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Why Do You Translate? Motivation to Volunteer and TED Translation

Maeve Olohan, *Centre for Translation and Intercultural Studies, University of Manchester*

Abstract

Many organizations today mobilize vast volunteer translation efforts, but there is little research into how the volunteering of translation may be understood in sociological and psychological terms. This paper introduces translation scholars to some of the complexities of investigating volunteering and motivation, informed by research from sociology, behavioural economics and social psychology. It then makes a methodological contribution to the study of volunteer translation motivation by assessing the potential of qualitative analysis of translators' discourse to derive conceptually sound categories of motivation. This methodology is tested on a small set of statements from volunteer translators for TED. The test case prepares the ground for much-needed, larger-scale studies into volunteer translation motivations. The paper concludes by advocating a mixed-methods approach which can accommodate multi-dimensional perspectives and contexts of volunteering.

Keywords

Volunteer translation; crowdsourced translation; altruism; TED Open Translation Project; Volunteer Functions Inventory (VFI); mixed-methods research

Volunteer translation is of increasing interest to translation scholars. It is often discussed alongside activism or non-professional translation and interpreting (e.g. Boéri and Maier 2010; Pérez González and Susam-Sarajeva 2012). Studies of activist translation tend to focus on the narratives of communities of translators and to foreground the relationship between translation or interpreting and social movements, particularly with anti-military and alterglobalization stances (e.g. Baker 2010; 2013). However, volunteer translators also translate scientific journals, software and websites, among other material. There is a small but growing body of research into online, collaborative and crowdsourced translation projects, though without agreement on the terminology to be applied to this activity (O'Hagan 2009; 2011; Cronin 2010), and with little research into what motivates people to volunteer translation services. In Olohan (2012) I posit possible motivations for volunteer translation and editing for a nineteenth-century scientific journal, based on archival research. O'Brien and Schäler's (2010) questionnaire-based research on translators for The Rosetta Foundation and McDonough Dolmaya's (2012) survey of Wikipedia translators, both discussed in more detail below, are perhaps the only examples of studies which set out to explore what motivates present-day translation volunteers.

Crowdsourcing and volunteering are features of many online communities and social networks, and increasingly also a feature of translation activity. While this prompts discussion of the demonetization and deprofessionalization of translation, it also poses sociological and philosophical questions as to why and how translation is used by global online communities to generate and share content and to disseminate knowledge (see Cronin 2012). Enquiry into these aspects of volunteer translation in their social and technological contexts necessitates empirical studies, applying interdisciplinary approaches, models and methods.

This paper uses TED.com and its volunteer translation initiative as a test case to examine the potential and limitations of an "open probe" approach to researching volunteer motivations, exemplified by a qualitative analysis of published statements by a small set of TED translators. TED disseminates video presentations by leading thinkers on technology and other current issues, providing transcripts of the talks in English, which are then translated into other languages and function as subtitles on the online video clip. Around 8,000 volunteer translators have provided over 30,000 translated talks to date (TED N.D.a). This test case focuses on eleven blog entries by translators which TED published to encourage and mobilize that substantial volunteer translation effort. While translation scholars tend to situate volunteer translation in opposition to professional translation, this paper emphasizes the need

to approach it from interdisciplinary perspectives, and in similar terms to other volunteer activities, as studied by sociologists, psychologists or economists. This test case makes no claims for representativeness or for identifying the motivations of TED translators in general. It aims, rather, to lay the groundwork for further research and larger-scale investigations of volunteer translation, drawing on conceptual and methodological frameworks of those neighbouring disciplines.

Section 1 introduces some of the complexities of studying volunteering and the motivations of volunteers. Section 2 presents TED as a mission-oriented organization and outlines how its translation activities are organized, including consideration of how TED attracts translators to help fulfil its mission. Section 3 illustrates how a published set of statements from TED translators may be analyzed to identify stated motivations for the translators' volunteer activities and to produce an initial set of theoretical categories of motives for volunteer translation. The concluding discussion reflects on the strengths and the limitations of this method and recommends a mixed-methods approach to larger-scale studies of volunteer translation.

Volunteering and Motivation

It is important to acknowledge the complexity of defining volunteering; volunteering activities take diverse forms, and public perceptions can also vary (Cnaan, Handy, and Wadsworth 1996; Handy et al. 2000). Furthermore, research into volunteering may be approached differently depending on the disciplinary frame in which it is placed (see Haski-Leventhal (2009) for discussion of volunteering and altruism from perspectives of economics, sociology, social psychology and socio-biology). Acknowledging these variations, we may nonetheless note four dimensions which generally inform judgements about volunteering: free will, reward, context for the activity and beneficiaries (Cnaan, Handy, and Wadsworth 1996). There are various points along each dimension, corresponding to purist and broader definitions of volunteering. On the “purer” side of the scale, a volunteer is someone who exercises free will in carrying out the action and who does so without receiving direct financial benefit; in addition, the volunteer activity is formally organized and benefits others, more so than, for example, the volunteer's family and friends or the volunteer him/herself (Cnaan, Handy, and Wadsworth 1996). Public perception of volunteers is shown to take net cost to the volunteer into account, so that, of two people performing the same volunteer

activity, one may be judged as being “more” of a volunteer than the other (Handy et al. 2000, 64). A working definition of volunteer translation might therefore be translation conducted by people exercising their free will to perform translation work which is not remunerated, which is formally organized and for the benefit of others.

There is an extensive body of literature on volunteering, studied from those disciplinary vantage points mentioned above, as well as interdisciplinary ones (see Wilson (2000; 2012) for overviews of recent research trends, Snyder and Omoto (2008) for social policy perspectives and Hustinx, Cnaan and Handy (2010) for the main theoretical approaches). One widely discussed aspect is causes of volunteering. Understanding why people do or do not volunteer and what volunteering means to those who do it are key issues for those interested in predicting and increasing volunteering rates. Studies of motivation to volunteer may focus on particular groups, e.g. students (Handy et al. 2010; Gage and Thapa 2012) and older people (Okun, Barr, and Herzon 1998), or on volunteering in specific sectors (de Cooman et al. 2011), patterns of volunteering and reasons for quitting (Hustinx 2010). Also studied, among other aspects, is the interplay between volunteer motivations and volunteering environments (Stukas et al. 2009).

Motivation defies direct measurement (de Cooman et al. 2011, 298). Survey methods are the most commonly used tools to elicit information from participants on motivating factors. Distinctions are often made between intrinsic/extrinsic (Frey 1997; Degli Antoni 2009) and altruistic/utilitarian motivation, but these binaries have also been found to be unsatisfactory, not least because volunteers are often motivated by a combination of factors, and can be seen as behaving simultaneously altruistically and egoistically (Cnaan and Goldberg-Glen 1991). Taking a psychological functional perspective instead, Clary et al. (1998) seek to overcome the shortcomings of the altruism-egoism duality by advancing a six-function model of volunteer motives. These functions are derived from a Likert-scale survey, the 30-item Volunteer Functions Inventory (VFI). The six psychological functions proposed are values, understanding, career, protective, social and enhancement (Clary et al. 1998). The VFI and modified versions of it have been employed in numerous studies (e.g. Gage and Thapa 2012; Stukas et al. 2009; Garner and Garner 2011; Kim, Zhang, and Connaughton 2010; Allison, Okun, and Dutridge 2002) and advantages of the six-factor model over two- or three-category models have been highlighted (e.g. Okun, Barr, and Herzon 1998; Wu, Wing Lo, and Liu 2009).

However, research on motivation to volunteer lacks a unified approach; numerous models and methods are employed, and motives continue to be classified and defined in diverse ways, whether altruistic, utilitarian, social, material, etc. (e.g. Ziemek 2006; Handy et al. 2010). In addition to such conceptual challenges, methodological shortcomings have been perceived in some empirical studies, including small sample sizes, a focus on only one volunteer initiative, lack of a control group and little attention to the interrelation of motives (Cnaan and Goldberg-Glen 1991, 275). In many cases the rationale behind grouping items on a list of motives may be conceptually motivated but not empirically validated, or vice versa (Okun, Barr, and Herzon 1998, 609). It is also noted that survey answers are likely to be influenced by people's wishes to provide socially desirable answers and that volunteers may not know the reasons for their actions (Shye 2010, 186). Moreover, Hustinx et al. (2010) and Handy et al. (2010) highlight the necessity of studying motivations across cultural and political contexts.

To my knowledge, only two studies have set out with the specific aim of investigating motivation to volunteer translations. Both use survey methods to elicit responses from active volunteer translators. O'Brien and Schäler (2010) study the volunteer translators for a not-for-profit volunteer translation facilitator, The Rosetta Foundation, using a questionnaire distributed to volunteers in the initial months of the Foundation's operations. They categorized motivations as personal or social (drawing on Shirky 2010), formulated three "self-serving needs" (1-3 below) and two "beliefs in external causes" (4 and 5), and asked respondents to rate these motivating factors for relevance, on a five-point Likert scale, from high relevance to no relevance. Respondents were also given a sixth motivating factor to rate, based on Shirky's (2010) notion of cognitive surplus. These motivations were formulated as follows: (1) to improve my language skills; (2) to improve my translation skills; (3) to gain professional translation experience; (4) to support The Rosetta Foundation's cause; (5) to support translation of information into a lesser-used language; and (6) to gain intellectual stimulation.

Analyzing responses from 139 volunteers, O'Brien and Schäler deemed motive 4 as most relevant, followed by motive 3. They conclude that these volunteer translators are motivated by both social and personal factors. In a second question, respondents were asked to indicate, from a list of eight rewards, which one would motivate them even more to volunteer. Rewards included payment, gifts, recognition in a top-ten list or website profiles, invitations to events, feedback from Foundation clients and feedback from qualified

translators. The most popular answers were the two forms of feedback, correlating with the motivations identified in the previous question. On the one hand, feedback from the clients would give volunteers more information on how their volunteering supported the Foundation's cause. On the other hand, feedback on their translation output from qualified translators would help volunteer translators to improve their translation skills and thereby advance their professional careers.

McDonough Dolmaya (2011; 2012) surveyed volunteer translators for Wikipedia to examine various aspects of crowdsourced translation, including motivating factors for volunteering. She drew on studies of volunteers for free open-source software initiatives (Lakhani and Wolf 2005; Ghosh 2005) and divided motivations into intrinsic and extrinsic. From a list of sixteen randomly ordered motivating factors, the 75 survey respondents identified up to four factors which reflected their reasons for their most recent participation in a crowdsourced translation initiative. The responses indicated that people often volunteered because they wanted to make information available to other language users and to help the organizations for which they were volunteering. They also found the projects intellectually stimulating. These three main motivations were labelled by McDonough Dolmaya as intrinsic and were described as social, community or political factors. Respondents also indicated that they volunteered because they wished to gain more experience translating. This was the main extrinsic motivation (described as career, monetary or product-related motives). McDonough Dolmaya notes that most responses represented a combination of intrinsic and extrinsic motivations.

Although these studies both focus explicitly on volunteer translators and motives, using questionnaires to elicit data, there are important differences between them. Their construction of questions about motives is related to (different) conceptual insights from previous research and they apply two different binary models, classifying motivations as social vs. personal and intrinsic vs. extrinsic, respectively. The chosen models guide the formulation of lists of possible motivating factors (six vs. sixteen items) which are presented to the respondents. Although McDonough Dolmaya presented more motivating factors, participants were asked to choose only four, and then to narrow their choice further to identify one primary motive. O'Brien and Schäler's Likert-scale rating, by contrast, may have enabled respondents to provide a more nuanced perspective on their motivating priorities, but for only six suggested motives. Participants in both studies were invited to add additional motivations not listed but many did not do so. Both studies provide useful insights into volunteer

translation but also illustrate some of the challenges of researching motivations noted above, particularly in relation to establishing conceptual clarity and empirical validity amid competing and overlapping definitions and models.

Cognizant of the difficulties of construing motivations *a priori* for a volunteer activity which has been little studied to date, and the shortcomings of existing categorizations, this article seeks to assess the potential of an alternative, qualitative approach, in which motives may be identified and categorized based on the discourse of volunteer translators. This approach is tested on statements produced by a small set of TED translators. These statements provide a useful test case because they have been published on the TED website and explicitly address the issue of motivation to volunteer; their accessibility and focus therefore facilitate the testing of this analytical method, prior to a more extensive programme of data gathering and analysis for a larger-scale study.

TED and Volunteer Translation

TED is a not-for profit organization, established in 1984 as a conference for those interested in technology, entertainment and design (TED N.D.a), which has evolved into a “global community [...] welcoming people from every discipline and culture who seek a deeper understanding of the world” (TED N.D.a). At two annual conferences, speakers, often well known, give talks lasting up to 18 minutes on topics considered of global relevance. Many of these presentations are filmed and released, as TEDTalks, on the TED website through a Creative Commons licence. The talks are promoted as “ideas worth spreading” and the website thus becomes a “clearinghouse that offers free knowledge and inspiration from the world’s most inspired thinkers, and also a community of curious souls to engage with ideas and each other” (TED N.D.b). Underlying this desire to share ideas is TED’s belief in “the power of ideas to change attitudes, lives and ultimately, the world” (TED N.D.b). The TED Open Translation Project is designed to make TEDTalks more accessible by offering subtitles and transcripts in languages other than English. English-language transcripts/subtitles are prepared by TED staff, while the translations into other languages are produced and reviewed by volunteer translators.

TED’s success may be gauged by its over-subscribed conferences and the vast numbers of viewers of TEDTalks online, as well as the establishment of other TED-like conferences and websites (e.g. PopTech). However, TED has also recently attracted criticism

of its epistemic basis; according to one commentator, TEDTalks “fuse sales-pitch slickness with evangelical intensity” (Jurgenson 2012). Critics argue that the TED mindset does not encourage conceptual complexities and nuanced argument and that TED “devalues intellectual rigor at the expense of tricky emotional and narrative devices” (Salmon 2012). TED has been described as having become the “insatiable kingpin of international meme laundering—a place where ideas, regardless of their quality, go to seek celebrity” (Morozov 2012). TED curators exert control over TEDTalks; presenters are selected and presentations are practised and honed, then expertly filmed and edited for online viewing (TED 2009a; Heller 2012). This leads to accusations of corporatism and a loss of cutting edge: “What was exceptional and emergent in the realm of ideas has been bottled, packaged, and sold back to us over and over again” (Jurgenson 2012).

TED can be described as “mission-oriented” (Besley and Ghatak 2005: 616). Its participants are incentivized to contribute to that mission and encouraged to map themselves to the organization based on affinity of mission. Through its website, TED explicitly requests help to fulfil its mission of disseminating “ideas worth spreading”, and lists eight ways of doing so, one of which is translating a TEDTalk (TED N.D.c). Seeded by TED with a small number of professional translations, the Open Translation Project was launched in May 2009 with 300 translations, 40 languages and 200 volunteer translators. Within a year, 21,000 translations by over 1,000 translators had been completed. TED issued a further call to translators to translate languages not yet covered (TED 2009b). These requests for assistance generated an enormous volunteer translation effort. By July 2012, 29,446 translations had into 88 languages had been completed by 7,850 translators, and these figures rise monthly (current data on languages and talks translated can be found on the TED website).

In outlining requirements on volunteer translators, TED stresses the importance of “crediting translators for their work” (TED N.D.d). For each translation, the translator and the reviewer are named (a measure which also has a quality assurance function). Translators may provide a detailed profile of themselves and make this accessible to others. Even if they do not supply profile information, their page shows how many talks they have translated or reviewed. The “most active translators” are highlighted. Translators’ “contribution to the TED community” is also given a numerical “TEDcred” score. Through these various mechanisms TED appears to address those who are interested in accruing recognition or social esteem from their volunteer translation activity, presumably seeing this as a motivating factor. However, TED also invokes alternative motives to volunteer when it describes its translators

as “taking part in our global effort to spread ideas and engage in a global dialogue” and as gaining “a huge satisfaction in bringing inspired talks to speakers of their own language worldwide” (TED N.D.d).

The first part of this statement, by contrast with the credit-giving concerns above, embodies a call to the pure altruism of increasing a public good without expectation of benefits for the volunteer. Following Stiglitz (1999), the public good in question is the spreading of ideas, or global knowledge. However, the second part of the statement also acknowledges “impure altruism” and the “warm glow” (Andreoni 1990) which may motivate many others, i.e. the sense of satisfaction to be derived from altruistic behaviour. Having observed how TED seeks to motivate translators, we focus in the next section on how motivating factors may be discerned from statements made by TED translators.

“Why Do You Translate?”

TED has published on its website eleven blog entries with the title “Meet XY, TED volunteer translator”, where XY is the name of the translator in ten cases, and the name of a group of translation volunteers in one case. The entries vary slightly in length but average 530 words. They are written in interview format. Translators responded to four questions: (1) Tell us about yourself; (2) What drew you to TED? (3) Why do you translate? and (4) What are your favourite talks? Why?¹

This analysis of stated motivation focuses on the statements given in answer to the third question, “Why do you translate?”, read not as observable measures or indicators of motivation but rather as representations of the motives that translators wish to communicate publicly. This constitutes an important distinction vis-à-vis research which analyzes questionnaire data. In both cases, respondents make decisions about the information they wish to impart to putative readers. However, the text of a blog entry published online is not proffered for research purposes but is a form of crafted self-presentation (Watson 2009), the implications of which are addressed below.

Clearly eleven blog entries cannot be considered representative of 8,000 volunteer translators; the aim here is not to uncover all possible motivations that may be indicated by TED translators but rather to assess the usefulness of a qualitative analysis of data of this kind in studying motivation. The analytical framework may be described as constructivist grounded theory (Charmaz 2008a; 2008b). Grounded theory, as first conceived (Glaser and

Strauss 1967), emphasized the development of theory inductively from data, but more recent thinking recognizes a role for deduction and abduction too, as researchers make conjectures and seek to explain surprising data observations. Rather than viewing researchers as removed from the analysis, these recent, constructivist approaches are contextualized and reflexive; researchers examine their own epistemological premises and research practices, and research is viewed as “an emergent product of particular times, social conditions, and interactional situations” (Charmaz 2008b, 160).

It is therefore important to sketch the contours of the reflexive lens which shaped this particular analysis. As discussed above, I was familiar with some of the research on altruism and volunteering, and had already sought to apply theoretical concepts of pure and impure altruism in an analysis of volunteer translation, in a different context (Olohan 2012). It could then be expected that my reading of the TED Blog data would be influenced by knowledge of existing typologies or categories of motives and their strengths and weaknesses. I had limited exposure to TEDTalks but, as a translator trainer, had suggested to students that experience could be gained through volunteer translation for organizations including TED. I had received anecdotal accounts of the TED translation process from volunteers who were also experienced professional translators; these included predominantly negative impressions of increasing competitiveness among volunteers, inconsistencies in the review process, and a perceived lack of regard for professional expertise in translation. Finally, during this project I developed awareness of recent critical appraisals of TED and other TED-like initiatives.

Before examining stated motivations, it is also useful to contextualize the blog entries. They were published between November 2009 and May 2010, i.e. within twelve months of the Open Translation Project launch. No further translator profiles have been added to the site, and TED has attracted thousands of volunteer translators, so it may be safe to assume that this small set of interviews was considered to have fulfilled its publicity function. The translators profiled (two female, eight male, one group) were involved in the early stages of the Open Translation Project. See Table 1 for details of target languages and translation activity, including reviewing. Ages, where specified, range from 26 to 58. Where relevant data is available, it indicates that most volunteers are university educated, and at least three to postgraduate level. Six give their current occupations as university lecturer in computer science, cardiologist and chief of medical informatics, systems engineer, immunology researcher, business coach, and Alexander Technique teacher, while the group comprises “a journalist, linguists, developers, a designer, a historian, a musician, artists and an

entrepreneur”. Of those not linked to a specific career or professional activity, two hold English degrees. Most are among the most prolific translators for their target language.

[[Insert Table 1 about here]]

Following a close reading of the blog entries, all stated or implied motivations for translating were coded. This coding focused on actions and theoretical potential rather than merely topics or themes. Then, through a process of comparison, cross-checking and focused coding, motivations were distilled into six categories: (1) sharing TED benefits; (2) effecting social change; (3) deriving warm glow; (4) participating in communities; (5) enhancing learning; and (6) deriving enjoyment. The following paragraphs constitute an initial analytical account of these categories and their properties.

The first factor identified is the desire to enable others to benefit from TED and the sharing of ideas. The benefits identified by the translators as worth sharing include “mental benefits”, “knowledge”, a “huge repository of knowledge, fun and emotions”, “valuable information, skills, experience and inspiration”, “innovative talks”, “ideas that I found fascinating” and “new ideas”. With the emphasis on ideas, information or knowledge, this motive can be seen as a desire to increase the supply of global knowledge; it can therefore be described as altruistic, in a pure sense.

The recipients of the shared benefits are only sometimes identified, or are outlined only in general terms. This is often in terms of language or culture, e.g. “Chinese people”, “Japanese society”, or “the millions of Arabic language speakers”. Among the less specific indications are “tens of millions of people” or “the coming generations”. However, some translators’ desires to share ideas start with their family and friends. As noted above, activities to help one’s family and friends are not considered as volunteering in a strict sense. Invariably though, the initial sharing by TED translators with friends and family becomes a wider motive, extending into a desire to address broader audiences: “many of my friends loved it, so I worked hard and translated a bit more”.

Few statements make explicit reference to the consequences of sharing for the recipients of the sharing action. Sharing is seen as providing (better) access to TED, and TEDTalks are perceived, unquestioningly, as beneficial and therefore simply “worth sharing”. Where a specific benefit of sharing is mentioned, it is about enhancing other people’s

knowledge or understanding. One translator whose statement focuses on social change (discussed below) sees sharing as “a good gift that could change something” in the lives of recipients.

Although the sample is too small to generate meaningful quantitative accounts, it is worth emphasizing that this sharing motive is the most frequently observed one in the translators’ statements. It is a direct reflection of the TED mission to spread good ideas, and the translators describe themselves as contributing to that mission. The consistency with which they evoke this motive points to a relatively strong sense of altruism among this group of TED translators.

TED’s mission also extends beyond the sharing of ideas: “we believe passionately in the power of ideas to change attitudes, lives and ultimately, the world” (TED). This goal of effecting social change through contributions to TED translation is also in evidence in the translators’ statements. It emerges as a separate category here since it refers, not specifically to sharing the information/ideas in TEDTalks, but to loftier aims of changing the world. This motivation of effecting social change is most in evidence in one translator’s profile but features to a lesser extent in others. Translators see TED translation as a chance “to contribute to the changing world”. In another case, translations would enable the new ideas of TED to become “an incorruptible fixture” in a culture which the translator describes as “not very progressive, and pretty repressive”. Finally, the translator whose statements focus more on social change than others emphasizes how his translation activity “promotes mutual respect between different cultures, people, religions”; he hopes to promote peace, prosperity and compassion in his country (Sudan) and to change people’s perception of it. This motive, like the previous one, is predominantly altruistic in its regard for the well-being of others.

The third category of motivation represents impure altruism. This term is used to refer to the “warm glow” (Andreoni 1990), i.e. the feel-good factor or the sense of satisfaction derived from altruistic behaviour which differentiates pure from impure altruism. The translators acknowledge the warm glow from helping others to gain access to TED and from enabling ideas to be shared, referring to feeling the “reward” from this activity, feeling “happy” when they receive positive feedback on their translations, feeling “proud” of being part of the project.

A fourth motive evoked by the translators is the desire to be part of a community, grouping or movement. Translators see their participation as taking place at different levels, from general notions of global society, the internet or a “huge collaboration of science,

technology and compassion” to more clearly delineated communities, notably those of TED and TED translators. One translator began translating for TED in order to be part of an open-source initiative and subsequently set up a website for TEDTalks. Another translator describes himself as a “networker”; he organized a TEDx event and established an online support group to help other translators and reviewers. Another writes of making friends among the community of TED translators and of having “debates and conversations” online about the talks she has translated. Likewise, others refer to “participating actively in the global society” or the “highly interactive experience” and the illumination of different points of view characterized by feedback from the viewers of translated TEDTalks. Not all translators expanded on the benefits of participating in these communities or groups but benefits noted were meeting people, making friends, interacting with viewers of translated TEDTalks, providing support for other translators and receiving reviews of one’s own translations.

A fifth motivating factor extracted from the translators’ statements is that of enhancing learning. Translators feel they learn from watching TEDTalks and from translating them. In more than one instance, translation is described as a means of enhancing one’s understanding of the material being read. Thus, to translate a TEDTalk means to gain a deeper understanding of its subject matter. Translators are motivated by intellectual interest in the content of the talks they translate, and translating for TED is described as opening up “a whole new world of knowledge” to them and fulfilling a desire to learn or a love of learning. The learning and intellectual stimulation achieved through translating TEDTalks is described in purely personal terms and not in relation to learning about translation. None of these translators admits to professional aims or interests, i.e. they were not motivated to gain translation experience because they aspire to careers as translators, which perhaps explains why they are motivated to learn about the content of the TEDTalks but not about translation *per se*.

The sixth motivating factor may be linked to this lack of contact with translation as a professional activity. The volunteers are motivated by the enjoyment of translating; translation is described as “fun”. This category of deriving enjoyment encompasses other expressions of emotional responses to translating for TED, e.g. it is described as “an exciting experience”, an experience that brings inspiration or “a favourite hobby”. The enjoyment derived is not attributed only to translation but also to other aspects of the process; for example, they also enjoy “the act of understanding”.

This analysis identifies six categories of motivation based on the eleven blog entries available, thus illustrating in principle the feasibility and productivity of the approach, which are discussed further, alongside limitations, in the next section.

Discussion

This analysis illustrates the potential of an open-probe approach when investigating the motives of volunteer translators, particularly at a point when volunteer translation has not been fully delimited as an object of study and when translator motivation is under-researched. The feasibility of similar qualitative analyses but on a larger scale seems evident. This would require data elicited from translators by interview, with due consideration of issues of sampling and representativeness. Data elicitation would focus explicitly on motives to volunteer but also gather information on the specific, individual and collective contexts of volunteering. Continuing to apply a constructivist grounded theory approach to the data, adjusting for scale by using multiple coders and intersubjective reliability testing, research could refine the categories which emerge here and add further ones as necessary, leading to the establishment of a comprehensive set of theoretical categories of volunteer motivation. Given the differences between this method and the two previous studies of volunteer translator motivation, it is worth comparing the main findings. In both O'Brien and Schäler's (2010) and McDonough Dolmaya's (2011; 2012) surveys, the translators' overriding motivation was support for the mission of the organization for which they were translating, and this chimes with the most dominant motivation of these TED translators. Like the TED translators, those surveyed by McDonough Dolmaya were also quite strongly motivated by intellectual stimulation. However, both they and the Rosetta Foundation translators were also motivated by the opportunity to gain translation practice or improve their translation skills, a motive which did not figure among this set of TED translators. By contrast, the Rosetta Foundation translators were not given an item choice relating to community participation or social interaction, and very few of McDonough Dolmaya's respondents opted for the available "be part of the network" item, but this factor emerged as a recurrent motivation among the TED translators. It may be concluded that volunteer translators, like volunteers in other domains, are motivated simultaneously by numerous factors, and that limiting their questionnaire choices to a small set of predetermined items reveals their perceptions of those items but risks overlooking other likely motivating factors. As seen above, none of these TED

translators gives translation as their past, current or prospective professional activity and none indicates that they have any training in translation. Several are professionally active in technical and scientific fields and have developed their interest in language alongside a career in another domain; they engage in translation as a hobby. This observation illustrates the importance of integrating personal background data into the study of the volunteer activity. Given the move away from dichotomous models of motivations in other disciplines, it is instructive to situate this qualitative analysis against one of the alternative typologies for motivation, namely Clary et al.'s (1998) six-function model of volunteer motives and the accompanying quantitative method of analysis. Those six functions are reflected in a set of 30 Likert-scale items on the Volunteer Functions Inventory (VFI), a survey instrument which has been extensively tested and widely used. Both motives (1) and (2) of this study correspond to Clary et al.'s (1998, 1517) values function, which designates "the opportunities that volunteerism provides for individuals to express values related to altruistic and humanitarian concerns for others". Motive (3) could be mapped onto the enhancement function, i.e. volunteering enhances positive affect and promotes the psychological growth, personal development, self-esteem, etc. of the volunteer. Motive (5) corresponds to Clary et al.'s (1998, 1518) function of understanding, i.e. volunteering "permit[s] new learning experiences and the chance to exercise knowledge, skills, and abilities that might otherwise go unpracticed".

However, motive (4) of this study ("participating in communities") would not map directly onto Clary et al.'s (1998, 1518) psychological functions. It would correspond partly to the enhancement function above, in which the formation of new friendships is viewed as one aspect of personal development. But it seems that the six-function model does not accommodate the interactionist aspect of volunteering particularly well. This aspect may be particularly salient in an online community, in which sharing and generation of content by users are key activities. It may be noted that alternative inventories, e.g. the ten-function Volunteer Motivation Inventory (Esmond and Dunlop 2004), include an additional social interaction function which reflects the motive identified in this study as motive (4). Finally, motive (6), i.e. sheer enjoyment of the volunteer activity, also does not fit well into Clary et al.'s (1998) functions. Allison, Okun and Dutridge (2002), in comparing the VFI with an open-ended probe, conclude that enjoyment is one of three further functions which could be added to Clary et al.'s six functions.

Looking outward from the six-function model, it can be noted that three of its functions are not addressed by any of the translators' statements in this dataset. These are the career function (i.e. volunteering to derive career-related benefits), the protective function (i.e. volunteering to assuage negative feelings of self) and the social function, whereby volunteers may be motivated by social norms or by friends and acquaintances assigning a positive value to volunteering (Clary et al. 1998). On the one hand, this is hardly surprising, since this study derived motives from a limited dataset and did not aspire to a comprehensive categorization. On the other hand, the dominance of the values and understanding functions in this dataset is attested in other research. For example, Allison, Okun and Dutridge's (2002) VFI study of 129 respondents found the values, understanding and enhancement (renamed "esteem") functions to be more prevalent than the social, protective and career functions. A study of an online community for sharing film recommendations (Fuglestad *et al* 2012), which used VFI, among other instruments, bears out this finding; higher values in the more "other-oriented" functions of the VFI (values and understanding) predicted more basic engagement on the film site, whereas higher values in the career, protective, enhancement and social functions, which are more "self-oriented", were negatively correlated with logins, ratings contributions and site visits. Thus, the categories which emerge from this study appear to be generally in line with the findings of larger-scale, VFI-informed studies.

Data elicitation by open probing may be criticized for producing highly personalized and therefore non-comparable and non-quantifiable responses. Since the VFI has been widely applied elsewhere, it may be a useful quantitative tool to employ alongside the probing of volunteer translators in the larger-scale study proposed above, allowing validation of the findings of the qualitative analysis but also extension of the six-function model if necessary (see Allison, Okun, and Dutridge 2002). A major advantage of integrating the VFI into a larger study of volunteer translators would be that it provides a direct means of comparing volunteer translation motives with volunteer motives in other settings, to ascertain how volunteer translating both resembles and differs from volunteering in other contexts. It would also facilitate systematic comparisons of volunteering in different translation environments. Comparisons along both of these axes could make valuable contributions to our understanding of volunteer translation.

Returning to the TED translators' statements, their situation of production invites further discussion. The profiles on the TED Blog were elicited from translators by TED, so they constitute, as I observed above, a crafted self-presentation (Watson 2009). In presenting

a profile on the TED Blog in answer to a specific set of questions, to be published online for publicity purposes, TED translators are likely to construct a set of motivations which are coherent with that particular situation. It is therefore not surprising that most of the translators equate their motivation for translation with TED's *raison d'être* or mission. The analysis has revealed considerable congruence between the motives used by TED to appeal for volunteer translators—sharing ideas, engaging in global dialogue, experiencing warm glow—and the motives which the volunteer translators, and TED, deem important to highlight and publicize to the wider world. It may be concluded that TED's campaign to recruit volunteer translators is persuasive and effective because it appeals to some of the factors which tend to motivate volunteer translators. Further research could verify whether those factors are the main motivating ones for a larger set of volunteer translators. TED's explicit appeal to these factors in its recruiting texts may indicate strategic awareness of them and their usefulness; this could be verified through consultation with TED's decision-makers.

As a final point for reflection, it may be noted that recruiting organizations focus on positive features and consequences of volunteering. Studies of motivation tend to do likewise. However, anecdotal accounts of demotivation among TED translators and declining interest after initial enthusiasm remind us that the factors which prompt people to start volunteering may not be same ones which lead to sustained volunteering efforts over time (see Hustinx 2010; Snyder and Omoto 2008). Thus, a study of demotivation of translators in the TED context may also be worthwhile.

Conclusion

Notwithstanding the limited scale and scope of this study, it fulfils several useful functions. Firstly, it highlights the lack of research within translation studies into volunteer translation and, in particular, translators' motives to volunteer, and makes a case for expanding nascent research efforts to enhance our understanding of the many volunteer translation movements which have recently emerged. Secondly, it introduces translation scholars to volunteering research in economics, sociology and social psychology, much of which confronts the complex nature of volunteering and the challenges of studying motivation in ways which are new to translation studies; such interdisciplinary engagement seems essential if we are to develop a detailed understanding of volunteer translation as a sociological and psychological phenomenon. Thirdly, a small-scale study of translators' discourse is used to exemplify the

potential of a qualitative analysis to derive conceptually sound categories of motivation. This approach is evaluated alongside the kind of quantitative analysis afforded by psychological instruments which reflect functional approaches to motivation, and a mixed-methods approach is proposed for future studies of volunteer translators. This represents a valuable methodological step for a research area which promises to be of increasing interest to translation scholars. Finally, it can be noted that the statements of a small set of TED translators reveal a range of declared motivating factors, and the partial congruence between these factors and TED's appeals to prospective translators provides a preliminary explanation for TED's volunteer recruitment successes. This paper hopes to pave the way for larger-scale, empirical studies of motivation and demotivation among volunteer translators.

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Notes

¹ The blog entries can be accessed at:

blog.ted.com/2009/12/04/meet_masahiro_k/; blog.ted.com/2010/01/11/meet_krystian_a/;

blog.ted.com/2009/12/18/meet_zoltan_ben/; blog.ted.com/2009/11/20/meet_anwar_dafa/;

blog.ted.com/2010/02/26/meet_mayomo_ted/; blog.ted.com/2009/11/13/meet_shlomo_ada_1/;

blog.ted.com/2010/05/13/meet_michele_gi/; blog.ted.com/2010/05/12/meet_tony_yet_t/;

blog.ted.com/2010/05/11/meet_sebastian/; blog.ted.com/2010/05/17/meet_ayse_seda/;

blog.ted.com/2010/05/20/meet_dimitra_pa/.