

Introduction

The book aims to offer an accessible introduction to news media translation as an important area of translation studies, a relatively new discipline that has witnessed an exponential growth since it first became established some fifty years ago. While initial research dedicated to translation was produced by scholars from the fields of linguistics and literary studies, as translation studies began to emerge as a discipline in its own right, it was also influenced by ideas and conceptualizations from other disciplinary areas. The scope of translation studies has increasingly widened to include not only all types of written texts but also audiovisual and multimedia products, as well as all types of interpreted communication.

Translation in the news media was included in the remit of translation research only around the beginning of the twenty-first century, and it was even later that scholars in communication and journalism studies started to pay attention to the pervading relevance of translation practices in the field. News media translation went mostly unnoticed, not least because it obeys norms and configures practices that are different from those traditionally associated with translation, where there is – by and large – the expectation of a linear correspondence between a source and a target text. The concept of “translation proper” held by the lay population and sometimes even unquestioningly adopted by scholars is challenged by news media translation – whose practices and products have often been conceptualized as something different from “translation” and that have, in fact, sometimes been referred to with different terms. Conversely, translation activities have been largely overlooked by news producers and have remained invisible to readers of newspapers, who are mostly unaware of what goes on during the news translation process.

This volume focuses on news media translation as a range of practices that play a central role in the way news is produced and disseminated in the current technological context. News media translation is an area that overlaps with news or journalistic translation, but it also intersects other areas – such as audiovisual translation (AVT) and research on translation and politics, conflict, and war. It addresses not only professional journalistic practices by news workers and media institutions and conglomerates, but also translation by

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other communities of practice such as interest groups and active citizens, in the context of digital media convergence. It includes news produced in the current information economy by actors such as bloggers, activists, lobbies, and so on. It is related to public discourse in politics and in social life; that is, it concerns the role of translation and interpreting in both “hard news” and “soft news.”

While the volume takes stock of current literature concerning the study of news translation, it also contains original research. In the last part of the book, I offer examples of research in news media translation based on the ethnomethodological approach. After an introduction to ethnomethodology and two of its main research strands, conversation analysis (CA) and membership categorization analysis (MCA), I carry out a close examination of some translated news texts, looking at how they represent descriptions of reality that are different from those of the source texts in another language. In particular, I apply membership categorization analysis to the analysis of newspaper texts in English and Italian. I also show how the use of corpus linguistics tools and resources can be brought to bear on the analysis of translated news texts.

The translation of information in the media is “arguably one of the most consequential forms of translation in our time” (Bielsa 2020, p. 366). It is through newspapers, TV news shows, websites, and social media that we get to know what happens in the world, and this knowledge is intrinsically tied to translation activities, practices, and processes. It is to a large extent through translation that we learn about people and events in distant locations, and any attempt to understand how foreign news is produced and received must take into account the extent to which interlingual translation is constitutive of it. However, translation also informs the production of local information in our increasingly multilingual and multicultural virtual and physical shared space. As digital communication has multiplied the occasions for translation in the news media, the study of how translation affects the way information is produced, disseminated, and interpreted has become of primary importance not only for academic research but also for practitioners, whether they be professional journalists or active citizens reading and producing the news in translation.

The book is organized into four chapters. Chapter 1 provides a discussion of some of the historical and social contexts in which metaphorical conceptualizations and terminology related to translation have evolved. As an introduction to the different meanings and practices associated with the concept of (and the words for) translation, I consider “translation” practices before the term *traducere* and its Latinate cognates (including “translation”) came into use in Europe, as compared to the modern concept of translation that became current as its practices became associated with the technology of the printing press and, more specifically, with the printed book. The technology of print was key

to the standardization of vernaculars, which were shaped by translation and which provided the foundations for the establishment of national languages. These, in turn, provided the ground for national identities, while the prototypical concept of translation was defined by the translation of those texts that were fundamental for the establishment of national identities – that is, religious and literary texts.

In order to illustrate the evolving conceptualizations of the discipline and of the object of study, I then consider the conventional definition of translation currently codified in dictionaries and engage in a discussion of the so-called turns of translation studies. I discuss the concept of “translation proper,” as used with reference to interlingual translation, and then look at how, since the early 1990s, the cultural dimension of translation has increasingly grown in importance as the discipline has been enriched by new areas of interest and methodological approaches. The concept of translation has broadened to refer primarily to the translation of cultures, and it has also been suggested that the humanities are in the midst of a translational turn, as languages and other features of cultural identity are negotiated through translation. While the modern meaning of translation is based on the premise of equal and homogeneous national languages and cultures, the study of translation practices and flows has shown that translation is rather a locus of power differential, taking place between one more and one less prestigious variety of human language. In the contemporary communication environment, English, which is for the most part the product of speakers who do not identify with an “English” national culture, has replaced Latin in the role of lingua franca and is the main language of translation – i.e., the main language into and out of which translation is carried out.

Translation practices are shaped by the material culture in which they take place, and in the last part of the chapter, I consider how the “medial turn” of translation has been facilitated by digital information technologies. The current context of globalization marks the transition between print culture and screen culture, a multimedia environment modeled by convergence technologies. The changed social and technological environment has led to a redefinition of translation practices as the meaning of translation “proper” is expanded to include senses that were previously seen only as metaphorical. At the same time, competing terms have surfaced to dispute the ground of the conventional conceptualization of translation. Thus, the terminology of localization, originally used to refer to the “translation” of software products, has been used to refer to translation practices and products in areas such as AVT and news translation.

The central chapters sketch the landscape of the research area of news media translation and provide an overview of this burgeoning field. Chapter 2 is divided into three parts. The first part provides an historical account of news

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translation since the first newsletters were printed in the Low Countries at the beginning of the seventeenth century, and which exclusively contained translated text. In the nineteenth century, the practices and the overall production context of news translation were shaped by developments in communication and travel technology and by the rise of global news agencies, while first French and then English acquired a prominent role as *lingua franca*. The twentieth century saw a shift to screen culture and mass media, and by the twenty-first century, the digital revolution had altered communication practices and processes in the news media, including translation.

The second part discusses the role of translation during the news production process. Translation may occur at any point between news gathering and news dissemination, from the moment a correspondent reads a text in a foreign language or has a fixer interpret the statement of a witness to the moment a report is published in the news media. News is produced not only by global news agencies or local media organizations but also by professional and nonprofessional interest groups and citizens, and it is spread through multimedia channels and social networks. In this section, I consider the role of English as a global *lingua franca* and, in particular, the way translated news affects issues of politics, conflict, and power. The production of translated news, which is inextricably linked to digital technologies and the new(s) media, is discussed with particular reference to translation from and into Spanish and Chinese. News translation is seen as taking place in the technological scenario of media convergence, where the cooperation or synergy between different media makes it possible for information to be translated and disseminated through and by a variety of agents and media sources.

The third part examines some key issues and concepts in news media translation. It offers a discussion of the concept of text (in)stability, showing how in the case of interlingual news translation – like in intralingual news translation – the presence of a specific, single source text cannot be assumed as the norm. Translation is often an invisible process that is taken for granted in news production and consumption. Both readers and news professionals tend to think of translation in terms of a transparent and straightforward operation, while news organizations in different political and social contexts all present translation as “faithful.” Research in news translation has, however, shown that considerable transformations take place at a textual level, and several terms have been used to refer to translation practices in the news media – including domestication, transediting, gatekeeping, and localization. These concepts, which inform and are often proposed as superordinate or synonymous concepts with news translation, are illustrated and discussed.

The rest of the book discusses various approaches that can be brought to bear on the analysis of translated news. Chapter 3 provides a general overview of current research in news media translation, distinguishing between three

main research perspectives in the study of news media translation, namely process-, product-, and culture-oriented research. Process-oriented research looks at work and organizational routines, guidelines, and procedures that govern the production of foreign news in news organizations. Studies have been carried out in a variety of contexts, from large private and state-owned translation agencies (including global news agencies such as Reuters and AFP and the Chinese Reference News) to local, national newspapers. *Process-oriented research* is usually carried out using an ethnographic approach to the collection of the data, as well as tools and methods from cognitive process research. Data collection methods include interviews and observation, as well as think-aloud protocols and eye tracking.

The linguistic dimension is paramount in research on news media translation, and *product-oriented research* looks at the results of translation processes, in the form of translated news texts, sometimes comparing translations and source texts. The main approach used for the analysis of translated news is critical discourse analysis (CDA), in the attempt to connect linguistic analysis with social theories. Textual and linguistic analyses carried out within the framework of CDA typically rely on the analytical model of systemic functional linguistics (SFL). Several studies also draw on narrative theory and framing theory, sometimes used in combination with and sometimes as an alternative framework to CDA, and the concepts of selective appropriation, recontextualization, and reframing are often invoked to explain the types of textual transformations that news undergoes in translation. Corpus linguistics tools and methods are also used in the analysis of collections of news texts, sometimes in conjunction with SFL. *Culture-oriented research* looks at the production of foreign news as a translation phenomenon and focuses on the role of translators and interpreters in shaping perceptions and interpretations of cultural and social identities. This includes research carried out from the perspective of imagology, which studies the representation of nations and nationalities by in- and out-groups with the aim of describing national prejudices and stereotypes.

The second part of this chapter contains a literature overview, grouping studies according to the language investigated in combination with English (or, less often, with another language) that adopt one of, or a combination of, the models and methodological approaches previously introduced. The studies reviewed focus primarily on translation between English and Spanish, Italian, Arabic, Russian, Chinese, and Korean, although studies involving Greek, Farsi, Ukrainian, Hungarian, German, and French are also reviewed. Overall, this chapter shows the range of approaches being used to study the complex phenomenon of news media translation.

Finally, Chapter 4 illustrates an approach to the analysis of news media translation based on ethnomethodology, a sociological approach that allows

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for the meticulous analysis of text in order to find how meanings are reflexively and indexically constituted through social interaction. First, I offer an introduction to the main concepts and analytical tools developed within the ethnomethodological research tradition and discuss the similarities and differences of this approach to the study of social life with other approaches used in news translation research – namely CDA, narrative theory, and symbolic interactionism. I then look in more detail at two research strands that seem to be relevant for news media translation research – i.e., conversation analysis (CA) and membership categorization analysis (MCA), both developed following the lead of Harvey Sacks in the 1960s. First, I provide a summary introduction to the methodological tenets of CA, which allow a detailed analysis of verbal interaction. Then I discuss some examples of the application of CA to research in dialogue interpreting, including dialogue interpreting for the news media, showing how research has emphasized the active role of interpreters as participants in the interaction. The examples discussed refer, in particular, to the role of the simultaneous interpreters during political talk shows, which are characterized by a systematic confrontational attitude by participants. It is shown that even while the setup of simultaneous interpreting seems geared to minimize the presence and role of interpreters, the latter may play a decisive role in furthering or restraining a participant's discursive strategy and thus in the outcome of a debate.

While CA has had a considerable impact in the area of dialogue interpreting, MCA has not yet been used extensively in translation studies. After a summary introduction to the main conceptual tools of MCA as elaborated by Sacks and later research, I provide an overview of studies that have applied these tools to the analysis of the news media, and to newspaper headlines and articles more in particular. Such studies have shown how fine-grained textual analysis can uncover the methods that are used to refer to people and describe their activities and the implications that are conventionally attached to how categorization is accomplished

The application of MCA to research in news media translation is illustrated through two case studies. The first study examines an English article published in *The Observer* and its Italian translation published in the weekly *Internazionale*. The analysis focuses on the respective headlines and blurbs, showing that the way they categorize people and describe what they do orients their respective readers to divergent interpretations of the story. The patterns of omission found in the translated story seem to confirm the interpretation toward which the Italian headline seems to lead the reader.

While the first case study deals with the translation of a feature story, the second is about the translation of international political news. This case study considers a corpus of news articles related to the “same” news event, an “incident” taking place at the border between Israel and the Gaza Strip in the

Occupied Palestinian Territories. More in particular, I focus on two pairs of articles published on two consecutive days in *The Guardian* and *La Repubblica*, one of the latter being a translation of one of the former. An analysis of the categorization procedures carried out in the texts reveals not only that the “incident” can be reported as being part of different narratives (Israeli politics or Palestinian occupation) but also that a video of the incident can be described as supporting both of these narratives. The analysis is supplemented with the use of corpus data. I argue that corpus linguistics tools and resources can offer a methodology for investigating common sense categorizations of people and activities, offering a backdrop of shared knowledge to the analysis of the categorization devices employed by newspaper translators and writers.

The survey and analysis presented emerge primarily from concerns within translation studies but necessarily affect other areas of research across the humanities and the social sciences – including media, communication, and globalization studies – and should be of interest to scholars who recognize the importance of considering questions of language and translation/interpreting in the news media but may not be familiar with the methods for studying those questions that have been developed in the field of translation studies. The case studies presented may also offer a contribution to research in ethnomethodology and hopefully stimulate further research in news media translation from this perspective.