



**Esperança Bielsa and Susan Bassnett. *Translation in Global News*. London and New York, Routledge, 2009, 162 p.**

Julie McDonough Dolmaya

---

Méthodologie de la recherche en traductologie : applications  
Applied Research Methods in Translation Studies  
Volume 25, Number 1, 1er semestre 2012

URI: <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1015355ar>  
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7202/1015355ar>

[See table of contents](#)

---

Publisher(s)

Association canadienne de traductologie

ISSN

0835-8443 (print)  
1708-2188 (digital)

[Explore this journal](#)

---

Cite this review

McDonough Dolmaya, J. (2012). Review of [Esperança Bielsa and Susan Bassnett. *Translation in Global News*. London and New York, Routledge, 2009, 162 p.] *TTR*, 25(1), 267–271. <https://doi.org/10.7202/1015355ar>

## COMPTES RENDUS

**Esperança Bielsa and Susan Bassnett. *Translation in Global News*. London and New York, Routledge, 2009, 162 p.**

*Translation in Global News* studies how news translation operates in a globalized world. The book contains seven chapters, three of which are revised versions of articles previously published in *Language and Intercultural Communication*, *Global Networks* and *Target*. Also included is an appendix with extracts from the presentations and ensuing debate at the international symposium on translation and global news held at the University of Warwick in April 2004.

In chapter 1, the authors explore the relations between power, language and translation. This chapter provides an overview of recent developments in translation theory and surveys the relevant literature, drawing parallels between news production and translation. As Bielsa and Bassnett point out, for instance, news stories are assembled in a way that resembles the translation process: information is deliberately and consciously selected, structured, assembled and fabricated into a format that satisfies reader expectations. But they also note how news translation challenges key concepts in Translation Studies. They argue that information undergoes so much editing and “repackaging” in its journey from one language to another that the distinction between source and target becomes blurred. In fact, “research into news translation poses questions about the very existence of a source and hence challenges established definitions of translation itself” (p. 11).

Chapter 2 addresses how globalization theories apply to Translation Studies. The authors point out instances in which translation is not taken into account in globalization theories, while offering examples of the role translation plays in a global context. As Bielsa and Bassnett argue, translation is an infrastructure of global communication, a border area where the local and global intersect; the ways in which cultural globalization operates will be better understood only when translation becomes less invisible.

Chapter 3 focuses on the globalization of news. It defines and describes the history of global news agencies, focusing specifically on two European agencies: Reuters and Agence Havas/France-Press. As Bielsa and Bassnett show, translation has been tied to news agencies since the 1830s, when Bureau Havas, which translated foreign newspapers for the French media, was transformed into the first news agency and subsequently began translating foreign news and gathering its own. This chapter also explores how modern journalism has evolved into global journalism: as the global infrastructure of Reuters and Havas brought news of distant events to readers faster and more accurately than before, the news agencies also tried to have their values of impartiality and objectivity, along with their emphasis on fact-based discourse, adopted worldwide. The chapter ends with a brief look at alternative news agencies such as Inter Press Service, the largest supplier of information about less-developed regions, and more recent developments in global news, such as continuous information channels like CNN, and non-Western news channels, such as Al-Jazeera.

In chapter 4, the authors study how translation operates in news agencies. They argue that news editors, though not formally designated as “translators,” possess the skills needed to produce translations. As they note, news agencies view translation as an integral part of the writing and editing process, one that is subject to the same stylistic and genre conventions as other journalistic texts. This means news translators must work as though they were journalists, even if they are not. Bielsa and Bassnett explore the nature of news translation, briefly discussing how news translators commonly intervene in the text. These interventions, which may include changing titles and leads, eliminating unnecessary information, adding background information, changing the order of paragraphs, and summarizing information, are intended to make the target text more like an original text suited to the needs of the target market. Finally, the authors discuss some translation practices in news agencies, including an emphasis on producing translations quickly, prioritizing the news that should be translated, observing stylistic rules, and ensuring translations are revised before being released. News translation, they argue, is doubly invisible: the translator’s intervention is hidden not only

because the translations are domesticated, but also because the translation process is integrated into journalism.

The authors use chapter 5 to delve further into the translation process in new agencies. Through interviews with journalists at Agence France Presse (AFP) and Inter Press Service (IPS) at the Latin American headquarters in Montevideo, Bielsa and Bassnett compare translation practices at AFP and IPS, focusing on specific translation strategies and journalist views on translation. The authors also sent online questionnaires to journalists at AFP, IPS and Reuters. Among their findings: journalists need to view source texts “not as a finished product, but as the basis for the elaboration of a new text which will convey the information required to new readers with maximum efficiency” (p. 84). Moreover, time and speed are particularly rigid constraints under which news translators must work.

Chapter 6 uses text analysis to study three sets of news agency texts: various articles collected at the AFP Montevideo office in 2004, sample articles taken on 20 July 2006 from Reuters’ US, UK, Latin America, Spain and France websites, and articles produced by IPS in English, Spanish, and Dutch during its coverage of the World Social Forum in 2004. With the first series of texts, the authors illustrate some of the translation strategies discussed in chapter 5, including fast, reliable translation of factual information, addition of factual details to a target text, adaptation for a geographically distant TL audience, and combination of various STs to produce a single TT. While these examples are intriguing, a more in-depth analysis of why these differences occur and what needs the translator-editor is catering to would have been appreciated. For instance, to illustrate how factual details are sometimes added to translated news stories, the authors briefly discuss the French, English and Spanish versions of a news article about two Palestinians killed by Israeli troops: the French and Spanish versions specify in the title that the Palestinians were teenagers, while the English version does not mention this detail until the first paragraph. An interesting example, but what is the significance of this difference? Is it part of a larger trend? Bielsa and Bassnett do not address such questions. The second set of texts—sample articles from the Reuters

website—serve to illustrate the directionality of translation (from English into Spanish and French, but not vice versa), the speed at which translations are produced (all appeared on the same day as the ST), the changes made to articles appearing on the websites of locales with the same language (minimal changes between the US and the UK but different translations in Latin America and Spain). Here though, Bielsa and Bassnett make a greater effort to contextualize the differences between the various versions, hypothesizing, for instance, that when an English article about Ronald Reagan's funeral clearly commemorates him as "the winner of the Cold War" (p. 104) but a Spanish article does not, this is because the Latin American public "suffered the Cold War as America's backyard with great human loss" (p. 105). Finally, the study of the IPS articles on a single event allows the authors to compare the coverage in each language, the number of translations into each language (60% of Dutch texts were translations vs. 40% of English and Spanish texts), the speed at which translations were produced (usually one day after the ST), the types of translation strategies used (e.g., addition, deletion and reorganization of information). The authors offer several conclusions. First, adaptation of the ST for TL audiences is common in news translation. Second, Western news agencies dominate the field, so certain European languages, particularly English, are predominant, and Western values like objectivity, neutrality, and newsworthiness shape text production. And third, speed is paramount to news translation, but translation itself has remained largely invisible.

Finally, chapter 7 uses a case study of UK, France and Italian news articles about Saddam Hussein's capture and trial to explore the extent to which translations can be considered truthful and accurate versions of a source text. They show how the publication of edited and translated transcripts in the press transformed the trial into a piece of global theatre. Although the transcripts were supposed to be accurate translations of the original, they varied considerably, even in newspapers published in the same language: one UK newspaper, for instance, depicted Saddam as "blustering" and "rather coarse," while another depicted him as a "serious, articulate figure" (p. 126). The authors wonder how readers can be asked to accept a target text as the

true, accurate version when it has been manipulated from oral Arabic to an abbreviated English transcript edited for a particular target audience. They explain the differences between the UK, Italian and French versions based on each newspaper's editorial policies and the country's political position on the war in Iraq. The final section of this chapter acts as a conclusion to the book, as the authors assert that news translation is not "translation" in the usual sense of the term, since an original text does not always exist, the process is completely integrated into journalism practices, and even in the case of reportedly accurate translations, "variations are so great as a result of various textual manipulations that we have only a loose grasp of what the original might have been" (p. 132).

In sum, *Translation in Global News* provides an excellent overview of the translation process in global news agencies. The fieldwork conducted in Montevideo is valuable, and the examples offered in the various case studies not only illustrate how translation is integrated into journalism practices, but also raise questions about the manipulation and veracity of information during the translation process. The case studies also point to which aspects of news translation could benefit from future studies incorporating a more systematic analysis of a large corpus of texts.

JULIE McDONOUGH DOLMAYA  
YORK UNIVERSITY, GLENDON COLLEGE

**Michel Ballard, dir. *Traductologie et enseignement de traduction à l'Université*. Arras, Artois Presses Université, 2009, 333 p.**

Comme son titre l'indique, l'ouvrage, constitué de quinze textes réunis par Michel Ballard, porte sur la place de la traductologie à l'université et de sa relation à l'enseignement de la traduction. Y sont présentées, sous forme d'articles, les communications de seize participants au colloque tenu les 15 et 16 février 2007 à l'Université d'Artois dans le cadre des activités de recherche « Textes et Cultures ». La problématique du colloque s'articulait autour de quatre grandes questions : « Pourquoi faire de la traduction à l'université? », « Comment la traduction est-elle enseignée? »,