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MACHINE TRANSLATION IN ONLINE NEWS MEDIA: CULTURAL DISTORTIONS IN THE PUBLIC DISCOURSE

The growing use of machine translation (MT) in online news media has significantly changed how information moves across languages and cultures. Neural MT systems like Google Translate or DeepL have become widely adopted in digital newsrooms due to their speed and accessibility. However, despite their lexical accuracy, these systems often struggle to preserve culturally determined meanings, which leads to distortions in public discourse [4].

Cultural distortions in MT-processed news texts tend to stem from several recurring problems: the inadequate rendering of culture-specific units such as realia and idioms, the loss of pragmatic connotations, and the neutralization of ideological framing. Politically charged vocabulary - especially in conflict-related reporting - is frequently replaced with neutral equivalents that remove the original evaluative meaning, which can affect how readers understand events [3]. This is particularly relevant in war journalism, where cultural framing matters both communicatively and ethically.

It has also been noted that MT systems are largely trained on corpora reflecting majority-language cultural norms, which creates a bias against minority or non-Western cultural references [1]. As a result, when news content in Ukrainian, Arabic, or Persian is processed by such systems, culturally embedded elements tend to be omitted or replaced with target-language approximations that do not fully reflect the original intent.

Another concern is that many digital newsrooms publish MT output without professional post-editing, which allows these distortions to reach audiences at scale. Some studies suggest that a considerable share of culturally marked segments in MT-generated news contain meaning shifts significant enough to influence reader interpretation [5]. This points to broader questions about editorial responsibility and media literacy in the age of automated translation.

Overall, while MT undeniably speeds up the international flow of news, its cultural limitations remain a real challenge for the accuracy of public discourse. A more balanced approach - combining MT tools with human translator input and more culturally diverse training data - seems necessary to address this gap [2].

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