

## Alluring translations after the Spanish-American War: A case study of *The Puerto-Rico Eagle*

Christopher D. Mellinger 

University of North Carolina at Charlotte, USA



### ABSTRACT

This article presents a case study of a Spanish-language newspaper, *The Puerto-Rico Eagle*, published in Puerto Rico after the Spanish-American War in order to identify the various ways in which the practice of translation manifests and to what ends these translations are used. This inquiry seeks to reconcile two approaches to translation history – first, to understand the history of translation practices in this colonial context and, second, to recognise the role that translation played in this colonial time and space. Bringing together these two approaches to translation history, this article provides preliminary insights into the multi-faceted nature of translation in Hispanophone newspapers, be it an unmarked effort to influence and persuade readers, a means to establish authority and inspire confidence, or a sensational act worthy of news coverage unto itself. In doing so, the article points toward potential avenues for future inquiry into translation in the Spanish-speaking Caribbean with newspapers as a site of translation activity.

**Keywords:** newspapers, Americanisation, translation history, unmarked translation, Puerto Rico

### Privlačni prevodi po špansko-ameriški vojni: študija primera *The Puerto-Rico Eagle*

#### IZVLEČEK

V prispevku je predstavljena študija primera časopisa v španskem jeziku, *The Puerto-Rico Eagle*, ki je izhajal v Portoriku po špansko-ameriški vojni. Namen študije primera je identificirati, v kakšni obliki so se prevodi v tem časopisu pojavljali in zakaj so se uporabljali. Raziskava poskuša uskladiti dva pristopa k zgodovini prevajanja: prvi poskuša razumeti zgodovino prevajanja v navedenem kolonialnem kontekstu, drugi pa prepoznati vlogo, ki jo je prevod igral v omenjenem kolonialnem času in prostoru. Z združitvijo obeh pristopov k zgodovini prevajanja prinaša prispevek preliminarni vpogled v večstransko naravo prevajanja v hispanofonih časopisih, ki sega od nepoudarjene namere, da bi na bralce vplivali in jih prepričali, do sredstva za vzpostavljane avtoritete in dvigovanja samozavesti, pa tja do senzacionalističnega dejanja, ki bi bilo samo po sebi vredno medijske pozornosti. S tem prispevek podaja možne nove smeri nadaljnjega raziskovanja prevajanja na špansko govorečih Karibih, in sicer v časopisih kot prostorom prevajalske dejavnosti.

**Ključne besede:** časopisi, amerikanizacija, zgodovina prevajanja, nezaznamovan prevod, Portoriko

## 1. Introduction

As an instrument of colonial imposition and expansion, translation was a well-documented means by which the Spanish Empire exerted control and influence. Throughout the empire, translation served not only as a tool for diplomatic negotiation and the finalisation of treaties (Bowen 1994), but also as a means by which to create and shape texts in the service of religious and cultural ideals (e.g., Rafael 2005; Valdeón 2014). The power of translation was known to the Spanish crown, and its utility was well established with regard to justifying conquest and appropriating and circulating scientific knowledge as early as the twelfth century in the famed School of Toledo (for a discussion, see Pym 1994). The practice of translation was not centralised exclusively on the Iberian Peninsula, as the Spanish Empire relied on the production of translations and multilingual texts from across the continent, including the Southern Netherlands, to administer and manage an expansive, multilingual territory (Behiels, Thomas, and Pistor 2014). As the empire grew, the utility of translation crossed the Atlantic and Pacific with missionaries, advancing their efforts in terms of religious teaching and conversion alongside teaching the Spanish language (e.g., Rafael 2005, 2015; Zwartjes 2014). From its initial rise to its subsequent decline, the Spanish Empire relied on translation as an effective tool to influence multiple aspects of its reign, both explicitly and implicitly.

Yet the decline of the Spanish Empire at the end of the nineteenth century does not coincide with a disappearance of translation as a means of imperial imposition.<sup>1</sup> The end of the Spanish-American War in 1898 by means of the Treaty of Paris resulted in several Spanish territories – namely Cuba, Guam, the Philippines, and Puerto Rico – being ceded to the United States. Much in the same way that translation had been used across the Spanish Empire for centuries prior to this transition, so too would translation be used to various ends in the new sociopolitical landscape. For instance, questions of nationhood arise from translation and its historicisation in the Philippines (e.g., Rafael 2005, 2016; Sales 2019), while the use of translation as a means to support US expansionist agendas and Americanisation efforts are described in Puerto Rico (e.g., Mellinger 2019) and Cuba (e.g., Foner 1972). Given the range of uses of translation, it is perhaps unsurprising that the sites of translation are equally varied. Research has documented the use of literary magazines and various forms of literature as a means to disseminate, serialise, and circulate translations in the Caribbean (e.g., Seligmann 2021; Saint-Loubert 2020), with intellectual communities relying on these spaces to engage in cultural and political debate (e.g., Guzmán 2020, 2021; Malena 2018).

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1 While the Spanish Empire still held overseas territories into the twentieth century, the Spanish-American War marked a watershed, after which its influence waned.

In addition to literary spaces, considerable cultural and political discourse occurs in print media, particularly newspapers, in the Caribbean and diasporic immigrant communities. Kanellos (2000, 2005, 2007) recognises the importance of print culture, particularly in Hispanic and Spanish-speaking communities, as a site for intellectual discourse and dissent, allowing writers to leverage writing in periodicals and newspapers for political reasons and to voice support for independence movements. Newspapers founded in Latin America were also an important tool for colonialism, and scholars such as Ferreira (2006) have argued that presses were used by the Spanish and the US to impose structural censorship and ideological control.<sup>2</sup> More specifically, research has revealed how newspapers in Puerto Rico provided spaces for political activism and transnational engagement beyond the island's borders (Meléndez-Badillo 2021). Despite the importance of these textual spaces, researchers still note a relative dearth of scholarship on Hispanophone newspapers in scholarly research (Bonifacio 2021). A notable exception is Castañeda and Feu's (2019) edited volume that establishes newspapers and periodicals as a site of collaboration, connection, and organisation during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, particularly in relation to anarchist ideologies and their circulation in the Spanish-speaking world.

In light of the importance of newspapers as textual spaces in which dissidence, influence, and collaboration are possible, translation studies researchers have sought to examine journalism in and through translation. Whereas previous reviews of the extant translation studies scholarship revealed limited attention to newspapers as sites of translation activity (see van Doorslaer 2011), the current translation studies research landscape suggests more robust attention is now being provided. Valdeón (2020) has outlined various points of intersection of translation studies and journalism studies, illustrating the remit of what constitutes translation in both areas of scholarly discourse. Comparative studies of different types of newspapers have illustrated how translation practices are varied and arise from the unique sociopolitical contexts in which these newspapers are situated (e.g., Baer and Pokorn 2018). Moreover, researchers have identified how the historical time period in which presses publish newspapers can result in unique configurations of languages and translations (Gasca Jiménez et al. 2019). The possibility of bilingual production occurs in some of these spaces, including immigrant, diasporic communities (Baer and Pokorn 2018), and in liminal spaces such as the US borderlands (Gasca Jiménez et al. 2019).

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2 Similar arguments related to censorship and ideological mediation in newspapers and journalism have been made in translation studies. See, for instance, work by van Doorslaer (2010) and Lovett (2019). Questions have also been raised related to the press reporting on the Spanish-American War and censorship (Brown 1965) and various ideological representations (Rodríguez 1998).

As Valdeón (2020, 1647ff.) notes, the production of translation in periodicals often involves multiple actors and procedures, such as transediting and adaptation. As such, translations must be contextualised not only in the sociopolitical contexts in which they occur, but also within the publishing house and its associated ideologies and affiliations. Consequently, a direct comparison between source and target language versions is complicated, requiring careful attention to how translations are framed and positioned within the publication.

This article presents a case study that examines translations published in Puerto Rico during the transition from Spanish to US control, focusing primarily on how translations are used and positioned in a Spanish-language newspaper and to what end. In what follows, three case studies are presented which examine how the role of translation (and in some cases, interpreting) figures into publishing strategies to various extents and with various effects. These translations are drawn from *The Puerto-Rico Eagle / El Águila de Puerto Rico* during a relatively short time period in the early twentieth century. In each case, the analysis takes into account the foregoing considerations of sociopolitical context, placement, and publishing apparatus to reveal the various ends to which these translations were used. Based on these examples, the article draws tentative conclusions on how the presence and relative position of translation activity in this type of Spanish-language newspaper can be identified along with their utility in establishing influence or authority.

## 2. Unmarked translations

Puerto Rico during the early twentieth century was a site of significant change and transformation with respect to language use, and by extension, translation and interpreting. The Treaty of Paris had ended the Spanish-American War in 1898, transferring control of Spanish-held territories to the United States. After nearly 400 years of Spanish rule, Puerto Rico was now under the control and protection of an English-speaking country with significant aspirations of extending its global reach throughout the Caribbean and Latin America. During this transition, newspapers became a site of vigorous political and ideological activity, allowing communities of like-minded individuals to share a common textual space (e.g., Meléndez-Badillo 2021; Sánchez Collantes 2019) and establish transnational lines of communication (e.g., de la Torre 2019; Sueiro Seoane 2019).

As part of this transition to US rule, various Americanisation efforts sought to establish a continuous, common history with the United States (Schmidt-Nowara 2012),

and some initial research has documented the extent to which translation enabled this process (e.g., Mellinger 2019). Newspapers are another site in which translation was used in the service of Americanisation efforts. Such is the case on 4 July 1902, in which *The Puerto-Rico Eagle / El Águila de Puerto Rico* printed the following on the front page of the newspaper:

### Example 1

Siendo hoy la fecha gloriosa en que se declaró la independencia de los Estados Unidos, reproducimos á continuación, la proclama que dirijiera al pueblo de Puerto Rico el General Nelson A. Miles al desembarcar en nuestras playas al frente del ejército americano.

[With today being the glorious date on which the United States declared its independence, we reproduce here the proclamation that General Nelson A. Miles directed to the Puerto Rican people upon disembarking on our shores ahead of the American army.]<sup>3</sup>

Landing in Guánica on the southwest side of the island, General Nelson A. Miles was the military leader responsible for leading the Puerto Rican campaign during the Spanish-American War, which lasted only a few months in 1898. These introductory comments situate his speech as one that should be celebrated – a harbinger of the arrival of US troops which would result in the overturn of Spanish colonial rule. The speech is then reproduced in Spanish, a translation of the speech that would have been delivered in English upon General Miles' arrival. In the newspaper, the text is not marked as a translation, but rather is presented as if it were originally uttered in Spanish. As the newspaper of the Puerto Rican Republican Party (*Partido Republicano Puertorriqueño*), the editorial decision to print the translation in this manner is consistent with its pro-annexation ideological leanings. This type of covert translation has been documented in other journalistic contexts, such as foreign-language immigrant newspapers for Russian and Slovene communities in diaspora, to varying effect (Baer and Pokorn 2018).

Including this proclamation in Spanish rather than English, and not marking the text as a translation, is reminiscent of the arrival of Napoleon in Egypt, when his French proclamation was rendered in Arabic without reference to its provenance (Tageldin 2011). This tactic results in the arrival of the occupying military forces “under the banner of equivalence, not difference”, creating what the author describes as an “alluring departure”

3 All translations are my own unless otherwise indicated.

from what might be considered a more traditional discourse of dominance (Tageldin 2011, 33). In the same way, General Miles' proclamation eschews the idea that the Spanish-American War is a destructive force, and instead characterises this bellicose intervention as spreading a "splendorous civilisation" within which all can live together. In doing so, the unmarked or covert translation becomes an alluring one that justifies this military action and entices readers to align themselves with the new US authority.

The conscious decision to print this text on American Independence Day extends beyond the sentiments it contains, since the relative position that the translation occupies with respect to other texts strengthens its impact. In the same column as the end of the proclamation, separated by two horizontal lines, a poem dedicated to José M. Torres Caicedo appears, written by Abigail Lozano, a Venezuelan poet known for patriotism and writing about Simón Bolívar and the liberation movement (Coester 1916, 310; Ramírez Vivas 2014). Originally written in 1855 and titled "La Libertad" [Liberty/Freedom], the poem evokes imagery of a free Latin America in line with Bolívar's vision of independence from the Spanish crown.<sup>4</sup> The proximity of General Miles' proclamation and Lozano's poem already suggests a relationship between the two ideas, with the United States serving as a quasi-Bolivarian liberator of Puerto Rico. The interplay of both texts on the front page of the newspaper leaves little doubt of the pro-independence stance adopted by the publishers with respect to the Spanish Empire.

Yet, the status of General Miles' proclamation as an unmarked or covert translation allows for deeper reflection if we consider Sturrock's (1990) conceptualisation of *en face* translation. In Sturrock's words, *en face* translation "[...] is not a method of translation, it is merely an unusual format for it", one that confronts a source text with its corresponding target text and "represents iconically the act of translation, conceived of as the matching of one text to another" (Sturrock 1990, 994–5, emphasis in original). Although first proposed to discuss poetic and literary translations that invite comparison across the space dividing two texts, the concept of *en face* translation is a useful frame to consider the two texts in question. Much in the same way that Tageldin (2011) signals equivalence through an unmarked translation, Sturrock's invitation to consider both texts in juxtaposition provokes readers to liken the liberation of Latin America from Spanish rule with the assumption of US control of the island. These sentiments are equated by virtue of their positions on the page, linking disparate histories and, as Tageldin contends, seductively replacing and imposing a new empire in its stead.

4 Even the poem's title seemingly alludes to Bolívar's nickname, *El Libertador*, which has been rendered in English as the Liberator (of America). It should be noted that the dedication to Torres Caicedo does not appear in the newspaper reproduction; this dedication appears in a collection of Abigail Lozano's works edited by Torres Caicedo (1864, 193).

Such textual tactics continue by turning the page, with the newspaper continuing in its exaltations of an American empire with descriptions of moments in US history associated with independence and national pride. For instance, the following page includes columns related to the Declaration of Independence and the Battle of Ticonderoga. An obvious link to Americanisation, the Declaration of Independence would be of limited relevance unless the newspaper was positioning Puerto Rico as being part of the United States. Of course, the ambiguous relationship between Puerto Rico and the US continues into the present day (see Trías Monge 1997). However, the positioning of Miles' comments being supported by these sentiments in the pages that follow his initial statements is an instantiation of Americanisation efforts (Schmidt-Nowara 2012). The Battle of Ticonderoga may have been slightly less known to readers, allowing an extension of an American empire and history into the Puerto Rican sphere or readership. This battle during the Revolutionary War was the first offensive victory of the US army against the British military, again echoing the sentiments of independence from European control or influence.

These Americanisation efforts do not carry over to other newspapers published on the same day. If we look, for instance, at *La Democracia*, which bills itself as “the paper with the largest circulation in the island”, the front page dedicates the first three columns to a section called *Cuentos y narraciones* [Stories and narrations], printing a story originally written in Spanish by Cecilio Andino with a certain Puerto Rican flair and authenticity (*La Democracia*, 4 July 1902, no. 3238). This story recounts an attempt to hire a band for the July 4 celebrations by a government official, who by virtue of his job needed to celebrate Independence Day. The remainder of the story describes the festivities of the day, without any clear efforts at Americanisation. Moreover, there is no feigned original presented via translation, nor is there an effort to tie historical events to the date. The editorial decision not to address the historical relevance of the date with regard to US independence is perhaps unsurprising, given the affiliation of *La Democracia* with the Liberal Party, which favoured independence rather than annexation.

This extended example of an unmarked translation provides preliminary insights into the allure of translations and their ability to link ideas and histories through the seduction and replacement of empire. Rather than a more direct imposition of US ideals that explicitly recognises their provenance, a covert translation of this type allows newspapers to meaningfully insert political and ideological ideals into the news discourse, which is further strengthened by the relative positions of these texts. While a single observed case cannot be generalised to Spanish-language newspapers across the region, this type of unmarked translation has been documented in other contexts (e.g., Baer and Pokorn 2018), such that future work in this area ought to recognise the

potential for translations to appear in this manner. Unmarked or covert translations, though, represent only one use of translation, and other translation practices are described in the sections that follow.

### 3. Errata, credibility, and engagement

Current thinking on journalism situates credibility as one of the pillars of a journalistic ethics, in which credibility is a normative ethical principle that establishes a source as being reliable and trustworthy (Ward 2005). The means by which credibility is cultivated depend on a variety of factors, with previous scholarship examining specific rhetorical moves that appeal to the provenance of an idea to establish a news item as being credible (e.g., Soto-Escobar and Espejo-Cala 2019). Research has documented that, through translation, credibility can be eroded on the basis of misattribution of information (e.g., Hong 2021).

The question of credibility with respect to translation in newspapers extends beyond the attribution of sources. A short column from 14 July 1902 in *The Puerto-Rico Eagle* illustrates this point. On the front page, following its lead story of the day in the first column, the newspaper ran a column with the title “Es de lamentarse” [It is a pity]. These three words appear in large print and start the first sentence of the full text, which reads:

#### Example 2

Es de lamentarse que el “San Juan News” no tenga un traductor que conozca lo que tiene entre manos.

[It is a pity that *The San Juan News* does not have a translator who knows what he is working with.]

(*The Puerto-Rico Eagle*, vol. I, no. 159, 14 July 1902)

Signed only with the initials I.X.L., the text proceeds to document what the writer deems to be a translation error or news errata that requires correction from a competing newspaper, *The San Juan News*. As the column explains, the original text was written in English with a corresponding translation provided in Spanish. The text in *The Puerto-Rico Eagle* describes the correspondent’s visit to a hospital patient, in which the critiqued text describes the atmosphere as “the calm of a place of suffering has given way to a more harsh business-like [sic] air.” In translation, the Spanish version renders *business-like* using the adjective *comercial*, which approximates the denotative meaning of business. The purported translation error is that the correspondent fails to account for the connotative dimension of *comercial* which, in I.X.L.’s estimation,

relates to “el estilo moderno y hacendoso que allí prevalecía” [the modern and industrious style that was prevalent there]. This characterisation of what the author describes as a mistranslation perhaps imbues a sense of modernisation or technological advancement, casting the English version in a much more positive light than might be expected given the original’s inclusion of the adjective *harsh*.

Nevertheless, I.X.L. presents a competing interpretation of the source text as factual and credible, leaving little doubt to readers of *The Puerto-Rico Eagle* of how the translation in *The San Juan News* should have read. The author then ends the column with the following request to *The San Juan News*:

### Example 3

que cuando viertan al castellano algún artículo ó correspondencia, que se le remita en inglés, que procuren no traducir literalmente sino dar el verdadero sentido de aquellos.

[that when translating an article or correspondence into Spanish that was written in English, to ensure that the translation is not done literally but rather gives its original sense.]

This claimed translation error illustrates the power of translation to establish credibility and authority. By writing a Spanish-language column in a predominantly Spanish-language newspaper, the author I.X.L. claims the position of an informed bilingual reader who is able to evaluate news sources from another publication and distil the most salient aspects for discussion in this new location. From this established vantage point, the author then makes a claim about the appropriateness of a rendition, using this established authority to evaluate how successful the translation is. The assumed authority provides the opportunity to then suggest that translations in the other venue cannot be trusted given the emphasis solely on a literal rendition rather than what the original text contains. In doing so, the author introduces a double-bind of trust: one in which translations cannot be trusted in some news sources – in this case, *The San Juan News* – while translations can be more definitively trusted by those who are in a position to evaluate them, such as I.X.L. in this news column.

What remains rather salient in this example is the possibility that the purported error is, in fact, not erroneous at all. In I.X.L.’s estimation, the term *comercial* is insufficient to capture the source language term ‘business-like’ [sic]. Notwithstanding the typo, which adds a sense of irony to the entire column regarding what constitutes an appropriate rendition, the author suggests that there should be a connotation of a

modern, efficient environment in which patients are treated. This understanding of the English term perhaps reflects the author's presumed reality or ideology, but does not necessarily align with the various elements present in source text. In fact, the term 'harsh' seems to fall away in both translations – in *The San Juan News*, the term does not appear at all, while in I.X.L.'s suggested revision in *The Puerto-Rico Eagle* the translation is skewed in a much more positive light. Nevertheless, by insinuating that the translation in *The San Juan News* is somehow faulty, the author capitalises on a readership that may not have access to the source text or may lack the faculty to evaluate the translation, thereby claiming a potentially unearned or undeserved credibility.

The inclusion of this column regarding a translation error speaks to larger questions of credibility of the newspapers in question. The author's invocation of an identified translation 'error', a suggested revision, and an exhortation to translate based on meaning lends credibility to *The Puerto-Rico Eagle* while undermining that of the competing newspaper. I.X.L. explicitly marks and reveals translation as a means of sharing news in the other publication, while writing directly in Spanish for a Spanish-speaking readership. It remains unclear based on the column alone whether translation is seen as being somehow lesser than original writing, but the text does point to the mediated nature of news dissemination and the potential for changes to be introduced as a result of translation. If readers are looking for information that is unmediated or unaltered, then the nature of translation being explicitly addressed may alter how readers engage with various sources.

In addition, the act of publishing this column demonstrates how newspapers can use translation to establish their own trustworthiness as a news source. While the column or letter could be attributed solely to the author and not viewed as an endorsement of the content, the very fact that the newspaper has printed a letter that critiques a competing publication shows a willingness on the part of the newspaper to challenge the credibility or trustworthiness of their competitors. The alternative – i.e., not publishing the piece, particularly in light of its potentially erroneous claims – provides further evidence that translation was viewed as a device to establish credibility, while also revealing a specific ideological position regarding the topic at hand. Given the well-documented nature of newspapers to adopt a specific political and ideological bent, one could plausibly surmise that the intentional decision to publish a column that invokes translation as a credibility-establishing instrument is an effort to position the newspaper as a definitive source of information.

#### 4. The spectacle of translation and interpreting

As a site of sustained engagement and collaboration, newspapers provide an opportunity to investigate events and interactions over a period of time. These encounters take various forms; within the same newspaper, letters to the editor or serialised instalments of a text can provide avenues for interaction while across multiple periodicals various texts may speak to the same topic on the same day or within a short span of time. This temporal dimension is important when considering how translations are used, particularly as a means to establish a consistent readership and audience. While serialised literary pieces are perhaps the most prominent example of this type of prolonged storytelling, another newsworthy case appears in *The Puerto-Rico Eagle* in which translation and interpreting were the objects of attention.

The example is drawn from a two-week-long court case that began 11 December 1902 in Mayagüez, a town on the western side of the island. Prior to US control of the Puerto Rico, legal proceedings would have roughly followed in the legal tradition of Spain, since the legal system and culture varied throughout New Spain given the vastness of the empire and the considerable distance from the metropole and Spanish capital, with practices being dependent on a broad range of factors (Cutter 2001). With the US assuming control of Puerto Rico only four years prior, the US legal system would have been US federal law, in which criminal trials guarantee certain rights for defendants, including an oral trial and judgment rendered by a jury of peers. This tradition of oral arguments during criminal proceedings was likely to attract attention on the island given its relative novelty, particularly since the Spanish legal system would have relied on, at least in some contexts, written arguments to be submitted for adjudication.

As a case in point, *The Puerto-Rico Eagle* printed the following three-line headline on the front page in the centre of the paper:

##### Example 4

EL CRIMEN DE LA CARRETERA DE AÑASCO  
JUICIO ORAL EN MAYAGUEZ  
Notas expresas para “El Aguila”

[THE CRIME ON THE AÑASCO HIGHWAY  
ORAL HEARINGS IN MAYAGUEZ  
Quick notes for “The Eagle”]

No other story receives a headline of the same size and placement throughout the two-week trial. While this news story is not an official transcript of the proceedings, the newspaper provides an abbreviated account for readers who were interested in these events. The newspaper frames the trial as an event worthy of attention, describing the excitement in the streets and squares of the town related to the upcoming trial. As the text reads, “De todos los pueblos limítrofes concurren á presenciar el juicio” [People from every neighbouring town have gathered to witness the trial]. In its opening discussion, the paper presents in essence a *dramatis personae*, noting the various parties who will be present in the trial along with a description of each. Of these, an interpreter is explicitly mentioned, William M. Falvo, who is described as follows:

### Example 5

Mr. William M. Falvo es el intérprete, quien con gran precisión y ligereza expresa en español lo que dice el Fiscal y el Juez Herrim[?] y en inglés lo que dicen en español los demás señores del Tribunal y la defensa.

[Mr. William M. Falvo is the interpreter, who with great agility and precision, renders in Spanish what the Prosecutor and Judge Herrim[?] say, and states in English what the remainder of the Court and the Defence say in Spanish.]

(*The Puerto-Rico Eagle*, vol. I, no. 285, 11 December 1902)

As might be expected, the description of William M. Falvo positions the interpreter as an integral part of the trial. Little room is left to question the way in which the trial will proceed, since the interpreter is described as creating a transparent means of communication with great facility. Previous scholarship has documented through a range of historical sources the use of indigenous people with language abilities in Spanish and local languages (e.g., Yannakakis 2008); however, in this case, we find interpreting featured prominently in newspaper reporting of a newsworthy event. Despite the prominent nature of the interpreter on the first day of the trial, Mr. Falvo disappears for the remainder of the reporting over several weeks, fading into the background with the hearings proceeding as though they were being conducted exclusively in Spanish. As such, the original utterances in Spanish and English are rendered ephemeral and likely unrecoverable in their totality, although some of the record is preserved in the newspaper as the trial proceeds. Back-and-forth questioning is provided solely in Spanish, which ostensibly records the Spanish rendition of the interpreter as well as responses that are provided in Spanish.

Despite not expressly commenting on the interpreter or his work, clues remain about the interpreting in the trial, which appear under subheadings in the newspaper that mark curiosities or events that occur using the title “Incidente”. This heading can be rendered either as an *event* or a *mishap*, and its polysemous nature allows various communication challenges that occur in the trial to be documented. About a week into the trial, the newspaper presents what appears to be a verbatim record of a series of questions between the witness and defence. During the exchange, the question in Spanish is asked “Qué posición ocupaban los coches próximos al puente?”<sup>5</sup> Rendering this question into a close translation into English is rather difficult given the lack of clarity in terms of grammar or terminology. The term *posición* is perhaps a calque from *position* in English, and the remainder of the question seems to syntactically follow English structures that are somewhat opaque in Spanish. One might surmise that the question is attempting to determine the location of the cars near a bridge, but this is purely conjecture.

Fortunately, hindsight is not required to solve this puzzle, since the newspaper relies on its marker of “Incidente” directly after the question is posed, which reads:

#### Example 6

Ni el testigo ni el Tribunal entienden la pregunta. El defensor aclara el motivo para que la hace y determina la forma.

[Neither the witness nor the Court understand the question. The defence attorney clarifies the rationale for asking the question and establishes its form.]

(*The Puerto-Rico Eagle*, vol. I, no. 291, 18 December 1902)

Based on this reporting, it may be possible to reconstruct whether the interpreter has made a newsworthy mistake. While there is no official language in the United States, English serves as the *de facto* official language, particularly since it is the language of the courts. In this case, the interpreter would have likely been necessary to allow English-speaking legal professionals, judges, and attorneys to communicate with Spanish-speaking parties or litigants. Given the strangely phrased question, one

5 The Spanish quotes from the trial are reproduced as they were originally printed in the newspaper, with any orthographic mistakes being maintained. For instance, one would likely expect an inverted question mark at the start of this question; however, none was printed in the newspaper. Diacritical marks, such as graphic accents, were not always included, either, as in Example 6.

could suspect that the interpreter has rendered an English question into Spanish in such a manner that the various parties were unsure of its meaning.

Notable here is that translation and interpreting are being used implicitly to tell the story of the trial, adding intrigue and points of contention to the series of events. Given the static nature of a newspaper and limited space, the newspaper could have easily ignored this “Incidente” in favour of another event or moment during the trial. Nevertheless, the breakdown in communication draws the attention of the correspondent, allowing readers to speculate alongside those in attendance regarding what occurred during the trial. The serialised nature of the trial provides prolonged engagement for readers who want to know the outcome of the case and how it unfolds. In some respects, translation and interpreting are a plot point in the story rather than the vehicle by which this story is told, illustrating the newsworthy nature of their inclusion in the trial. While this particular article does not rise to the level of other cases in which interpreters play a crucial role (see, for instance, Kelleher’s 2018 book-length treatment of *The Maamtrasna Murders*), its inclusion in this early Spanish-language newspaper suggests the potential for other cases that are similar in nature to exist and merit greater attention.

## 5. Conclusion

This study documents different types of translations present in the Spanish-speaking newspaper *The Puerto-Rico Eagle* during the early twentieth century in Puerto Rico, seeking to understand how these translations appear and the extent to which their utility can be examined. Three different types of translations are identified in a preliminary effort to understand the multi-faceted nature of translation in this type of newspaper. First, unmarked translations were used as a way to influence and persuade readers, linking ideas of neighbouring stories through their positioning on the page. These alluring translations seduce readers into a feeling of like-mindedness by suggesting a similar provenance and alignment of ideals while linking the texts to other ideas. In the example from *The Puerto-Rico Eagle*, the translation is an instantiation of Americanisation efforts that bridge similar anti-colonialist sentiments from European metropolises, supplanting previous Spanish history with a more US-centric account. Second, translation errors are interrogated to cultivate credibility and presume authority, establishing a hierarchy of trust between different newspapers based on translation practices and purported errors. Regardless of the veracity of the claims related to the translations, the authors can leverage knowledge of multiple languages and the suppressed source text to establish viable narratives about what constitutes the most appropriate translation. Third, translation and interpreting appear in this case study as sensational acts worthy of news coverage themselves. At times, such language

professionals figure prominently in the news stories, while in other instances a closer reading is required to identify traces of their presence. In either case, translation and interpreting figure into the historical record as notable practices of interest.

These different uses of translation are an initial step toward understanding the role that translation plays in newspapers in colonial and post-colonial contexts, particularly in cases in which colonial powers are substituted and replaced. While the documented examples in this case study cannot be generalised to Spanish-language newspapers across the region during the time period, the observed types of translation activity may serve as the foundation for future systematic studies. Moreover, the range of translation activity that is observed in the six-month time span from which these examples are drawn is suggestive of translation's multi-faceted role in this publishing space. The publication of literature alongside news items in Spanish-language newspapers in the Caribbean provides a unique opportunity to investigate the sociopolitical and ideological perspectives of the related authors, news correspondents, newspaper editors, and political figures. While the described categories of translation and the associated analyses are likely applicable in a broad range of journalistic settings, the multilingual and polycultural context that characterises the Caribbean suggests that newspapers are a rich site of translation activity that merits additional study.

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## About the author

Christopher D. Mellinger is Associate Professor in the Department of Languages and Culture Studies at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte. He is the co-editor of the journal *Translation and Interpreting Studies*, co-author of *Quantitative Research Methods in Translation and Interpreting Studies* (Routledge) and co-editor of *Translating Texts: An Introductory Coursebook on Translation and Text Formation*. He has co-edited special issues on language access, translation, and training (*Just. Journal of Language Rights & Minorities*, 2022), community interpreting and technology (*Translation and Interpreting Studies*, 2018), and translation process research (*Translation & Interpreting*, 2015).