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The Network of Translators for Linguistic Diversity (Tlaxcala) and Resisting Western Media Dominance.

ABDELAZIZ Ahmed1*

¹ Hassiba Ben Bouali University of Chlef, a.abdelaziz@univ-chlef.dz

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Abstract:

With technological advancements, free, volunteer networks of translators have emerged to defend ideas they consider just, such as the right to cultural and media diversity, the rejection of media dominance in all its forms, and related issues. This research aims to shed light on the modus operandi of one of these groups, the Translators' Network for Linguistic Diversity Tlaxcala, the types of issues they defend, and the extent of their contribution to countering Western hegemony and propaganda. This will include an analysis of the relationship between translation and the concept of media and communication from a theoretical perspective, while also analysing some of the content of this network's website.

Keywords: Translation, media, communication, volunteer translators, media dominance.

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^{*} Corresponding author



1. INTRODUCTION

In modern studies, translation is one of the ways to shed light on the danger of unipolarity or hegemonic polarities. It is one of the tools that inspired oppressed peoples to free themselves from slavery and occupation, and one of the means that led to the enlightenment of global public opinion, including the peoples, elites, and intellectuals of occupying countries that continue to promote imperial ideologies through various methods, their ideologies and policies based on power and domination.

The Tlaxcala website (Tlaxcala), the International Network of Translators for Linguistic Diversity, is one of the web-based networks run by a group of international volunteer translators. They aim to confront the media hegemony that supports the colonial ideas of large countries by using translation as an effective tool for transferring the thoughts and visions of weak countries and their thinkers from their dominated languages to most of the world's languages. This website specialises in publishing translated articles from multiple international newspapers that interest global public opinion. It focuses primarily on the current issues affecting humanity, such as liberation issues, conflicts between world powers, democracy, minority and human rights. This leads us to ask the following question: To what extent can the activity of online volunteer translator networks play a role in resisting Western media hegemony and its ideological agendas?

To answer this question, we must consider the work of these online translators as a form of communication, linked to the media and translation, and the function of each of them combined, as well as their objective of carrying the voices of writers who express the issues of vulnerable countries and peoples. This research aims to shed light on the media struggle of a category of translators against the domination of the media of the great powers and their ideologies in shaping the international scene and guiding world opinion, through an analytical study of the website of one of these associations, which includes a group of volunteer translators, the Network of Translators for Linguistic Diversity (Tlaxcala).

2. The communicative function of translation and media:

Today's world is witnessing major changes in the media sector, the most significant of which is the speed with which information is transmitted and the way it transcends traditional borders. Technological and digital developments have exacerbated these changes, such as the growing urgency for communication between individuals and countries. Digital media, such as the Internet, have helped to create an environment that accelerates communication and the exchange of information on a larger scale. As the diversity of commercial transactions, the freedom of movement of individuals, and the interweaving of international interests. Media, with its multiple goals, primarily aims to enable these people to access information, in addition to other unstated goals. Its definitions and branches vary to encompass different fields. It is the transmission, investigation, and dissemination of news and events with the aim of enlightening and educating minds, relying on



integrity and professionalism in obtaining information. It is also considered a tool for directing public opinion through objective methods, while playing a role in raising the level of education, knowledge, and awareness on various topics, by the use of multiple media and channels. (Al-Far, 2013, pp. 26-29).

Media is fundamentally linked to the concept of communication, the latter being based on several elements, the most important of which are: the sender (source), the message, the recipient (target recipient), the communication channel, the purpose of the communication process, and the feedback (Ibid, p. 232). In a world of rapid technological and media development, the evolution of these fundamental components of communication processes has made them both more attractive and complex. Starting with the nature of the senders, including journalists, thinkers, creators, and politicians, and the multiplicity of messages and recipients. This communication process also occurs within or outside the same geographical space. It is also carried out using various means, traditional and modern, written and visual, in addition to the multiple objectives of each message, taking into account the differences between languages.

Translation has always been linked to communication and is often defined as a process of communication between the source text and the target-language reader. Given its communicative role, it acts as a mediator whose primary mission is to overcome linguistic barriers between people of different languages, as an effective tool for communication among the global population. Here, the role of translation as an indispensable mediator emerges, as global and regional intermediary languages, such as English, French, and Spanish, fail to perform this communicative function alone, ensuring that information reaches the reader in its various manifestations and sources. This is due to the monolingualism of a large percentage of recipients, as well as the small number of bilinguals and multilinguals, compared to the vast amount of media materials promoted in various media spaces and websites. If the concept of multilingualism is linked to multiculturalism, however, translation itself is an intercultural process. It is a communication process that allows the recipient to understand the original text or the culture to which it belongs without needing to know its original language (See: Albir, 2001, p. 669). We can place this description within the classical definition of translation, as "a communicative process, which takes place within a social context" (Hatim & Mason, 1990, p. 3). It is therefore a means of communication between two different languages. However, each communication process has its context, function, and objective. Whenever there is a translation or several translations of a text, this process is linked to specific objectives of the target reader's culture that are embodied in the target text. (Nord, 2023, pp. 169-184).

Translation plays a role similar to text, (and its function lies in language use as a constituent element of communication in a specific social context. It is also subject to the various active components of the communication process and is therefore linked to a definitive context and function (Albir, 2001, pp. 670-671). Hence, the study of translation according to its communicative



significance must consider the factors that intervene in the communication process, as well as the context and function of translation. Translation, like media, has communicative roles and functions in different contexts. Both are based on written or spoken texts.

The concept of media text is linked to the different media and products in various contexts with the text as a whole, which is defined as (the basic communicative linguistic unit resulting from human linguistic activity and always having a social character and defined by its semantic and communicative integration, as well as its deep and surface coherence due to the (communicative) intention of the speaker, who wants to create an integrated text (Albir, 2001, p. 535).

Thus, text, in its informative function, embodies the tool through which the process of transferring information in its various forms to the reader is carried out, according to specific goals and objectives. In the same way for translation, that guarantees the transfer of this text from the original social environment to that of the target text while preserving the same meaning, function, and communicative objectives of the original text.

The transition of a media text from one language to another and from one culture to another is one of the most complex communication processes due to the cultural and ideological differences between peoples and societies. This is how the term "intercultural communication" was born, which is defined by human interaction in the context of different cultures (Shan, 2004) and to which translation scholars have devoted extensive research, either considering translation as a link between peoples or addressing the translation difficulties created by cultural differences between societies with different behaviours, beliefs, and values (House, 2015, p. 5).

Numerous studies have addressed the issues of cultural and ideological differences between peoples and societies. These studies have always attempted to approach it from the perspective of coexistence or culture clash. The media and translation have been associated with these themes, as means of conflict and domination or as means of establishing justice among nations. Meanwhile, some employ both to achieve intellectual and cultural dominance, using propaganda, incitement, and deceiving public opinion. Some seek to establish a civilised dialogue based on coexistence by confronting the errors of the propaganda media, revealing the facts, and highlighting the fair causes.

3. What are volunteer translator networks?

Nowadays, the web hosts numerous institutions, networks, associations, unions, and organisations with diverse tasks, specialisations, challenges, and orientations. Translators have emerged as key participants in these digital networks. Many factors have contributed to their coming together and organisation as official and voluntary associations and networks on the World Wide Web. This involves keeping up with technological developments and the challenges imposed by globalisation. Such as benefiting from the various advantages of using the internet. Among its benefits: the speed of work execution, the processing of large volumes of data and information, and interaction with a high number of clients and subscribers. For this reason, some translators are grouped into global networks to keep pace with the digital transformation, particularly in the



internet space, in the form of highly organised networks. Their quest may differ depending on the principles, standards, laws, and objectives they share. All of this can vary from one network to another. Yves Gambier classifies it into three overlapping categories:

The first category is global and generally refers to socio-technical networks, which are the networks that meet financial and economic requirements aimed at forming virtual professional and social blocs on the internet. These are translators who work for themselves or for specific agencies to produce translations that can be used for different professional, commercial, and even activist purposes. Regarding the nature of the objective, Gambier identifies two complementary categories (Gambier, 2007).

The second category varies depending on the nature of the translation process, as it is the product of a new division of labour imposed by the market and its controls, in addition to the nature of collective work, which requires the agent-translator to engage in a set of decisions like other agents. Such networks may work on commercial projects, employing free translation techniques and software and striving to disseminate them (Gambier, 2007).

The third type of these networks consists of translators who employ their profession and skills to address specific issues, promoting the values of solidarity, participation, and cultural diversity, rejecting division and isolation (See: Gambier, 2007). As for the third category, the subject of our research, these are translators who work independently or volunteer under various names, such as volunteer translation networks (like Global Voices Online and Translators Without Borders. Translators of different nationalities work through different types of media such as podcasts, blogs, and various popular media (Folaron, 2010, pp. 231-234) such as the International Network of Translators for Linguistic Diversity called Tlaxcala.

4. International Network of Translators for Linguistic Diversity

The Tlaxcala Media Network was launched in late 2005 by a group of activist translators. One of its goals was to counter the ideologies of domination and contempt promoted by dominant languages toward minority languages; they believed in a multilingual and multipolar world (Gambier, 2007). This website specialises in publishing translated articles from various international newspapers on topics of interest to global public opinion, such as issues of liberation, conflicts between global powers, democracy, climate change, minorities and human rights. It also attempts to disseminate open letters and collective signatures that appeal to the global conscience.

Another issue that translators are trying to address through their media network is the attempt to confront the domination of some languages. And since translation is the bridge that connects people and their languages, the role of these volunteer translators is to act as new mediators, enabling numerous authors, thinkers, cartoonists, and activists from around the world to make their voices heard, who are oppressed by the dominance of the English language and its Anglophone media (Tlaxcala's Manifesto, 2006).

These networks, run by volunteer translators, aim to preserve the right to information for all



and the right to freedom of expression against what is promoted by the dominant powers through the terminology of Globalization, which is directed according to a perspective that serves only their narrow interests. This is achieved by promoting information, news, or data, along with methods of analysing them and their resulting outcomes, through communication channels that serve their interests. For these powers, Globalisation is unipolar. This is what we find today in the Western world in their news reports aimed at convincing global public opinion of the validity of their international policies and decisions. The traditional Western media often stands behind its allies and against anyone who threatens the interests and influence of the dominant global powers. They strive to convince their followers and guide them to the justness of the causes they defend with a huge amount of news, images, and analyses that serve Western perceptions and ideologies. While simultaneously ignoring many important issues, such as liberation and the suffering of people under the yoke of occupation, poverty, and massacres.

The role of these volunteer translators, through their network, is to promote the truth, whether by translating it from writers and journalists in vulnerable countries or from the Western world itself, and in various languages. For example, from Arabic, Italian, Spanish, or German to English or French, and vice versa. This is to disseminate truthful narratives globally. The goal is to enlighten Western opinion on the one hand, and the rest of the world's peoples on the other hand. Therefore, reverse translation into these languages becomes a weapon of resistance, after having been a weapon of imperialist or colonial states to implement their agendas and spread their colonial ideologies.

4.1 Media and Professional Policy of the Tlaxcala Translators Network:

The manifesto of the International Network of Translators for Linguistic Diversity, published and signed on behalf of its founders and those involved, is an identification card of the policy and principles on which its activities are based. This manifesto alone is sufficient to develop its media communication plan based on translation. The term domination is one of the main concepts associated with languages, translation, and postcolonial theories included in these studies. This is due to its relationship with translation and postcolonial studies. According to Antonio Gramsci, (it is an effective attempt to explain the ability of a permanent authority to shape the self-concept, values, political systems, and personalities of the people as a whole, even long after the external source of that authority has disappeared (Douglas, 1997, p. 13). Accordingly, this concept of domination is the imposition of the perception of powers that have the authority of some patterns on states, societies and individuals in various areas of life, and the effects, even if this authority disappears.

This manifesto begins by focusing on the concepts of hegemony and empire, addressing the importance of languages and their contribution to human communication and their connection to different concepts of identity, culture, history, and the experiences and behaviours of their speakers. However, this fanatical connection, on the other hand, has created the dominance of strong



languages and their cultures over weak languages and cultures, which are now known as global languages (Tlaxcala's Manifesto, 2006).

Translation studies have long addressed the relationship of empires to their languages and their impact on weak languages and their societies. Douglas Robinson defines empire as "An empire is a political system based on military and economic domination by which one group expands and consolidates its power over many others – usually one nation over many other nations" (Douglas, 1997, p. 8). The pretexts used to justify their control and domination over weak states may vary, the most prominent are economic and security expansion and intervention to protect minorities and oppressed peoples (Douglas, 1997, pp. 8-9). This expansion has resulted in the assimilation or complete disappearance of weak cultures and languages into the cultures and languages of the dominating countries. Another consequence is the monopoly of these languages and cultures of world history and its narratives. This is evident in the abundance of sources in global languages such as English, French, and Spanish, which narrate human history, science, and world events solely from their narrow perspective. This is due to their cultural, and military superiority. One of the actions that indicate their hegemony is the obliteration of historical evidence and languages that contradict their hegemonic ambitions and expose their uncivilized and immoral practices throughout history. The editors of the statement highlight examples of this, including the disappearance of cultures and communities, along with their languages, under the weight of the colonial and settler behaviour of European empires. Among these examples is the story of the Mexican city of Tlaxcala, which symbolically bears the name of their network, and that was erased by Spanish colonialism in the sixteenth century AD (Tlaxcala's Manifesto, 2006).

The attempt to monopolise information, write history, and rule nations and peoples did not end with the demise of traditional empires and colonialism. On the contrary, this situation persists today, despite the emergence of independent states, nations, and organisations and the rise of global opinion. Old and even new empires exploit the disparities in the degrees of progress of all kinds—material, intellectual, and technological—that centuries of colonialism have engendered at the expense of the development and prosperity of colonised nations. In this context, the declaration does not forget to refer to the United States of America and the English language as two sides of the same coin in a new empire, and to the rest of the colonised countries and their languages, such as French, Spanish, and Portuguese, and their influence on the rest of the world's languages. This has led to the disappearance of many local languages in many countries (Tlaxcala's Manifesto, 2006).

The translators on this network are not opposed to these global languages performing the communicative function that any language performs. Still, they are against their use as a vehicle for promoting policies of subordination, superiority, arrogance, rejection, and oppression of others. Their goal is to serve their intellectual and ideological agendas. Even translation, in the opinion of these translators, has not been spared the superiority syndrome, even in English-language media



where activists are fighting for a better world, where the percentage of media material translated into and from English is almost zero compared to its content in English and compared to what is translated from English. This network blames the translators who have accepted this situation. (Tlaxcala's Manifesto, 2006).

Translation and linguistic diversity are a way for these translators to combat the media and intellectual domination of some languages and the imperialist and colonialist ideas that underlie them. Just as translation was one of the effective means of colonisers' expansion, it was also an effective way to communicate with occupied peoples and to subdue them in innovative ways to make them more obedient and cooperative. Translators were selected and trained to act as intermediaries between the occupiers and the occupied. This was achieved by recruiting individuals to learn the languages of the colonised peoples and then teaching them the language of the conquering empires. Thus, translation served the objectives of the colonial powers (Douglas, 1997, pp. 10-11). This is what the authors of the declaration are referring to when they evoke the fatal error made by the city of Tlaxcala when it placed its trust in the Spanish Empire at the expense of the Nahua Empire, the price of which was the disappearance of both (Tlaxcala's Manifesto, 2006), the translation being the coloniser's cunning means of achieving its various objectives.

Since the hegemony that is the product of colonial methods does not disappear with the disappearance of colonialism itself, the translators in this network were aware of the continuity of the media and propaganda machine that serves empires themselves in their modern form. They also noted their use of dominant languages and translation to achieve the same objectives. This is why we find in their declaration that they decided to oppose these methods by first liberating English from colonialism domination (so that it could be a tool of communication and nothing more, the tool used to impose its intellectual and cultural hegemony). They therefore decided to work towards diversifying the language of publication, particularly the English language, for authors, cartoonists, and activists whose work is obscured and whose voices are silenced by media empires. They also decided to break the domination and defeat of the English language and all the forces that support it and that attempt to subjugate other cultures to their will and perceptions so that the world becomes diverse in its poles and languages (Tlaxcala's Manifesto, 2006).

The principles that underlie the Tlaxcala Network's media thought and editorial line are those that preserve human rights and dignity, in accordance with the values proclaimed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. They oppose several concepts, including imperialism, unbridled capitalist globalisation, the clash of civilisations, discrimination, and separation based on linguistic and material barriers. They also refuse to be the subject or subjects of their history (Tlaxcala's Manifesto, 2006).

4.2 An overview of some contents of the Tlaxcala network:

On the Tlaxcala website, we find numerous articles, poems, and conference announcements



translated into several languages, particularly those related to the element of resistance, especially those that concern humanity in line with current events, such as insoluble questions of liberation, such as the Palestinian cause, and other issues related to the ideological conflicts between the West and the East under the slogan of controlling the wealth of oppressed peoples. The website features numerous thinkers, journalists, and creatives from around the world, and a page is dedicated to them, including Arab journalists and writers. We also find a page for free books that share themes of resistance and expose the ancient and modern methods of colonialism, such as a book on Palestinian resistance translated by the same network, "Palestine: la parole à la resistance" (Scahill, 2024). Or the book "The Ethnic Cleansing of the Palestinians" (Pappe, 2007) and its translations from its original English version and its various translations into French, Italian, German, and Spanish. It Also includes (George Orwell's book "Big Brother Is Watching You" which clearly shows that the world is transforming into a village run by some regimes that control everything. Or Frantz Fanon's book The Wretched of the Earth, its original version and its translated versions (Free books, s.d.).

The site offers content in different languages, including Arabic, English, French, Spanish, Italian, German, and others. This creates a diverse and open space for the network's translators to provide content. Also, click on any language link on the homepage. The site allows the reader to browse various content in the selected language, indicating whether it is an original or translated text. The content is categorised by publication date on the site, from newest to oldest, etc. This approach highlights the blog's desire to attract a large audience of readers from various languages to browse its content, despite the language selection being limited to specific languages and its marginalisation of dozens of other languages. This may be explained by financial and human factors that compel its managers to envision a site capable of competing with the dominating websites. Therein lies the secret of the empire's media dominance, with its numerous outlets, including newspapers, television channels, cartoon websites, and others. This is achieved by controlling decision-makers and businessmen and exchanging benefits with them.

This is despite the countless government, independent, and volunteer media outlets that oppose these dominating empires and their media. The best proof of this is the predicament the members of this network found themselves in. In a statement, they denounced the disruption of their blog website by the French server provider of their former website, Tlaxcala-int.org, without prior notice. The site was then acquired by an unknown entity in February 2022, which impersonated the network and published content copied from various media outlets (Tlaxcala Release, 2022). This reflects the difficulties and financial pressures these associations may face, as their activities are not based on profit or influential government or non-governmental organisations.

As for the articles and texts, they were drawn from various written, audiovisual, and electronic sources from across the world, from major powers and other countries. One of the most discussed topics on this network is the Palestinian cause, which challenges Western perceptions of itself. For example, we find an article from the French newspaper Libération, translated into English and



Spanish, on the suffering of the people of Gaza, written by Nour Z. Jarada (Jarada, 2024). We also found an article by Palestinian poet Musab Abu Toha, entitled "Gaza Must Be Rebuilt by Palestinians, for Palestinians" (Toha, 2025), translated into French but not Arabic. It is noteworthy that the author of this article is the founder of the Edward Said Library and one of those who left Gaza for the United States. The content of this article is a response to American plans to relocate the people of Gaza for a better life, attempting to correct some of the concepts associated with the origins of the Palestinian cause, based on sacrifice and linked to land and history, and not with the perceptions of colonial empires that seek to exchange the freedom and principles of weak peoples for a Western-style life, a life detached from identity and belonging to homelands and beliefs. Examples abound, most of them serving to promote the Palestinian cause or to denounce the behaviour of the occupier and its Western supporters.

4.3 Translators and Activists on Tlaxcala Network

We cannot determine the identity of the translators and activists of the Tlaxcala Network except by examining a group of translators whose names appear in numerous articles, both as translators and sometimes as writers. Among them is Fausto Giudice, one of the 150 authors on the network's list (Authors, s.d.). He is a journalist and activist of Italian origin living in Tunisia, after living in France, Belgium, Italy, Switzerland, and Germany. He founded publishing houses and was influenced by the Algerian, Vietnamese, and Chinese revolutions. He has worked in activist journalism and published an article in four languages: English, French, Spanish, and Arabic: "The Al-Agsa Flood: What Can Iron Do Against the Wind?" (Fausto Giudice). This testifies to his belief in the justice of the Palestinian cause and the many issues that have preoccupied the world, both as a writer and translator. We also find names like Hamza Hamoushan, who writes on issues of liberation, climate, and imperialism, and whose article is linked under the title: The Psychology of Oppression and Liberation (Hamouchene, 2024). The site also translates for activists such as Hana Al-Sheikh, a Palestinian and American resident whose village of Yalu was ethnically cleansed in 1967. These writings focus on issues related to her country, Palestine, and the role of displaced Palestinians in matters that concern them, particularly resistance to the occupation. It also features articles by Ameer Makhoul (a Palestinian writer, activist, and political prisoner who led the NGO Ittijah and the Popular Committee for the Defence of Freedoms and was active in the Institute for Palestinian Studies (Authors, s.d.).

Throughout some of the profiles offered by the site, the common denominator among these individuals is their struggle for causes they consider to be just, such as the Palestinian cause. They are also united by specific goals, such as the fight against occupation, imperialism, and hegemony in all its forms. They also aspire to justice and other noble humanitarian goals. The diversification of the network into a multitude of authors and translators from around the world is merely an attempt



to provide promotional space for their ideas and perspectives on events and issues that serve the media agenda of the network as a whole.

4. CONCLUSION

By highlighting the activities of these translators within their network, it becomes clear that translation can be a tool of resistance against great powers and their online media outlets. This is achieved by publishing the works of authors and activists around the globe, covering different marginalised issues. Translation also contributes to diversifying the languages of publication for articles, open letters, and other works offered on the site, by translating what can be translated into multiple languages. The goal, indeed, is to reach the highest possible number of readers from various languages. In this way, translation becomes an essential part of the communication process for the site's translators and activists. It also becomes an effective tool for breaking the dominance of global languages such as English and French, which are used by the media of great powers to promote ideas and visions that serve their interests at the expense of those of other countries.

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