

## Rethinking Transediting

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### Article abstract

This paper reflects on the terms used in investigating news translation, with a special focus on the term *transediting* as it was suggested in a paper by Stetting. After a summary of Stetting's original arguments, some research into news translation is presented, illustrating main methods, findings, and concepts used. The paper presents arguments put forward by various scholars for using or rejecting the term *translation* for describing the complex processes of translation in the context of mass media and illustrates which alternative terms are used. It is shown that Stetting's original aim in coining the term *transediting* was to raise awareness of translation being more than a pure replacement of a source text by an equivalent target text. Transformations as identified in news translation, however, are characteristic of translation more generally. Therefore, the paper finally reflects on whether there is a need to keep the term *transediting* and whether it has any explanatory power for describing the practices in news translation.

# Rethinking Transediting

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## RÉSUMÉ

Le présent article est une réflexion sur les termes utilisés dans l'analyse de la traduction de nouvelles et se penche plus particulièrement sur le terme *transediting* [transédition] tel qu'il a été proposé par Stetting. Après un résumé des arguments proposés par Stetting, nous présentons un certain nombre de recherches menées dans le domaine de la traduction de nouvelles en illustrant les principales méthodes utilisées, les conclusions et les concepts utilisés. Notre recherche présente les arguments qu'ont proposés différents auteurs en accord ou non avec l'utilisation, pour décrire le processus complexe de transfert linguistique dans les médias, du terme *translation* [traduction], puis présente les termes employés pour remplacer ce dernier. Nous démontrons que l'objectif initial de Stetting, lorsqu'elle a proposé le terme *transediting*, était de démontrer que la traduction était davantage qu'un remplacement du texte source par un texte cible. Or, les transformations identifiées dans le processus de traduction de nouvelles sont plutôt caractéristiques de celles qui surviennent dans la traduction en général. Ainsi, nous évaluerons la pertinence de conserver le terme *transediting* et nous tenterons de déterminer si ce dernier terme a le pouvoir de décrire les pratiques de traduction de nouvelles.

## ABSTRACT

This paper reflects on the terms used in investigating news translation, with a special focus on the term *transediting* as it was suggested in a paper by Stetting. After a summary of Stetting's original arguments, some research into news translation is presented, illustrating main methods, findings, and concepts used. The paper presents arguments put forward by various scholars for using or rejecting the term *translation* for describing the complex processes of translation in the context of mass media and illustrates which alternative terms are used. It is shown that Stetting's original aim in coining the term *transediting* was to raise awareness of translation being more than a pure replacement of a source text by an equivalent target text. Transformations as identified in news translation, however, are characteristic of translation more generally. Therefore, the paper finally reflects on whether there is a need to keep the term *transediting* and whether it has any explanatory power for describing the practices in news translation.

## MOTS-CLÉS/KEYWORDS

nouvelles (actualités), presse, médias, transédition, édition  
news, press, medias, transediting, editing

## 1. Introduction

Research into translation and interpreting has grown enormously in recent years, as reflected in increasing publications and conferences, new journals, new associations and societies, not to mention the growing number of translator training programmes worldwide. The questions addressed in this research have gone far beyond the language centred ones which were characteristic in the 1960s/1970s. With the establishment of Translation Studies as an academic discipline in its own right since the 1980s,

the theoretical discussion has expanded to investigate cultural, systemic, cognitive, ideological, and sociological aspects of translation and interpreting. In addition to studying written texts, scholars have analysed other forms of interlingual transfer and cross-cultural communication, which has resulted in new subfields in Translation Studies such as audio-visual translation (e.g., dubbing, subtitling) and multimedia translation (e.g., localisation of games, websites). In this respect, the very concept of *translation* is sometimes questioned and replaced by alternative concepts, with *localisation* being a case in point.

One such area which has recently attracted more interest within Translation Studies is news translation, i.e., translation for print and/or online mass media (e.g., Holland 2006; Bielsa 2007; Kang 2007; Bielsa and Bassnett 2009). In analyzing the role of translation for news reporting specifically and journalistic text production more generally, the concept of *transediting* has frequently been used (e.g., Hursti 2001; van Doorslaer 2009; 2010; Cheesman and Nohl 2010). This term, *transediting*, was originally introduced by Stetting (1989) as a new term to account for the fuzzy borderline between translating and editing. In this paper, I will at first summarise Stetting's original arguments, then illustrate some research into news translation and the labels used, and finally, I will reflect on the appropriateness of the term *transediting* for describing the practices in mass media. This paper is thus a contribution to researching the complexity of translation in mass media (see also the contributions in Schäffner and Bassnett 2010), and to the metalanguage of Translation Studies more generally (Gambier and van Doorslaer 2009).

## 2. *Transediting* as a new term

Stetting's paper is published in the Proceedings from the fourth Nordic Conference for English Studies, held at Elsinor, Denmark in 1989, attended primarily by academics working in English departments and interested in the areas of language, literature and civilization (Stetting 1989; Zettersten 2002). Both the occasion and the time are interesting: in the 1980s, conferences specifically devoted to translation were still relatively rare, and translation research was still seen primarily as a sub-discipline of Applied Linguistics.

Stetting's argument is that a "certain amount of editing has always been included in the translation task" (Stetting 1989: 371). As examples she gives changing miles into kilometers, adding explanations to source culture specific referents, and removing information which is deemed irrelevant to the target culture context. Such "cultural and situational adaptations" are necessary in view of the knowledge and expectations of the target text addressees. She states that changing, adding and removing are textual actions which editors do with texts in their own language as well. In addition to these, she also refers to correcting errors in the source text and to improving on cohesion, grammar, style, as editing acts done by translators. She describes the task of an editor in general as "improve[ing] clarity, relevance, and adherence to the conventions of the textual type in question – without 'killing' the personality and the interesting features of the actual piece of writing" (Stetting 1989: 372).

After a very brief summary of arguments for close or free translation, she introduces her "alternative approach to certain types of translation tasks" (Stetting 1989: 373). Her specific focus is "on the needs of the translation receivers" which "will

depend on the function the translated text serves, seen from their point of view, and not just from that of the sender” (Stetting 1989: 373). She then provides a list of five cases where transediting is practised:

1. Shortening of text passages for subtitling;
2. Making the text of an interviewed politician idiomatic and well-structured;
3. Cleaning up inadequate manuscripts;
4. Journalists drawing on material in other languages for writing their own texts;
5. Extracting information from various documents for producing promotional company material in another language.

(Stetting 1989: 373-374)

She adds that transediting is also practised “although in a minor way” (Stetting 1989: 374) in the translation of literary, religious and historical texts, which she groups under the label “cultural texts.” For these texts, the central concern is to achieve equivalence to the source text, which explains her restriction “in a minor way.” Non-fictional texts, however, frequently need transediting, and the writer is often accessible and can be consulted to solve problems, e.g., when the translator detects errors in the source text or if the text is unclear. A translator taking on the responsibility “to see to it that the original intentions are reborn in a new and better shape in the target language [...] turns into a ‘transeditor’” (Stetting 1989: 376). She then suggests three distinct areas of transediting:

1. Adaptation to a standard of efficiency in expression: “cleaning-up transediting”;
2. Adaptation to the intended function of the translated text in its new social context: “situational transediting”;
3. Adaptation to the needs and conventions of the target culture: “cultural transediting.”

(Stetting 1989: 377)

After a brief outline of the qualifications a competent transeditor would need to have and attitudes required of clients towards transeditors, she finishes her paper by listing some topics for future research, mainly focusing on professional practice and translator training.

The main aim of Stetting’s argument is to convince her audience that making changes to the content of a translation is legitimate and even necessary. As said above, the paper was delivered at a conference for English Studies where aspects of language learning and foreign-language production were high on the agenda. The audience were mainly university teachers with research interest in language and literature, and who might only have been familiar with the general terms *literal* and *free translation*. Moreover, the widely shared view among teachers was still that a good translation should not move too far away from its source text and should reproduce it as faithfully as possible. Stetting wants to argue against such a narrow view, as is also evident when she says: “I also hope that this new term will contribute towards opening up for a discussion of the legitimacy of improving and, to a certain extent, changing texts in the translation process” (Stetting 1989: 373). However, she herself seems to be influenced by equivalence-based theories that were dominant at the time. This is evident, for example, when she speaks of straight translation or when she says that transediting is different from translation – despite her claim that there is no clear dividing line between translating and transediting.

When we recall that her specific focus was “on the needs of the translation receivers [...] which will depend on the function the translated text serves” (Stetting 1989: 373), we can say that her arguments are very much in line with those of functionalist approaches. Functionalist theories see the translation process as being determined by the purpose the target text will have to achieve for its addressees, which in turn is determined by the client’s needs. Both Vermeer’s Skopos theory and Holz-Mänttari’s theory of translational action had already been introduced into Translation Studies at the time of the Elsinor conference (e.g., Vermeer 1978; Holz-Mänttari 1984). It is surprising to see that there is no explicit reference to functionalist theories in Stetting’s paper. Also her comments about the professional role and status of transeditors are similar to Holz-Mänttari’s plea for recognizing translators as experts in their own right. Stetting says:

It takes more courage and energy to be a transeditor than a straight translator [...] proficient work is likely to bring back clients for more business, once they have understood that their intentions have been taken well care of. A transeditor is also likely to feel that her work is more rewarding, if it is more independent and more on a par with that of the writer. (Stetting 1989: 377)

For Holz-Mänttari, professional expertise would apply in each and any case of action, and would by all means include the translator’s interventions. Stetting’s trans-editing would thus be fully incorporated in the definition of translational action.

### 3. Researching news translation

As indicated above, journalistic text production which includes language transfer, is just one of the five cases Stetting gives as examples of transediting. She calls this practice “re-writing” and devotes a mere total of 105 words to describing it as follows:

“Re-writing” takes place at different levels between editing and translating. Journalists often have to draw on material in other languages. This is especially true in countries whose language is not internationally used. Here foreign-language competence is often a high priority, because international orientation is a necessity, and journalists will naturally work through a great deal of foreign material in order to process some of the information into articles in their own language. In other cases, articles are bought and simply translated with a relevant amount of editing to suit the new group of receivers, this sometimes being performed by the same person in one process. (Stetting 1989: 374)

It is this case of transediting which other scholars who investigated news translation have referred to when adopting Stetting’s term. Overall, there are not that many studies into news translation, and the research conducted so far was mainly based on case studies of specific language pairs and selected newspapers in one particular country. The Warwick project *The politics and economics of translation in global media*, funded by the United Kingdom’s Arts and Humanities Research Council, is so far the most comprehensive one. It investigated the influence of translation on information flows, focusing on the ways in which news agencies employ translation, including the study of attitudes to translation prevalent in the world of news reporting (Bielsa and Bassnett 2009).

I will briefly review some work into news translation, identifying recurring features and presenting labels used in these studies to characterise the role of translation. This review is intended to give an overview of topics addressed and methods

used and will thus be of a more descriptive nature. At the end of this section I will provide an evaluative account of the labels used to lead on to the question whether *transediting* is actually an appropriate term to characterise news translation.

### 3.1. *Examples of research into news translation*

Some of the research conducted so far is text-based, some focuses on processes in media institutions, and some combines a textual with a contextual analysis. In text-based studies, methods and evaluation reflect the researchers' own interests and theoretical background. For example, Kadhim and Kader (2010) compared English BBC political news to their Arabic translations. In doing so, however, they were mainly interested in finding out whether syntactic and stylistic differences affect the quality of the translation. Their very detailed analysis is grounded in structural linguistics, making use of the X' theory and componential analysis. The differences identified are characterized as overtranslation, undertranslation, replacement translation, incorrect translation, or ambiguous translation. They conclude that the Arabic texts are more readable, but as reasons for such shifts they just list, rather arbitrarily, suiting "the ideological perspective, the culture, the political make up, the Arabic grammar and the sociolinguistic idiosyncrasies of the Arab target readers" (Kadhim and Kader 2010: 45). In the illustration of the examples (mainly extracts of news texts), however, they devote much more time to commenting on Arabic grammar. Ideological perspectives and political considerations are only briefly touched upon.

Hursti (2001) too focused on textual transformations in transferring international news from the British news agency Reuters to the Finnish News Agency. Hursti illustrates reorganization, deletion, addition, and substitution as the major linguistic operations in news transformation. In reflecting on these operations, he comments on situational, organizational, and cultural factors. These include the demands of news journalism such as speed of news production and readability of the texts. He also adds that text selection criteria do not only depend on which stories "are culturally acceptable but also on whether they are culturally desirable" (Hursti 2001: 3). Hursti argues that selection, transformation and transfer are operations used for controlling the foreign news flow. He describes them with reference to gatekeeping, and sees translation and editing as integral part of the gatekeeping process. In fact, Hursti is in favour of using the term *transediting* to refer to news translation. He defines *transediting* (although not with reference to Stetting) as "the composite term used to refer to work done in the realm of 'practical texts,' such as news items, in which both the processes, editing and translating, are not only very much present but also equally important and closely intertwined" (Hursti 2001: 2).

Valdeón (2005) compared news articles from the American news corporation CNN to those of the Spanish-language website, *CNN en Español*. He identified differences in text structure (e.g., use of headlines), in syntactic and grammatical structures (e.g., in respect of transitivity) and in lexical choices. His main conclusion is that the English texts were very closely translated, rarely taking audience sensitivity into account (reflected in the presence of South American regionalisms in the texts which indicates a lack of editorial intervention in targeting a readership in Spain). Since Valdeón's analysis is predominantly text-based, his reflection about reasons for

the translation strategies are at best hypotheses. However, his comments on the text structures also show the complexity of the processes, in particular in the examples which indicate that the English texts which served as source texts for the translations into Spanish were themselves (at least in part) based on Spanish texts.

In another paper, Valdeón (2008) studies *BBC Mundo*'s news web texts and their source English reports (*BBC World*) from a critical approach, confirming his previous findings that the Spanish texts are close translations. Going beyond the textual analysis, he also comments on ideological implications in news translation with reference to both the selection of news items and translation strategies (in particular omissions, additions and permutations). He argues that a certain perspective of the world is projected to the target audience, and that this image "accentuates an ethnocentric view of the world whereby Anglophone news is given prominence at the expense of other more international news" (Valdeón 2008: 303). Although he does make use of Stetting's label *transediting*, he more frequently speaks of *translation* and *mediation*, *transformative acts*, *translatorial/editorial strategies*, and he also uses *writer/translator* to emphasise the dual function performed by the journalists.

Bani (2006) analyses press translations into Italian published in the weekly magazine *Internazionale*. Texts selected are sent to a translator who works away from the editorial office. When the translations are returned to the editorial office they undergo a complex editing process, with one editor checking the target text against the source text, another editor proofreading the Italian version, followed by a copy editor considering how and where the translation will be placed inside the newspaper, and ending with the director having the final say. Bani makes a difference between textual manipulation carried out by the editorial board (such as reorganizing the text, cutting, inserting explanations) and translation strategies (such as cutting, summarizing, inclusion of explanations, generalization, substitution). All these strategies are aimed at making the text readily comprehensible and easily readable for the Italian public. Bani speaks of textual and extra-textual translation strategies, with this second group including additions of subheadings, pictures, glossaries, or information about the article's author. It is not always clear, however, which strategies are used by the translator and which ones by the editors.

Holland (2006) and Kang (2007), in their respective studies, also compared source texts and target texts, employing methods of Critical Discourse Analysis. Their case studies, however, are not news in a narrow sense, but the representation of a political speech as reported in several print media for Holland, and longer news reports for Kang. Holland analyses a speech by the President of Indonesia, which was delivered in Indonesian and immediately afterwards in English. He compares these two versions of the speech to each other and then to various English versions as they were made available in British and US media (including the *CNN* voiceover, the *BBC* online website, the print version of *The Guardian*). He explains the differences with reference to the contexts and audience design, arguing that different audiences may have received significantly different impressions of the speech. He does not problematise the concept of *translation*, but merely concludes that such texts "raise fundamental questions about the nature of translational 'equivalence'" (Holland 2006: 250). He also expresses the hope that his study might "serve to establish '[Re] Statements in English' as a potentially useful focus for research in translation and in discourse analysis" (Holland 2006: 249).

Kang (2007) analyses news stories on North Korea originally published in the US American magazine *Newsweek* and their translations into Korean for the Korean edition *Newsweek Hankuk Pan*. She illustrates that parts of the source text are “lifted from their original setting, re-perspectivized, differently foregrounded, blended with other voices and relocated in a new setting” (Kang 2007: 221). She characterizes news translation as an “instance of entextualisation” in which information is selected, reduced, supplemented, reorganized, and transformed. She shows how these translation strategies result in the construction of different representations of North and South Korea (e.g., mitigation of negative representations of North Korea). She also emphasizes the fact that news translation is an institutional practice and as such subject to institutional conditions and values. The processes in the Korean office are complex, involving translators who translate the selected texts, checkers who do revision and proofreading of the texts they receive from the translators, and top checkers who take the final decision regarding omissions and naturalization of the text. Kang concludes that news translation is a collective effort, and the texts finally published are the “result of the collaborative work of people assuming different roles and engaged in language transfer, cultural adaptation, proofreading, revising, naturalizing, editing and other textual processes that are carried out repeatedly and cyclically” (Kang 2007: 238).

In analyzing the coverage of the 2008 US Presidential Elections on the *BBC World Service* websites, Cheesman and Nohl (2010) compared the English source text with its Arabic, Persian, Tamil and Turkish versions. They take up Stetting’s label of *transediting* but set it apart from *gatekeeping*. For them, *gatekeeping* “refers to what and in which sequential order things are put into a report” and is thus an “operation which is performed prior to translation,” whereas *transediting* “denotes (semantic) changes within the selected and reorganized text which occur during translation” (Cheesman and Nohl 2010: 3). They illustrate overt and implicit gatekeeping strategies (such as omissions, additions, re-ordering) and transeditorial strategies (such as reduction and excision of information). They argue that *BBC World Service* as an international media outlet globalize news stories, which means adapting them in their English versions to an assumed “world public.” The respective language services then localize them again, by “adapting specific aspects of the coverage of the globalized event on the basis of assumptions made about the knowledge, comprehension, and cultural reference points of the target audience” (Cheesman and Nohl 2010: 3). Their main conclusion is that the BBC’s corporate aim of providing a univocal service is “in tension with widely differing journalistic norms, and differing assumptions about audience knowledge and needs” in each language department (Cheesman and Nohl 2010: 2).

In a related paper, Aktan and Nohl (2010) compare English and Turkish news stories from the *BBC World Service*’s websites. In addition to the text comparison, their research included interviews and observations at the Turkish radio station of the *BBC World Service*. They too, use the label *international trans-editing* to characterize the journalist’s task which includes both skills of translating and of editing (although they say to have coined the term *international trans-editing* to describe this task, they actually refer explicitly to Stetting 1989). They illustrate five typical patterns of trans-editing:



- 1) Adding information (mainly for explanation);
- 2) Modifying the semantic meaning (stylistic adaptation and semantic shifts);
- 3) Reducing information (e.g., omission of idioms);
- 4) Enhancing comprehension by omission (e.g., omission of information deemed irrelevant to the target culture);
- 5) The editor adding input.

In contrast to the dominant text-based studies of news translation, Frías Arnés (2005) in his study of the English edition of *El País* which is a supplement to the *International Herald Tribune*, comments on the objectives, editorial policy, tasks, work routines and resources in producing the texts. Although professional translators are employed for doing some of the translations, journalists in the local office are responsible for post-editing and revising the texts. For the vast majority of the texts, however, professional journalists with language competence perform the work of, as he calls it, *adaptation/translation* (“adaptación/traducción,” Frías Arnés 2005: 43).

Van Doorslaer (2009) presents findings of investigations into the Dutch- and the French-language press in Belgium. He reveals a direct correlation between the sources of information and the number of articles dealing with a specific country. For example, he discovered that the French-language press used French news agencies (especially *AFP*) to more than 70% as a source, which resulted in articles about France being dominant. In contrast, the Dutch-language press relied most prominently on the American news agency *AP*, which resulted in a large amount of articles about the USA. Van Doorslaer (2009: 90) concludes, that “linguistic proximity or identity can sometimes be an important [...] criterion for news selection, in addition to geographical and psychological proximity.” He also shows that only very few articles are explicitly labelled as *translation* and that the texts are produced by journalists themselves, who write their articles in French or Dutch based on foreign language sources. His analysis, however, is quantitative and does not include any textual analysis. Therefore, his claim that the findings of his analysis “confirm the dominance of transediting practice” (van Doorslaer 2009: 90) can only be justified with reference to the invisibility of the term *translation* in the newspapers and in the interviews with journalists.

The label *transediting* has also been used by researchers who investigated other kinds of text. Romagnuolo (2009), for example, analysed Italian translations (published in books and newspapers) of inaugural addresses of US presidents in a diachronic perspective, identifying recurring translation strategies. For those speeches published in newspapers, she argues that the “inaugural message undergoes a metamorphosis into news discourse, that is, it is subjected to information selection, transediting, or the gatekeeping effect (Stetting 1989; Vuorinen 1995), and is influenced by the features that contribute to the making of a news article” (Romagnuolo 2009: 6). Schmid (2009) uses *transediting* (with reference to Hemmungs Wirtén 1998) to describe the process of shaping books for new local readerships, a process “during which texts are effectively rewritten for different regional audiences so that globally marketed books sell better locally” (Schmid 2009: n.p.). Hemmungs Wirtén (1998) herself uses *transediting* to describe the particular process of translation and editing in which translators and editors cooperate in producing a book for a new market. In her case study of Harlequin Enterprises, she compared the original book, the manuscript as submitted by the translator, the editor’s changes to this manuscript, and the

finally published translated book. She explains that the line between translator and editor is blurred, and that “translators edit and editors translate – and this is what the process of transediting involves” (Hemmungs Wirtén 1998: 126). There is no reference to Stetting or to research into news translation at all.

### 3.2. Terminological variation

All studies into news translation (or press translation) have revealed that the processes involved are very complex. Texts are adapted to suit the target audience, the in-house style, and/or ideological positions of the newspaper. In all these processes, language change is incorporated. That is, within news agencies, translation is not conceived as separate from other journalistic tasks. Or, as Bassnett and Bielsa say: “Information that passes between cultures through news agencies is not only ‘translated’ in the interlingual sense, it is reshaped, edited, synthesized and transformed for the consumption of a new set of readers” (Bielsa and Bassnett 2009: 2).

This list of strategies in the quote above is also more extensive compared to Stetting’s transediting strategies of changing, removing, and adding. More specific and more detailed translation strategies are also presented in the work of other researchers as summarised above. For example, cutting, explaining, generalizing, substituting (Bani 2006), reorganization, deletion, addition, substitution (Hursti 2001), omission, addition, generalization, particularization, re-perspectivization (Kang 2007). Vuorinen (1995: 170) lists deletion, addition, substitution, and reorganization as operations of gatekeeping. In fact, Vuorinen was one of the first scholars to investigate translation of international news, using the concept of *gatekeeping* to describe the “process of controlling the flow of information into and through communication channels” (Vuorinen 1995: 161). In critically engaging with views which see gatekeeping operations as being distinct from translation proper, he argues for considering gatekeeping operations such as deletion, addition, substitution, or reorganization “part and parcel of the normal text operations performed in any translation, and particularly in news translation, in order to produce functionally adequate target texts for a given use” (Vuorinen 1995: 170). This argument is in line with Stetting’s position, even if Vuorinen does not refer to her work.

Another aspect which has frequently been mentioned is that in news translation the translation (or transediting) is mainly done by journalists themselves. The main reason for this practice is that journalists have experience of journalistic work, they are aware of journalistic genres and styles and thus competent in journalistic text production. Journalists, however, call themselves (international) journalists or editors, rather than translators. Since translation is perceived as an integral part of their journalistic work (not only in the case of global news agencies, which Bielsa and Bassnett focus on, but also in press translation more widely), the very word *translation* is avoided, which makes translation largely invisible. Both Bielsa and Bassnett (2009) and Frías Arnés (2005) point out that among journalists, translation is normally understood as literal translation, and that they see their journalistic work, including translation/transediting, as more creative. This is similar to Stetting’s argument about the work of a transeditor being more independent and more rewarding.

What the brief review of research into news translation also shows is some unease with describing these processes as *translation*. This takes us back to the main aspect

of this paper, i.e., reflecting on the labels used to describe these complex processes of news translation, and especially the label *transediting*. Not all researchers who investigated news translation, or translation of journalistic texts more generally, make use of the label *transediting* as introduced by Stetting. Even those who do use *transediting*, often set it apart from *translation* (as Stetting did herself). For example, Hursti, who encourages fellow researchers to adopt the label *transediting* to indicate that translating and editing are closely intertwined, defines *translation* as “that part of the news production process which involves translating into another language those parts of the original message that are considered newsworthy in the receiving cultural environment.” *Editing* is defined as “that part of the news production process which involves transforming the language or the structure of the original message by using such text-surgical methods as deletion, addition, substitution and reorganization” (Hursti 2001: 2). These definitions, however, imply a more narrow understanding of translation as literal translation since obviously transformations are not seen as part of translation. In contrast, the methods listed as examples of editing by Hursti are identified as part of transediting by Cheesman and Nohl (2010). As seen above, they distinguish between *transediting* and *gatekeeping*, with *gatekeeping* denoting information selection prior to translation, and *transediting* describing changes during translation.

Some other authors have opted for labels either in conjunction with or in contrast to *translation* and/or *transediting*. For example, Frías Arnés (2005) uses *adaptación/traducción* in combination, and Valdeón (2005) speaks of *transformative acts* as an umbrella term for the two processes of editing and translation, which he sets apart from *transformations* which denote intralingual changes (i.e., changes to texts in one language only). Other scholars simply use *translation*, either not problematising the concept at all (like Kadhim and Kader 2010), or seeing transformations as an integral part of translation (Valdeón 2005; Bani 2006; Holland 2006; Kang 2007). Kang refers to translating, revising and editing as separate processes as she identified them in her case study (Kang 2007: 222). Bielsa and Bassnett too agree that both editing and translating involve “selection, correction, verification, completion, development or reduction that will give texts the final form in which they appear in the newswire” (Bielsa and Bassnett 2009: 57). They decide against adopting Stetting’s “somewhat artificial concept of transediting” and prefer simply to use “news translation to point to this particular combination between editing and translating” (Bielsa and Bassnett 2009: 63–64).

These discussions about finding a term which describes the practice of news translation most appropriately lead to the final question I wish to address: do we need the term *transediting*?

#### 4. Transediting revisited

Bielsa and Bassnett (2009) argue that news translation poses challenges to some of the key concepts of Translation Studies, such as *source text*, *target text*, *authorship*, and in fact, *translation*. It is true that a significant amount of research into translation has been done on the basis of whole texts produced by one author, and that much of our thinking and theorizing has been determined by this model (although even the Bible does not have a single author). However, if we think of press translation and

translation of journalistic texts more widely, it could also be argued that the processes are much more complex and diverse and that replacing *translation* by another term is not a straightforward solution.

News itself is a kind of umbrella term, covering various genres, such as short news items, news reports, news stories, press releases (therefore Bani 2006 prefers to speak of *press translation*, and Romagnuolo 2009 of *newspaper translation*). The press includes daily, weekly, monthly newspapers and magazines as well as the growing number of online media. Most mass media combine original and translated texts (in different quantities), with translated texts coming either from one source (as in Kang's analysis of *Newsweek Hankuk Pan* [2007]) or from different sources (as in Bani's study of *Internazionale* [2006]). In translating journalistic texts, there are thus examples of complete texts produced by one author which are translated by a professional translator who may not be based in the office together with the journalists (as illustrated by Kang [2007], Frías Arnés [2005], and also in my own analysis of the practices at *Spiegel International* [Schäffner 2005]). News texts are often based on several (written and/or oral) sources (Tsai 2010, for example, illustrates this with reference to the TV news studio). But once texts produced by news agencies are sent to other subscribing news organisations who then translate the information into their own respective languages, we do have one text which functions as a source text, independent of the number of sources and the language(s) this text was initially based on.

Similarly to the source text not being easily identifiable as one single text written by one author, the target text too in its finally published form is only rarely the product of one person. Kang emphasised news translation as a "collective effort" of translators and editors (Kang 2007: 238). In these processes of information selection, translation, editing, the actual wording of the text is much less important than the topic, the message, as seen as relevant by the journalists for their respective audience. Or, as Valdeón says, we have "translation of information, rather than [...] translation of texts" (Valdeón 2009: 79). It is the amount and the nature of the transformations involved in these processes which make researchers reflect about the applicability of the label *translation* to news translation.

However, the transformations identified in news translation are not confined to news texts. Information selection, reduction, and synthesizing are essential, for example, in the case of gist translation, or summary translation. Subtitling too encompasses summarizing and paraphrasing as strategies (Gambier 2010: 11). And as research in Translation Studies has shown, shifts at macro- and micro-level are an integral part of any translation process, not only as a result of differences in the linguistic systems of source and target language (the analysis of which was the focus of the more traditional equivalence based theories) but more often as a result of considerations of the target audience, the target culture, and the purpose the target text is expected to fulfil in its new context. Such a more functional understanding of translation also often underlies the research of those scholars who *do* use the label *translation* and do not replace it by *transediting*. We need to bear in mind, however, that the research I illustrated above covers a variety of journalistic texts in various mass media institutions with various practices, including practices where the tasks of translating and editing are done separately by different people. For such cases, a definition of translation as a purposeful activity as we see it in functionalist approaches (e.g., Vermeer 1996) is surely appropriate. Scholars who opt for *transedit-*

*ing*, or who reject the label *translation*, have most frequently analysed news translation in the more specific sense of texts produced directly by journalists working for news agencies. We could ask then, whether Vermeer's definition below would capture the specificities of news translation in such a narrow sense as well.

I understand translating roughly as a procedure initiated by a commission consisting of a set of (verbal and non-verbal) instructions (plus additional material) to prepare an (oral or written) "target-text" for transcultural interacting on the basis of "source-text" material. (Vermeer 1996: 6)

The reference to "source text material" would allow including the situation of the target text being produced on the basis of more than one fixed source text (although Vermeer did not initially have this in mind, his reference to "material" needs to be seen in the context of his understanding of the source text as an offer of information). Transcultural interacting needs to be interpreted in a somewhat wider sense than envisaged by Vermeer. Although journalists often do write for a specific audience (in particular if they are employed by one particular newspaper), in the case of international news agencies, there is no clearly identifiable target culture. Global news are basically meant for a global audience, which also means that identifying one very detailed skopos is not so straightforward either. It is in newsrooms of the specific language services that the texts undergo further editing processes to adapt them to a specific readership (as shown by Cheesman and Nohl 2010, but see Valdeón 2005 for effects of neglecting a specific audience).

Even if we say that Vermeer's definition does not fully cover all aspects of news translation, translational processes do play a role. Could news translation then be covered by Holz-Mänttari's theory of translational action which has sometimes been described as wider than Skopos theory? Holz-Mänttari (1984) sees the primary purpose of translatorial action as enabling cooperative, functionally adequate communication to take place across cultural barriers. For her, the task of the translator as an expert in transcultural communication is to design the actions and the ultimate product of these actions (i.e., a text) as appropriate to the aims and conditions of the specific process of intercultural interaction. Holz-Mänttari puts emphasis on translatorial action as professional action. Translators do not pursue their own communicative aims, but in their professional capacity they design texts to be used by others in their own interactive contexts. This is obviously somewhat different in the case of news translation. In producing texts, journalists do pursue their own communicative aims, although not as individuals but as representatives of the news agency or newspapers they are working for. They are thus not experts in transcultural communication but in journalism, with all the specific skills and values this entails. Whereas translators perform translational action in their professional role as translators, journalists act in their role as journalists, even if translation is part of their text-production actions.

As we saw above, Bielsa and Bassnett (2009) too just opt for the term *translation*, not with reference to functionalist theories though but aligning with arguments inspired by system theories and the cultural turn in Translation Studies, especially the concept of *rewriting* as used by Lefevere (1992) for the literary field. They qualify the term *translation*, however, by speaking of *news translation*. With this qualification they want to "point to this particular combination between editing and translating

and more specifically to the form that translation takes when it has become integrated in news production within the journalistic field” (Bielsa and Bassnett 2009: 63-64). But as we have seen, the journalistic field comprises more than news texts in a narrow sense, and adding the field or the genre in front of the word *translation* may not necessarily be sufficient to clarify specificities (for example, labels such as *specialised translation*, *technical translation*, *legal translation*, refer to a field as well, but do not imply any processes or strategies which would be specific to this field only). What Bielsa and Bassnett (2009: 63) present as features which distinguish *news translation* from other forms are the following (based on Tapia quoted in Hernández Guerrero 2005: 157-158):

- 1) The main objective of news translators is to transmit information;
- 2) News translators translate for a mass audience. Consequently, a clear and direct language needs to be used;
- 3) News translators translate for a specific geographical, temporal and cultural context. Their job is also conditioned by the medium in which they work;
- 4) News translators are subject to important limitations of time and space;
- 5) News translators are usually “backtranslators” and proofreaders.

Apart from point 5, all the other points can equally be identified within the framework of Skopos theory as the outcome of reflecting about a translation commission. A difference being, however, that Skopos theory argues that decisions about translation strategies need to be taken for each individual text and commission, whereas the points above are meant to characterise news translation in general. As research so far has revealed, however, these features do not apply in each and every case. For example, global news are produced for a global audience (contradicting point 3), and news translators are much more creative than simply being backtranslators.

So would the label *transediting* then indeed be the most appropriate one to use? Those researchers who have a background in Translation Studies and who *do* use *transediting* do so in order to stress that editing and translating are closely intertwined (Hursti 2001; van Doorslaer 2009), whereas others with a background in Media Studies or Discourse Analysis use it in a more narrow sense for changes that occur during the translation process (Cheesman and Nohl 2010). In each case, examples of translation, editing, or indeed transediting strategies are identified and illustrated. In some cases, strategies such as omissions or additions, happen both in translation and in editing (in contexts where the two processes are separate). Even if the work of translators, or of international journalists, already included such strategies, the texts are subject to further transformations in the subsequent editing processes. Examples provided often illustrate that translators/journalists opted for omissions, additions, and explanations in respect of knowledge and expectations of their target audience. Cases in point are explanations of proper names and of culture-specific terms (such as “Otto Schily (SPD)” in the source text becoming “Social Democratic Interior Minister Otto Schily” in the target text, example from *Spiegel International*, see Schäffner 2005), or omission of information which is too specific to the source culture and thus not of relevance to the global public.

These examples can be compared to Stetting’s *situational transediting* (adapting the translated text to its intended function in the new social context) and *cultural*

*transediting* (adaptation to the needs and conventions of the target culture). Stetting had a third type of transediting, *cleaning-up transediting*, which she defined as adapting the translated text to a “standard of efficiency in expression” (Stetting 1989: 377). She gives as an example a TV interview with a foreign politician who speaks in his foreign language, and she argues that before publication the text needs to be transedited “in such a way that the speech is perfectly idiomatic, correct and well-structured” (Stetting 1989: 373). All these three types can be seen in other types of translation as well.

Helping the readers understand source culture specific information is not the only reason why journalists opt for additions and explanations though. In his analysis of how German translations of speeches by US President Obama were presented in mass media, Martini (2010) showed that extracts of the speeches are combined with what he calls *in-text paratexts*. Such insertions are used by journalists to comment on what was said, or not said, and how it was said. That is, in such cases the journalist is visible as an author, adding his or her voice to that of the politician whose statement is presented in translation.

This example points to another aspect of news, or journalistic, translation, namely the political and ideological nature of the (transediting) processes. Information selection and transformations are not only done to help the readers understand the message. News and other texts in the mass media can be instrumental in promoting ideologies. Analyses in Critical Discourse Analysis, although conducted predominantly on the basis of monolingual texts, have shown how media discourse constructs and/or frames reality. In the context of media translation, Gambier speaks of reframing processes as “reconstruction of a constructed reality” (Gambier 2006: 12). Such ideological aspects have been commented on in some of the research summarised above (e.g., Holland 2006; Kang 2007; Valdeón 2008), also with reference to gatekeeping (e.g., Hursti 2001; Cheesman and Nohl 2010). In my own analysis of the *BBC Monitoring Service* (Schäffner 2010a), I could show that despite their claim of “translating reports accurately into English” (promotional brochure) and keeping editorial intervention to the minimum required to make texts more user friendly (for example, providing a headline and subheadings), these interventions by the translators (called *monitors* at the *BBC Service*) are actually not absolutely neutral. I illustrated this with strategies visible in the free sample texts that were available on the website (this service is not offered anymore), such as lexical choices (e.g., “condemn assassination” in the main headline provided by *BBC Monitoring* compared to “condemn killing” in the translation of the title of the original text). Such interventions set the readers up for one particular interpretation of the text and do not really do justice to the claim on the website “We show not only what the media are reporting but how they are telling the story.”<sup>1</sup>

What these practices show is that the voices readers actually hear are refracted voices, refracted by translation policies of the respective media institutions. This is also emphasised by Kang who argues that news translation “involves a process of recontextualization that may be intricately associated with issues of voice, representation, institutional authority and ideology” (Kang 2007: 220). Stetting’s argument in favour of transediting the text of an interview with a politician and her claim that “the translator has to be more faithful to the originator than to the actual words spoken” (Stetting 1989: 373) can also be interpreted as leading to a refracted voice.

Moreover, the journalistic practices and values differ, not only in specific media institutions but also in the different countries. In Germany, for example, politicians have the right to authorise interviews before publication. This means that they can check the transcript and amend it if they are not happy with the political message or the wording. This opportunity, however, does not exist for foreign politicians if the interviews were conducted in another language or interpreted. There is no chance for them to authorise the translated text before publication (for transformations in an interview with the former Russian President Putin, see Schöffner 2008; 2010b).

Bielsa and Bassnett argue that angles change in news translation, and that this is “a perfectly normal operation in journalism if a new angle is justified according to the [...] criteria of background knowledge and relevance” (Bielsa and Bassnett 2009: 67). However, they do not address more explicitly changes which are motivated by ideological aims. But is it actually possible to draw a line between legitimate changes in angle or perspective and cases of manipulation? How, for example, can we evaluate translation policies and practices of new, mainly online, media institutions which present themselves as independent, such as the *Middle East Media Research Institute (MEMRI)*<sup>2</sup> or *Information Clearing House*<sup>3</sup> which promotes its aims as “correct[ing] the distorted perceptions provided by commercial media”? Based on his analysis of the media representations of a political speech, Holland too reflects about more or less deliberate manipulation by newsmakers, more or less deliberate misrepresentation by the media, and asks whether we can “distinguish between intercultural communication and ‘intercultural spin’” (Holland 2006: 250). More research is required to provide answers to such questions.

## 5. Conclusion

Stetting obviously did not explicitly have ideological considerations in mind when she coined the label *transediting*. And as we have seen, she was also not writing specifically about news translation. The reference to journalistic text production was just given as one example of *transediting*, which she intended to use in a wider sense to raise awareness of translation being more than a close reproduction of a source text. This intention is evident when she expressed her hope that the new term will contribute to recognising the legitimacy of “changing texts in the translation process” (Stetting 1989: 373). As said above, her arguments were put forward at a time when translation was still widely understood as transfer of meaning and with reference to equivalence. In the meantime, our understanding of translation has moved beyond such a narrow linguistic view, and research within the discipline of Translation Studies is conducted from various perspectives, exploring translation as a social phenomenon embedded in and determined by a variety of factors.

The question then arises whether replacing the term *translation* by another one is not actually a step back. It is not only in news translation that the definition of translation has been challenged. For example, screen translation has been labeled as *versioning* or *transadaptation* (Gambier 2010: 11), and *transcreation* is often used for adapting marketing and advertising material. Such new terms are usually meant to highlight processes which go beyond the aspects of pure language change and thus focus on the importance of the needs of the target audience, constraints of the medium, as well as socio-cultural and ideological conditions. Introducing a new label



can contribute to raising awareness of the complexity of processes and encourage rethinking the more traditional views. This happened when terms such as *Skopos* or *polysystem* were put forward, and raising awareness was Stetting's aim as well.

I would like to conclude then by arguing that the term *transediting* was useful at the time it was introduced in its own context. However, if *transediting* is used as a substitute to and/or in opposition to the term *translation*, there is the danger that *translation* continues to be understood in a narrower sense of a purely word-for-word transfer process. As any translation, news translation, or media translation more generally, is a textual and a sociocultural process which involves transformations. New forms of online media and new actors (blogs and fan translation, as cases in point) just add to the already existing complexity. In order to fully understand and explain both the processes and the products of media translation, the whole framework of actions surrounding the translators, as well as the policies and ideologies that underlie these actions, need to be taken into consideration. Debating the appropriateness of specific terms may be futile if not accompanied by further investigation of the role of translation in journalistic text production. Or, as Pym reminds us, "the practice of translation exceeds its theory, thus requiring an ongoing empirical attitude" (Pym 2010: 109).

#### NOTES

1. *BBC Monitoring*. Visited on 12 November 2012, <<http://www.monitor.bbc.co.uk/>>.
2. *Middle East Media Research Institute (MEMRI)*. Visited on 12 November 2012, <<http://www.memri.org/>>.
3. *Information Clearing House*. Visited on 12 November 2012, <<http://www.informationclearing-house.info/>>.

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