

Journalistic translation

In brief



 **SPA Periodística (traducción)**

origins

This is the name given to the translation activity carried out in the journalistic sector.

other names

In the English-speaking world, the term *news translation* is widely used, but *journalistic translation* is preferable because it is a broader concept that includes not only news, but all the textual varieties of journalism (interviews, reports, opinion articles, etc.).

abstract

Journalistic translation is the label for translation in news organizations – print and digital newspapers, magazines, audiovisual media, press syndicates, news agencies and other communication companies. Journalistic practices influence both the ways in the translation process and how journalistic messages are redrafted for specific audiences. Purely linguistic tasks are always secondary to providing information.

The journalists' work consists of generating news, which may involve translation, understood in different ways. These do not always coincide with the traditional concept of translation since their aim may not be to reproduce an original text but rather to use it in order to create information for a specific medium with a given function. In journalistic production, translation is one of the skills needed for the production of new content. It is not considered a separate task from journalism but rather an integral part of it. The term *journalistic translation* may encompass various types of translation, and translation may be used flexibly according to the functional needs of each medium.

Journalistic translation is also part of a juncture of political and economic interests. The communications industry controls the flow of international information -not only for economic reasons but also for ideological purposes- and journalistic production (news and opinion) have become a strategic and global product, sold and distributed in a trading system controlled by large corporations. Translation can help news organizations reach new audiences, and have a significant social impact.

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Entry



 SPA [Periodística \(traducción\)](#)

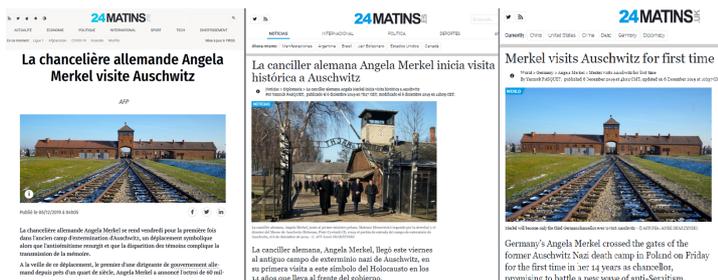
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Introduction

Journalism has been closely linked to translation since its beginnings, either in the form of publications that are authentic translated newspapers, or in publications that alternate translated articles with their own journalistic output. Both forms persist to this day. The earliest manifestations of journalism in Spain began in the 15th century. Amongst the first documented cases of translated journalism are the *Gazeta romana, y relacion general, de auisos de todos los Reynos y Prouincias del mundo*, published in Seville in 1618, and three issues of the *Gazeta de Roma* printed in Valencia between 1618 and 1621, translated from Italian (Espejo 2013:79). Since then and till the present day, translation has been integrated in the inner workings of journalistic production and its role has evolved over the centuries. Valdeón (2012) presents a complete historical view at an international level, starting in the 17th century and reaching the present day. The close link between journalism and translation has intensified over time to become, without exaggeration, a real relationship of dependence, as nowadays it would be very difficult to conceive journalism without translation.

The internationalisation of information has produced continuous flows of information transfer, which cross borders in complex processes only possible thanks to translation. New information technologies have sped up the process, regardless of the format (print, audio-visual and digital or multimedia journalism).



Screenshots of the Spanish and English editions of the French news website [24matins](#).

Companies in the sector have a dual function, selective and diffusive: they select and filter the information, give it a certain treatment, style, and language according to its recipients, while marking it ideologically and culturally. Translating, in these companies, is just another part of the complex process of elaborating journalistic information. The ways of

using translation are not uniform, which gives place to varied forms, from texts that reproduce the content from the original faithfully and integrally, to more flexible forms where the traditional notion of the term is difficult to apply. The objective of the media is not to reproduce the originals, but to produce new information that meets the expectations of the local audience and the interests (economic, political, ideological, etc.) of the communication group.

Translation in the media is constant. In the process of creating information, the continuous flow of translated text is diluted and intermingled with the journalistic text produced in the newsrooms, and thus becomes part of the media's own production. Added to this invisibility of translation is transparency: a way of focusing mediation in which texts are adapted to the norms of the receiving culture, minimising linguistic and cultural differences for the sake of fluency. Audiences prefer to receive information in their own language and in the way that they have conventionally received it.

Bielsa & Bassnett (2009) point out that the invisibility and transparency of translation in the global information flow have created the impression that information circulates unaltered between linguistic and cultural communities, when the reality is quite different: it is altered by the mediation process to which it is subjected

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¶ Translating journalistic material: stable and unstable sources

The media translates a wide variety of texts, such as news, agency dispatches, interviews, reports, columns, and opinion articles. This flow of information circulates on a global scale and the media selects and translates it according to their needs and interests. However, the way in which this wide variety of texts is translated is not always the same. Analyses of translations (Hernández 2005, 2009, 2010) allow to distinguish between two very different ways of focusing on the translation of this journalistic material: when it is considered a definitive text (stable source) and when it is not considered a definitive text (unstable source). This difference can be linked to the textual classification into journalistic genres, respectively argumentative (opinion) or informative and interpretative (information). Although they are exceptions, informative texts (news, dispatches, reports, and interviews) are unstable sources and can be subject to substantial modifications. Argumentative texts (columns, tribunes, opinion articles), on the other hand, are considered finished material and their integrity is respected.

The image contains two screenshots of news articles from El País. The top screenshot is the Spanish version of an article titled "Bolsonaro anima a los ejecutivos de Davos a invertir en el nuevo Brasil". The article text states: "El presidente de Brasil defiende, sin muchos detalles, el comercio por delante de la reforma fiscal y la esperada reforma del sistema de pensiones por parte de los inversores". The bottom screenshot is the Portuguese translation of the same article, titled "O breve discurso de Bolsonaro decepciona em Davos". The article text states: "Falta de detalhes sobre medidas concretas gera frustração na audiência do Fórum. 'Foi um pouco decepcionante, mas a verdade é que as metas que fixou foram alentadoras', avalia o economista-chefe da seguradora de riscos IHS".

Screenshots of a news article from El País translated in its Brazilian edition

Informative texts

Informative texts focus on presenting facts, lose their relevance, and must be modified to account for their evolution. They are unfinished texts (unstable sources) which are open to rewriting; this material, in its various stages of production, passes through several mediators who have a great deal of freedom to update it. On this journey, the journalist/translator's work often involves shortening or expanding texts, adding, or deleting information, in a process of rewriting that ends up adapting them to the needs of the company. Authors take a back seat and information takes precedence over other considerations. In the translation process, texts are often manipulated and transformed.

PAUL KRUGMAN

No, el coronavirus no es bueno para EEUU

Hasta que punto debería asustarnos el coronavirus? No soy epidemiólogo, pero lo que he visto da bastante miedo. No es nada más que hecho de que el Gobierno de Trump, como parte de su guerra genocida contra la ciencia y la experiencia, haya reducido gravemente la capacidad de respuesta de Estados Unidos en caso de que afrontásemos una pandemia peligrosa.

También parece bastante posible que el virus infliga muchísimo daño económico, aunque no nos mate, podría matar muchos empleos. Y una fuente de preocupación especial es que altos cargos del Gobierno de Trump están diciendo tonterías sobre la amenaza económica.

Pues bien, acerca de esa amenaza económica muchos están calificando para delfinos con el brote de síndrome agudo respiratorio severo (SARS) en 2002-2003, que también se originó en China. Al igual que el brote actual, el SARS provocó la imposición de cuarentenas perturbadoras para la economía y que parecen haber tenido un significado, aunque temporal, efecto adverso sobre la economía china y un moderado impacto negativo en el resto de la economía mundial.

Aun no sabemos si el coronavirus es más o menos peligroso que el SARS. Lo que sí sabemos es que probablemente las consecuencias económicas mundiales de una pandemia en China sean mucho más graves ahora que entonces, por la sencilla razón de que China es un actor mucho mayor que antes.

En 2002, China estaba aún en las primeras fases de gran crecimiento económico, equivalente solo al 8% del valor añadido del sector de la fabricación mundial, muy inferior al porcentaje de Estados Unidos, Japón y Europa. Hoy, sin embargo, China

es el taller del mundo, y representa más de la cuarta parte de la producción mundial. Ahora bien, a lo mejor piensan que los problemas de China tienen un lado positivo: que una perturbación del comercio sector de la fabricación china beneficiaría a oportunidades a los productores de otros países, entre ellos Estados Unidos. Es decir, podrían pensar si no superar nada sobre la economía del siglo XXI.

Y como no, Wilbur Ross, el secretario de Comercio, opone el martes por la mañana en Fox Business para declarar que "no quiero hablar de una ronda triunfal", pero que el coronavirus "guñará a acelerar el retorno de puestos de trabajo a Norteamérica". Al decir eso, demostraba dos cosas: (1) por que los lectores de Fox Business lo ven como el peor miembro del Gabinete de Trump, y (2) por que la guerra comercial de Trump ha sido un gran fracaso.

Lo que Ross y sus compañeros por lo visto siguen sin entender —aunque algo nos a lo mejor empezaron a hacerse una idea— es que la fabricación moderna no es como la de hace dos generaciones, cuando los sectores industriales de los diferentes países se encontraban envueltos en una competencia mano a mano que los desestabilizaba. Hoy en día, vivimos en un mundo de cadenas de valor globales, en el que buena parte de lo que un país cualquiera importa no consiste en bienes de consumo, sino en mercancías "intermedias" que son como parte de su propio proceso de producción.

En un mundo así, cualquier cosa que altere las importaciones —ya sean aranceles o virus— aumenta los costes de producción y, en consecuencia, en todo caso perjudica al sector fabril. De hecho, un estudio reciente llevado a cabo por la Reserva Federal concluyó que los aranceles



Miembros del equipo de baloncesto de China patrullan en Pekín, semana anterior.

El virus da bastante miedo y una fuente extra de preocupación es que altos cargos de Trump digan tonterías

Las consecuencias económicas de una pandemia en China ahora son mayores a cuando se originó el SARS

de Trump, que se concentraban en mercancías intermedias, no han aumentado la producción y el empleo en el sector de la fabricación, sino que los han reducido. Y claro, mientras que el crecimiento económico total en 2019 fue decente (no fenomenal) la industria manufacturera está en recesión. (Y la inflación crecida por la guerra comercial puede explicar por qué la inversión empresarial ha disminuido a pesar de la enorme rebaja de los impuestos sobre sociedades).

Como ya he dicho, parece que algunos miembros del equipo de Trump ya han estado en la cuenta. La semana pasada, la Casa Blanca biológicamente admitió que los aranceles sobre el acero y el aluminio han hecho más mal que bien, y han perjudicado a los sectores que utilizan esos materiales. Pero la respuesta del Gobierno no es una reconsideración de su política, sino imponer más aranceles, a una gama más amplia de productos.

Lo que me decepciona al coronavirus, además a un lado las cuestiones de salud pública —aunque el Gobierno de Trump no ha dejado claramente mucho dinero preparado que antes para afrontar estas situaciones si se vuelven graves— y centromos en la economía.

Lo que podemos decir es que si el virus altera seriamente la producción china, su impacto en la economía estadounidense será como una variación extrema de la guerra comercial de Trump, pero sin compensación en forma de ingresos aranceles. Y las dos cosas que, sabiendo de la guerra comercial son que ha sido un fiasco económico y que al parecer el equipo de Trump sigue sin tener ni idea de por qué lo ha sido.

Tengan en cuenta que, hasta ahora, Trump ha tenido una suerte extraordinaria. Aparte del huracán María —un asunto que gestionó mal, y en el que fallaron miles de estadounidenses—, precisamente no ha afrontado crisis, internas o externas, que no los hubiese oprimido. Y el hecho de que una pandemia que para afrontar la capacidad del presidente para abordar una crisis que no ha provocado sí mismo.

Si los ridículos comentarios que hizo Wilbur Ross el martes sirven para hacerme una idea, y me temo que el Gobierno de Trump está aún menos preparado para afrontar las consecuencias económicas de una posible pandemia que para afrontar la crisis de salud pública, asintiendo.

Paul Krugman es premio Nobel de Economía. © The New York Times, 2020. Traducción de News Clips.

Opinion texts

Opinion articles are used to publicise ideas or value judgements typically arising from events that have been in the news recently and are considered a stable source. The authors are particularly important because they are prestigious figures. When the original is a stable source, the target text is usually a complete translation. These are usually set texts, signed articles, with rights (copyright) that restrict the mediator's freedom of action. The text is adapted to the new communicative framework and, although it may be modified by the journalist/translator and the editor, it is still intended to reflect the original and its status is that of a translation. This is why it often includes

Example of a translation of an opinion text in El País

certain paratextual marks that allow it to be recognised as one (such as a caption with the translator's signature).

Distinguishing between stable and unstable sources simplifies the ways of translation excessively. Nevertheless, it is very useful for analysing the media's translation activity. The transfer of originals into other languages is carried out in different ways depending on whether the source is information or opinion.

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The translation of information

When information is translated, the cross-cultural transfer is determined by the information needs of the receiving media and its audience. The journalist/translator produces a message for a new group of recipients and rewrites its content with them in mind. Textual analyses have brought to life domestication operations (Clausen 2004, Bassmett 2005) that allow the remodelling of material in other languages to adapt it to the expectations of its recipients and the editorial line of the companies in the sector. Vuorinen (1995: 170) identifies these four operations: omission, addition, substitution and reorganisation, the same operations that are used to process information in journalistic production.

Bielsa and Bassnett, in their study on how translation works in news agencies, note that translating can involve all kinds of textual manipulation, including synthesis, omission, explication and many other textual strategies. For these researchers (2009: 64), the most frequent modifications to which the source text is subjected in the translation process are the following:

- Change of title and subtitles.
- Elimination of unnecessary information.
- Addition of important background information.
- Change in the order of paragraphs.
- Summary of the information.

To explain the substantial changes in translating information, researchers have drawn on several processes that influence this transformation – some of them rooted in journalistic practice – such as the selection of information, transediting, recontextualisation, localisation, and rewriting. We review them below.

The gatekeeping process is used to designate the points that act as barriers, responsible for rejecting or deciding which events become news. Gatekeepers are those who hold the power to allow or block information in a media. Those who translate information also function as gatekeepers, that is, they act as filters and select which parts of a journalistic text will be disseminated and how. In the words of Fujii (1988: 36), they perform these four functions: controlling the quantity of the text, adapting it to the new context, adding information and reorganising its structure. Valdeón (2016) elaborates on the role of journalists/translators as information selectors and manipulators.

Transediting, a term coined by Stetting (1989: 371), refers to the usual combination of translation and editing in journalism. Editors handle material in other languages and process this information for their articles. For Stetting (1989: 377), transediting covers all three areas:

- (1) Adaptation to the standard of efficiency of expression.
- (2) Adaptation to the established function of the new text in the new social context.
- (3) Adaptation to the needs and conventions of the target culture.

In the process of transediting, the form of a textual modality of the receiving culture is adopted. It is not all a matter of form: an important part of the textual intervention is conditioned by extratextual factors. The media is decisive: it decides what is translated, establishes with what function, and conveys it with the stamp of its editorial line.

The information must function in its new socio-cultural context and for this purpose media professionals not only filter, translate and edit it, but also recontextualise it for the local media and its audience. For Verschueren (2007: 79-80), the process of recontextualising a text affects its meaning, function, and reception: a translated text not only involves linguistic, but also contextual and cultural displacement. The process of recontextualization transforms the message and the information is presented from a different perspective. According to Schäffner and Bassnett (2010: 8), recontextualization always implies a transformation, determined by the goals, principles, and interests of the new context.

The transformations presented by translated news have also been associated with the concept of *localisation*. For Pym (2004:4), texts are also material products that are distributed in time and space. The international news we read in the local press can legitimately be considered a localisation of texts in other languages, transformed to some extent by international agencies. Orengo (2005) argues that news is the first global information product to be localised, i.e., distributed in multiple languages simultaneously. Moreover, this process is tailored to the new social, cultural, and political profile of the local audience. The news market implies its translation into other languages as a prerequisite for global distribution. The process of publishing a news agency text corresponds to the transition from a global product to a localised version by a national media.

The Telegraph



xlsemanal



Screenshots of a translated interview

Last but not least, the concept of *rewriting* has also been used to explain transformations. Rewriting is a frequent practice in journalism, with and without translation. Hernando (1990: 57) describes them as a collective production process in which one or more editors rewrite information based on data supplied by other sources. As Bielsa and Bassnett (2009: 57) point out, journalistic rewrites are the way in which news is made available to readers worldwide. Information is rewritten for a given audience, updated, adapted to their interests, following the style standards of each media and the journalistic conventions of the receiving culture, and marked with the ideological bias of the media that reproduces it. The process of rewriting is present in all journalistic production in which translation is involved: news agency dispatches undergo a process of rewriting in the local language before being redistributed by newspapers, radio and television (Lomheim 2002: 184); foreign correspondents rewrite news stories through the filter of their intercultural mediation (Hautanen 2008); international media stories translated by a national newspaper are rewritten for their new readers, to name but a few examples (for a description and classification of different translation based journalistic rewritings, see Hernández 2009).

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¶ The translation of opinion

The media plays a fundamental role in the transmission of ideologies and identities and in the creation of states of opinion. Behind every media company there is a powerful economic and/or ideological group that defends particular interests, which are the ultimate reason for its existence and the central element of its business strategy. The translation of opinion is used to support and reinforce the editorial line of the media outlet (Hernández 2012).

The translations of opinion texts are generally accurate and respect the author's style. Mutilations are rare. When they do occur, they are mainly for ideological or spatial reasons and always to a lesser extent than in informative texts. The media exercises control over the opinions it publishes; it does not do so directly, by manipulating the content of the articles, but indirectly, by selecting and

translating the opinions it disseminates. Its translation policy serves to reinforce its editorial line with the opinion of authoritative international voices.

In order to convey a current of thought, it is crucial to choose a portfolio of opinion leaders and intellectuals. When these voices write in other languages, the media translates them. They arrive on the opinion pages in different ways: in some cases, they are part of the circle of prestigious figures from whom the media regularly solicits their articles; in others, they arrive through agreements with other media, or through packages purchased from international syndicates, such as Tribune Content Agency, The New York Times Syndicate or Project Syndicate, among others.



Project Syndicate is a clear example of a translation policy at the service of currents of thought (Hernández 2016). This non-profit organisation – which is funded by financial contributions from media and foundations in developed countries – is currently the world’s largest distributor of opinion articles. It selects personalities of international prestige from whom it requests articles in English, which it translates into thirteen languages and

Example of a rewrite based on the translation of an opinion piece in El País.

distributes to more than five hundred media outlets around the world – in developing countries, free of charge or at reduced rates. Project Syndicate uses translation to make these opinions more resonant, with the stated aim of helping readers around the world understand issues of global relevance on topics such as economics, international relations, science, sustainability, etc. However, the organisation is at the service of the media groups that fund it. It functions as a global agency specialising in opinion distribution and disseminates the same uniform message as the mainstream media, serving the preservation of the liberal socio-economic system and the prevalence of Western culture.

While opinion articles fall into the category of stable sources – signed, copyrighted texts that make their manipulation difficult – the opinion sections of the media also offer translation-based journalistic rewritings that intervene in the content of the originals. Among the best known and most studied are press reviews (see Martín 2003 and Guerrero 2005), a minor genre that presents only fragments of articles, columns, or editorials from other media, many of them international. Press reviews are not consistent. Some publish a single fragment of the original, of varying length (a single paragraph, or more than one) or the text with important omissions marked by typographical signs indicating such omissions: ([...]). Press reviews are based on rewriting. As a general rule, the source is mentioned, and occasionally the name of the author, but almost never the name of the journalist/translator.

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Research potential

Research on journalistic translation is relatively recent. The first studies began at the end of the 20th century, with a notable development in the first two decades of the 21st (Valdeón 2015, [2020](#); Davier [2019](#); Hernández 2019a).

A significant part of the research has been focused on journalistic translation as a product through various analyses of translations between different languages. There are few studies of the process, which could provide valuable information on the ways in which professionals in the sector operate, as well as an insight into the profile of those who translate, and the skills required for the job.

Davier, Schäffner and Van Doorslaer (2018) suggest that textual analysis alone is insufficient for an in-depth understanding of journalistic translation processes. These researchers propose approaching translation with a combination of textual analysis and qualitative data collected through fieldwork. Thus, hypotheses derived from textual analysis could be confirmed or modified with first-hand information from the source of the study: semi-structured interviews, non-participant observation, collection of internal documents...

From a theoretical point of view, the investigation in journalistic translation can contribute to the debate in translation studies regarding the traditional notion of translation and its necessary expansion to include other phenomena. Practices like transediting, rewriting... have led investigators in this area to point out the necessity to expand and redefine central concepts such as equivalence, fidelity, or authorship.

On the other hand, journalistic material has become a strategic, global product. It influences audiences, transforming their view of the world, imposing cultural schemas, representations of identity, and fostering the emergence of certain currents of thought (see Vidal [2012](#); Paula [2016](#); Páez 2017; Rodríguez 2019). Large communication groups control it for commercial but also ideological purposes. Translation allows them not only to produce new information, but also to grow, reach new audiences and achieve greater social impact. New studies are needed to analyse how it is used in the configuration of the discourses disseminated by the media, in their policies, as well as the power relations in the transmission of journalistic messages. Not forgetting the study of the reception of translated messages, a practically unexplored area. All this requires an interdisciplinary methodological framework that combines translation studies with other related fields such as sociology, semiotics, communication studies, cultural studies...

Finally, the changes of the digital era are leading to interesting lines of research:

- The journalistic sector is undergoing a major transformation process: new forms of journalism have emerged such as citizen journalism, alternative media, blogs, multimedia platforms...

lavanguardia.com/internacional/20200127/664/accidente-avion-afghanistan-muertos.html

"Las noticias sobre el accidente de una avión de la aerolínea Ariana en los canales de noticias no son ciertas, todos los vuelos de la aerolínea Ariana operan con normalidad", publicó la empresa en su cuenta de la red social Facebook.



Screenshot of a news article from La Vanguardia with translated social media content

There is a need for case studies on the role of translation in the new media.

- Journalistic companies, immersed in multimedia convergence, have changed the way they produce content. This new reality is redefining the media landscape and transforming both the news production process and the practices of journalists (Davier & Conway 2019). Studying how new modes of information production affect the processes of translation and the strategies used is a new field, hardly explored to this day.
- Digital transformation has also brought about new discursive practices in journalistic writing. Information is now presented through a combination of text, sound, and images, and is constantly updated. New textual conventions have emerged, such as incorporating social media content into news stories, mainly as quotes or statements. When such content is in other languages, it is offered in translation and often accompanied by a screenshot of the original, revealing to recipients a hitherto mostly invisible translation activity. The study of the use of translation in the new textual conventions and in the new narrative model of multimedia journalism is a line of research that is just beginning.

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