Agenda-setting and Journalistic Translation: *The New York Times* **in English, Spanish and Chinese**

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Abstract

Drawing on the concepts of agenda-setting and framing, this article aims to examine the role played by translation in the selection of articles of the *New York Times* for the Spanish and Chinese versions. It analyses whether the three versions focus on similar topics and, therefore, follow a similar agenda, it aims to identify the topics that receive more salience via translation, and how these are complemented with texts specifically written for the translated/foreign language versions, as well as the framing mechanisms used by the writers and/or translators to create, suppress or accentuate ideological positionings. For that purpose, a constructed week methodology was used in order to collect a total of seventy articles per language. The analysis, based on Baker's adaptation of narrative theory and Kress and van Leeuwen's study of non-verbal signs, shows that the three versions of the *New York Times* vary in terms of format and content. Thus, while the English and Chinese versions focus on political and economic issues, the Spanish versions undergoes a process of tabloidization.

Keywords: journalistic translation; New York Times; English, Spanish and Chinese; agenda setting; framing; constructed week

Introduction

Drawing on two concepts widely used in communication studies, namely agenda-setting and framing, this article aims to consider the crucial role that translation plays in the construction of specific narratives in the two foreign-language versions of the *New York Times* (hence NYT). The *Times,* as it is often referred in the United States, is a landmark of American journalism that, like other national newspapers provides information in one or more foreign languages in contrast to media such as the *Vietnam News* and the *China Daily*, which have been specifically created to cater for international audiences. An important difference between the *Vietnam News* and the *China Daily* on the one hand and the NYT on the other is that the former are funded by their governments in order to increase their so-called soft power (Wright, Scott and Bunce, 2020).

Conversely, a privately-owned outlet such as the NYT is expected to have its own independent editorial line that might, or might not, be supportive of a specific government. However, researchers have shown that the NYT's stance towards specific conflicts and events is not necessarily impartial, including historical events such as the coverage of Hitler's initial period in office (Klein, 2001), reporting on Stalin's Soviet Union (Taylor, 1990), and, more recently, the coverage of the Middle East crisis (Zelizer, Park & Gudelunas, 2002) and the use of dominant versions of the nation-state following the 9/11 terrorist attacks (Frascina, 2003).

Unlike these studies, which analyse the reporting of specific news events, this paper aims to compare the three versions of the NYT (i.e. the original one in English, and its versions in Spanish and Chinese) to ascertain whether the narratives vary across the three languages. It has been argued that the use of translation in news production is characterised by its double extension (van Doorslaer, 2010): the first extension refers to the language transfer between a source text and a target text, whereas the second extension refers to the more complex relationship existing between a target text in a language and the multiple source texts from which the target text has been translated. Although I will focus on the translated texts, other materials specifically produced for the non-English versions of the NYT will also be considered.

The next sections discuss the theoretical framework, the methodology and the results.

Agenda-setting and Framing

This study will draw on two concepts that have very productive in news content analysis, namely agenda-setting and framing. As these two concepts work on two different levels, I will identify framing strategies to establish the features of the agenda-setting process in the three versions of NYT.

Agenda-setting theory can be traced back to the 1970s when McCombs and Shaw (1972) compared the most important issues for US voters during the presidential campaign and those that received most media coverage. Originally, agenda-setting theory focused on media influence by analysing the topics that receive more salience in news production (McCombs and Shaw, 1972), i.e. agenda-setting examined how mass media can and do prioritise the reporting of certain issues, persons and topics over others (McCombs, 2004), bearing in mind that audience attention span can only turn to a small number of issues at a given time. At a later stage, agenda-setting also looked at the attributes associated with those topics, where attributes are "a generic term encompassing the entire range of properties and traits that characterize an object" (McCombs, 2004, p. 70). In other words, these attributes are specific features of an object, event or person, and serve to give greater salience to the topic. The study of these

attributes or features characterises second-level agenda-setting theory in contrast to first-level agenda-setting, which focused on the issues or topics themselves. These features are related to the concept of framing to be discussed below.

In addition, agenda-setting has been studied in connection with gatekeeping, a concept widely used in journalism studies to refer to the various gates that information needs to pass through before it is finally published (Shoemaker and Vos, 2009). More recently, it has been argued that gatekeeping can explain the limited autonomy of journalism because various kinds of coercive, moral or remunerative elements are used to influence journalists and the mass media (Vos and Russell, 2019). Given the space limitations, only passing references will be made to gatekeeping though.

As regards framing, the interdisciplinary nature of the concept has meant that it can bring "disciplinary perspectives together in interesting ways" (Reese, 2007, p. 148). Framing has been used in discourse analysis, translation studies and journalism, three research areas that share an interest in how language is used to create concrete narratives. For the purpose of this research, I will draw on Reese's definition of frames as "organizing principles that are socially shared and persistent over time, that work symbolically to meaningfully structure the social world" (2001, p. 11) as it relates to the concept of agenda-setting. Frames are relevant not because they are available for everyone to see and understand. Rather they are significant because they are selected in order to construct a certain narrative of the world or of a news event: they involve selection and salience (Entman, 1993, p. 52). This is, in fact, what news producers and translators do: they select or deselect the material to appear in their work and/or to be rendered into another language, both at macro and micro-levels. In Reese's view, frames are general topics, such as the "war on terror", which serve to guide audiences in a certain direction. In order to do this, writers (of source texts in English, and of target texts in Spanish and Chinese) resort to several framing mechanisms and elements. Tankard, Hendrickson, Silberman, Bliss, and Ghanem (1991) have spoken of selection, emphasis, exclusion and elaboration while Tankard (2001, p. 100) mentions headlines and kickers (small headlines over the headlines), subheads, photographs, photo captions, leads (the beginnings of news stories), selection of sources or affiliations, selection of quotes, pull quotes (quotes that are blown up in size for emphasis), logos (graphic identification of the particular series an article belongs to), statistics, charts, and graphs, concluding statements or paragraphs of articles as the various elements susceptible of being used to promote certain frames.

Framing has also been used in the study of translated news products. For example, Yan (2020) has recently analyzed the use of frames in German news media to produce specific

images of China; Wu (2017) has identified the mechanisms used to reframe Western reports of the Sino-Japanese territorial dispute in the Chinese *Cancao Xiaoxi*, and Author (XXXX) has shown that *El País*'s focus on the removal of the remains of Spain's former dictator Francisco Franco from the Valley of the Fallen Basilica in the outskirts of Madrid received wide attention in the newspaper (both in its Spanish and English versions). These three articles focus on three specific news events and the frames used to report on them.

In contrast, this article aims to identify the topics that received greater attention (i.e., that were part of the newspaper's agenda) and the mechanisms used to give salience to them (i.e., the framing devices), both in the source newspaper and in its two foreign versions during a specific period. Translation scholars have examined how framing mechanisms operate in media texts and their translations. Baker (2006), for instance, has drawn on narrative theory to propose an analytical methodology that looks at framing mechanisms in translation. Unlike Goffman's approach to framing (1974), Baker understands framing as the process that allows audiences to connect with the images and objectives projected by texts as well as to participate in the construction of reality (2006, p. 106). Baker discusses selective appropriation of source material: this is particularly relevant in the case of the journalistic translation of NYT articles, as not all the original texts are likely to be selected. Selective appropriation, "realized in patterns of omission and addition in order to supress, accentuate or elaborate particular aspects of a narrative" (Baker, 2006 p. 114), is common in journalistic translation on both macro and micro-levels. On a macro-level, news media select the articles that will be translated into other languages, while on a micro-level level journalists/translators make choices concerning what parts of the source texts are retained, what should be suppressed and what should be added. Selective appropriation is thus related to setting an agenda, which might differ in the three versions of the NYT.

Finally, framing has also been used in connection with newspaper layouts (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006, pp. 203-204): it has been argued that paralinguistic features such as colours and space can affect the salience of a news story.

Corpus, objectives and methodology

In order to carry out the study, I gathered a corpus consisting of the top ten articles posted in the three internet editions of the NYT on seven specific days by means of constructed week sampling. By "top ten" I refer to the articles that are given prominence at the top of the webpage before readers need to scroll down to see other news that receive less attention. First introduced

in the 1950s, constructed week sampling has been successfully used in communication studies during the past three decades to analyse a wide range of topics and publications. To test its validity, Riffe, Aust & Lacy (1993) compared the use of simple random, consecutive day and constructed week sampling, and showed the superiority of the latter in terms of representativeness and efficiency. Since then, constructed week sampling has been applied to a wide range of studies, including historical events such as the Spanish-American War (Hamilton, Coleman, Grable and Cole, 2006), Chinese themes such as the study of the representation of China in the NYT and *Los Angeles Times* (Peng, 2004), and Canadian media coverage of Chinese news (Goodrum, Godo & Hayter, 2011).

For the purpose of this research, I created a constructed week consisting of seven days of 2020, including Wednesday July 1, Thursday July 9, Friday July 17, Saturday July 25, Sunday August 2, Monday August 10 and Tuesday August 18. In other words, I gathered seventy articles per version, 210 in total. The articles were collected in the mornings (CET) of the days indicated. To being with, it should be indicated that, as the format of three versions varies, decisions had to be made regarding the salience of the articles. In principle, I considered the position of the articles, starting from the top left hand-side of the internet versions, moving towards the right hand-side and scrolling down if necessary, as Anglophone media tend to give maximum salience to news events by placing them in that position (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2006: 195), I assumed that the NYT teams might follow a similar distribution pattern for the three languages, even in the case of a non-Western language such as the Chinese one. Indeed, the English version follows a left-to-right distribution: the more salient information is placed on the left and the opinion columns placed on the right.

However, the format varies considerably in the Spanish site. One significant feature of the Spanish version is that the number of articles is smaller: typically, two or three articles are given prominence from left to right, and the right of the webpage is also reserved for opinion columns. On the other hand, the Chinese version displays similar font size for all the articles, although those placed in the centre occupy more space than those on the left-hand side. Opinion columns appear on the right too. These differences indicate a degree of adaptation to the conventions/expectations of the respective target audiences. I will return to formatting issues in the final discussion.

Thematically, and considering the time when the articles were collected, the initial assumption was that news coverage would focus on the Covid-19 pandemic in all three sites, possibly racial protests in the US and other countries, the role of world leaders such as Presidents Trump, Xi Jinping and Bolsonaro during the pandemic and, presumably, the

relationship between China and the US on the one hand, and Latin America and the US on the other. I also hypothesize that, on account of the left-of-centre ideology of the newspaper, the texts would be critical of Donald Trump's presidency. The main objectives of the paper were:

1. To ascertain whether the three versions of the NYT focused on similar topics and, therefore, promoted a similar agenda for the three target audiences.

2. To identify the topics that receive more salience via translation in the two foreign-language versions, and how these were (or were not) complemented with texts specifically written for the translated/foreign language versions.

3. To identify the framing mechanisms used by the writers and/or translators to create, suppress or accentuate the stance vis-à-vis certain topics as part of the agenda-setting process.

In order to elaborate on these issues, I will focus on the headlines, leads and photographs as framing mechanisms (Tankard, 2001, p. 100), although full texts were considered. Headlines and leads are the two linguistic parts of the texts used to attract the readers' attention, summarize the story and maximize newsworthiness (Bednarek & Caple 2019, p. 123). News headlines are often complemented by photographs that accentuate the credibility of the article, as photographs are supposed to capture reality and, therefore, may be regarded as reliable elements to support the narrative of the texts (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006, pp. 154, 163). As mentioned, the analysis will draw on Baker's version of narrative theory (2006), which considers both source and target texts by looking at selection and deselection of material and language choices. These features will illustrate the ways in which one or more agendas are set in the three services.

Results and analysis

The results show that the three versions vary considerably, even though the majority of the top ten articles in the Spanish and Chinese editions are translations of English originals. The most important finding was in fact that while the Covid-19 pandemic ranked first in the English and Spanish sites, the pandemic did not receive much salience in the Chinese version. In fact, the main focus of the latter was the relations between China and the West in general and between China and the US in particular. The US presidential election and a variegated range of Latin American topics occupied the second position in the English and Spanish versions respectively, while the former British colony of Hong Kong ranked second in the Chinese version. The following tables list the main topics covered during the constructed week:

Table 1
NYT in English

Date/Topic	Covid-19	US elections	China	BLM protests	Others
July 1	4	1	-	2	3
July 9	3	2	-	1	4
July 17	7	1	-	1	1
July 25	8	-	2	-	-
August 2	6	3	-	1	-
August 10	3	-	4 (HK)	-	3
August 18	2	8	-	-	-
Total	33	15	6	5	11

Table 2
NYT in Chinese

Date/Topic	China/ West relations	Hong Kong	Covid-19	Donald Trump	Others
July 1	3	6	1	-	-
July 9	1	5	1	3	-
July 17	5	2	2	1	-
July 25	9	-	1	-	
August 2	7	2	1	-	-
August 10	8	2	-	-	-
August 18	5	1	-	-	4
Total	38	18	6	4	4

Table 3
NYT in Spanish

Date/Topic	Covid-19	Latin America	US elections	Others
July 1	5	2	-	3
July 9	4	4	-	2
July 17	2	1	5	2
July 25	5	2	-	3
August 2	6	2	-	2
August 10	1	4	1	4
August 18	4	1	-	5
Total	27	16	6	21

The most significant difference between the three versions is the focus on Chinese political and economic issues in the Chinese version, with a total of 56 articles out of 70 devoted to either China, Taiwan, and/or Hong Kong. Conversely, the number of pieces devoted specifically to China in the English version is six, despite the ongoing economic and political conflicts between China and the United States during Donald Trump's presidency, whose intensity increased during the Covid-19.

The next subsections will examine the three websites by language, although connections between them will be made when relevant.

NYT in English

As Table 1 shows, during the period studied the original version of the NYT gave salience to four news events: the Covid-19 pandemic accounts for 47.14% of the total, the US elections for 18%, China for 8.5% and the Black Lives Matter protests for 5%. The inclusion of the articles under one category was based on the main event being reported, as shown by the headline and the lead, even though overlapping with other topics occurred in the main body. For instance, articles on the pandemic tend to have ramifications for the US presidency and the relations with China, e. g. the article "Grave Shortages of Protective Gear Flare Again as Covid Cases Surge", available on July 9, discussed the pandemic in relation to federal government (in)action and the US election thus:

(1) Five months into the pandemic, the U.S. still hasn't solved the problem. The dearth of supplies is affecting a broad array of health facilities, renewing pleas for White House intervention.

(….) The crisis has reinvigorated calls for President Trump to invoke the Defense Production Act and order American manufacturers to step in and help. The presumptive Democratic presidential nominee, former Vice President Joseph R. Biden Jr., said this week that he would use that law to boost domestic protection of medical gear if elected.

The text was accompanied by the photograph of the worried chief officer of a clinic that assists low-income families. The photograph[1] serves to illustrate the essence of the issue (Kress & van Leeuwen 2007, p. 30), in other words, the devastating economic and health consequences of the government's failure to respond rapidly and effectively to the crisis. Combined with a powerful caption, the picture contributes to the framing process of the pandemic for the target readership of the newspaper: headline, photograph and caption suggest a set of expectations on the part of the audience (Baker, 2006, p. 106), which the newspaper meets in the main body of the article.

This narrative builds up the left-of-centre stance of the newspaper, which is also realized in the articles about the US elections as well as in two of the op-ed columns included in the "Others" section. In "Do Progressives Have a Free Speech Problem?", Michelle Goldberg tackles the issue of how free speech has been threatened by the radical left in the US. This issue was raised by a letter signed by a number of leftist intellectuals who have warned of the dangers of political correctness. In addition, on August 9, activist Thea Riofrancos published "It's a

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[1] See the picture on https://www.nytimes.com/2020/07/08/health/coronavirus-masks-ppe-doc.html?action=click&module=Top%20Stories&pgtype=Homepage

Tough Time for the Left. But I'm More Optimistic Than Ever", in which the writer expressed admiration for the people who "defied lockdowns and demanded justice for George Floyd, Breonna Taylor and all the Black Lives lost at the hands of the police". The latter is complemented with a collage of several photographs in which several individuals, seemingly representing minorities, are raising their fists. These columns contribute to the creation of a very specific interpretation of the events, which, combined with the hard news articles (and their various elements: headlines, leads, pictures), provide "repeated exposure" to the same narrative (Baker, 2006, p. 101). Drawing on Bruner, Baker uses the term "narrative accrual" to refer to this process, which allows the writers to consolidate public or media narratives.

This narrative runs parallel to the articles and op-eds discussing or reporting on the relationship between the pandemic and the US election, which serve to highlight the negative intervention of Donald Trump and his administration, as illustrated by the following headlines:

(2) Trump Threatens to Cut Funding if Schools Do Not Fully Reopen (09/07)

(3) Sex, Sisters and Dr Donald (09/07)

(4) Double, Double, Trump's Toil, Our Trouble (02/08)

(5) Trump's Orders on Coronavirus Relief Create Confusion and Uncertainty (10/08)

(6) Michelle Obama, in Searing Speech, Says Trump 'Cannot Meet This Moment' (18/08)

Opinion columns, hard news texts and quotations cooperate to sustain the anti-Trump narrative expected from the NYT. These headlines anticipate the negative framing of the topic by means of carefully selected evaluative language (Bednarek & Caple, 2019, p. 58). Verbs, adjectives and nouns present the President and his actions in a negative manner (by using words such as 'threatens', 'cut', 'confusion', 'uncertainty'…) while references to his opponents are described positively ('searing speech'). Thus, the articles in our corpus support the hypothesis regarding the NYT's stance on the Trump administration. Equally unsurprising is the newspaper's views on the Black Lives Matter movement, which led to demonstrations and riots across the country following the death of George Floyd. In fact, even though the number of articles on this issue is relatively small, the narrative presented in the headlines is clear: "I'm a Black American. I need a Gun to Feel Safe in This Country". These two sentences, which introduce an article posted on July 1, whose lead reads "Some Black American never considered buying a gun. Until now", exemplify the function of headlines as relevance optimizers (Dor, 2003), that is, it allows the readers an optimal ratio between contextual effect and processing effort: it relies on a known context to provide an unequivocal frame. The story is complemented

with a photograph of a middle-class African American couple holding guns[2], apparently making the point that gun ownership is their only defence in a country at war against them. For a newspaper that has traditionally opposed gun ownership, this unequivocal position is somehow shocking.

NYT in Chinese

The first relevant feature of the Chinese version is its format, which resembles that of the English site, albeit with some adaptations concerning the position and width of the three columns. Apart from this, the layout of NYT in Chinese is characterized by its broadsheet appearance, with small photographs accompanying the articles. The Chinese site illustrates the characteristic structure of Anglophone newspaper layout, with two clear blocs of information on the right and the left and a bridge acting as mediator in the centre (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006, p. 198).

As regards the topics, they are clearly political and economic in nature, an impression supported by the accompanying photographs of Chinese and US leaders. As Table 2 shows, the vast majority of the seventy articles reported or commented on political, economic and social issues. The relationship between China and the West, and particularly between China and the US, is central to 54.2% of the articles, rising to 80% if we include Hong Kong. Conversely, the Covid-19 crisis only accounts for 8.5% of the articles, with 5.7% of the texts devoted to Donald Trump and the same figure to a smaller number of topics.

These figures mark a sharp contrast with the English edition, which highlights the existence of a very different agenda for the Chinese version. This agenda focuses on the conflicts between China and the West, and pays particular attention to the protests in Hong Kong, often from the view of protesters, signalling the newspaper's own ideological stance. This interest diminishes as the intensity of the conflict decreases towards the end of the constructed week. In any case, the readership's repeated exposure to highly political topics serves to consolidate specific ontological narratives (Baker, 2006, pp. 28-29), thus contributing to the establishment of a link between those personal narratives and media or public narratives (Baker, 2006, p. 33). The articles use mental schema allowing the newspaper to build its political agenda while anticipating the readers' processes of interpretation. In other words, the framing mechanisms and the attributes (McCombs, 2005, pp. 546-547) serve to provide a negative narrative of China that serves to construct the media narrative supported by the *New York Times* as a Western news corporation.

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[2] See https://www.nytimes.com/2020/07/01/opinion/black-gun-ownership.html?action=click&module=Opinion&pgtype=Homepage.

Another relevant feature of the Chinese site is that the majority of the texts are translations of English originals: 91.4% of the texts are translations and only six were specifically produced for the Chinese edition. In other words, the Chinese version is a translated version. This underscores the hypothesis that translation becomes a framing mechanism via selective appropriation of concrete material (Baker, 2006, p. 115) to be rendered into Chinese. With its focus on controversial topics, the editors are clearly setting the agenda:

> (7) 美司法部长敦促美国公司拒作中国"棋子"
> Barr Urges U.S. Companies to Resist Serving as 'Pawns' for China

> (8) 中国对四家美国媒体采取新限制措施
> China Announces New Retaliation Against U.S. News Outlets

These examples rely on US institutional sources both American and Chinese to highlight the conflict between the two administrations. In cases such as these, the selection of named sources provides greater news value (Bednarek & Caple, 2019, p. 111), as they underscore the extent of the conflict. In example number 7 the newspaper quotes the US Attorney General, who spoke against American firms for cooperating with China and called "to secure a world of freedom and prosperity for our children". The choice of "pawn" allowed the speaker to provide a highly critical view of the role played by American companies, who are portrayed as collaborators. Example 8 reports on the measures taken by the Chinese government in response to the US government's actions. Interestingly, this article also quotes Chinese official sources to justify their decisions, namely Zhao Lijian, a spokesman for the Foreign Ministry, who spoke of a "necessary countermeasure".

All the other articles dealing with Chinese issues focus on the relations between China and the US, the economic problems between China and the West, and other political issues associated with them. The selection of articles suggests a very different agenda vis-à-vis the English edition, with a clear emphasis on Chinese topics, often illustrating a variety of conflicts as exemplified by the following:

> (9) 特朗普的微信和 TikTok禁令为何措辞含糊 (10/08)
>
> [Gloss: Why Trump's WeChat and TikTok bans are vaguely worded]
> Original English: Trump's Orders on WeChat and TikTok Are Uncertain. That May Be the Point.

(10)　　哈佛和麻省理工起诉特朗普政府，要求取消留学生签证限制（09/07）

[Gloss: Harvard and MIT sued the Trump administration for removal of visa restrictions for international students]
Original English: Harvard and M.I.T. Sue to Stop Trump Visa Rules for Foreign Students

(11)　　前中情局官员被控为中国从事间谍活动 (18/08)

Original English: Ex-C.I.A. Officer Is Accused of Spying for China

As we can see, the lexical choices tend to present China as a threat, economically or politically, and the photographs that illustrate these reports appeal to commonly "invoked frames" (Entman, 1993, p. 53). For example, example number 9 includes a photograph of President Donald Trump looking defiantly at an unknown person or object. This and the other pictures mentioned in this article can be labelled as "analytical" (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006, p. 89) as they do not simply illustrate the topic at hand: they also contribute to giving the topic salience and to promoting specific interpretations for the readers. This is indeed part of an agenda-setting process that focuses on the conflict between China and the West while providing little information on other topics. In some cases, the articles may provide a critique of the US government by focusing on President Donald Trump's policies, as shown by the lead of example 9: "The restrictions on the two Chinese-owned apps followed a familiar model for other policy announcements on China from the Trump administration". The sentence gives initial and end-focus to "restrictions" and the "Trump administration", thus presenting the president as part of the problem rather than the solution. The Chinese version reproduces the text literally with adaptations to meet the conventions of the target language. However, rather than a reference to the Trump administration, the president becomes the main actor of the news event: "周四晚些时候，特朗普总统突然决定…" [Gloss: Later on Thursday, President Trump suddenly decided…].

Finally, it is noteworthy that the number of articles on the Covid-19 pandemic is small in comparison with the other two sites, probably resulting from factors such as the fact that, in the summer of 2020, the pandemic was already under control in China, and that the Chinese service is primarily a translated service, where translation has a gatekeeping function as part of the agenda-setting process (McCombs, 2005, p. 546).

NYT in Spanish

Similarly to the English version, the Spanish edition devoted 38.5% of the articles to the pandemic, while 22.85% of the texts dealt with Latin American topics and 8.5% with the US elections. Interestingly, the number of articles under the 'Others' section is almost a third of the total. This means that, unlike the English and Chinese versions, the agenda of the Spanish edition is more diluted with an important number of articles devoted to a variety of soft news and feature articles. The list of texts in this section includes translated texts addressing political issues in countries such as Israel and Belarus together with translations of articles devoted to UFOs and the use of crocodile tears to cure dry eyes:

(12)   Las lágrimas de cocodrilo (literalmente) podrían ser la cura para la resequedad de los ojos (15/08)
[Gloss translation: Crocodile tears (literally) could be the cure for dry eyes]
(Original: Could Owl and Crocodilian Tears Lead to a Cure for Your Dry Eyes? Posted on 13/08)

This headline is particularly noteworthy, as it highlights the peculiarities of the Spanish service. The sentence resorts to a popular catchphrase in Spanish in order to grab the readers' attention: "lágrimas de cocodrilo", referring to someone's insincere display of emotion, may also be used in English with that implication ("crocodile tears"). However, in this context the translator has rendered the original headline erroneously by omitting the reference to "owl" and thus the implied meaning is misleading: the article reports on how scientists are learning from the tears of animals such as crocodiles and owls to cure dry eyes in humans, not on how 'crocodile tears' can serve as a cure. The lack of clarity of this headline is repeated in several other cases, thus accentuating the frivolous nature of the texts:

(13)   Walter Mercado después del amor (25/07)
[Gloss translation: Walter Mercado after love]
(14)   El rey iba desnudo y España miró a otro lado (25/07)
[Gloss translation: The king was naked and Spain looked the other way]
(15)   Encontré el alma de Sonora en la carne asada (14/08)
[Gloss translation: I found Sonora's soul in grilled meat]

These three headlines serve to introduce opinion columns by Latin American or Spanish writers. The first one, written by Puerto Rican journalist Ana Teresa Toro, reviews the life and miracles of Walter Mercado, an androgynous television celebrity that gained fame among the US's Hispanic population. The text contains several subjective comments despite the apparent attempt to remain objective. Equally striking is the article devoted to Spain's former king Juan Carlos, who has received much media attention due to financial and extramarital scandals. Although written by David Jiménez, a Spanish journalist, the tone is surprisingly similar (in other words, frivolous and biased) to example 13. Starting with the same type of clumsy headlines that seem to characterise the Spanish headlines of the NYT (both in translations and original texts), the op-ed begins with a personal account of how Jiménez's former editors at *El Mundo* newspaper asked him to investigate the king's alleged relationship with a Spanish actress. Jiménez provides gory details by quoting dubious characters such as former entrepreneur Javier de la Rosa, who was imprisoned for embezzlement. In all these texts, the use of stereotypes deprives the authors of moral authority usually associated with op-eds and thus they fail to give salience to the topic at hand (Entman, 1993, p. 53) and set any kind of serious agenda in the *New York Times* in Spanish. Their texts merely exaggerate sensational aspects, which can result from different factors, such as a strategy to improve the website's reading figures (Baker, 2006, p. 119), or simply from the absence of any serious agenda on the part of the company for its Spanish venture.

Another interesting feature of the Spanish version is the fact many articles remain available for several days or weeks. This indicates that the resources allocated to the Spanish site are more limited than in the case of the Chinese version. For example, the text entitled "¿Qué es un oxímetro de pulso? ¿De verdad necesito uno en casa?" remains a top article for two consecutive weeks (July 1, July 9), "Tratamientos y medicamentos para el coronavirus: monitoreo de la efectividad" is available on July 17 and 25, "¿Podemos volver a infectarnos del virus? Los expertos creen que es muy poco probable" on July 25 and August 2 and so on. This underscores the secondary importance of the Spanish service vis-à-vis not only the English version but also the Chinese one, even though the NYT in Spanish is aimed at the Spanish-speaking population in the US and in Latin America, and seems to indicate the importance of the Chinese version versus the Spanish one.

As regards the three main topics, the pandemic comes first and Latin American issues second, while the number of articles devoted to the US election is much smaller. In fact, most of the texts about this issue were available on the same day. Therefore, only the first two exhibit the features of an agenda-setting process, in which the communicators bear in mind the interests

of the target audiences (McCombs, 2005, p. 546). However, even in these cases, the articles illustrate a tendency towards sensationalism, that is, the selection and translation of the texts frame the topics in ways that are assumed to attract the audience's attention:

(16)   Coronavirus en el baño: descargar el agua del inodoro puede arrojar partículas infecciosas (01/07)

Original: Flushing the Toilet May Fling Coronavirus Aerosols All Over

(17)   ¿El virus está en mi ropa? ¿En mis zapatos? ¿En mi pelo? ¿En mi periódico? (01/07)

Original: Is the Virus on My Clothes? My Shoes? My Hair? My newspaper?

(18)   Llevar mascarilla es como ponerse casco, cinturón de seguridad o condón (25/07)

Original: To Get People to Wear Masks, Look to Seatbelts, Helmets and Condoms

While all these articles are translations of English originals, in the latter version they are a small fraction of all the texts available to the English readers. Therefore, their sensationalist nature is diluted among the hard news items. Conversely, in the Spanish edition human-interest items occupy the front page of the site. This selection process thus favours sensationalist topics to the detriment of more informative texts, a trend that is best illustrated by the main article on August 10: "Cómo mudar a tu elefante en una pandemia" or "How to Move Your Elephant During a Pandemic", posted two days earlier in its English version as a feature article. It was indeed necessary to scroll down the English site in order to have access to it.

Finally, the texts devoted to Latin American issues combine opinion and facts to provide readers with a critique of many Central and South American regimes, such as those of Cuba, Venezuela and Brazil. These articles relied on the same strategies as those of feature articles, presumably to attract readers. For example, "Carta de amor a Hugo Chávez" [Love letter to Hugo Chávez] (10/08) uses an ironical tone to recall the three main characteristics of Venezuela under Chávez (namely, corruption, economic collapse and political repression) or "Presidente López Obrador, no vaya a ver a Trump" [President López Obrado, do not meet Trump] (01/07) in which the op-ed writer Jorge Ramos uses an imperative to express his opposition to the planned meeting between the US and the Mexican Presidents. The use of these mechanisms allows the writers to use negative emotions for news value (Bednarek, 2008, p. 116) and, thus, attempt to influence the "interplay between ontological and public narratives" (Baker, 2006, p. 138).

Overall, in the case of the Spanish version of the NYT the analysis does not point to the existence of agenda-setting processes. The selection of articles seems (even in the case of the Covid-19 pandemic) to highlight the sensationalist element of the articles in order to attract readers. Consequently, the NYT in Spanish differs considerably from the Chinese and English websites.

Final discussion

The two foreign-language services of the NYT are clearly translated services. Unlike other Anglophone news outlets, such as the BBC, which post many original texts, the NYT relies mostly on translations, as the newspaper itself indicates. Although the names of the translators are not mentioned, all the articles include links to the original texts both in Spanish and Chinese. In addition, the Chinese articles include a link to a bilingual version, which readers can use as a language learning tool.

In both cases, translation functions as a first-level gatekeeping mechanism (Author 2020) as editors/translators need to carefully select the material for translation that will promote specific narrative of events, political relations and so on (Baker, 2006, pp. 115-116). This in principle is likely to result from the specific agendas of the NYT. Both the English and the Chinese editions remain close to what can be described as a serious news outlet, with an emphasis on political and economic issues. There are, however, important differences between the two: the US edition focuses on the pandemic and the US election, while the main issue in the Chinese edition is the relations between China and the US (and China and the West). Paradoxically, while the English version reflects the left-of-centre stance of the newspaper, the Chinese version provides a critique of China's policies. This apparent contradiction could be analysed in more detail in future studies, particularly since neither stance allows for other voices to be heard: the US editions critiques President Donald Trump and the Chinese edition is critical of China.

On the other hand, the Spanish site is surprisingly different from the English and the Chinese ones. First of all, the total number of articles available is smaller. This difference can be partly explained for financial reasons: from September 2019 the NYT decided to discontinue its Spanish edition only to publish occasional translations of English articles, as the company itself announced on September 17[3]. However, the service has remained available with translations of English texts as well as with a small number of original op-eds, as well as feature and political articles. However, even before September 2019, both the number and quality of

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[3] See https://www.nytimes.com/es/2019/09/17/espanol/una-nota-para-nuestros-lectores.html. Accessed September 16, 2020.

the articles was ostensibly different from those of the other two sites. Future research could in fact consider differences in this respect.

Finally, given the space limitations of a research paper, I could not consider whether the different agendas managed to influence the target readership. This can be the object of future reception studies. Another interesting issue that is worth pursuing pertains to the tabloidization of the Spanish version, which, as we have seen, differs considerably in terms of format and content. Thus, future studies may explore the links between translation and the tabloidization of news sites such as the NYT or others such as the BBC.

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