Chapter 7. News Translation

Resources

Readability resources

- “Readability formulas” – My Byline Media:
  http://readabilityformulas.com/
- “Readability Score” – Added Bytes:
  https://readable.io/
- “Ms. Sword’s Writer’s Diet” – Copyright © Helen Sword:
  http://writersdiet.com/

Mentions to translation and indirectness in News agencies’ guidelines:

Below you can read some raw material about indirect sourcing and standards for crediting sources in the guidelines from AFP, AP and Reuters. You may want to invite students to read and reflect on instances of indirect translation that arise from practices described below. Repeated mentions were maintained for the sake of completeness; for every quotation we give the section under which it appears.

AFP - Agence France Presse

“AFP – Twenty principles of sourcing. 19.05.2016”

6. SECONDARY SOURCES
When we do not have an AFP journalist present or a direct source we can use secondary sources, in which case thorough checking of the veracity of the information is required. It is up to the bureau to judge the value of the source, and past experience is a good guide. We can pick up from respected and established news agencies, television networks, newspapers, radio stations, news agencies, online sites or social network accounts, but should exercise extreme caution when dealing with secondary media, unknown websites or dubious or unverified social media accounts.

(...) It is our responsibility to judge the veracity and credibility of the information, particularly if the secondary source is quoting unidentified sources. Does their reporting match our standards? Does the report contain accusations that demand a right of reply? Are anonymous
officials using other media to spread a particular message? Are they repeating a rumour or chatter that is being spread on social media? If we cannot get any on-the-record confirmation, we can at least put the story in context and quote our own analysts, who can evaluate the credibility of the report. Even if our agreement with a local news agency permits it, we should not present their work as our own, but should clearly identify them as the source of the story.

(...) If AFP quotes a secondary report we give it credibility and it becomes our story, and if it is erroneous we cannot shelter behind the excuse that we were only repeating what was being said.

We must always clearly identify the source, e.g. “according to a Chinese foreign ministry spokesman quoted by Xinhua”. If we pick up quotes from a television broadcast, we describe the event (told reporters in a televised news conference, told waiting journalists outside parliament, etc.). If we pick up an exclusive television interview, we source it as such (Prime Minister Theresa May said in an interview on Al Jazeera TV).

We must say if an image or footage was provided as a hand-out and identify who provided it. We do not plagiarise -- all content picked up from a third party must be credited. (p. 6)

8. QUOTATIONS
We must report sources accurately, without modifying what was said. It is not our responsibility to tidy up ungrammatical quotes (with the exception of minor slips or repetitions), but neither is it our job to embarrass people unaccustomed to talking to the media. On the other hand, it is perfectly legitimate to quote precisely a public figure who misspoke. Paraphrase if necessary. Never change the sense of the quote through editing, either in text or video. Avoid ellipses. Without overburdening the text, give complete quotes as a rule and limit partial quotes. (p. 7)

10. UPLOAD AND EXTERNAL CONTENT
Social media have become an integral part of the news gathering process and have created added responsibilities for journalists who must verify their content.

(...) Twitter should be treated as a platform used as a communication tool by individuals, sports teams, companies, governments, etc. Once we verify that an account is authentic, the information has the same credibility as material received from trustworthy and verified sources via a website, email, fax, etc. Although news agencies are still expected to break news, the first snippets of information now often circulate on social networks. Our role is to verify the noise and confirm stories for our clients. While we are still expected to be fast, the absolute priority is to be accurate. (p. 8)
12. RUMOURS AND SOCIAL MEDIA NOISE
We do not report rumours and should contact sources to confirm or discredit them. Social media networks in particular are awash with rumours, disinformation and hoaxes that should be checked out if the topic is of sufficient importance. We must take care in confirming rumours -- a dubious confirmation from a weak source (who may have heard the rumour through other channels) plus the rumour does not equal a story. However, we can report (with the chief editor’s approval) that a rumour has provoked a significant reaction,

AFP editorial standards and best practices. 22.06.2016.

1. TEN GUIDING PRINCIPLES
5) AFP journalists have a duty to seek the truth and not passively report information as it is presented to them. They should challenge their sources and question the facts.
6) AFP photo and TV journalists must not doctor images or videos and must not tamper with or alter subject matter. Text journalists must not manipulate quotes.
7) AFP journalists must identify their sources of information transparently and do not plagiarise. They must never submit a story to a source for vetting. (p. 1)

HANDOUTS
We must clearly identify all material received as handouts from governments, press services etc. and never present it as our original work. The same rule applies to pool reports. (p. 7)

PLAGIARISM
We must never present the work of others as our own. If we use external material such as extracts from the work of others, pick-ups from interviews and other media, the source must be fully identified and credited. We must not violate copyright. (p. 8)

USE OF QUOTES
We must report sources accurately, without modifying what was said or selectively using quotes that misrepresent the sense of the statement. It is not our responsibility to correct grammatical mistakes or clumsy language. We can use a partial quote or paraphrase if necessary, although it is legitimate to quote verbatim a public figure who misspoke. We must never change the sense of a quote through editing, either in text or video, and avoid using ellipses. Without overburdening the text, we should give complete quotes and limit partial quotes. (p.9)

8. IMAGES – GRAPHICS, PHOTOS AND VIDEO
GRAPHICS
Particular vigilance is needed during translation and proofreading of graphics, with regard to both the text and graphic elements. Good proof reading comprises three phases: the coherence and general relevance of the graphic, the text content (form and shape, spelling, font,) and the graphic content (accuracy, choice of colours). (p.24)
The Associated Press Statement of News Values and Principles

We don't plagiarize, and we respect copyright. (p. 1)

If we quote someone from a written document – a report, email or news release -- we should say so. Information taken from the internet must be vetted according to our standards of accuracy and attributed to the original source. File, library or archive photos, audio or videos must be identified as such. (p. 7)

QUOTATIONS
Quotes must not be taken out of context. We do not alter quotations, even to correct grammatical errors or word usage. If a quotation is flawed because of grammar or lack of clarity, it may be paraphrased in a way that is completely true to the original quote. If a quote's meaning is too murky to be paraphrased accurately, it should not be used. Ellipses should be used rarely and must not alter the speaker’s meaning. (p.23)

(...) Use of regional dialects with nonstandard spellings should generally be limited to a writer's effort to convey a special tone or sense of place. In this case, as in interviews with people not speaking their native language, it is especially important that their ideas be accurately conveyed. Always, we must be careful not to mock the people we quote.

Quotes from one language to another must be translated faithfully. If appropriate, we should note the language spoken. (p. 24)

USE OF OTHERS’ MATERIAL

[I]t is common for AP staffers to include in their work passages from previous AP stories by other writers – generally background, or boilerplate. This is acceptable if the passages are short. Regardless, the reporter writing the story is responsible for the factual and contextual accuracy of the material.

Also, the AP often has the right to use material from its members and subscribers; as with material from other news media, we credit it.
Unless we are clearly retransmitting in full a story by a member outlet, we do not transmit stories in their original form; we rewrite them, so that the approach, content, structure and length meet our requirements and reflect the broader audience we serve.

Under no circumstances can news releases be published in their original form; we can use information, quotes and properly cleared images from releases, but we must judge the material’s credibility, augment it with information from other sources, and then prepare our own stories, with the release material duly credited. (p. 27)

QUOTES

When translating quotes from one language into another, we should do so in an idiomatic way rather than with pedantic literalness. Care must be taken to ensure that the tone of the translation is equivalent to the tone of the original. Beware of translating quotes in newspaper pickups back into the original language of the source. If a French politician gives an interview to an American newspaper, it is almost certain that the translation back into French will be wrong and in some cases the quote could be very different. In such cases, the fewer quotes and the more reported speech, the better. (p. 4)

[edit] SPOT STORY

The basic spot news story is the mainstay of the Reuters file. Write it quickly, clearly and simply. Say what happened and why we are reporting it, in language that is easy to translate. (p. 53)

[edit] TEXT

Clients often want to read the text of a major announcement or speech. We should say in the lead paragraph whether it is a full or a partial text. Use TEXT (not FULL TEXT) as a headline tag.

If the original is in a language other than English, say so, and whether this is an official or Reuters translation. (p. 54)

GUIDELINES FOR PARTICULAR STORY TYPES:

5. WRITING BY - used on stories where the bylined reporter on the spot can report but not write, for whatever operational reason. Note that the contact details in this case should also be for the writer. Reason: the reporter in this case is very probably not easy to reach. This field may also be used where a journalist has written a story that draws substantially on a series of
stories from another Reuters service, possibly even adding some local reporting, rather than producing a straight translation of a story. (Writing by Olaf Brandt; Editing by June Sink)((olaf.brandt@reuters.com; +1 646 897 1335; Reuters Messaging: olaf.brandt.reuters.com@reuters.net))

6. TRANSLATED BY - used on stories that are translated into another language, alongside the credits for the original reporter(s) either in the byline or the sign-off, as outlined above. Contact details should be those of the translator unless the reporter can also easily field questions in the new language of the story. (Reporting by Sam Thomas; Translated by Jeanne Bouchard)((jeanne.bouchard@reuters.com; +33 1 1234 5678; Reuters Messaging: jeanne.bouchard.reuters.com@reuters.net)) (pp. 87-88)

ABBREVIATIONS
In the case of foreign groups, where the word order changes in the English translation, bracket the initials, e.g. the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN). (p. 112)

AMERICAN SPELLING
Watch out for regional words that non-English language services and clients will find difficult to understand and translate. (p. 124)

BANKRUPTCY
Be as precise as possible in reporting what a company or court says, especially if a translation is involved. For example, in France the normal form of bankruptcy is faillite; the term banquerote refers to fraudulent bankruptcy and there is a danger if they are confused. Similarly, in Germany a collapse known as Bankrott is more serious than a normal liquidation. (P. 139)

BRITISH SPELLING
Watch out for regional words that non-English language services and clients will find difficult to understand and translate. ( p. 150)

QUOTATIONS
Avoid quotes in colloquial or parochial language not easily translated or understood in other countries. If you do give such quotes, explain what they mean, e.g. He said: Clinton is behind the eight ball (in a difficult situation).

(...)When translating quotes from another language into English, do so in an idiomatic way rather than with pedantic literalness. However, give a literal translation if a statement is tendentious and likely to be the subject of close analysis. (p. 372)

SENTENCE LENGTH
Sentences should generally be short but, to avoid a staccato effect, vary their length. Avoid complex constructions. A sentence with more than one subordinate clauses can be hard to follow and difficult to translate. (p. 399)

SLANG
Avoid slang not be readily understood outside the English speaking world or your own country. It creates problems for translators. If a vivid quote contains slang, explain it in brackets or give a paraphrased version, e.g. Hes in the cat-bird seat (in a favoured position) or Saying Smith was in a favoured position, he added: Hes in the cat-bird seat. (p. 404)

SOME
Write about 500 people rather than some 500 people. As an indication that a figure is an approximation, some is more likely to confuse translators than about. (p. 405)

SPELLING
Watch out for regional words that non-English language services and clients will find difficult to understand and translate. (p. 407)

SPORTS METAPHORS
Think twice before using a metaphor drawn from sport. They are often particular to a single sport or culture and are difficult to translate. Not everyone knows what you mean by bowling a googly, a full court press or standing up to the plate. (p. 408)

BANKRUPTCY STORIES
Be as precise as possible in reporting what a company or court says, especially if a translation is involved. For example, in France the normal form of bankruptcy is faillite; the term banqueroute refers to fraudulent bankruptcy. The danger if they are confused is obvious. (p. 533)