AL-FARABI KAZAKH NATIONAL UNIVERSITY

Department of International Relations

Chair of Diplomatic Translation

**Translation business in the field of international and legal relations**

**“Translation of Scientific and Technical Documents”**

2024-2025 academic year, fall semester

**Lecture 8**

**Module 2: Resources for scientific and technical translation**

**Lecture 8: Translation peculiarities of media materials about science**

The science writing that we will focus on first is produced by scientific research organizations and institutions who seek to disseminate their research findings beyond the scientific research community, for some or all of the reasons mentioned above. In some cases, the institutions write directly for the public who access their websites or for websites which aggregate science news, like www.futurity.org. In other cases they issue press releases and other material designed for science jour- nalists to read and communicate to the general public through their own publications. In most of these situations we can identify layers of mediation between scientists and the public, performed, for example, by press officers or journalists, as well as translators. To get an insight into the transformation from scientific journal article to news item, we take the example of a press release triggered by publication of a scien- tific study and some news reports generated in turn by the press release. For reasons of space we will confine this exploration to headlines and standfirsts (i.e. the highlighted text between the headline and the body of the article) and the use of sources in quotations (see Dahl 2015 for analysis of a different scientific story with similar areas of focus). Our aim is to identify some of the specific ways in which the discourses are constituted and framed, relating linguistic choices to the communi- cative purposes of the news stories and their contexts of production. We will then link our observations to some previous research identify- ing a set of typical features of popular science news reporting.

**From research publication to press release**

The publication of a professional scientific article can trigger a press release from the research organization, which, in turn, can trigger cov- erage in other outlets, for example, print and broadcast media, science news websites and blogs. Our example relates to a large European research project being led by investigators at the University of Cambridge; results of one study from this project were published as an article in the *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition* (*AJCN*) on 15 January 2015. The University of Cambridge issued a press release to publicize the research, and the story was picked up by broadcast and print media in the UK on the same day (for example featuring on BBC Radio 4’s *Today* programme). The full text of the press release can be found in Appendix 4 (reproduced courtesy of the University of Cambridge).

*Headline and standfirst*

Excerpt 7.1 presents the headline and abstract outline of the *AJCN* article, and the headline and standfirst of the University of Cambridge press release. In the title of the *AJCN* article, we can identify many of the features typical of professional science, notably the use of medical terminology which may not be immediately understood by non- specialists, namely *all-cause mortality* and *overall adiposity* and *abdominal adiposity*. It also gives the full name for the large-scale European study of which this was a part, the *European Prospective Investigation into Cancer and Nutrition Study* and the corresponding acronym, *EPIC*. We might also recognize the two-part structure of *AJCN*’s title, with separation via a colon, as a common structure for academic paper titles, particularly where the first part is formulated to grab attention and the second to provide more information, although that is not the case here. With its 27 words and footnote reference, this title can hardly be described as snappy or particularly attention-grabbing. A final observation about the title is that it tells us that the study focuses on the relationship between physical activity and adiposity, but it gives no indication of the outcome or findings. These are, however, summarized in the abstract; the proportion of premature deaths among people categorized as moderately inactive was smaller than the proportion of premature deaths among people in the inactive classification. This reduced mortality was observed across different levels of body fat and waist circumference. It was therefore estimated theoretically that even small increases in physical activity among inactive people could reduce mortality to a greater degree than reductions in obesity levels.