



Voices from the Rwanda Tribunal

Official Transcript: Justine Ndongo-Keller (Part 5 of 13)



Role:	Chief of Language Services
Country of Origin:	Cameroon
Interview Date:	8 October 2008
Location:	Arusha, Tanzania
Interviewers:	Donald J Horowitz Lisa P. Nathan
Videographer:	Max Andrews
Interpreter:	None

Interview Summary

Justine Ndongo-Keller describes various roles within the Language Services Department at the ICTR, clarifying differences among interpreters, translators and reviewers. She stresses the importance of effective, high-quality translation for the Tribunal's overall success, as well as the significance of review in the translation process. An original member of the language services team, Ndongo-Keller also provides a perspective on the department's evolution. She comments on the personal toll to individuals in language services from extensive exposure to materials about the genocide.

The transcript of Part 5 begins on the following page.

Part 5

- 00:00** Donald J Horowitz: Now, you used the word revising, so, tell us, and we've seen, s-, sometimes we walk in the hall here and we see a door at it says somebody is revising . . .
- 00:09 Is a reviser.
- 00:10** DJH: Tell us about what that, what that means.
- 00:12 Okay, so basically in the Language Services Section we have translators. They do only translation. We have translator-interpreters. They do both. Their main task is to interpret but they can translate as well.
- 00:29** DJH: So translating would mean from written . . .
- 00:33 Translation is written only.
- 00:34** DJH: Okay, and interpreting is oral.
- 00:36 Is oral.
- 00:37** DJH: Okay.
- 00:37 But we have people who can do both – translation and interpretation. Then we have revisers. Revisers are people who, when a translation is presented to them like I have done a translation, it has to be revised. These are people who, when they produce it takes, it can be certified. We know that there's no mistake. There's no problem. We can certify.
- 01:04 But translators, when they translate it has to be revised by a reviser. Somebody goes behind the translation, takes the original, takes and the translation – I showed you a sample already.
- 01:15** DJH: Yes.
- 01:16 To see that the ideas, the meaning, the form, everything, the idiomatic language, presentation, references, every single thing has been properly, you know, is properly done in the text. It's only when the text is revised that the section will certify it, and they will become of public consumption.
- 01:39** DJH: Okay, it becomes official (_____) . . .
- 01:41 Official, yes. And it, on the, you know, you mark "Certified by the LSS." And it can be used.
- 01:48** DJH: But today . . .

01:49 Because sometime if the, the translation is not revised, it comes out as a draft and we put “Draft” on it, yeah.

01:58 DJH: Okay. Today, how many staff p-, how many people approximately are interpreters, transcribers and revisers? Those are the three categories, yes.

02:10 We have 17 French interpreters, that is from English into French. Including myself and the Chief Interpreter, that’s 19 – because I’m basically an in-, an interpreter. And we have 11 French translators; six English translators; four French revisers; three English revisers and three Kinyarwanda revisers; 12 Kinyarwanda interpreters and six Kinyarwanda translators.

02:54 DJH: Okay, so it’s grown a fair bit.

02:57 Yeah, we’re a team of 123.

03:01 DJH: Your whole staff is.

03:02 All staff because we, I have a unit in Kigali with nine people and a unit in The Hague, at The Hague with four people.

03:11 DJH: Okay, and you are the Administrative Head of all three branches, if you will.

03:16 Yes, yes. We have units. We have the translation unit, the French Translation Unit, the English Translation Unit and the Kinyarwanda Translation Unit; then the Interpretation Unit, then the, the Docs Control – the Document Control Unit where we have document assistant, the control assistant, reference assistant, proofreaders, yeah.

03:42 DJH: And so document control, explain to me what that () . . .

03:46 The document control assistant is the one that receives all documents that come in, distributes them for translation and make sure that they are translated and send them back to whoever asked for the translation to be done. The reference assistant is the one that when the document, the assistant docs control receives the document, he gives it to the reference assistant.

04:11 She goes on the database on all the, the, the software that we have, TRIM, et cetera, and looks for all the references that are useful, will be useful for the text to be translated because she needs to send these references to the translator. Because i-, the tr-, the translator does not have to look for the references like the footnotes.

04:37 If it referring to a, a judgment that, that was delivered in Papua New Guinea, for example, is the job of the reference assistant to go and look for that text and send it, you know, electronically to the translator so that the translator can translate.

- 04:58 Then the proofreader – the translation is done, the reviser has revised, the typist because we have a pool of secretaries, the secretary has, you know, inserted all the, the, the correction that were done by the revisers.
- 05:15 Now it goes to the proofreader. She is in charge of the presentation, the, the commas, the semi colons as everything be presented because we have a UN book on the way text has to be presented. She checks how well – grammatical errors, the typos, every single thing that will make the text to be clean and usable. That’s the job of the proofreader.
- 05:42 **DJH: Okay.**