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**Translation Activism and Its Influence on Public Opinion**

Překladatelský aktivismus a jeho vliv na veřejné mínění

(Bachelor's thesis)

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**Declaration of authorship**

I do solemnly declare that I have authored this bachelor's thesis *Translation Activism and Its Influence on Public Opinion* and that I have correctly acknowledged all bibliographic references and quotations.

In Olomouc (date):

Signature: .....

## Abstract

This bachelor's thesis is concerned with translation activism and its influence on public opinion. The aim of this thesis is to assess the influence that translation activists may have on public opinion, their strategies, goals and organizations. To be able to make this assessment this thesis looks at the past of translation activism and important organizations that influenced its development. The focus of this thesis is on the strategies that translation activists use when translating and their choice of texts. To be able to assess these, this thesis draws on narrative theory. It also outlines the current situation of translation activism and further describes the Global Voices website, which is currently the most active organization of translation activists. It looks at various language mutations of this website, their activity and influence. This thesis concludes that translation activists have the power to influence public opinion and that they help to shape the current narrative.

**Key words:** translation activism, narrative, citizen media, Global Voices

## Abstrakt

Tato bakalářská práce se zabývá překladatelským aktivismem a jeho vlivem na veřejné mínění. Cílem této práce je popsat vliv, který mohou překladatelé-aktivisté mít na veřejné mínění, strategie které využívají, jejich cíle a organizace, ve kterých se sdružují. Abych byla schopna provést toto zhodnocení, nejprve popisují příklady z historie a důležité organizace, které měly vliv na vývoj překladatelského aktivismu. Tato práce se soustředí na metody, které překladatelé-aktivisté využívají při překladech textů a jejich výběr textu. Při popisu těchto metod práce staví na narativní teorii. Dále v této práci nastíním současnou situaci překladatelského aktivismu a popíši webovou stránku organizace Global Voices, která je v současné době provozována nejaktivnější skupinou překladatelských aktivistů. Tato práce se zaměří na jednotlivé jazykové mutace této stránky, na její aktivitu a vliv. Ve své práci docházím k závěru, že překladatelé-aktivisté mají schopnost ovlivnit veřejné mínění a mohou se tak podílet na formování současného vnímání světa kolem nás.

**Klíčová slova:** překladatelský aktivismus, narativní teorie, občanská média, Global Voices

# Content

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1	Introduction .....	6
2	Methods .....	8
3	Translation and public opinion .....	9
4	Definition of translation activism .....	12
4.1	Translation activism from the point of view of translation studies .....	14
5	Narrative theory .....	17
6	Examples of translation activism in history .....	20
6.1	Irish independence (late 19 <sup>th</sup> and early 20 <sup>th</sup> century) .....	20
6.2	Arab Spring (early 2010s) .....	21
7	Important organizations of translation activists .....	22
7.1	ECOS .....	22
7.2	Babels .....	23
7.3	Traduttori per la Pace .....	24
7.4	Tlaxcala .....	24
8	The current situation of translation activism .....	26
8.1	Global Voices .....	27
8.2	Comparison of sites within Global Voices .....	27
8.3	Global Voices in Czech .....	31
8.4	Translating for Global Voices .....	32
9	Translation activism in practice .....	34
9.1	Temporal and spatial framing .....	34
9.2	Selective appropriation .....	35
9.3	Framing by labeling .....	38
9.4	Repositioning of participants .....	40
10	Conclusion .....	42
	Bibliography .....	44

## List of figures

Figure 1	Timeline of language sites within Global Voices .....	28
Figure 2	Number of articles translated by language sites of Global Voices .....	29
Figure 3	Number of articles translated in 2015 by the most productive sites .....	30
Figure 4	Number of articles translated by the Czech site of Global Voices in 2015 and the beginning of 2016 .....	31
Figure 5	Number of visitors of the site Global Voices in Czech and in Polish in 2015 and the beginning of 2016 .....	32

# 1 Introduction

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Activist translation that my thesis is concerned with goes against the general impression that translators should not have an opinion on the texts they translate because their main task is to transfer the text from one language to another without their own input. This notion may be true for hired translators who work for agencies or for free-lancers who make their living by translating texts someone else has chosen. However, it does not apply to activist translators who most commonly choose their source text. They are usually not paid for their work, they translate texts that relate to their own opinions and make these texts available for broader audience in different countries and cultures. In this way the activist translators diverge from the mass translation industry and they can have an influence on public opinion.

In the view of many people, a translator is someone who just translates texts from one language to another without being given any authorship or credit. They present the opinions and styles of authors of the texts which they translate. According to Venuti, the present-day society perceives the ideal translator as “invisible.”<sup>1</sup> The translator should in no way distort the meaning or style of the original text. In the same text Venuti goes on to state that “invisibility is the term [he] will use to describe the translator’s situation and activity in contemporary Anglo-American culture.” However, in his book Venuti argues that this notion is just fictitious. He states that “the translator’s invisibility can now be seen as a mystification of troubling proportions...”<sup>2</sup>

In my thesis, I argue against this invisibility. I argue that translators can have far-reaching influence. The works of Mona Baker support my claim. She draws on “narrative theory, sociology and the study of social movements to examine some of the ways in which translators and interpreters reframe aspects of political conflicts, and hence participate in the construction of social and political reality.”<sup>3</sup> Brownlie defines activism as follows: “intentional action whose aim is to bring about social, political, economic, or environmental change.”<sup>4</sup> This definition applies to translation activism as well, since one of the aims of the translators is to promote certain opinion, which is often insufficiently represented in the mass media, and even to call the public into action.

The aim of my thesis is to examine the phenomenon of translation activism described above. I am going to look at the channels through which the activist translators

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<sup>1</sup> Lawrence Venuti, *The Translator’s Invisibility: A history of Translation* (London: Routledge, 2008), 1.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

<sup>3</sup> Mona Baker, *Translation and Conflict: A Narrative Account* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 151.

<sup>4</sup> Siobhan Brownlie, “Committed Approaches and Activism,” in: *Handbook of Translation Studies, Volume 1*, ed. Yves Gambier and Luc van Doorslaer (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2010), 45.

can influence public opinion. In my thesis I argue that their input is important both when they choose what to translate and when they choose how to translate. I am going to look at the organization and communities of translation activists both in the past and currently active. I am also going to compare the influence of translation activism in the Czech Republic and abroad. Finally, I will describe the methods translation activists have at their disposal and look for examples of their usage in some of the activist translations published by Global Voices website.

The research questions I am going to address in my thesis are the following:

- How can we define translation activism?
- Are there any historical examples of translation activism?
- How can translation activism influence public opinion?
- Which organizations are operating in the world and in the Czech Republic?
- Which methods can translation activists use in order to influence public opinion?
- Are there practical examples of translation activism in the translated texts?

To achieve the aim of my thesis I am first going to define translation activism and differentiate it from other types of translation. To assess the influence on public opinion, I am going to use the website Global Voices. It is one of the biggest platforms that connects activist translators and allows the public to access their work. I am going to examine the data about the number of people who visit this website, about the number of translators engaged and about the amount of articles translated monthly. I am also going to look at the tools and support which the platform provides for its translators. I am going to examine the methods that translation activists use in order to influence public opinion as described by Baker.<sup>5</sup> Then I am going to look for examples of these methods within the translated articles published by Global Voices.

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<sup>5</sup> Baker, *Translation and Conflict*, 105-140.



## 2 Methods

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To achieve the aim of this thesis, several research methods were applied. The whole thesis can be divided into three parts, each of them using its own research method. The types of research employed are both descriptive and analytical.

The first part of this thesis, chapters 3-7, uses the descriptive approach. It consists of a literature review of articles written about translation activism, translation and public opinion and narrative theory. To describe the particular organizations and communities of translation activist information from their websites were used. On their websites these organizations usually publish their guidelines and manifests, describing their structure, aims and the methods they use to achieve them. This information, together with information gathered from the articles on the topic, was crucial for formulating the definition of translation activism written in Chapter 4.

The second part of this thesis, chapters 8 and 9, uses the analytical approach. Its aim is to explain how translation activists achieve their goals. Chapter 8 examines the website Global Voices which is currently one of the biggest organizations of translation activists. The chapter includes a comparison of various language mutations of this website. All the data were taken either from the Lingua Translation Stats, a database included directly on the Global Voices website, or they were provided by the editor of the Czech site of Global Voices Milan Ončák. Data on the visitor rate of Global Voices in Polish were provided by Krzysztof Pawliszak, the editor of the site. Chapter 9 provides practical examples of translation activism. Articles published by the Czech mutation of Global Voices were used as a source of these examples as this website is the most active organization of translation activists in the Czech Republic. Five articles published by the Czech site of Global Voices between December 2015 and February 2016 were selected and compared with their English sources. The shifts in translation that took place between the English source text and the Czech target texts were analyzed based on narrative theory described by Baker in her book *Translation and Conflict*<sup>6</sup> and were categorized by various methods of reframing narrative according to the same book.

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<sup>6</sup> Baker, *Translation and Conflict*, 1-203.

### 3 Translation and public opinion

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Before we are able to define the concept of translation activism we first need to look at the importance of translation in society. In order to gain a better understanding of translation activism and its influence on public opinion we first need to examine the general influence of translation. In the introduction we said that based on the general opinion the translators should be neutral and their task should be to transfer the text from one language to another without much of their own input. Venuti goes as far as to state that the present-day society sees the translator as “invisible,”<sup>7</sup> as someone who does not distort the meaning or style of the original text. If this notion is true and given that the translators translate texts not based on their choice but texts that were chosen by the customer, the translators should have no influence on public opinion. However, neither of these assumptions is completely true.

First of all, the notion of invisibility is false. Even Venuti refutes the idea of invisibility in the same chapter in which he defines it: “the translator’s invisibility can now be seen as a mystification of troubling proportions...”<sup>8</sup> According to Venuti the translator always makes a mark on the text because they are translating it based on their own interpretation. He also states that translators always have to make choices and they make their choices based on their cultural assumptions, social situations and even the historical period. Venuti uses the term “violence” to describe the changes that take place within the text. He describes the violence within the translation process as “the reconstitution of the foreign text in accordance with values, beliefs, and representations that preexist it in the translating language and culture...”<sup>9</sup> It means that the source text and the target text always differ and it is the translator who makes the choice about the nature and the extent of this change. In the same text, the author also argues that in the translator’s own interpretation he or she consciously changes the text to make it acceptable for the receiving audience: “this aim [of translation] always risks a wholesale domestication of the foreign text, often in highly self-conscious projects where translation serves as an appropriation of foreign cultures and agendas in the receiving situation, cultural, economic, political.”

Tymoczko shares a similar point of view but she goes even further in the description of the extent of the change that takes place in the translation process and in the extent of the conscious manipulation by the translator: “translation thus is not simply an act of faithful reproduction, but, rather, a deliberate and conscious act of selection, assemblage, structuration, and fabrication—and even, in some cases, of falsification, refusal of

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<sup>7</sup> Venuti, *Translator’s Invisibility*, 1.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

information, counterfeiting and the creation of secret codes.”<sup>10</sup> This statement shows us the degree of influence a translator may have on public opinion. This is not to claim that translation activists engage in falsification or refusal of information. However, through conscious selection and structuration they can impose the desired effect on their audience. And as we will see in the various manifests or organizations involved in translation activism this desired effect is to show the audience that there is an alternative that can balance the sometimes distorted and single-sided picture of reality provided by the mainstream media. But the influence of translators is wider than just providing information. In her book Tymoczko argues, that translators have a great influence on power relations in the world. She also claims that those who are in power can promote their values and culture easier. Thus, through conscious manipulation of the texts, the translators participate in the constitution of values and culture. According to Tymoczko, translation is one of the primary literary tools that institutions can use to “‘manipulate’ a given society in order to ‘construct’ the kind of ‘culture’ desired.”<sup>11</sup> However, it is not just institutions that can use these techniques—individual translation activists and their organizations have the same potency.

The importance of translation and translators in shaping public opinion is undeniable. In today’s globalized world where most of conflicts concern many nations whose members may speak several languages the influence of translation is still growing. Governments as well as other organizations which get involved in conflicts and which partake in shaping the world are trying to promote their points of view and persuade people to join their causes. As Baker states: “translation is central to the ability of all parties to legitimize their version of events.”<sup>12</sup> According to Baker’s narrative theory, as described in her book *Translation and Conflict*, people’s behavior and decisions are guided by the stories they believe to be true rather than by their gender, race and other attributes. Thus, the translators participating in creation of those stories have a great potential in influencing people’s behavior. Baker also claims that to undermine a certain regime one has to challenge the stories and values that this regime is based upon.<sup>13</sup> To promote a change one has to provide alternative stories. Baker gives an example of Nazi Germany or South African apartheid, but the regime that is being challenged does not have to be a particular political regime, the whole world regime can be called into question and that is what some of the organizations of translation activists do. They challenge the common world order and provide an alternative. They are not concerned only with political issues but also with the matters of human rights,

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<sup>10</sup> Maria Tymoczko and Edwin Gentzler (eds.), *Translation and Power* (Amherst: UMassPress, 2002), xxi.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, xiii.

<sup>12</sup> Baker, *Translation and Conflict*, 1.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 1-7.

environmental questions or avant-garde art. These areas are the ones most frequently touched upon by articles published by the organizations of translation activists, for example by articles available on Global Voices.

## 4 Definition of translation activism

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To define translation activism, we are first going to look at the definition of activism in general. According to Brownlie,<sup>14</sup> activism can be defined as an “intentional action whose aim is to bring about social, political, economic, or environmental change.” Thus, the aim of translation activism should be to promote change. As we argued in the previous chapter, translation in general has the power to influence public opinion. However, not all the translators use this influence to promote their own opinions. With commercial translation translators spread the influence of their customer because it is the customer who chose the text and who can set their requirements for the translation. The translation activists, on the other hand, use their influence to promote causes that they agree with. Thus, they use their influence with the aim to promote change, which is in accordance with the definition of activism that was provided earlier.

It is not only the ability to choose the texts for translation that distinguishes translation activists from other translators. Another factor is their motivation. For commercial translators, the main motivation is to get paid for their work. In general, translation activists do their work for free. It means that their motivation must be different. With their translations they are able to spread ideas, opinions and points of view that they agree with and support initiatives that they deem important. Based on narrative theory described in more detail in the next chapter we can say that the aim of the translation activists is to contest the dominant narrative and promote an alternative narrative that otherwise would not be heard. Translation activists often want to help a cause whose representatives do not have the resources to pay for translation services. At this point we have to stress that not all voluntary translations are examples of translation activism. There are translators who translate for example subtitles to TEDx, subtitles to their favorite TV series or texts for charitable organizations. Even though they receive no financial reward for their work, they are not considered to be activist translators as their aim is not to spread their own opinion and they are rarely using the same methods that we will later describe as typical for translation activists.

Translation activists also have more liberty in their choices during translation. Since there is no customer to make requirements on the translation, it is the translator who decides on the way they translate the text. There are two ways in which activist translators influence opinions of their readers: through the choice of texts as we said before, and through the choice of their formulations, wording and other means of expression. If we turn to narrative theory again, we can say that translation activists have more options to frame

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<sup>14</sup> Brownlie, *Committed Approaches and Activism*, 45.

their narratives. These means and options will be described in more detail in Chapter 11 which deals with translation activism in practice. This is not to say that translation activists can change the source text to something totally different according to their liking. Translators always have to stay within their prescribed “frame space.”<sup>15</sup> It means that translators have a certain space allocated for expression of their own voice but they have to be careful not to step out of this space, otherwise the readers may not see them as trustworthy. In some organizations of translation activists (for example in Global Voices) there is an editor who goes through the translation before it is published. But usually the job of the editors is not to question the choices of the translator, but only to ensure certain quality of the texts. It means that the editors look for grammatical errors, mistakes in punctuation and general understandability of the text.

Even the genres of texts translated by translation activists and commercial translators differ. While commercial translators translate all possible genres, beginning with contracts and ending with poetry, the variety of texts translated by translation activists is not so broad. Most commonly the texts translated by translation activists are news articles and blog posts. When we look at the work of various organizations of translation activists, for example at the work of Global Voices (an organization that will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 8) we can see that majority of the translations are in fact news articles and blog posts. It is very rare for the activists to translate fiction, poetry or drama, but we can find examples even of these genres. Baker gives an example of the Lysistrata Project. Under this project, the theatre play *Lysistrata* was translated into several languages and staged in 59 countries in 2003 as an expression of protest against the invasion of Iraq. According to Baker this expression of protest was made possible by “the kind and generous translators and adaptors who ... offered their scripts free of charge for this onetime event!”<sup>16</sup> This is a good example of translation activism as it shows the characteristics mentioned above: it was the translators themselves who chose to participate in this project. They were not motivated by money as they provided their translations for free, they wanted to contribute to a project that they deemed important and meaningful. In this way they could express their opinion on the invasion in Iraq.

Being a professional or being an amateur does not characterize translation activists—we can find representatives of both groups. There are professionals who make their living as commercial translators and in their free time they translate for free to support causes and express their opinions. And there are also amateurs, voluntary translators for whom translation is a means of providing access to important information to broader

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<sup>15</sup> Baker, *Translation and Conflict*, 109.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 113.

audience. Within the organizations and communities of translation activists, professionals and amateurs often cooperate to achieve better results. One example of such cooperation was ECOS, a community described in more detail in Chapter 7.1. One of their aims was to bring together professionals and activists to discuss issues related to injustices and translation.

Even though this thesis is dedicated to translation activism, it is worth making at least a short remark about its relation to interpreting. Many of the organizations of translation activists also offer interpreting services. For example the organization Babels that will be described in more detail later, was formed with the aim to provide both translation and interpreting. Both activist translators and interpreters are based on a similar basis. Again, the interpreter can choose whom he or she is going to interpret and which narrative he or she is going to support. Hatim and Basil claim that: “many of the ways in which language users exploit the potentialities of the language system for particular purposes are common to both the written and the spoken modes.”<sup>17</sup> This means that many of the strategies for reframing the narrative that translation activists use and that will be described in more detail in Chapter 9 can be used even by interpreters. Thus, interpreters have similar possibilities of influencing public opinion as activist translators.

#### **4.1 TRANSLATION ACTIVISM FROM THE POINT OF VIEW OF TRANSLATION STUDIES**

According to Brownlie activism in translation studies can refer to two different things: either studying and even promoting activist translators and interpreters or studying the current situation of certain causes related to translation in the new globalized world.<sup>18</sup> This chapter is going to discuss the former because it is connected to the practice of translation activism, which is the main topic of this thesis.

It was in the 1990s that some of the translation studies scholars started to abandon the descriptive paradigm and focus more on the manifestations of power reflected in texts and in translation.<sup>19</sup> Even Tymoczko confirms that this shift towards poststructuralism and focus on the relationship between translation and power took place in the 1990s.<sup>20</sup> Several theorists adopted this approach and concentrated on topics related to power and translation. First of them was Lawrence Venuti who focused on the dominance of the United States and of the English language. He shows this domination on the imbalance in the

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<sup>17</sup> Basil Hatim and Ian Mason, *The Translator as Communicator* (London: Routledge, 1997), 6.

<sup>18</sup> Brownlie, *Committed Approaches and Activism*, 46.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 45.

<sup>20</sup> Tymoczko, *Translation and Power*, xiv.

number of texts translated into English and from English. Due to the domination of the English language, only 2 % of the books published by American publishers in 2004 were translations.<sup>21</sup> According to Brownlie even the translations reinforced the values of the dominant culture because they were using the fluent translation.<sup>22</sup> In comparison, the number of translations from other languages than French published in France varies between 8 and 12 %.<sup>23</sup> In the case of translations into English, Venuti advocates non-fluent translation which preserves and even highlights the source text formulations that are quite different from English and thus help maintain higher linguistic variability and contest the dominant position of English. According to Venuti, by publishing such a great volume of English literature the publishers are supporting the expansion and domination of British and American cultures.<sup>24</sup> Even though Venuti cannot be marked as a translation activist, this view of his is in accordance with manifests of some of the organizations of translation activists, for example Tlaxcala, who define themselves as a network for linguistic diversity and whose manifest will be described in more detail in Chapter 7. In Venuti's point of view translators and the whole translation process should be made more visible.

Another theorist dealing with the matters of translation and power and translation activism is Maria Tymoczko. She claims that researchers in translation studies should consider the question of power and injustice in translation. In her book *Translation and Power* Tymoczko states that translation can never be a neutral activity and it is a very effective tool for domination.<sup>25</sup> The context and the cultural background of the translator have an influence of confirming or contesting the power structures in the world. Interestingly, she admits that the translators can both confirm and contest at the same time. The translator can represent the status quo while introducing new forms of representation and thus he or she "acts as a kind of double agent in the process of cultural negotiation."<sup>26</sup> Some of the organizations of translation activists described later in Chapter 7 (for example ECOS) admit this role of translators as a tool at the service of globalizers and the possibility of translation to maintain the global structures of domination. It is the main aim of some of these organizations to give voice also to the globalized and dominated and contest the power of dominators.

Mona Baker is another researcher who focuses on the issue of translation and its role in society. She is an advocate for the research on activist communities of translators and interpreters because they go against the traditional view of translators and interpreters as

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<sup>21</sup> Venuti, *Translator's Invisibility*, 11.

<sup>22</sup> Brownlie, *Committed Approaches and Activism*, 45.

<sup>23</sup> Venuti, *Translator's Invisibility*, 11.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

<sup>25</sup> Tymoczko, *Translation and Power*, i-xx.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, xix.



passive and non-interventionist, against Venuti's description of invisibility. In her work Baker uses narrative theory to describe the work of activist translators and interpreters, especially during conflicts. Similar with Tymoczko, she also focuses on the relationship between translation and power and the ability of translation to contest the global structures of domination.

## 5 Narrative theory

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As we mentioned in the previous chapter, translators can have an influence on public opinion since every translation process involves conscious decisions about necessary changes in the text. To be able to assess the means that translators use for creating and circulating a certain narrative, we are going to draw on narrative theory.

Baker states that there are more possible approaches towards narratives.<sup>27</sup> She distinguishes two basic approaches: the literary approach and the linguistic approach. According to the literary approach, a narrative is an optional mode of communication. The literary narrative theory looks at narration as a way to describe events in temporal order. Basically, they analyze the structure of these narratives. According to the linguistic approach, on the other hand, narration “is a meta-code that cuts across and underpins all modes of communication.”<sup>28</sup> A narrative is a way of understanding and interpreting of the whole reality around us. A narrative is not an option, it is a perspective that is always present. Another difference between these two approaches is the genre that they deal with. The literary narrative theory sees narratives in various genres and it can be used to analyze literature, folktales or even political statements. The linguistic narrative theory, on the other hand, sees narrative as independent of genre and at the same time present in all genres, be it stories for children or technical and scientific articles.<sup>29</sup> For analyses of the activist translation the linguistic approach is more applicable as it distinguishes between the dominant narrative that the translation activists attempt to contest and the narrative of the minority that they aim at promoting. It also allows for analysis of different genre, including the news articles and blog posts that this thesis is going to look into.

Narrative has the power to create categories that exist only within this particular narrative. Within a certain narrative, all characters and events can be categorized as either normal or abnormal, as legal or illegal, as legitimate or non-legitimate. And it is the narrative that provides the legitimation and justification of these characters and events. The narrative also has a normalizing function, it tells us what the norms are. People embedded in a certain narrative often do not question its principles as they see them as normal and natural. According to Baker there are certain narratives, especially the political ones that we “digest, translate and circulate ‘passively’ without stopping to consider their implications.”<sup>30</sup> This relates to one of the aims of translation activism which is to provide an alternative narrative

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<sup>27</sup> Baker, *Translation and Conflict*, 8.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

and make readers look beyond their own narrative, to make them think about events and opinions from a different perspective and reconsider their norms and values.

Baker states that it is the power of translators and interpreters both to circulate and to contest the narratives.<sup>31</sup> Translators and interpreters may be paid by governments and organizations to circulate and promote their narrative and thus help legitimize it. Translation activists, however, can contest the mainstream narratives because they can choose which articles they translate, as they are not paid for their work. They can choose to promote points of view of minority groups that do not have the resources to pay for translation services. In this way the translators can support causes that they believe in. Baker supports this power of narrative when she admits that “narratives have political import and that they can unsettle and contest hegemonic views of the world.”<sup>32</sup>

As we said before, a narrative is present in all modes of communication. However, it is particularly important in political context because governments and organizations use the narratives to legitimize their power. A narrative is not concise and strictly delimited. Each narrative circulates in many different versions. These versions may differ only in unimportant details or they may be the complete opposite of each other. With time the various versions of a narrative evolve and their importance fluctuates. Baker argues that each individual and community base their current narrative on the narratives of the past.<sup>33</sup> The past narratives help the individuals embedded in these narratives to find a common identity, define who they are and form an opinion on the current situation. By retelling, stressing or rejecting narratives of the past, organizations, governments and individuals can control the thinking and behavior of others. We can see the opposing versions of a narrative during a conflict. Each side would usually have their own narrative which legitimizes their cause. For each side of the conflict it is crucial to promote their narrative and persuade others that theirs is the only truth. Most of the conflicts today are not negotiated in monolingual environment because even conflicts within one country often concern more than one cultural and ethnic group. Thus, the translators and interpreters play an important role as they have the power to influence the narratives within this conflict. Every time a text is translated and a narrative is retold, the translator brings in a certain amount of their broader personal narrative and thus he or she can influence the narrative of the target environment. In this way the narratives continually influence each other and evolve.

Narrative theory, as Baker puts it in her book *Translation and Conflict*, deals with the way in which narratives interplay in the processes of domination and oppression. Narratives

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<sup>31</sup> Baker, *Translation and Conflict*, 14.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.

often legitimize and promote the points of view of political, economic and cultural elite while leaving out large sectors of society such as minority groups, groups that are not economically important or do not have political power. This focus is in line with the topic of translation activism because through promotion of alternative narratives the activists contest the dominant narrative of the elite.

## 6 Examples of translation activism in history

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To gain a better understanding of the current situation of translation activism, it is worth looking at its history. Nowadays, translation activism is getting more and more attention due to contemporary technologies and easier dissemination of information. However, the translation activism is not just a current phenomenon. Some authors (for example Martha Cheung or Maria Tymoczko) find its examples as far as in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>34</sup> During the Qing period in China that lasted between 1840 and 1911 translators played an important role in changing the traditional Chinese society by the introduction of Western texts.<sup>35</sup> This can be an example of translation activism by selective appropriation as the translators were choosing the texts based on the origin of the author. Below, two periods when translation activism played an important role are described.

### 6.1 IRISH INDEPENDENCE (LATE 19<sup>TH</sup> AND EARLY 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY)

Translation activism also played a role during the Irish fight for independence in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century. During this period, a figure of Cú Chulainn was created by the Irish translators.<sup>36</sup> This figure later became a hero for the Irish nationalists who were fighting for the independence of Ireland. Originally, Cú Chulainn was a figure with many negative and not appealing characteristics, definitely not a hero. However, the fighters for Irish independence needed a figure that could become their emblem. For this reason the translators shifted the narrative about Cú Chulainn to create a character that people could admire and follow. According to Milton, Lady Gregory, who was one of the translators, deliberately left out mentions of fleas that the original character had an abundance of and she also omitted his womanizing.<sup>37</sup> In her translation Cú Chulainn was not as lazy as the source character and thus he became much more suitable for a hero.

This method, called selective appropriation by Baker,<sup>38</sup> is described in more detail in Chapter 9 as one of the methods that translators use to reframe their narrative. Lady Gregory was not the only translator to use this method and the sum of the translations created at that time gave birth to an entirely new character which became much more famous than its source.

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<sup>34</sup> Brownlie, *Committed Approaches and Activism*, 46.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>37</sup> John Milton, "Translation Studies and Adaptation Studies," in *Translation Research Projects 2*, ed. Anthony Pym and Alexander Perekrestenko (Tarragona: Intercultural Studies Group, 2010), 53.

<sup>38</sup> Baker, *Translation and Conflict*, 114.

## 6.2 ARAB SPRING (EARLY 2010s)

Translation activism played an important role during the Arab Spring in early 2010s. Many communities of translation activists were established with the objective to tell the world what was going on in the countries concerned. Citizen media played a key role in disseminating information about the Arab revolution.

One of the projects that involved citizen media and later translation activists was Small World News. The aim of this project is to support civil society through citizen media. Thanks to modern technologies this projects wants to make tools for sharing stories and information available even to people that live in crisis areas and are in a way isolated from the rest of the world.<sup>39</sup> This project was followed by a series of projects called *Alive in/*. Several Arab countries have their own version of *Alive in/* which continue with the same objectives as Small World News. *Alive in/* mention translation as one of their main tasks on their website. They say that their project will be “dramatically improved by translating the content into English in order to reach a wider audience.”<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> “Small World News,” accessed March 31, 2016, <http://smallworldnews.com/about/#story>.

<sup>40</sup> “Alive in/,” accessed March 31, 2016, <http://alive.in/egypt/about/>.

## 7 Important organizations of translation activists

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Nowadays we can find several important groups of translation activists. According to Brownlie the current groups differ from the previous formations in three main aspects.<sup>41</sup> Firstly, contemporary movements are supra-national on many levels: concerning their members, administrators, contributors and audience. This differentiates them from the activism during the Qing period and also the activism during the Irish independence, because they were both focused on a single nation (China and Ireland respectively). Secondly, contemporary technologies enable faster and easier spreading of information, through electronic networking and various websites. This differentiates the current groups from the Qing period and Irish independence as the texts can reach broader audience in a much shorter period of time. Thirdly, the current groups have much stronger common identity as we can see in the manifests of organizations described later in this chapter. Some of the most important current translation activist groups are briefly introduced below.

### 7.1 ECOS

One of the first modern communities of activist translators was ECOS. This community was established in 1998 and it was based on the University of Granada. Their aim was to “provide translation and interpreting services for NGOs and other social organizations.”<sup>42</sup> One of the contributions of ECOS to the development of translation activism was the organization of the First International Forum on Translation/Interpreting and Social Activism. This forum was held in April 2007 in Granada. Its aim was to bring together members of academia, members of activist communities of translators and interpreters as well as professionals to discuss translation and interpreting in socio-, geo-political and ethical terms. They wanted to address the role of translators and interpreters in compensating the injustices of conflictual and polarized society. They touched upon several topics including the political aspects of translation, ethical dimension of translation, the issue of volunteering and many more.<sup>43</sup>

There are two important outcomes of this forum. Firstly, the Granada Declaration was approved by participants of the forum. Secondly, a publication consisting of selected papers was compiled, edited by Julie Boéri and Carol Maier and published in 2010. The Granada Declaration, with its subheading of Manifesto in favor of translation and interpreting at the service of society as a whole and of all societies, formulated several defining principles of

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<sup>41</sup> Brownlie, *Committed Approaches and Activism*, 48.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 46.

<sup>43</sup> “Granada Declaration,” accessed February 2, 2016, <http://www.translationactivism.com/Manifest.html>.

translation activism that still apply today. It stated that the work of translators and interpreters should not be limited to neutral conveyors of ideas. This point allows translators and interpreters to have their opinion and style just as it acknowledges their background and culture. Thus, it liberates them from the idea of invisibility, presented by Venuti that was mentioned earlier. The declaration also admits that in the process of neoliberal globalization translators and interpreters are sometimes a tool at the service of the globalizers and also the globalized. This point stresses the role of translators and interpreters in the creation of public opinion. According to the Granada Declaration, translators, interpreters, scholars and students should all aim to build intercultural societies, reinforce links between social movements and defend language diversity. The declaration rejects the use of translators and interpreters by military forces during wars of occupation.<sup>44</sup>

## 7.2 BABELS

According to Brownlie, the translation activism took off particularly in 2002, the year when the Babels were established.<sup>45</sup> In the same article Brownlie also states that Babels are the largest and most visible of the current translation activism communities. Babels define themselves as a network of volunteer translators and interpreters. Their beginnings are connected with the European Social Forum held in Florence in November 2002. From the volunteers that gathered for translating and interpreting this forum, Babels were born. On their website they say about themselves: “Babels is not a provider of linguistic services, it is a political actor.”<sup>46</sup> Since their establishment they have taken part in all the World Social Forums, mainly as interpreters. Their aim is to give voice to the people of different languages and cultures, to make participation in the decision-making process possible even for people who “do not speak a colonial language.”<sup>47</sup> They claim to be changing the outcome of political debates by increasing the diversity of contributions by making it possible for everybody to express themselves in the language of their choice. Babels have no hierarchical structure and they are based entirely on the work of volunteers. They comprise of activists of different tendencies and backgrounds and are connected by the task of transforming the social forum. Boéri states that Babels are “one of the best examples of how alternatives to market capitalism can and are being actively produced through the Social Forum process.”<sup>48</sup>

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44 “Granada Declaration,” accessed February 2, 2016, <http://www.translationactivism.com/Manifest.html>.

45 Brownlie, *Committed Approaches and Activism*, 46.

46 “Babels,” accessed February 5, 2016, <http://www.babels.org/spip.php?article272>.

47 Ibid.

48 Julie Boéri, “Babels and the Politics of Language at the Heart of the Social Forum,” (*Z Net: A community of people committed to social change*, 2005), 1.



The translation activities within Babels are connected under their project Transtrad, which is an autonomous project within the Babels network. The main task of Transtrad translators is to prepare the documents before the social forum, but they also participate during the event and work on the materials that need to be processed after the forum. On their website, anyone can sign up as an interpreter or project facilitator. According to this website, there are more than 3900 translators already registered at Transtrad.<sup>49</sup>

### **7.3 TRADUTTORI PER LA PACE**

Another organization, that made an important contribution to the field of translation activism, were Traduttori per la Pace (Translators for Peace). This organization was established in 1999, during the war in Kosovo. This association was based in Italy and Italian was also the main language of the discussion group. During its golden age, Traduttori per la Pace had more than 300 members.<sup>50</sup> Nowadays, the group is almost inactive, having published only few articles on their website during 2015.

The aim of this group was to make articles and documents that were not available in the Italian press which was intended for the Italian public. Later, their mission shifted slightly and they were helping civil society organizations whose message was to promote peace and to spread their word. They helped translate documents, websites and similarly with Babels they also provided interpreters for conferences and meetings. In general, through translation and interpreting, Traduttori per la Pace were promoting peace and fighting against wars.<sup>51</sup>

### **7.4 TLAXCALA**

According to Brownlie, Tlaxcala was also one of the important organizations that focus on providing translations of media and other texts on their website and on sharing this information with other organizations.<sup>52</sup> Tlaxcala was founded in 2005 and they define themselves as a “network for linguistic diversity.”<sup>53</sup> However, this group is not active anymore; they published their last article in 2012.

According to the Tlaxcala’s Manifesto, written in 2005 when the organization was established, the main goal of the organization is to promote linguistic diversity. The manifest describes with regret the time of Spanish colonization of the Americas and the resulting loss of indigenous languages and cultures. It draws a parallel with the situation today when

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<sup>49</sup> “Babels.”

<sup>50</sup> Maria Tymoczko (ed.), *Translation, Resistance, Activism* (Amherst: UMassPress, 2010), 46.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 47.

<sup>52</sup> Brownlie, *Committed Approaches and Activism*, 46.

<sup>53</sup> “Tlaxcala’s Manifesto,” accessed February 10, 2016, <http://www.tlaxcala.es/manifiesto.asp>.

the USA are the new imperial power and English the new official language that forces the so-called “subordinate languages”<sup>54</sup> into oblivion. They criticize the fact that English functions not only as lingua franca, but it also “consciously or unconsciously transmits the ideology of superiority that characterizes it.”<sup>55</sup> Tlaxcala points out the imbalance between the amount of texts translated from other languages into English and texts translated from English into the subordinate languages. The amount of translations into English is only a small percentage. Tlaxcala takes up the responsibility and sets equalizing of this imbalance as its target. To achieve this aim and to de-imperialize the English language, Tlaxcala attempts at publishing texts in all possible languages. They want to make the voices of writers, thinkers, cartoonists and activists heard by a wider audience. They want to allow the authors to publish in their own languages and still be heard throughout the world. By this effort they hope to achieve their objective of making the world more multipolar and multilingual and “as diverse as life itself.”<sup>56</sup>

All these organizations contributed to the development of translation activism in their own way. Each of these organizations focused on slightly different activities. ECOS opened the discussion on translation activism between academia, professionals and activists. They formulated the Granada Declaration which still helps to define translation activism today. Babels wanted to make it possible for everyone to participate in the social forum and thus contribute to the discussion about the future of our society. Traduttori per la Pace translated and interpreted in order to support the world peace. For Tlaxcala, the most important issue was to maintain linguistic diversity and oppose to the supremacy of imperial languages.

Even though these organizations differ in many ways, they still have a lot in common. Their main goal is to support the minority groups that often do not get the voice to express their opinions and attitudes. They are in opposition to the hegemon, which is promoting its ideology, culture and language, making it seem the universal truth. All of these organizations are based on the work of volunteers, who want to contribute to the common purpose. They do it to support the idea they deem important. Most of these organizations were active mainly in the past. Nowadays some of them are losing their strength and influence, some of them ceased to exist altogether. However, there is one important organization that seems to be taking up the role of the organizations mentioned above and becoming the leading actor in the field of translation activism. This organization called Global Voices, will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

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<sup>54</sup> “Tlaxcala’s Manifesto.”

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

## 8 The current situation of translation activism

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Translation activism is closely connected with citizen media and citizen journalism. One of the definitions of citizen journalism is provided by Allan and Thorsen: “the spontaneous actions of ordinary people, caught up in extraordinary events, who felt compelled to adopt the role of a news reporter.”<sup>57</sup> The whole field of media is changing because the mainstream media no longer have the monopoly on providing information to the public. Nowadays, when so many people have a phone with a camera and internet connection it is very easy to share information with others. According to Greer and McLaughlin, “the emergence of the citizen journalist carries significant implications for professional news gathering organizations and official institutions who would seek to control the news.”<sup>58</sup> There are several websites where citizen journalists can share their news with the rest of the world. Some examples of these websites include Littera Report, visionOntv or Global Voices.

Although some of these websites have other than English versions they focus mainly on the English-speaking audience; with the exception of Global Voices. Globalization and the fact that the Internet is accessible for more and more people every day creates greater transnational connectedness and it has its effects on the media as well. According to Reese et al., “the Internet has increased the speed, reach, and comprehensiveness of journalism available to the public and lowered the cost of entry to anyone seeking to participate.”<sup>59</sup> It means that anyone in the world can participate in the media no matter where he or she lives or what language they speak. Reese et al. stresses this interconnectedness of the world media: “the online environment ‘deterritorializes’ news, such as that the user, creator, and news subject need no longer share the same national frame of reference.”<sup>60</sup> Not everyone in the world speaks English and the predominant use of English excludes many people from participation in the citizen media. For this reason, some authors consider translation to be an intrinsic part of citizen journalism. For example Goode considers translation to be one of the most important components of citizen journalism.<sup>61</sup> And this is when the translation activism comes in to play its role in the global media.

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<sup>57</sup> Stuart Allan and Einar Thorsen (eds.), *Citizen Journalism: Global Perspective* (New York: Peter Lang, 2009), 10.

<sup>58</sup> Chris Greer and Eugene McLaughlin, “We Predict a Riot? Public Order Policing, New Media Environments and the Rise of the Citizen Journalist.” *British Journal of Criminology* 50 (2010): 6.

<sup>59</sup> Stephen D. Reese et al, “Mapping the Blogosphere.” *Journalism* 8 (2007): 236.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> Luke Goode, “Social News, Citizen Journalism and Democracy,” *New Media Society* 11 (2009): 1291.

## 8.1 GLOBAL VOICES

Global Voices are one of the citizen media communities that are trying to make information accessible for everyone regardless of the language they speak. Global Voices comprise of more than 1 200 volunteer writers, analysts, online media experts and translators. In their aim to provide information to everyone they come as far as to make translation one of their five main objectives. According to their website their objectives are to report, translate, defend, empower and connect.<sup>62</sup> On the same website they also state that they “curate, verify and translate trending news and stories.” The Global Voices website became available to the public in 2005 and since then they have covered 167 countries.

Global Voices were originally published in English, but soon the need to translate the stories into other languages emerged. In 2006 the pioneer Chinese version was created, followed shortly by the French. In order to manage all the translations between the increasing number of languages, project Lingua was established. Since its beginning, Lingua has expanded substantially and nowadays more than 500 volunteer translators participate in this project and translate between more than 35 languages.<sup>63</sup> These languages include the major world languages such as Arabic, Chinese or Spanish, but we can also find languages that are not so commonly used, such as Malagasy, Aymara or Catalan. Among the languages of Lingua we can also find Czech.

There is another dimension to Global Voices than project Lingua. The organization also offers its translation services to organizations dealing with media and journalism, freedom of expression, human rights and many more. However, these services are not considered to be translation activism as they are offered for a charge. It is stated as a part of their principles that the organization pays their translators a competitive rate and keep their administrative costs to a minimum.<sup>64</sup> Even though the organization offers translations of activist articles, the main motivation of the translators is to get paid for their work and not to help a cause or spread an idea. For this reason, this part of Global Voices is not translation activism and when we talk about Global Voices in the rest of this thesis, we always mean their project Lingua.

## 8.2 COMPARISON OF SITES WITHIN GLOBAL VOICES

To understand better how Global Voices operate, it is useful to look at its structure. This will also allow us to compare the various language versions and observe the position of languages within Global Voices. The website as a whole consists of two groups of sites:

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<sup>62</sup> “Global Voices Lingua,” accessed February 10, 2016, <https://globalvoices.org/lingua/>.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

thematic sites and language sites. Each of the thematic sites focuses on a different topic. Among these we can find for example Global Voices advox, concerned with freedom of speech online, Rising Voices, focused on extending the benefits and reach of citizen media, or The Bridge, featuring original ideas, opinions and writings. For this thesis, the thematic groups are not that important and it is going to focus on the second group of sites, the language sites.

As we mentioned before, Global Voices, through their project Lingua, translate between more than 35 languages. Each of these languages has its own site. In September 2015, when the last update of the list of language sites was carried out, there were 44 language sites, including English. The number is higher than the number of languages, because for example Chinese has two language sites: Chinese Simplified and Chinese Traditional. There are also sites that were established without ever translating anything, for example the Kurdish site of Global Voices. The sites were not established at once, as we already mentioned. Figure 1 below shows the timeline of years when some of the language sites were established. The years when the first article in the particular language was published were taken as the years when the sites were established. According to the data of Lingua Translation Stats, 11 articles in Spanish were published in 2004, even before the Project Lingua was officially started. The biggest number of new language sites were established in 2007 and 2008. This is also the time when Global Voices Czech came into being. Other sites that were established during the same year include for example Global Voices po polsku (Polish site) or Global Voices in Italiano (Italian site).

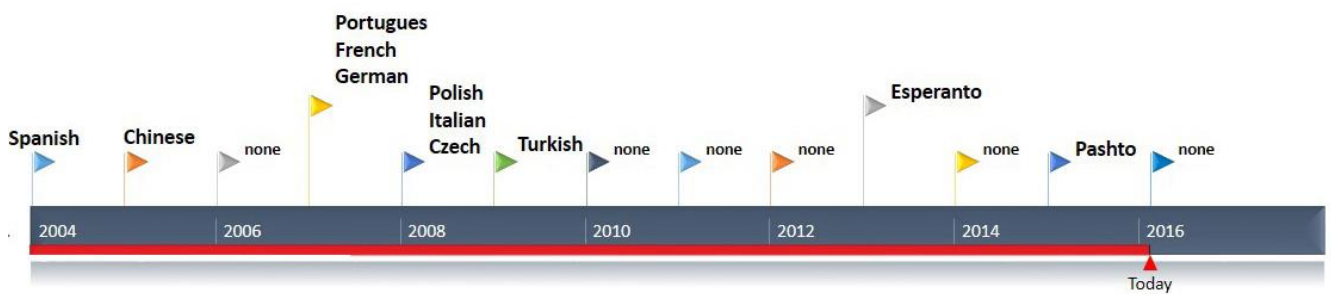


Figure 1: Timeline of language sites within Global Voices (Source of Data: Global Voices Lingua Translation Stats)

Even though the establishment of these language sites lagged just one year behind some of the languages with much greater number of speakers, these data tell us nothing about the amount of translation actually carried out by these sites.

Figure 2 below shows the actual number of articles that were translated by various Lingua sites between 2010 and 2015. The selection of countries in Figure 2 is not based on the highest number of translated articles (the most productive Lingua sites are shown below, in Figure 3). Spanish and French were selected because they stay in the top 10 sites for many years. English was selected because it has a prominent position as a language of international communication. The Czech site was chosen because we will discuss it in more detail in the next chapter. German and Polish were chosen because of their geographical proximity with the Czech Republic so we can compare the activity in the Czech Republic and in the neighboring countries.

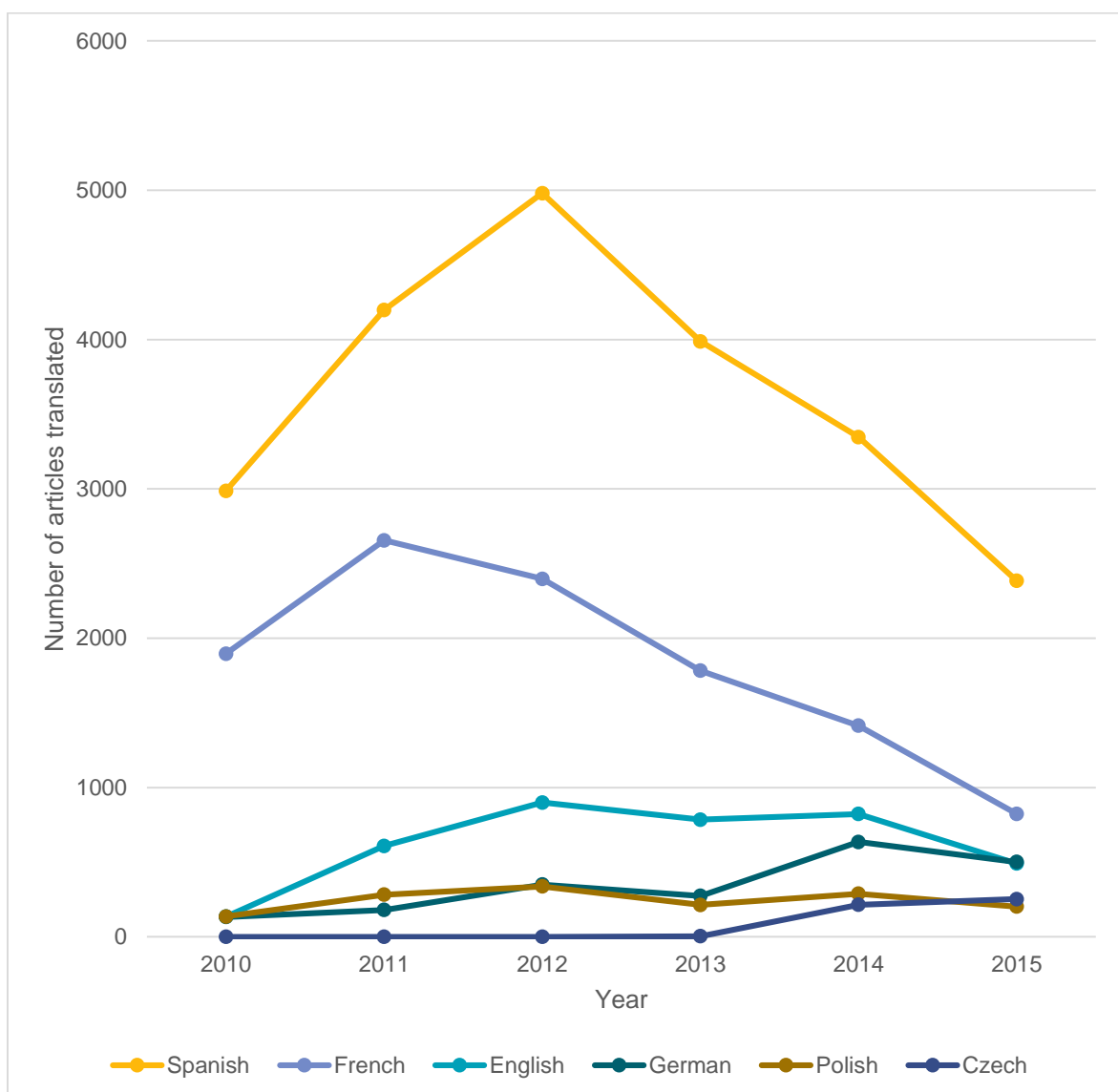


Figure 2: Number of articles translated by various language sites of Global Voices (Source of Data: Global Voices Lingua Translation Stats)

In Figure 2 we can see that in the past year the number of articles translated into all of the selected languages decreased, with Czech being the only exception. The peak of the number of translated articles was different for each of the observed languages. While the number of articles translated to Spanish was the highest in 2012, the number of French articles is going down considerably since 2011. The position of English is very interesting in this regard. Figure 2 shows the number of articles translated into English, not all the articles that were published in English. It means that the amount of articles published in a different language than English and later translated was increasing between 2010 and 2012 and since then it stays more or less stable. Even though the Czech site (Global Voices v češtině) was established already in 2008, the number of translated articles was negligible until 2014. Since then the number of translated articles has been increasing. The Polish site, on the other hand, was quite productive in 2010, it translated approximately the same number of articles as German and English, and in 2011 it even surpassed German. However, since then their activity has been slightly decreasing and in 2015 the Czech site translated more articles than its Polish counterpart.

Figure 3 below shows the number of articles translated by ten of the most productive sites of Global Voices in 2015. By far the highest number of articles was translated into Spanish. Surprisingly, the second most productive site in 2015 was Global Voices teny Malagasy. Malagasy, with only about 18 million of native speakers, has been within the five most productive languages since 2011. Similarly with Figure 2, even Figure 3 shows us that the amount of articles translated into English is quite low compared to other languages, it holds only the 7th position.

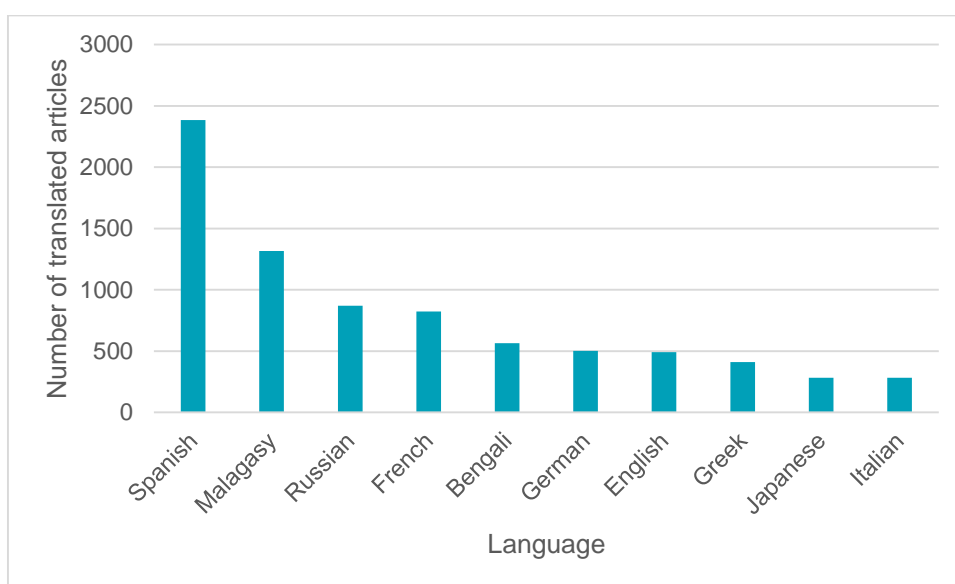


Figure 3: Number of articles translated in 2015 by 10 of the most productive sites (Source of Data: Global Voices Lingua Translation Stats)

### 8.3 GLOBAL VOICES IN CZECH

As we said before, Global Voices have several language sites and translate between many languages. One of these versions is Global Voices v češtině. It is the most active organization of translation activists in the Czech Republic. The Czech site was established in 2008 but the first article was not published until 2013. Since then, the number of articles translated each year has been rising (see Figure 2). As of March 2016, the site has 28 active voluntary translators. Since 2008, they translated altogether 486 articles. The average number of translated articles by one translator is over 17, but this number is not very predicative because the mode of translated articles is just 2. The average is so high because the editor himself has translated over 300 articles since the establishment of the site. Figure 4 below shows the number of articles translated by the Czech site of Global Voices each month between January 2015 and February 2016. We can see that during the first half of the year the number of articles was quite high and then declined considerably. Most of the articles were translated from English, Spanish ranks second and a few articles were also translated from German.

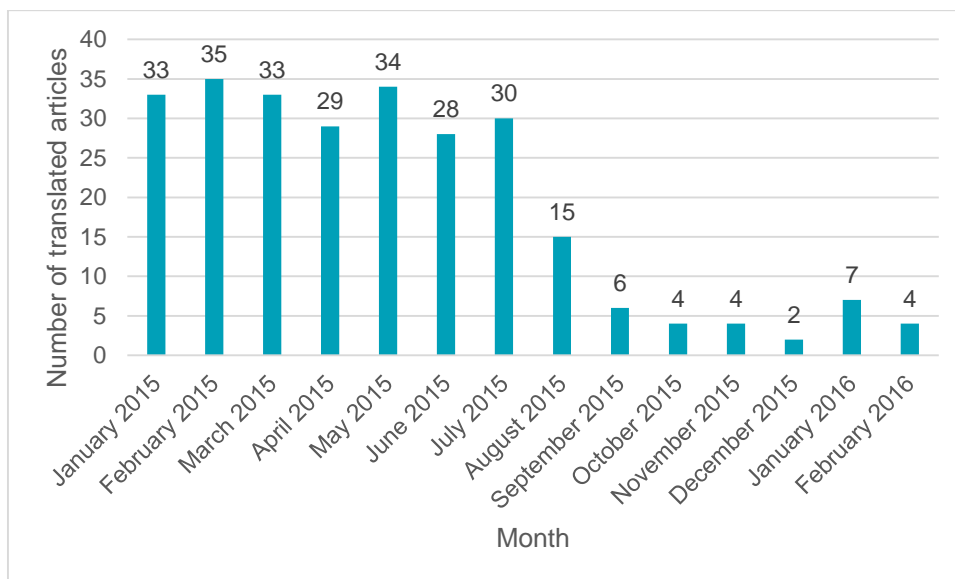


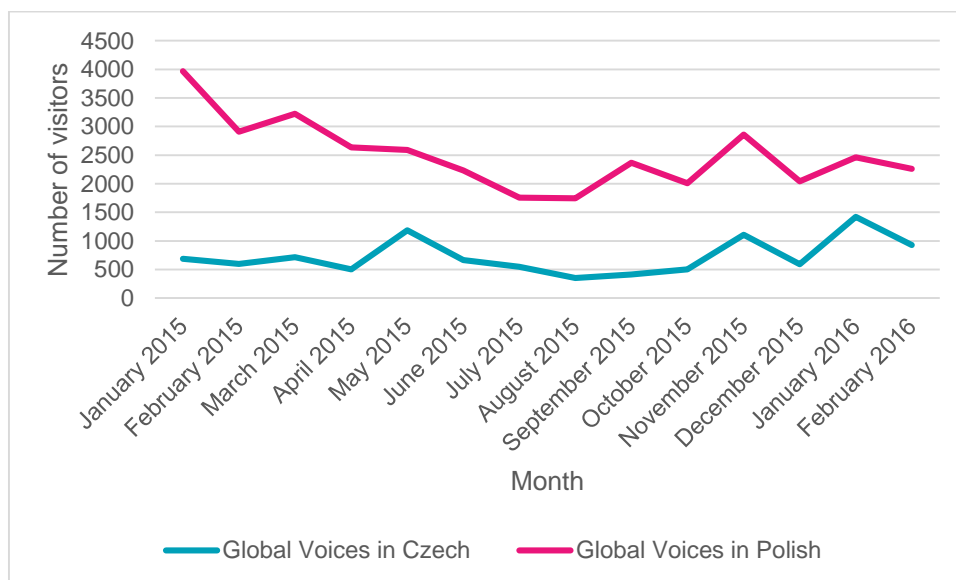
Figure 4: Number of articles translated by the Czech site in 2015 and in the beginning of 2016 (Source of Data: Global Voices Lingua Translation stats)

Figure 5 below shows the number of people that visited the Czech and Polish sites of Global Voices each month between January 2015 and February 2016. The Polish site was chosen for comparison with the Czech site based on the historical and geographical proximity of these two countries. Slovakian site would be even more appropriate but no such site has been established so far. Figure 5 shows us that the visitor rate of both of the



sites fluctuates considerably. The visitor rate of the Czech site ranges from the lowest value of 353 visitors in August 2015 and the highest value of 1419 visitors in January 2016. The visitor rate of the Polish site of Global Voices ranges from the lowest value of 1,743 visitors in August 2015 and the highest value of 3,967 visitors in January 2015. Interestingly, there is a similar pattern of the visitor rate fluctuation. There is an increase in November 2015 and January 2016 in the visitor rate of both sites. These peaks are divided by a decrease in visitor rate in December 2015. When we compare the visitor rate of these two sites we should take into consideration the difference in number of speaker (Czech has about 11 million native speakers and Polish has about 40 million native speakers), we can see that the visitor rate of the Czech site is higher, but there is no marked difference. On average, 728 visitors opened the Czech site every month during the observed period. For the Polish site, this value is 2,503. When we take into account the number of speakers, there is a very small difference. Comparing this figure with Figure 4 above, we can see no relationship between number of translated articles and the number of visitors. While the number of translated articles declined in the second half of the observed period, the number of visitors does not show this trend.

Figure 5: Number of visitors of the site Global Voices in Czech and in Polish in 2015 and the beginning of 2016 (Source of Data: Milan Ončák, editor of the site Global Voices in Czech and Krzysztof Pawliszak, editor of the site Global Voices in Polish)



## 8.4 TRANSLATING FOR GLOBAL VOICES

Translation for project Lingua of Global Voices is based entirely on a voluntary basis and anyone can join as a translator. In their application form, they only ask about one's name,

age, nationality and about the source and target language of the potential translator. Clearly, the motivation is more important than any previous experience or professionalism because the online application form contains a question: What would you like to bring to GV and why?<sup>65</sup> They do not ask any questions about education or employment. However, they ask about the topics that the potential translator is interested in and passionate about. After the applicants submit this form, it is the editor of the particular site of Global Voices who contacts them and welcomes them about the Global Voices community. It is a custom for the new members of the Czech site to introduce themselves to the rest of the members. Each of the members have their own profile on the website that anyone can see together with the articles which they have translated. Even though there is an application form, anyone can be admitted. When one becomes a translator, the whole translation process is quite simple. The translator selects an article from any of the language versions and marks that he or she is working on this particular text. Translators can choose any text published by Global Voices, no matter the language or publication date. There are many articles published every day and thus the choice is very wide. Selection of the article is also a way to influence public opinion. After the translation is finished, translators submit it for review to an editor. After the editor's work is done, the translators can see their translations with all the changes marked by the editor. This gives them feedback and enables them to learn from their mistakes and improve their translation with every text. Afterwards, the translator receives a confirmation email from the editor and the article is published on the particular site of Global Voices. The work of the editor is usually limited to checking for any grammatical errors, misspellings and general understandability. They do not interfere with the style of the translator unless there are some substantial changes compared to the source text. This process gives the translators a wide frame space and a lot of options to infuse the text with their own voice.

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<sup>65</sup> "Global Voices Lingua."

## 9 Translation activism in practice

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Translators and especially translation activists have the power to influence public opinion, as we described it in the previous chapters. This chapter is going to focus on the methods that translators can use to do so. As we mentioned above, translation activists have two basic ways of influencing public opinion and expressing their own beliefs: through the choice of the texts they translate and through various strategies they use in the text. Both of these ways are going to be described in this chapter and complemented with examples from the translations published by Global Voices. Five articles published by the English site of Global Voices and their translations published by the Czech site were chosen as a source of examples.

To describe the methods used by translation activists to accentuate, undermine or modify certain narratives we are going to use the concept of framing as described by Baker.<sup>66</sup> She defines framing as “an active strategy that implies agency and by means of which we consciously participate in the construction of reality.”<sup>67</sup> It means that through framing translators can influence the image that the reader of the text makes about the described event, organization or point of view. Translators have many options to frame the narrative, both linguistic and non-linguistic. The non-linguistic options include for example intonation and typography, examples of linguistic options are tense shifts, deixis, code switching and use of euphemisms.<sup>68</sup>

These methods enable the activist translators to contest, support or modify the narratives. In case there are two or more competing narratives, which is typical, for example, during conflicts, the translator can tend to one of them by the choices they make during the translation process. However, this choice does not have to be consistent and even within one text the translator may support both of the competing narratives.<sup>69</sup> Sometimes the translators oscillate between the narratives with the aim to create their own that suits their beliefs and sense of reality.

### 9.1 TEMPORAL AND SPATIAL FRAMING

One of the methods used by translation activists to express their voice is temporal and spatial framing. This method involves the choice of text to be translated. In this case, the translator selects a certain text and ingrains it in the temporal and spatial context in such a way that it leads the reader to establish a connection between the text and current situation.

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<sup>66</sup> Baker, *Translation and Conflict*, 105-140.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 106.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, 111.

<sup>69</sup> Mona Baker, “Reframing Conflict in Translation,” *Social Semiotics* 12 (2013): 152.

This connection may be just illusory, because the source narrative may take place in a very remote time and space. Using this method, the translator does not have to make any other interventions in the text, the current reality of the readers should be enough for them to establish the desired connection.

To illustrate temporal and spatial framing, Baker provides the example of Lysistrata project<sup>70</sup> that was mentioned already in Chapter 4. During this project, translators provided their translations of the Greek theatre play Lysistrata and readings of this play took place in several countries. Even though the play was set in a very remote place and time, the time of the readings together with the message of the play led the public to establish a connection between the act of women united to end the Peloponnesian war and the contemporary invasion of Iraq. It was the possibility for the translation activists to express their protest against the invasion of Iraq through translating this play and providing the translations for free for the readings.

We can find examples of temporal and spatial framing on the Czech site of Global Voices. However, these examples are not as pronounced as the one described by Baker, the implicit connection is often more visible than in the Lysistrata example. An example of spatial framing may be the article about a Palestinian refugee in Syria who moved to Germany towards the end of 2015 together with many other Syrian refugees. This article was published by the English site of Global Voices in the end of January 2016, its Czech translation was published two weeks later. The Czech translation can be called spatial framing because despite the fact that the situation in the Czech Republic is not explicitly mentioned in the article, all the readers know that the situation is quite similar to Germany. At the time, when many refugees were coming also to the Czech Republic and the media were mostly spreading fear of them, the translator of this article wanted to present an alternative story about the refugees and make the Czech narrative about refugees more positive. The English article says that: *Germany represents their first chance to be something other than refugees — to become full citizens of a state.*<sup>71</sup> By choosing this article the translator aims at persuading the Czech audience to have a positive attitude towards the refugees, to give them a fair chance to find a home country.

## 9.2 SELECTIVE APPROPRIATION

Another method that can be used by translation activists for framing narratives is selective appropriation. Baker defines selective appropriation as “patterns of omission and addition

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<sup>70</sup> Baker, *Translation and Conflict*, 112.

<sup>71</sup> Noon Arabia, “Syria's Most Vulnerable Live a Hard Life in Jordan's Refugee Camps,” in *Global Voices in English*, posted December 11, 2016.

designed to suppress, accentuate or elaborate particular aspects of a narrative encoded in the source text or utterance.”<sup>72</sup> This method can be exercised in two levels: during the selection of the text and during the translation itself

On the higher-level, meaning the level of the choice of the texts to be translated, there is a possibility to exclude certain texts, authors, languages and cultures from translation altogether. Baker provides the example of Jewish authors during the Nazi rule in Germany.<sup>73</sup> Because every translation had to provide the racial background of the author in order to be published, the publishers could sort out the Jewish authors and thus totally conceal their narrative from the public.

On the lower-level, meaning within a text, selective appropriation takes place in the form of omission or addition of certain parts or expressions to the text. Using this method, translators can support a particular narrative because in extreme cases they may totally delete the passages of the text that undermine the narrative that they want to support. Baker uses the example of an English translation of the article written by Gabriel García Márquez to describe an event when the US navy rescued a family fleeing from Cuba to the US after their boat capsized.<sup>74</sup> The aim of the translator was to promote the narrative of the US and show it in a more positive light. In order to do so, the translator deleted some details that portrayed the US police as aggressive and disrespectful as the original article presented the US authorities in a negative light. By doing so, the translator supported the official US narrative of the conflict.

Examples of selective appropriation can be found even within the translations published by Global Voices. The higher-level selective appropriation is not so prominent on the Czech site of Global Voices, there is no evidence of exclusion of any particular group of authors or a specific topic. Concerning the selection of texts, we can see a tendency to translate texts that are related to the current situation in the Czech Republic. During the months when refugees were an everyday topic in the Czech newspaper, many articles concerning refugees were translated. However, we can find examples of the lower-level selective appropriation within the texts. For example the title of an English article “Syria’s Most Vulnerable Live a Hard Life in Jordan’s Refugee Camps”<sup>75</sup> was translated into Czech only as “Tvrký život těch nejzranitelnějších v jordánských uprchlických táborech”<sup>76</sup> [The hard life of the most vulnerable in Jordan’s refugee camps]. The information about the

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<sup>72</sup> Baker, *Translation and Conflict*, 114.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 118.

<sup>75</sup> Noon Arabia, “Syria’s Most Vulnerable Live a Hard Life in Jordan’s Refugee Camps.”

<sup>76</sup> Kryštof Švec, trans., “Tvrký život těch nejzranitelnějších v jordánských uprchlických táborech,” in *Global Voices v češtině*, posted December 15, 2015.

refugees being Syrian is totally left out in the Czech translation. This may be an attempt of the translator to make the article seem more attractive to the Czech audience that may be more interested in the topic of refugees in general, since it concerns them as well, than in the particular situation of Syrian refugees in Jordan. We can find more examples of the selective appropriation even within the same text. A sentence in the English text says: "Imagine having lost everything you own, including **all or some of your family** [bold type mine]<sup>77</sup>, relatives or friends."<sup>78</sup> This sentence was translated into Czech as "Představte si, že ztratíte vše, co jste kdy vlastnili, **včetně své rodiny**, příbuzných a přátel"<sup>79</sup> [Imagine having lost everything you own, **including you family**, relatives and friends]. Here the translator omitted *all or some*, which gives the reader the feeling that the refugees have no family, relatives or friends at all, while the original says they lost some of them. The narrative created by the translator stresses the desolate situation of the refugees.

There are also examples of selective appropriation by addition. In this case, the translator adds some information not originally present in the text with the aim of reframing the narrative, for example making it more intensive. An example of this method can be found in an article about a young Somali refugee studying successfully in the US. In the English text, we can find the following sentence: "The 19-year-old was born there after her family fled **the civil war** in Somalia."<sup>80</sup> The Czech translation illustrates the intensification that we often find in the works of translation activists: "Tato devatenáctiletá dívka se v tomto táboře narodila nedlouho poté, co její rodina uprchla ze Somálska **před běsnící občanskou válkou**"<sup>81</sup> [The 19-year old girl was born in this camp shortly after her family fled Somalia's **raging civil war**]. It is obvious that the translator wanted to create even stronger impression on the audience and thus he decided to add the adjective *raging* which was not present in the source text. This is a good example of the power of translation activists to frame the public narrative.

Selective appropriation is a very efficient method for narrative reframing. This is evident from the number of examples we can find within the Czech translations of Global Voices articles. One more example illustrating this method can be found in the Czech translation of an article describing the progress of war in Yemen. The English article states that both parties of the conflict: "have violated international humanitarian law and international human rights law, **as reported by** Amnesty International, Human Rights

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<sup>77</sup> Applies to all subsequent cases

<sup>78</sup> Noon Arabia, "Syria's Most Vulnerable Live a Hard Life in Jordan's Refugee Camps."

<sup>79</sup> Švec, "Tvrký život těch nejzranitelnějších v jordánských uprchlických táborech."

<sup>80</sup> Public Radio International, "How Culturally Sensitive Mental Healthcare Helped One Somali-American Teenager Stay Resilient," in *Global Voices in English*, posted December 12, 2016.

<sup>81</sup> Kryštof Švec, trans., "Jak kulturně citlivá péče o duševní zdraví pomohla mladé somálské Američance zůstat nezlomnou," in *Global Voices v češtině*, posted December 17, 2015.

Watch, and the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.”<sup>82</sup> In the Czech translation, a small part was added and it states that: “**Podle několika na sobě nezávislých studií** zpracovaných Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch a úřadem vrchního komisaře OSN pro lidská práva porušují obě strany jemenského konfliktu ... mezinárodní humanitární a lidská práva.”<sup>83</sup> [According to several independent studies conducted by Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, and the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, both of the parties of the conflict in Yemen ... are violating international humanitarian and human rights law.] Here, the aim of the translator is to increase the credibility of the studies by adding the information that there are **several** such studies and that these studies are **independent**. In this way the translator can make the cited sources sound more significant to the audience.

### 9.3 FRAMING BY LABELING

Labeling is another option for the translators to express their opinion. Using this method, sometimes also called lexicalization (e.g. Shahi and Talebinejad<sup>84</sup>), translators are making a decision between different options of translating names and titles. Translation of organizations' names, geographical names and titles of books and films is an integral part of each translation and it has a great potential for influencing the reader since it is often the most visible feature of the text. According to Shahi and Talebinejad the way in which a particular country decided to name an event or a geographical location is an important part of its narrative.<sup>85</sup> Similarly, the way in which the translator decides to translate such a name is a part of a narrative that he or she creates and presents to the readers.

Baker provides a good example of labeling by naming when she describes the translation of rival place names.<sup>86</sup> During a conflict, the rival parties often use different names for the same geographical location. Choosing one of the options means supporting a certain narrative and contesting the other. For example during the conflict in the Middle East, each party calls the area in question differently. Within the Zionist narrative it is called *Judea and Samaria*, which are biblical names for the area. Within the Palestinian narrative it is called *West Bank*. When translating about this area, the translator has to make a conscious decision about which name to use and thus to which narrative to subscribe. This brings us back to the fact that it is fairly impossible for a translator to stay completely neutral.

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<sup>82</sup> Noon Arabia, “200 Days of War in Yemen,” in *Global Voices in English*, posted October 14, 2015.

<sup>83</sup> Irena Křiváková, “Dvě stě dní války v Jemenu,” in *Global Voices v češtině*, posted November 20, 2015.

<sup>84</sup> Mohammad Shahi and Mohammad Reza Talebinejad, “Frame Labeling of Competing Narratives in Journalistic Translation,” *Journal of Research in Applied Linguistics* 5 (2014): 23.

<sup>85</sup> Shahi and Talebinejad, *Frame Labeling*, 23.

<sup>86</sup> Baker, *Translation and Conflict*, 123.

BBC, as an official institution, should not take sides in the conflict and for this reason they call the area in question *Judea and Samaria [the West Bank]*, using both of the variants with the aim of not offending anyone. However, they use this whole name only when it is mentioned in the text for the first time, in the rest of the text they only use *the West Bank*, signaling its commitments to the Palestinian narrative.<sup>87</sup> The choice of the name is a possibility for the translation activists to express their opinion while staying within their prescribed frame space.

Labeling also plays a role during translation of titles of books, films or articles. Even though titles are not rival like the geographical names (there is no choice between two possibilities) they too help to frame the narrative as they are often the most prominent feature of the text and even if the readers do not read the whole text, they can still be influenced by its title. Baker claims that the framing in the title is often followed by slight interventions in the texts itself that are in line with the narrative implied in the title.<sup>88</sup>

To find an example of framing by labeling within the website of Global Voices, we can again look at the article about Syrian refugees in Jordan, mentioned above. Here the example concerns neither a rival name, nor a title of the article, but a shift of perception of the attitude of Jordan. The English version of the article says: "This is in addition to the large numbers of refugees from Palestine and Iraq **Jordan has been hosting** over the past several years, **despite its own socio-economic challenges**."<sup>89</sup> This sentence shows Jordan in a positive light, as a country willing to **host** refugees from other countries and help them despite its own problems. This sentence was translated into Czech as follows: "Navíc zde posledních několik let **pobývá** i obrovské množství uprchlíků z Palestiny a Iráku, **a to navzdory** socioekonomickým výzvám, jímž Jordán čelí"<sup>90</sup> [In addition, during the past years a great number of refugees from Palestine and Iraq **have stayed** here despite the socioeconomic challenges that Jordan faces]. The Czech translation portrays the refugees as self-invited people who do not care about the difficult situation of Jordan and present further burden for the already troubled socioeconomic system. Here, the same fact (refugees staying in Jordan's territory) is labeled as *hosting* and translated as *living*. The way the author and the translator label the fact in their narrative changes the impression on the reader to a complete opposite.

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<sup>87</sup> Baker, *Translation and Conflict*, 125.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, 128.

<sup>89</sup> Noon Arabia, "Syria's Most Vulnerable Live a Hard Life in Jordan's Refugee Camps."

<sup>90</sup> Švec, "Tvrký život těch nejzranitelnějších v jordánských uprchlických táborech."



## 9.4 REPOSITIONING OF PARTICIPANTS

Another method for framing the narrative that is at the disposal of translation activists is the repositioning of participants. Using this method translators can change the way in which the participants of the narrative are positioned or the way in which the participants position themselves. According to Baker it is the translator's linguistic management of time, space, deixis, dialect register that allows the translator to reposition the participants of the narrative.<sup>91</sup> Translators can reposition the participants in time through the shift of tenses or the use of adverbs such as *now* and *then*. Repositioning in space can be done by the use of adverbs such as *here* and *there*. Translators can also reposition the participants and themselves as being either part of the narrative or excluding them. This can be done by the use of adverbs such as *us*, *them*, and *we*. Using the pronoun *we* the translators can also guide the readers in establishing their relationship with the community in question.

Even on the website of Global Voices, translators use the method of repositioning of participants. An example can be found for example in the article describing the destruction of a monastery in Iraq by ISIS. The English version of the text says: "Satellite photographs published by Associated Press, which broke the story, **show** rubble where the structure once stood on a hill."<sup>92</sup> This sentence is translated into Czech as: "Na satelitních fotografiích, které jako první zveřejnila agentura Associated Press, **vidíme** na kopci stavební suť na místě, kde klášter dřív stával."<sup>93</sup> [On the satellite photographs that were first published by Associated Press **we can see** rubble on the hill on the spot where the monastery once stood.] While the English version uses a neutral expression *photographs show*, the translator used the expression *we can see* with the aim to make the readers more involved in the story that takes place at a very distant location. Thus, the translator is repositioning himself together with the readers as *we*.

We can find another example of repositioning the participants in the article of young Somali student in the US which was already mentioned above. The author of the article describes the life of this young woman and at some points he uses the form of an interview. The author conducted the interview himself and therefore he uses the first person perspective in sentences such as: "...she told **me** when we met for the first time."<sup>94</sup> However, the translator changes the narrative into plural: "řekla **nám**, když jsme se poprvé

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<sup>91</sup> Baker, *Translation and Conflict*, 130.

<sup>92</sup> Amira Al Hussaini, "ISIS Destroys Dair Mar Elia, Iraq's Oldest Christian Monastery," in Global Voices in English, posted January 20, 2016.

<sup>93</sup> Michal Grebeň, trans., "ISIS zničil nejstarší irácký křesťanský klášter Dajr Mar Elija," in *Global Voices v češtině*, posted January 23, 2016.

<sup>94</sup> Public Radio International, "How Culturally Sensitive Mental Healthcare Helped One Somali-American Teenager Stay Resilient."

setkali”<sup>95</sup> [she told **us** when we met for the first time]. This is an example of the translator making the text less personal as the plural form of the pronoun sounds more objective and it gives the writer more credibility.

The examples provided above demonstrate that all the methods described in this chapter are methods that translation activists use in their translations. Spatial framing is more common than temporal framing as the website mostly publishes articles on current issues and does not focus on history. However, spatial framing is common because the Czech translators often choose articles that can be related to the situation in the Czech Republic, even when the source articles are located in a different environment. There is a great number of examples of selective appropriation as adding and omitting words or parts of the text is the easiest way to alter the narrative created by the translator and change the general impression the article makes on the public. There are also examples of framing by labeling even though they are not as pronounced as the examples provided by Baker.<sup>96</sup> Repositioning of participants also takes place in the Czech translations because it gives the translator an opportunity to make the reader either more distant or more present in the story itself. Due to all these strategies the activist translators are able to reframe the narrative presented to the public in the Czech Republic and thus influence public opinion. However, if we take into consideration the number of visitors of the Czech mutation of Global Voices, the influence of these translations is negligible. Despite this fact the activist translations have a great potential and if the popularity of Global Voices website was to increase the influence would be unavoidable.

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<sup>95</sup> Švec, “Jak kulturně citlivá péče o duševní zdraví pomohla mladé somálské Američance zůstat nezlomnou.”

<sup>96</sup> Baker, *Translation and Conflict*, 126-130.

## 10 Conclusion

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The concept of translation activism contests the general view of many people that translators should only reproduce the opinion and the style of the source text. Translators in general have a great power to influence public opinion and the translation activists are often using the power to express their own opinion and often to contest the dominant narrative.

There are several defining characteristics of translation activists. First of all, translation activists can choose the texts for translation and usually they select texts that promote their own opinion, they can support a cause that they agree with or give a voice to a minority that would otherwise not be heard. Translation activists are not paid for their work. Compared to other translators, translation activists have more liberty with the choices they make during the translation because often there is no editor or their work is limited only to grammatical errors and general understandability. Thus, translation activists have much broader frame space. Whether the translator is amateur or a professional is not a defining characteristics of a translation activist because their work is done on a voluntary basis and anyone can participate.

From the point of view of translation studies, translation activism is quite a new phenomenon as researchers started to notice it only in the 1990s. However, we can find examples of the translation activism even in the history. During the Qing dynasty in China in the second half of 19<sup>th</sup> century translation activists provided translations of Western texts in order to change the traditional Chinese society. During the struggle for Irish independence, translators created the hero Cú Chulainn out of a not very appealing historical character. In recent history, translation activists played an important role during the Arab spring when they were bringing information about the situation in Arab countries.

In the past, there were several important organizations of translation activists, for example ECOS, Babels, Traduttori per la Pace or Tlaxcala. However, most of those organizations are not active any more. Currently, the most important community of translation activists worldwide is Global Voices. Their website offers more than 40 language versions and translate between 35 languages. Their voluntary translators can choose any article published by any of the sites and translate it into their language. In this way they can make the chosen articles available for much broader audience. Various language sites differ in their activity and number of visitors. The most active sites by the amount of translated articles are Spanish and French. The number of articles published by the Czech site is rising each year since 2013. Even though the number of articles is still quite low

compared to the most active sites, the Czech site surpassed some languages which have more speakers, for example Polish.

There are several methods which translation activists use to reframe the narrative in the desired direction. These methods include for example temporal and spatial framing, selective appropriation, framing by labeling and repositioning of participants. Within the translations published by the Czech mutation of Global Voices we can find examples of each of these methods. However, selective appropriation seems to be more common than others. Using this method, translators either add or omit words, phrases or parts of the text with the aim to contest or accentuate certain narrative. This is an easy way for the translators to change the general impression the article makes on the public.

To conclude, we can say that translation activism is a phenomenon which has its own place in the globalized world of today. It gives voice to minority groups and often contests the dominant narrative. It offers a perspective that would otherwise not be available to people around the world. It is also a way for the translators to express their opinion. Using the various methods for reframing narrative, translation activists can influence the way the public sees the current situation and world reality. In some countries the influence of translation activism is bigger than in others, judging by the number of translated articles and number of visitors of the activist sites. In the Czech Republic, this influence is quite small so far. However, there is a potential for the translation activists to increase their influence if the number of visitors of their site keeps increasing in the future.

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## Summary

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Tato bakalářská práce se zabývá překladatelským aktivismem a jeho vlivem na veřejné mínění. Staví se proti častému názoru, že překladatelé pouze kopírují styl a myšlenky výchozího textu, bez toho aniž by mohli projevit svůj vlastní názor. Tato práce tvrdí, že překladatelé mají velký vliv na tvorbu cílového textu, do kterého mohou promítnout svůj názor a vytvářet tak alternativu k dominantnímu narativu.

Tato práce se skládá z teoretické a praktické části. V teoretické části se věnuje obecně vlivu překladatelů na veřejné mínění. Na základě definic organizací překladatelských aktivistů definuje práce překladatelský aktivismus a hledá jeho příklady v historii, například během irského boje za nezávislost nebo během arabského jara. Věnuje se také popisu důležitých organizací překladatelů-aktivistů, jak v minulosti, tak v současnosti, například organizacím ECOS, Babels, Traduttori per la Pace nebo Tlaxcala. Jedna kapitola je věnována narativní teorii podle Mony Baker, na základě které práce vyhodnocuje příklady překladatelského aktivismu v praxi. Praktická část práce je zaměřena na organizaci Global Voices, která je v současnosti nejaktivnější skupinou překladatelů-aktivistů. V pěti vybraných anglických článcích a v jejich českých překladech práce hledá příklady překladatelského aktivismu a identifikuje v nich metody ovlivňování narativu, které popisuje Baker ve své knize Translation and Conflict.

K základním charakteristikám překladatelských aktivistů patří snaha projevit svůj vlastní názor a ovlivnit dominantní narativ. Toho překladatelé dosahují pomocí výběru vhodných textů i způsobu, jak tyto texty překládají. Překladatelé-aktivisté většinou pracují bez nároku na finanční odměnu a jejich hlavní motivací je právě zprostředkování alternativních informací širšímu publiku. Tito překladatelé mají také mnohem větší svobodu než komerční překladatelé, jak ve výběru textu, tak ve volbě překladatelských řešení.

Ve své práci docházím k závěru, že překladatelský aktivismus je důležitým fenoménem, jehož vliv může v současném globalizovaném světě dále narůstat. Jak ukazují příklady ze stránky Global Voices, překladatelé mají k dispozici několik metod, které mohou použít, aby do cílového textu vnesli svůj názor a ovlivnili tak příjemce textu. V současné době nemá česká verze stránky Global Voices dostatek návštěvníků na to, aby mohla zásadně ovlivnit veřejné mínění v České republice. Kdyby však počet návštěvníků a přeložených textů v budoucnu vzrostl, mohla by tato stránka mít významný vliv.



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