

# On the role of indirect translation in the history of news production

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## **Abstract**

This article aims to problematize the role of translation in news production as a result of the invisibility of indirect translation (ITr). In the first section, I argue that in journalistic translation ITr is not merely ‘hidden translation’ but rather ‘ignored translation’ as a consequence of the traditional status of the translational activity in journalism and because researchers can hardly find traces of ITr in news production, such as the name of sources, attributions, or paratexts. I then move on to discuss the importance of the various forms of translation in the emergence of journalism in the early modern period. Human conflicts and movement meant that news texts were recycled across Europe, often via ITr. News writers used various sources from different languages and adapted the texts taking into account political and cultural considerations. This establishes a link with contemporary journalism, as news articles are characterized by their multi-authored nature. In addition, translations can be embedded and are often circular rather than linear. In the concluding discussion, I suggest that journalistic translation research, including research into ITr, can benefit not only from interdisciplinary approaches, but also from incorporating historical aspects.

## **1. Introduction**

In an enlightening article published in 1978, Roy Atwood discussed some of the problems of journalism historiography. Among them, he mentioned that only a small number of journalism historians had tried to delve into the origins of the profession and stressed that theoretical and methodological considerations also needed attention (1978, 6). Although the situation has certainly improved since then, one feature remains unchanged. Journalism scholars have paid little or no attention to the role of translation during the emergence of journalism as a profession. Translation scholars (Bielsa and Bassnett 2009, Hernández Guerrero 2009, van Doorslaer 2010) have discussed what might be construed as the main reason to explain this paradox: although news production has always required translation, journalism scholars and journalists ignore or downplay the practice of translation as a secondary activity within the profession. Valdeón (2018) has shown that this is related to the conceptualization of translation in journalism studies, where it is understood as word-for-word interlinguistic transfer. In fact, in his analysis of almost 200 journalism studies research

papers, Valdeón found that when journalism scholars write about translation not only do they tend to mean “literal” translation, but they also regard the process in a negative way, sometimes associated with words such as “piracy” or “copy”.

Conversely, in translation studies journalistic translation research has witnessed a rapid expansion over the past two decades (see the overviews in Valdeón 2015 and 2020). Translation scholars have focused on product-based studies on the one hand and research methodologies on the other (see Davier, Schäffner and van Doorslaer 2018), while a smaller number of studies have approached news production from an ethnographic perspective (Bielsa and Bassnett 2009, Filmer 2014). Both product and process-based studies are highly problematic: on the one hand source and target texts are difficult to locate, on the other journalists/translators are reluctant to participate in ethnographic studies. As regards the former, it follows that if analyzing contemporary target texts on the basis of the source texts is problematic, the study of the role of ITr in news production becomes almost an impossible task, as the availability of texts for the study of this translational phenomenon is next to none.

Despite this problem, the present paper aims to discuss a neglected aspect concerning the role of translation in news production: the importance of ITr in journalistic texts, with a particular focus on the early modern period, despite its (mostly) invisible nature. The starting point for the discussion is that, in news production, ITr is not merely “hidden translation”, as in the case of literary translation, where this term has been used as an example of what Kálmán (1986) called borderline cases of translation such as pseudo-translation, auto-translation and indirect translation. Although Kálmán did not provide definition of these concepts, notions such as “hidden translation” were taken up by other authors who concurred that it was important to include examples of other translations that had been previously overlooked in the literature (Tymoczko 1999, Delabastita 2008), as they challenge the binary and unidirectional approaches to translation (Delabastita 2008, 239).

But while hidden and pseudo translation can be detected, it can be argued that journalistic translation is in fact “ignored translation”, or to put it bluntly, nobody seems to care about the origin of the target texts and about whether these are translations. Thus, the ensuing discussion may become an extension of the debate about the function of direct translation in news production, since the fact that journalistic translation is hidden or ignored may be another consequence of the traditional status of the translational activity in journalism and in journalism studies, where translation has been relegated to a secondary or even a tertiary position (Author XX; Bielsa and Bassnett 2009). In fact, as Bielsa and Bassnett (2009, 1-2), Filmer (2014, 136) and Conway (2010a, 980) have pointed out,

journalists do not believe they translate, even if they do. This is indeed surprising if we bear in mind, for example, that the wires produced by contemporary international news agencies often entail several translation processes through which information is turned global by translating it into (typically) English, and then made local again by rendering the material into another language. In addition, even though news texts tend to be retranslations or indirect translations (Hernández Guerrero 2009, 114-115), they do not include attribution to specific sources.

Another important problem in connection with the above is the fact that journalistic translations rarely originate in one specific “original” text, but rather in two or more source texts, as the final published product relies on various sources (not only on written texts) and goes through several changes. In connection with this, van Doorslaer (2010) proposed the existence of two extensions in journalistic translation: the first one being more target-text oriented while the second one would add elements pertaining to the source text and source context (2010, 181). This combination of factors makes it even more complicated to locate traces of the role of ITr in news production, such as sources, attributions and paratexts. Despite these challenges, I would like to hypothesize on the role that ITr may have played in the history of journalism in order to establish a link with the role played by translation at large. This, it is hoped, will contribute to a renewed problematization of the translational practice in journalism and also to the discussion on the need for interdisciplinary approaches to journalistic translation research involving both translation and communication studies. The rest of the paper is devoted to the presentation of some of the available evidence of the use of ITr in seventeenth-century (generally considered the birth of journalism) in news production, which is invariably linked to direct translation. The discussion will also establish links with the use of ITr in contemporary news production across genres (ranging from interviews to editorials and op-eds, from hard news to soft news).

## **2. Indirect translation in early modern news texts**

### **2.1. Language, translation and power in early modern news translation**

The fluidity of the contact between languages across Europe through newsletters goes back to at least the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, as shown by the archive of Francesco Dattini (Infelise 2010, 51). This historical library, comprising around 140,000 letters from almost 300 European cities, shows that information circulated across European cities. But although

translation was crucial in the dissemination of news, it is not possible to distinguish between original and translated information, and it is often impossible to ascertain the languages involved in the various processes. Infelise (2010, 51-52) mentions the case of an individual called Benedetti Dei, from Florence, who had an extensive network of correspondents across Italy and provided them with news he had gathered in distant lands. As the system became more sophisticated, the newsletters were distributed to cities such as Paris, Frankfurt, Antwerp and Amsterdam, where the information had to go through translation processes once again. This information, like in the case of today's news correspondents, would have needed language. Therefore, ITr was necessarily at the centre of the production of the news texts from this period. Its use at the time can be related to contemporary contexts, such as conflicts, where foreign correspondents require interpreters (or fixers) who can provide them with translated information from the local languages. In this context, like in the early modern period, journalists attach great importance to accurate translations (Palmer 2018). In addition, the role of these contemporary mediators who work with different languages serves to highlight not only the use of translation in news production but also of ITr, as news will become available in one language and then reused by other international and national media in their own language. Thus, ITr may be associated with the concept of piracy or copy mentioned by journalism scholars.

In addition to the above, research has demonstrated the crucial and often polemical role played by translation in news production. But, while most publications in Translation Studies have focused on contemporary news production, the available evidence suggests that from at least the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, news pamphlets such as the *Gaceta de Roma* (1619) in Spain (Raymond 2013, 229), and the corantos or news sheets that reached England from Amsterdam (Harms, Raymond and Salman 2013, 6) were translations of foreign texts. The content of these early newspapers was likely to have undergone previous processes of translation. Indeed, translation characterized the dissemination of news texts across Europe through several intermediaries. Couvée (1962), who was one of the first scholars to analyze news production in the Low Countries and Flanders, stressed that the first coranteers (a word applied to a kind of proto-journalists) gathered news from different sources in different countries including "news centres" such as Rome, Vienna and Prague. The news may have originated in other parts of Europe, e.g. news from Spain and France was sent to Rome, news from Hungary and Poland was received in Vienna and so on (1962, 23). Thus, translation was an integral part of the process, first into the language of the news centres, then into other languages such as Dutch and German. For example, Dutch

corantos with translated news from other parts of Europe made their way into England, where they underwent another translation process, and Koopmans (2013, 269) mentions the case of Andries Andriesz Winius, the son of a Dutch merchant that translated Dutch newspapers for the Russian Tsar.

The latter exemplifies the relationship between governments and news production. Indeed, newsletters were specifically produced for governments and rulers. This is the case of Don Giovanni de Medici, the natural son of Cosimo I, who used a variety of oral and written sources to produce his newsletters for the Grand Duke. Don Giovanni worked as an informant and travel throughout the continent obtaining information that was later sent to Grand Duke. Dooley (2010, 108) has demonstrated that Don Giovanni organized his friends and acquaintances “into a veritable news bureau”. His contacts provided him with information from Spain, England, the Low Countries and so on. All this material was later rendered into Italian. Another interesting case is Giovanni Quorli, who supplied aristocrats, merchants and ambassadors with information. Quorli is an excellent example of the multilingual nature of the business. In the mid-seventeenth century, Quorli ran a prosperous news business with over sixty clients. News produced in Italy, which may have originated elsewhere, became available in German-speaking areas, while foreign ambassadors in the Italian peninsula also received news, translated by bilingual scribes (Barbarics and Pieper 2007, 64) highlighting the existence of a hidden web of translation. Although Barbarics and Pieper do not focus on the translation of news texts, they note (2007, 66) that news travelled across languages as the thirst for news of conflicts such the Battle of Lepanto did not cease. The actors, informants and writers involved in such events spoke different languages that required translation before the news could be disseminated.

It has been claimed that literal translation of “source” texts was the norm in the early modern period, that is, translators used a word-for-word strategy to render foreign texts into their own languages. However, this was not always the case, which in fact brought about serious problems for some translators. Andrews (1859, 67-68) mentioned the story of a translator whose mistakes were so serious that he was expelled from the country, and the text had to be translated anew. Andrew’s predicament might support the view that one of the conventions of the time was to translate literally with no editorial material added, as this could endanger the life of the publishers or editors, as also happened to Joseph Mede, who was arrested in 1621 for ‘adding to Corrauntoes’ (Raymond 2014, 161). Therefore, the editors might be safe as long as the pamphlets were presented as literal translations of *one* source text. However, this *one* source text could have been in fact translated from several texts

written in other languages: as the primary sources were not traceable, literal translation might have guaranteed the validity of the target version and avoided political problems with the authorities. To some extent, this feature of early modern journalistic translation can be related to the ethical questions concerning the authorship of source and translated news texts that still characterize contemporary journalism. As Hernández Guerrero (2009, 14-15) has noted, the use of translations as adaptation of source material to the target culture is not necessarily a neutral or ethical option. In fact, it can be interpreted as a way to hide political and economic interests because, as Conway (2010b) has stressed, translation, no matter how literal, tends to introduce new perspectives to news stories, even more so in the case of ITr where the “source” text might be impossible to locate.

### 2.1. The role of human movement and conflicts in translated news

Two other features connecting this early form of journalism with contemporary news production are the movement of people and, hence, information, and the thirst for news about the wars that plagued the continent at the time. Conflicts were one of the reasons why Europeans wanted to be informed, while transportation and the creation of the postal services facilitated the dissemination of news. Dooley and Baron (2001, 17-18), for instance, stress that events such as the Thirty Years War were pivotal for the birth of journalism, and note that England’s initial importation of the corantos produced in the Low Countries (which had to be translated into English by London Stationers) were related to this interest in war news. These pamphlets, although produced in Dutch and translated into English, provided information that was collected throughout the continent in various languages. This meant that the news travelled across borders and also across languages, even though we can only hypothesize about the language barriers that corantos and other news pamphlets had to cross. In sum, news dissemination was indeed the result of the fluid movement of people who spoke a variety of languages and the impact that these people had on news production.

Another important factor that underscores the importance of ITr is related to European colonial expansion, as the seventeenth century was characterized by a great mobility across the globe, and particularly to and from the Americas. In Spain, for instance, readers were informed of the events taking place in distant lands, such the massacre of Christian missionaries in Japan or native uprisings in South America (Ettighausen 2001, 200), which involved translations between native languages and Spanish. The Spanish chronicles of the conquest are a good example of the role that ITr played in the dissemination of news from the Americas. For instance, in his *Crónica del Perú*, Pedro Cieza de León provided a picture

of the linguistic transformations necessary to gather information. Cieza de León, who was an accomplished chronicler, needed mediators to have access to the information provided by the natives, often in the form of *kipus* (strings that contained all kinds of data). These *kipus* had to be translated by *kipu* readers, and then the information was rendered into Spanish. At a later stage, the information was translated from Spanish into other European languages. In addition, in some cases, a text was translated via another language. For instance, *Brevísima relación de la destrucción de las Indias*, the propagandistic pamphlet written by Bartolomé de las Casas to incite the Spanish prince to action and pass laws against the abuses of the conquerors, was first translated into French and from the French version rendered into English. This more visible use of ITr was very specific to the translation of this type of informative texts of a more literary nature, where the name of the translator was included.

### 2.3. Indirect translation and news recycling

As mentioned, news texts were often the product of translations from pamphlets containing information about distant lands (Ettighausen 2001, 200). Both the longer chronicles and the shorter pamphlets necessitated translation from myriad languages. Since these texts, in turn, were reprinted in other European languages, we can assume that ITr must have occurred frequently: the newspapers of the time often shared the same sources, although not necessarily in the same language, which reminds us of the fluidity of news texts today. For instance, the news articles published in publications such as *Aviso*, *Relation* and *Neue Zeitungen* may have originated from similar sources (Schröder 2001, 141). But, although news sheets such as *corantos* and *Gazettes* were translations (Espejo 2011), it is not easy to decipher whether these pamphlets were direct translations of one original or translations via a second language. Occasionally, the source texts can be traced. Dooley (2010, 11-12), for instance, mentions the case of an article published in English in 1621 which reported the burning of a ship. The text appeared in a newspaper entitled *Italy, Germany, Hungaria, Spaine and Dutchland* and was a translation of a Dutch *coranto*, which in turn was a translation of a Venetian newsletter. Interestingly, Dooley notes that although the English text followed the original closely, there was some degree of adaptation, e.g. the number of people responsible for the attack was raised from three to five. This, according to Dooley, might have been due to the availability of new information, but it might have resulted from some degree of ideological manipulation to create a certain state of mind in the target readers vis-à-vis those responsible for the attack. This problematizes the claim that early modern

news texts were often word-for-word renditions of source texts, as they were open to transformations and manipulations,

In fact, even if the convention of the early modern period seemed to have been the literal translation of foreign texts without any accompanying editorials (Raymond 2014, 160), at times the editors/translators rearranged the information they gathered from foreign sources. Infelise (2010, 64) has examined extant seventeenth-century newsletters and found that even in the case of similar texts on the same news event, writers could omit information, be moved forward or inserted later. Raymond (2014, 161) points out that news texts had to be adapted to the cultural milieu of the target readership as the cultural and geographical context might have impeded communication otherwise. In fact, omission was also common at the time, especially for ideological reasons. One such case was the sixteenth-century English versions of German and Dutch corantos. Some of the texts (or part of them) were not translated. This also affected ITr since many of the news events had originated in England, were reported in the continent in translated form and (partly) deleted in the English versions (Brownlees 2014; 2018, 20-21) to avoid problems with the English government.

Be that as it may, the *Italy, Germany, Hungaria, Spaine and Dutchland* article mentioned above highlights the complex network of events, informants, writers and newsletters at play, which involved at least three languages as well as several writers and publishers. In connection with this, Brownlees quotes a pamphleteer, who in 1623 wrote:

I find some, that would as it were pull me back by the sleeue, for running too fast with the newes, as if the Dutch-men were partiall on their side. I haue now lighted vpon other Letters, and other Authors, some in Latine, some in Spanish, and most in Italian, from whence I haue extracted the whole occurrences of the last Moneth. (Brownlees 2010, 238)

This testimony shows that the writers drew on different sources to compose their texts, which, regardless of their true nature, were often presented to the readers as literal translations. The emphasis on the literalness of the translation process was crucial for two reasons. On the one hand, faithfulness to the source texts (whether these “source” texts were originals or translations from other languages was irrelevant) underscored the truthfulness and trustworthiness of the stories. On the other, articles presented as literal translations protected news producers from accusations of political bias. However, this does not mean that, as texts were translated from one language into another via at least a third one, changes did not occur. As we have seen in the abovementioned article, adaptations for the target



readers did take place. These changes have led Dooley to propose a diagram to represent the multiple agents and sources involved in news production during the early modern period:

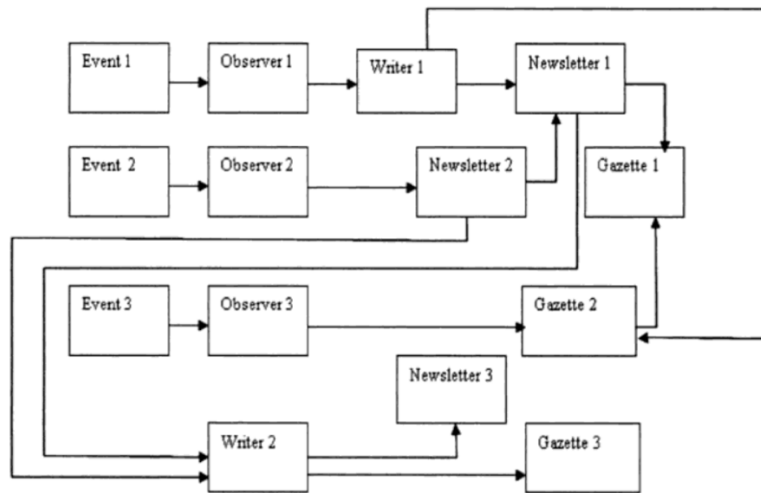


Figure 1. The creation of news texts (Dooley 2010, 12)

The diagram does not specifically consider the various languages that news texts had to go through before publication, but, in light of the example, it is obvious that translation occurred at various levels, since newsletters relied on oral forms that were transformed for local consumption and then made their way into other European nations and languages. Hunt (2014), for instance, has discussed the role played by rumours in the spread of news about the Pope's health. Hunt notes that the citizens of Rome were interpreters of external signs, which they turned into rumours. These rumours were later disseminated in written form through the *Avissi*. News about the Pope's health were published in Roman and Venetian pamphlets, together with news originated in other parts of Europe. These newsletters contained information originally available in other written and oral sources. Then they were exported to the Low Countries, where they were published in the form of Dutch corantos, and later translated into English as well as other languages. This complex news cycle occurred across Europe as the oral dissemination of news increased with the spread of postal services. In fact, postmasters became news correspondents, i.e. they gathered news from their posts and mailed them to other European centres (Høyer 2003, 452), which gave way to an international web of languages from and into which news was translated.

#### 2.4. The multi-authored nature of translated news

The various agents intervening in news writing and dissemination processes meant that news pamphlets, regardless of whether they were in printed or in handwritten form, could not be attributed to one single author (Infelise 2010, 63). This multi-authored nature of early journalism has also remained a feature of contemporary news production (van Doorslaer 2010, 186; Schäffner 2012; Davier 2014) and is related to its multilingual origin, as writers may rely on various sources who speak different languages. This pertains not only to the original sources of a news event (such as an eyewitness) but also to published texts written in other languages. This interaction between the various informants and writers is more difficult to decipher when we turn to the early modern period as the extant documents do not allow researchers to say much about the “languages prevalently, about translations from one language to another and about the inevitable linguistic and cultural transfers” (Infelise 2010, 63). However, we can hypothesize that, given the fluidity of the contact between the different European regions and cities, much news writing was the result of a Chinese whisper style of translation. Infelise mentions the case of an *aviso* dated 29 May 1610 containing news from Prague, Nancy, Florence, Paris and Vienna among other places, while a second news sheet provided its readers with news from Spain. Once again, we should remember that these *avisi* were later transported to Switzerland and Austria, where they underwent further transformations. This situation applied to news production centres across Europe as trade routes contributed to news dissemination (Raymond 2014, 161). In these circumstances, indirect translations must have been at the basis of many of the publications, as pamphlets moved around Europe and needed mediation for the new target readerships. In his study of British seventeenth-century periodicals, Curelly (2017, 104) has found that in the case of newsheets such as *The Moderate Intelligencer*, writers used translations of French newsletters, which in turn were translations of Italian texts. Interestingly, in some cases the sources were mentioned (e.g. attribution appeared in *The Moderate Intelligencer*) while in other cases (e.g. in *The Moderate*) references to the source were much vaguer or not at all mentioned. Thus, the reports upon which the translations were based remained anonymous (Raymond 2014, 163). Occasionally, the initials of the translator appeared in the pamphlet (Raymond 2003, 105).

The authorial issue partially explains the difficulty to locate the source texts, then as in contemporary journalism. In addition, the existence of not one but many authors, and in more than one language, makes it practically impossible to trace the production line of most news texts in the early modern period. This, however, allows us to underscore the importance of ITr on the one hand, and raises ethical questions concerning the use of news texts without

attribution, a debate that still exists today both in news production and, consequently, in journalistic translation. In her study of news translation in the Spanish press for the period 2004-2008, Hernández Guerrero (2009, 120-121) noted that copyright was not observed, and that we often have to guess the origin of the material. In some cases, though, Spanish news media hire translators, whose work is acknowledged (2009, 29-30) and, therefore, the copyright of the source text is respected. However, the traditional characteristics of news production, which do not always include attribution, have given way to an even much faster news production process than in previous centuries, i.e. online news requires quick publication and constant updates and little attention to the source (Author XX).

## 2.5. The status of languages in news production

Another important issue that connects early forms of journalism with contemporary news production is the marginal status of some languages. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, translations were in particular demand in the less central states. In Scandinavia, for instance, where journalism developed later than in other countries, translators were among the first to be hired for the production of some form of autochthonous press, which depended heavily on English and other continental news sheets (Høyer 2003, 454). Even within the Nordic countries, the situation varied. Høyer mentions that the first newspapers in Norwegian and Finnish appeared in the second half of the eighteenth century, reflecting the status of Norway and Finland as colonies of Denmark and Sweden respectively (2003, 456). Typically, the content of Swedish and Danish newspapers was translated from foreign *Gazettes*, often German. Once again, the number of languages that served as the source of the *final* product is difficult, or simply impossible, to trace, although there is some evidence that Stockholm newspapers subscribed to foreign pamphlets in order to have rapid access to foreign news (Høyer 2003, 457). This intricate language web highlights the difficulty to distinguish the role played by direct and indirect translation in news production even today. The pan-European news channel Euronews is a case in point. As are the English, Spanish and Chinese versions of *The New York Times*, where direct and indirect translation can hardly be distinguished even though the practice of translation in these three versions is more visible (as the newspaper includes links to the English versions). For instance, news articles written by Anglophone journalists based in various parts of the world use direct quotations by individuals which either use English (translating from their mother tongue) or whose words are translated into English. For instance, during the Covid-19 pandemic *New York Times* correspondents reported from Europe, as these texts published on June 3, 2020 show:

(1)

Amsterdam's Red Light Zone Stays Shut as Rest of City Edges Open (...)

"No photos of sex workers," read the signs above the brothel windows. "Fine: 95 euros."

Ámsterdam está a punto de abrir, excepto por el barrio rojo de la ciudad (...)

"Prohibido tomar fotografías de las trabajadoras sexuales", decían los rótulos colocados encima de los escaparates de los burdeles. "Multas: 95 euros".

These extracts are reminiscent of the literal translations of the early modern period. In addition, they also remind us of the variety of languages involved in the dissemination of news texts: here the English *original* uses material translated from Dutch (possibly by the owners themselves), which in turn is translated into Spanish.

## 2.6. Linear versus circular translations

These transformations can be defined as linear, as a source language is translated into a target language and then is embedded within a larger text in the target language. In turn, example 1 becomes the source text for a new audience, Spanish-speaking in this case. In other words, a text in language A is transformed into language B and then into language C.

However, imbedded translations of this type are not always linear but circular. This means, for example, that a source text in a language A quoting a language B will reproduce the source words in translation in language A. Then, the whole article may be translated into language B. However, the translators are not likely to use the original words in language B. Instead, they translate language A into B. In other words, the text is rendered back into the original language via language A. This process is probably more frequent than we may think. News can originate in any language, then news wires are produced by news agencies (often in English) and then translated for audiences whose language is the same as the one used where the news event originated. In some cases, the situation can have serious ideological implications on the target text. For example, in his discussion of news reporting of Eta terrorist attacks in Spain, Valdeón (2007, 115) showed that the BBC altered words used by the Spanish officials and replaced "terrorista" [terrorist] by "separatist" in the English version. Then, as the Spanish service BBCMundo translated some of the English articles into Spanish, the original words underwent a surprising transformation: from "terrorista" to "separatist" in English and then back into Spanish as "separatista" [separatist] via ITr. Thus, in the same way as direct translation may serve to imbue a text with the ideology of the news

company (and other institutions associated with it), so does ITr. This is, in fact, a feature of journalistic translation that might produce significant insights into how news translation works and how ITr alters sources texts. In other words, it might be worth exploring the role of ITr as embedded translation, both linear (from language A into B and finally into C) and circular (from language B into A and then into B), and the extent to which ITr is distinct from other forms of journalistic translation.

As regards this type of ideological manipulation via translation, the influence of governments and other institutions on journalistic texts can also be traced back to the early modern period again. Newsletters were heavily influenced by governments. In fact, in some countries, government officials had to authorize their publication. In England, as the Privy Council had to approve newsletters, translators may have had to alter the original sources to be able to comply with government requirements. In Sweden, the postmaster played a gatekeeping function, as he had to select the material by removing inadequate passages before the texts were submitted to the censor, who would make further changes if considered necessary (Ries 2001, 241). This complex and dynamic process (which involved interlinguistic and intralinguistic transformations) offers another glimpse of the fluid nature of news writing in the seventeenth century, when news travelled via indirect routes both physically and linguistically. Curelly (2017) recalls the case of the Fronde, a series of disturbances that took place in France in the mid-seventeenth century. These events were the basis of a series of reports in *Decision de la Questions dv Temps* and later appeared in English version in *The Moderate*. However, some of the articles published in the English periodicals were not direct translations from French but rather translations of the Dutch versions (Curelly 2017, 121).

## 2.7. Translation as a political tool

It has been argued that translated foreign news texts were expected not to be politically charged (Brownlees 2010), but the fact is that governments monitored what was published. This was of particular note in England where the government wanted to stay away from the wars of religion of the continent. In fact, the publication of official speeches and proclamations began in the late sixteenth century and opened the way to the translation and publication of foreign news, often to support the Protestant cause in the continent and also as part of the fierce anti-Catholic and anti-Spanish propaganda (Parmelee 1996, 32-33). Consequently, the British monarchy attempted to control translations coming from the Low Countries (Raymond 2006, 4-5), as the material was considered “licentious”. In the second

half of the seventeenth century, the *London Gazette*, published with royal permission, disseminated translated reports from foreign newspapers (Brownlees 2018, 14). These reports were closely monitored by the Secretaries of State, which also controlled the Post Office. More interestingly, the *Gazette* offers an excellent example of the importance of ITr at the time: for about forty years, starting in 1666, it also published a French version entitled *Gazette de Londres*, which was in fact a word for word translation of the English “original”, the main purpose of these translated versions being to control the flow of information in the continent (Schultheiß-Heinz 2010, 120).



The print shows the reading of the *Gazette de Londres*. Reading of foreign Gazettes involve translators if the audience did not understand the language.

The ideological influence of governments on news production can, of course, be found in contemporary journalism, both in direct and indirect translations. Although in Western democracies, governments do not own the press anymore, news media continue to have close associations with governments, based on the ideological affinity between them, e.g. Hernández Guerrero (2012) has discussed ideological biases in the translation of the opinion columns in the Spanish daily *El País*, and Song (2017) has studied the case of the private news agency Yonhap News Agency and the Korean government. This influence can be found, for instance, in the choices made by national news companies that publish versions of their articles in foreign languages. This practice is indeed highly relevant for the study of

ITr, as national media tend to use foreign material translated into their own language, which then becomes the source for the target versions. These texts, or extracts, are sometimes imbedded as linear or circular indirect translations. Spain's *El País* provides a good example again. During the Catalan secessionist crisis of 2017, *El País* seemed to support the measures taken by ruling conservative Popular Party. Among the many texts published at the time, Carlos Yárnoz wrote an op-ed column in which he quoted French historian Benoît Pellistrandi. Pellistrandi had published a piece on the Catalan secessionist issue in the French newspaper *Le Figaro*, which was partly translated from French into Spanish, and then via ITr into English for *El País*'s international readership. The piece, which contested the secessionists' claim for independence, served domestically to give authority to the ruling party and was then internationally disseminated in English.

Similarly, the issue of secessionist legitimacy was at the basis of the publication of an interview with Kosovan leader Ramush Haradinaj in which translation played a crucial role. The interview, conducted by journalist M. Antonia Sánchez-Vallejo (30 April 2018), necessitated translation: either the interview took place in English or it required the services of an interpreter before it was published in Spanish. Two days later, the article was published in English, a literal translation from the Spanish, albeit with some adaptations (e.g. the text was condensed), a typical feature of foreign language versions in media such as *The New York Times*, the BBC and *El País*. More significantly, as Valdeón (2020) has shown, the translation made an important change in the focus of the original interview: while the pull quotes in the Spanish version (typically used to grab the reader's attention) focused on the Kosovan difficulties to join the international political arena, the English version focused on the Catalan issue.

## 2.8. The multi-directionality of news translation

Before concluding I would like to highlight the multi-directionality of both direct and indirect translation that characterizes news texts, from the early *Le Mercure Anglois* and *Nouvelles Ordinaires de Londres* to contemporary *Le Monde Diplomatique*. In this context, I use multi-directionality not in connection with official or institutional translation, as Merkle (2013) does, but rather as a unique feature of translated news material whereby a text can originate in a given language from two or more source languages, and, subsequently, it can be translated inter and/or intralinguistically for other target audiences. For instance, *Le Mercure Anglois* and *Nouvelles Ordinaires de Londres* were published in the 1640s and 1650s, and although it is almost impossible to ascertain whether these pamphlets were

translations of English texts (Brownlees 2018, 14) or of the Dutch *Mercurius* (der Weduwen 2017, 36), we can hypothesize that both direct and indirect translations were used. Similarly, in the case of contemporary multilingual news ventures such as *Le Monde Diplomatique*, we can only make assumptions as regards the use of ITr. However, in some specific cases ITr surfaces. For example, the article titled “Pourquoi il faut se méfier des chiffres chinois sur le coronavirus” (Milcent 2020) is available in French and Spanish, the latter being clearly a literal rendition of the former:

(2)

Les États-Unis, secondés par l’Australie, veulent désormais ouvrir une enquête internationale. Ils dénoncent l’Organisation mondiale de la santé (OMS), *dont le directeur est accusé de complaisance, voire de complicité, avec Pékin et menacent de la quitter.*

La Administración de Trump denuncia a la Organización Mundial de la Salud (OMS), así como a su director, *a quien acusa de connivencia y complicidad con Pekín, y amenaza con una posible salida de su país de este organismo internacional.*

An interesting feature of two texts is the fact that Milcent quotes or paraphrases other people, including the US administration. This example highlights the embedded and largely invisible role of ITr in contemporary journalism as well as the multi-directionality of the languages and translations processes involved. In both the early modern and the contemporary texts, multiple voices may have been used to produce the news pieces, which in turn could have been translated for different target audiences whose expectations would have required some type of adaptations.

### **Final discussion**

This article has attempted to describe the complex nature of ITr in news production in relation to other translation practices discussed in journalistic translation research (e.g. by Bielsa and Bassnett 2009, Hernández Guerrero 2009, Conway 2014, Valdeón 2018, Davier 2017). Most TS researchers have underscored the difficulties to investigate journalistic translation, given the unstable features of source and target texts (Hernández Guerrero 2009). Not only are source texts difficult to locate but the practice of translation itself is undermined by the journalists’ belief that they do not translate (Filmer 2014). Besides, the instability of journalistic texts adds another layer of difficulty to the investigative task. These features, specific to news translation vis-à-vis other translation types, might explain the reason why



ITr in news production is not merely hidden translation, but rather ignored or neglected translation. As van Doorslaer (2010, 181) put it, the combination of these (and other) factors create a “(barely reconstructable) multi-source situation”, which means that the journalistic translation is far from a “ready-made object of study” (Conway 2014, 624).

To be sure, while in the literary field ITr might be hidden, the situation becomes even more complex in the case of journalistic translation. To the challenges pointed out by other scholars with respect to the location of source texts and the fact that translation has been considered a secondary or tertiary activity by communication scholars, ITr becomes more invisible, more difficult to trace. However, this challenge contributes to a better understanding of the role of translation in news production itself, and of the reasons why journalism researchers have paid so little attention to the translational activity. While in the early modern period translation was crucial in the dissemination of news texts, in the nineteenth century translation was relegated to an invisible position. Chalaby (1996)’s claim that contemporary journalism was an Anglo-American invention might also explain this paradox: journalists in the United States and Britain moved from old-fashioned approaches, largely based on the translation of foreign news texts, to an emphasis on original reporting and interviews. In other words, Anglo-American journalists changed from a language-centred to a fact-centred view of news production. However, this move has not suppressed translation practices within the profession. Chalaby himself has noted that the French news agency Havas (later AFP) continued to publish translated abstracts of British newspapers until well into the nineteenth century (Chalaby 1996, 310). In fact, what this indicates is that although journalism became more Anglocentric, translation in all its forms has remained central to the profession.

For this reason, the role of ITr in news production, from the seventeenth century to the present day, should not be ignored or underestimated. ITr can be studied from different perspectives capable of bringing new insights into news production. First, it can serve to have a better understanding of the processes involved in the dissemination of information (and propaganda) for audiences wanting to be informed of conflicts in the early modern period (and at present). Intermediaries were necessary to gather the news, produce the texts, translate them into another language and then again into a third or a fourth one. As we have seen, news sheets were *travelling* texts that underwent several transformations as they moved from Latin or Italian, for instance, into Dutch and then into English or Spanish, and from Italy to the Low Countries and then to England.

Second, it can serve to analyze and understand the historical development of news production and journalistic translation. In line with this, Conway (2014) has suggested drawing on historian Michel-Rolph Trouillot to find traces of evidence to construct or reconstruct historical narratives. Trouillot (1995, 26) mentioned four moments to locate “silences”: the making of sources, the making of archives, the making of narratives and the making of history in the final instance. Some or all of these moments are indeed complex to construct or reconstruct in the case of journalistic translation, even more so in the case of ITr: as the number of extant documents is limited, creating and recreating the moments of historical significance is complicated. However, it might still be possible to hypothesize about the situation of ITr both in the early modern period and beyond, as well as to attempt to find traces of its role in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in order to establish connections with the current situation by using the available documents.

Third, ITr can be explored by considering both print and handwritten texts. Barbarics-Hermanik (2011, 349-350) has stressed that one of the problems for the study of handwritten newsletters is that they tend to be considered separately from print news sheets, even if they probably relied on the same sources. In fact, Barbarics-Hermanik (2011, 363) has noted, newsletters were often translations of some type of “source” texts that might be located in some of the collections of handwritten newsletters found in Italy, Spain, France, England, Sweden and Germany. This type of approach would certainly require cooperation with experts from archival studies among others.

Finally, journalistic ITr can contribute to the debate on the conceptualization of translation and to the incipient dialogue between journalism and translation scholars. As mentioned, one of the obstacles for this dialogue is the divergent view of translation by these two disciplines. This is reflected in the (otherwise interesting) chapter on communication and translation studies in van Doorslaer and Gambier’s edited collection *Border Crossings*: although Juliane House and Jens Loenhoff (2016) attempt to bridge a gap between the two disciplines, the dialogue seems to run as two parallel paths that meet occasionally. ITr can be another piece in the complex and fascinating puzzle of news translation.

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