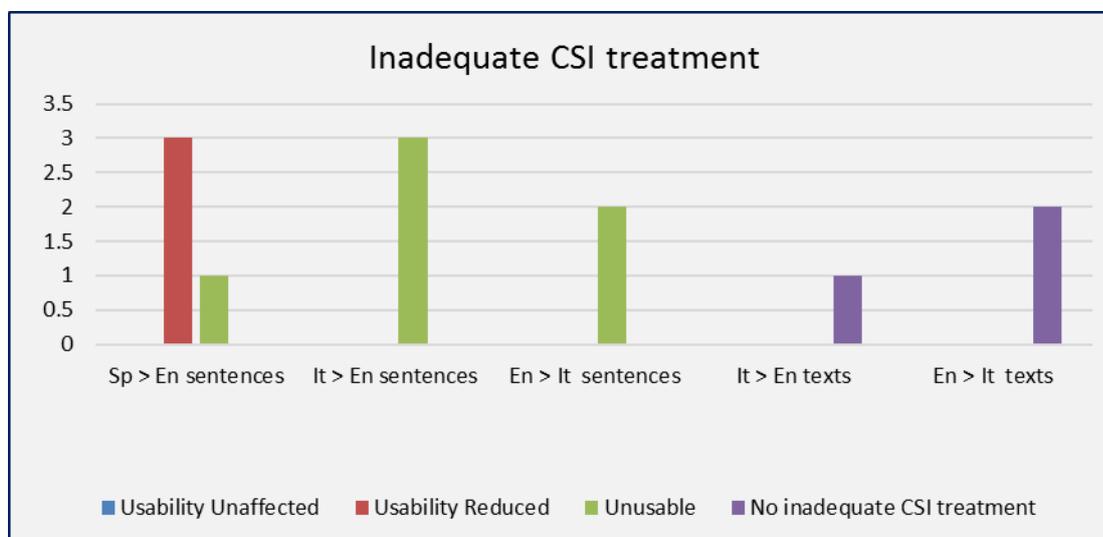
However, good work was also produced by non-professionals who worked collaboratively – albeit with the input of a professional and without the aid of an open-source platform. On the other hand, the other two professional translators also made mistakes, pointing to the importance of editing/proofreading regardless of experience. Considering, however, that many texts have been online for a number of years and steps could have been taken in the intervening period to rectify errors or update content, this preliminary study appears to indicate a lack of recognition of quality issues by VTOs. Given the role played by websites in building NPOs' credibility, reinforcing brand identity and soliciting donations, this lack of attention to quality appears counterproductive. It also seems avoidable since, as Garcia observes, "in the fluid web environment, translation errors don't carry big risks if fixed quickly" (2010: 4). That errors are not being addressed could be damaging not only to NPOs, but arguably also to translators whose ability and reputation are open to public scrutiny and who will not improve if they are not provided with feedback. As volunteer translations are also undertaken by professionals - although it is unclear in what numbers - the answer may partly lie in VTOs ensuring that experienced translators play a mentoring role through editing, proofreading, compiling glossaries and corpora, providing training on online research tools, and overall participating more widley in open-source collaborative work. With regard to the latter, however, this study indicates that open-space platforms per se are no guarantee of quality, as the translations produced through the two organizations that use such tools (TWB and TRF) also contain unusable sentences, again pointing to the importance of editing and professional input.

9. Conclusions

The study summarized in this paper was an initial attempt to address the existing research gap in the assessment of volunteer translations for NPOs. The analyzed corpus consisted of 12 texts in three different language pairs: Italian and Spanish into English, and English into Italian. Using a purpose-built evaluative framework, this study found poor-quality translations across all three language combinations, although there were also some examples of good work. The study found that most texts had been translated by non-professionals and that the best work had been done by experienced translators. However, non-professionals who worked collaboratively also produced good work, whereas professionals also made mistakes. Many texts had been online, uncorrected, for several years, possibly indicating low concern for quality issues by VTOs. The study contained a number of limitations and additional research

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would be needed to confirm its findings. Besides small corpus size, the range of languages analyzed was limited, many texts were sourced from just one VTO, and there were only three examples of translations undertaken with the aid of digital platforms. More research addressing these issues would therefore be required to confirm the generally poor quality found by this study. Similarly, more research into the proportion of non-professionals and experienced translators undertaking pro bono work would be useful to build a fuller picture of the current situation. This would also allow a realistic assessment of the study's suggestion that greater collaboration between novices and professionals, as well as more widespread use of digital platforms, could result in more usable content for NPOs.

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