



## METAPHORICAL POLYSEMY AS A HUMOUR ENGINE IN ENGLISH AND RUSSIAN

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### Abstract

Media translation is rarely “just” linguistic transfer. When a media text crosses languages, it also crosses newsroom routines: speed, space, house style, legal exposure, and political positioning. This article argues that the choice of translation strategy – close rendering, domestication, selective explicitation, or full transediting – functions as a form of editorial control that shapes what audiences take to be factual, relevant, and legitimate. Drawing on research on global news agencies and news transediting, the discussion shows how routine operations (retitling, reorganizing paragraphs, deleting “redundant” details, adding background) systematically reframe events for target readers, often without visible traces of translation. I also connect these newsroom practices to broader translation-theory debates about fluency and translator invisibility, and to the growing challenge of translating multimodal digital news where text interacts with images, hyperlinks, and interactive elements. A limitation is that the article synthesizes existing scholarship rather than presenting a new corpus study; therefore, claims are interpreted cautiously as grounded patterns, not universal laws.

**Keywords:** Media translation, journalistic translation, news transediting, translation strategy, gatekeeping, framing, domestication, multimodal news.

### Introduction

In newsroom settings, “strategy” is not a stylistic preference; it is a decision about responsibility. A translator who keeps close to the source text primarily carries linguistic responsibility (accuracy of wording, terminological


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consistency). A translator who transedits – selects, deletes, adds, combines, abridges, recomposes – assumes an additional editorial role: defining relevance, calibrating background knowledge, and aligning the story with the target outlet’s stance and constraints. Chen describes transediting as a hybrid of translating and editing and lists these operations explicitly, noting the built-in tension between factual consistency (journalistic ethics) and adjustment for the target culture and organization.

This tension is not a rare exception; it is institutionalized. Bielsa’s analysis of global news agencies shows that translation is integrated into the production pipeline and governed by the same imperatives that govern reporting: speed, clarity, and standardized style. The implication is practical and blunt: a “faithful” lexical choice can be overruled by a deadline, a headline length limit, or a desk editor’s expectation of what counts as the lead. In that environment, strategy is the mechanism by which translators meet constraints without openly announcing that constraints exist.

Consider what happens before the reader even reaches the first paragraph. Changing the title and lead is not cosmetic in news; it reshapes the interpretive frame. Bielsa notes that titles and leads are often substituted to suit target readers or target publication requirements, and that summarizing and paragraph reordering are common when space or relevance shifts across contexts. If a source headline foregrounds uncertainty (“Officials investigate...”), but the target headline foregrounds outcome (“Explosion kills...”), the translation has already altered the reader’s expectation of what is known and what is disputed. Nothing “false” may have been added, yet the epistemic stance – how sure the story sounds – has changed.

A similar logic applies to deletion and addition. In principle, deletion is justified as removing redundancy or locally irrelevant detail; addition is justified as supplying background that target readers lack. Bielsa frames both as responses to relevance and background knowledge. In practice, these moves decide what the audience is allowed to ignore and what they are required to know. A small inserted clause – “widely criticized by opposition parties” – can convert a neutral institutional action into a contested political act. Conversely, deleting an

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attribution (“according to witnesses”) can harden a claim into an apparent fact. The strategy choice therefore influences not only content but also evidentiality and accountability.

This is why “literal vs free” is too crude for media texts. The more diagnostic question is: where does the translation relocate agency? Chen explicitly positions the news translator/transeditor as an active gatekeeper who lets some information pass and keeps other information out, while balancing accuracy and acceptability under constraints. That gatekeeping is not necessarily ideological propaganda; it can be routine professional triage. Yet triage still has political effects, because it determines which actors and causes remain visible when the story is retold for a new public.

A useful way to make strategy choice concrete is to treat it as risk management under competing norms. One norm says: preserve factual relations to the source. Another says: produce a text that functions in the target media environment – readable, timely, legally safe, and aligned with editorial style. Pym’s review of Nord’s translation-oriented text analysis highlights how Skopos-informed approaches rank target purpose (the “skopos”) and initiator instructions as decisive determinants, even if that priority creates theoretical tensions. In media work, the “initiator” is often diffuse – desk editor, style manual, organizational stance – yet the same logic operates: strategy is selected to satisfy the expected target function, not to preserve source-text form as an end in itself.

At this point, a common misconception needs to be removed. Many people imagine that journalistic translation is less “translational” because it involves rewriting. Valdeón’s study of how journalism scholarship uses the term “translation” shows that outside translation studies, “translation” is often understood narrowly as linguistic transfer, and the concept of transediting may be absent even when the practice is present. That mismatch matters, because it encourages simplistic evaluation criteria (“Did you translate the words?”) when the real professional question is (“Did you translate the communicative act under newsroom constraints?”).

Venuti’s discussion of fluency and the “illusion of transparency” helps explain why these strategy effects can be socially powerful. When a translation reads as

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if it were an original, the translator becomes “invisible” and the conditions of production disappear. In media contexts, invisibility is intensified: translations often circulate without being labeled as translations at all. The audience then treats the target text as direct access to foreign reality, even though it may be the product of selection, recomposition, and retitling. Fluency, in this sense, is not merely a stylistic achievement; it can be a masking device that hides editorial intervention behind effortless readability.

The ethical pressure point appears most sharply in quotations and reported speech. Bielsa notes that back-translation and re-quotation can go wrong, and newsroom guidelines often prefer fewer direct quotes and more reported speech in certain cross-linguistic loops. This is an area where strategy choice changes liability: a direct quote invites fact-checking at the level of wording, while reported speech shifts evaluation toward gist and intent. Under time pressure, reported speech can be safer; under political sensitivity, it can also be more easily shaped. The translator’s decision is therefore simultaneously linguistic, legal, and reputational.

Digital news adds a further layer: multimodality. Hernández Guerrero’s work on multimedia news translation stresses that the “text” is not only paragraphs; it is also the interaction of written language with images, video, graphics, and hyperlink structure. A strategy that works for a print-like article (summarize, cut detail, rewrite lead) can fail in a multimedia story where meaning is distributed across modes. If a translated caption contradicts what a graph shows, readers experience incoherence even if each component is locally acceptable. Strategy selection must therefore include cross-modal consistency checks – something traditional translation training does not always foreground, but digital journalism forces into the workflow.

So what does all this imply for practice? It implies that choosing a strategy is choosing a profile of control. Close translation limits the translator’s editorial power but may produce a text that misfires pragmatically (too culture-bound, too detailed, too slow to process). Aggressive transediting improves target functionality but increases the chance of shifting stance, evidentiality, and perceived causality. The professional skill is not to “avoid intervention” – that

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is unrealistic in media production – but to make intervention principled, traceable inside the workflow, and proportional to the communicative purpose. Two safeguards follow directly from the literature. First, treat headline/lead rewriting as a high-stakes act, not a routine polishing step, because it determines framing and reader inference. Bielsa’s inventory of common modifications is a reminder that these are standard moves; their standardness is exactly why they should be audited rather than assumed harmless. Second, explicitly monitor the accuracy–acceptability balance described by Chen: when acceptability pressures rise (space, speed, political fit), the translator’s gatekeeping role expands, and the risk of silent reframing rises with it.

A limitation of the present article is that it does not provide a new bilingual corpus of media translations to quantify how often each strategy produces measurable framing shifts. That empirical step would strengthen the argument and would allow comparison across genres (hard news, opinion, features) and platforms (print, web, social). For now, the safest claim is narrower: existing scholarship consistently shows that media translation strategies operate as editorial mechanisms, and that the consequences – what becomes salient, what becomes background, what sounds certain – are not secondary effects. They are the point at which translation becomes public knowledge production.

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