News translation has been investigated more systematically since the mid-2000s. Since then, it has kept pushing the boundaries of translation studies by asking such questions as the following: Can we study multilingual practices that do not necessarily have an identified source text? If so, what do we analyze and compare? Can we call these practices ‘translation’? How do we integrate multimodality into our traditionally textual analyses? This article formulates tentative answers based on recent publications in the field. It calls for sustained research in the reception of news translation and with cognitive methods, as well as intensified exchanges with audiovisual translation.

**Keywords:** news translation, journalistic translation research, methodology, media convergence, multimodality.

Technological and economic developments have left one aspect unchanged in today’s mediascape: multilingualism and translation still permeate the production of news. If your mother tongue is not English, you will hear or read about Catholic Church sex abuse cases in the United States through translation. If you live in a multilingual country, you will consume national news that contains elements of translation. Even if you are only based in a multilingual region, you are very likely to come across translations in local news. However, very few listeners or readers have ever thought about this possibility and its implications. This paper reiterates the importance of research in news translation and points at the conceptual, methodological, and practical problems that scholars may face in this field.

1. What is news translation?

Rather what is journalistic translation research — to refer to the term coined by Valdeón (2015a)? Although researchers probably quarreled about the delimitations of the field, it is necessary to resort to a working definition in this article. While news translation covers translational phenomena occurring “in news gathering and dissemination” (Palmer 2011, 186), journalistic translation encompasses all journalistic production, even if it is not news proper (e.g., features, columns, or comment). Moreover, news translation includes press releases, which are not journalistic products per se but raise similar questions (see investigations into other news producing organiz-
tions, such as the work of Tesseur 2014a). From my point of view, news translation should not be opposed to audiovisual translation (see section 4.1). This section can only temporarily crystallize what news translation tends to be — or what it tends not to be.

1.1. What news translation tends to be

As an object at the periphery of translation studies, news translation has attracted many considerations about its nature and definition. The term “transediting” (Stetting 1989) has been often used these past 15 to 20 years to describe the transformations involved in the process but has also been harshly criticized by leading scholars in the field (Schäffner 2012) who think that the concept of “translation” is broad enough to encompass changes made for the sake of the target audience. Other authors have suggested using “localization” (Pym 2004, Orengo 2005) or “transadaptation” (Li 2006), but the same criticism applies here.

The tendency to avoid the concept of translation may be explained by the fact that news editors almost never consider their production to be the result of an activity of translation (Holland 2013), that translation is completely integrated into the process of news writing (van Doorslaer 2010b, 181), and that traces of translation are erased in the published products (Hernández Guerrero 2011). This is due to organizational aspects in news outlets (Palmer 2011), the multiplication of source texts and their various transformation procedures (van Doorslaer 2010a), and the multi-authored nature of many journalistic target texts (Schäffner 2012). Both Hernández Guerrero (2008) and Valdeón (2015b) notice different translation techniques if the sources of the news are “stable” (e.g., a column by a renowned journalist or a politician) or “unstable” (e.g., a report published by a news agency), but other researchers find that this distinction does not always work, for instance in newswires (Davier 2017).

1.2. What news translation is not

I am not in favour of excluding research projects from a field of study, which is why this section is short. If a line needs to be drawn, I would say that news translation does not deal with fictional works, such as movies, although there can be fruitful intersections with research in audiovisual translation.

In addition, the label of “news translation” cannot be attached to any study using news reports in its data set. Contrary to Valdeón (2015a), who cites Baker’s book (2006) in his article, I argue that, for instance, Baker’s work does not fall into the field of news translation because “news translation was not the focus of her book” (Valdeón 2015a, 648), although she supports her arguments with news texts. I would say that — in its current state — news translation does not encompass all comparisons between translated news reports, but only analyses that raise questions about the nature of translation in the media or the impact of translation on the news.
2. Main research trends in news translation

This article does not intend to give an exhaustive review of news translation during the last 20 years of its development (for this, Valdeón 2015a is a more appropriate resource), but to offer an overview of its main research axes. The classification chosen for this article follows Holland’s (2013) categorization as product-oriented (“focusing mainly on translations themselves” (ibid., 335)) and process-oriented approaches (“concerned with questions of how translations are produced, by whom and in what contexts” (ibid., 336)). I would like to add reception-oriented approaches, which Holland calls “audience analysis” (ibid., 343).

2.1. Product-oriented approaches

As often happens in translation studies, product-oriented approaches seem to be more prominent among publications about news translation. As a consequence, it is difficult to present them in an exhaustive manner. Valdeón (2015a) provides an excellent overview of this type of research starting in the 1990s. While some scholars focus on the domesticating or foreignizing strategies adopted by the journalists (Kwieciñski 1998; Bassnett 2005; Kang 2007; Bielsa and Bassnett 2009; Károly 2012; Pan 2014; Pym and Matsushita 2018), others investigate the ideological influence of translation on the news story (Sidiropoulou 2004; Schäffner 2005; Valdeón 2005; Kang 2007; Valdeón 2007; Schäffner 2008; Gottlieb 2010; Conway 2011; van Rooyen 2011; Gagnon 2012, 2013; Conway 2015). Hernández Guerrero, one of the more prolific authors in news translation, has almost developed her own strand of research about journalistic genres, norms, and conventions (among others, Cortés Zaborras and Hernández Guerrero 2005; Hernández Guerrero 2005, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012). Critical discourse analysis has been a popular instrument for publications about ideologies conveyed or transformed by news translation (Valdeón 2015a, 647).

2.2. Process-oriented approaches

This section brings together a growing number of researchers who are interested in the ways translation interacts with news production. This emerging trend was doubtlessly created by Bielsa and Bassnett’s (2009) seminal book based on extensive fieldwork in three international news agencies. Bielsa and Bassnett lay the methodological foundations for future process-oriented research. Davier (2017), Matsushita (accepted), Pan (2014), Tesseur (2013, 2014b), and Xia (2016) combine participant-oriented methods (participant or non-participant observation, semi-structured interviews, surveys, etc.) with discourse or shift analysis to gain a richer understanding of news production in multilingual contexts.

Coming from the neighbouring field of applied linguistics (and media linguistics, more specifically), Perrin (2013) develops a methodology of his
own that he suggests can be applied to the study of news translation (Ehrensberger-Dow and Perrin 2013). This mixed-methods approach, called “progression analysis”, triangulates data obtained by keystroke logging, screen recordings, eye tracking, cue-based retrospective verbalization, and version analysis.

In the volatile context of community radios in South Africa, where the “texts” of radio bulletins disappear immediately after their broadcast (if they ever existed at all), van Rooyen (2018) is not realistically left with the choice of shift analysis. Thus her work is only based on data gathered in the field through quantitative and qualitative methods.

In terms of results, scholars following Bielsa and Bassnett (2009) walk in their steps. Davier attempts to refine their findings in the context of two multilingual newswires based in Switzerland (2014, 2017), then in monolingual media based in Canada (accepted). Matsushita illustrates how keeping the English original in a Japanese translation can be a risk mitigation strategy (Pym and Matsushita 2018). In a completely different ideological context, Pan (2014) and Xia (2016) show that translation policies vary from central language units to local sections of a non-governmental organization. In a political context with considerable inequalities between language communities, van Rooyen (accepted) exemplifies how the digital divide materializes through news translation.

During the development of these process-oriented methods in translation studies, a whole group of scholars in applied linguistics (NT&T 2018) uses linguistic ethnography to explore tensions between language communities in various media landscapes (e.g., Jacobs and Tobback 2013, Bouko and al. forthcoming).

### 2.3. Reception-oriented approaches

“A sense of audience is clearly of central importance to many of those involved in the production and dissemination of news […]”, writes Holland (2013, 343). Although he calls for studies examining “audience reception of broadcast news across societies” (ibid., 343), researchers who have explored the reception of translated news since the 2010s have been interested in other questions.

Conway and Vaskivska (2010) investigate a news translation experiment: how readers of Russian and English react to articles about the Russian government published by the New York Times and translated into Russian. They conclude that the reader comment sections could “improve communication across linguistic and cultural lines” (Conway and Vaskivska 2010, 233) but that their potential is limited by the functionalities of the section (e.g., when it is not possible to answer a previous comment) and the behaviour of readers, who only take into account a limited number of other comments.
Tian and Chao’s (2012) research is comparable (they analyze 846 forum posts following an Economist news report about China), except that they analyze the (dis)satisfaction of the readers of one news item. This news item is a story in English about the deadly riot that occurred in the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region in China, which is an instance of “cultural translation” (Conway 2012) rather than news translation.

From a different perspective, Cadwell (2015) presents a case study in an ethnographic tradition to understand how foreign residents used translation/interpreting to communicate and collect news during the Great East Japan Earthquake in 2011.

In her PhD thesis, Scammell (2016) revisits the question of domestication/foreignization from the angle of reader response. Using focus groups, she shows that foreignized translations of culture-specific items and quotes in news dispatches do not have a negative impact on reading ease. With this experiment, she opens the door to disruptive cosmopolitan practices in news translation.

Although a few scholars have started to explore the numerous possibilities that are open around the reception of translated news, I am not currently aware of ongoing research in this area. Young researchers almost have a terra incognita to discover. Instead of criticizing manipulation through translation, they could wonder whether participants would be willing to consume news reports that require more cognitive efforts. Instead of complaining about the invisibility of translation in the news from a research perspective, they could ask readers and viewers whether they are aware of translational practices in the media. Instead of disapproving of the low quality of live news translation, they could approach readers to learn whether they are disturbed by typos and shortcomings in the translation.

3. Methodological issues in news translation

The issue of definitions and concepts introduced above (see section 1.1) echoes methodological questions. During the previous two decades, scholars illustrated that the source text and the author are myths that do not hold in the media. What is left to translation scholars if these basic concepts are challenged? How are translation studies scholars equipped to deal with unclear source text—target text situations; in other words, how do they deal with materials that contain “translational elements” (Gentzler 2017) but no (or very few) complete translations? These questions are tackled in a special issue of Across languages and cultures dedicated to methods in news translation (Davier, van Doorslaer and Schöffner 2018).

3.1. Uncertainties about identified source texts

Davier and van Doorslaer show that source texts are never a given in today’s media, where “[i]ntegral and explicitly mentioned translations are extremely rare” (2018, 245). Even in the instances where a source text seems to
exist, unexpected problems arise: the exact translation direction is not always clear; a written text can be presented as a source, although journalists based their translation on the oral version of a speech; and there can be pseudo-translations for political reasons (Holland 2006).

3.2. Absence of an identified source text

In this special issue (Davier, van Doorslaer and Schäffner 2018), several contributions — which are at least partly product oriented — struggle with the absence of an identified source text. Davier and van Doorslaer (2018) highlight the difficulty of collecting corpora, including source texts (or texts identified as such at the time of data collection). Instead, they suggest that scholars could build multilingual comparable corpora that do not explicitly contain translations. They can then either analyze these corpora without specifically taking into account their translational elements (e.g., in the spirit of a comparative media analysis) or by examining them to discover traces of translation (Davier and van Doorslaer 2018). The authors warn that the work necessary to find these traces is extremely time consuming and does not always allow researchers to identify a source, but only two similar news items. They also argue that triangulation using a participant-oriented method can usefully complement textual analysis (ibid., 250).

Facing similar problems, Gagnon, Boulanger and Kalantari (2018) have decided to work with a bilingual comparable corpus composed of journalistic texts. They acknowledge that interlingual translation is so invisible that it is mostly untraceable with a concordancer (ibid., 235). Nevertheless, they discover numerous instances of intralingual translation (such as rewording and popularization) that they think to add to the general understanding of news translation.

Another article in the same issue (Caimotto and Gaspari 2018) proposes a new methodology by which to overcome the dichotomy between parallel and comparable corpora: the comparallel corpus analysis. A comparallel corpus contains both translated and non-translated texts (ibid.). However, the authors note that the application of this methodology still needs to be tested with news texts. They also call for interdisciplinary collaborations, for instance between translation studies, corpus linguistics, critical discourse analysis, and media studies (ibid.).

3.3. Challenges of cognitive approaches

To the best of my knowledge, cognitive approaches have only been used in news translation by one team of researchers working with Perrin (see, among others, Ehrensberger-Dow and Perrin 2013; Perrin 2013; Perrin, Ehrensberger-Dow and Zampa 2017). Although the mixed methodology Perrin presents (process, participant, and product-oriented) is very promising, it requires a whole team of researchers to set up and expensive equipment (an eye tracker and software for computer logging and screen recording). These
hurdles may prevent young researchers from going in this direction. In addition, they raise particular ethical issues at a time where research ethics boards are more and more demanding. While an ethics board can understand the justified use of computer logging and screen recording, media organizations may not be as open to the request. With recent developments in the mediascape, such as convergence, researchers may have to tackle yet other methodological challenges.

4. News translation and audiovisual translation

In a recent volume, Davier and Conway (accepted) show that the phenomenon of convergence (or multi-platform journalism) opens new avenues for research and creates new methodological problems for scholars.

4.1. Multi-modality

Although scholars interested in news translation and audiovisual translation usually attend separate panels at international conferences in translation studies, for more than a decade, a few authors have shown that news is not restricted to the print media and that audiovisual products go beyond fiction and Hollywood movies. Among them are Tsai (2005, 2006, 2010), in her double role as a scholar and TV journalist; Conway (2008, 2011); Gambier (2010); Darwish (2010); Kang (2012); and Perrin (2013). More recently, the interest in the translation of multimodal news has grown unsurprisingly alongside the phenomenon of “convergence” (for an introduction to the concept, see Deuze 2004, Quinn 2005, Quandt and Singer 2009). The differences between traditional media (print media, radio, and television) have progressively merged with newspapers producing audio and video content on their websites, broadcasters publishing written news reports online, and social networks requiring multimedia content. Does convergence (sometimes also called “cross-platform journalism”) have an impact on translation or vice versa? This fundamental question is addressed by a collective volume on the topic (Davier and Conway accepted).

It seems that convergence reduces the space dedicated to translation. Journalists try to avoid showcasing foreign voices in audiovisual content because of their audience’s tolerance to hearing another language (Davier accepted, Gendron, Conway, and Davier accepted). Convergence could increase the risk of losing multilingual voices in journalism, as already observed in a pre-convergence framework (Jacobs and Tobback 2013; Davier 2017; Perrin, Ehrensberger-Dow and Zampa 2017). Nevertheless, we need multiplied case studies to check whether this result — obtained in the specific context of public broadcasting in Canada — is similar in other media landscapes.

With convergence and increased paces of publication, the “lines separating translation and interpreting” are blurring, as shown by Caimotto (accepted) in a case study of the Italian media. News translation gets closer to
oral communication: typos cannot be corrected immediately online but in the printed version of a news report. In addition, the multiple source texts already described by van Doorslaer (2010a) and Schäffner (2012) are further fragmented into multimedia elements: short live translations, videos with subtitles or voice-overs, embedded tweets, and so on (Caimotto, accepted).

4.2. New challenges for data collection and analysis

The development of cross-platform journalism and social networks poses new challenges in terms of data collection and analysis for which journalistic translation researchers may not yet be equipped. For many scholars, who were still trained in departments of language and linguistics with a separate representation of written translation and oral interpreting, this may require them changing their mindsets and acquiring new skills.

The multimedia fragmentation investigated by Caimotto (in press) and described in the previous section creates further conceptual problems for researchers. As argued by Davier, Schäffner, and van Doorslaer (2018), the source text and target text are no longer useful conceptual tools. The sources may be speeches that are not available to the researcher, while the target texts are “volatile like speech” (Caimotto, in press) since they can disappear and be replaced by a more accurate version any time online.

Live translation necessarily implies live data collection, which may not always be feasible, given competing duties. In addition, for comparative analyses between various media outlets, simultaneous data collection requires a team of researchers. Live translation also forces scholars to anticipate the data they want to collect instead of searching for them posteriori on massive news databases, such as Nexis®. Because of the constraints of live data collection, researchers may have to analyze ad hoc corpora (Valdeón, accepted) instead of corpora neatly composed according to transparent criteria of comparability (Davier and van Doorslaer 2018). Unanticipated challenges are likely to arise when several scholars are working on these types of data.

Even the collection of digital stories on a media website results is much more problematic than in the era before convergence. Gendron, Conway and Davier (accepted) write that it was easier to identify stories as discrete units in traditional media but that “the distinction between one web-based story and another is far less clear, especially when video and sound (which also frequently stand alone) are integrated into a written text” (ibid.). The authors suggest solving this problem by treating digital stories as pages with a single link on the analyzed websites (ibid.), but this solution may not work in all digital contexts.

5. Concluding remarks

I certainly do not have a crystal ball to foretell the future of news translation, but I can see areas of interest that are still under-researched and that would have considerable potential for young scholars. While publications
centered on the product have already attracted much attention, triangulation using process-oriented methods (e.g., interviews, observation, experiments, or cognitive methods) can still complement them in a useful way. Studies focusing on this process can also help solve methodological challenges, such as when great uncertainty surrounds the source text. Moreover, on the side of reception, almost everything still has to be done.

The changes brought about by media convergence also need to be closely scrutinized. With convergence between text, image, and sound, young scholars will need to embrace interdisciplinarity more fully than in past decades. Journalistic translation researchers who were proficient in critical discourse analysis and frame analysis will have to get trained in the audiovisual analysis. Sustained interactions with researchers active in audiovisual translation may be helpful. Convergence also poses new challenges for data collection and data segmentation, which need to be addressed with great transparency. Aside from these issues, social networks will also have to be part of the new landscape. One thing is certain: there will be absolutely no room for boredom.

References


The moving boundaries of news translation


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To cite this article:


ПОДВИЖНОСТЬ ГРАНИЦ В ПЕРЕВОДЕ НОВОСТЕЙ

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Поступила в редакцию 15.09.2018 г.

Начало более системного изучения перевода новостных текстов относится к 2000-м годам. С этого момента теория перевода расширяет границы исследования в поисках ответа на целый ряд вопросов. Можно ли изучать многоязычные процессы, когда не обязательно имеется достоверно идентифицированный исходный текст? Если да, то какие тексты подлежат сравнительному анализу? Можем ли мы назвать такой процесс переводом? Каким образом мультимодальность может быть интерпретирована в традиционный анализ текста? В данной статье формулируются возможные ответы на эти и другие вопросы на основе недавних научных публикаций,
посвященных данной теме. Перевод новостей требует более системного изучения восприятия новостных текстов, в том числе с использованием когнитивных методов. Необходима большая синергия с исследованиями в области аудиовизуального перевода.

Ключевые слова: перевод новостей, исследование перевода текстов журналистики, методология, конвергенция СМИ, мультимодальность.

Список литературы


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