



**The Open  
University**

**Tuning In: Diasporic Contact Zones at the BBC World Service**

## **Working Paper Series**

Working Paper No. 20

### **Many Voices, One BBC World Service? The 2008 US Elections, Gatekeeping and Trans-editing**

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Elections Study Group

Tuning In: Diasporas at the World Service, The Open University

**May 2010**

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## Many Voices, One BBC World Service? The 2008 US Elections, Gatekeeping and Trans-editing

Tom Cheesman, Arnd-Michael Nohl, and The BBCWS US Elections Study Group<sup>1</sup>

### Abstract

*This paper concerns the trans-editing (simultaneous translation and editing) of coverage of the 2008 US presidential elections on BBC World Service websites. We investigate how English-language source texts were reworked in Arabic, Persian, Tamil, and Turkish, with a detailed analysis of the structuring, content, and rhetoric of a sample text in English and in these other languages. This analysis shows that, while the BBC's corporate aim is to provide a univocal service across its multilingual output, this aim is in tension with widely differing journalistic norms, and differing assumptions about audience knowledge and needs, in each of the World Service's language departments. The 'melody' remains essentially the same, but it is orchestrated differently by each department.*

**Keywords:** international media, news coverage, BBC World Service, translation, localization, gatekeeping, trans-editing, comparison, linguistic analysis

### Word count: 7519

The BBC World Service (BBCWS) is one of the prominent international broadcasters which provide multi-lingual news services to many parts of the world. Currently it broadcasts – and offers web services – in 32 languages, as well as English, reaching prosperous global cities as well as places where people are generally poor, and places where the media are not free. Journalists from all over the world work in the numerous language departments of the British Broadcasting Corporation, relying on their own sources or on news provided by the English-language chief editorial office with its huge international network of correspondents and stringers. The BBCWS, in spite of the heterogeneity of its broadcasts, is widely, if not universally, seen to provide high-quality, impartial news. Therefore one question is thrust on the researcher: Does BBCWS speak with one or many voices? This immediately leads to a second question: How do editorial and translation decision-making processes work?

This article is based on a study conducted by a large, multilingual team of researchers, and it brings together hitherto distinct fields of enquiry: the analysis of editorial and translation processes. It goes beyond perennial concerns in news media research with questions of gatekeeping, selection, bias, and distortion (Poor, 2007; Clausen, 2004). We show how international news broadcasters like BBCWS engage simultaneously in translation and editing processes or, as Stetting (1989) puts it, in 'trans-editing'. In many such studies it remains unclear what the *tertium comparationis* is, i.e. what common element is shared by the news sources which are being compared. Our study surveys multiple news sources with a single institution (the BBCWS), taking a particular news topic as a starting point of comparison.<sup>2</sup> By taking the US presidential elections of 2008 as a *tertium comparationis*, we ensure comparability across a number of dimensions in order to assess whether and how univocality and/or polyvocality are institutionally guaranteed. We identify specific trans-editorial strategies, overt as well as implicit, in the work of BBCWS Arabic, Persian, Tamil, and Turkish services.

The article is in three main sections. The first two introduce the concepts of gatekeeping and trans-editing, and processes of 'globalizing' and '(re-)localizing' news, in relation to the institutional context of BBCWS. The third section reports in detail on our study of one news report, which was first posted on the BBCWS English-language web-site, then appeared in trans-edited forms on the Arabic, Persian, Tamil, and Turkish websites. Here we examine how trans-editorial outcomes reflect the material constraints within which editors operate, as well as their adjustment of textual style and content (overt and implicit) to the presumed knowledge and interests of readers.

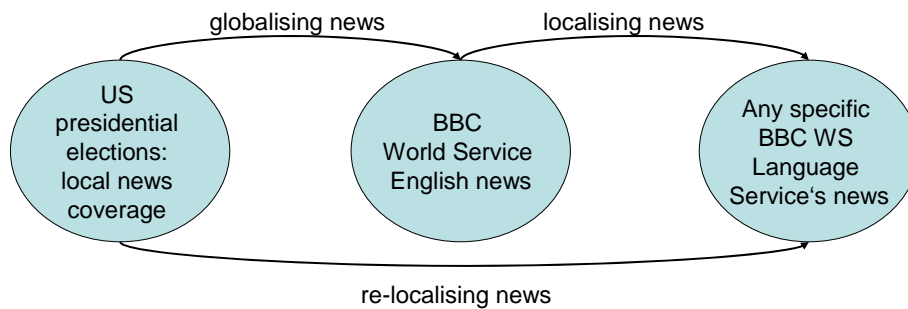
### **1. Gatekeeping and trans-editing during news globalization/localization**

In the literature, gatekeeping and trans-editing have often been regarded as synonyms or, at least, as overlapping concepts. For example, Vuorinen (1995: 170) assumes that 'deletion, addition, substitution, or reorganization' are all operations of gatekeeping, while Stetting (1989: 378), who coined the concept of 'trans-editing', regards its 'constituents' as being to 'change', to 'add', and to 'remove'. For the purposes of our analysis, we reserve the gatekeeping concept for the selection of a news report as worth publishing, as well as to the selection and reorganization of its parts (paragraphs and sentences). Hence gatekeeping refers to *what* and *in which sequential order* things are put into a report. Thus defined, gatekeeping is an operation which is performed *prior to* translation.<sup>3</sup>

Marked off from gatekeeping, trans-editing denotes (semantic) changes within the selected and reorganized text which occur during translation. Stetting differentiates between 'cultural and situational adaptations' (1989: 371), the latter referring to 'the intended function of the translated text in its new social context', the former including semantic changes necessary because the 'needs and conventions of the target culture' are peculiar (1989: 377).<sup>4</sup>

Gatekeeping and trans-editing are operations widely used when journalists convey news from one corner of the world to the other. At this point we deliberately avoid speaking of 'global news' as such. The US presidential elections, for example, are widely seen as global news. However, this news is not intrinsically more 'global' than that on any change of government. The CNN report titled 'Missing ballots stall Minnesota Senate recount' seems no more 'global' than Bhutantoday.com's report on the appointment of new cabinet members in Bhutan.<sup>5</sup> So international media outlets must actively *globalize* news on events such as the US presidential elections.<sup>6</sup> Events must be adapted to the (anticipated) expectations and comprehension of an assumed 'world public'. Many international media cooperations stop at this point. BBCWS goes further: globalized news is transported into the 'local' contexts reached by its LOTE (Languages Other Than English) services.

Hence, after globalizing (i.e. de-localizing) news stories, BBCWS language services localize them again. This means adapting specific aspects of the coverage of the globalized event on the basis of assumptions made about the knowledge, comprehension, and cultural reference points of the target audience. However, the picture is complicated by the fact that not all LOTE services rely solely on BBCWS English output; some are able to draw on their own correspondents and news agencies. These services can transfer local news directly, from (for example) the US, into the assumed local context of their target audience. We call this direct transfer 're-localizing' (see graphic).



The three processes of globalizing, localizing and re-localizing news each involve both gatekeeping and trans-editing. As such they revolve around axes of foreignization and domestication. In contrast to other authors (e.g. Clausen, 2004) we define foreignization and domestication in strictly procedural terms, leaving aside any substantialist aspect. *Foreignization* 'ensures that a text is self-consciously other, so that readers can be in no doubt that what they are encountering derives from a completely different system' (Bassnett, 2005: 120-1) of meaning than that which they inhabit. *Domestication* refers to rendering an event 'comprehensible, appealing and relevant' (Gurevitch et al., 1991: 206) to *any specific* target audience, be it a locally (i.e. regionally and/or linguistically) specific, or a supposed 'global' audience. Even in the process of globalizing news, coverage is normally domesticated, i.e. adapted to the presumed knowledge and needs of the culturally quite specific 'community' of globalized news users: the global household, one might say. Foreignization, i.e. the trans-editorial process of highlighting otherness and unfamiliarity in a news report, is much less frequent than domestication, but it is also an integral part of the processes of globalizing, localizing, and re-localizing news.<sup>7</sup>

## 2. The BBC World Service: institutional aspects of globalizing and (re-) localizing news

BBCWS has developed its own institutional strategies to globalize, localize, and re-localize news.<sup>8</sup> Together with the BBC (a formally distinct institution), the BBCWS maintains a global network of English language correspondents and stringers and draws on practically all news agencies world-wide. Editorial control of these sources is in the hands of the News Board, which globalizes news in cooperation with its English-language correspondents and stringers in different world regions. The News Board – as the chief editorial office – produces its own English language programme ('BBC News' etc.), and also creates a huge pool of globalized news. Nowadays all reports are stocked in the BBC's Embedded Media Player Service (EMPS).

The EMPS serves as a semi-permeable membrane, which allows English-language globalized news to reach the LOTE services, who themselves can rarely input significant content, and certainly have no editorial control over this pool.<sup>9</sup> Within BBCWS the globalization of news is therefore institutionally separate from localization, the task of the LOTE services.<sup>10</sup> In localizing news from the EMPS, regional editorial departments operate as (soft) gate-keepers, and then the 32 LOTE services localize the news again. However, LOTE services which have their own correspondents, and/or draw on their own feeds from news agencies, are able to directly re-localize reports, without passing through the EMPS.

The LOTE services included in this study vary considerably in terms of resources. The *Arabic* service has the biggest budget, and it has increased in recent years to produce a 24-hour television channel and an elaborated website (prepared by five staff members at a time), along with the traditional radio transmissions. The service has its own permanent correspondent in the US, and was able to send additional staff from its core team to cover the presidential elections. The *Persian* service enjoys a generous budget too, though smaller than that of the Arabic service. Its website was launched in 2001, targeting Iran, and also Dari speakers in Afghanistan and Tajiki speakers in Tajikistan. It was among the most popular BBCWS websites until it was blocked by the Iranian authorities in 2006. In 2009, the Persian service also started its own television channel. The department has its own office in Washington and, during the US elections, was able to use three of its own correspondents in the US, as well as Iranian news agencies and texts commissioned from Persian authors. The *Turkish* service is a mid-range service, broadcasting on radio approximately 90 minutes per day, producing a weekly television broadcast and maintaining a website (with a single producer) from a restricted budget. For the US elections the service was able to send one producer and to draw reports from one US-based stringer. The *Tamil* service is by far the smallest of the LOTE services investigated, broadcasting only a daily 30-minute radio transmission, accompanied by a less elaborated website. For the US elections, with no correspondents or stringers of its own, the service included information taken from telephone interviews with Tamil experts in the website news.

### **3. 'Obama assembles White House team': transferring a news report into four languages**

In the previous section, we described institutional aspects of BBCWS LOTE services' coverage of US presidential elections. Clearly there are both common and idiosyncratic aspects of the processes of news (re-)localization. Now we focus our analysis more closely on the specific tertium comparationis of one English news text which was transferred into four different languages. This analysis enables us to take a closer look at domestication, foreignization and other issues involved when an globalized report (the English source text) is transferred into different localized reports (the target texts in different languages).<sup>11</sup>

The choice of the report 'Obama assembles White House team'<sup>12</sup> was the result of chance. We monitored six LOTE services during the week of the election, and this text happened to be trans-edited by four services. In the following table the reader finds the English text, divided into numbered sentences. Throughout this analysis we use the following abbreviations: ET (English text); AT (Arabic text), PT (Persian text), TaT (Tamil text), TuT (Turkish text), with sequentially numbered sentences.

In analysing how this source text has been transferred into different languages, we will begin with an analysis of its structure, and its deployment of emotive as well as factual information (section 3.1). Then we will compare the overall structures of the reports based on it, in order to identify the 'different ways of developing a story' (Bielsa/Bassnett 2009: 13), i.e. how sentences were retained, altered, re-sequenced, or omitted, and what information has been added from other sources (section 3.2). Then, in the next step, we will compare the different reports in depth, trying to identify their patterns of conveying information and emotion to their readership (section 3.3).

<b>Obama assembles White House team</b>
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ET1	Barack Obama has started forming his administration by asking Rahm Emanuel, a former adviser to President Clinton, to be his chief-of-staff.
ET2	US President-elect Obama is next expected to appoint a treasury secretary to tackle the country's economic crisis.
ET3	He has until his inauguration on 20 January to select his senior officials.
ET4	Mr Obama was elected the first black US president on Tuesday with a resounding win over Republican rival John McCain.
ET5	Mr Obama's transition team is to be run by John Podesta, a former chief-of-staff to President Bill Clinton; Pete Rouse, who was Mr Obama's Senate chief-of-staff; and close friend Valerie Jarrett.
ET6	No briefings or announcements are expected on Thursday, but Mr Obama's staff said that he would address the media by the end of the week.
ET7	<b>CIA briefings</b>
ET8	Mr Emanuel is an Illinois congressman and tough Washington insider who has been strongly criticised by some Republicans for being too partisan, says the BBC's Jane O'Brien in Washington.
ET9	Although he has not formally accepted the job yet, if he does become chief-of-staff, he would be responsible for much of the internal management of the new administration.
ET10	But critics say his appointment could accentuate party divides, rather than heal them, as Mr Obama has pledged to do.
ET11	With the country in the throes of an economic slowdown and part of the global financial crisis, the post of treasury secretary will be a key post.
ET12	Likely contenders reportedly include former Treasury Secretary Larry Summers, and Timothy Geithner, the current head of the New York Federal Reserve.
ET13	Current Treasury Secretary Henry Paulson has pledged to work with Mr Obama to ensure a smooth transition, and is said to have already set up desks and telephone lines at the department where Mr Obama's incoming team can work between now and the inauguration.
ET14	There has been speculation Mr Obama will ask Defence Secretary Robert Gates to remain in his post.
ET15	Mr Gates is broadly respected by both parties and would reflect a more bipartisan administration, our correspondent says.
ET16	With the business of preparing for government under way, Mr Obama will from Thursday start receiving the president's daily CIA briefings, which will include

updates on covert operations.
ET17 In another sign of the changing of the guard, Michelle Obama spoke by telephone with First Lady Laura Bush, who invited her to visit the White House.
ET18 Projected results from Tuesday's election have yet to be announced for the states of North Carolina and Missouri, which are believed to be too close to call.
ET19 But with most precincts tallied, Mr Obama's share of the popular vote stands at 52.4%, compared with Mr McCain's 46.3%.
ET20 Turnout was reported to be extremely high - in some places 'unprecedented' in what many Americans said they felt was a historic election.
ET21 The entire US House of Representatives and a third of US Senate seats were also contested in Tuesday's elections.
ET22 The Democrats increased their Senate majority by five seats to 56, including two independents, but fell short of the 60 needed to stop blocking tactics by Republicans. A further four seats are too close to call.
ET23 The Democrats also increased their majority in the House of Representatives, gaining 19 seats to give a total 254, leaving the Republicans with 173.

### 3.1 Source text structure: information and emotion

The structure of the source text is relatively complex. Its headline refers not to a specific event but to an unfolding process which has only just begun. The main topic is *ongoing orderly transition*; ET17 makes this clear rhetorically: 'In *another sign* of the changing of the guard...' (emphasis added). Accordingly, the text switches repeatedly between present, future, and past tenses, and also between specified facts (names, percentages, actions: e.g. 'Paulson has pledged', ET13) and anticipation, opinion, or speculation. This is sometimes specifically attributed ('Mr Obama's staff said', ET6), sometimes vaguely or not at all ('is next expected', ET2; 'speculation', E14; 'many Americans', ET20). An important sub-topic is the reported *mood of historic excitement*, based on the extraordinary nature of the ongoing transition. The mood is stressed in sentences near the start and near the end: Obama has won a 'resounding' victory to become the 'first black US president' (ET4); this event and the scale of his popular support are 'historic' and "unprecedented" (ET20). The inverted commas in the source text suggest that 'unprecedented' is a quote, but with no clear speaker. Readers are perhaps meant to infer that this is universal opinion.

The 'mood' sentences are interpolated into the general structure of topics. There are seven topical sections:

- ET1-2 appointment of chief-of-staff and treasury secretary
- ET3-6 transition procedure
- ET8-10 reputation of Emmanuel and chief-of-staff job description
- ET11-13 treasury secretary and economic crisis
- ET14-15 defence secretary and bipartisan continuity
- ET16-17 transition: general/emotive interest (CIA, First Ladies)
- ET18-23 election results update

The headline ('assembles new team') highlights one aspect of the transition process, but that is the topic of only half of the text (ET1-3, ET5-6, ET8-16). What is more, the relevant sentences are mostly anticipatory, using the future tense, and referring to speculation rather than accomplished fact. Of the first six sentences, just two (ET1 and ET5) name members of the new team, with brief background information on each. ET2, ET3 and ET6 all refer to anticipated future announcements, naming no names. ET8-15 offer most detail on the political process underway. ET8 elaborates on ET1 and refers to criticism of Rahm Emanuel, attributing a named BBC journalist, who cites a generalized source: 'some Republicans'. ET9 reveals that Emanuel's appointment is yet to be finalized (again an anticipatory statement), and also sketches very briefly, and vaguely, the job description of 'chief-of-staff'. ET10 elaborates on the criticism of Emanuel mentioned in ET8, in anticipatory mode. Also in anticipatory mode, ET11-13 elaborate on ET2 (the treasury secretary post), while ET14-15 introduce 'speculation' about the defence secretary post and Robert Gates. Overall, the report contains strikingly little hard news.

The name 'Robert Gates' and the title 'defense secretary' can be considered emotive for many 'global' readers. Other elements in the report also have emotive aspects. The subtitle 'CIA briefings' (ET7) does not in fact introduce the section which follows it. The acronym is doubtless so prominent because it can arouse emotional responses among readers. The subtitle (likely to be a sub-editor's addition) refers to a sentence which comes much later, a brief anticipatory statement about transitional routine (ET16). This is juxtaposed with a 'human interest' or emotive report about the First Ladies on the telephone, restating the theme of 'smooth transition' (ET17). The text then returns for a while to unemotive fact. Anticipated late election results (ET18) and details of national results so far are presented (ET19-23), mostly in numerical terms. ET21 explains which seats were at stake in the election, and introduces the terms 'Senate' and 'House of Representatives', to aid comprehension of the closing two sentences. But a 'mood' statement (on what 'many Americans' *felt* about the election, ET20) – is embedded in the sequence of dry news statements, prompting a last emotive response. Its positioning parallels the way the first 'mood' statement ('the first black US president', ET4) is embedded in the opening section. These 'mood' statements effectively – but unobtrusively – frame the report.

### **3.2 Sequencing and the subtleties of gatekeeping**

A general point should be noted first. The four LOTE texts differ in scope, and the differences correspond very closely to the differential resources of the services concerned. The source text ET has c.550 words over 23 segments. The Arabic text AT has c.600 words over 18 segments (in the English-language monitor translation); the Persian PT has c.400/15; the Turkish TuT has c.320/16; the Tamil TaT has c.120/4. The scope of TuT is still less than this suggests: several sentences add explanatory or linking information about transition procedures, institutions etc.

The transfer of a report into another language normally involves significant changes in its sequential structure. The journalist who transfers the report has to decide how to select, alter, discard, or supplement the source(s); how to begin, sequence, and end. The term gatekeeping usually refers to the question *which* news story is transferred at all, but re-sequencing a report involves a refined, subtle form of gatekeeping.



The first sentences of each report, set in bold in the BBC's online publications, serve as an introductory lead-in, alluding to the content but not explaining it. The English report (ET1-2) combines information which is abstract ('forming his administration') and concrete ('Rahm Emanuel'). The Turkish and the Tamil texts introduce the topic in a more abstract way, and they transform the English subordinate clause ('...by asking Rahm Emanuel...') into a separate, second sentence. By contrast, the Arabic and Persian texts follow the sentence structure of the English original.

Be they abstract or concrete, such allusions always promise further information, to be supplied later. The reader is assumed to be willing to wait for explanations. Why then do the Turkish and Tamil texts mention concrete facts only in the second sentence, whereas the Persian and Arabic news stories put them in their introductions? The reasons are unclear, but this may be associated with the different scope of the texts and the different kinds of trans-editorial work which have gone into them. The Tamil and Turkish services created shorter versions, relying mainly on strategies of deletion, whereas the Arabic and Persian services created lengthy, detailed versions, using multiple strategies of deletion, addition, re-ordering, etc. To 'tease' readers with concrete allusions implies that they are expected to be interested in detailed information (e.g. on Rahm Emanuel). This corresponds to a text which is longer overall, and contains more detailed information. On the other hand, there are country- or language-specific habits of writing and reading news. E.g. in Turkey, it is common to introduce a report by referring to the general topic, not to specific events.

The introductory lead-in is followed by three different sorts of content: information on the generational transition procedures (ET3-6 and 16-17), information on specific government positions (ET 8-15), and a reminder and update of election results (ET18-23). The sequence in which these sorts of content are presented is significantly different between the language services. The English, Arabic and Persian services begin with information on the general transition procedures (amended for the Persian audience with the information that Obama has won the elections), although in their introduction they had mentioned a concrete point (the appointment of chief-of-staff). Conversely, the Turkish and Tamil services, which have not mentioned the specific appointments, go straight to the core of the matter, informing their readers about Rahm Emanuel, the envisaged chief-of-staff, and other specific appointments. Thus they follow a significantly different dramaturgy than the other services. Underlying the sequence from the introductory lead-in to the subsequent sentences is a deductive structure, going from the abstract to the concrete, whereas the English, Arabic and Persian sequences display a ruptured structure, based on the semantic break between introductory concreteness and subsequent abstractness. In these cases the journalists seem to be playing with the readers' impatience, which they have provoked with the concrete introduction ('so who are the new chief-of-staff and treasury secretary?'). The Turkish and Tamil texts lack this 'game with impatience'. Their readers instantly learn what the texts' previous sentences encourage them to learn. Again, this relates to the relative scope of the texts.

The Tamil report finishes at this point, remarking that Obama is presumed to want to include Republicans in his government. This remarkably short scope tallies with the resourcing of the service, but may also be attributed to a lack of (anticipated) interest in US politics among readers. Our researcher, Sharika Thiranagama, reported that this is consistent with the whole approach of the Tamil service to the US elections: they were not reported in terms of the American context, but as seen through 'global'

eyes, in terms of relevance to Tamils, and more broadly, America's role as a world power.

The Turkish text is a less truncated summary. After the abstract opening it gives some detailed insights into the specific government positions, then returns to the abstract, with information on general transition procedures. This sequence from general to particular to general contrasts with the more complicated sequential structure of the English, Arabic, and Persian texts. They use detailed information as a 'teaser', then follow the sequence of general to detailed and back to general information, and conclude with a slightly different topic: a spotlight on the election results (ET, PT) or quotes from US women politicians (AT).

The relatively complex structure of ET, AT and PT might relate to language-specific reporting styles, but of course all services carry both summary reports and longer, structurally more complex reports. But *in this instance* the different structures on different services imply differing expectations regarding their readers' capacity to tolerate information delays and content ruptures. The Tamil and Turkish texts are far easier to comprehend and aim to secure *instantaneous* comprehension. The others anticipate more patient readers.

Putting a news text into a new sequential order by editing and omitting sentences implies operations of domestication and foreignization. Where the sequential order of some of the LOTE services' reports significantly departs from the English original, the text is 'insert[ed] directly into the world of the ... [target] readers and transform[ed] ... into their own' (Schleiermacher 1963: 48). Rather than foreignizing their reports, the LOTE services attach importance to conveying the news in a style with which their audiences are familiar. Indeed, as operations of sequencing, domestication and foreignization refer to the style of a news text rather than to its semantics. We therefore propose to call these operations *stylistic domestication*, and *stylistic foreignization*, respectively, as opposed to the semantic operations which we will tackle in the next section.

### **3.3 Issues of trans-editing in comparison**

Having compared the language services' reports in terms of general structure, we now go into the detail of trans-editing, examining various specific issues of trans-editing which we identified. We will conclude with the treatment of the emotive or 'mood' components. In respect of these we can tentatively identify language-specific trans-editing strategies, which demand further research.

#### **3.3.1 Giving the report a name**

ET is headlined with a short, concrete sentence which does not summarize the whole report, and 'White House' is an indexical proper name indicating the office of the president. All LOTE services omit this proper name in the headline and prefer technical expressions.<sup>13</sup> These technical terms (e.g. 'team', 'American administration', 'Obama administration', 'cabinet'), are more abstract than the English version, and hence summarize the report more broadly. Interestingly, the Tamil report, the shortest of all, gives the most inclusive summary: 'Obama begins the task of setting up a new American administration'. Presumably the Persian and Turkish news stories avoid the word 'administration' in the headline (and only rarely make use of it in the article) because these words are unusual for referring to the government in these languages.

### **3.3.2 Immediate and retarded globalizing**

Like the English headline, the English introductory sentence presupposes that the context of the report is clear to readers, or else that they are willing to wait to be informed about the context. To write that 'Barack Obama has started forming his administration by asking Rahm Emanuel, a former adviser to President Clinton, to be his chief-of-staff' (ET1) is to assume that readers already know who Obama is, whose Clinton was, and what a 'chief-of-staff' is and does. This is a typical example of a news sentence which has not been globalized – or perhaps it has been partially globalized, on the assumption that all 'global' readers are familiar with governmental structures and persons in the USA. Only in the next sentence does the English text inform its readers that Obama is the president elect of the USA.<sup>14</sup> Only much later does it indicate what 'chief-of-staff' means: 'if [Emanuel] does become chief-of-staff, he would be responsible for much of the internal management of the new administration' (ET9). We call this 'retarded globalization', because the contextual information required is delayed. By contrast, the LOTE services all immediately globalize the first sentence by informing the reader that the event is situated in the US, and that Obama has been elected president. The Turkish and Arabic services also promptly outline the role of chief-of-staff. Thus these language services provide information which renders the news globally intelligible.

### **3.3.3 Reduction of information as a strategy of semantic domestication**

Reduction is a strategy frequently used to semantically domesticate a text.<sup>15</sup> A significant example is ET5: 'Mr Obama's transition team is to be run by John Podesta, a former chief-of-staff to President Bill Clinton; Pete Rouse, who was Mr Obama's Senate chief-of-staff; and close friend Valerie Jarrett.' The LOTE services all apparently assumed that the information on these three persons was not relevant to their readers. Hence the equivalent Arabic sentence (positioned later in the text) reads: 'Mr Obama's transition team is run by three personalities, among them John Podesta, a former chief-of-staff to Bill Clinton between 1998 and 2001' (AT16). The other two persons are not named. The other services domesticate further, by completely excising this sentence.

### **3.3.4 Complementary information as an ambiguous strategy**

Reduction and excision of information are operations which can be empirically observed in the text. Semantic domestication and foreignization, however, are processes which unfold during the interaction between the text and its readers. As long as we only have the text as the basis of our inquiry we can only *assume* that something has been domesticated or foreignized. The empirical ambiguity of domestication and foreignization is most evident where complementary information is provided. Take for example the additional information which the Arabic text gives on John Podesta: 'He is now the director of the 'center for the advancement of America', which is a leftist research center' (AT16) This additional information – both that he is the 'director' of the center and that it is 'leftist' – domesticates the source text, in that it facilitates readers' comprehension, using categories with which they (presumably) feel familiar. However, complementary information can also result in foreignization, when what readers 'are encountering derives from a completely different system' (Bassnett, 2005: 120-1). For example, early in their reports, the Arab and the Turkish services make their readers aware that in the USA the 'chief of staff' is the 'highest level authority' (TuT2) or the 'highest personality in the American government' (AT2). This does not correspond exactly to the role description offered by the English text: 'responsible for much of the internal management of the new administration' (ET9;

translated literally in PT8). More importantly, perhaps, it highlights a role which is alien to other governmental systems, certainly in Arabic-speaking countries and in Turkey. Here, trans-editing aims to facilitate comprehension by adding information which elucidates the foreign cultural context.

### 3.3.5 Nostrification

Whereas to foreignize information means to ‘blow a foreign spirit to the reader’ (Schleiermacher, 1963: 57), occasionally the trans-editors neither foreignize nor domesticate information, but render something *as if* it ‘suits the norms of the target culture’ (Bielsa/Bassnett, 2009: 9), although in fact it does not. For example, all other LOTE services speak of the ‘inauguration’ of President-elect Obama, but the Arabic text uses the term ‘coronation’ (AT4), presumably more familiar to inhabitants of monarchical Arab states. As a result, the event is presented *as if* it were happening according to the normalcy expectations in some Arab countries. Such transfers, which blur an original meaning in assimilating it to the (assumed) perception patterns of the target readers, may be called ‘nostrification’ (Stagl, 1981: 284). This differs from what we are calling ‘domestication’ in that the translator is not only selecting, ordering, deleting, and adding information in order to make the source intelligible, but is using concepts of the target culture which are not appropriate to the source context. For further comment on the use of ‘coronation’, see below (3.3.7).

### 3.3.6 Rendering text or action meaningful

Trans-editing aims to make a *text* comprehensible and significant for a target audience by re-creating it in the target language (cf. Bielsa/Bassnett, 2009: 7). But a trans-editor of news may also feel the need to render the *actions* reported in the text meaningful. There is a blurred dividing line between what counts as a meaningful text and what counts as a meaningful action reported in a text.

For example, the Persian text states that ‘the post of treasury secretary will be a key post considering the economic slowdown’ (PT10), and names possible candidates as: ‘former Treasury Secretary in President Clinton’s team and former head of Harvard School, Larry Summers, and Timothy Geithner, the current head of the New York Federal Reserve’ (PT11).<sup>16</sup> This underlines the importance of the post, and it might also implicitly highlight the ‘old boys network’ to which the candidates belong. In contrast, the Tamil text explicitly connects the crisis situation to the candidates’ ‘experience’, a term not found in ET: ‘When taking into account the country’s financial situation, the most important appointment is the post of treasury secretary; it is said that he is considering appointing as treasury secretary those with experience...’ (TaT3). Different trans-editorial additions produce meaningful *texts*, but also – in different ways – makes the reported *action* of Obama seem meaningful and plausible. Put another way, it looks as if the Tamil trans-editors have sought to justify the decisions of Obama to their readers, whereas the Persian trans-editors are unobtrusively inviting their readers to adopt a more sceptical perspective – or confirming their pre-existing scepticism.

Making reported action meaningful may also involve deleting alleged contradictions. The Turkish text – like the Persian and Arabic texts – closely follows ET in stating that, with the nomination of Emanuel, ‘the gap between the parties would deepen instead of being reduced’ (TuT6). By contrast, the Tamil text mentions no such contradictions implied by the prospective appointments, only that ‘there is speculation as to whether Barack Obama would include in the administration members of the Re-

publican Party going beyond Democrat party lines' (TaT4). Such deletion of reference to contradictions surrounding reported action is another way of ensuring a meaningful text, reporting on apparently meaningful action: only, it produces a simplified and, arguably, inaccurate meaningfulness.

Without detailed research on the Tamil service in general and at the specific time concerned, it is impossible to know whether this attempt to render the reported action meaningful is explained by a positive attitude towards the new US administration, or by the necessity to ensure meaningfulness within limited scope. The lengthier texts of the Arabic, Persian, and even Turkish editions are able to report on *prima facie* contradictory actions, without endangering the text's coherent meaning.

### 3.3.7 Emotive components

The emotive components identified above (3.1) include: the framing 'mood' sentences ('first black president ... resounding win', ET4; "unprecedented' ... historic', ET20); the highlighted 'CIA briefings' (ET7, ET16); the First Ladies' phone call (ET17); and (for some) the mention of Robert Gates (ET14-15). None of these survive the Tamil trans-editing. They are handled in interestingly different ways by the other services.

Gates's possible re-appointment as defense secretary is 'buried' in the middle of ET (ET14), but much more prominent in AT (AT5) and PT (PT5). This re-sequencing corresponds to the presumable interest of Arabic and Persian readers in both the individual and the post. Turkish readers, by contrast, find this item of news almost at the end of the report (TuT11). On the other hand, it is positioned here just before a remarkable aggregation of emotive elements (see below).

The Arabic text retains the 'CIA briefings' subtitle (AT6) and news item (AT11). The Persian text omits the CIA entirely; perhaps it was deemed provocative? The Turkish text uses a different, duller subtitle ('First the treasury secretary may be announced', TuT7), but concludes with mention of the CIA briefings (TuT16).

The First Ladies are omitted by all the trans-editors. Annotating the Arabic text, our researcher, Fatima el Issawi, speculated that this item may have been thought unsuitable for a generally serious report.

The first 'mood' sentence (ET4) is translated in PT and TuT, and repositioned in TuT. None of the texts use the second 'mood' sentence (ET20), but all use substitute components with the same or intensified effect. Emotive components occur at the same, framing positions in AT and PT, while TuT uses a different structural principle. This shows that all trans-editors are aware of the emotive components of the source text, and work to re-create the effect. Indeed, the emotive effect is increased in all three cases.

In Arabic, reference to Obama as 'black' is omitted. But his 'coronation' (AT2) appears in equivalent position to ET4. We considered this above as an instance of 'nostification' (3.3.5). A term rich in target culture connotations may also signal intensified emotion; thus the trans-editor is achieving a similar effect on readers, using entirely different content. Later in the text, the ET references to the 'first black president', to the First Ladies, and to the 'historic' result are all substituted, by introducing quotations from two US women politicians. The report ends with these quotes: 'Being

an American from African roots, I am proud especially because this country has gone a long way in correcting its mistakes and is not making race an essential element in our life' (Condoleezza Rice, AT16);<sup>17</sup> and, to conclude the report: 'The American people said their word clearly and loudly and expressed its willingness for change' (Nancy Pelosi, Speaker of Congress, AT18).<sup>18</sup> The Arabic trans-editor has used independently sourced material to amplify the emotive suggestions of the source text. By ending on these quotes, rather than returning to electoral details as ET does, the originally rather implicit message is amplified: Obama's victory signals a new, hopeful chapter in US race relations. This emphasis may be linked with the significance of the Arabophone diaspora, racialized in the US, among BBCWS users.

The Persian trans-editor opts for a generally drier report, concluding (like ET) with electoral statistics. Nevertheless, the first 'mood' sentence is accurately translated, in the same position as in ET (PT4). In the position of the second 'mood' sentence, the following item is substituted: 'Justin Webb, BBC correspondent in Washington, says Americans have sent a clear message by voting for Obama. The message is that they are deeply unhappy about the existing situation and that they have closed the door on the nationalist history of the country' (PT12).<sup>19</sup> This substitution suggests that Persian readers are presumed to be interested in international rather than in race relations.<sup>20</sup> The Bush regime is implicitly characterized as 'nationalist', in what way be an instance of direct translation of Iranian political discourse.<sup>21</sup> The topic of 'historic' change is retained, and the emotive structuring closely replicates the effect of the source text, but the content is significantly altered.

As noted earlier, the Turkish trans-editor adds several sentences which provide explanatory and linking information. But s/he also alters the frame structure of the 'mood' sentences. All the text's mood components are positioned in a row at the end of the text, with no links between them. It's a surprising shift in textual style. Thirteen dry, carefully connected sentences on the appointments process are followed by three emotive ones. The topic is orderly transition. First, an independently sourced item: 'The current US President George Bush said that he will collaborate with [Obama] one hundred percent during the transition period' (TuT14).<sup>22</sup> Second, with no apparent narrative logic, a shortened translation of ET4: 'Barack Obama was elected as the first black president of the USA yesterday' (TuT15). Third, the report's concluding sentence: 'From today, Obama will start receiving daily briefings from the American Central Intelligence Agency, CIA' (TuT16). The structural logic leads from dry, continuous reporting into a closing staccato of emotion. We can isolate the keywords of TuT14-16: 'Bush – collaborate – Obama – transition – Obama – yesterday – today – CIA'. They summarise 'orderly historic transition' and imply, subtly, a certain irony, as the man standing for change and hope becomes the wielder of (the same old) geopolitical power. In ET, the highlighting of 'CIA' presumably intended to arouse emotion in global audiences. The Turkish trans-editor intensifies that effect, in a rather dramatic climax. The term 'CIA' is linked with ET's first 'mood' sentence by sheer juxtaposition. Yet readers have to traverse the whole text to reach this sudden emotive intensification.

This analysis shows that BBCWS trans-editors do not only mechanically translate, summarize, or re-combine sources at the level of informational content. Their work is 're-creation in the target language' (Bielsa/Bassnett 2009: 7). They evidently appreciate that: 'the primary task of the translator is to translate not what is there but what is *not* there, to translate the implicit and the assumed, the blank spaces between words'

(Bielsa/Bassnett 2009: 6, italics in original). Trans-editors are aware of the implicit structuring principles of source texts, in particular their uses of emotive components, and (within the scope allowed) they creatively adapt these structures and components, in order to achieve comparable effects on different readers. The ways in which they do so seem to relate in some ways to language-specific conventions (e.g. the re-structuring of emotive effect in TuT), but more research is needed to discover how far this is the case.

#### **4. Conclusion: melody and orchestrations at the BBC World Service**

As our analysis shows, the question whether BBCWS speaks with one or many voices is too superficial. There is evidence for both homogeneity and heterogeneity. The coverage of the US presidential elections reveals that BBCWS plays one melody, orchestrated in different ways, with different instruments from one language service to the other.

When, for example, one of the Arabic service's own correspondents in the US focuses on the candidates' stance regarding the occupation of Iraq or the Palestinian issue, or when the Persian service website carries analyses by the dissident journalist Ahmad Zeyd-Abadi, then these LOTE services certainly 'play' specific instruments, which other BBCWS services do not play. Furthermore, each LOTE service has its own strategies for localizing news during the gatekeeping and trans-editing processes. Sequencing, adding or deleting information, or writing different headlines, are empirical evidence of the BBCWS 'melody' being variously orchestrated. As in the world of music, orchestration is not only a matter of taste but also of budget. The prosperous Arab and Persian services' websites are far richer and more detailed than the Tamil one, while the Turkish website seems to go for a low-budget but information-rich internet platform.

One melody underlies BBCWS coverage of the US presidential elections. Despite significant variations, the LOTE services disseminate information quite consistently. The main events of the election day were picked up in all LOTE services alike. The news coverage avoids blatantly taking sides in generally similar ways in all the services, although the longer sample texts all communicate a sense of pleasurable excitement at Obama's victory.

How is such a shared 'melody' achieved within the BBC World Service? This demands further research into the detail of trans-editorial and related working practices, including the formal monitoring of LOTE services by senior editors, and even what happens in case of transgression of corporate rules. There is ample evidence of institutional efforts at BBCWS to keep news coverage in harmony. Editorial guidelines impose explicit rules on every editor, while English-language content, provided centrally, embodies implicit norms.

However, it must be admitted that harmony across services is more easily achieved where events such as the US presidential elections are concerned, than in other, more controversial cases. This event was globalized by many news outlets, and a consensual discourse on it had been shaped months before election day. There are perhaps few political issues on which global opinion was so united, extolling Obama and execrating Bush. But our empirical evidence shows that, even for such globalized and well-nigh univocally judged events, within BBCWS there is still potential for different accents to be placed and heard.

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<sup>1</sup> Members of the Study Group include, in alphabetical order, Oktay Aktan, Maria Luisa Azpíroz, Marie Gillespie, Kiran Hassan, Fatima el Issawi, Leyla Khodabakhshi, and Sharika Thiranagama. The group operated within the research project titled 'Tuning In: Diasporic Contact Zones at the BBC World Service', directed by Professor Marie Gillespie (Open University), and funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council. See [www.open.ac.uk/socialsciences/diasporas/](http://www.open.ac.uk/socialsciences/diasporas/). Using a template devised by Tom Cheesman (see [www.open.ac.uk/socialsciences/diasporas/uselections/index.htm](http://www.open.ac.uk/socialsciences/diasporas/uselections/index.htm)), the Study Group monitored online coverage of the US elections, November 4-8, 2008, by six LOTE (Languages Other Than English) services. They identified news reports based on English-language BBCWS reports;



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prepared annotated 'monitor translations', i.e. translations from the other languages into English (these are quoted below); collated and annotated the English-language source texts, the LOTE target texts, and the monitor translations; and summarized their findings in reports.

<sup>2</sup> We know only two analyses adopting a similar strategy. Poor (2007) inquires into computer news sites on the web in five languages, but fails to take into account the subtleties of trans-editing because he relies on Google translation. Bielsa and Bassnett (2009: 95-110) provide an in-depth analysis of trans-editing into three languages, based on AFP and Reuter's coverage of one topic.

<sup>3</sup> For a more detailed discussion of gatekeeping in the context of 'jihadist' and 'mainstream' media, see Hoskins and O'Loughlin, 'Remediating *Jihad* for Western News Audiences' (2010), in the present volume.

<sup>4</sup> Stetting does not differentiate between gatekeeping and trans-editing. Hence we do not fully adopt her definition of trans-editing.

<sup>5</sup> [www.cnn.com/2008/POLITICS/12/04/minnesota.recount/index.html](http://www.cnn.com/2008/POLITICS/12/04/minnesota.recount/index.html) (4 December, 2008) and [bhutantoday.blogspot.com/2008/06/bhutan-key-appointees-to-cabinet.html](http://bhutantoday.blogspot.com/2008/06/bhutan-key-appointees-to-cabinet.html) (19 June, 2008).

<sup>6</sup> Bielsa and Bassnett (2009: 58-62) do not clearly identify the need to globalize news, but their analysis of the cooperation between local and international journalists within the regional or country offices of international media corporations suggests that news globalization very much depends on this cooperation.

<sup>7</sup> The distinction between foreignization and domestication goes back to Friedrich Schleiermacher who, in 1813, characterized the former operation as the attempt to 'compensate for the lack of knowledge of the original language on the part of the reader' (1963: 47-8). The translator 'tries to convey to the readers the very picture, the very impression which he has obtained from the opus through his knowledge of the original language. Thus he tries to move them [the readers] to his point which is actually strange to them.' (1963: 48) Contrariwise, domestication means writing translated text as if the original author had composed it in the target language (1963: 48): here, the translator moves the text to the readers, rather than vice versa.

<sup>8</sup> For a closer look at the institutional aspects of trans-editing, including globalization and localization strategies and their historical contingencies, see Podkalicka, 'Factory, Dialogue and Network' (2010), in the present volume.

<sup>9</sup> From time to time some LOTE services are able to feed the News Board with their own news, gathered from correspondents or experts in their respective country (e.g. when elections are held in Pakistan). However, editorial control of these inputs remains with the English-language News Board.

<sup>10</sup> In principle, LOTE services could also be systematically involved in producing news for the EMPS, drawing on their own correspondents and expertise. However the BBCWS seems to have decided not to use this rich source, preferring to keep the control in the hands of the English-language editorial office.

<sup>11</sup> We would like to emphasize that our research does not aim at evaluating the 'quality' of the gatekeeping and trans-editing processes in the different languages, but to identify the strategies used during these processes.

<sup>12</sup> Published November 6, 2008, still available (June 3, 2009) at: [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/us\\_elections\\_2008/7712270.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/us_elections_2008/7712270.stm)

<sup>13</sup> Except in the Arabic service, 'White House' is not used at all in the LOTE reports.

<sup>14</sup> Bourdieu/Waquant (2001) remind us that the globalization of news is a power-driven process in which the Western world in general and the US in particular have succeeded in imposing their particularistic categories and 'commonplaces (in the Aristotelian sense of notions or theses *with* which one argues but over which there is no argument)' (2001) as universalisms.

<sup>15</sup> For Stetting (1989: 378), 'to delete passages that are less relevant to the new group of receivers or which would only seem confusing to them' is a constituent of the trans-editing process.

<sup>16</sup> Similarly, the Arabic text states that 'it is expected that Obama will nominate a new treasury secretary very soon' (AT3) and only later adds that 'with the beginning of the economic slowdown in the light of the global financial crisis, the post of the treasury secretary will be another key post' (AT12). The Turkish text is similar to the Persian one.

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<sup>17</sup> 'On a personal note, as an African-American, I am especially proud because this is a country that's been through long journey in overcoming wounds, and making race not the factor in our lives. That work is not done, but yesterday was obviously an extraordinary step forward.' Rice, quoted November 5, 2008, on [politicalticker.blogs.cnn.com/2008/11/05/rice-proud-of-obamas-victory/](http://politicalticker.blogs.cnn.com/2008/11/05/rice-proud-of-obamas-victory/) (accessed 3 June 2009).

<sup>18</sup> Cf.: 'It's a signal of the change that the American people want.' Pelosi, Nov 5, 2008, quoted at [www.cnn.com/2008/POLITICS/11/05/house.election/index.html](http://www.cnn.com/2008/POLITICS/11/05/house.election/index.html) (accessed 3 June 2009).

<sup>19</sup> No source found. Webb wrote on his blog on November 4, 2008: 'On every level America will be changed by this result - its impact will be so profound that the nation will never be the same. In a sense the policy changes could be the least of it. It's the way the nation sees itself that will change. And the way outsiders see America.' [www.bbc.co.uk/blogs/thereporters/justinwebb/2008/11/](http://www.bbc.co.uk/blogs/thereporters/justinwebb/2008/11/) (accessed 3 June 2009).

<sup>20</sup> Diasporic Persians (especially in the US) may be less racialized or may be less inclined to politicize racialization.

<sup>21</sup> Our researcher, Leyla Khodabakhshi, notes (regarding PT12): "To send a clear message by voting for..." is a familiar phrase after President Khatami's election. Maybe the translators had the phrase on the back of his/her mind?" The 'send a message' phrase also occurs in a different context in TuT11.

<sup>22</sup> Our researcher, Oktay Aktan, suggests interpreting this as supplementary information which reinforces the differences between the electoral systems of the US and Turkey, where there is no such a transitional period.