

Research Article

Translatorial Invisibility and Ecological Agency in Global News Discourse A Norm Based and Aesthetic Inquiry into Media Translation Practices

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Abstract

This study investigates the complex relationship between translatorial invisibility, ecological agency, and the discursive shaping of global news through translation. Drawing exclusively on a theoretically integrated reading of seminal works in translation studies, media discourse analysis, and ecological translatology, this article develops a comprehensive framework for understanding how translated news becomes a site of ideological negotiation, cultural adaptation, and narrative construction. While traditional paradigms of translation emphasized equivalence and fidelity, contemporary scholarship has demonstrated that news translation is neither neutral nor transparent but rather embedded in institutional norms, ideological pressures, and audience expectations. The works of Venuti on invisibility, Toury on translational norms, Van Dijk on news discourse, and White on narrative rhetoric collectively establish that news translation is an act of selective mediation that reorders reality for particular readerships. Complementing these perspectives, Eco Translatology as developed by Hu and further elaborated by Jun, Zha, and Tian conceptualizes translation as an adaptive and selective process within an ecological environment composed of linguistic, cultural, ideological, and communicative constraints.

Within this integrated theoretical architecture, this article proposes that the translator in news media occupies a paradoxical position. On the one hand, institutional and professional conventions demand invisibility, neutrality, and speed. On the other hand, the ecological conditions of media production require translators to actively select, reshape, and reframe source texts in order to achieve communicative viability within the target culture. Drawing on the notion of transediting introduced by Stetting and the newsroom ethnographies of Tsai, this article argues that news translators function as co authors of mediated reality rather than as passive linguistic conduits. This co authorship is rarely acknowledged but is deeply consequential in shaping public understanding of political events, cultural identities, and moral narratives.

Using qualitative textual and theoretical analysis grounded in the cited literature, this study elaborates how norms of acceptability, ideological framing, narrative aesthetics, and ecological adaptation interact to produce what may be called a constructed transparency in translated news. Such transparency gives readers the illusion of direct access to global events while obscuring the translatorial labor that makes this access possible. The results demonstrate that translatorial invisibility is not merely an aesthetic or ethical stance but a powerful ideological mechanism that stabilizes dominant media narratives. At the same time, eco translatalogical theory reveals that translators retain a form of constrained agency through their adaptive selections within complex media ecologies.

The discussion highlights the implications of these findings for translation ethics, media literacy, and cross cultural communication. By synthesizing discourse analysis, narrative theory, and ecological translation studies, the article contributes a multidimensional understanding of how news translation operates as both a regulatory and a creative force in global communication. The study concludes that acknowledging the ecological and narrative dimensions of news translation is essential for developing more transparent, responsible, and critically aware practices in international journalism.

Keywords: News translation, translatorial invisibility, eco translatology, media discourse, narrative framing, ideological mediation

INTRODUCTION

The translation of news occupies a uniquely influential position in the contemporary world of global communication. In an era when international events are consumed almost instantaneously across linguistic and cultural boundaries, translation is no longer a peripheral activity but a central mechanism through which reality itself is socially constructed. Yet despite this centrality, the role of the translator in news media has traditionally been rendered invisible, both institutionally and ideologically. This invisibility is not merely a matter of professional anonymity but constitutes a structural condition through which translated news is presented to audiences as if it were a direct and transparent reflection of the original event. Venuti conceptualizes this phenomenon as the translator invisibility that dominates Anglo American and global publishing cultures, where fluency and naturalness conceal the mediating role of translation (Venuti, 1995). When this principle is transposed into the high stakes arena of news reporting, the consequences become far more significant than in literary translation, because the translated text participates in shaping political opinions, moral judgments, and ideological alignments.

Within media studies, the understanding of news has long shifted from the idea of neutral information transmission to that of discourse and narrative construction. Van Dijk argues that news is a form of discourse structured by ideological frameworks, power relations, and cognitive models that guide how events are selected, organized, and interpreted (Van Dijk, 1988; Van Dijk, 1998). Similarly, White emphasizes that news stories are driven by a narrative impulse that seeks to impose moral order on disruptive events, constructing characters, motives, and resolutions that make the world intelligible to readers (White, 1997; White, 1998). When news is translated, these discursive and narrative structures do not simply cross linguistic borders intact. Instead, they are reconfigured through the norms, expectations, and communicative strategies of the target media system.

Translation studies has provided powerful conceptual tools for analyzing these processes. Toury's theory of translational norms demonstrates that translations are governed not by abstract ideals of equivalence but by historically and culturally situated expectations of what a translation should look like within a given system (Toury, 1978). In news translation, these norms include speed, clarity, ideological compatibility, and audience relevance, often leading to substantial departures from the source text. Stetting's notion of transediting captures this hybrid practice, where translation and editing merge into a single process of adaptation and selection aimed at producing a publishable news item rather than a linguistically faithful replica (Stetting, 1989). Empirical studies of newsrooms, such as those conducted by Tsai in the Taiwanese television context, further reveal how translators operate under intense institutional pressures, negotiating between foreign sources, editorial agendas, and audience expectations in real time (Tsai, 2005; Tsai, 2006; Tsai, 2009).

Parallel to these developments, a distinctive theoretical paradigm has emerged in Chinese translation studies under the name of Eco Translatology. Developed primarily by Hu, this framework conceptualizes translation as a process of adaptive selection within an ecological environment composed of linguistic, cultural, communicative, and ideological factors (Hu, 2004; Hu, 2011a; Hu, 2011b; Hu, 2011c). From this perspective, translators are not merely constrained by external norms but actively adapt to and select from their environment in order to achieve ecological rationality. This means that a translation is successful not when it is equivalent in a narrow linguistic sense but when it achieves a balanced fit between the source text, the target context, and the translator's own subjectivity. Scholars such as Zha and Tian and Jun have further emphasized the importance of translator subjectivity within this ecological model, arguing that translators are not marginal figures but central agents who navigate complex cultural and ideological terrains (Zha and Tian, 2003; Jun, 2020).

Despite the richness of these theoretical traditions, there remains a significant gap in the literature regarding their integration. Studies of news translation often focus on institutional practices and discourse structures without fully engaging with ecological

and subjectivity based models of translation. Conversely, Eco Translatology has been applied primarily to literary and general translation, with limited attention to the specific constraints and power dynamics of media institutions. Furthermore, while the aesthetic and receptive dimensions of news have been explored by scholars such as Tsang and Tsai and by Wu and Xie in the context of receptive aesthetics, these insights have not been systematically connected to translation theory (Tsang and Tsai, 2001; Wu, 2006; Xie, 2002).

This article seeks to address these gaps by developing an integrated theoretical framework that brings together translatorial invisibility, translational norms, media discourse analysis, narrative aesthetics, and Eco Translatology. By doing so, it aims to provide a more comprehensive understanding of how translated news is produced, how it functions ideologically, and how translators exercise agency within constrained ecological environments. The central argument is that the invisibility of the news translator is not a neutral professional condition but a powerful ideological effect that stabilizes dominant narratives while concealing the adaptive and selective labor that makes cross cultural communication possible.

The focus on news translation is particularly significant because of the gatekeeping role that media institutions play in shaping public knowledge. Vuorinen conceptualizes news translation as a form of gatekeeping in which certain voices, perspectives, and events are selected for circulation while others are excluded or reframed (Vuorinen, 1997). Wei's analysis of Mainland Chinese news in the Taiwanese press further demonstrates how ideological positions and organizational strategies interact to produce distinctive news structures that reflect local political and cultural priorities (Wei, 2000). Valdeon extends this insight into the digital age, showing how online news translation involves selective appropriation of themes and texts, often leading to anomalous or distorted representations of foreign events (Valdeon, 2008). These studies collectively indicate that translation is not merely a technical step in news production but a central mechanism of ideological mediation.

By situating these insights within the broader theoretical context of Venuti's invisibility, Toury's norms, and Hu's ecological rationality, this article offers a multidimensional account of news translation as a socially embedded practice. It argues that the translator's apparent absence from the news text is in fact the condition that allows the translated narrative to function as authoritative and natural within the target culture. At the same time, Eco Translatology reveals that this invisibility is achieved through active, often creative adaptation and selection, rather than through mechanical reproduction. Understanding this paradox is essential for developing a more ethically and analytically informed approach to global news translation.

METHODOLOGY

The methodological orientation of this study is qualitative, interpretive, and theoretically integrative. Rather than collecting new empirical data, the research undertakes a systematic and in depth analysis of the theoretical and analytical frameworks provided by the selected body of literature. This approach is justified by the nature of the research questions, which concern the conceptualization of translation, discourse, ideology, and ecological agency in news media. The objective is not to test a specific hypothesis through quantitative measurement but to construct a coherent and comprehensive theoretical model that can explain how translated news functions within complex communicative environments.

The primary sources for analysis consist of the works listed in the reference corpus, which includes foundational texts in translation studies, media discourse analysis, news aesthetics, and Eco Translatology. These texts are treated as interrelated components of a broader scholarly conversation about how meaning is produced, mediated, and received across languages and cultures. The methodology involves close reading, conceptual mapping, and comparative interpretation. Each theoretical contribution is examined in terms of its core assumptions, key concepts, and implications for the study

of news translation.

One major methodological principle is triangulation across theoretical traditions. For example, Venuti's critique of translatorial invisibility is not analyzed in isolation but is juxtaposed with Toury's norm based model and with Hu's ecological adaptation theory. This allows for a more nuanced understanding of how invisibility operates both as a cultural ideology and as an ecological outcome of adaptation to institutional environments (Venuti, 1995; Toury, 1978; Hu, 2011c). Similarly, Van Dijk's discourse analytical framework is read alongside White's narrative theory and Tsang and Tsai's aesthetic approach to news, enabling a multidimensional account of how news texts organize meaning at cognitive, rhetorical, and affective levels (Van Dijk, 1988; White, 1997; Tsang and Tsai, 2001).

Another methodological pillar is intertextual synthesis. The study systematically identifies points of convergence and divergence among the referenced works, constructing a theoretical dialogue that reveals underlying patterns and tensions. For instance, while Stetting's concept of transediting highlights the hybrid nature of news translation practices, Tsai's newsroom studies provide empirical grounding for how such hybridity is operationalized in real institutional contexts (Stetting, 1989; Tsai, 2005; Tsai, 2009). These insights are then integrated with Eco Translatology's emphasis on adaptive selection, producing a layered model of translatorial agency that is both constrained and creative.

The methodological process also involves discursive and ideological analysis. Drawing on Van Dijk's approach to ideology in the press, the study examines how translated news texts implicitly reproduce or challenge dominant power relations through their lexical choices, narrative structures, and framing strategies (Van Dijk, 1998). Although no specific news texts are analyzed in this article, the theoretical apparatus developed here is designed to be applicable to such analyses in future empirical research. The focus remains on articulating the mechanisms through which ideology is mediated by translation within news institutions.

Furthermore, the methodology incorporates receptive aesthetics as articulated by Wu and Xie, which emphasizes the role of the audience in completing the meaning of a news text (Wu, 2006; Xie, 2002). This perspective is essential for understanding why translators must adapt and select rather than merely reproduce, because the success of a news translation depends on how it is received and interpreted by target readers within their own cultural and ideological frameworks. By integrating this audience oriented dimension, the methodology avoids a purely text centered or source oriented model of translation.

The methodological stance is therefore holistic, combining textual analysis, theoretical synthesis, ideological critique, and ecological modeling. It recognizes that news translation is not a single level activity but a multi layered process involving source texts, translators, institutional norms, narrative conventions, audience expectations, and broader socio political environments. By grounding this analysis strictly in the provided references, the study ensures theoretical coherence and scholarly rigor while producing an original interpretive framework.

RESULTS

The integrative analysis of the referenced literature yields several interrelated findings that together illuminate the complex nature of news translation as an ecological, ideological, and narrative practice. The first major finding concerns the structural invisibility of the translator in media discourse. Venuti's concept of invisibility, originally developed in relation to literary translation, proves highly applicable to news translation, where fluency and immediacy are paramount (Venuti, 1995). In the news context, invisibility is intensified by institutional norms that prioritize speed, clarity, and the appearance of direct access to events. Toury's theory of norms helps explain how this invisibility becomes a regularized expectation within the target culture's media system, guiding translators toward strategies that minimize any trace of foreignness or mediation

(Toury, 1978).

A second finding is that this invisibility is not the absence of agency but rather the outcome of intensive adaptive and selective labor. Eco Translatology provides a powerful lens for understanding this paradox. According to Hu, translators operate within an ecological environment composed of linguistic constraints, cultural values, communicative goals, and ideological pressures, and they must adapt to this environment through selective choices (Hu, 2004; Hu, 2011b; Hu, 2011c). In news translation, this means deciding which information to include, how to frame events, and how to align the narrative with the expectations of the target audience. Jun's emphasis on translator subjectivity within this ecological model further clarifies that these decisions are not mechanical but involve interpretive judgment and cultural positioning (Jun, 2020).

The third major finding relates to the narrative and rhetorical nature of news. White's analysis demonstrates that news stories are structured as moral narratives that seek to restore order in the face of disruption (White, 1997; White, 1998). When such narratives are translated, the translator must reconstitute not only factual content but also the underlying moral and rhetorical logic. Tsang and Tsai's concept of news as an aesthetic narrative reinforces this point by highlighting how news appeals to readers through coherence, drama, and emotional resonance (Tsang and Tsai, 2001). Receptive aesthetics, as articulated by Wu and Xie, shows that these narrative qualities are essential for audience engagement and interpretation (Wu, 2006; Xie, 2002). Consequently, translators must adapt the narrative structure to fit the aesthetic and cognitive expectations of the target readership.

A fourth finding concerns the ideological dimension of news translation. Van Dijk's work makes clear that news discourse is saturated with opinions and ideologies that shape how events are presented and understood (Van Dijk, 1988; Van Dijk, 1998). Vuorinen's gatekeeping model and Wei's analysis of cross strait news further reveal how translation functions as a filter through which ideological positions are reinforced or modified (Vuorinen, 1997; Wei, 2000). Valdeon's study of online news translation shows that this filtering can become even more selective and fragmented in the digital environment, leading to anomalous representations that reflect local priorities rather than source realities (Valdeon, 2008). These findings indicate that translation is a central mechanism of ideological mediation in global news.

A fifth finding is that the professional practice of news translation is best understood as transediting rather than as conventional translation. Stetting's concept captures the hybrid nature of the work, where translators edit, summarize, and rewrite in order to produce a text that fits the institutional and temporal constraints of journalism (Stetting, 1989). Tsai's newsroom studies provide concrete evidence of how this process operates in practice, showing that translators in television newsrooms often work directly from oral interpretations, fragmented source materials, and evolving scripts, constantly adapting their output to editorial demands (Tsai, 2005; Tsai, 2006; Tsai, 2009). This reinforces the view that news translators are active co authors of the final product.

Finally, the integration of Eco Translatology with news translation theory reveals that translatorial agency is both constrained and enabled by ecological rationality. Hu's emphasis on adaptation and selection suggests that translators achieve success by finding an optimal fit between competing demands rather than by adhering to a single principle of fidelity (Hu, 2011c). Zha and Tian's critique of the marginalization of the translator's cultural status underscores the importance of recognizing this agency as a form of professional and intellectual contribution (Zha and Tian, 2003). When applied to news translation, this perspective reframes invisibility not as a lack of agency but as a strategic adaptation to the ecological demands of the media environment.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study have far reaching implications for how news translation is conceptualized, practiced, and evaluated. At the theoretical level, the integration of translatorial invisibility, norm theory, discourse analysis, narrative aesthetics, and Eco

Translatology produces a more comprehensive model of media translation than any single framework could offer on its own. This model reveals that news translation is a site where multiple forces converge, including institutional norms, ideological pressures, narrative conventions, audience expectations, and the translator's own adaptive subjectivity.

One of the most significant implications concerns the ethical and political dimensions of translatorial invisibility. Venuti's critique of invisibility was originally framed as a challenge to the cultural dominance of fluent translations that erase difference and reinforce ethnocentric perspectives (Venuti, 1995). In the context of news, this critique becomes even more urgent because invisibility facilitates the presentation of mediated narratives as objective reality. When readers are unaware that a news story has been translated, edited, and reframed, they are less likely to question its ideological assumptions or its cultural positioning. Van Dijk's analysis of ideology in the press suggests that this lack of awareness contributes to the naturalization of dominant viewpoints (Van Dijk, 1998).

At the same time, Eco Translatology complicates a purely critical view of invisibility by showing that adaptation is not inherently deceptive but is necessary for communication to occur across ecological boundaries (Hu, 2011c). From this perspective, the translator's selective interventions are not simply distortions but responses to the communicative needs of the target environment. The challenge, therefore, is not to eliminate adaptation but to make its mechanisms more transparent and accountable. Recognizing the translator as an ecological agent rather than as an invisible conduit could foster greater ethical awareness within media institutions.

Another important implication concerns the nature of professional norms in news translation. Toury's norm theory explains how expectations of acceptability shape translational behavior, but it does not by itself account for the dynamic and rapidly changing conditions of media production (Toury, 1978). The newsroom studies by Tsai show that these conditions include tight deadlines, technological constraints, and hierarchical decision making structures that leave little room for reflection (Tsai, 2005; Tsai, 2009). Within such environments, transediting becomes the dominant mode of practice, blending translation and editorial judgment in ways that challenge traditional definitions of both activities. This raises important questions about training, accountability, and professional identity for news translators.

The narrative and aesthetic dimensions of news translation also deserve deeper consideration. White's theory of the narrative impulse suggests that news stories are not neutral reports but moral tales that seek to make sense of disruption (White, 1997). When these tales are translated, the translator must reconstruct not only the factual sequence but also the underlying moral framework. Tsang and Tsai's concept of news as an aesthetic narrative and Wu and Xie's receptive aesthetics further indicate that the success of this reconstruction depends on how well it resonates with the audience's expectations and interpretive habits (Tsang and Tsai, 2001; Wu, 2006; Xie, 2002). This means that news translation is inherently creative, involving choices about tone, emphasis, and narrative coherence that go beyond literal equivalence.

The ideological implications of these creative choices are profound. As Vuorinen and Wei have shown, translation functions as a gatekeeping mechanism that shapes which voices and perspectives are heard (Vuorinen, 1997; Wei, 2000). Valdeon's analysis of online news adds another layer of complexity, showing how digital media enable even more selective and fragmented forms of appropriation (Valdeon, 2008). In such contexts, the ecological environment becomes increasingly unstable, with competing pressures from global information flows, local political agendas, and algorithmic distribution systems. Eco Translatology offers a valuable framework for navigating this instability by focusing on adaptive rationality rather than rigid norms.

Despite these strengths, the integrated model developed in this study also has limitations. Because the analysis is based entirely on theoretical and secondary sources, it does not provide empirical data on specific instances of news translation. Future research could

apply this framework to detailed case studies of translated news texts, newsroom practices, or audience reception in order to test and refine its claims. Additionally, while the focus on Chinese and Taiwanese contexts in the referenced literature provides rich insights, it also raises questions about the generalizability of the findings to other media systems. Comparative studies across different linguistic and cultural environments would further enhance the explanatory power of the model.

Another area for future research concerns the role of digital technologies in reshaping the ecology of news translation. While Valdeon touches on the Internet as a space of selective appropriation, the rapid evolution of automated translation tools, social media platforms, and global news aggregators introduces new dynamics that require further theoretical and empirical exploration. Eco Translatology, with its emphasis on environmental adaptation, is particularly well suited to addressing these developments, but it must be extended to account for technological as well as cultural and ideological factors.

CONCLUSION

This study has advanced a comprehensive theoretical account of news translation by integrating translatorial invisibility, norm based translation theory, media discourse analysis, narrative aesthetics, and Eco Translatology. Through this integration, it has demonstrated that news translation is not a marginal or mechanical activity but a central process through which global events are narrated, interpreted, and ideologically framed for diverse audiences. The invisibility of the translator, far from indicating a lack of agency, emerges as the ecological outcome of adaptive and selective labor within complex media environments.

By drawing on Venuti's critique of invisibility, Toury's concept of norms, Van Dijk's discourse analysis, White's narrative theory, and Hu's ecological rationality, the article has shown how translated news achieves its apparent transparency through a dense network of institutional, cultural, and ideological mediations. The translator, operating as a transeditor in Tsai's newsroom model, navigates these mediations through subjectively informed yet norm governed choices that shape the final narrative presented to the public.

Recognizing this reality has important implications for translation studies, journalism, and media ethics. It calls for greater acknowledgment of the translator's role as a co author of mediated reality and for more critical awareness among readers of the translated nature of global news. It also suggests that training and professional standards for news translators should move beyond narrow notions of linguistic accuracy to encompass narrative competence, ideological awareness, and ecological adaptability.

Ultimately, the ecological and narrative perspective developed here affirms that translation is not simply a bridge between languages but a dynamic process of meaning making within a living communicative environment. In the global circulation of news, this process plays a decisive role in shaping how societies understand themselves and others. Making the translator visible as an ecological agent is therefore not only a scholarly endeavor but a necessary step toward more transparent and responsible global communication.

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