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## Translational phenomena in the news

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# **Translational phenomena in the news: Indirect translation as the rule**

Lucile Davier

University of Geneva

Studies of news translation and indirect translation have challenged classical concepts of Translation Studies, but the two subfields have taken separate paths. This article applies Assis Rosa, Pięta, and Bueno Maia's (2017b) classification of indirect translation to data collected via workplace studies conducted in two multilingual news agencies based in Switzerland and one monolingual broadcaster based in Canada. Illustrative examples are provided of the first six types of (in)direct translation in the classification. This typology allows for the inclusion of phenomena that may have been previously disregarded as translation, such as oral mediations and transfers from public-relations agencies to news agencies and other media outlets. However, news translation is a borderline case of translation that pushes Assis Rosa, Pięta, and Bueno Maia's (2017b) classification to its limits because of the centrality of reported speech in news stories. Indirect translation seems to be able to bridge various subfields of Translation Studies.

**Keywords:** indirect translation, news translation, workplace studies, methodology, discourse representation

## **1. Introduction**

Hanna Pięta piqued my curiosity when she asked whether I would be interested in applying the concept of 'indirect translation' to the area of news translation. I had been content in my narrow

subfield until then, despite – following the lead of Delabastita (1991) and Chesterman (2019) – silently lamenting the fragmentation of Translation Studies. When I read, in the call for papers for this issue, about the broader definition of indirect translation as a “translation of a translation” (Gambier 1994, 143), I was intrigued to see how it could apply to news translation. Is indirect translation one of those concepts “that in some way bridge[s] the gaps between the segments” of Translation Studies (Chesterman 2019, 15)?

This article applies Assis Rosa, Pięta, and Bueno Maia’s (2017b) typology of indirect translation to news translation in order to verify to what extent this typology can help develop a more precise vocabulary for describing the translational phenomena that occur in the media. The examples I discuss are news stories produced by two multilingual news agencies based in Switzerland and the francophone network of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) (see Section 3) – media organizations in which I conducted fieldwork. Anchoring this article in fieldwork also justifies the use of first-person pronouns, which is customary in describing the personal actions of researchers collecting data in the field and the subjectivity involved in the interpretation of qualitative data (Bensa 2008, 326). This “context-oriented” anchorage (Saldanha and O’Brien 2013, 205–206) allows me to generate sound hypotheses for a “product-oriented” analysis (50–51). The question guiding this article is the following: How does Assis Rosa, Pięta, and Bueno Maia’s (2017b) typology help describe the complex translational phenomena that are observable in the news?

## **2. Indirect translation and news translation in dialogue: A selective literature review**

Since the early 2000s, journalistic translation research (Valdeón 2015) – or news translation – has challenged classical concepts of Translation Studies: translation, adaptation, source, target, and even text (Davier and van Doorslaer 2018). Can the multilingual phenomena we observe

in the news qualify as ‘translations’? Scholars have crafted concepts, such as “transediting” (Stetting 1989) or “localization” (Orengo 2005), to reflect the numerous complex translation strategies journalists deploy, such as omissions, additions, or reorganizations (Hursti 2001). Other researchers have suggested broadening the definition of translation instead of using new concepts that revert to a narrow understanding of translation between lexical units (Schäffner 2012; Davier 2015) and add to the terminological instability that is characteristic of Translation Studies (Marco 2007; Assis Rosa, Pięta, and Bueno Maia 2017b).

News translation and indirect translation share certain characteristics: the invisibility of the process, the difficulty of establishing a source text, and the methodological issues these two characteristics raise. Translation is kept invisible in the media as a rule (Bielsa and Bassnett 2009; Hernández Guerrero 2011; Davier 2014), while indirectness is often “hidden” or “camouflaged” (Assis Rosa, Pięta, and Bueno Maia 2017b, 113). Research in news translation (Davier and van Doorslaer 2018) and indirect translation (Assis Rosa, Pięta, and Bueno Maia 2017b, 113) challenges the binary between source text and target text because, in some situations, “a source text cannot claim either historical precedence or legal priority” (Washbourne 2013, 615).

These characteristics have methodological consequences: “Traces of translation can be found with time-consuming detective-like archival work” (Davier and van Doorslaer 2018, 247). In both subfields of translation studies, authors lament the unreliability of some sources and suggest triangulating methods and data (Marin-Lacarta 2017, 145; Davier and van Doorslaer 2018, 254). They recommend interrogating paratexts (Marin-Lacarta 2017), investigating the context (Schäffner 2008, 21; Marin-Lacarta 2017, 141), “collecting information about the backgrounds of translators” (Marin-Lacarta 2017, 140), or organizing interviews (Marin-Lacarta 2017, 144; Davier and van Doorslaer 2018, 250).

Despite all this shared ground, both subfields have evolved over the last decades without intersecting, perhaps because of the fragmentation of Translation Studies into areas corresponding to different genres, such as literary translation and news translation. Pięta (2017, 200) acknowledges that

a vast majority of studies [about indirect translation] has been confined to the translation of literature; research into indirect audiovisual translation is scant and relatively recent; research into other text types (e.g. scientific, technical) is almost non-existent.

This article aims to show the extent to which the two subfields of indirect translation and news translation intersect by applying Assis Rosa, Pięta, and Bueno Maia's (2017b, 122) tentative classification of indirect translation to the examples discussed in this article.

### **3. Methods: Fieldwork informing the analysis**

Unlike studies that address historical data, research into contemporary news can employ sociological methods, such as interviews, to inform and contextualize text analysis (Davier and van Doorslaer 2018). In this article, I discuss news stories that stem from media outlets I investigated during two fieldwork studies. Some of these stories were published when I had already left the field, in which case, I ground my analysis on my sociological knowledge of each media organization.

These two workplace studies were conducted in different contexts at different times: (1) two multilingual news agencies based in Switzerland (*Agence France-Presse* [AFP] and

*Agence télégraphique suisse* [ATS])<sup>1</sup> and (2) the multi-platform newsroom of Ici Radio-Canada (the francophone network of the CBC), which is based in the bilingual National Capital Region of Canada.

For the first workplace study, I conducted two one-week fieldworks during which I used semi-structured interviews and non-participant observation to explain the hidden translation processes involved in the news dispatches.<sup>2</sup> AFP and ATS are news wholesalers that provide news to media and non-media customers, but not to end consumers (in contrast to a news agency such as Reuters). In other words, one can only find an AFP or ATS news dispatch republished by another media outlet such as *Le Monde* in France or *Le Temps* in Switzerland. I visited the Swiss bureau of the international agency, AFP, in Geneva in 2012, and the headquarters of the Swiss national agency, ATS, in 2011. In parallel, I compiled a corpus of nearly 350 000 words in French and English for AFP, and in French and German for ATS.

For the second workplace study, I combined semi-structured interviews and over twelve hours of non-participant observation in 2017 to explore the “translational phenomena” (Gentzler 2017, 2) that are almost invisible in stories published by Ici Radio-Canada. I gathered stories published by the journalists I shadowed. However, to guarantee the journalists’ anonymity, I do not use these stories in this study. In addition, I refer to all my participants using feminine pronouns so as not to reveal their identities. The regional Ottawa–Gatineau newsroom of Ici Radio-Canada produces content for various platforms: radio, TV, a website, and social media. It shares its newsroom space with the anglophone network of the CBC, although both operate distinctly and target different audiences. Ici Radio-Canada’s newsroom is located in the English-speaking province of Ontario and in the metropolitan area of Ottawa,

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<sup>1</sup> *Agence télégraphique suisse* changed its name to Keystone-ATS/Keystone-SDA in April 2018. See Keystone-ATS, “Feu vert pour la nouvelle entreprise Keystone-ATS [Green light for the new Keystone–ATS company],” Keystone-ATS (April 27, 2018).

<sup>2</sup> Non-participant observation is a form of observation in which the researcher does not take part in the observed activities (Arborio and Fournier 2008, 86). In my fieldwork, I observed journalists without taking part in newswriting or translation.

where French is a minority language spoken by 15.3% of the population (Statistics Canada 2016). This contextual element matters because Assis Rosa, Pięta, and Bueno Maia (2017b, 120) highlight the importance of the status of the “intervening languages” in the “regional system of translation.”

Quotes from journalists who appear in this publication come from the interviews I conducted in these two different projects.

#### **4. Applying a classification of indirect translation to corpora of news translation**

To invite news translation into dialogue with indirect translation, I take my cue from Assis Rosa, Pięta, and Bueno Maia (2017b). Their categorization is based on an extensive literature review that criticizes the “metalinguistic instability” surrounding this concept (118). The classification considers three variables that render it “flexible” and “inclusive” (120): “the number of intervening texts,” “the number of intervening languages,” and “the choice of intervening languages” (121). It was elaborated on by bridging a top-down (the comparison of existing definitions) and a bottom-up (the analysis of numerous examples) approach. However, while this approach favors conceptual clarity and efficiency, it also begets “rather clumsy compound terms” (St. André 2020, 470).

From this linguistic perspective, Washbourne’s (2013) classification of indirect, relay, and support translation, which builds on Dollerup (2000), is more transparent. Indirect translation covers mediating texts that are “not intended for consumption” (Washbourne 2013, 613). Relay translation is “written for consumption in a given language, but also used to seed multiple new translations” (615). Support translation means using target texts as part of the research conducted by translators as a source of phrases or strategies but not as a “harvestable translation product” (616–617). This indirect/relay/support distinction is problematic because

it relies on the mediating text's aim (it may or may not be intended for consumption), and intention cannot be reconstructed without archival work or fieldwork. In addition, indirect translation (and its co-hyponyms) is limited to situations in which three languages are involved – a limitation that Assis Rosa, Pięta, and Bueno Maia (2017b) explicitly avoid. Washbourne's (2013) classification is “overly exclusive” (Pięta 2017, 203) and contributes to the terminological instability that is typical of indirect translation through maintaining distinctions between indirect translation, relay translation, and support translation (and many other sub-terms such as adaptation, transediting, transcreation, self-translation, and revision).

Nevertheless, three elements can complement Assis Rosa, Pięta, and Bueno Maia's classification (2017b). First, Washbourne (2013) cites Bielsa and Bassnett (2009) to offer an example in the area of the news, which is similar to several examples I develop in this article (see Sections 4.5 and 4.6). Second, he uses the abbreviations L1, L2, and L3 to refer to the languages involved in the indirect translation, which can prove useful for abstract descriptions. Third, Washbourne (2013, 618) more clearly emphasizes the problematic nature of “lost originals,” which is germane to the translation of sacred texts but also important in the news. Indeed, journalists and news editors routinely base their stories on pre-existing materials such as interviews, press conferences, and press releases (Davies 2009). Most of the time, these materials are intended for journalists and not made available to the public. In addition, they are not systematically recorded or archived and therefore disappear once journalists have consumed them. If they were sources in another language, it becomes impossible to compare them to the story based on them.

The following sub-sections present the first six categories of Assis Rosa, Pięta, and Bueno Maia's classification (2017b). Each category is showcased by the “thick description” (Geertz 2000 [1973]) – the situation of a news story within its context.

## 4.1 Direct translation

The principal reason I became interested in the concept of indirect translation is because there are rare instances of direct translation in the media. What is understood as ‘direct translation’?

In Assis Rosa, Pięta, and Bueno Maia’s work (2017b, 120), direct translations possess one ultimate source text in Language 1 and one ultimate target text in Language 2. Nevertheless, this instance of “integral and explicitly mentioned translations” is “extremely rare in the media” (Davies and van Doorslaer 2018, 245). They are the exception rather than the rule, and one may discover them in “some multilingual news websites, forms of news reviews, or opinion articles in quality newspapers” (ibid.).

Direct translations are uncommon in both situations I consider in this study. At Ici Radio-Canada, translating a story is usually an “editorial choice” made during editorial meetings within each newsroom with no set criteria.<sup>3</sup> According to an investigative journalist: “[...] if it’s a good story, usually, it’ll appear on both platforms.”<sup>4</sup>

For an example of direct translation, I selected one target text (a digital story<sup>5</sup> in English) and one identifiable source text (a digital story in French) published on the English and French networks of the CBC.<sup>6</sup> In the bilingual newsroom of Ottawa–Gatineau, three digital editors of Ici Radio-Canada explained that they scanned the website of their counterparts in the English-language network daily to find stories that they could make available to their

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<sup>3</sup> Throughout the article, quotes from the interviews that were originally in French are translated to English by myself. The original French is provided in footnotes. Original: “[...] *ils font des choix éditoriaux par rapport à ça.*”

<sup>4</sup> Original: “[...] *si c’est une bonne histoire, normalement, elle va se retrouver dans les deux plateformes.*”

<sup>5</sup> A digital story is a written story that appears online only and can include audiovisual elements such as a graph or a video.

<sup>6</sup> English text: CBC, “Dozens Gather Outside U.S. Embassy in Ottawa for Peace Protest,” *CBC* (January 4, 2020), accessed June 22, 2022, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/ottawa/american-embassy-ottawa-peace-demonstration-1.5415348>.

French text: Ici Radio-Canada, “Tensions avec l’Iran: Manifestation pro-paix devant l’ambassade américaine [Tensions with Iran: Peace Protest Outside U.S. Embassy],” *Ici Radio-Canada* (January 4, 2020), accessed June 22, 2022, <https://ici.radio-canada.ca/nouvelle/1457769/soleimani-manifestation-pro-paix-raid-irak>.

readership in French. Their anglophone colleagues probably do the same, but I do not have evidence of this.

I can surmise that the English story is a translation because it is followed by this note: “with files from Radio-Canada’s Yasmine Mehdi.” From what I learned during my observation sessions at the CBC, this phrase means that Ici Radio-Canada’s named journalist conducted the main investigation. The name of the anglophone editor who wrote the digital story in English does not appear, probably because she did not contact sources on her own. Indeed, gathering sources is considered to be original reporting and, according to a seasoned digital editor, seems to be distinct from simple newswriting.

In other words, the original story was produced in French and then translated into English by an unnamed anglophone news writer. Both stories were published on January 4, 2020. Table 1 shows the title and first three paragraphs of the presumed ultimate source text in French (left column) and the presumed ultimate target text in English (right column).

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 INSERT TABLE 1 HERE  
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**Table 1.** Excerpts from the presumed ultimate source text in French (left) and the presumed ultimate target text in English (right). Numbers refer to the paragraphs’ order of appearance. Additions are bolded in the English text

<i>Tensions avec l’Iran: manifestation pro-paix devant l’ambassade américaine</i>	Dozens gather outside U.S. embassy <b>in Ottawa</b> for peace protest <b>Protesters demand end to ‘American interventionism’ following death of Qassem Soleimani</b>
<i>Radio-Canada</i> <i>Publié le 4 janvier 2020</i>	CBC News   Posted: Jan 04, 2020 6:19 PM ET   Last Updated: January 5

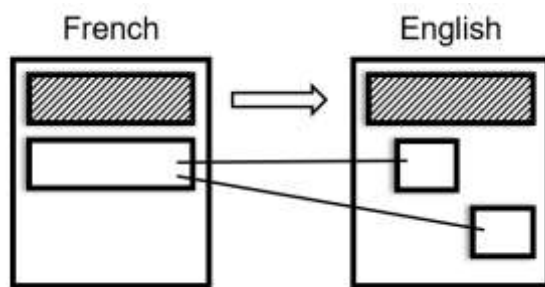
<p>[Photograph of man holding a cardboard sign “End US imperialism” – can be seen following URL provided in Footnote 6.]</p> <p><i>Une cinquantaine de manifestants se sont présentés devant l’ambassade américaine, samedi.</i></p> <p>Photo: Radio-Canada / Yasmine Mehdi</p>	<p>[Photograph of man holding a cardboard sign “End US imperialism” – can be seen following URL provided in Footnote 6.]</p> <p>Around 50 people turned out for a demonstration outside the U.S. Embassy <b>in Ottawa Saturday condemning the American government's killing of a top Iranian general.</b> (Yasmine Mehdi/Radio-Canada)</p>
<p><i>1. Une cinquantaine de manifestants se sont présentés devant l’ambassade des États-Unis à Ottawa, samedi, pour réclamer la fin de « l’interventionnisme américain », à la suite du raid qui a tué Qassem Soleimani.</i></p>	<p>1. Around 50 protesters gathered in front of the U.S. Embassy in Ottawa Saturday to demand an end to “American interventionism” following the death of Qassem Soleimani.</p>
<p><i>2. Le climat est tendu au Moyen-Orient <a href="#">depuis la mort de ce général iranien, tué tôt vendredi dans un raid américain à Bagdad</a>, en Irak.</i> [the underlined text is a hyperlink embedded in the original news story]</p>	<p>2. Tensions have been high in the Middle East since the Iranian general was <a href="#">killed early Friday</a> in an American raid in Baghdad. [the underlined text is a hyperlink embedded in the original news story]</p>
<p><i>3. Les manifestants présents dans la capitale canadienne demandaient aux États-Unis de cesser leurs interventions au Moyen-Orient. [...]</i></p>	<p>3. Protesters in Ottawa demanded that the United States end its intervention in the Middle East. [...]</p>

A parallel comparison of the stories reveals that they are integral translations until Paragraph 3 in Table 1. There are several additions in the English text: the location (“Ottawa”) is added in the title; there is a subtitle; the same picture appears below the title but its caption in English provides more context. These additions can probably be explained by formatting preferences in the CBC newsroom, such as the introduction of a subtitle below the title of a digital story, or the need for a caption to answer to answer the 5Ws (Who? What? When? Where? Why?). The remainder of the text can be analyzed with a focus on translation shifts or translation strategies, which include cutting, rewriting, and restructuring paragraphs, as noted in the different contexts of news translation (i.e., Hursti 2001; Gambier 2010). For instance, a

quote by a French-speaking protester (Paragraph 4 in French) is cut into shorter parts and arranged differently in the English version (Paragraphs 7–12 in English); the picture of the defense minister does not appear in the English story; and direct speech (Paragraph 8 in French) is transformed into indirect speech (Paragraphs 13–15 in English). The schema in Figure 1 reformulates this explanation visually.

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INSERT FIGURE 1 HERE  
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**Figure 1.** Case in which one part of the story (represented by the frame filled with lines) is a direct translation and another part of the story (represented by the frames without lines) is restructured and rewritten.



Paratextual information and my knowledge of the journalistic routines at CBC and Ici Radio-Canada suggest that the texts in Table 1 represent a case of direct translation with an ultimate source text in the ultimate source language (French) and an ultimate target text in the ultimate target language (English). However, the term ‘direct translation’ seems insufficient to describe a common media reality: numerous rewritings aimed at tailoring a news text for a new audience (Bielsa and Bassnett 2009, 10). The analysis of both text and images indicates that fragments of the example in Table 1 qualify as a direct translation, but the story as a whole does not. In journalistic translation research, as argued by Davier and van Doorslaer (2018), it may make more sense to work with units of translation that are smaller than a text. Indeed,

considering the news story in its entirety may hide the complexity of the changes that journalists have made in the ultimate target text.

#### 4.2 Mediating language-mediated indirect translation

Mediating language-mediated indirect translations (the second category in Assis Rosa, Pięta, and Bueno Maia's [2017b] classification) includes one ultimate source text, one mediating language text, and one ultimate target text. The classification of indirect translations is capable of covering transfers involving "only two languages [...], but several mediating agents, texts and processes" (Assis Rosa, Pięta, and Bueno Maia 2017b, 119).

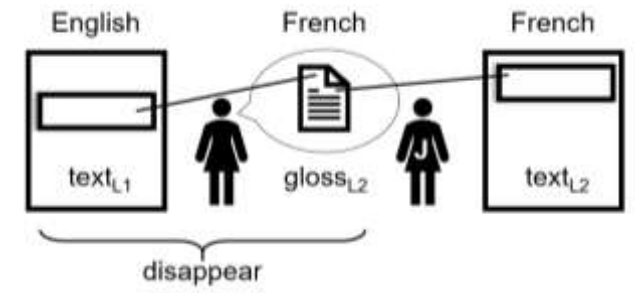
With this definition in mind, I see cases of mediating language-mediated indirect translation abounding in the news. They can occur in oral and written modes (121), either through a published mediating text or an oral mediation. Oral mediations can be interlingual or intralingual reformulations in situations where the journalist authoring the story asks colleagues for help. Colleagues can paraphrase an unclear source text in the source language or suggest equivalents in the target language.

This definition partly overlaps with the situation Washbourne (2013, 616) describes as "unacknowledged direct translation from an oral interlinear text." Nevertheless, promoting these hidden practices under the label of 'direct translation' makes them seem accepted whereas, in fact, few scholars have commented on them until now.

Returning to the CBC, a description of mediating language-mediated indirect translations could encompass (1) a French-speaking journalist explaining an English phrase in French for a francophone colleague working on a story (which one could express as  $\text{text}_{L1} > \text{gloss}_{L2} > \text{text}_{L2}$ ), and (2) an English-speaking expert explaining an English phrase in

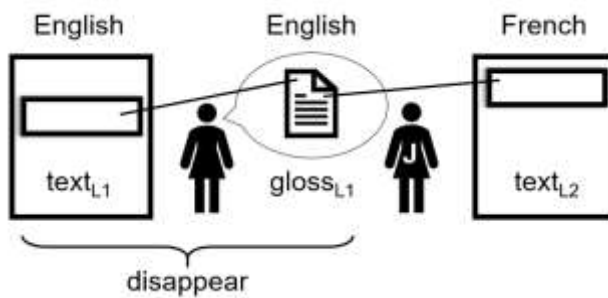
English for a French-speaking journalist (paraphrased as  $text_{L1} > gloss_{L1} > text_{L2}$ ). The first case is illustrated in Figure 2 and the second in Figure 3.

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INSERT FIGURE 2 HERE  
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**Figure 2.** The English text is discussed in French between the journalist (J), who authors a news story in French, and a French-speaking colleague. Both the ultimate source text and the mediating text are oral and disappear after the conversation

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INSERT FIGURE 3 HERE  
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**Figure 3.** The English text is discussed in English between an English-speaking expert and the journalist (J), who authors a news story in French on the right. Both the ultimate source text and the mediating text are oral and disappear after the conversation

The example I have selected demonstrates the case illustrated in Figure 3. One Ici Radio-Canada journalist told me that the morning before I interviewed her, she had gone to the Ottawa City Council to gather reactions to an open letter sent by women’s rights organizations asking for Ottawa to designate itself a ‘sanctuary city’ for undocumented migrants. She approached a city councilor to attempt to better understand the status of a sanctuary city, the details of which were requested in the open letter. She recounts: “There was also an ‘English’[-speaking] journalist there, so, that happens sometimes, uh, to make everybody’s life easier, I let the conversation take place in English, because I – I have an aptitude for English.”<sup>7</sup> On the basis of the background information she gathered during this informal exchange, she asked the city councilor, who had mastered some French, a question on record, allowing her to record a short video clip for her Twitter feed and an audio clip for the next radio bulletin. Eventually, the English mediating text vanished behind a post and a short video on Twitter, which appeared to result exclusively from monolingual newsgathering.

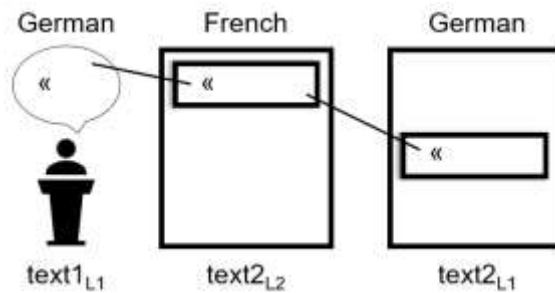
Mediating language-mediated indirect translation may also be useful to describe back translations – a type of indirect translation Washbourne (2013, 614) subsumes into “legacy translations” (text<sub>1L1</sub>>text<sub>2L2</sub>>text<sub>2L1</sub>). I uncovered only one example of back translation in both projects I conducted, and this example is not substantiated with textual excerpts: it was only broached in a discussion with one of the editors-in-chief of the Swiss news agency, ATS, while she was giving me a tour of the trilingual newsroom (French–German–Italian). She described a situation in which a francophone journalist covered a press conference in German (text<sub>1L1</sub>) and translated a few quotations into French (text<sub>2L2</sub>) in her news dispatch, which was sent to the wire for other media outlets and reused as a mediating source text within ATS for a French-to-German translation. The original quotations in German were erased, continuing to

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<sup>7</sup> Original: “[...] il y avait aussi une journaliste des Anglais qui était là, donc ça arrivait quelquefois, euh, pour simplifier la vie de tout le monde, je laisse la conversation se dérouler en anglais, parce que moi, j’ai de la facilité en anglais.”

exist only in French, and were then translated into German ( $text_{2L1}$ ) via the mediation of the mediating language, French. This apparently exceptional situation is represented in Figure 4.

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INSERT FIGURE 4 HERE  
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**Figure 4.** A press conference given in German was attended by a French-speaking news editor, who produced a news dispatch in French, from which quotations were translated into German

Given the absence of lexical overlap between language systems, it is highly likely that the ultimate target text ( $text_{2L1}$ ) differs from the ultimate source text ( $text_{1L1}$ ) (German, in Figure 4) (Chesterman [1997] 2016, 6).

The comprehensive definition of this category makes it operational for news translation, whereas mediating texts involve only two languages and can be intralingual, interlingual, and oral (Assis Rosa, Pięta, and Bueno Maia 2017b, 119). Its flexibility is novel when compared to previous definitions of indirect translation. For this category, a focus on the indiscernibility of indirectness in the final product (ibid.) and on the participants (121) seems particularly relevant.

### 4.3 Ultimate target-language mediated indirect translation

The third type in Assis Rosa, Pięta, and Bueno Maia's (2017b) classification is the ultimate target-language mediated indirect translation. It entails several ultimate target-language texts.

The authors suggest that retranslations can fall into this category. For the time being, and with the data I collected, it is difficult to document the existence of translations mediated solely by the ultimate target language. However, I analyze an example of compilative indirect translation mediated by the ultimate target language in Section 4.6.

#### 4.4 Compilative direct translation

Compilative direct translations (the fourth type in Assis Rosa, Pięta, and Bueno Maia's [2017b] classification) imply  $n$  ultimate source language texts and one ultimate target text. They probably account for the most common cases of direct translation in the media, given the compilation of translated quotes from different ultimate source-language texts, including interviews and public-relations material. In fact, compilative writing is characteristic of newswriting: it is a "process in which reporters extract discourse from one context and then reinsert it into a new context" because news is "what others speak and write about" (Catenaccio et al. 2011, 1844). This extracted and recontextualized discourse must often cross language borders.

It is noteworthy that Assis Rosa, Pięta, and Bueno Maia's (2017b) classification does not explicitly address the question of translational fragments, which is typical of compilative writing in the news. While the whole/fragment opposition is certainly interesting in relation to news translation, it must be developed by considering that several ultimate source fragments are compiled to produce one ultimate target text. Another track could be to focus on indirect translation within discourse representation, notably in the subcategories of the narrative reporting of speech acts, indirect speech, and direct speech (Assis Rosa 2013, 229–231).

For this category, I have chosen a news dispatch sent on the ATS newswire that summarizes the reactions to a vote in Switzerland by political actors and members of civil

society.<sup>8</sup> This news dispatch in French comments on a collection of quotes that were probably produced in different languages. In this 680-word text, there are sixteen utterances of reported speech (or “discourse representation” [Assis Rosa 2013, 224]) – that is, information attributed to sources other than the news editor, or “quoter” (Assis Rosa 2013, 224). Six of these sources have probably expressed themselves directly in French because they are politicians active in the francophone part of Switzerland. Two are likely to have been translated directly from German by the author of the news dispatch because their authors work for organizations that are principally based in germanophone Switzerland. One instance of indirect speech attributed to the Organization of the Islamic Conference<sup>9</sup> was probably translated from English into French. Two organizations active at the federal level in Switzerland may have produced a bilingual press release, which implies that the German–French translation would have occurred before the writing of the news dispatch. The reference to five other sources is so vague (e.g., the Catholic Church or the Liberals) that it is impossible to know whether the news editor obtained information in French or German. The reference to these sources can be termed a “narrative report of speech acts” (Assis Rosa 2013, 229).

In summary, this example comprises one ultimate target text – the ATS news dispatch in French – and three different ultimate source texts (fragments) in German and English, plus seven other possible source texts. As there are only two language pairs (German–French and English–French), there is no mediating text or mediating language, as illustrated in Figure 5.

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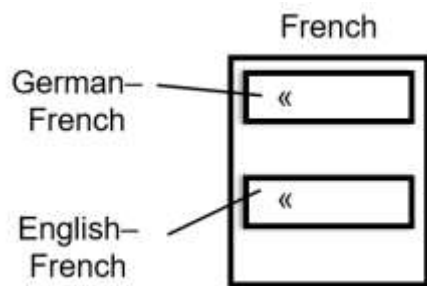
INSERT FIGURE 5 HERE

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<sup>8</sup> ATS, “Minarets – La surprise et la déception l’emportent, les critiques fusent [Minarets – Surprise and disappointment prevail, criticism is coming from all sides],” *ATS* (November 29, 2009), 6.12 pm.

<sup>9</sup> The Organization of the Islamic Conference changed its name to the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation. See <https://www.oic-oci.org/>.



**Figure 5.** Representation of a French news dispatch incorporating fragments of direct translations from German and English

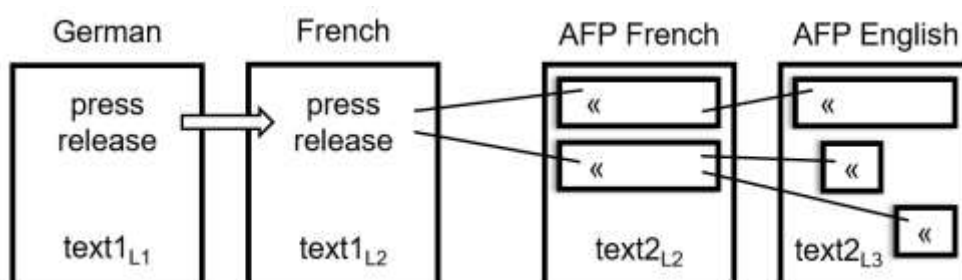
As such, this example matches the definition of compilative direct translation. Nevertheless, two quotations in particular may have been translated through a mediating text in the ultimate target language (a translation in French completed previously by another organization). Although this is only a hypothesis, scholars interested in news translation should bear in mind that there may be situations in which the categories of compilative mixed direct and indirect translation (types seven, eight and ten in Assis Rosa, Pięta, and Bueno Maia’s [2017b] typology) apply. Given the number of sources that possibly existed in other source languages, and the instability of these sources (press releases are not systematically archived), it seems almost impossible to reconstruct the entire translational journey of these quotations.

#### 4.5 Compilative indirect translation (mediating-language mediated)

The fifth category in Assis Rosa, Pięta, and Bueno Maia’s (2017b) classification – compilative indirect translations that are mediating-language mediated – comprises *n* mediating language texts. This type of indirect translation is most likely to occur in chains of communication, such as a translated press release and a translated news dispatch by a news agency. It could result in the following summary:  $text1_{L1} > text1_{L2} > text2_{L2} > text2_{L3}$  (see Figure 6).

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INSERT FIGURE 6 HERE



**Figure 6.** Illustration of an integral translation of a press release (text1<sub>L1</sub>), whose French translation (text1<sub>L2</sub>) is quoted verbatim in a news dispatch (text2<sub>L2</sub>), which functions as a mediating text for a news dispatch in English (text2<sub>L3</sub>).

I draw the following example from a textual AFP corpus I compiled (Davier 2017, 173–175). Examining my bilingual French–English corpus consisting of AFP news dispatches, I identified a quote by a hard-right political organization in Switzerland that was repeated dozens of times throughout the corpus from 2007 to 2010. With the help of my ATS corpus, I located the two press releases from which this quotation probably originated.

The *Komitee „Ja zum Minarett-Verbot”*<sup>10</sup> ‘political committee “Yes to the minaret ban”’ probably drafted a press release in German, which was translated into French and sent out to French-language media.<sup>11</sup> The quote as it appears in the German and French versions of the press release, is given in Example (1a).

### Example (1a)

<sup>10</sup> Komitee “Ja zum Minarett-Verbot”, “Verbot von Minaretten in der Schweiz [Minaret ban in Switzerland]” (2009), accessed June 22, 2022, <https://www.minarett-verbot.ch/darum-geht-es/index.html>.

<sup>11</sup> Comité contre la construction de minarets, “Initiative populaire contre la construction de minarets [People’s initiative against the construction of minarets]” (2009), accessed June 22, 2022, <https://www.minarett-verbot.ch/f/argumente/index.html>.

*„Das Minarett ist das äusserliche Symbol eines religiös-politischen Machtanspruchs, der verfassungsmässige Grundrechte in Frage stellt.“*

‘The minaret is the external symbol of a political-religious claim to power, which challenges fundamental rights that are guaranteed in the Constitution.’ (Own translation)

*« Le minaret est précisément le symbole extérieur de cette revendication de pouvoir politico-religieuse qui remet en question certains droits fondamentaux garantis par la Constitution. »*

‘The minaret is exactly the external symbol of a political-religious claim to power, which challenges fundamental rights that are guaranteed in the Constitution.’ (Own translation)

Since the political committee for a minaret ban in Switzerland was primarily composed of German-speaking members, it is likely that German was the original version of the press release. This text was then translated into French – either by a contracted professional translator or a francophone member of the committee. A fragment of this press release was quoted in the AFP in French (see Example [1b]).

### **Example (1b)**

*« le symbole d’une revendication du pouvoir politico-religieux par l’islam »<sup>12</sup>*

‘the symbol of a political-religious claim to power by Islam’ (Own translation)

I found thirty other similar occurrences of this fragment at later dates in the corpus. The slight variation between the French mediating-language texts may be explained by the possibility that

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<sup>12</sup> AFP, “Suisse: des responsables de la droite partent en guerre contre les minarets [Switzerland: right-wing politicians go to war against minarets],” *AFP* (May 3, 2007) 3.18 pm.

the journalist quoted from notes during a press conference, retranslated the quote from German, or rephrased the mediating text in French.

Based on what I learned when visiting the AFP bureau in Geneva in 2010 and 2012, the anglophone AFP journalists probably translated from French, either from the press release or the news dispatch written by a francophone colleague. Therefore, two competing translations ultimately co-exist in the English AFP subcorpus, and the second may be a revision of the first (see Example [1c]).

### **Example (1c)**

“a political-religious bid for power”<sup>13</sup>

“a political-religious claim to power, which challenges fundamental rights”<sup>14</sup>

The first quotation in Example (1c) appears in sixteen other news dispatches after May 3, 2007, while the second one is found sixteen times after July 8, 2008.

Given AFP is an information wholesaler, the chain of translation and quotation does not cease here. When I searched the Nexis Uni® database for the English quote, it came up in various global media based, for instance, in Australia, Canada, Egypt, and Pakistan. A similar phenomenon is observable with a quotation in French. The aspect of such travel is addressed in Section 4.6.

## **4.6 Compilative indirect translation (ultimate target-language mediated)**

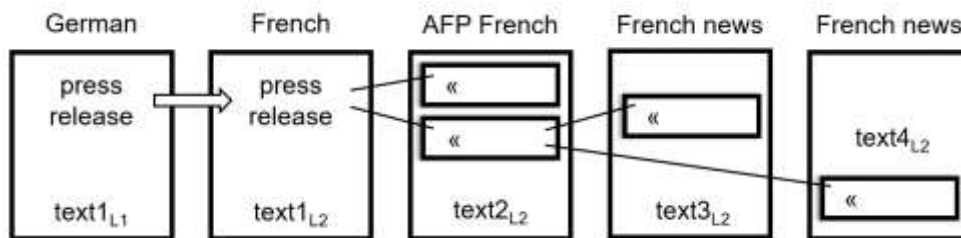
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<sup>13</sup> AFP, “Swiss rightwingers challenge minarets as ‘Islamist’ threat,” *AFP* (May 3, 2007) 1.24 pm.

<sup>14</sup> AFP, “Far-right Swiss group moves closer to country-wide minaret ban,” *AFP* (July 8, 2008) 11.30 am.

In Assis Rosa, Pięta, and Bueno Maia’s (2017b) sixth category (ultimate target language-mediated compilative indirect translations), the indirectness is mediated by the ultimate target-language texts. According to their definition, this form of compilative indirect translation typically occurs when a media organization reuses a quotation previously translated, either as part of public-relations material or by a news agency such as AFP. I represent this situation as follows:  $text1_{L1} > text1_{L2} > text2_{L2}/text3_{L2}/text4_{L2}/textn_{L2}$  (see Figure 7).

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 INSERT FIGURE 7 HERE  
 -----



**Figure 7.** Representation of a press release in German ( $text1_{L1}$ ), which is translated into a press release in French ( $text1_{L2}$ ), which is used as a quote in an AFP news dispatch in French ( $text2_{L2}$ ), a quote which is used in other news stories in French ( $text3_{L2}$ ,  $text4_{L2}$ , etc.)

Here, it is instructive to return to Examples (1a, 1b, and 1c): a press release in German translated into French and then embedded into an AFP news dispatch in French. How did this translation then circulate throughout other French-language media outlets that subscribe to the AFP wire service?

I searched the Nexis Uni® database for similar quotations in French and found three variations. The first one seems to have circulated from the Swiss press release in French through the Swiss news agency ATS to the Swiss French-language newspaper *Le Temps* (see Example [2a]).

### Example (2a)

« [...] le symbole extérieur de cette **revendication de pouvoir politico-religieuse** qui remet en question certains droits fondamentaux garantis par la Constitution. »<sup>15</sup> [...] *an external symbol of this **political-religious claim to power**, which challenges some of the fundamental rights guaranteed by the [Swiss]constitution'*

« symbole d'une **revendication de pouvoir politico-religieuse** qui conteste des droits fondamentaux d'autres personnes »<sup>16</sup>

*'symbol of a **political-religious claim to power**, which challenges the fundamental rights of other people'*

« symbole d'une **revendication de pouvoir politico-religieuse** »<sup>17</sup>

*'symbol of a **political-religious claim to power**'*

The part in bold is identical in the source text (press release), the mediating text (ATS news dispatch), and the ultimate target text (*Le Temps* news story). However, a slightly different ultimate target text exists in the French newspaper *Le Figaro* (see Example [2b]).

### Example (2b)

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<sup>15</sup> Comité contre la construction de minarets, "Initiative populaire contre la construction de minarets [People's initiative against the construction of minarets]" (2009), accessed June 22, 2022, <https://www.minarett-verbot.ch/f/argumente/index.html>.

<sup>16</sup> AFP, "Swiss rightwingers challenge minarets as 'Islamist' threat," *AFP* (May 3, 2007) 1.24 pm.

<sup>17</sup> *Le Temps*, "Samuel Schmid et l'initiative sur les minarets [Samuel Schmid and the minaret ban]," *Le Temps* (May 14, 2007).

« le symbole apparent d'une **revendication politico-religieuse du pouvoir**, qui remet en cause les droits fondamentaux »<sup>18</sup>

'the apparent symbol of a **political-religious claim to power**, which challenges fundamental rights'

It may have been mediated through another target-language text in French, a news dispatch published by the AFP news agency, shown in Example (2c).

### Example (2c)

« le symbole d'une **revendication du pouvoir politico-religieux** par l'islam »<sup>19</sup>

'the symbol of a **political-religious claim to power** by Islam'

This variation among the target versions in Examples (2b) and (2c) may be because the available French translations did not completely satisfy the AFP journalist and *Le Figaro* editor, who therefore adjusted them linguistically for their final audience. I base this hypothesis on the fact that the two journalists modified the syntax of the quote. In the *Figaro* article, the editor placed the underlined adjective (*politico-religieux* 'political-religious') directly after the noun *revendication* 'claim' to avoid any form of ambiguity. In the AFP news dispatch, the adjective refers to the masculine noun *pouvoir* 'power' instead of the feminine noun *revendication*. These differences may also be explained by the fact that one of the mediating texts was a press conference or that the quote was retranslated from German, as explained in Section 4.5.

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<sup>18</sup> Kovacs, Stéphane, "La droite populiste suisse part à l'assaut des minarets [Swiss far-righters go to war against minarets]," *Le Figaro* (July 9, 2008).

<sup>19</sup> AFP, "Suisse: des responsables de la droite partent en guerre contre les minarets [Switzerland: right-wing politicians go to war against minarets]," *AFP* (May 3, 2007) 3.18pm.

These text fragments reveal variation among different ultimate target-language texts (newspapers), which have possibly been mediated by other target texts (two news agencies, ATS and AFP, possibly a press conference). These quotations ultimately appear to be indirect translations but their actual journey – from the press release to various newspapers directly or indirectly through a news agency – can only be conjectured.

## **5. Concluding remarks**

Research on indirect translation and news translation may cross-fertilize each other. On the one hand, research on indirect translation provides a metalanguage that helps describe the complex realities that journalistic translation researchers face on a daily basis. On the other hand, studies of news translation, with its many borderline cases, helps expand the existing typologies of indirect translation.

Assis Rosa, Pięta, and Bueno Maia's classification (2017b) enables researchers to gain a wider understanding of and note translation cases that may otherwise have been excluded from translation scholarship because they are oral, temporary, or unacknowledged. Several categories of the typology are particularly important in this regard, such as mediating language-mediated translation (their second category). This is because this includes oral mediations (e.g., when a journalist asks a colleague or an expert for help), even if these only involve two languages. As such, it can certainly be applied to many similar daily situations in the realm of professional and nonprofessional translation. Two further categories (the fifth and sixth categories: compilative indirect translation [mediating-language mediated] and compilative indirect translation [ultimate target-language mediated]) are helpful in describing the complex travel of information across languages from public-relations specialists to news agencies and finally to media outlets. Such a journey represents a clear example of compilative indirect

translation that is mediated by mediating language and ultimate language. These categories are particularly meaningful in news reporting, a form of text production that is marked by discourse representation or recontextualization (Fairclough 1995; Catenaccio et al. 2011; Assis Rosa 2013); in other words, compilative writing. Although the categories of mixed direct and indirect translation (mixed direct and indirect translation, *n* languages/*n* texts; the seventh to tenth categories in the typology) are not illustrated with examples in this article, they demonstrate how the first six categories can be combined. Nevertheless, presenting examples of each combination would not have added value to these considerations.

At the conceptual level, Assis Rosa, Pięta, and Bueno Maia's (2017b) classification offers clear advantages for various contexts of news translation. First, the breadth of the concept makes it capable of robustly counteracting terminological fuzziness (as opposed to the terms that derive from words with a common sense in Washbourne's [2013] typology). This broad conception of indirect translation constitutes a disciplinary reply to calls to broaden the definition of translation anchored within different subfields of translation (Zethsen 2007; Polezzi 2012; Davier 2015). Second, its inclusivity makes it effective in media contexts in which transfers between two languages are frequent, notably in the context of monolingual media (as opposed to multilingual news agencies, for instance). In this regard, Dollerup (2000) or Washbourne's (2013) categories are too specific to be applied to translational phenomena in the media unless they are substantially reformulated. Third, Assis Rosa, Pięta, and Bueno Maia's (2017b) classification includes variables that are typical of contexts in which translation is predominantly hidden, second-hand, or implies different modes (written, oral, and visual) and mediums (web stories, radio clips, videos, and versions adapted to social media).

Even though the illustrations provided in this article rely on contextualization and data triangulation (following, among others, Marin-Lacarta's [2017] methodological recommendations), the hunt for traces of indirect translation still entails much time-consuming

guesswork. Perhaps we translation scholars must learn that our analyses should permit some uncertainty and that our conclusions should always be modest and careful. Another avenue for research has been opened by methods used in the digital humanities, where researchers have developed tools for establishing the order in which drafts of a literary work were created (Mayfield and Alberts 2021) or detecting interlingual plagiarism (Roostae, Sadreddini, and Fakhrahmad 2020). Such tools may complement workplace studies and facilitate useful comparisons.

This journey through three fields of news translation in two countries on different continents needs a conclusion in which the process of writing should be revealed. I faced significant difficulty in applying this classification to the numerous situations I encountered in the field and had to exchange several of the examples I had already analyzed. This difficulty indicates that news translation is a borderline case of translation. In detail, the category of direct translation works for the first part of the news story presented in Section 4.1, but the remainder of the text is restructured. Direct translation cannot account for the complexity of these transformations. In addition, none of the categories is appropriate for situations in which part of the text is translated directly and part of the text is created from nothing (if a reporter adds new information without using a source in a different language). Part of the solution may be to apply this typology to “units of translation” (Ballard 2010) that are smaller than the text (or fragments as opposed to texts), such as paragraphs or quotations, and to combine the typology with a classical analysis of translation strategies as defined by, for example, Chesterman ([1997] 2016). Another solution may be to use indirectness as an umbrella term and therefore consider news translation as a combination of indirect translation, rewriting (Lefevere 1992), and direct translation, without remaining trapped in the rigid application of each category.

Reworking Assis Rosa, Pięta, and Bueno Maia’s (2017b) table with the whole/fragment distinction may facilitate its applicability to areas beyond literary translation or contemporary

West-European translation, where the status of the ultimate source text is less prominent. Emphasizing indirect translation contributes to deconstructing ‘*the original*,’ questioning the “tired notions of ‘originality’ and ‘imitation’” (Montgomery 2000, 285) and blurring the “lines between translation and original writing” (Toury 1995, 132) – concerns that are shared by scholars specializing in sacred texts, diachronic scientific translation (Montgomery 2000), or journalistic translation research. As such, it seems that Assis Rosa, Pięta, and Bueno Maia (2017b) have managed to open a dialogue among researchers across different subfields of translation studies. This dialogue may well be a stepping stone to the goal of limiting the fragmentation of the discipline.

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**Address for correspondence**

Lucile Davier

University of Geneva

Faculty of Translation and Interpreting – Uni Mail

Boulevard du Pont-d’Arve 40

1211 Geneva 4

Switzerland

Lucile.Davier@unige.ch

0000-0002-5219-6418