



Translational AI, Digital Multimodality, and Linguistic Authority: A Comparative Critical Discourse Analysis of Multilingual News Production on TikTok and X

Sukimin

Sukimin

School of Languages and Applied Linguistics

University of Melbourne

Email: sukimin.reva@unimelb.edu.au.richardson@unimelb.edu.au

*Corresponding Author: sukimin.richardson@unimelb.edu.au

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ABSTRACT

The convergence of artificial intelligence, platformized communication, and multilingual digital media has transformed the production, circulation, and interpretation of contemporary news discourse. This study investigates how AI-assisted multilingual news practices reshape communicative authority, linguistic legitimacy, and ideological framing across TikTok and X as two structurally distinct digital communication environments. Drawing upon critical discourse analysis, multimodal discourse theory, and corpus-assisted computational linguistics, the article comparatively analyzes 2.1 million words of multilingual news-related discourse collected from English-, Spanish-, and Japanese-language content between 2023 and 2025. The findings demonstrate that TikTok prioritizes affective multimodality, narrative compression, and algorithmically amplified identity performance, whereas X sustains discursive contestation through textual interactivity, ideological polarization, and translational circulation. AI-assisted captioning, automated translation, and generative summarization significantly influence semantic framing, audience interpretation, and institutional credibility across both platforms. The comparative evidence further reveals that AI-mediated multilingual communication increasingly restructures journalistic authority by privileging platform-compatible discourse forms over traditional editorial verification structures. This article argues that digital multilingual news environments now operate through algorithmically regulated communicative ecologies in which linguistic adaptation, multimodal circulation, and computational visibility jointly shape socio-political

interpretation and transnational public discourse. The study contributes to contemporary linguistics scholarship by proposing the concept of platformed translational authority to explain how AI-mediated multilingual communication transforms institutional news legitimacy within global digital publics.

Keywords: digital discourse, multilingual communication, AI translation, multimodal discourse, sociolinguistics, media linguistics, critical discourse analysis, TikTok, X platform, computational communication

INTRODUCTION

The rapid expansion of AI-assisted communication technologies has fundamentally transformed contemporary media discourse, multilingual communication practices, and institutional information circulation. Across global digital ecosystems, news production increasingly occurs within algorithmically governed communication platforms where linguistic forms, translational systems, multimodal structures, and audience engagement mechanisms jointly influence public interpretation. Within these environments, artificial intelligence no longer functions merely as a technological supplement to journalism but increasingly acts as a communicative infrastructure mediating discourse visibility, semantic framing, and multilingual accessibility.

This transformation is particularly visible within platformized communication systems such as TikTok and X, where news discourse circulates through highly accelerated multimodal interactional environments. The rise of AI-assisted translation, automated subtitling, generative summarization, and recommendation algorithms has intensified the globalization of digital communication while simultaneously reshaping how linguistic legitimacy and institutional authority are negotiated across transnational audiences (Androutsopoulos, 2022; Pennycook, 2024). UNESCO (2024) reports indicate that more than 61% of global digital news users now encounter multilingual or translated media content daily through AI-mediated platforms, especially among younger audiences operating across mobile communication ecosystems.

From a sociolinguistic perspective, these developments represent a major shift in the organization of public discourse. Traditional journalistic authority historically relied upon editorial institutions, professional gatekeeping, and relatively stable linguistic conventions associated with national media systems (Fairclough, 1995). However, platform-based communication environments increasingly redistribute communicative authority through algorithmic visibility structures privileging engagement metrics, affective resonance, and multimodal adaptability. Consequently, language practices within digital news environments are shaped not only by journalistic institutions but also by platform architectures and computational recommendation systems.

Previous scholarship has explored several dimensions of digital multilingual communication. Media linguistics research has examined platform discourse structures, audience interaction, and multimodal communication practices within social media ecosystems (Zappavigna, 2023). Translation studies scholars

have investigated AI-assisted translation and machine-mediated intercultural communication (O'Hagan, 2021). Sociolinguistic studies have analyzed digital identity performance, transnational communication flows, and online language ideologies (Tagg & Seargeant, 2022). Computational communication research has additionally explored algorithmic amplification, recommendation systems, and discourse polarization within digital public spheres (Cinelli et al., 2021).

While previous studies emphasize platform dynamics and AI-enabled communication efficiency, current scholarship remains limited in several important respects. First, existing research frequently examines social media discourse independently from multilingual translation processes despite the growing integration of AI-mediated translation within global communication systems. Second, comparative discourse analysis across structurally distinct platforms remains underdeveloped, particularly concerning how multimodal and textual architectures produce divergent communicative outcomes. Third, many studies focus on technological functionality while insufficiently addressing broader socio-linguistic implications for institutional authority, communicative legitimacy, and public epistemology.

These limitations are increasingly significant because AI-assisted multilingual communication now shapes global public discourse at unprecedented scale. TikTok and X represent particularly important comparative cases because they embody fundamentally different communicative logics. TikTok privileges audiovisual multimodality, narrative compression, and algorithmic immersion through short-form video structures. X, by contrast, sustains textual immediacy, ideological contestation, and networked conversational interaction through microblogging discourse structures. These differences potentially influence how AI-mediated translation, linguistic framing, and communicative authority operate within each environment.

The communicative implications extend beyond platform interaction into broader institutional and socio-political domains. Digital news discourse increasingly influences electoral behavior, public health communication, intercultural perception, and geopolitical interpretation (van Dijk, 2021). Consequently, understanding how AI-mediated multilingual discourse operates within contemporary media environments has become essential for linguistics scholarship concerned with communication, ideology, and institutional transformation.

Critical discourse analysis offers an important theoretical framework for examining these developments because it conceptualizes discourse as socially situated and institutionally structured (Fairclough, 1995; Wodak & Meyer, 2016). Within AI-mediated media systems, discourse visibility and legitimacy are increasingly regulated through algorithmic infrastructures privileging specific communicative forms. Simultaneously, multimodal discourse theory highlights how meaning-making emerges through the interaction of linguistic, visual, auditory, and technological modes within digital communication environments (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2020).

Translation studies scholarship further suggests that AI-mediated multilingual communication transforms intercultural meaning negotiation by accelerating semantic circulation while potentially flattening

contextual nuance (O'Hagan, 2021). Machine-assisted translation systems prioritize communicative speed and accessibility but may also reproduce ideological biases embedded within dominant linguistic datasets. This dynamic becomes particularly consequential within politically sensitive or institutionally contested news discourse.

Recent studies demonstrate emerging concerns regarding these transformations. Pennycook (2024) argues that AI-driven communication systems increasingly shape epistemic interpretation through predictive discourse generation. Similarly, Piller (2023) contends that digital language systems may reinforce communicative inequalities by privileging globally dominant linguistic structures. However, current research has not sufficiently explained how AI-assisted multilingual discourse interacts with platform architectures to shape journalistic authority and public interpretation differently across communicative environments.

This article therefore addresses a major theoretical and empirical gap by comparatively analyzing AI-mediated multilingual news discourse across TikTok and X. The study examines how platform architectures, translational AI systems, and multimodal communication structures jointly influence discourse production, institutional legitimacy, and socio-cultural interpretation.

The novelty of this article lies in four principal contributions. First, it integrates critical discourse analysis, multimodal discourse theory, and computational linguistics within a unified comparative framework. Second, it empirically demonstrates how AI-assisted translation and platform architectures produce divergent communicative ecologies across digital media systems. Third, it conceptualizes multilingual news discourse as algorithmically mediated institutional communication rather than merely user-generated content. Fourth, it proposes the concept of platformed translational authority to explain how AI-mediated multilingual communication restructures journalistic legitimacy within transnational digital publics.

The analytical framework guiding this study conceptualizes the following relationship:

AI-assisted translation → multimodal discourse adaptation → algorithmic visibility → communicative legitimacy → socio-political interpretation.

Within this framework, linguistic transformation occurs through the interaction between computational translation systems, platform discourse structures, and institutional communication practices. Consequently, AI-mediated multilingual communication increasingly shapes how audiences interpret political events, institutional credibility, and transnational socio-cultural narratives.

This study argues that TikTok and X operate as distinct algorithmic discourse environments that reshape multilingual news communication through divergent multimodal and translational mechanisms. The research objective is therefore to comparatively analyze how AI-assisted multilingual discourse practices on TikTok and X transform communicative authority, institutional legitimacy, and socio-cultural interpretation within contemporary digital news ecosystems.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a comparative mixed-methods research design integrating corpus-assisted critical discourse analysis, multimodal discourse analysis, and computational linguistic analysis. The methodological framework was grounded theoretically in Fairclough's (1995) model of discourse and institutional power, Kress and van Leeuwen's (2020) multimodal discourse theory, and recent scholarship concerning AI-mediated communication and digital multilingualism (Pennycook, 2024; O'Hagan, 2021). The empirical corpus consisted of approximately 2.1 million words and multimodal transcripts collected from multilingual news-related content circulating on TikTok and X between January 2023 and March 2025. The dataset included English-, Spanish-, and Japanese-language discourse associated with climate policy, geopolitical conflict, migration, and public health communication. Cases were selected because these topics generated sustained transnational engagement and intensive AI-assisted translation activity across both platforms. Units of analysis included lexical framing, multimodal sequencing, translational adaptation, interactional discourse markers, semantic compression, ideological positioning, and institutional attribution practices. Quantitative analysis involved keyword extraction, collocation analysis, sentiment mapping, multimodal tagging, and discourse frequency measurement, while qualitative analysis examined narrative framing, translational shifts, affective positioning, and communicative legitimacy structures.

The comparative logic of the study focused on how distinct platform architectures shape multilingual communicative practices differently. TikTok data included AI-generated subtitles, translated captions, audiovisual narration, and comment-thread interactions, whereas X data emphasized repost discourse, machine-translated threads, institutional statements, and user-generated interpretive commentary. Institutional triangulation was conducted using UNESCO digital communication reports, platform governance documents, newsroom AI policies, and multilingual journalism guidelines published by international media organizations. Analytical validity was strengthened through intercoder reliability calibration, cross-linguistic semantic verification, and iterative multimodal interpretation procedures. Ethical considerations involved anonymization of non-public user data, exclusion of private communication, and adherence to digital discourse research protocols concerning platform accessibility and data minimization. The study acknowledges limitations related to rapidly evolving platform algorithms, uneven multilingual data availability, and the instability of AI-assisted translation outputs across software updates. Nevertheless, the methodological design provides robust explanatory capacity for examining how AI-mediated multilingual communication restructures institutional discourse and public meaning-making within contemporary digital media systems.

Findings and Discussion

1. Multimodal Compression and Narrative Acceleration in TikTok News Discourse

The comparative findings demonstrate that TikTok systematically restructures multilingual news communication through multimodal compression and affective narrative acceleration. Unlike conventional journalistic discourse emphasizing contextual explanation and sequential elaboration, TikTok communication prioritized rapid semantic accessibility, emotional immediacy, and visually synchronized storytelling.

The linguistic evidence indicates that AI-generated subtitles and automated translation systems significantly shaped discourse interpretation. Across multilingual datasets, translated TikTok captions frequently reduced syntactic complexity and condensed ideological nuance into emotionally intensified framing structures. Expressions associated with urgency, outrage, solidarity, and fear appeared with substantially higher frequency than within equivalent X discourse datasets.

These communicative patterns reflect the platform's audiovisual architecture. TikTok's recommendation algorithms privilege engagement-maximizing discourse forms characterized by narrative brevity, multimodal coherence, and affective amplification. Consequently, linguistic meaning becomes inseparable from visual sequencing, soundtrack synchronization, and algorithmic circulation patterns.

The comparative discourse evidence further demonstrates that AI-assisted translation within TikTok frequently prioritized semantic accessibility over contextual specificity. Japanese-language political commentary translated into English often lost culturally embedded politeness structures and institutional indirectness, while Spanish-language migration discourse was frequently reframed through emotionally intensified lexical simplification. These translational shifts altered interpretive positioning and audience perception.

This finding extends previous scholarship concerning digital multimodality by demonstrating that AI-assisted translation interacts directly with platform architectures to shape communicative outcomes. Whereas earlier media systems separated translation from visual production processes, TikTok integrates translation, audiovisual editing, and algorithmic recommendation within a unified communicative infrastructure.

The socio-cultural implications are substantial. TikTok facilitates rapid transnational dissemination of multilingual news content, thereby increasing communicative accessibility across linguistic boundaries. However, the platform simultaneously privileges emotionally resonant discourse forms potentially reducing interpretive complexity and contextual nuance. This creates conditions in which public understanding increasingly depends upon algorithmically optimized multimodal framing rather than institutional verification structures.

Educationally, these developments influence digital literacy practices among younger audiences. Users increasingly encounter translated geopolitical discourse through short-form multimodal narratives rather than traditional journalistic formats. Consequently, communicative competence now requires

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2. Textual Contestation and Ideological Polarization on X

Whereas TikTok prioritized multimodal compression, X sustained communicative legitimacy through textual interaction, ideological contestation, and networked interpretive negotiation. The corpus evidence demonstrates that multilingual discourse on X was characterized by extensive repost commentary, translational reinterpretation, and argumentative positioning across transnational communicative networks.

AI-assisted translation on X enabled accelerated circulation of institutional statements, political commentary, and journalistic reporting across linguistic communities. However, unlike TikTok's emotionally compressed narratives, X discourse frequently involved discursive fragmentation through quotation, reposting, and oppositional reinterpretation. This produced highly dynamic communicative environments in which institutional authority became continuously contested.

The findings indicate that machine-translated discourse on X often intensified ideological polarization by simplifying culturally specific contextual markers into generalized political binaries. English translations of Japanese policy discussions concerning migration and defense frequently omitted institutional ambiguity markers, thereby increasing interpretive absolutism within international discourse circulation. Similarly, Spanish-language environmental policy discourse translated into English frequently shifted toward conflict-oriented framing structures associated with platform engagement dynamics.

These patterns demonstrate how AI-mediated translation interacts with platform affordances differently across communication systems. On X, translation functions less as communicative stabilization and more as discursive acceleration enabling rapid ideological reinterpretation across transnational networks.

The comparative evidence also reveals important differences in interactional metadiscourse. X users employed significantly higher frequencies of evaluative commentary, intertextual referencing, and direct institutional challenge than TikTok users. This reflects the platform's textual architecture encouraging argumentative continuity and networked conversational participation.

The findings resonate with van Dijk's (2021) argument that discourse structures shape ideological interpretation through communicative framing mechanisms. However, the present study extends this perspective by demonstrating that AI-assisted translation now functions as a key mediating layer within digital ideological circulation. Translation is no longer merely linguistic transfer but increasingly a computationally accelerated mechanism influencing political interpretation itself.

Institutionally, these developments complicate journalistic authority. Traditional media organizations increasingly compete with decentralized translational networks in which institutional reporting is continuously reframed, condensed, and ideologically recontextualized through AI-mediated circulation

practices.

3. Comparative Matrix of Linguistic Structures, Communicative Practices, and Socio-Cultural Outcomes

Table 1. Comparative Matrix of Linguistic Structures, Communicative Practices, and Socio-Cultural Outcomes

Variable	Case 1: TikTok	Case 2: X	Linguistic Evidence	Analytical Interpretation
Communicative Structure	Audiovisual multimodality	Textual interactivity	TikTok emphasized synchronized visual-linguistic sequencing	Platform architecture shapes discourse organization
Translational Logic	Semantic compression	Ideological reinterpretation	Shortened captions versus repost commentary	AI translation adapts differently across platforms
Narrative Style	Affective storytelling	Argumentative contestation	Higher emotional framing on TikTok	Emotionality versus deliberative interaction
Institutional Authority	Influencer-mediated legitimacy	Networked institutional challenge	More creator-centered discourse on TikTok	Distinct legitimacy structures emerge
Multilingual Adaptation	Accessibility-oriented simplification	Contextual fragmentation	Simplified subtitles versus interpretive reposting	Translation changes communicative meaning
Audience Engagement	Immersive consumption	Discursive participation	Higher audiovisual immersion on TikTok	Different interactional models shape interpretation
Ideological Dynamics	Emotional amplification	Polarized textual debate	Stronger conflict framing on X	Platform affordances influence polarization
Socio-Cultural Outcomes	Accelerated transnational	Intensified ideological circulation	Distinct discourse ecologies	AI reshapes global public

The comparative matrix demonstrates that multilingual AI-mediated communication cannot be understood independently from platform architecture. TikTok and X generate fundamentally different communicative ecologies through distinct relationships between translation, multimodality, and audience participation.

TikTok prioritizes affective accessibility and narrative immersion, enabling rapid multilingual circulation through compressed audiovisual discourse. X, by contrast, sustains textual contestation and ideological reinterpretation through networked interactional structures. Consequently, AI-assisted translation functions differently across each environment. On TikTok, translation stabilizes narrative accessibility; on X, translation accelerates discursive fragmentation and political reinterpretation.

The evidence further indicates that institutional authority increasingly depends upon platform compatibility. News organizations whose communicative practices align with algorithmically privileged discourse forms gain enhanced visibility and audience engagement. This reflects broader transformations in digital communication systems where platform governance increasingly mediates journalistic legitimacy.

The socio-cultural implications are substantial because multilingual public discourse increasingly operates through algorithmically regulated communicative infrastructures. AI translation systems facilitate unprecedented intercultural accessibility while simultaneously reshaping how political meaning, institutional trust, and ideological interpretation circulate across global digital publics.

4. Platformed Translational Authority and the Transformation of News Legitimacy

The final analytical finding concerns the emergence of platformed translational authority as a new form of communicative governance within multilingual digital media systems. The evidence demonstrates that AI-assisted translation increasingly functions as a mechanism through which institutional legitimacy is redistributed across platformized communication environments.

Platformed translational authority refers to the condition in which communicative credibility emerges through algorithmically mediated multilingual circulation rather than exclusively through traditional editorial institutions. Within this framework, visibility, engagement, and translational adaptability become central determinants of public legitimacy.

The comparative findings indicate that TikTok and X operationalize translational authority differently. TikTok privileges communicative immersion through multimodal synchronization and emotionally accessible translation. X privileges discursive velocity through repost interaction, textual reinterpretation, and argumentative circulation. Both systems reshape institutional communication by embedding journalistic discourse within algorithmically governed engagement structures.

The evidence suggests that AI-mediated multilingual communication contributes to a broader decentering of traditional journalistic authority. Institutional legitimacy increasingly depends upon adaptability to platform discourse norms rather than solely editorial verification practices. Consequently, communication systems reward linguistic forms optimized for algorithmic circulation rather than contextual complexity.

These developments reflect broader transformations in digital sociolinguistics. Communication platforms increasingly function as language governance systems shaping acceptable discourse forms through recommendation algorithms, translational infrastructures, and visibility metrics. AI-assisted translation therefore becomes a socio-political mechanism influencing whose narratives circulate globally and how they are interpreted.

Importantly, the study also identified emergent forms of communicative resistance. Some multilingual journalists strategically modified AI-generated translations to preserve contextual nuance and culturally specific discourse structures. Others employed hybrid multimodal strategies combining institutional verification with platform-compatible storytelling techniques. These practices suggest that communicative actors remain active negotiators within algorithmically structured environments.

Nevertheless, the broader trajectory indicates increasing integration between AI systems and institutional communication infrastructures. News organizations, governmental agencies, and digital platforms are progressively normalizing AI-assisted multilingual communication as a standard operational mechanism. This normalization may fundamentally reshape future understandings of journalism, translation, and public discourse.

Conceptual Framework

Platformed Translational Authority Framework

AI-Assisted Translation → Multimodal Discourse Adaptation → Algorithmic Visibility → Communicative Legitimacy → Socio-Political Interpretation

This conceptual framework explains how AI-mediated multilingual communication transforms institutional discourse legitimacy within contemporary digital media systems. AI-assisted translation functions as the initial mechanism enabling accelerated transnational circulation of multilingual discourse across platform environments. Through multimodal adaptation processes involving captioning, audiovisual synchronization, semantic compression, and textual reframing, discourse becomes optimized for platform-specific communicative structures.

Algorithmic visibility subsequently determines which discourse forms gain prominence within digital communication ecosystems. Recommendation systems privilege engagement-oriented communicative

patterns characterized by emotional resonance, interpretive clarity, and multimodal compatibility. These visibility structures shape communicative legitimacy by influencing audience trust, institutional credibility, and interpretive authority.

The final stage involves socio-political interpretation. As multilingual discourse circulates through AI-mediated platforms, public understanding increasingly depends upon algorithmically regulated communicative infrastructures rather than traditional institutional gatekeeping mechanisms. Consequently, platformed translational authority restructures the relationship between language, journalism, and democratic communication within global digital publics.

This framework contributes theoretically by integrating sociolinguistics, media linguistics, translation studies, and computational discourse analysis within a unified explanatory model capable of explaining contemporary transformations in multilingual digital communication.

CONCLUSION

This study comparatively analyzed how AI-assisted multilingual discourse practices on TikTok and X reshape communicative authority, institutional legitimacy, and socio-cultural interpretation within contemporary digital news ecosystems. The findings demonstrate that platform architectures and AI-mediated translation systems jointly transform multilingual public discourse through distinct communicative logics and institutional consequences.

The analysis revealed that TikTok prioritizes multimodal compression, affective accessibility, and immersive audiovisual storytelling, whereas X sustains textual contestation, ideological reinterpretation, and networked discursive interaction. AI-assisted translation significantly influenced semantic framing across both platforms by restructuring contextual nuance, ideological positioning, and communicative accessibility according to platform-specific engagement dynamics.

Theoretically, this article contributes to linguistics scholarship by proposing the concept of platformed translational authority. This framework explains how institutional legitimacy increasingly emerges through algorithmically mediated multilingual circulation rather than solely through traditional editorial structures. The study therefore extends critical discourse analysis and digital sociolinguistics by conceptualizing AI-assisted translation as a mechanism of communicative governance embedded within platform infrastructures.

Empirically, the findings demonstrate that AI-mediated multilingual communication reshapes journalistic discourse at lexical, multimodal, and institutional levels. Translation systems no longer function merely as linguistic transfer technologies but increasingly shape ideological interpretation, audience engagement, and public epistemology within transnational communication systems.

The institutional implications are substantial. News organizations must recognize that

communicative legitimacy increasingly depends upon platform adaptability and translational visibility alongside editorial credibility. Policymakers and media institutions should therefore develop multilingual AI governance frameworks addressing contextual preservation, translational accountability, and algorithmic transparency.

Educationally, the findings indicate the growing importance of multimodal critical literacy and translational awareness within digital communication education. Users increasingly encounter international political discourse through AI-mediated multimodal systems requiring sophisticated interpretive competencies extending beyond conventional textual literacy.

The study nevertheless faces several limitations, including rapidly evolving platform algorithms, uneven multilingual data availability, and instability within AI translation systems across software updates. Future research should therefore investigate longitudinal changes in AI-mediated media discourse, comparative analyses involving additional languages and platforms, and the relationship between translational AI and emerging forms of digital political polarization.

Ultimately, this article argues that AI-assisted multilingual communication represents a structural transformation in the organization of global public discourse. As translation systems, recommendation algorithms, and platform infrastructures become increasingly integrated, they reshape how language, legitimacy, and institutional authority operate within contemporary digital societies. Understanding these transformations is therefore essential for contemporary linguistics scholarship concerned with communication, technology, and socio-political change in the algorithmic era.

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