

FACULTY OF FOREIGN LANGUAGES
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MASTER'S THESIS

**THE TRANSLATION OF POLITICAL DISCOURSE IN DAILY ONLINE
NEWSPAPERS IN KOSOVA: WITH A FOCUS OF WAR IN UKRAINE**

Candidate:

Lindi Gjikolli

Mentor:

Assist. Prof. Dr. Aida Alla

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Abstract

This study investigates the complexities of journalistic translation in the context of political discourse, focusing on English-to-Albanian translations of war-related articles about the Ukraine conflict. Grounded in Skopos Theory, the research analyzes eight translated headlines from international online newspapers to evaluate accuracy, cultural adaptation, and translational strategies. A mixed-methods approach combines textual analysis of translated headlines, such as "G7 leaders condemn Putin for attacking Ukraine" and "North Korean troops in Kursk a 'significant escalation'", with insights from a former translator's professional experience and literature on journalistic translation challenges. Findings reveal recurring difficulties in: preserving rhetorical force in politically charged statements, balancing fidelity to source texts with target-audience readability, and handling culturally loaded terms. The study contributes to translation theory by refining Skopos principles for crisis reporting, demonstrating how translators prioritize audience impact over literal accuracy. Practical recommendations include: adopting hybrid human-machine workflows for time-sensitive content, developing glossaries for conflict-related terminology, and training translators in political discourse analysis. Limitations include the narrow focus on headlines and the Albanian context, suggesting future research on full-text translations across languages. Ultimately, this research underscores journalistic translation's pivotal role in shaping international perceptions of war.

Keywords: journalistic translation, Skopos Theory, Ukraine war, political discourse, machine translation, Albanian-English translation

Abstrakt

Ky hulumtim analizon kompleksitetin e përkthimit të zhanrit gazetaresk në kontekstin e diskursit politik, duke u përqendruar në përkthimet nga anglishtja në shqip të artikujve që kanë të bëjë me luftën në Ukrainë. I bazuar në Teorinë e Skopos-it, hulumtimi analizon tetë tituj të përkthyer nga gazeta ndërkombëtare online për të vlerësuar saktësinë, adaptimin kulturor dhe strategjitë përkthyesë. Një qasje e përzier kombinon analizën tekstuale të titujve të përkthyer, si p.sh. "Krerët e G7 dënojnë Putin-in për sulmin ndaj Ukrainës"* dhe "Trupat e Koresë së Veriut në Kursk një 'eskalam i rëndësishëm", me njohuri nga përvoja profesionale e një ish-përkthyesi dhe literaturën mbi vështirësitë e përkthimit gazetaresk.

Gjetjet zbulojnë vështirësi të përsëritura në: ruajtjen e fuqisë retorike në deklarata me ngarkesë politike, balancimin e besnikërisë ndaj tekstit burimor me lexueshmërinë për audiencën e synuar dhe trajtimin e termave të ngarkuar kulturorisht. Studimi kontribuon në teorinë e përkthimit duke përsosur parimet e Skopos-it për raportimin e krizave, duke treguar se si përkthyesit prioritetizojnë ndikimin ndaj audiencës sesa saktësinë fjalë për fjalë. Rekomandimet praktike përfshijnë: adoptonin e flukseve hibride njeri-makinë për përmbajtje me kohë të ngushtë, zhvillimin e fjalorëve për terminologjinë e lidhur me konfliktet dhe trajnimin e përkthyesve në analizën e diskursit politik.

Kufizimet përfshijnë fokusimin e ngushtë në tituj dhe kontekstin shqiptar, duke sugjeruar hulumtime të ardhshme mbi përkthimet e teksteve të plota nëpër gjuhë të ndryshme. Në fund të fundit, ky hulumtim nënvizon rolin kryesor të përkthimit gazetaresk në formësimin e perceptimeve ndërkombëtare të luftës.

Fjalë kyçe: përkthim gazetaresk, Teoria e Skopos-it, lufta në Ukrainë, diskurs politik, përkthim automatizuar, përkthim shqip-anglisht

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INTRODUCTION

Translation itself exists since from many centuries ago, even before the Christ. The translation was and in fact it is still needed in different fields such as: field of literature, field of medicine, field of business, field of law, field of sports, field of news, field of politics, and in many other different fields of everyday life, whether it is professional or not.

Perhaps more than with other areas of discourse, however, one needs at the outset to consider the reflexive and potentially ambiguous nature of the term political discourse. The term is suggestive of at least two possibilities: first, a discourse which is itself political; and second, an analysis of political discourse as simply an example discourse type, without explicit reference to political content or political context. But things may be even more confusing. Given that on some definitions almost all discourse may be considered political (Shapiro 1981), then all analyses of discourse are potentially political, and, therefore, on one level, all discourse analysis is political discourse.

“Translation is a mental activity in which a meaning of given linguistic discourse is rendered from one language to other,” according to Ghazala 1995. It is yet unknown for who was the first translator, but it is said and believed that the first translator came from Mesopotamian Era, this could be confirmed if The Ancient Library of Alexandria in Egypt would still exist. So by the lack of information it would be only rumored for other names. The first translations are said to be from the Sumerian language of epic Gilgamesh to other Asian languages from two millenniums BC. Translation has its roots in the earliest times of mankind. It is certainly older than writing itself. Saying this is because translation is not only used for written texts, but for the speech itself also, considering that the language existed in the spoken form first, and the translation of speech preceded also the translation of written texts after it.

Research questions:

1. Why are the adjustments made in these articles?
2. Why are the adjustments needed when you translate?
3. Why the abridgements are made in online newspapers?

Hypotheses:

H1. The reason that adjustments were made in these articles is that if many words were translated in literal way, it would completely lose the meaning of the parts where the adjustments were made.

H2. The adjustments are needed in translation for the reason that if there is no adequate word from the original language to the translated language, the translator has to find an adequate word from the translated language to adjust it according to the meaning of the word.

H3. The abridgements while translating in online newspapers are made mainly because the online readers are often in a hurry, thus summarized versions let them stay informed without needing to invest much time in reading long articles.

Aim

The aim of this study is to show that the whole news or the whole meaning of the title, and some parts of the articles can be changed from the adjustments that are made in these articles, or let us say the needed adjustments. These adjustments can include also not translating some words, and the purpose most of the time is not known, maybe to give a different meaning, to not translate the whole article, or to make it more interesting to the readers.

Objectives

The objectives of this study is to find how, why and where the abridgements and adjustments in journalistic translation, especially in online newspapers in this case in Kosovo, with a focus on how the War in Ukraine was covered in this country.

Thesis outline:

Chapter 1: Introduction

The opening chapter begins by establishing the research questions central to this study, specifically examining how translators navigate political bias and terminological precision when rendering Ukraine war reporting from English into Albanian. It presents the hypothesis that translators operating in politically sensitive contexts tend to prioritize audience impact over strict literal fidelity. The chapter then outlines the study's primary aim of analyzing the challenges and strategies inherent in journalistic translation of war-related content, with three key objectives: evaluating headline translation accuracy, assessing the applicability of Skopos Theory to these translations, and comparing human versus machine translation outputs.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This chapter provides a comprehensive foundation for the study, beginning with fundamental translation concepts including definitions of translation itself and distinctions between transcription, transliteration, and transcreation. It then explores the specialized field of journalistic translation, detailing its unique challenges such as tight deadlines and cultural nuance management, along with the essential skills required including political literacy and audience awareness. The discussion turns specifically to political discourse and war reporting, examining approaches to translating political meetings and press conferences, with particular attention to Ukraine war terminology. The theoretical framework section introduces Skopos Theory, explaining its core principles and relevance to crisis reporting. The chapter concludes with an examination of machine translation's growing role in journalism, weighing its benefits of speed and cost-efficiency against limitations in handling cultural and political subtleties.

Chapter 3: Methodology

The methodology chapter describes the mixed-methods approach combining textual analysis with expert insights. It details the data collection process focusing on eight carefully selected translated headlines drawn from major international news sources covering G7, NATO, and Ukraine war developments. The analytical framework applies Skopos Theory criteria - purpose, audience, and cultural context - while also incorporating comparisons between professional human translations and machine-generated versions to identify patterns and divergences.

Chapter 4: Findings and Analysis

Presenting the study's core findings, this chapter offers detailed case studies of translated headlines. Each analysis, such as the rendering of "G7 leaders condemn Putin for attacking Ukraine" into Albanian, examines how rhetorical force and political nuance are preserved or altered. The chapter systematically addresses key challenges identified, including cultural adaptation of potent metaphors like "nuclear abyss" and the balancing of headline brevity with clarity. A dedicated section analyzes characteristic errors in machine translations, particularly the literal treatment of idioms and loss of political connotations.

Chapter 5: Discussion

Building on the findings, this chapter evaluates how Skopos Theory manifests in practical translation decisions, demonstrating where professionals consistently prioritized audience understanding over verbatim accuracy. It proposes concrete recommendations including the development of specialized glossaries for war terminology and optimized human-machine collaborative workflows. The discussion acknowledges the study's limitations, particularly its focus on headlines rather than full texts, and suggests directions for future research including expansion to additional language pairs and more comprehensive textual analysis.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

The concluding chapter synthesizes the study's major findings, reinforcing the critical role of journalistic translation in shaping international perceptions of conflict. It reflects on how the research contributes to both translation theory and practice, particularly in the context of political discourse and crisis reporting.

Appendices

Supplementary materials include the full dataset of analyzed translations and, where applicable, transcripts of interviews with professional translators that informed the study's conclusions. This narrative structure maintains a logical academic progression from theoretical foundations through methodological execution to empirical findings and their implications, while presenting the information in continuous prose rather than bullet points. The outline can be easily adapted to emphasize particular aspects or accommodate additional case studies as needed.

METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative, desk-based research methodology centered on comparative textual analysis to examine the translation practices employed in rendering English-language news about the Ukraine war into Albanian. The approach is fundamentally interpretive, seeking to understand not just how translations are produced but why particular strategies are adopted within the specific context of Albanian online journalism.

The research design takes the form of an in-depth case study analysis, focusing on a carefully selected corpus of translated news materials. Rather than generating new experimental data, the study engages in close reading and systematic comparison of existing translations, using Skopos Theory as its primary analytical framework. This theoretical lens proves particularly valuable for examining the decision-making processes behind translation choices, as it emphasizes the importance of purpose, audience, and cultural context in shaping translational outcomes.

Data collection proceeded along two parallel tracks. For source materials in English, the study drew upon articles from established international news organizations including The Guardian, BBC, and Al Jazeera, focusing specifically on their coverage of significant developments in the Ukraine war such as G7 declarations, NATO summit outcomes, and major military updates. These texts were selected for their political significance and the complex translation challenges they present, particularly in terms of diplomatic language and technical military terminology.

The Albanian-language counterparts were sourced from three major online news platforms: Telegrafi.com, as the most prominent Kosovo-based outlet with high readership numbers; Albanian Post, representing Albania's media landscape with its particular political orientations; and REL (Radio Evropa e Lirë), known for its practice of translating content from Western international media. This selection ensured representation across different editorial approaches while maintaining focus on professionally produced journalistic translations.

Supplementing these primary materials, the research incorporated insights from various secondary sources. Independent translator commentaries gathered from professional blogs, forums, and social media provided valuable grassroots perspectives on the practical challenges of news translation. While only one academic translation studies text was consulted for core theoretical grounding, this was balanced by informal but informative discussions with working translators, which offered contemporary, practice-based understandings of the field. These conversations, though not formally structured as interviews, yielded important anecdotal evidence about industry norms and decision-making processes.

The analytical framework applied to this corpus combines several complementary approaches. At the micro level, lexical analysis examines how specific terms and phrases - particularly those carrying significant political weight or cultural connotations - are rendered in translation. This includes close attention to the treatment of diplomatic language (such as the verb "condemn"), military terminology, and culturally embedded metaphors like "nuclear abyss." At the structural level, the study investigates common adaptation techniques, including the strategic abridgment of content, reorganization of information, and modification of headlines for different audience expectations.

Skopos Theory informs the interpretive dimension of this analysis, providing a conceptual basis for understanding why certain translation decisions are made. The theory's emphasis on functional adequacy over formal correspondence proves especially relevant for examining how translators balance competing priorities - such as maintaining political neutrality while preserving rhetorical impact, or adhering to source text meaning while accommodating target audience expectations. A secondary but informative line of inquiry compares machine-generated translations with their professional human counterparts, highlighting areas where human intervention proves most critical.

CONCLUSION

Translation itself started with the humanity, and by this that is concluded that the translation of political discourse started with the politics itself, since the ancient times, like in Ancient Greece, Ancient Rome, Ancient Egypt. Many linguists wrote about this and many studies have been made for the translation itself and the translation of political of political discourse also. By reading different articles translated from the English Language to Albanian Language in this case, you can see that there different forms of translations made, word by word and literal translation, which in fact have no meaning at all, you cannot really understand what the author of the original article meant, and professional translation, where sometimes a lot of adjustments are needed to be made, and some adjustments are made just to give the translated article the same meaning and to deliver the same message that the original article has, as mentioned in this case as the article in English. In the articles that are used in this diploma thesis, there are parts where a lot of adjustments are made, only for the reason to not change the meaning of the words and sentences, and not to change the meaning from the original article in English Language into the Albanian Language. There are some parts where adjustments were made in smaller parts and there are parts where no adjustments were needed to be made, there are also some parts where some words are replaced with other words to maintain the meaning, just because those words seem not to exist in the Albanian Language. Whenever you translate, you must consider and use a good word order, you need to check your spelling for the reason of not making grammatical mistakes, you need to check and read the whole word or the whole sentence to translate it properly, and to not translate word for word, and this is needed mostly in professional translations, like in politics, news, medical field, literary works, and also even if you do not make professional translations, just to give your translation the proper meaning and to deliver the same message as in the original language. Abridgements are a part of journalistic translations, mainly because the readers tend to read only the first few paragraphs and to get the whole meaning and message from those few paragraphs that they read, but the abridgements are recommended to be made only on the parts where the context and/or meaning of translation is not changed.

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