



MEDIATED VOICES: INDIRECT TRANSLATION AND POWER RELATIONS IN MULTILINGUAL DIGITAL JOURNALISM

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In the era of global digital communication, journalism increasingly relies on multilingual content dissemination. One prominent yet underexplored practice in this context is indirect (mediated) translation, where news texts are translated not from the original source language but through an intermediary language. This article examines how indirect translation functions within multilingual digital journalism and how it shapes power relations among languages, cultures, and media institutions. Drawing on translation studies, media discourse analysis, and critical theories of power, the study argues that indirect translation is not merely a technical necessity but a discursive practice that influences narrative framing, ideological positioning, and the visibility of marginalized voices. The paper highlights the role of dominant languages as gatekeepers in global news flows and discusses the implications for journalistic ethics, accuracy, and media diversity.

Digital journalism has transformed the production, circulation, and consumption of news across linguistic and national borders. Online platforms, social media, and global news agencies enable information to travel rapidly, often reaching audiences far removed from the original sociopolitical context of events. In such environments, translation becomes a central mechanism of news mediation.

While much research has focused on direct translation in journalism, indirect translation — also referred to as mediated or relay translation — remains relatively underexamined. In indirect translation, a news text is translated from a source language into a target language via a third, intermediary language, often one with higher global prestige such as English or French. This practice is widespread in multilingual digital journalism due to time constraints, limited access to source languages, and institutional dependencies on major news agencies.

This article explores the following research questions:

- How does indirect translation operate in multilingual digital journalism?
- What power relations are embedded in the use of intermediary languages?
- How does mediated translation affect the representation of voices, perspectives, and meanings in global news discourse?

Indirect translation has traditionally been viewed as a secondary or inferior practice compared to direct translation. However, contemporary translation studies emphasize its functional and ideological significance. Scholars argue that each stage of mediation introduces interpretive shifts, making indirect translation a site of meaning negotiation rather than simple transmission. In journalism, these shifts are particularly consequential because news discourse claims objectivity and factual accuracy. Indirect translation challenges this assumption by revealing how news texts are shaped by multiple layers of linguistic and cultural filtering.



Language functions as a key instrument of power in global communication. Dominant languages — especially English — occupy a privileged position in international news production, often serving as intermediary languages in indirect translation processes. This centrality grants them agenda-setting power, allowing certain narratives to circulate globally while others remain localized or distorted.

From a critical discourse perspective, mediated translation contributes to asymmetrical power relations by:

- ✓ Amplifying voices aligned with dominant geopolitical actors;
- ✓ Silencing or reframing perspectives from less powerful linguistic communities;
- ✓ Standardizing diverse realities into globally acceptable narratives.

In multilingual digital journalism, indirect translation commonly occurs through:

- International news agencies translating local news into English
- Regional media outlets translating English news into other languages
- Social media platforms where users repost translated content without access to the original source

This chain-like process often prioritizes speed over depth, resulting in compressed narratives and reduced contextualization.

Intermediary languages function as filters of meaning. When news passes through a dominant language, culturally specific references, local political nuances, and alternative viewpoints may be simplified or omitted. As a result, the intermediary language does not merely transmit information but actively reshapes it. For example, reports originating in less widely spoken languages may gain international visibility only after being reframed through English-language journalistic norms, which can alter tone, emphasis, and ideological orientation.

Indirect translation affects whose voices are amplified in global news discourse. Official sources, elites, and institutional actors are more likely to be translated and retransmitted, while grassroots perspectives may be excluded. This selective mediation reinforces existing power hierarchies within and across societies.

The reliance on mediated translation raises ethical concerns regarding:

- ❖ Accuracy and fidelity to the original message
- ❖ Transparency about translation sources
- ❖ Responsibility for ideological distortions

Journalists and media organizations often do not disclose when news has been indirectly translated, which obscures the interpretive processes involved and limits audience awareness of potential bias.

Indirect translation in multilingual digital journalism should be understood not as a marginal practice but as a structural feature of global news production. It reflects unequal access to linguistic resources and reinforces the dominance of certain languages and worldviews. At the same time, mediated translation can enable the circulation of news that would otherwise remain inaccessible, highlighting its ambivalent role as both a bridge and a barrier.

Recognizing indirect translation as a site of power encourages more critical media literacy and calls for institutional strategies that promote linguistic diversity and ethical transparency.



This article has examined indirect translation as a powerful yet often invisible force in multilingual digital journalism. By mediating news through dominant languages, indirect translation shapes global narratives, redistributes symbolic power, and influences how events are understood across cultures. A critical awareness of these processes is essential for journalists, translators, and audiences alike. Future research may focus on empirical case studies, audience reception, and the role of artificial intelligence in mediated news translation, further illuminating the complex relationship between language, power, and digital media.

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